

# NERIDA BACON

I propose a toast . . .

An exquisite chandelier.  
A breath-taking view.  
A room filled with dinner suits and dry kisses.  
Just one more pre-dinner drink  
And I am amiably equipped  
To brush surfaces in suitably circular motions.

Dinner is served.  
A dry white with the smoked salmon.  
A full-bodied red with the roast beef.  
The place card of the up and coming doctor is beside mine.  
He glows in the certainty of his success.  
My glow is in my next glass.  
He listens to my chatter with a tolerant smile:  
Having been warned of my whimsicality.

Meanwhile, the others of his profession:  
These Godsend's; these noble men; these crazy scientists  
Have cut and stitched a man I love for the last time.  
They have exhausted their ingenuity.  
There are no more new tricks to keep the dead alive.  
No more cheap, voyeuristic thrills in the spread of cancer.  
The relentless tampering of their gloved fingers  
Has brought nothing but new pain to the old.  
It is as if their responsibility  
Is to make death worth dying for.  
A body barely alive  
Lies soaked up in morphine  
Waiting for a death long overdue.

. . . to mercy killing.