

# 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.