

MADELINE BASSNETT

MICROBIALS

I. DIATOM

buttercup and poppy
ragged robin's pink fronds
droop the pollen-dusted
surface limpid
and taut broken

by ophelia's limbs rising
from the pond's weedy
bottom-tangle silver-green
long purples shadowing

her cheek daisies
crowning her forehead
with shade. look
closer. look until her cheek

the blueing skin of her fingers
is a pointillist canvas
beaded by diatoms

discs and ovals green
swimming canoes blue
spoked wheels silver
triangles gold petals
staining pink

her clear
glass skin

II. HAPTOGLOSSA

cytoplasm bulge
microbial artillery

dart coiled
in a barrel at
tube's end

the worm the womb

admit
admiration

our two arms two
legs unfit
for transformation the belly
still the belly longing
to un-be
re-be

an offensive weapon

III. COCCOLITHOPHORID

self-wrought shields un-
buckling from an inner forge

silica not
gold not battle-
embossed soot-
stink heart-cry
plough upturning
black soil

reflective
algae bloom

ocean untroubled
by glory

dying spawns
rain

showering
our busy
killing

IV. PROCHLOROCOCCUS

primitive green
berry microscopic
sea pasture dawn's
red fingers comb bacteria

blankets of living
biomass breathing

the cold wet of it
clouds ravelling
a dank sky

mirror held
to a mouth

vapour intangible
lungs invisible

yoked
unhitched

we can't
begin again