

AFTER PHYLLIS WEBB'S POETICS AGAINST THE ANGEL OF DEATH

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*I am sorry to speak of death again
(some say I'll have a long life)
but last night Wordsworth's "Prelude"
suddenly made sense—I mean the measure,
the elevated tone, the attitude [...]*

Last night I thought I would not wake again

Dumb iamb—
I don't understand you, and feel so facile
in my thumb-stump stupor of plea:
your nobility is permission
to mourn, though I find myself
sorry to speak of death again

Webb & my mother share a Christian name
but Winnipeg took its toll on the latter;
I reread the emails about my grandmother
in the hospital, where kimo was chemo
and looked at my palms for clues
(some say I'll have a long life)

When my dad took us for bike rides
along the Ottawa River, I cried because
I didn't want to be seen in a helmet—
When the paths flooded every Spring
I felt mystic
*but last night Wordsworth's "Prelude"
suddenly made sense*

Why do I invoke anyone—
We think we are graceless, free immigrants
no relics to bear but memories
of Christmas dinner, and

I know I am not formless:

Last night I thought I would not wake again