

Olga Balema

*Formulas*

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‘Here it’s as if he’s found the essence of form itself — it can generate dimensionality out of nothing, out of repetition, out of fusion, even out of its own barrenness...’

‘The thing about trees is that they know what to do. When a leaf loses its color, it’s not because its time is up and it’s dying, it’s because the tree is taking back into itself the nutrients the leaf’s been holding in reserve for it, out there on the twig, and why leaves change color in autumn is because the tree is preparing for winter, it’s filling itself with its own stored health so it can withstand the season. Then, clever tree, it literally pushes the used leaf off with the growth that’s coming behind it. But because that growth has to protect itself through winter too, the tree fills the little wound in its branch or twig where the leaf was with a protective corky stuff that seals it against cold and bacteria.’

‘Edges involve extremes. Edges are borders. Edges are very much about identity, about who you are. Crossing a border is not a simple thing. Geopolitically getting anywhere round the world in which we live now requires a constant producing of proof of identity. Who are you? You can’t cross til we’re sure. When we know, then we’ll decide if you can or not.

Edge is the difference between one thing and another. It’s the brink. It suggests keenness and suggests sharpness. It can wound. It can cut. It’s the blade — but it’s the blunt part of the knife too.

It’s the place where two sides of a solid thing come together. It means bitterness and it means irritability, edginess, and it means having the edge, having the advantage. It’s something we can go right over...

Edges are magic, too; there is a kind of forbidden magic on the borders of things, always a ceremony of crossing over, even if we ignore it or are unaware of it... In the eighteenth century people found that standing on the edge of a cliff or a sheer drop was a very good way to view what became known as the sublime; a hundred years later Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote about the edge as a force of psychological sublimity, how ‘the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall / Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed...’ for the notion of edge is double edged, involves notions of survival and a natural proximity to words like over the.’

— from *Artful* by Ali Smith

