

Spring 2014

Notes on a Chronic Illness

Siobhan K. Phillips
Dickinson College

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholar.dickinson.edu/faculty_publications



Part of the [Poetry Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Phillips, Siobhan. "Notes on a Chronic Illness." *The Southampton Review* 8, no. 1 (2014): 68-69.

This article is brought to you for free and open access by Dickinson Scholar. It has been accepted for inclusion by an authorized administrator. For more information, please contact scholar@dickinson.edu.

Notes on a Chronic Illness

by SIOBHAN PHILLIPS

So that it is useful.
So that it is evidence.
So that it is real.

So that you remember how hard it is to remember what you actually feel.

So that you have somewhere to staple in blood draws, scans, standard ranges, and tests.
So that you can track the initial relief at abnormal results and irrational faith in a diagnosis.

Also, the plans, the practice, *practices*: good, bad, best.
The bouts of research, of spurning research, of trusting impulse, of intuition.

Assertion, submission.
Patience, pressure.
Rations, excess.

Topical, oral.

So that you find morals.
So that you record each meaningless moment that seems to arrive as an incomplete fable.

*The folders of painstaking notes that one left on a library table,
the botched no-bitter one watched without notice or mention,
the sprint for a wrong bus.*

So that you set down the maxims you'd never confess you were ever tempted to trust:

If you're not outraged...
(Don't pay attention.)
Every journey—
(Watch where you step.)

Your move. *What can't be measured can't be improved.*

To believe in a pattern of facts, the act of a form, in beginning and end, climax or turn.

A problem you solve.

A living you earn.

To find in your body's attachment to pain its pledge to abandon nothing it had to attack.

Or try to attack.

Without correction.

No matter how minor, misapprehended, hyperreactive, how far back.

To debate how much it is yours, how deep it is *you*, that yearned for disaster called recollection.

So that it is strange.

So that it is true.

So that it can change.