

WE DON'T ACCEPT THE INEVITABILITY

We are the delay factors,
the stumbling blocks.

We are the interventions,
the vigilance.

We are the artwork on the walls
of single rooms bright with colour

and no curtain rails.

ESCARPMENT

'A long cliff that occurs from erosion or faulting and separates two relatively level areas of differing elevations. One side (the scarp) is steep; the other (the dip slope) is flatter and tilts at a continuous angle.'

This is your eroding dip slope,
a seemingly gentle rise.

As you plod up it,
a modern-day Sisyphus,

family throw themselves down
to trip you; friends hold you;

colleagues clutch to your sleeves;
strangers try to stop your journey

well before the scarp edge,
the precipice where gravity

siren-calls to you.

Along its windy crest
figures join hands,

a paperchain fence of:
statistics and research papers,

probabilities and risk factors,
and a single wind-blown poster

with The Samaritans phone number.

THE DIALECTIC OF PREVENTION

No-one likes to wait, we hate
delay. Trains running late,

flights missing their slot,
buses missed by milliseconds

our arms a whirling semaphore
of fury. But to delay you –

that is our idea. To give you...
pause – this is our aim.

We want to be like the wind
that caught the crinolines

of Sarah Ann Henley, that lovelorn
barmaid on her Severn leap.

We want to land her again
safe in thick mud;

fill her with strong tea
in the railway refreshment room;

load her bed covers
with offers of matrimony;

be at her marriage; see her through
another 63 years of life.

SARAH ANN HENLEY WORK-SHADOWS THE SUICIDE TSAR

We know there is a continuum
of risk factors – a gradually rising slope,
ending in a precipice.

Along its windy crest we join hands:
a paperchain of figures, of research papers,
probabilities, a complexity of interactions.

We try to create in you the gravitational pull
of carrots: of being wanted; of having your place
here with us – the living; that you are loved.

And we are shameless – we'll use
thorny sticks too: that insistent tug
of duty, your fear of pain, your terror

of it not working – of you being left
vegetable. And we'll brandish the hurt
you'll sear – forever – into others.

If nowt else works (though it goes
against our grain) we'll even call in religion
if it will help... Help keep you here:

till your weather clears; the breeze
re-sets your sails; and lifts
your face to the sun.