

to help you face the hard slog  
 through terrain somehow familiar,  
 yet never as dark as now:  
 to feel the danger, how it stabs,  
 needles, scalpels,  
 sting of chemotherapy,  
 experimental, clinical trial, a tribulation  
 last-ditch effort, white flag to dis/ease;  
 or maybe you take an alternative route,  
 you'll try anything now,  
 caffeine-enema herbs homeopathy organic  
     roughage  
 vitamins tinctures teas tisanes so foul-tasting  
 you choke, but still,  
 you down them, desperate,  
 sorry now for every burger, French fry you  
     ever ate  
 (or maybe it was that time they sprayed the  
     forest  
 where you played as a girl, infusion of pesticide,  
 a trade-off for a summer free of mosquitoes).  
 anyway, now does it matter  
 the cause or whom to blame,  
 having come this far, suffered so much?  
 deep deep hurt, spreading until  
 pain is a cloak you wear,  
 weighs you down, stifles breath,  
 as you move with slow precision  
 toward a distant shore  
 where light and dark mingle,  
 where you hold tight  
 even as you let go,  
 where you fight  
 even as you surrender,  
 where the only recurrence  
 you really care about  
 is this (Repeat after me):  
 love, loss, love, loss,  
 love, loss, love, loss:  
 Love.

*Mary Trafford's poetry appears earlier in this volume.*

## DIANE DRIEDGER

### Cancer Treatment

One long list  
 To administer  
 To remember

2 surgeries  
 2 general anesthetics  
 1 drain  
 hanging out my side  
 1 breast surgeon  
 2 oncologists  
 4 and a half months of chemo  
 every 3 weeks  
 6 treatments in all  
 6 weeks of radiation

through it all I needed  
 1 emotional bulletproof vest

*Diane Driedger's poetry appears earlier in this volume.*



*Diane Driedger, "Cancerlilies," 2008, watercolour, 22" x 30".*