

## [Hopewell Bay](#) [1]

March 16, 2016 [Featured Poetry](#) [2]  
[Grief](#) [3]

### Hybrid Poetry by Cynthia Neely

Finalist of the 2015 Talking Writing Prize for Hybrid Poetry



1.  
A confession: I fell in love with grief.  
Not a single grievance, but grief.
2.  
Cisplatin (cisplatin). The word sounds like liquid silver, iridescent, lovely and cool as water. But it's quicksilver, arrowed at fast growing cells. Hot and unforgiving when it enters a vein. *In vivo*, it binds to and crosslinks DNA, triggers apoptosis (programmed cell death).
3.  
Laminaria: Seaweed, Devil's Apron, Sea Girdles.
4.  
Water takes on the color of its surroundings, so a body  
of it can be blue-sky, black-night, gray.  
It can be red as the cardinal flower it reflects or the buoy  
that marks the channel. It's green as the grasses

that edge the shore. Grief's like water. It moves,  
flows. It buoys me up.  
You lived in water.

5.

What if green (blue & yellow) expressed all grief?  
Where would that leave red? Angry  
at me for having fallen for it?  
The plastic bag snag of it,  
barbed-wire fence of it?  
But I've seen red in mourning, too.  
*Red sky in morning, sailors take warning.*

6.

I couldn't warn you  
to slow down  
to settle your cells into stupor  
forget your eyes  
your ears  
fingerprints  
skin.

7.

There are five stages of grief but only three stages of pregnancy.

8.

A bag snags on a fence  
fills with air on rusted wire  
beside the high-plateau highway  
the dust and rush of us  
weighted down by what  
we refuse to carry.  
Who carried *this* emptied bag,  
what had it held?  
A couple of steaks  
and a bottle of good red  
cast-off sweaters for Goodwill  
curtains for the new nursery  
a pregnancy kit?

9.

Hygroscopic—readily absorbs water. Laminaria stem swells to five times its original diameter in twelve to twenty-four hours.

10.

Should I have waited  
as if a different answer could arrive?  
Not one deflated  
a fence-caught plastic bag  
when the wind calms  
red letters crisp but twisted.

11.

My grief is leaving me.  
Twisting out of my grasp

even as I reach for something  
to hold, something I can carry  
and not let go.

12.

I let you go.

13.

There are five stages to grief. Once through each stage, we are ready to let go. This is myth.

14.

There are at least five synonyms for grieving: regretting, mourning, lamenting, suffering, sorrowing. Sorrowing I love best. It sings like a saw—a poor man's viola.

15.

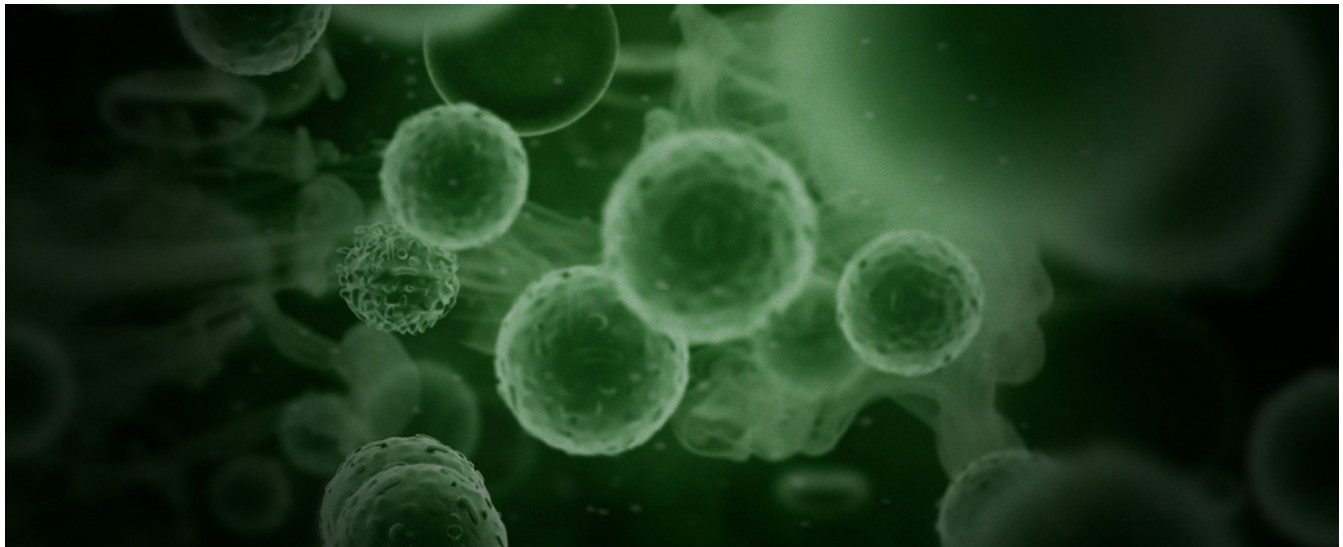
This is when I catalogue my woes  
then detest myself for doing so.  
My years now catch me  
when I fall, brittle-boned, stiff-jointed.  
It's not the leaving that's grieving me  
it's all the grieving I'll have to leave behind.  
That black cat was ready to go, offered himself up  
to the coyote needing a meal.  
The gray cloud of wolfish dog held on too long.  
I see myself in her. My sorrow, I follow it  
a faithful pet.

16.

Genus Laminaria—green-brown kelp from the cold black waters of northern oceans.  
Laminaria digitata—effective hygroscopic cervical dilator.

17.

Worship it, this grief  
something to count on  
like the scalpel, sharp, incisive.  
Or that needle, impossibly long  
that could reach the smallest  
part of me. An iridescent  
hummingbird's bill plunging deep  
to nectar. But this  
had no beauty to it.



18.  
Germ cell carcinoma of the ovary in a woman at twenty weeks gestation: The patient's right to make an informed decision about her pregnancy must be supported by her health care givers. The physician must provide the patient with all information about the risks and benefits of the treatment options in an unbiased manner. He must not tell her what to do. Nondirective counseling is very difficult, if not, in fact, an oxymoron.

19.  
The intentional termination of a pregnancy for medical reasons, including medical illness in the mother, is called *therapeutic*.

20.  
Oxymoron: an epigrammatic effect by which contradictory terms are used in conjunction: living death, deafening silence, only choice, therapeutic abortion.

21.  
Balsamroot bloomed  
clustered, yellow-bright again  
and so did I, pushing up  
through desiccated duff  
all that decay  
waiting for that flame  
to burn and burn.

22.  
Some ecosystems have evolved with fire as necessary for habitat renewal. Some species in fire-affected environments require flame to germinate, establish, and to reproduce.

23.  
The world is blackening  
around me a conflagration  
a congregation of pines  
refuses to bow down  
but still topples.

24.  
Patients with malignant germ cell tumors of the ovary who still hope to have children, will have the affected ovary and the fallopian tube removed, leaving the uterus, the ovary, and the fallopian tube on the opposite side intact. Germ cell

cancer must also be immediately treated with combined chemo for at least three full cycles (programmed cell death).

25.

Dysgerminomas are extremely sensitive to chemotherapy, as are all fast growing cells.

26.

This summer's in a hurry  
moving off on a gust. My only son  
wants to swim to Hopewell Bay.  
Today. A round trip of a thousand breaths.  
Alone. And I don't want to let him go  
though I should know  
no rotating prop will dice him up  
slice those lovely legs, render him.  
He wants this test, his will  
against my own. Still,  
most days I would go  
match him stroke for stroke  
breathe his breaths  
if I could, swallow air for him.

What is this, this giving in  
resigned? Where's my mean bone  
now when I want it, gleaming,  
gristled, unbending.

27.

Water owes its blueness to selective absorption in the red portion of its visible spectrum. Absorbed photons promote transitions to highly excited vibrations. We observe the blue or blue/green light produced by water's absorption because light is scattered by suspended matter and so returns to the surface.

28.

My love, I don't know how to tell you  
what I know. How the sky, once blue,  
now like spillage, grim and gray, might have one day  
opened and let you see how rain is formed,  
the weep of it. But I know how they saw my face, shrouded  
with a constant fury. Now it urgently mouths I'm sorry  
while clouds conspire in skies where, once in awhile,  
bright and heavenly bodies have the audacity to rise.

29.

Should I apologize  
now that I have almost stopped  
mourning for what's been lost  
for what is leaving?  
How the blue-gray umbilical of memory holds  
and holds  
and yet my grief is going goes  
the one thing I possessed to keep  
you clutched so tightly to my breast.

If hope's a finch  
that lightly touches down  
and leaves the earth for sky

then grief must be a hungry thing  
that suckles and suckles  
and leaves its mother dry.

30.

I learned to say good-bye  
without saying anything.

31.

There is evidence that fools us,  
the blue of sky, the color of water.  
There are things we believe  
without evidence at all—  
a fetus feels no pain.  
Even when it's gone, it lingers.  
Even a body of water  
skimmed with ice  
still breathes  
its skin rising and falling.



---

### Art Information

- ["Laminaria Hyperborea"](#) [4] © Christophe Quintin; Creative Commons license (image has been cropped).
- ["Chemotherapie"](#) [5] © Gerolf Nikolay; Creative Commons license (image has been cropped).
- ["Frozen"](#) [6] © AJC Photography; Creative Commons license.



Cynthia Neely is the 2011 winner of the Hazel Lipa Prize for Poetry, a chapbook contest for *Broken Water*, published by *Flyway: Journal of Writing and Environment*. Her critical work has appeared in the *Writer's Chronicle*, and her poems are in numerous print and online journals, including *Bellevue Literary Review*, *Crab Creek Review*, *Naugatuck River Review*, and [Terrain.org](http://Terrain.org) [7], and in several anthologies. Her full-length book of poetry, *Flight Path*, was published in 2014 as a finalist in the Aldrich Press book contest.

On the hybrid nature of her piece, she says:

In 'Hopewell Bay,' I have juxtaposed poetry with prose, imagery with information, and fervency with matter-of-fact reportage. The juxtapositions are made in a fragmented fashion, with no type of linking structure. These fragments are intended to mimic the fractured nature of the experience the poem describes.

**Source URL:** <https://mail.talkingwriting.com/hopewell-bay>

### Links:

- [1] <https://mail.talkingwriting.com/hopewell-bay>
- [2] <https://mail.talkingwriting.com/talkingwriting-categories/featured-poetry>
- [3] <https://mail.talkingwriting.com/tw-channels-and-categories/grief>
- [4] <https://www.flickr.com/photos/34878947@N04/9477892357/>
- [5] <https://www.flickr.com/photos/gmf-productions/4585501828/>
- [6] <https://www.flickr.com/photos/ajc1/15731816834/>
- [7] <http://www.terrain.org/>