

Now! Order your prepaid cremation!

Poetry in the [July 14, 2009](#) issue

I've seen the Kathmandu corpses,
garlanded with marigolds, burned
to a crisp, holy smoke sifting
across the river, censing the air for the tourists.
In Annapurna's narrow lap this valley,
chock full of bones, is too cramped
for burials. Instead, the dead are loaded onto
burn piles stacked with logs from the foothills,
now naked and eroding, pillaged for ceremony,
death gathering to itself more death
up the slow gradient of necessity.
Mourners chant. Mortality teaches
our ears, eyes, noses as the little boats of
skeletal ash and charcoal are launched,
freed from the funeral ghats,
to drift downstream.

Urged now to weigh the manner of
my final dispersal, I'm not
averse to incineration. But I confess
this foolish comfort: to lie beside my husband
in our grave—a double bed we chose together—
the full, aged remnant of the body he loved,
knowing heaven can pull together
from earth or urn, from bones or ashes,
whatever is needed for what's next.