

Two Griefs

(for Hone)

Waiata Tangi

Stop it! Stop it!

I can hear you the length of the country:

the men mumbling,
the women weeping.

A man has died.
What did you expect?

It was his right.

Hine-nui-te-po!
Take heed!

The sky has designs.

Tie back your hair!
Unfold your legs!

Get busy!

He was flesh,
to flesh he must return.
There is no argument.

Forget the earth:
deep, black, hungry.

You are his soil.

Stretch wider.

Push! Urge! Shudder!

Between your thighs
his elegant cries,

startling the birds.

Oooohhhh!

Yeeaaahhhh!

Loovvveerrly!

Lament

Death is democratic, my friend.

You will like him.

Four o'clock is knock-off time anyway.

If it is all right with you
I will not go down to that coast
curling from your bach
like wood-smoke;

nor to that dour
church, in suit and tie.

Not even that sun-drenched field,
ripe with paspalum and cicada,
at the top of the long track appeals.

I will go to the beach
with my daughter instead.

She does not know of death,
only that the tide

comes in, goes out,
comes in, goes out.

We will look for you in passing;

a slurp of cloud,
a wink of light,

most likely in the taut corpulent body
of a black-backed gull gulping pipi.

Old words will arrive,
dressed faithfully, in black,

sit carefully in rows.

They will miss you most.

The language is bereft.

There is little else to say or do.
Stop by if you get the chance.

I feel unbowed at your death.

There has been a storm,
the sky obscured for a day or two.

When I look to the horizon
it has remained the same.

Ruapehu,
Taranaki

and you.

Glenn Colquhoun