

The Funeral

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I

We stop to cool my brother's steaming car:
No license plate, a hole in the roof,
a shattered rearview mirror—
missing or broken things I could prepare for.

But not this narrow lane, stone walls,
and the capped shepherd leveraging
his crook in the sloped sod,
whistling his collie to a gathering of the flock.

The car consents to start again,
all hissing and bumping gone.
Michael releases an unfinished cigarette, tossing it from his window.

II

Our mother lies in the bow of the small chapel.
To reach her, we must walk the center aisle,
abandon the darkness of the entrance.

We reach the front pew, but fail to dip one knee,
bow our heads, touch our fingers from forehead to chest,
to left and right shoulder.

We blink: This butter-yellow light,
the gold cloth, the violet delphiniums,
the white stock—nothing we could have hoped.

III

Turn and greet your neighbors!

He's not Father Chadwick or Father Mooney,
men both shy and alcoholic.
This priest stands tall, booms
against the snow-covered Pennines around us.

Still, we resist—a handful of jagged kin—
and in the pew behind,
three white-haired ladies.

C'mon on! Don't be stooffy.

We smile as we turn:

In her last hours, this man did not weave confusion,
but piloted her honestly, bravely, through her last despair.

- Theresa McCourt

repost on 3/14/16