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.
Cysplatinum (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

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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

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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.

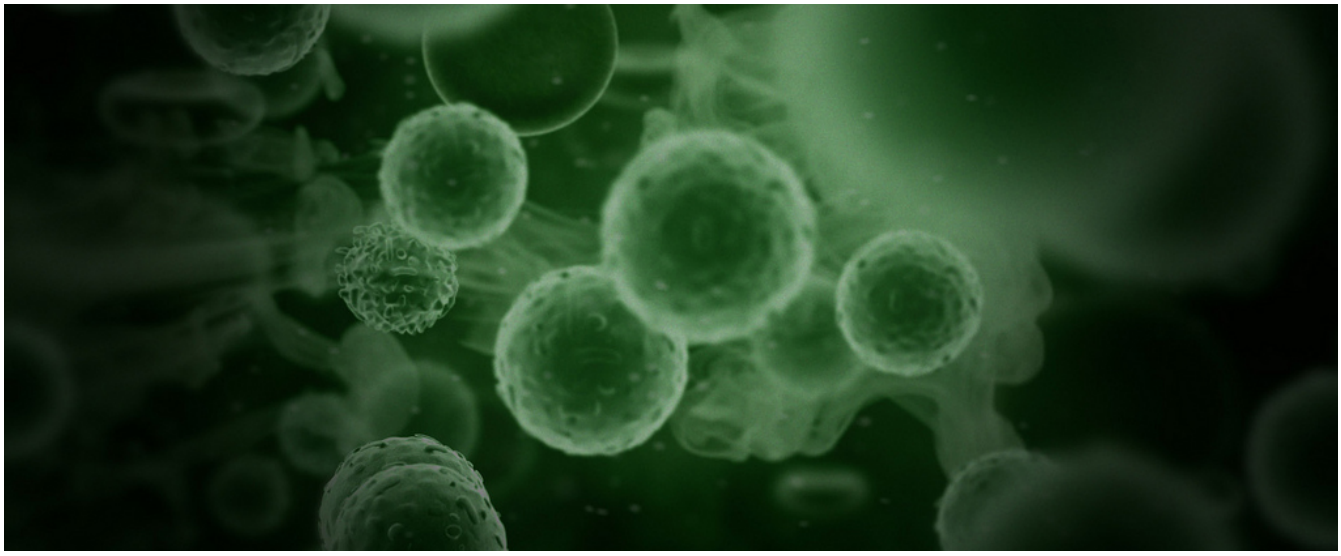
14.
There are at least five synonyms for grieving: regretting, mourning, lamenting, suffering, sorrowing. Sorrowing I love best. It sings like a saw—a poor man's viola.

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.

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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

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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

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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.



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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* [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.

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