

NANCY EIMERS

Diners

She her face bereft
 of grammar
(wanting its breakfast
 not remembering
 to open its mouth)

is a veil (*velum*, a sail, a female
 covering),
opacity worn
 over the self
 instead of netting, say,

or silk so stirred by breath
 and almost
breath itself.
 Some tissues up her sleeve
 must feel soft

an answer not to anything.
 Lean forward.
You're not listening
 (he talks that way to her).
 He feeds her

eggs, reminding her with a fork
 to be a child

if not a wife
 whose hair no one
 has "done"

into a shapely woman's
hive or dome;
such clumps and puffs!
To be merely feminine
as the gender of a star or time

the Latin *stella* and the German *Zeit*,
to "take the veil,"
to be alone in there
She looks exhausted
far beyond surprise

no tears no *womanly*
across a marriage
booth at Theo and Stacy's Diner
no friendship, long
after no string pulls taut

between their eyes—