

A Metaphor for Cumulative Error

There's no Nepenthe, now, on Earth for me.
--Charlotte Smith, 1797

Bye-bye soothsayer, bees, mammals!

Shhhh! "You're up shit's creek
When they die."

There's that special pain of pining for someone,
the ouch. Even a little respite
From remembering, that would be nice!
An abacus in my eye, an omnipotent dart,
You on the shore: Are you suffering from your thoughts?
The round, meaty words in your head
That keep you from being present.
We're here 'til we die . . . move into the positive train.

"Nepenthe."
Oh, I thought you whispered that the phone was ringing.

Odette: Hospice Death #2

There is no twice upon a time,
but there's safety in humility.
And although some things
just never cross our minds,
others cross three times,
or four.

Odette was drawn (as we all are)
to putting herself somewhere.
She breathed in the morning air
and forced a body on to its side
up off the old, flat
futon.

Please, God, cross my mind today,
she whispered.
I need a little
company.

Later in the day, Odette went for
a second walk, unusual for her,
but she was drawn again by need.
She went to the Williams hill next door,
planting herself in the living landscape
:

Up through the trees
went a wind,
a breath, a catch of air,
up to the sky went a bird.

Up through the hill went a cat,
with nothing,
nothing but day.

Up went and down came,
through and through

and through.

My Back

is up
against a supernova—
warm, the comfort of history.

Abstraction, from electricity to electrocution,
allows us to take for granted: towels, television, twilight—
a backsaddle event display.

I love death.
It has been my saving grace,
a porcupine of deliverance.

Mother dead: relief.
Father dead: relief.
Brother: so relieved
that I spent
three hundred
dollars on his obituary.

No pretense of grief. I resemble my father, after all . . . a woman with a face full of hubris.

Subconscious tease, a torment, really,
an indeterminate face.

Exile

“Women deal with exile in many ways,” Mother said.
I am as plain as water, busy saving my life.

Girl child, walking in the fields,
jiggering and jaggering,
making it all the way
to the front door
by her little self.

Full of energy,
standing still,
miswanting.

Yesterday I bought a loaf of bread.
Then I forgot, and bought another.

How could the pope
name twenty-six new cardinals
when he knows nothing about birds,
and my daughter
makes it home all by herself?

I guess I can see the wind, in the blowing rain, long down from the sky, pushed and
pushed away. The grass is green hair being combed, being pressed by a hand, smoothed
down, over and over again.

The Double Coincidence of Wants

In a barter economy
there's something called
the double coincidence of wants:
the need to find a match
between two wanters.

I have truffles but
they're candied brown.

I'll trade one mended heart
for two lambskins.

I'm lost
in my head.

You keep livestock
and collect wounded birds.
You're safe
in my mind.

I want your glorious past,
but can I sacrifice
my gondola,
my golden
pet peeves?

Prayer is over.
Now comes the hard part.
Waiting, believing, accepting
yesterday's desires.