

This Country of Gale-force Winds

Eileen Hennessy

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Eight things a day, that's all

they ask us to declare.
We know you have billions, they say.
So we take our places in the line
and say what words we can.
On the quiet side, there's
declaring to Customs,
declaring to a court,
declaring income for taxes.
There are also declarations
of intent and love and truth-telling,

but here
we're moving toward the wilder side,
a chilly wind blows, a white
plastic bag chatters along a path,
angels of the Lord declare,
Here's where you'll build your town.
So we take our places in the line
and pile word on word into houses,
build the stories we live by.
Out here. On this sandy coast.
In this country of gale-force winds.

Metamorphosis

Yesterday,
as if recently dead, I saw myself
passionate fruit, swinging
from the persimmon tree in my yard.

Then cut down, crumpled on the ground,
oxen tonguing me, head to foot,
until my body turned

round-eyed fish, breathless, marooned,
cooked, eaten, made flesh.
Slapping on the sand, I pray
for an incoming wave to carry me home.

Tomorrow,
I may be raving to the fishermen. Or
food for *their* fish. Operations
best performed in the morning,
when I have the whole day's dying before me.

Millennium

The ice will be wiped clean with a stroke of the pen. The past will be broken in a striking way. But even in this extraordinary time, encourage your children to understand and respect the importance of tradition and precedent. Let them stand on the letter of the law so that they will be tall enough to look out through the widow at the Promised Land. Open the window so that they can throw out one of their dolls and watch her fly through the air and land sprawled on the stoop, her legs spread wide, her torso twisted, her head turned up to look at the house, at the window, and at your children looking down at her and arguing the fine points of the ancient and honorable art of defenestration.

Doing bone time

is what comes of that toss of the dice
that ends with the 206 bones of the body
inventing stories to be told into the air,
straining to remember
the trees in the childhood back yard.
A bone is a report that an *I* was here,
scrabbled hard through its time,
ended in the ground,
good yard food for the dogs.
Bone time is the flow of us. Our feet rumble,
our fists chant, our bellies shake

in time with what's going on *now, here*
on the shifting earthplates honeycombed
with the cells where we live and work
above the billions of our ancestors
dispersed into the tissues of the land.
No matter our throw of the dice,
the ground quakes when it must,
the honeycomb cracks,
essence of forebear escapes upward
into the everyday smoke of our campfires,
the bones of our hard handsome race.