

PHILOSOPHER AT A FUNERAL

Askold Skalsky

After her spiral romp with bad infinities,
the open casket shifts her into absolute
lack of clarity and missed insights,
gone like Nefertiti's eyeball,
lips thrummed with dark roses
beside the double-breasted shroud,
the unsophisticated absence of breath
visible in the chest while mourners
trail their fingers across polished oak,
letting doubtful premises lead her
to unavoidable conclusions,
shut doors into which she collapses
like an unhooked hinge,
squeezing her face into a veil
and calling on helpful spritis,
whiskey and Valium—paladins of the soul
where everything turns mysterious
like a blue light bulb.
Someone helps her stand,
guides her to an anonymous chair,
like a confessional, muttering
We are what you see—
a hand, a skullbone, twining vein,
inseparable from unexpected endings,
and abashed.