

# Aperture

Category: Poems

written by Martin Kohn | April 3, 2015

**Martin Kohn**

*(for Helen)*

This openness into  
This brightness onto  
This bodied and  
dis-embodied  
sunken-eyed  
knowing

This close  
and blinking  
moment  
This shutter stop  
goodbye

Your round soft  
shoulder pillowed  
beneath a feeble  
hug  
The Lord  
“not quite ready”  
to take you  
even though you  
and Trixie your cat  
had walked the dark path  
to him again

“Get back to where you came from!”  
–the Lord bellowed  
You and Trixie complied  
content to wait  
licking the saucer  
with each sweep  
of the second hand

## **About the poet:**

Martin Kohn is director of the program in medical humanities at the [Center for Ethics, Humanities and Spiritual Care](#), Cleveland Clinic, and associate professor of medicine at the Cleveland Clinic Lerner College of Medicine of Case Western Reserve University. He cofounded the [Center for Literature and Medicine](#) with Carol Donley of Hiram College, and with her served as a founding editor of the [Literature and Medicine book series](#) at Kent State

University Press. His poetry has appeared in print and electronic journals including [Pulse](#), [Exquisite Corpse](#), [Ad Libitum/Annals of Internal Medicine](#) and [ZEEK: A Jewish Journal of Thought and Culture](#).

**About the poem:**

“Helen, my father’s significant other (they couldn’t afford to lose Social Security income by tying the knot), outlived Dad by about fifteen years. Not long before she died, I received a frantic call from Helen’s out-of-town daughter expressing concern that Helen was going downhill fast (‘not eating’ and ‘talking strangely about visiting God with her cat!’) that got me into my car early the next week for the trip to Ashtabula, in the far corner of northeast Ohio. When I entered Helen’s room, I could see that she had changed (not nearly as much as I had feared), and that she seemed at peace. I visited for a few hours, trying to remain fully present, but also sensing that what she was telling me was already starting to take shape as a poem. Helen lived for eight more months before dying in August 2013 at the age of eighty-six. During that time, when I asked her for permission to publish this poem, she sent me a card saying that she was honored and touched by it, and thanking me for my ‘spirit insight.’ “

**Poetry editors:**

Johanna Shapiro and Judy Schaefer