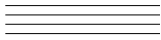


T H A N K S   T O   L E I B N I Z ,  
P U T A T I V E   F A T H E R   O F  
T O P O L O G Y



L A U R A   K O L B E

*Topology is sometimes defined as the study of those properties of an object which remain unchanged when that object is subjected to stretching, shrinking, and twisting without tearing, piecing, or gluing.*

—Introduction to General Topology by K. D. Joshi

*Thirty Years' War, 1618–1648*

It is not obvious the underwear stays on  
unless at least one leg of jeans  
untubes one thigh. You think there would be  
a special mode of bend,

a dispensation. Hip-fishing tights  
under trousers, tees under wool,  
*ibid.* It took a man nursed in war  
to tell me I have to get naked

in order. When horses became meat,  
then shoes became meat, to think  
what a ring in the mind could do  
without breaking —

that circles are cloaked lines  
glued long before the first clock told  
the first pale general, *sleep*.

The iron accounts of a number-man's eye

without bread for weeks, the bright reveal  
that eye fell grateful into —

what one later called  
the heart of the heart

of the country, meaning an answer dead-plum-  
toned, unable to rip out. What you could call  
a showing. In sleek present, in rumple  
before coffee, how I smell you

on my top and bottom as jacked goods obtained  
through slats of soft fence.

It's only half the work to say,  
"you cannot sip yolk from a whole shell."

You must also say, "unwrap, Sister Package.  
Mother Envelope, tear off your tongue.  
Hooks for coats will not let me touch you,  
dearest shawl, until the leather bomber

takes its neck off  
your collar's blue-black modesty."