

## Buff Whitman-Bradley

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### Cremation

“The undiscovered country from whose bourn/No traveller returns . . .”  
*Hamlet*, Act III, Scene I – William Shakespeare

Arriving in the mail today  
A promotional brochure  
Offering me  
A reduced rate  
On cremation.  
It is not the first time  
That I have received such mail  
And each time  
I make light of it  
And crack a feeble little joke  
About my inescapable demise.  
But having recently endured  
Surgery and radiation treatment  
For cancer  
This time I hesitated  
Before tossing the mailer  
Into the recycling  
And for the first time thought  
*Well maybe I should look into this.*  
It would be the responsible thing to do  
Making arrangements and pre-paying  
For my incineration  
To save my loved ones  
The trouble of scrambling around  
At the last minute  
To find a suitable crematorium  
While my body grows cold  
Lying in a rented hospital bed  
By the large windows  
In the living room.  
It could be my final act of generosity  
When they look through my papers  
And discover to their relief –  
*Oh look, he's already taken care of it.*  
*Here's the number to call.*  
So instead of having to careen  
Through the yellow pages  
They would be able  
To spend a few quiet moments with me  
In the profound pause

Following my final breath  
Before we head off in our separate directions –  
They to the bustle of the noisy world  
And I to the stillness  
Of the undiscovered country.

**Buff Whitman-Bradley's** poetry has appeared in many print and online journals, including *Atlanta Review*, *Bryant Literary Review*, *Concho River Review*, *Crannog*, *december*, *Hawai'i Review*, *Pinyon*, *Rockhurst Review*, *Solstice*, *Third Wednesday*, *Watershed Review*, and others. He has published several collections of poems, most recently, *Cancer Cantata*, poems written during his treatment for cancer in 2016. His interviews with soldiers who refused to fight in Iraq and Afghanistan became the book *About Face: Military Resisters Turn Against War*. He lives in northern California with his wife Cynthia.