

Stinging Nettle

—For Margaret Avison

by Ken Babstock

Is there a patron saint of severe
falls? I began in that mode. But
I was constructing Satan's niche.

An enclave set into the structure
from where He might monitor
progress. Down a flight of stairs.

Down three flights of stairs.
The skull re-stapled or X-rayed.
Flowering sage is pure scent

plus violet. In His niche He picks
His nose and excels at pure math.
The shibari can always come

after the sherbet. From where
to where?—
I understand up to the point

I no longer do, and my spade
is turned. Warmer, actually, inside
the crypt than on the grounds

of the November kirk. Emotion
isn't feeling but the ground
of what's possible, where ground

flags this planet's limits. We've
agreed You is an Other, but
civilization demands a third

object writhe between us. A whole
new cashmere wardrobe
requires its own new chest freezer.

As Marvel knows well, you
can make a funny man fit but
you can't make a fit man funny,

just as Marvell well knew, you
can make a republican blind but
you can't blind a republican to

the narrative worth of the fallen.