

**In the Year of 75 - 2015**



*Old age superbly rising! Ineffable grace of dying days!*

**Walt Whitman**

*It comes so soon, the moment when there is nothing left to wait for.*

**Marcel Proust**

**Naomi Weiss Barber**

**July 17, 1940 -**

***Yourself: mad Ireland hurt you into poetry.***

*W.H. Auden In Memory of W.B. Yeats*

***Who would be you and what would you do if you weren't afraid?***

*David Brooks, NY Times column "Lady Gaga and the Life of Passion" 10/23/15*

### **Breaking dreams into daylight**

Remembering dreams  
Waiting for me to recall  
Dormant hibernating  
Scrambling for daylight  
Somber sad solemn  
Watching them  
Tumble to daylight  
So long unremembered  
Left to languor  
In some subterranean  
Part of my soul  
Sunlight sun bright  
Bringing to light  
Denied me  
A star to guide me  
Day's treachery  
Start anew  
No premonition  
No wish upon a star  
Abandoned night lifting  
Left with a day  
Bereft of informed self  
The past throbbed to enlighten  
With the sun exposed  
To the day's treachery  
Never a dream  
To forewarn or to shape  
The breadth of what was  
Left unremembered  
Shattering and breathtaking

NB

***Thrombosed bulges, throbbing clots*** – my mother’s hindquarter was always a veiny maze, a varicose labyrinth, though not just hers: weighty were the bases of all the women in my family, my mother’s family. My grandmother, my great- grandmother, every aunt and cousin – Holocaust fodder. Heavy Jewesses, thickly rooted Jewesses, each swinging a single pendulous braid. Joshua Cohen, “Book of Numbers”

### **Grandma Lighting Candles**

Sabbath cupping face  
Swaying over flames  
Braid sashaying  
Down her back  
Incantations of  
Solemn mournful chants  
Spiriting the candles  
Evanescent glow

NB

***When every day is a ‘radiant capsule of time.*** Hilary Masters, poet (son, Edgar Lee Masters)

***The key to life is resilience.*** Dominique Browning

***There’s something missing in survival as a reason for being you know?*** Joan Didion

***People only have the despair they can afford....***Michael Peppiatt , Francis Bacon in *Your Book*

***The pitiful old man at my computer pecking away, cooing spring – talking to himself again as he strolls down Broadway in the rain.*** Fred Seidel , Poet

***Enough decades and a body slowly twists into one great cramp.***  
***Lauren Groff, Fates and Furies***



***Sentimentality, the ostentatious parading of excessive and spurious emotion, is the mark of dishonesty, the inability to feel.***

***The wet eyes of the sentimentalist betray his aversion to experience, his fear of life, his arid heart.***

***James Baldwin, "Everybody's Protest Novel" (discussing "Uncle's Tome's Cabin")***

.....

***Life is not about avoiding suffering. It is about creating meaning.***

***He didn't die until he died.***

***It took everything we had to cope, but it was also like we could ultimately find meaning, which was amazing. That was because he could write this book. I think there would have been more existential suffering if he didn't have a purpose.***

***Lucy Kalanithi, wife of Paul Kalanithi, "When Breath Becomes Air"***

## **Dr. Ezekiel Emanuel**

Dr. Ezekiel Emanuel  
Thinks we have had  
Enough life  
Lived long enough  
At 75  
Says he we shouldn't  
Stuff up the atmosphere  
Clog up the medical system  
75 is the right time to die

Snake charm  
Pneumonia's draw  
Last breathes  
Raw unkempt  
Lung's collapse  
Death's cupping hand  
Die talking sense  
Relishing the night breeze  
Remembering  
More than regret  
Lying down finally in  
Soft Egyptian cotton sheets  
Poignantly aware  
Life's final draw down  
Time eviscerating  
As the you of you  
Vacates vanishes disappears

NB

***Gloria Steinem linked her feminism to the story of her mother, a pioneering female journalist who suffered from mental illness and constricting feminist roles. It was her father who gave her the courage to cur her own unconventional path. Both my mother and father paid a high price for lives out of balance. Yet at least my father had been able to choose his own journey.***

*NYTimes 11/11/15*

**"Even in its darkest passages, the heart is unconquerable,"**

**Dave Pelzer writes in *A Child Called It*.**

**Why I Hope to Die at 75 –excerpts Ezekiel J. Emanuel, “The Atlantic” /10/14**

*An argument that society and families—and you—will be better off if nature takes its course swiftly and promptly.*

*Seventy-five. That’s how long I want to live: 75 years. Dying at 75 will not be a tragedy.*

*When parents live to 75, children have had the joys of a rich relationship with their parents, but also have enough time for their own lives, out of their parents’ shadows.*

*But there is something even more important than parental shadowing: memories. How do we want to be remembered by our children and grandchildren? We wish our children to remember us in our prime. Active, vigorous, engaged, animated, astute, enthusiastic, funny, warm, loving. Not stooped and sluggish, forgetful and repetitive, constantly asking, “What did she say?” We want to be remembered as independent, not experienced as burdens.*

*Once I have lived to 75, my approach to my health care will completely change. I won’t actively end my life. But I won’t try to prolong it, either. Today, when the doctor recommends a test or treatment, especially one that will extend our lives, it becomes incumbent upon us to give a good reason why we don’t want it. The momentum of medicine and family means we will almost invariably get it.*

*My attitude flips this default on its head. I take guidance from what Sir William Osler wrote in his classic turn-of-the-century medical textbook, The Principles and Practice of Medicine: “Pneumonia may well be called the friend of the aged. Taken off by it in an acute, short, not often painful illness, the old man escapes those ‘cold gradations of decay’ so distressing to himself and to his friends.”*

*Once I have lived to 75, my approach to my health care will completely change. I won’t actively end my life. But I won’t try to prolong it, either.*

*Ezekiel J. Emanuel*

**Now I Am 75**

**I am 75 75 75 75 75 75 75 75 75 75**

You are what? 75 75 75 75 75 75 75

I am 75 75 75 75 75 75 75 75 75 75

No longer obliged to keep truckin’

To keep alive

I am 75 75 75 75 75 75 75 75

You are what? 75

Time to die – gone my mile

Had my life my cup runneth...

I am 75 75 75 75 75 75 75 75

Yahwey! Amen! Hallelujah!

NB b. 7/17/40 – Today 10/21/15

Wondering when the end should come...

*...the old man at my computer pecking away, cooing spring...Frederick Seidel, poet*

## **Template**

Influencer

Affirmer

Tacit

Supporter

My birthday

About

40 days away

From June 2 to July 17

40 a seminal

Totemic number

Endowed

By the creator

Biblical judicial

Radical number

Reconciliation

Slavery

Reclamation

40 days left

To contemplate

Enter the chamber

The final hours

Bequeathed by grace

Steeped in conflict

How?

Not when or why

To die to die to die

End life – 40 days

Left to decide

NB

*"In Search of Poetry"*

1. *"Don't write poems about what happened."*
2. *"Don't tell me your feelings," because what you think and feel is not yet poetry."*
3. *"Don't reconstruct / your gloomy, long-buried childhood."*
4. *"Don't shift back and forth between / the mirror and your fading memory."*

.....  
*This landscape? It doesn't exist.  
What exists  
is vacant space, to be planted  
with landscape retrospectively.*

*Carlos Drummond de Andrade, poet, How to Make a Landscape*

**Ode to the Number 40**

*Matthew 4:1-3* "Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting **forty days and forty nights**, he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him."

*Joshua 5:6* "For the people of Israel **walked forty years in the wilderness**, until all the nation, the men of war who came out of Egypt, perished, because they did not obey the voice of the LORD; the LORD swore to them that he would not let them see the land that the LORD had sworn to their fathers to give to us, a land flowing with milk and honey."

*Exodus 34:27-28* "And the Lord said to Moses, "Write these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel." So he was there with the Lord **forty days and forty nights**. He neither ate bread nor drank water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments."

*Genesis 7:12* "And rain fell upon the earth **forty days and forty nights**."

**Forty Acres and A Mule**

*From that meeting came Gen. William T. Sherman's Special Field Order 15. It set aside land along the Southeast coast so that "each family shall have a plot of not more than **forty acres of tillable ground**."*

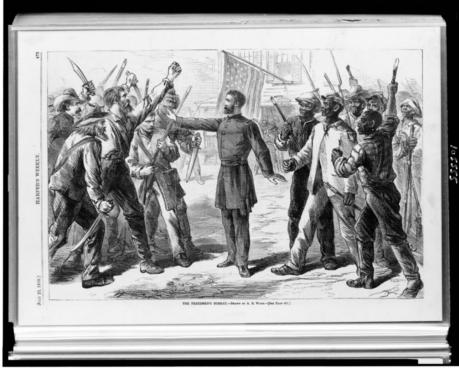
*That plan later became known by a signature phrase: "**40 acres and a mule**."*



*Four days later, Sherman signed Field Order 15, setting aside 400,000 acres of confiscated Confederate land for freed slaves. Sherman appointed Brig. Gen. Rufus Saxton to divide up the land, **giving each family up to 40 acres.***

*And it wasn't in the order but some also received leftover Army mules. "But it became known as of Jan. 16, 1865, as '**40 acres and a mule,**'*

*"The Story Behind '40 Acres And A Mule'" Sarah McCammon NPR 1/12/15*



***He really understands women** who are dealing with getting older, and all the loss that we face – 'I had this dream; I thought I had all this time; How did it all slip through my fingers.'*

*For women, that is a profound thing that happens, because it happens earlier – our work and our youth and our beauty carry us through life, and when that starts to go away, what are we left with if we haven't built up an inner life and figured out what we really wanted?"*

*Kyra Sedgwick, commenting on playwright William Inge's (Off the Main Road)*

***So much of life was the peeling away of illusions.***

**Matthew Thomas "We Are Not Ourselves"**

## Dangling Participle

Aftermath afterthought  
The comma at the end  
Of cordiality  
I am appended  
A dangler  
Gangplank of friendship  
Slipped shoved off  
Afterthought courtesy  
*Other eyes I use for fuel*  
Blinkers or cataracts  
Hazy glazed over  
A quick kiss both cheeks  
Dangling participle  
Friendship conversation  
Feigned confessional booth  
Was it to me to cultivate  
To groom bloom friendship  
Arrogantly ardently aridly  
Built to be solitary alone  
Needing nobody no one  
Almost cultish  
And now defining  
The day of final reckoning  
Edges ever closer  
The bitter juices  
Of decisions and choices  
Rumble a reckoning  
Often view others contemptuously  
Elevate myself stealth salvager  
Relish secrets miss-steps  
Friendship savagery  
Poke flout faults  
Find relief in negation  
Loneliness solitariness  
Spit shined alabaster  
Totemic honor  
Future with possibility  
No longer promised

Aghast I read life all wrong  
Needing no one ever never  
Love ambiguous totemic craven  
Forbidding hunger craving too great  
I've come to desire quench my thirst

Saturate salvage my soul  
Throw caution to the wind  
Date with death consecrate

Dangling participle  
Made myself irrelevant  
Armored with salacious contempt  
Mentally meanly evening up the score  
*Others eyes I used for fuel*  
Reckoning reconciling  
Human desire need  
For friendship love  
Dying knowing  
I just missed the boat  
*Sailing off to Byzantium alone*  
Stunned my appetite too great  
To risk expression  
Thrashing crashing craven  
My desire for the other  
Time to forgive myself  
For being fraught frightened  
Remaining solitary unloved  
Going forward  
In the illuminating final darkness  
I know I built myself this way  
And this is how I will in perpetuity stay

NB

**Ending in a shaft of wilt.**

**NB**

## His Cock Went Hard

His cock went hard  
His lips went surly  
This small man  
Towered with the swell  
Rising up rearing  
A stalking stallion  
Still the vagrant  
Ghost gagging reflexive  
Wooing with the swelling

How to make peace  
To accept the fact  
That I let this teeny tiny  
Cock squirting man  
Bathe anoint me  
In salty slimy briny spray  
Promises allure  
Now so distant from yes  
Avert turn away deny  
Submitted in virginal swoon  
Disjointed cracked crooked eyed  
Crazy faced desperate hearted  
Spread batwing legs  
Derivative in the glooming

*We settle a dark peace this morning. The sun is too sad to show itself. Let's go, to talk about these sad things some more. Some will be pardoned, and some will be punished. There was never a story more full of pain than the story of Romeo and Juliet. (Shakespeare)*

If only love had found its way  
To this bedding down  
The desperation depicted in  
Woman with cockamamie face  
Inglorious ignominious reflection  
Invasive reprobate reproduction  
Concocted vision version of me  
Concomitant committed immortal  
Rendered swirling in ancient  
Residual occupying consciousness  
I am of that ilk that mold  
Hideous *Woman V* tribal woman  
Inhabiting de Kooning's mind



de Kooning *Woman V*

Time to bring  
This errant woman-girl  
Back inside  
Death won't abide  
This self's divide  
Unquiet my lips  
Repent vagrant heart  
Lapsed moments  
Of unease diseased  
*How could you*  
I ask myself  
A meticulous  
Continuo of woe  
Jazz riffs improvised  
Terrorized crumpled  
Will-less fallen  
Macerated leaf  
Seizing life back  
Panting hyperventilating  
Brazen execution  
Machination  
Incarcerated wife escapes  
Labyrinth libertine  
Swivels in opulent desk chair  
Wife walks out  
Leaving behind objects  
If not heart and mind  
With cello piano  
Clothing and jewelry  
Theatric fictive

Long slog to  
Marriage break-up  
Heroics blunted  
Shucked given up  
Freedom independence  
In a flighty game  
Of strip poker  
Wobbled hobbled  
Screwed fucked up  
Grass stains  
Residue of consent  
Pang pain ending  
So errantly new beginning  
Submitted to bogus  
Concocted mocking  
Rooky cock of the walk  
My life given away  
In sleek orchestrated  
Misadventure  
Shucked like corn  
Guts torn out  
Handily by butcher's son  
Indentured once again  
For another seventeen years  
Livid and forlorn  
Numb disjointed asleep  
*Rip Van Winkle* disappeared  
Nigh twenty years  
So much of my life  
I have remained  
Numb dumb squelched  
A firefly in jar without holes  
Chronicling myself victimized  
Seventeen years since  
The next big walkout  
A slipknot of time gone  
Chastened remorse  
Iron fisted unrelenting  
Holding the hand now  
Of a twenty-seven year old  
Our son our foundling  
Foundry metallurgy  
Decision caste in bronze  
Miraculous virgin birth  
Mounted this infant  
Into our misbegotten arms

This rank unfathomable coupling  
The stallion father  
Crumpled impotent incontinent  
Echolalia emotions  
Scatological vent  
*I did the best I could*  
My stomach knotting  
Turmoil nausea gag  
*I am not perfect*  
*People make mistakes*  
I don't know this man  
Making amends  
As if prayers  
As if bent against  
A confessional booth  
Life in the paranormal  
The conditional  
Time eclipsed  
Ellipsis of soul betrayed  
Tone deaf to its plea  
Sold off my life  
On a rubbing of stone  
A promise of eternal youth  
The stallion mounted  
I stayed hidden  
Gone afterglow  
Of subversive perverse  
Lovemaking, which yielded  
An infant a swaddling  
Ripped from the branch  
Of a jungle rainforest tree

Condition of death  
To forgive myself  
Getting twisted up  
Tongue stumbling  
Propulsive irascible  
Raptor lashing attacking  
Conscienceless man  
Forgive and forget  
Or cut out my tongue  
Mute as an Ellen Jamesian (*World According to Garp* John Irving)  
If my heart persists  
Totemic beats  
For remembering  
Buttressed past

Unforgiving blunders  
Bitter ashamed  
How I lay down  
For a man whom  
I then took as husband  
Now on opposite  
Sides of a hospital bed  
Watching our foundling  
Twenty-seven  
Half his stomach missing  
Tears flood face  
Inordinate suffering  
Surly man small man  
Riling me up  
Unsightly unseemly  
Time for a post-mortem  
Shedding pretext  
Dismembering your heart  
Repulsed reviled  
You turn my stomach  
Twist up my mind  
No longer nimble  
Frayed chunked dissembling  
Compartmentalizing  
Remembering  
I was that woman who  
With two feet extended  
Jumped into that landmine

I did submit once  
To his throbbing cock  
His barbing lips  
The father of our foundling  
The heat of the earth deep within  
Is small compared  
To my hearts crushing love  
For this founding  
Perforce must quiet mute  
The murderous vitriol  
Rising to warring words  
Readying to attack  
The boy in the bed  
Limp with dread of dying  
Wants his found mother and father  
To quell quiet their mounting fury  
To clip the barbing retributive tongue



Remembering I chose him  
I took him as husband  
We brokered for an abandoned baby  
To serve to be our son  
No retakes no remakes no embellishments  
I lifted my skirt left the door ajar  
Once again taking leave  
Stepping outside myself  
The baby born of this tomfoolery  
A boy our son his intestines twisted mangled  
Obsessively dreaming of food  
Body repulsed upon its entering  
Watch how we are dangled  
On the devil's pitchfork  
Taunted tormented  
Grand seduction for our grand gesture  
And it's utter conjuring harming ruthlessness  
**NB**

### **Mother is a Marriage Wrecking Ball**

Dragon fire dooming wedding vows  
To disavow abjure abdicate  
The sacred sanctimonious sacraments  
*Till death do us part*  
Death an existential blip on truth slaying lips  
We have come full circle marriages aborted  
Legacy detritus shredded marriage vows  
No attempt to recuse myself  
Now to temper blame  
So that it does not become another  
Guilt riddled self-indulgent bonbon  
The hurtling wrecking ball  
Swung by my hands grafted from my body  
*It is an ill wind that blows nobody any good*  
Torrential tumultuous life  
Struggling to suffice needing no one  
Trapped alone in an *Orgone box*  
Fear the salacious seductive  
Preoccupies intractable daydream  
My granddaughter Willa scrutinizes  
My face my teeth my words  
Skeptical about trusting entrusting

Anomic nomad at ten she knows  
Woof and warp of my past  
We are a family of walker outers  
Her mother now leaves a marriage  
Three kids follow breadcrumb paths  
Which road, which home  
Never consecutive beds in duo of nights  
I am the architect of this inevitability  
My oldest son's wife has served him  
Stuck in his hand struck like lightning  
The court to enforce her walking out  
It was sadly inevitable  
In the tealeaves in that star struck  
Tenuous prepossessing moment of *I do*

I watched my granddaughter Willa  
With her best cold shoulder for me  
Hug her father around the knees  
With an ease that was discomfiting  
Her face pressed like a prim rose  
Against his zipper his fly  
With a wry eye she caught a glimpse  
Of my watching this unguarded moment  
And there goes my 14 granddaughter  
Out to shoot basketballs with her father  
The man we steely caste as unruly monster  
My granddaughter served as surrogate wife  
Her father's very own concubine  
Daughter wife, ultimately will be abandoned by dad  
Her mother Houdini disappearances  
By default had her stand-in an understudy  
My daughter demonstrates a daunting resolve  
To walk out leave her marriage behind  
This an instant replay  
Of my leaving walking out on her father  
It's in the bones we gut wrench to survive  
Promising giving ourselves over to whip lashing  
Individuals who perpetuate our need for victimization  
Copycat clones cut form the same fearful cloth  
I wrote the script replaying re-enacting ending a marriage  
Inevitable no breaking with the past  
Wondering in the dim of my life  
In which generation does true enduring love come  
My eldest son up to his ears thrombotic beating of his heart  
His sociopathic alcoholic wife dances over him *Zumba* style  
Sundays at an Episcopal Church he prays for his three children

When divorcing his father the devil served as co-signatory  
Biblical rumination pre-ordains this heartbreak  
*God will by no means clear the guilty,  
Visiting the iniquity of the fathers  
On the children to the third and the fourth generations (Bible 14:18)*  
This inevitable bedrock of grief  
I am the mother hen who gave provenance  
Firstborn son and daughter bent toward  
Abject decisions to spark love's slaughter  
I am the mother strapped into mantel of guilt  
Children gobsmacked stepped instinctively  
Into the thorn encrusted path of loveless marriage  
Unexpurgated history holds testimony  
Having a nose for finding three pathological narcissists  
Clinical sociopaths with overhang of personality disorders  
Crackling eardrum busting mockery  
Vanity of victimhood self-deluding gratification  
Marriages split apart particles atom splintering  
Finding the erotic moment in the departing *fuck you*  
Mother endows inevitable heartbreak divorce  
Children now grandchildren stranded  
Adrift afloat on broken vows moving from house to house  
Goodbyes hellos too much left at doorstep unspoken  
We each could never make it to an illuminating god faring *I do*  
When true love came to us reached for us we refused

NB

***I couldn't imagine that I would be living like this. Now in her late 70's, she will wait a little longer. I can't do anything more than kneel and pray.***

***Led by Mayor, a City Turns to Face Indonesia's Murderous Past,  
NY Times 7/13/15 "Palu Journal," Jeremy Kutner***

***She was hardly the first person to yearn to hurry death. The medieval text "Ars Moriendi" (The Art of Dying) call it "the sin of impatience." Katy Butler, The End NY Times Sunday 7/12/15***

**Proclamation: July 17, 2015**

On this day  
I have released myself  
From wandering atop  
The landmines  
Of my children's lives

Son of broken body  
Wild vaporous tempers  
Scary really  
Move to Cali or not  
Indeterminate  
His life in the crevices  
No fixes  
His roommate  
Or partner or girlfriend  
Is at points delusional  
A pathologic untruth teller  
Bent on tumultuous  
Swings of emotion  
From slumbering  
Deep depression  
To fomenting  
A plan to move  
Anything to keep  
My son captive  
Off-kilter off-tilt  
In his heart he knows  
He has to move on  
Will he hear  
Will he abide  
That inner voice

I have removed myself  
From speculating  
From worrying  
From wondering  
Having him near  
Is killing me  
Having him move away  
Will kill me as well  
He has been at my elbow  
Since his body failed him  
Time for new beginnings  
Life without being

In such close proximity  
No longer wanting  
To be mother deity

My daughter  
Again has her head  
In her raptor  
Father's mouth  
Webbed in his  
Pathologies  
Narcissist supreme  
She lives in a bubble  
Of contrivances  
Sunk in the mire  
Of anorexia alcoholism  
Anti-anxiety pill popping  
Corrections  
She comes from a stream  
Of women  
With eating disorders  
My mother frenzied  
Fetishizing food  
Preoccupation  
Redounding  
With forays  
Into astronomical  
Deceitfulness lying  
Not telling the truth  
Air born from  
Both branches of family  
Depicting herself  
As a good soul  
Sweet kind gentle  
Seething with  
Fierce rage  
And vengeance  
Compelled to  
Avenge a life  
She gave away  
To her husband  
To her father  
To me  
Sweet solipsistic lullabies  
Squandering parsing  
Juxtaposing self with other  
The most personal of pronouns

Denounced diminished  
Pawning herself off  
As a sweet and gentle soul  
Her hardness forms  
The sediment  
Upon which she stands  
Sweet kind gentle  
Projected through  
A gauzy scrim  
An alcoholic gaze  
Be he gay or straight  
She has slithered in  
As this man's mate  
The winning pot of gold  
At the end of his rainbow  
She has become a  
Lazy perplexed mother  
Checking off chores  
Overwhelmed overcome  
By what she wrought  
Perpetuating tenuous  
Connection to Daddy  
*As big bad wolf*  
*Whiskery breath*  
*Who's afraid of the big bad wolf*  
*The big bad wolf, the big bad wolf*  
*Who's afraid of the big bad wolf*  
*Tra la la la (Ann Ronell – Frank Churchill)*

Stubble stumble on a tune  
Climbing clinging to the trellis  
The omen bad guy bad father  
Gag on premonitions  
Fix his legacy to dying star  
Recumbent redolent redo  
Weaver warp and weft  
Insinuation embattling  
Promulgating  
Mad hatter confusion  
Blessing cataracts  
Blur vision mar illusion  
Stepping away  
Into other orbits  
Practicing departing  
Creating space distance  
Until slipping off unnoticed

For at least a day or two  
Enticing her to walk  
Forward toward  
Can't recover recoup  
What is lost  
By walking backward  
Time shoves us forward  
Marigold pods  
Blown hither and yon  
Little feathery merchants  
Of a future awakening

I am taking myself out  
Jaundiced mother glimpses  
Word projectiles  
Flash dancing condemnation  
Her finger a pileated



Pecking away at her smartphone  
She used to identify birds  
Catalogued in *Audubon*  
This before she could read  
A written word  
That girl now *of woman born*  
My body yielded this fruit  
Now so badly damaged  
Clad in drink drugs starvation  
Look hard this mom  
*Mother Courage*  
Removing her children  
From the dragon's fiery mouth  
From the pointed gun

From the threats  
To kill us if we left  
Broke up the home  
And he having  
Nothing left to lose  
Her future is writ in stone  
Ruthless relentless  
Her plan to move on  
Fixed in pretext  
Of gentleness kindness  
She is a fury aflame  
With rage  
Tempers unhinge her  
She is a fury  
On a rampage  
For which  
Her ill-formed husband  
Blinks a baby bird  
Awakening beak wide  
No worms no more  
Slithering in  
My daughter  
Has returned  
To being a *St. Bart's* girl  
Determined to bend  
The world to her will  
Momentum heats up  
No stopping now  
What she cooks up  
Recalcitrant warrior  
Savaging a past  
Sanctified by Indian Shaman  
Who tells her  
To be a leopard with distemper  
Willful harmed damaged child  
You were born to a mother  
Who vanished into marriage  
Three weeks after first date  
He had a gun  
He drew the circumference  
Of our lives suffocatingly tight  
It is clear the night I became  
Your dragon father's bride  
It was pre-ordained that  
My baby's eyes  
Would flutter open



As their hearts shut tight

My oldest child  
Lives tortured tormented  
In irrational panic and fear  
That he will be left  
By the woman he married  
Was destined to leave him  
Sub-conscious whispered  
Victimization inevitable  
Abandonment a certainty  
She a dangerous soul on the loose  
Her billionaire boyfriend a Canadian  
Was driving her mad  
As well as to Jewish lessons  
Promise of marriage vows  
Under a *Chuppa* said under his breath  
Time spent splitting wood chips  
She fled the billionaire's footprint  
Squarely on her rear  
She divined deep leagues of vulnerability  
In my son's ever wavering uncertainty  
Equivocation drove his great love away  
Nine lives cat survives  
Landing a duck on wavering waters  
*Whomever I am standing next to*  
*The day I want to start of family*  
*Is who I will marry* encapsulated in his  
Metastasizing aftershock of equivocation  
My son struck dumb blinded by her gaze  
He hangdog followed her to justice of the peace  
Stickers of hearts on the walls  
This was LA after all  
On their first anniversary  
He announced he was married  
For Jewish mothers  
No one is ever good enough  
To marry their sons  
But before me blind-sided blinded  
By the flash of recognition  
He had dredged up  
Yet another sociopath  
A pathological lying narcissist  
Sun scarred by her beauty  
Never believing his good fortune  
That this model ex tap dancer

Could fall for want to be with him  
Being unworthy is the escutcheon  
Upholding the tawdry weight  
Of the family crest  
My son undone unglued  
By her disingenuous rush  
Dangling jangling jarring  
Bundle of emotional dismemberment  
Bound him to her  
She rushed three children his way  
Each less than two years apart  
She answered  
His doomed heart's fateful call  
There she was  
Pylons for his weakened knees  
She was no more fit for motherhood  
Than mother gorilla wandering off  
Mewling baby squealing  
Mammaries swelled instincts lost  
Stealth vagrant liar thief  
Cunning manipulator  
A woman vacated by emotions  
Coolly coyly cloyingly stating  
That she had no friends  
Among the other mothers  
Because and I quote  
*She was too tall too pretty too thin*  
This in *Barbie Doll* nation of LA  
She was fraught she was make believe  
She was made up an impressive fiction  
My son foundering floundering drowning  
Still awe-struck by her beauty  
That she wanted me the subtext  
Refused to see to know  
What was before his eyes  
Restraint necessary when confronted  
By life's unwieldy incredible blunders  
Love struck awakened  
To love for his children thundering enfolding  
An internal uprising the gestation  
For love without condition entered him  
Rhyme or reason expanding gene pools  
The why of such disparate choosing unanswerable

*Too tall too pretty too thin*  
No longer had him blindsided

He stepped from the maze  
Of her entangling captivity  
Becoming mother father to his children  
Distemper seized her power ebbing  
Feet starting running  
Claiming *he ruined her emptied her out*  
In reality returning her  
To her natural sociopathic empty state  
Inevitability reigns freely in our family  
We will be walked out on abandoned  
Because we find ourselves  
Mired mucked up in lovelessness  
The petulant resolute past dictates  
We are driven toward  
Vile violent half-formed predators  
We are victims-in-waiting  
Safely ensconced in the aromatic allure  
Of sparring words to violate and defame  
How to move beyond hating ourselves  
For the harm we have wrought  
By our weak-kneed need for victimhood  
How to rise above the indeterminate ashes  
Of past degradation  
We keep on bumping into  
Our very own co-constructed *Nazi's*  
We create them  
From the threads of fear  
Irreconcilable repentance  
We have yet to confront  
Master our past  
Hydra headed intimidating  
Waiting...

This is the story retold reenacted  
My father his grandpa  
Enamored by his bride our mother  
Crazy as a loon  
Dangerous to her two children  
And yet his love  
Went on and on and on  
Look up look up  
Look who goes there  
*Beaudeful beaudeful Bluma*  
The chorus the continuo  
For our doom  
His sad eyes mournful expression

Told us he was helpless love struck  
Could not do otherwise

Cycles circles  
It goes around and around  
Today I walk off  
Into new territory  
No longer wanting to be preoccupied  
By my children's collective future  
Their handmade destinies  
Time to prepare dying  
With modicum of grace and dignity  
And at my own hand  
Without witness guide  
My preoccupation  
My dilemma  
Fixed on a point  
Beyond which there is no return  
I walk into the day  
Estranged from my past from motherhood  
Forming a new and necessary destiny  
I refuse to believe  
That it was I alone who destroyed them  
Shaped yes along with incursions of the past  
Way back we were displaced  
Dispossessed cracked broken  
The road never got us straight

NB

***Something struck me like lightning.*** All at once everything seemed to mean something different, more precisely: exile. This was what exile was like. This was what exile looked like.

S. Yizhar, "Khirbet Khizeh"

***When you have eliminated the impossible, then whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth.*** Sherlock Holmes

***This vivid image of the ardent girl*** as revealed by a faceless woman hints at the tangled snare of the past. An effort to shed an old self may simply make a person disappear.  
Amy Rowland, reviewer author of "The Transcriptionist" reviews

*"The Body Where I was Born" by Guadalupe Nettel*

***What we need is hatred.*** *From it our ideas are born. Jean Genet, "The Blacks"*

## **Hating**

I hate her hate her hate her hate her  
My gut busts with bile  
Hatred distorts twists up my smile  
She is vile and I hate her hate her hate her  
She has left a virtual backpack of explosives  
Three children she disregards  
Abdication as mother  
Who do she think she is - *Doris Lessing?*

*Lessing had an uneasy relationship for many years with her two eldest children John and Jean from her marriage to civil servant Frank Wisdom, which lasted from 1939 to 1943 while she was living in Rhodesia. She walked out on him, later claiming she had to escape 'the intolerable boredom of colonial circles', and left her two young children to live with him.*

*Doris Lessing: She had abandoned her children when they were very young, divorced her first husband.*

*Doris Lessing said: "There is no boredom like that of an intelligent woman who spends all day with a very small child. While it was a terrible thing to do, it was the right thing to do."*

Curdling milk internal agony  
Shame shock  
She blew and blew  
And the house came tumbling down  
She roared and he became supplicant  
Pleasing this Queen Bee  
Without qualm she deserving  
Devotion without condition  
Demagogue wife  
Agitator disruptor  
*Disturbia*  
Penury enslaved  
*Stockhausen syndrome*  
Capture-bonding  
Traumatic-bonding  
Morbidity  
Pink and fuzzy  
She glowered insulted punished  
Refused to greet him feed him  
Begged for more of more

Penitent  
Hoping for a better day  
Do more say more give more  
Fertilize the weed ro  
Yield flower or fruit  
Not just trouble  
Erratic leave  
Swirl out tidal wave  
Undercurrent  
Riptide of rage  
Tornado  
*Ill wind blowing no good*  
Incendiary flamethrower  
Deserter  
Tumultuous  
Lying thieving alcoholic sociopath  
Mascaraed prance dance deceit past  
Anorexic bulimic deceives cheats  
And that is what is good/human in her  
Wolf in sheep's clothing  
Pretty comely  
*Too tall to thin to pretty*  
To have or keep friends

Sociopath: a person with a personality disorder manifesting itself in extreme antisocial attitudes and behavior and a lack of conscience. *Sociopaths tend to be nervous and easily agitated. They are volatile and prone to emotional outbursts, including fits of rage. They are likely to be uneducated and live on the fringes of society, unable to hold down a steady job or stay in one place for very long. It is difficult but not impossible for sociopaths to form attachments with others. Many sociopaths are able to form an attachment to a particular individual or group, although they have no regard for society in general or its rules. In the eyes of others, sociopaths will appear to be very disturbed. Any crimes committed by a sociopath, including murder, will tend to be haphazard, disorganized and spontaneous rather than planned.*

*Sociopaths can be sexy and beguiling; they take risks the rest of us don't and come across as bold and exciting. Socially, they are often leaders, the life and soul of the party. The downside is that they regard others to be used, don't feel sympathy, empathy or guilt, and are often one step away from becoming what psychologists used to call psychopaths: criminally vindictive types whose only motivation is to take advantage of weaker people. The first researcher to name the concept of psychopathy was Dr. Hervey Cleckley in 1941. Cleckley noted that psychopathy was difficult to diagnose precisely because it presents itself without the obvious symptoms of mental disorder. Psychopaths and sociopaths are often a bit too rational.*

Abdicate surrender abandon abnegate abjure  
Who do you think you are  
Who the hell do you think you are  
*Doris Lessing*  
Will your womb yield the *Golden Notebooks*

Whore bulimic anorexic alcoholic sociopath  
The mother of three of my grandchildren  
My son was reeled in  
*She is so pretty* subtext  
Why would such a pretty woman want me  
Did you not see the ugliness  
The dragon fire the forked tongue  
Predator reptilian menace  
Old as time vamp woman  
Who do you think you are  
Who the hell do you think you are  
You goddamn bitch  
Wife mother of our three children  
Who the fuck do you think you are  
I've had enough  
This man's mother's fingers crossed  
This song swings us into reality

NB

***No, I can't take one more step towards you***  
*'Cause all that's waiting is regret*  
*And don't you know I'm not your ghost anymore*  
*You lost the love*  
*I loved the most*

*I learned to live, half alive*  
*And now you want me one more time*

*And who do you think you are?*  
*Runnin' round leaving scars*  
*Collecting your jar of hearts*  
*And tearing love apart*  
*You're gonna catch a cold*  
*From the ice inside your soul*  
*So don't come back for me*  
*Who do you think you are?*

*I hear you're asking all around*  
*If I am anywhere to be found*  
*But I have grown too strong*  
*To ever fall back in your arms*

*I've learned to live, half-alive*  
*And now you want me one more time*

*And who do you think you are?*  
*Runnin round leaving scars*  
*Collecting your jar of hearts*

*And tearing love apart  
You're gonna catch a cold  
From the ice inside your soul  
So don't come back for me  
Who do you think you are?*

*Dear, it took so long just to feel alright  
Remember how to put back the light in my eyes  
I wish I had missed the first time that we kissed  
'Cause you broke all your promises*

*And now you're back  
You don't get to get me back*

*And who do you think you are?  
Runnin' round leaving scars  
Collecting your jar of hearts  
And tearing love apart  
You're gonna catch a cold  
From the ice inside your soul  
So don't come back for me  
Don't come back at all*

*And who do you think you are?  
Runnin round leaving scars  
Collecting your jar of hearts  
And tearing love apart  
You're gonna catch a cold  
From the ice inside your soul  
Don't come back for me  
Don't come back at all*

*Who do you think you are?  
Who do you think you are?  
Who do you think you are?*

**Jar of Hearts:** LAWRENCE, DREW C.PERRI, CHRISTINA JUDITH/YERETSIAN, BARRETT NOUBAR

**Thanks Mom.** Tonia has filed for a divorce. So that process will continue. My hope is for a peaceful Christmas and then to figure it out. December 12, 2015

**Sarah said to Issy** at their 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary party thrown by their sons, “*Issy for me you don't exist!*” “ Sarah and Issy were my grandparents, my father Bill's parents. Legacy take away – “for me you don't exist” has rumbled down now through generations. Partners we choose could proclaim the same feeling at any point starting with “Yes” and “I do”. NB

***I think she wants to be lovelorn...she becomes a hurricane of woundedness –***



**Film concerns itself** with the ways in which history can variously build and break the human spirit. *A Tale of Love and Darkness* –Amos Oz

Shape shift tralalalal.....

**I look at the world as a product of God.** His job as a scientist was to figure out how it works. I feel much more comfortable in the world because I understand how simple things work. I get a sense of security that not everything is random, and that I can actually understand and not be surprised by things. *Jacob Bekenstein, Physicist, Revolutionized the Study of Black Holes.*

**The Morehouse Gospel:** a belief system characterized by a prophetic-mystical vision, a focus on racial justice and a commitment to nonviolent love.

*Morehouse, Parent's Parting Ceremony:* The parents affirmed their love and acknowledged the importance of letting go; the students thanked the elders for their support and vowed to honor the namely name.

*Do not ask what the world needs, ask what makes you come alive, and go do it; for what the world needs is people who have come alive.*

*Morehouse, do not make God repent for having created you. Dr. Howard Thurman, Jesus and the Disinherited. Christianity must become again a religion that was born of a people acquainted with persecution and suffering.*

Rev. Dr. Peter G. Heltzel

**All people who really want** to write and can't, or who really need to write and can't, have real conflict and real oppositions. One part of them is saying you have to do this, you want to do this, and the other part is saying you're not allowed to. *Cynthia Macdonald, poet*

**Fasting to death:** an act of *santhara*, a voluntary, systematic starvation ritual undertaken by members of the austere, ancient Jain religion. First renounce pleasures like tea and tobacco – and ultimately the ancient vow giving up food and water.

*No practice is more demanding than santhara, which was first mentioned in texts written more than 1,500 years ago and derives from a word in the ancient Pravkrit language meaning "bed of grass."*

*Santhara is something that came to him. It does not come to everyone. He must have done something good that he got such a death. NY Times, Ellen Barry and Mansi Choksi, 8/25/15*

### **No strings**

No alimony  
Accept little  
Money for college  
Worked saved  
*Always be alone*  
I was eleven  
Told Maude  
Our babysitter  
Our protector  
From our mother  
Flaming into  
Unpredictable rages  
No alimony  
Two divorces  
No pension  
No social security  
No what owed  
Wifely benefits  
Stalwart refusals  
Couldn't wouldn't  
Rely upon  
Even when wronged  
Brought it on myself  
Fraught choices  
No alimony  
No strings  
Defiant  
Arrogant  
Need no one  
Need nothing  
Cultivated solitariness  
As a prized garden

Groomed pinched  
Pruned  
Roses bloomed  
Fragrant infusing  
Heart singing  
Gorgeous flowers  
Colors palate  
Unworldly  
Otherworldly  
Outrageous  
Breathtaking  
No alimony  
No money  
No strings  
From those  
Who harmed  
No way  
To appease  
Or apologize  
On my own  
Adamant  
Unyielding  
Willful  
To the  
Nth degree  
Need no one  
Solemn promise  
Acquired skill  
Safer  
Fear too big  
To overcome  
To confront  
No alimony  
No strings  
No witnesses  
No one  
To bear witness  
Need to die alone  
Must die alone  
Unobserved  
Without witness  
Stream to river  
To ocean  
So my life  
Consistent  
Continuity

Continuous  
Beginning  
To end  
My sorry diatribe  
No alimony  
No strings  
Adamant  
Refusal  
To have  
True love  
Lo and behold  
Broke out  
Biblical  
Stranglehold  
*You are a good mother*  
My children love me  
My children don't  
Fear or hate me  
Bloodied contaminated  
Blood bonding waters  
Adult love yet elusive  
My children  
Can't get the grip  
The hang of it  
Thrown back  
Splattered  
The cruel tourniquet  
Of the past  
Twists tighter  
Turn their backs  
On partners  
Who want  
To love them  
Vouchsafe  
The palpitating  
Reality of fear  
The pasts  
Collective vise  
Can't yield  
Fear metastasized  
Fear kept me alive  
Fear kept me  
In this life too long  
Watching my children  
Throw off bad marriages  
Three children in

*Kathe Kollwitz*  
Trembling huddles



Who to forgive  
Who to blame  
What didn't  
Get resolved  
Rectified faced  
How to break  
The yoke of this  
Multi-generational  
Treachery  
Confront finally  
True love  
Rabbit out of hat  
Commit love poems  
To memory part the  
Biblical waters of fear  
It can't be  
That we go on  
In perpetuity  
Never experiencing  
Never holding on to  
A great love a true love

Now time to  
Confront  
And shape  
My death  
No witnesses

No one  
To bear testimony  
To die alone  
By my own hand  
To take my own  
Breathe away  
Becoming part  
Of the eternal  
A final and last  
Departing wish  
To die alone  
No alimony  
No strings  
This is what  
I have prepared for  
To draw a final breathe  
Without witness  
Eyes fluttering shut  
Some cloud some sky  
Some long and  
Forever night nearby

NB

***She studies the contours** of her own distress. Ultimately she reaches out to the Hemlock Society. She practices graceful ways of putting her head in an oven. Dwight Garner, review "Negroland" NY Times 9/11/15*

***Practice, practice, practice**, she writes, like scales, like a barre. Do your daily suicide warm-ups. Margo Jefferson, "Negroland"*

***...is that there is no substitute** for exploration. Dr. Lee R. Berger, paleoanthropologist, archaeologist.*

***Gefilte fish will usher me out of this life**, as it ushered me into it, eighty-two years ago  
Filter Fish, at life's end rediscovering the joys of childhood favorite.*

*Oliver Sacks, New Yorker 9/14/15*

## Momma and the Whale

Still living  
Never left  
The belly  
Of the beast  
Sacramental sac  
Amniotic fluid  
Breathing tube  
Goo and bones  
And odors  
Unknown  
Swirl encroach  
Never to  
Move beyond  
Birth channel  
I am stuck  
Plugged in  
Not to expunge  
Leave that dark place  
The whale's belly  
Floating along with  
Flotsam and jetsam  
From the sea  
What is dying  
In the sea  
Is in me

In that roaring moment  
First gasp grasp  
In that moment  
Of infinite possibility  
Cloistered in mother's arms  
Catatonic stiff wouldn't release  
Sealed stuck in the smarm  
Strangulated triangulated  
Breathing tube intubated baby  
Never evolved evolutionary stall  
Umbilical cord taut intact  
I lived sucking off it  
Incarcerated

Fledgling Viking  
Found son  
Explicit exchanges  
With buddy

*Suck my dick*

Harpies in the thick  
Of the soupcon  
Play Station scene  
Where pot rules  
Agile hands on controller  
Live within 47" screen  
Liturgical reckoning

There are two children  
Born of my body  
Inevitable twisted currents  
Of family history lore time  
We marry to divorce  
It is in our genes  
My daughter marries  
Paragon of good guy  
Tall blond Wasp blue eyes  
Steeped in privilege  
The knob of sexual insecurity  
Got him to marry beneath him  
Pilgrims progress self-effacing  
Debasing beneath breath  
Subliminal statutory assassination  
Assignment upright uptight  
Three children edifice of rightness  
My daughter swam upstream  
In the thickened gob of birth fluid  
Amoeba mouth one cell stunted  
The heart stuck primordial

My firstborn tapped into  
The throb of least deserving  
Found a wife dazzled by her beauty  
Why me how me imagine me  
This backcountry beauty  
Kept her running shoes on  
Back-stitches dropped  
Years days gone unremembered  
She lived in the thick gel  
Of the moment  
Nothing existing before  
Everything just out there  
Flight her art  
The world about to swallow her  
Grabbing mythic monster



Squelch her shrieking self-pity  
Morose beyond a widow's mourning  
Epiphany married alcoholic sociopath  
Revelatory exculpatory  
He is after all a lawyer  
A man bereft with three children  
Look to him stungun staring  
How and why  
Eclipsed in the deep remorse  
The shame humiliation  
Marrying a woman of the margins  
And now aghast watching as she  
Storms out banging into doors  
Failure of family  
Failure of life  
As man husband  
Provider father  
She flaps a crazed witch  
Hunting for her broom  
He stars startled aghast  
His inner woundedness affirmed

Mother whipping up  
Dredging chaos  
Fear bridling  
Cages up heart  
I see the remains  
The refuse floating  
The discarded  
The waste  
The turbulent sea  
Surrounding me  
I am the belly  
Of the beast  
Images of gut  
Membranous tissue  
The walls artifice  
Collapse fold in  
I see no default  
I see it all  
My life surfaces  
Detritus  
Shambles  
Ramble  
I have sinned  
I don't believe in god

I believe in wrong  
I have lived  
On that side of the aisle  
The side of the horizon  
Dipping into the rings  
Leading to hell  
My legacy  
Turmoil pain

With foundling son  
Body mangled insides gutted  
Living inside  
The house that pot built  
I was silent I am repulsed

I was born  
To be solitary  
I was born  
Challenged  
To love  
My children better  
Than my mother did  
Her kids  
The cudgel the whip  
That calling  
Had me in its grip

Gefilte fish heaven  
Siren calls me  
Same as it did  
*Oliver Sacks*  
Who found love at 77  
I will not live that long  
I am bound  
By his humility  
I live an old woman  
Immersed enfolded  
In the belly of the whale  
Supping on gel laden gefilte fish

NB

*...he is listening to nothing. He is trying to block out the noise of the intrusive, unmanageable world.*

*...Wall Street that world capitol of soullessness*

*...makes you feel the spirit of big-city anomie in your gut...*

*...he meets up with an old boyfriend, who has found a conjugal happiness that will always be beyond Willem's grasp.*

*It's not where you are, it's where you disappear.*

*Song From Far Away, playwright, Simon Stephens, review NY Times Ben Brantley, 9/13/15*

*...unaccommodated man Shakespeare, King Lear*

*To engage in playful, inventive thinking, and possibly create wealth for oneself during those idle hours spent at an airport, requires science. But other people's minds, over in the peon lounge (or at the bus stop), can be treated as a resource – a standing reserve of purchasing power. ...Digital technology is capitalism in hyper-drive, injecting its logic of consumption and promotion, of monetization and efficiency, into every waking minute. Sherry Turkle, Reclaiming Conversation*

*...these poor folk are poorer in their way...and less able to manage and more hopeless than many people I had traveled among in distressed parts of Africa and Asia....though America in its greatness is singular, it resembles the rest of the world in its failures.*

*Paul Theroux, Deep South, Four Seasons on Back Roads*

*I'm going to remember everything and then I'm going to write it all down. An aria to a coat. A requiem for a café. An eloquent – and a deeply moving – elegy for what she has lost and cannot find but can remember in words. Patti Smith, M Train*

*Love is not a symptom of time*

*Time is just a symptom of love.*

*I just knew it was the birdcall I'd been hearing all my life, at the end of the day, since I was a little child. It feels like a sort of quiet, happy lonesomeness of things ending in the fullness of time. Joanna Newsome, Singer, Drivers, Sapokanikan*

*The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom: sooner murder an infant in its cradle than nurse unacted desires. William Blake*

## **I am sinking hard fast**

In the muck and mire  
My life getting to me  
Engulfing subversive  
Tired worn out  
Ready wanting  
To die  
To no longer  
Stay alive  
Not wanting  
Anymore to wait  
A frightening scream  
On the phone  
Premonitions  
Predilections  
Disaster  
Beam to fall  
Pending doom  
Appending upending  
No longer wanting  
To fear a ringing phone  
Tired out weary  
Of being happy  
Of finding beauty  
Excitement  
In spite of myself  
Tired of lovely days  
Tired of beautiful trees  
Anticipating fall colors  
Tired of being enamored  
By the Hudson River  
Tired of reading  
Drawn into reflection  
Probing opening up  
New queries questions  
Nature of life  
Confounded by death  
Its finality  
Who and how  
Will I be remembered  
Tired of being  
Adventuresome  
Tired of optimism  
Thinking each day anew  
Beckoning with possibility

Tired of being open  
Tired of loving others  
My open heart  
My *Buber* smile  
Tired of connecting  
With others  
My eyes search  
My heart lurches  
Tired of thinking  
Of my grandchildren  
Tired of anticipating  
The future for their families  
Lived to see  
Them fragmenting  
Divorce a family  
Rite of passage  
A tribal re-enactment  
In the aftermath  
Picking up the pieces  
Reconfiguring  
Beginning again  
And again and again  
Tired of the weight  
Of my own guilt  
The sludge the weight  
Tired of knowing  
How much  
I wanted love  
Tired of knowing  
How it just was  
Beyond me  
Weary of life  
Don't want to go on  
Don't have to go on  
Won't go on  
Inverse converse  
Beckett's summons  
*I must go on. I can't go on. I'll go on.*  
How to die with grace  
Bring myself  
Heightened hyper aware  
From life to death  
Tired of knowing  
Just tired of knowing  
Tired of sadness  
Tired of watching

My children struggle  
My oldest son  
My bonny prince  
Every year having  
To contend with a wife  
Whose narcissism daunts  
Terrifies preoccupies  
Trying to appease her  
The life the family  
He constructed  
Was built of fear  
I know I've been there  
My daughter is caught  
In the *WASP's* web  
Mr. easygoing good guy  
Fucking her over  
His manner impeccable  
She just wants to move on  
Her impatience will  
In the end do her in  
And my youngest one  
My *Guarini* prince  
My foundling  
Fighting off  
Butcher surgeon's hands  
From taking pieces by the yard  
Of his small intestine  
As if fruit by the foot candy  
His large intestine gone  
Poop pushed into ostomy bag  
My *Guarini* prince  
My foundling  
Whose father worships  
At the feet of the house  
Medicine built  
I no longer have the nerve  
The courage the fortitude  
Or temperament  
To fight him off  
Blaze of blinding light  
Had me webbed to him  
This man this father  
Abound in fatherly love  
Lashing his love  
For his found son  
To medical manacles

Killing his son off  
Laboratory rat  
In high beamed  
Surgical rooms  
Dear god in whom  
I don't believe  
But I am a Jew  
I do know I am a Jew  
Thankfully no afterlife  
Time for me  
To depart end it all  
Muster up the courage  
To leave behind  
What I will never know  
Endings get written  
Transcribed edited  
A page a day witness  
The *Workman's Calendar*  
Attesting to the infinite  
Creative heart mind  
Desire abounds  
Desire impugns cripples  
Overwhelmed overcome  
Finally fatefully  
Reading the tea leaves  
I see I have come  
To a mortal dead end

NB

***My grandfather's clock was to large for the shelf,***

*So it stood ninety years on the floor;  
It was taller by half than the old man himself,  
Though it weighed not a pennyweight more.  
It was bought on the morn of the day that he was born,  
And was always his treasure and pride.  
But it stopp'd short, Never to go again,  
When the old man died.*

*Chorus*

*Ninety years without slumbering  
Tick, tock, tick, tock,  
His life seconds numbering,  
Tick, tock, tick, tock  
It stopp'd short, Never to go again  
When the old man died.*

*In watching its pendulum swing to and fro,  
Many hours had he spent while a boy;  
And in childhood and manhood the clock seemed to know,  
And to share both his grief and his joy.  
For it struck twenty-four when he entered the door,  
With a blooming and beautiful bride.  
But it stopp'd short, Never to go again,  
When the old man died..*

*My grandfather said, that of those he could hire,  
Not a servant so faithful he found:  
For it wasted no time, and had but one desire,  
At the close of each week to be wound.  
And it kept in its place, not a frown upon its face,  
And its hands never hung by its side;  
But it stopp'd short, Never to go again,  
When the old man died..*

*It rang an alarm in the dead of the night,  
And alarm that for years had been dumb;  
And we know that his spirit was pluming its flight,  
That his hour of departure had come.  
Still the clock kept the time, with a soft muffled chime,  
As we silently stood by his side;  
But it stopp'd short, Never to go again,  
When the old man died. Song, Henry Clay Work, 1876*



***We measure our own lives against the trees we grew up with.*** What does it mean for us when they disappear? Increasingly, knowing your surroundings, recognizing the species of animals and plants around you, means opening yourself to constant grief.

***“Solastalgia*** a term coined by the Australian environmental philosopher Glenn Albrecht to refer to people’s emotional distress when their home landscapes become unrecognizable through environmental change.

Writing on the slow death of American forests from a hundred years of tree diseases in the book “Nature Out of Place” Jason Van Driesche found himself almost mute, “This is my home. How can you put something like this into words?”

**Helen Macdonald, author, *H is for Hawk***

***Listen, I have been educated.***

*I have learned about Western Civilization. Do you know what the message of Western Civilization is? I am alone.*

***Eileen Myles, poet, “Chelsea Girls”***

## **Facing Confronting**

The big breaking apart  
Break down  
Chronicler  
Of the final  
Golden descent  
I walk around  
The house  
Sobbing grieving  
For myself  
As if after death  
As if I had already died  
I grieve my loss  
I am bulging  
Overflowing  
With sadness  
I cannot I won't  
Forgive myself  
For never having  
Experienced adult love  
I am a mass of sadness  
Piling up overwhelming  
I don't want to  
Walk around  
Knowing what  
I gave up  
Didn't do  
Won't live to do  
I feel sorry for me  
I pity me  
No time left  
To track down  
And number  
My regrets  
The big breakdown  
The big coming apart  
I am in the middle  
Of the end  
The very tip  
The very edge  
The very beginning  
Of the end  
Overdose on melatonin  
Close as I can come with  
So I can feel as if  
I am dying naturally NB

## **Arbor harbor**

What are you doing  
Taking down that tree  
Thick and sprawling  
Framing a view of heaven  
*It is diseased it is about 100 years old*  
Rushed around the park  
With dollar camera  
Taking photos of trees  
The trees around the Harlem Meer  
Something drove me to do it  
Two trees now gone  
Held all of poetry  
All of life and death  
Secrets bark enfolded  
These the only photos taken  
Keepsakes to rival disbelief  
At what stood beside the Meer  
Trees to gefilte fish  
Sustenance to ruminant  
As I close the door  
On the past  
Worn ground to depletion  
Gefilte fish tastes of endings  
Oliver Sachs ended his life  
Holding communion  
With gefilte fish bits and bites

Tired of looking backward  
Of attesting to failure  
To watching my own children  
Stuck on suffering  
On the same god damn things  
That drove me to near suicide  
Building families and homes  
On desperation's bile  
Unable to commit to affirm  
A whisper from the heart  
My daughter to a dangler and angler  
My son to a black widow spider  
Who drew him into her poisoned web  
My youngest son my found one  
Body dying bit by bit  
Rebellion from within

His home beneath an arbor  
A canopy of rainforest trees  
Lying under the weight  
Of parrot song and wind

Sanctuary trees  
Live in memory  
Motherhood my best moment  
Scar tissue on children's lives  
I couldn't move us forward  
Beyond *pogrom* displacement  
*Holocaust* 's unworthy touchstone

Trees figs honey cake gefilte fish  
Tomorrow the day to atone  
I will stand at the side of the Meer  
Near where the grandest tree used to be  
And ask to be forgiven relieved  
Of the contempt the past has for me  
Not I did the best I could  
I wallowed stuck hamstrung by fear

In spite of myself trees flowers birds  
Called to me  
Redolent with their offerings  
Got stuck mired held captivated  
Tree root earth vine  
Despite myself  
Reverent for the sublime  
Elusive truth encompassing beauty  
I marveled at tree root branch  
And the swill of paint  
Torqued tortured Van Gogh's  
Oils thick and explosive  
I felt the pulse of art of tree  
I had more of life than it had of me

NB



The Mulberry Tree by Vincent van Gogh

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**London Plane Tree**

***IN the deep stillness of a forest in winter**, the sound of footsteps on a carpet of leaves died away. Peter Wohlleben had found what he was looking for: a pair of towering beeches. “These trees are friends,” he said, craning his neck to look at the leafless crowns, black against a gray sky. “You see how the thick branches point away from each other? That’s so they don’t block their buddy’s light.”*

*Before moving on to an elderly beech to show how trees, like people, wrinkle as they age, he added, “Sometimes, pairs like this are so interconnected at the roots that when one tree dies, the other one dies, too.” Peter Wohlleben “The Hidden Life of Trees: What They Feel, How They Communicate — Discoveries From a Secret World,”*

***I do it because I have no choice. It's a story that I tell. I write the sky.***

*...important to remember the warm memories, the beautiful things about whatever it is that you've lost. **Philippe Petit walked wire between World Trade Towers***

***Wishing there were generally recognized stages of love so you could break it to someone without causing a panic.***

***Tim Kreider, writer, "I Wrote this Book Because I Love You"***

***He seemed to tolerate marriage slightly better, but only because his wife was well practiced in the art of self-annihilation. (She typed his manuscripts.) Chris Offutt, "My Father, the Pornographer"***

***I feel the earth move under my feet***

*I feel the sky tumbling down, tumbling down*

*I feel the earth move under my feet*

*I feel the sky tumbling down*

*I just lose control*

*Down to my very soul (Carole Kin)*

***I had to fight hard against loneliness, abuse and the knowledge that any mistake I made would be magnified because I was the only black man out there. Jackie Robinson, "I Never Had it Made: An Autobiography of Jackie Robinson.***

***"It's love of the game," said Jeremy Barber, a partner at United Talent Agency. "She's at every screening, she's at every festival. She's not scared to box around with the titans in the space. Sometimes she's at odds with them, sometimes she's employed by them. There's a certain old-school publicity diva, and she just is one." Peggy Siegal, Best Hostess in a Supporting Role, Alex Williams, NY Times Sunday Styles 2/14/16***

*...a neighbor knocked on our door to tell my husband that everything happens for a reason. "I'd love to hear it," my husband said. "Pardon?" she said, startled. "I'd love to hear the reason my wife is dying," he said, in that sweet and sour way he has.*

*One of the most endearing and saddest things about being sick is watching people's attempts to make sense of your problem. Buried in all their concern is the unspoken question: Do I have any control?*

*Cancer requires that I stumble around in the debris of dreams I thought I was entitled to and plans I didn't realize I had made.*

*Life is so beautiful. Life is so hard.*

*I am 35. I did the things you might expect of someone whose world has suddenly become very small. I sank to my knees and cried. But one of my first thoughts was also Oh, 'god, this is ironic. I recently wrote a book called "Blessed."*

*Death, the Prosperity Gospel and Me – Kate Bowler author of "Blessed: A History of The American Prosperity Gospel"*

## **Unfathomable but Knowable**

I am sinking in the swamp of my dilemmas  
The earth moves under my feet  
*I feel the earth move under my feet*  
*I feel the sky tumbling down*  
*I feel my heart start to trembling - Carole King*  
More surgery for Luca  
Took a year to recover  
Last surgery almost  
To the day a year ago  
Strange marker  
The anniversary *Yom Kippur*  
Again boy with torqued body  
Phobic about even a sign that reads  
Quiet Zone near a hospital  
Places himself at the mercy of  
Entering into a Level 1 trauma center  
At first sight triage team  
Comes alert with urgent danger signals

The mother watches witnesses life draining  
The boy fierce warrior against all odds  
What has god asked of him of me of us  
My Jew Catholic my Catholic Jew  
My Native American *Guaraní* prince my foundling  
How much to take I ask scanning the sky  
*Yom Kippur* sin to salvation  
Day to repent but for what  
For what fucking what  
How much more god  
And why? And why?

*job's agonized question: "Why, God?" (13-17 Job asks God to reveal a sinful cause with job himself.)*

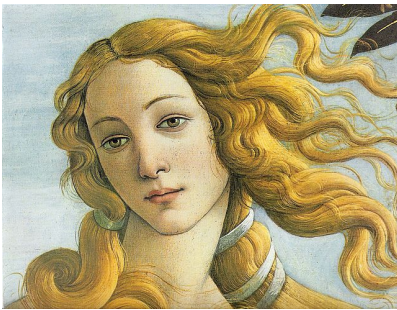
And these *things* You have hidden in Your heart; I know that this *was* with You: If I sin, then You mark me, And will not acquit me of my iniquity. If I am wicked, woe to me; Even *if* I am righteous, I cannot lift up my head. *I am* full of disgrace; See my misery! If *my head* is exalted, You hunt me like a fierce lion, And again You show Yourself awesome against me. You renew Your witnesses against me, And increase Your indignation toward me; Changes and war are *ever* with me. (Enduring Word)

I am no *Job*-like woman  
I don't fixate on tragedy  
Dark streams don't run  
Under my feet suck up my life  
Muck it up unrecognizable  
No blinders no rosy glasses  
Sky draws me each day hopeful  
Pregnant with oblique expectation  
*For the other shoe to fall*  
Do not hunt out the disastrous  
A dragnet set a spell to unsettle  
What wrath what venal assessment  
Withdraw blessing toss us  
Under a tarpaulin  
Of insufferable damnation

Our sins are quite ordinary mundane  
Lopsided fear riven choices and decisions  
Yet on this *Yom Kippur* we stood  
On the soil of interminable displacement  
The past swallowed us  
We wallowed in plight and pain  
Tomorrow was never just another day (*Gone with the Wind*)  
To start again  
Fatalism quaked rumbled  
Voices trembling  
Bodies stiffened resistant



Prayer silenced a defiant act  
Self-righteous idiopathic Jew  
Why god why me why him why us  
Love stifled too frightening  
Never moment bereft of grief  
White satin embossed initialed cover  
Gold binding of prayer book never opened  
Half-baked reform Jewish confirmation  
Why does this Jew pine for the old world  
I am a *Holocaust* escapee twice removed  
My mother beat her head colliding terminal  
Of avowed chaos hatred  
Trying to strip herself prime her life  
As if born on half a shell  
The invented Jew  
Cracking herself open  
Did think she would find  
Be born again in this image  
Oh my god  
Why was I bequeathed the child  
Of this broken mad mother  
Trying to remake me  
In the image of this Botticelli  
Venus on a half-shell



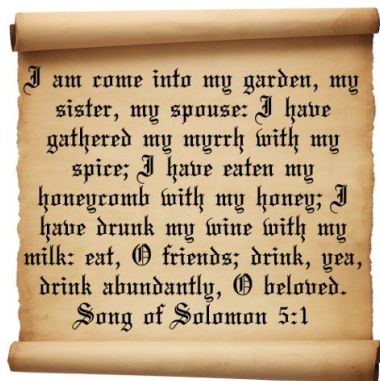
Not reviled as Jew  
Born again reckless resentful  
To shed her body to flee her life  
Baker's daughter head basher  
Father's Tefillin Phylacteries  
Prayer accouterments  
Father's morning prayer  
Set her off head spinning  
Escaping exiting fleeing  
Her body held twisted legacy

Her father's chants  
Dressed up  
With all this folderol rigmarole  
Heavy in wheel chair  
One leg missing  
No way to escape pretend  
She was the princess abandoned  
On a mound of parched earth  
Embankment on the Rhine or Red Sea  
She didn't want to be a Jew  
She was imprinted with Talmud  
Spiteful enslaved  
By her voluminous bilious resentment  
She was an omnibus of refusal and envy  
Ensuring inoculating offspring  
*To the third generation (Exodus 20:5)*  
Of being able to find and fall in love  
Spell caste Jewish preternatural flight  
Spinning whirling whirring  
Sonic boom soaring clouding enshrouding  
How did the murderous arm of *Pogrom*  
Of *Holocaust* stun gun our hearts  
Palpably incapable of true love  
Blithely we tossed our hearts into the ring  
As if marriage were a coin toss  
God made no counter voice  
Love is perhaps our one and only free choice  
Reparations in process trying to right the ship  
Rebecca moves family toward divorce  
Jeremy's wife sues him for divorce  
Fixing myself as *Charlotte of Wilbur* and...  
Dying off want to set my children free  
Not to fear love not to stand on wobbly legs  
Destiny is not pre-ordained  
Find the courage to love  
Ironic testimony  
Remove fists from head  
Thrombotic with embittered legacy  
Your grandmother's self flagellating  
Her father's Tefillin Phalacteries  
Squat in his wheel chair diabetic  
Diabetic one leg pulled me on his lap  
Eyes sacs of mournfulness with  
His daughter's mordant disdain  
Holding me tight against her rampages  
Without bitterness without anger

Without resentment  
Held religious fanaticism to light  
Now I see I feel his baker's breath  
Saw felt the love the liveliness  
Surging soaring within me  
Prayerful as if back in his hold and sway  
Find love my adult children  
It is never meant to be safe  
Love gives flight its resonance it meaning  
Before some ambiguous god  
Grandma's torment cannot triumph  
My grandpa spun me around the room  
His wheel chair spinning to *Solomon's* song

***You wanna fly, you got to give up the shit that weighs you down ...***

*"Gimme hate, Lord," he whimpered. "I'll take hate any day. But don't give me love. I can't take no more love, Lord. I can't carry it...It's too heavy. Jesus, you know, you know all about it. Ain't it heavy? Jesus? Ain't love heavy?" (Toni Morrison, Song of Solomon)*



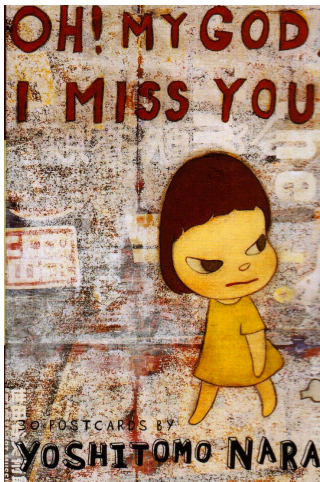
If not for love I ask you  
Why in the hell did we risk all  
Coming to this sanctuary land these hallowed shores  
*I lift my lamp before the golden door. (Emma Lazarus, The New Colossus)*

NB

*And if history is any guide, every time we have built new eyes to observe the universe, our understanding of ourselves and our place in it has been forever altered. Each time we wave our hands around or move any matter, disturbances in the fabric of space propagate out at the speed of light, as waves travel outward when a rock is thrown in a lake.*

*Finding Beauty in the Darkness, Lawrence Krauss, Theoretical Physicist, NY Times 2/14/16 Discussing **Einstein's gravitational waves**...affirmed 100 years later.*

*...but I like to think to imagine that he was thinking about any of these things, but I like to imagine that he was thinking about all of them when the seed of the bad heart that had killed his father sent out roots and bloomed violently in Rog's chest. Sometime that night Rog died of a heart attack. Jesmyn Ward, "Men We Reaped"*



***Ironic Tenacity (James Baldwin)***

Ferocious don't shrivel just yet  
Curdling in my stomach  
Remembrances cut like shards of glass  
*We don't receive wisdom;  
we must discover it for ourselves  
after a journey that no one  
can take for us or spare us. (Marcel Proust)*  
Around each corner the past's shadow  
My eyes well my stomach tightens  
Prescient what more what more  
Why are you doing this  
Why is this happening  
Scour the past  
Turn stones of *Holocaust*  
Feel the pulse of *Pogrom*  
Heaped blame displacement's child  
As wheat bundled at harvest time  
My mother kicks up a tidal swell  
Refusing to accept any more blame  
My father was in love with my mother  
However insane and he unlike *Abraham*  
Sacrificed my brother and my lives  
Where to turn truth blunts my path  
Stub toe legs quiver baby calf  
Eyes won't burn off early morning dew  
Hold on dear soul for another day or so  
Another bout with anticipation  
Sledgehammer reality about to fall  
Again my baby my found infant  
My Guaraní prince lives on the precipice  
How many times  
Do we have to come this close  
Death sashaying our lives  
A tenacious connection obsession  
Recollect past to prune cultivate guilt  
Bequeathed as an heirloom jewel  
My eyes spill over  
My heart saturated with grief  
Premonitions follow the sun  
I try I have tried  
Blurt out comedic soliloquys  
My own Saturday night live satirist

Life's irony have not missed me  
*Ironic tenacity James Baldwin* named it  
I find myself laughing giggling  
Mirthful with life's odd tick tock moments  
My son my sweet dear Guaraní prince  
Falls under the knife once again  
To slice into what is left  
Of his intestines and I scream  
No more no more no more  
But what is no more  
What does that mean  
That his death will come before mine  
I will watch motherly eyes  
While he rants and rages  
*Catheter out no more needles*  
*I have posttraumatic stress*  
*Too many shots test injections*  
I stand silent as he battles  
On the clock hospital staff  
Thinking to myself what courage  
What a fighter what a battler  
How much mother do I have in me  
Witnessing this agony  
As they cut from his body  
Intestines bit by bit piece by piece  
Reflecting upon my life  
Probed the decision to bring him  
Take him off rain forest tree  
Cantankerous welts well embattled brain  
How could I bring this infant  
From a rain forest to New York streets  
Circumspection holds my embattled soul  
In this no escape encampment  
Wrong bad sinful no longer works  
Duty ingrained obligation motherhood  
I will show up bedside when he awakens  
But should he not I will be there as well  
I am sentinel at the *Stations of the Cross*  
Satanic bride took the infinite  
Fruit off the tree the embodiment of Christ  
I took a child into my life  
Spurious reason justification  
Does the love the I feel I have for him  
Equal rival the decision made on  
A devil's bed of thorn and mockery

As if from my body torn  
I was mother of Guaraní Prince born  
NB

### **Jew to Jew at Zabars**

Happy New Year hugs  
How are you?  
Noah has a baby  
Producer on food network  
You know about being grandma  
Invasive insinuating ensues  
How is Luca?  
Moved to LA early July  
He has a girlfriend?  
She gasps as if  
I am describing bestiality  
Two wounded people  
Found each other  
I answer  
Who the fuck is she  
To wonder  
Abigail our link  
Probably told her  
About Luca's odious  
Disfigured body  
This queen of Zabars  
So many years ago  
Mocked Luca  
About his competitive spirit  
His openness about enjoying  
Playing tennis and winning  
He was about 11  
Trickster Jew Esther  
Bounty hunting competitor  
Gathering the low hung fruits  
Esther as she told me  
Peter fucks her every night  
You liked husband one  
Better than Frank

You got married twice  
She stammered out  
When I shared  
Never ever wanted to marry

Credit where credit due  
Thank you Esther  
For helping to shape  
And acknowledge writer's voice  
Authentic genuine writer's voice  
Plucked from the closet  
From the back  
Of my underwear drawer  
I was like Erika Jong after all  
Thank you Esther  
Affirming discovering writer's voice  
You had it when you were born  
Don't want to categorize writing  
You don't have to  
The good Esther Jew said

Your son the agent never answered  
When we sent him Peter's tape  
Peddling her husband  
As if a street peddler  
On the Lower East Side  
Tenement days  
Head lowered eyes cast down  
Implied that he Mr. Big Shot  
Probably very busy  
He did acknowledge he got it  
And would get back  
Probably just very busy  
Quickly adding he not only one  
My friends don't help  
Random reaching out  
Her mass mailings  
Advertisements for herself  
Peter got in to the NYC Doc Fest.  
The most competitive one  
Hope you can come

Abigail the triangulator  
Never even mentioned  
Esther had sent it to my son  
Said she didn't know



Hadn't heard  
Should choke on my pasta  
At those interrogating  
Lunches with Abigail  
She squeezes me dry  
Wanting to know  
Scoping as if a potential  
Real estate client  
Probe and scope  
You should have been with Mike  
I always thought so  
She recounts over and over  
Mike my best friend  
Closet gay and pot head  
And much married man  
She and Esther snakes  
The ones who wooed  
Adam and Eve  
Drew them from  
The Garden of Eden  
Peter fucks me every night  
Abigail got a hunk of man  
Coincidentally Mike's godson  
A decade younger  
*She better stay trim* Mike says  
Andrew likes his rough and raw  
Abigail peddles Andrew's furniture  
Admittedly beautifully crafted  
Like a born again shaker

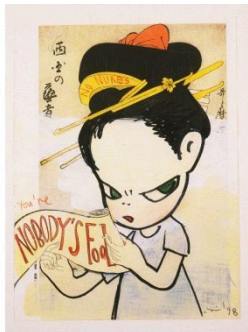
Esther runs a dominion  
Queen Bee of corner of Catskills  
Hamlet in Cornwallville  
Esther you make betrayals  
In Hamlet seem punk small time  
Esther religiously devoted to Zabars  
Delicacies always laid out  
As if set for Gourmet magazine spread  
Esther you dress as if a production piece  
Each item electric with eccentricities  
Deceit fills your breath  
Like slaughtered swine shank  
One of those lefty leftovers  
Still roaming the Upper West Side  
Shylock roams your heart  
Shoots out of your mouth

On the tablet good to bad roster  
Esther you got me believing  
In my writing  
Esther you gave me confidence  
In my heart's desire  
To write be a writer  
Esther you are so goddamn mean  
So calculating so manipulating  
Esther clone of my mother  
Women like you scare me  
Jean Rose Abigail and you  
Want news meat to chew on  
Want pieces of you  
Price of friendship  
And yet Esther  
You brought me Sheila  
The angel who brought  
My father to his wish  
For a dignified death  
Filled with grace  
With Irish lilt minus Bach  
And when I saw you  
At Abigail's urging  
Feeding adopted Noah  
Knew it was possible  
To be the mother  
Of a son, Luca  
As well from Latin America  
Esther you mock you jeer  
You sneer you judge  
Jew to Jew  
Esther you are no good  
To bone and cranium  
You skulk frame elicit extract  
Whatever it is  
You are on the hunt for  
Peter fucks you every night  
My agent son never got back  
About the documentary  
Esther you looked  
Into my shopping cart  
At the cashier at Zabars  
Had banana bread  
Couldn't find right honey cake  
Stuffed cabbage

And two pieces of gefilte fish  
With horseradish  
As they say at the Seder  
The banana bread for sweetness  
The stuffed cabbage  
To remember grandma  
The gefilte fish to honor  
Oliver Sachs approaching death  
"I have discovered the joys  
Of gefilte fish –  
If two ounces at a time"  
Bought Gefilte fish  
To eat in small bites  
To practice withdrawing food  
Will gefilte fish also become  
My last and final food  
Jew to Jew  
Esther oh Esther  
You crossed the line  
Luca has a girlfriend  
Jeering at Luca when he said  
He liked to win in tennis  
Esther you are the evolved Jew  
Became everything we never should  
Heartless cunning  
Wishing good tidings for New Year  
Under your breath and in your heart ill will

NB

*A **wedding is the time** and place to recognize the full clutch of the past in the negotiation of a shared future. Elizabeth McKenzie, *The Portable Veblen**



***This plate is my Paradise.*** *I don't want anything else- no country house, no car, no dacha, no life insurance, no riches. It's this plate of grapes that I want. It's this plate of grapes that makes me really happy. To eat my grapes and enjoy them and want nothing else – that is happiness, that's what makes me happy. Jonas Mekas, filmmaker, age 93*

***I feel that 'healthy' infantile*** *omnipotence is the most important asset for dealing with life's stresses and potential trauma. Dr. Henry Krystal, psychiatrist, survivor of Nazi camps, Trauma Expert and Survivor*

.....  
***You learn so much about people*** *when they're gone, when their life is complete. I've just realized, too, that Lou was in the process of becoming an ancestor from being a person.*

***As a human companion he's gone,*** *and that I really miss. That was a conversation that was nonstop for 21 years. But then, I think, don't be so selfish. Things end, and that's how it is.*

*Laurie Anderson, after death of husband Lou Reed - Velvet Underground -*

## **Post California**

Releasing myself  
From chill  
Of trauma  
Death  
Whispering  
All around me  
Vagaries of life  
Swept over  
Wild storm  
Of bad choices  
Tainted stained  
Trickle treacle  
On the lives  
Of my children  
My hand trembles  
Rage and despair  
What I will  
Leave behind

Tributaries  
Of my unformed  
Uninformed self  
My children  
My offspring  
Repositories  
Of fear entrapped  
Woman mother  
Fear of whom  
Of what  
Of my mother  
Of my heart  
Of my desires  
Reverberate redound  
*In Mahler's Sixth  
Tragic Symphony*  
Question how to  
Contain the damage  
Block barricade  
My pathetic weakness  
From salting over  
Their entire lives  
Pounding heart  
Leapfrog time  
It started with  
Unequivocal abiding  
Love of a mother  
For a child  
Exacting heart  
First pumping  
Leather fisted  
Mockery of love  
Jade and sorrow  
Broke free  
So sorry my children  
Could not be otherwise  
You were children  
Of a woman  
For whom fear  
Riled and ruled  
My dear sweet children  
Splattered with  
The salty remains  
Of my despair my fears  
My torment engages  
Endangers

Hapless struggle  
Sins slab dab slapstick  
Trickle down  
Generation upon...  
Pointless rumination  
Miscalculating  
How things could be  
Otherwise  
Past devilish dervish  
Skirting leaping around  
Displacement's domain  
Hellish existence  
Thunderbolt legacy  
I have left despair  
In my awful wake  
Love was the victim  
The casualty  
Time comes to an end  
Hourglass runs out  
See two adult children  
Adoring parents  
Each with three  
Lap dogs at the mercy  
Of rangy uncanny misery  
No mystery here  
We attract sociopaths  
Like bees to honeysuckle  
Venomous past  
Unresolved  
Entraps  
I watch heartbroken  
As they struggle  
Against better angels  
Aching to break free  
Escape the horror  
And torments  
The tenacious past  
Unchallenged unchanged  
Wretched legacy

NB

***Not to want to say**, not to know what you want to say, not to be able to say what you think you want to say, and never to stop saying, or hardly ever, that is the thing to keep in mind, even in the heat of composition. Samuel Beckett*



**Hanoi's giant turtle**, known as *Cu Rua*, Great Grandfather Turtle, was seen as an important link between "the here and now, the earthly world and the spiritual world." *A Revered Turtle's Death...* Mike Ives, NY times 1/23/16

.....

**Freedom is inside you.** *It's the thing that cannot be denied. "How could you know your limits unless you tested them?"*

*I always feel a ferocious ambivalence: I want to be nowhere else; I want to be anywhere else. It is important to experience that ferocious ambivalence, the threshold of freedom.*

*Ways to Be Free, Roger Cohen, NY Times 1/23/16*

**The compromises and corruption** on shore fail to contaminate or alter the joy-drenched, adrenalated play in the ocean. *Wave and surfer are ageless. For surfing is a pagan mystery cult after all. "Barbarian Days," William Finnegan*

.....

### **What happens when remembering empties out**

When remembering stops  
When I wave off no longer listening  
No longer entertaining  
Dancing images of that or those days  
What happens when I no longer  
Find any of it interesting captivating  
When I have drained all angles  
And am left numb dumb  
When none of it makes sense to me  
The whole of it  
The wars the friends the food family  
When I have lobbed myself off  
Cut myself off from all remembering  
What is left  
Breathing stretching walking  
Eating through gags and indifference  
Bathroom habits no longer of interest  
The day a day a night still in sight  
How to brush  
Even a dipstick of curiosity away  
In a mean contest with myself  
To end it by my own hand  
Or to drag fate into it all  
Slobbering incontinent nearly blind  
Slack lips tongue sluggish  
Words of fury and rage  
Try to lift to voice to say  
I tried to tell you to warn you  
Not to let yourself get this way

NB



## **Random Urgencies**

Stripe of purple blue lime green  
Lifting from my eyebrows  
To my ever receding hair line  
My fractured hip  
My fractured skull  
It happens at home  
The old the old  
Banged into wall  
Going to the bathroom  
After midnight  
No light no nightlight  
Crashed banged  
Straight into the wall  
Missing the bathroom door  
This was my fatal fall  
Soon after accidents at home  
The old die  
Soon after the purple hues  
Of bruise fade I think  
This was fractured hip  
This was my broken heart  
This was no more chances left  
This was the peppered hoist of death  
Forewarning eternal night  
Closing in without reprieve

NB

## Harry died Dad

Did you feel  
The little splash  
The kerplunk  
In the thicket  
Of grass weeds  
Did his last  
Drawn breath  
Resonate  
Harry your  
Younger brother  
The boy  
You taught  
To slap a bass  
At a wedding part  
In one of your bands  
As you ran  
Between gigs  
Harry who wrote  
Of your mother's  
Indiscretions  
Leaving you boys  
One Carl blind  
While she rode off  
In a gilded caravan  
To pose nude  
To buy her  
Three boys fine clothes  
Dad Harry is dead  
Died weeks before  
Reaching 100  
Three brothers gone  
The blind one  
Vanished into thin air  
Harry 's daughter Martha  
Became family documentarian  
Dad who had a violin  
Bashed over his head  
For not practicing  
Dad caught in the middle  
Scooping ice cream  
Changing the marquee  
At the local movie  
Dad indomitable force

For being excellent  
Was New Jersey  
Field and track winner  
In a few heats  
Dad who watched  
As others danced  
At parties and weddings  
Digging his fingers  
Deep into the bass strings  
Dad mesmerized by  
Beautiful girls  
Yet never believing worthy  
Dad your disease caught fire  
Bred into the bones  
Of your grandson  
Swept off his feet  
As you were  
By a woman  
Whose pretty face  
Washed away  
Any protective  
Judgment or instinct  
And Dad as I watch  
You sink into yourself  
As she your wife  
My mother thrashed about  
So now my son  
Lips quivering watches  
As his wife prone  
On the floor sobs  
Children watching  
She is robbing him blind  
Taking every last cent  
Her tears the hysteria  
Of demonic plunder  
She cries with the artifice  
The agony  
Of having to leave him  
With no knowable reason

Dad recapture your deep smile  
Your capacity for pleasure  
Without constraint  
Dad deep in the pond reeds  
Into which we gently  
Slipped your ashes

Dad we were left  
With your wife our mother  
Dad we rescued you  
From her murderous hands  
Nefarious residue  
Of the Diaspora  
Residue of flight  
Souls diminished  
In brutal crossings  
Life abridged  
Jews stragglers  
Bedraggled bedazzled  
Overcome with desire  
To become other  
Our mother clawing away  
Believing within  
To be a woman of infinite stature  
Equal to any Wasp  
Before whom she cowered  
Dad your wife finally freed  
Of you who she claimed  
Held her back dead weight  
Manic bipolar grandiose  
Your blind unabashed love  
Your magnificent obsession  
Fueled the furnace  
Of her hot madness  
After your death  
Quicksand to her memory  
Never spoken of again

My brother and I subjected  
Incarcerated petrified by her  
Howling bouts madness freaking out  
Dad Harry died week shy of 100  
Dad my expiration date closes in  
Knowing that I never have  
And will never experience  
That rapturous smile  
Redolent with deep pleasure  
Dad my brother and I were sacrificed  
This time unlike Abraham and Saul  
Not spared God willed you love  
Unremittingly a pitiless woman  
Rampant with mental illness  
Blinded by her beauty inured

To the horror she wielded on our lives  
Dad Harry is dead  
We were deadened sacrificed  
Without experiencing bold submission  
To wonder love pleasure  
We stream you like sunlight  
Angry words banished  
Still needing your goodness  
Your approval  
Dad expiration date closes in  
Dad time to be drained  
Like a dying lake or pond  
Of hate of blame of rebuke  
It is what it was  
Life on the other end  
The other side of *Diaspora*  
Disease consumed our mother  
Dad like a trapped rat  
Enraptured blinded by a love  
That found itself a home  
In a land rueful and compromised  
If burst upon harbor of your smile  
Dad pond grasses abundant  
Where we slipped your ashes  
Wanted you to know that Harry was dead  
Wanted you to know we do not web you  
In our despair our smile our capacity for pleasure  
Dimmed an diminished by your bride  
Our bipolar mother died living a decade more  
Banished from her scorched earth  
Finally with the world to herself  
Stories of who she could have been  
The Nazis killed 7 million Jews  
And you Dad killed off all that was possible  
For her, in her displacement  
She found herself incarcerated by you  
Dad perhaps once I will feel exuberant  
Feel the smile rise the pleasure  
A day mine to soulfully unequivocally embrace

NB

**July 28, 2015**

Dad today is your or was to be your 101 birthday  
Harry wrote poems or pomes as he called them  
Reflecting with great humor and irony about life –

Here is one to bring a smile a laugh to you wherever

*The mysterious "I"*

*Some times the "I" in me  
Is Betrayed by the frame  
In which it is housed  
Me is a body in decay*

*Fault lies in my aged eyes  
Now to filter out the stimuli  
That once moved the younger me*

*It is a distressed "I"  
Being trapped in a body saying  
"Oh my!" while the mind says, "Let me go"  
And the viscera say "In no way"*

*The drawback of sensuousness  
In senescence is frustration  
An insolvable stand off  
Imagination must stand in  
Or end of life be the solution  
Harry Weiss, Hoots of a Coot*

**Objectivity gutted**

The subjective  
The subjunctive  
The parts of speech  
Like skeleton bones  
Rattling  
I am both  
Subject and object  
Rush out into the day  
Take hard looks  
At trees flowers birds  
Pressed into memory  
So these images flash  
As my eyelashes  
Flicker shut  
No to open again  
Death plays out  
Where each day begins  
NB

***In the Arab World, we act as if sex doesn't exist. But it determines everything.  
Sexual Misry and Islam, Kamel Daoud, NY Times 2/14/1***

***Where Did the Great Migration Get Us? African Americans still haven't found  
the freedom they left the South for 100 years ago. They could not know what was  
in store for them or their descendants, not the hostilities they would face wherever  
they went. Consider the story of two mothers who lives bookend the migration and  
whose family lines would meet similar, unimaginable fates. The horrors they were  
fleeing would follow them in freedom and into the current day.***

*Emmett Till and Tamir Rice both 14 –In pictures, the boys resemble each other, the  
same half-smiles on their full moon faces, the most widely distributed phtographs of  
them taken from the same angle, in similar light, their clear –eyes looking into the  
camera with the same male-child assuredness of near adolescence. They are now  
tragic symbols of the search for black freedom in this country.*

*The attack on voting rights , incarceration, obviously but even more intellectually and  
cultural, a sort of exhaustion with black protest, an attitude of What are these*

people really complaining about? Look at at what we've done for you. Eric Foner, a second Redemption ---the period of backlash against the gains made by newly freedmen that led to Jim Crow.

Mothers: Mamie Carthan Till and Millie Petty...how great grandmother would have reacted to Tamir's death: "My mother would have carried that hurt and felt the pain of the generations." Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of American's Great Migration*" NY Times, 2/14/16



**Jacob Lawrence *The Great Migration***

**My mother is an author**

My son of broken body  
Tells his Korean friend  
Koreans and Jews  
Are very much alike  
Author mother  
Son of broken body  
Whom friends  
Of every depiction love  
My mother is an author  
Honey tipped depiction  
My heart revels  
As it breaks  
Every time I see my son



As he rushes toward the bathroom  
To take a soothing bath  
Bent like a tree toward the son  
I am an author  
Koreans and Jews  
We are so much alike  
Yes think that is true  
I tell him back  
Yes I believe that is true  
NB

**I'm waiting on catastrophic  
Cataclysmic event**

As the blues goes  
Every day I awake  
All day long I wait  
For a catastrophe  
To take place  
I wait breath held  
In the scuttled wake  
Of a catastrophe  
To break on me  
Fear comes to me in waves  
Din of the catastrophic  
A trop a malapropism  
Dizzying  
NB

**In the dooming hours**

Dwindling hours  
Life rewriting itself  
Mesmerizing fiction  
Revealing metamorphic  
Self-transformation  
Had I had the courage  
Of my inner voice  
Just verging  
On the cusp of womanhood  
Had I...rather I ran away  
From a destiny I had zealously  
Crafted shaped without limit

Without boundary pre-condition  
As if blown up from a nether world  
Vengeful god emerged from mythic lore  
Seized swept off overtaken  
By predatory rueful grip  
Lifelong capture internment  
Without exits  
Conjoined symbiotic that close  
To death now is the time to rewrite  
Life as I would have wished it  
Dancing Martha Graham  
Hard steps the choreography  
Of my heart my desires my dreams  
Had I not been dead ended  
By grasping pilfering fear  
Gave myself away  
Just at the dawn of my creation  
To numbness defeat  
Time for reconciliation  
Reclamation restoration  
Rewriting my life  
As it could have happened if...

NB

***"You are -- your life, and nothing else."***

*"I'm going to smile, and my smile will sink down into your pupils, and heaven knows what it will become." Jean-Paul Sartre, No Exit*

### **The loves of my life According to the Gospel of Martin Buber**

*Inscrutably involved, we live in the currents of universal reciprocity.  
Through the Thou a person becomes I - To be old can be glorious if one has not unlearned how to begin. Play is the exultation of the possible. Martin Buber*

Love all my loves  
As in sudsy *All My children*  
(episodes often written by ex-mother-in-law, Doris Frankel)  
Flickers of a candle  
Buber loves  
Caught in  
Momentary

Fragmentary conversation  
On a park bench subway bus  
On a walk  
All the loves of my life  
Speed dated candle flickers  
Momentary glimpses  
Of love caught up in  
Time's relativity  
Everlasting  
My cup is full  
Buber loves  
My heart fearful  
Of enduring lifelong  
Great love true love  
Anniversaries  
Silver gold platinum  
Scuttled to shadows  
Love too great a risk  
Of it disappearing  
Of losing it  
Of being abandoned  
Of exploding  
Like a helium balloon  
With feelings  
Unable to contain  
I married a man  
Who didn't know me  
Couldn't love me  
Sacrificed myself  
On an altar of fear  
I knew him  
Petulant arrogant  
Viporous distemper  
Violence in the wiggle  
Of his arm hairs  
I knew him  
Said I do  
And exponentially  
Expediently  
I was funished through  
Undone so very young

Bound to Buber loves  
My hearts adamant quest  
Thirst desire  
To connect

Without constraint  
Love in glimpse smile  
Conversation  
Fragmentary seconds  
Of connections  
I have loved  
Buber loves  
And yet  
Truth be told



Ruthless unbearable truth  
Death spit away  
Flayed heart  
Displayed ultimate break  
Seized diseased  
Dark ornerly  
Dark stream  
Sullied dreams  
Vipor love  
Was what I could tolerate  
Imagined occluded  
Bride of love's death  
Horror  
Review final encyclical  
Brave ultimate conquest  
Not committing suicide  
Before my 21 birthday  
Waited until I was 22  
Gold ring on finger  
Inscribed *from now to forever*  
So it was  
So it will be  
Never had adult love  
Droplets of raw love  
On monogrammed heirloom sheets  
Truth be told to stay alive  
Keep my hand off the suicide knife

I had to turn my back  
On a love bringing silver gold platinum

NB

**Proverbs to live by**

Scar tissue  
Fault lines  
Too dangerous  
To pursue  
Too late  
For any dream  
To come true  
Time to let  
Sleeping  
Tigers lie  
Time to die  
Never again  
To make  
Up for lost time  
NB

**Tyger**

*Tyger, burning bright,  
In the forests of the night;  
What immortal hand or eye,  
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?*

*In what distant deeps or skies.  
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?  
On what wings dare he aspire?  
What the hand, dare seize the fire?*

*And what shoulder, & what art,  
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?  
And when thy heart began to beat,  
What dread hand? & what dread feet?*

*What the hammer? what the chain,  
In what furnace was thy brain?  
What the anvil? what dread grasp,  
Dare its deadly terrors clasp!*

*When the stars threw down their spears  
And water'd heaven with their tears:  
Did he smile his work to see?  
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?*

*Tyger Tyger burning bright,  
In the forests of the night:  
What immortal hand or eye,  
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?*



*William Blake, The Tyger*

***She was trying to make something of the way life felt.***

*Kate Walbert The Sunken Cathedral*

*...to create the artist and let the artist do the work. The image I like is the one from cartoons. You see the artist's hand drawing a little mouse. It gives him a little goose, and the mouse scoots away down the road. Well, the hand is drawn.*

*E.L. Doctorow, Obit, NYTimes, 7/22/15*

## **Drenched with emotion**

Devoid of temptation  
Emotions sulking  
Grounded teenager  
Sobs silenced  
Quashed  
Suffering too great  
Too expansive  
Too large  
To indulge in  
Abandoned  
The girl I was  
Left her clamoring  
Begging pleading  
Unharness me  
Fake fraudulent  
Dreams  
Quick fixes  
Quicksilver  
Married  
Killed herself  
Without  
Needing  
To murder her  
I'll show you  
Now you'll see  
Adolescent tyranny  
I got wed  
I got webbed  
Held  
In captivity  
Trophy girl  
Taxidermied  
Fixed to a life  
The knight  
On a white horse  
A castle  
In Switzerland

No need to think  
No need to speak  
No need  
To do anything  
But spread my legs  
And arch my back  
Mistresses scheduled  
On alternate days  
*Low sex drive*  
He said about me  
Dead inside  
I said back  
Silently  
Vanished  
Ran away  
Girl just  
Verging on  
Gasping  
Wild wonder  
Submits  
Escapes to  
Preordained  
Fate  
Absolved  
Of life's decisions  
Of the dailyness  
Of things  
I stepped  
Out of myself  
Walked  
The wedding aisle  
My own self-styled  
Gangplank

Crying silenced  
Standing water  
Stilled  
Sufficiently old  
To look back  
Without  
Being overcome  
Verdant runaway  
Escapes deception  
Venal isolation  
To confront  
A bootlegged past



Girl shunted  
Thwarted displaced  
Blithely  
Recklessly  
Tossed away  
Unburdening  
Lapsing and  
Longing  
Time to  
Take it all back  
To sift  
Through time  
To be resigned  
To the aggregate  
The summation  
The final  
Testimony  
Of a girl  
Murdered  
Killing herself off  
For *whom the bell tolls*  
NB

***For whom the bell tolls***

*Time marches on  
For whom the bell tolls*

*Take a look to the sky just before you die  
It is the last time you will  
Blackened roar massive roar fills the crumbling sky  
Shattered goal fills his soul with a ruthless cry  
Stranger now, are his eyes, to this mystery  
He hears the silence so loud  
Crack of dawn, all is gone except the will to be  
Now they see what will be, blinded eyes to see*

*For whom the bell tolls  
Time marches on  
For whom the bell tolls*

*Metallica*

## Remembering

Forgetting  
Forgiving  
Massive  
Metastasized  
Regret  
Yields  
Death  
Enters  
Washes over me  
Jesus washing  
The feet  
Of the condemned  
The forfeited

I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet. So you also should wash one another's feet. I have given you an example. You should do as I have done for you. John 13:14 - 15

I feel  
The soft  
Warm swish  
Of forgiveness  
Time to relent  
Repent  
Ask the girl  
Left behind  
For forgiveness  
This once chance life  
Betrayed slayed  
Just on the rim  
The dawn  
The revelatory  
Moment  
The girl  
Gave in  
Caved fled  
Yielding  
Wind-swept  
Gobsmacked  
Rendered  
Speechless  
Astonished  
Brought  
The future  
To its knees

Death knell  
Dreams desire  
Quashed smashed  
Fled  
Relinquished  
Future  
To my own  
Kind of king  
A fate fashioned  
In the quicksand  
Of fate  
My own virtual  
Marauding murderer  
Slaughtered slayed  
The future of love  
And the biblical  
Tentacle tantric chorus  
Past visits to the...  
Ducks with webbed feet  
Took to the splash of  
Absolving holy waters  
Becoming credible  
Mothers and fathers  
Vocabulary slip threads  
For this love  
God asked Abraham  
To slaughter first son

After these things God decided to test Abraham's faith. God said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Yes!" Then God said, "Take your son to the land of Moriah and kill your son there as a sacrifice for me. This must be Isaac, your only son, the one you love. Use him as a burnt offering on one of the mountains there. I will tell you which mountain." In the morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. He took Isaac and two servants with him. He cut the wood for the sacrifice. Then they went to the place where God told them to go. <sup>4</sup>After they traveled three days, Abraham looked up, and in the distance he saw the place where they were going. Then he said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey. The boy and I will go to that place and worship. Then we will come back to you later." Abraham took the wood for the sacrifice and put it on his son's shoulder. Abraham took the special knife and fire. Then both he and his son went together to the place for worship. Isaac said to his father Abraham, "Father!" Abraham answered, "Yes, son?" Isaac said, "I see the wood and the fire. But where is the lamb we will burn as a sacrifice?" Abraham answered, "God himself is providing the lamb for the sacrifice, my son."

Godless sacrificial lambs  
Possibility of great love  
Swiped stolen first breaths

Squalling screams  
Infant throb sobs  
Pre-ordained lovelessness  
But transcendent  
Recumbent redolent  
If love forsaken  
Not never the infant child  
So the pursuit of rapture  
Sullied but the heart  
Blossomed abundant  
Swiss mountain flowers  
For the babies the babies  
Eternal love  
Great love  
True love  
Lambasted splashed  
Soaked  
In the penitents water  
Kept too long  
Under christening  
Baptismal waters  
Drowned runt love  
Damned  
Dream desire  
Squashed squished  
Hybrid worm  
Underfoot  
Overtaken  
Grieving  
For what  
Never got lived  
Bleeding out  
Old wound  
Left myself  
Winnowing  
The girl  
Buffeted by  
Longing  
Took  
Succulent  
Supple  
Crowning  
Achievement  
Girl  
Pilloried  
On the spit

Of despair  
Demise  
Defeat  
Bereft  
Lost  
Turned my back  
On myself  
For that  
There is no  
Forgiving

An after thought  
I hear its footsteps  
Feel its breath  
Down my neck  
I feel its reckoning  
No time  
For other choices  
Other decisions  
For enlightenment  
Time has come and gone  
As if a day to setting sun  
Memories are left  
Revenant ghost  
Domain of spirit  
And death  
My father  
Left me bereft  
Tried and failed  
To step over his death  
To pretend  
He was near me  
It was the dream  
Of a dad who loved me  
He was the man of my life  
Who couldn't have been  
Shouldn't have been  
He stole my heart  
Kept it in a lock box  
Dad I am dying  
To be with you  
Another day  
Of longing  
For the forbidden  
Another day  
For the feckless

The reckless  
Concubine  
Oedipal princess  
Imprisoned  
In Freudian desire  
A girl for her father  
I was kept  
Messy unkempt  
Syllogism  
Dialectic diaspora  
Dynastic Jews  
Eschewed religion  
Secular Jews  
Parallelogram  
Dimensions dislocation  
Creepy twisted  
Desire sexuality  
Circumference for love  
Self-imposed captivity  
Exertion exhausted  
Fleeing escaping running  
Family madness lunacy  
Sordid conviviality  
We couldn't think straight  
Escaping took the last resolve  
No air left  
Dreams forfeited  
No goyische temptation  
*Grand leaps of faith*  
The torch of Lady Liberty  
Dimmed existence  
Energy exhumed  
Sucked out gone  
Death advances on me  
Time to submit  
Will die true to one love  
Daddy's little girl



Fate trickster  
Kept me solo  
Dying denying  
Cringing  
The object of my love  
*Elektra* soul and spirit



*Electra at the Tomb of Agamemnon, Frederic Leighton 1869*

Diadem of mythic fantasy  
Widowed despondent  
Daughter  
Mother attempts  
To murder father  
Daughter rescues father

She is keeper mistress  
Overseeing waning hours  
Vigil over her true love  
Her great love  
Her forbidden  
Foreboding forbidding  
By his side  
Drawing last breathes  
Exhumed ancient lore  
Stanchion life force  
I lived a daughter  
Kept by her father  
Widowed despondent  
Elusive love elusive dad  
Writ in Euripides Aristophanes  
Freud our Jewish sayer  
A man loved his daughter  
And even after death  
It was wrought  
Never released  
Dad you incarcerated me  
Held me imprisoned  
Clinging to your wife  
The vanquished child  
Subliminal pre-ordained  
Reverberating through time  
Annals leagues  
Of daughters and fathers  
Who could never would never  
Never let go of a daughter

NB

*Josh and Samantha are "honey-combed with disappointment"*

*The bereaved are like "life prisoners and locked in sufferers"*

*Michael is started by something he sees in Josh's expression – a look of "long-held animosity, not a sudden aversion."*

*Michael thinks, remembering a conversation he had with his wife, are "like landfill, unseen but still there, seeping into the soil."*

*Owen Sheers, "I Saw a Man"*

***Nabacov once suggested*** that memory is the only real estate. In Ana's case, it is also the only country from which emigration is impossible. Sara Novic, *Girl At War* – reviewed Anthony Marra, *NY Times Book Review* 6/7/15



**And that is why it is so important to be solitary** and attentive when one is in sorrow: because the seemingly uneventful and motionless instant, when our future enters us, stands much closer to life than any other loud and random point in time, when it happens to us from the outside. Rainer Maria Rilke, "Letters to a Young Poet"

**yes gus, i am 75** - and sure you will find a friend who will value and love you and know and understand who you are - i am not that friend -

and find that quiet lovely place - always with such deep and fond and loving memories - except the leaving - naomi

Okay I tried.

People change and mature, I was a young and overly jealous guy back then and **as I recall you had a few years on me.**

Maybe one day I will be able to find a quiet place to live whatever little time I have left, among the pine trees and streams, likely I never will. I was looking for a friend, I don't have many. I apologize for my erroneous effort. This is not thirty years ago.  
Best wishes, truly.

gus - think we should just forget about having a visit - naomi

if reschedule at all, won't be until the fall - got up for this visit and to welcome you into my home, rarely invite more than family in -

seems there is always something that makes this reunion impossible -

gus, had my heart opened to you - no meals just a rare and raw openness - gone now

to my mind, you walked out - i really loved you - would have stayed with you and we could have had a kid and worked through our immaturity and old wounds - but rather than join on a sailboat trip with mike to which you were invited you left -

threatened me if i went you would leave - can't threaten people with abandonment - mike remained a life long best friend to me and to the kids and became luca's godfather - and mike was gay -

think best to let sleeping dogs lay - and seems as if you are held hostage by a wife and mother of your son to whom you are devoted - so be well old friend - we move on - naomi ( i was once hostage to a husband but managed to escape and get out - that was ben)

.....

**Like a Terrier**

Wiry hair  
Offsets Bassett jowls  
Leopard spots  
Bejewel wrists  
Eyesight blue haze  
Of cataracts  
Teeth enamel  
Rubbed relic stone  
Human scents on bus  
Drive me to  
Barking choking  
Eyes avert  
People move away  
Eyeing me rabid  
Unfit to commune  
Bus-ride down 5<sup>th</sup> Ave  
On the number 2  
My river Ganges  
NB

.....

*Anyhow, by 35 most poets either can't do it anymore  
Or have ruined their lives or the lives of others or have  
Simply realized that all of it was a farce.  
Exploding the Spring Mystique, Eileen Myles*

.....

*...fully awake now and how be otherwise on a day portending such glorious craving and fulfillment? CK Williams, AT What Time on the Sabbath Do Vultures Awake?*

**WAR HAS BEEN GIVEN A BAD NAME**

*I am told that the best people have begin saying  
How, from a moral point of view, the Second World War  
Fell below the standard of the First. The Wehrmacht  
Allegedly deplores the methods by which the SS effected  
The extermination of certain peoples. The Ruhr industrialists  
Are said to regret the bloody manhunts  
Which filled their mines and factories with slave workers.  
The Intellectuals  
So I heard, condemn industry's demand for slave workers  
Likewise their unfair treatment. Even the bishops  
Dissociate themselves from this way of waging war; in short  
the feeling  
Prevails in every quarter that the Nazis did the Fatherland  
A lamentably bad turn, and that war  
While in itself natural and necessary, has, thanks to the  
Unduly uninhibited and positively inhuman  
Way in which it was conducted on this occasion, been  
Discredited for some time to come.*

*Bertolt Brecht*

.....

*A dark star passes through  
you on your way home from  
the grocery: never again are you*

*the same – an experience which is  
impossible to forget, impossible  
to share. The longing to be pure*

*is over. You are the stranger  
who gets stranger by the hour.*

*If I could cajole  
You to come back for an evening,  
Down from your compulsive*

*Orbiting, I would touch you...*

*I would  
touch your face as a disinterested*

*Scholar touches an original page.*

**James Tate, Dome Of The Hidden Pavilion**

*I looked at the white walls. They were shrinking, holding me tighter and tighter. One day soon they would smother me. And what can you say about that? That they were doing their job.*

**James Tate, *The Psychiatric Unit***

*The scar the surgeon left as a signature  
on my belly's right side will say, "I am." I am  
I feel a gathering possibility passing from temporary  
articulation to articulation the way the horizon  
arises in the sun as a series of evident illuminations  
while the earth spins clockwise toward futurity.  
When the time comes I'll rise and say, "I am."  
I'll gather all my questions, step into their midst  
and say, "I am." I am I am.*

**I feel like some third person**

*locked outside the language  
through which I am  
the things I mean.*

**Christopher Gilbert: *An Improvisation***

**Attribute**

*At 40 I became 50 or 60 –  
Picked younger men  
Who picked on my bones  
Savaging me  
Pilloried me  
Vultures on a stanchion  
At a carcass  
I picked younger men  
Six or seven or eight  
Years younger  
You would think  
I would be charged  
For fucking a minor*

*I was young then  
I was younger  
Than they were  
I was stunted  
Never got beyond 23  
Marriage stunted me  
Marriage had me hiding  
Petrified never again  
Stuck with fear alarm  
I dwarfed myself  
To live unharmed*

*You found me  
In the aftermath  
Of spousal  
Abusive misery  
I was younger  
Far younger  
Than either of you*

*Yet the one  
I married  
Never tarried  
Wearied  
Of reminding me  
Of how old I was  
How beyond  
Menopause  
How close  
To crinkly*

*Old age  
Demise and death*

*But you never  
Until now  
You whom  
I found  
Whom I loved  
Whom I believed  
I could grow  
Old with  
You never said  
Never mentioned  
Our difference  
In age  
And now  
So many years later  
Nearly 30  
To be exact  
You excuse  
Your bad behavior  
The harm you did  
By adding saying  
If I remember  
You had years on me*

*Yes and yes and yes  
I was out of my element  
I went pre-school  
To find a mate  
Men my age  
Scarred perhaps  
Like me  
Would not  
Loved me  
But would  
Never lambast  
Me day after day  
Because of my age  
The one thing  
I could never change*

*NB*

## **Out of my body**

I gave birth to you  
Now troubled waters  
Your amniotic fluid  
Holy water of your birth troubled

*When you're weary, feeling small  
When tears are in your eyes,  
I will dry them all  
I'm on your side  
When times get rough  
And friends just can't be found*

*Like a bridge over troubled water  
I will lay me down  
Like a bridge over troubled water  
I will lay me down*

*When you're down and out  
When you're on the street  
When evening falls so hard  
I will comfort you  
I'll take your part  
When darkness comes  
And pain is all around*

*Like a bridge over troubled water  
I will lay me down  
Like a bridge over troubled water  
I will lay me down* *Bridge Over Trouble Waters, Paul Simon*

A mother watches child  
Weary eyes old eyes  
Tired eyes cataract scaled  
Heart limp with weary beats  
Life through a scrim  
Of irremediable sorrow  
Stuck between Charybdis and Scylla



*It is not about you Mom*  
No but my aftermath  
I am the eye at the eye  
Of these storms  
I never tended wounds  
Deep cuts soul severed  
Morass of the unsettled  
Metastasized into future time

Weary eyes watch on  
As you struggle suffer  
The house you built  
On hope and illusion  
Expeditious run into the future  
Son who so cautiously and carefully  
Examined everything  
Worked for every inch of success  
Rushed headlong into this wind  
I know it well  
I did the same thing  
Knew your father for three weeks  
Knew him not at all  
Knew him too well  
Our tempos in synch  
Foolishly rushing headlong  
Into marriage  
Building families where danger lurked  
Stuck between Charybdis and Scylla  
Awash in my amniotic fluid



I am swollen with tears  
Eyes wrapped in cataracts  
Weep tears that come from  
A very old place  
Mythic in scope  
Redolent in tragedy  
We should have known better  
And didn't want to  
Or couldn't risk it

I watch you struggle  
Truth nips at your feet  
Turbulence rocks your heart  
Courage yours for the taking  
Becoming wise in the aftermath  
Three children and sizeable mortgage  
Of years logged encumbered by a tithe  
Divorce after a decade costly  
Do we marry to leave  
*Attracted more to abandonment than love? (nb)*

What energy is left  
After breaking free  
What truths urge on  
After breaking free  
Rush head wind for relief  
Separate the sociopath  
The chaff from the wheat  
Little boat small craft  
Scuttle through  
Move to the open sea  
Leave Charybdis and Scylla behind

Me I got further mired bogged down  
A mother weeps she is on her knees  
Tears blur reason and vision  
Anguish cuts deep  
It is not about me  
But my bequeath is its centerpiece  
Steeliness will get you through  
Again finding heart's soft spot

A mother watches from afar  
Horrified pained mortified  
Children as unsettled  
As a tsunami torn sea

Weep cupping face helpless  
How and why did I did we  
Faulty legacy  
Overcome by desire for love  
Thus the back turned  
And the fast clipped run  
Three weeks before your father and I wed  
Same for you given some days here and there  
Sown the seeds visited the sins  
A god I don't believe in  
Has quashed all delusion  
Of wholeness wholesomeness  
Three small children  
Three shivery trembling kittens  
Watch the shadows as you move  
Scruff of neck out of bedlam  
To a kind and sweet forgiving refuge

Pilot this small craft  
To better waters  
My head explodes with sorrow  
Quash overwhelming despair  
Son son of my body  
How how did we come to this end  
Is it rage and vengeance we exact  
By the manner of our exits  
Or floundering in our own fears  
When we know we knew  
We still ran headlong  
Into that disastrous whim and wind

Getting out more or less whole  
Our redemption  
Mothering solace or victimhood  
It matters little  
A mother weeps  
A son struggles  
To retrieve whatever life is left  
After the house comes tumbling down  
And he the wolf to blow it down

NB

**"House Of Cards"**

*Yeah I know you and you know me all too well  
You can tell what I'm thinking before I can even pretend  
Yeah we've begun and we've been down time and again  
And again and again and again and again and again*

*Sometimes it feels like I don't need your touch  
Sometimes it's just too much*

*And I come tumbling down like a house of cards  
Whenever you take your love away  
And the sweet sweet sound of your voice  
Is all it seems to take  
Like a house of cards (like a house of cards)*

*Yeah I've played games and I've been played before  
I've been to the bottom and back and I know how it feels  
Yeah we know it's bad but we still come back for more  
And better than that I can tell and I try to believe*

*Sometimes it feels like I don't need your touch  
Sometimes it's just too much*

*And I come tumbling down like a house of cards  
Whenever you take your love away  
And the sweet sweet sound of your voice  
Is all it seems to take  
I come tumbling down, I come tumbling down  
Like a house of cards*

*When I come down I come down hard  
Oh and when I fall I fall so hard*

*Yeah we've begun and we've been down time and again  
And again and again and again  
And again and again and again and again and again and again*

*And I come tumbling down like a house of cards  
Whenever you take your love away  
And the sweet sweet sound of your voice  
Is all it seems to take*

*And I come tumbling down like a house of cards  
Whenever you take your love away  
And the sweet sweet sound of your voice  
Is all it seems to take*

*And I come tumbling down, I come tumbling down  
I come tumbling, tumbling down  
Like a house of cards (Amanda Scott)*

***Caesar stands thoughts about ignoring his wife's wishes, to stay home***

*Feelings of hate and horror about to explode*

*Knife in hand with no reason child beginning to bother him*

*He feels a poke ... spins and looks down*

*Child lying in her pool of blood*

*More thoughts of death and fear and feeling destroyed*

*Caesar looks and stabs himself dripping blood feels worse Dead*

*Mother of child walks in lost terrified but knows she must go on*

*She must not tell she must not be destroyed*

*She sobs and keeps it in the deepest place in her heart*

*"The evil that men do lives after them"*

***Sophie Hart - school assignment - write a poem based on line from Shakespeare***

## **Savagery**

Once again  
Beats out of the breast  
Kin bloodletting  
Head beating  
Oven stuffing  
Emotions  
Edged limned with  
Murder and death  
We live to die  
To punish  
To defy  
The sun  
Grafted  
To expressions  
Forlorn ruinous  
Defeat  
Heartbeats  
For naught  
Death enshrouds  
Our lives  
Lived in torment  
Lived in sorrow  
Lived in self-pity  
Livid with grief  
For what yet  
Is to fear  
Is to happen  
We have blood  
On our hands  
On our tongue  
Refusing to live  
To give up shroud  
To yield to doubt  
Anticipating  
The no good  
We wait  
Mourners  
At the bed side  
Awaiting  
The body  
Cold dead bereft  
Nothing left  
Refusing  
To be alive

To live  
At first breath  
Mourners  
Lost souls  
Penitents  
Scour  
For the untoward  
Children bare  
The heft  
Of sorrow remorse  
For what is yet  
To come  
Dark ends  
Darker days  
Born to hate  
A life  
Into which  
Death is born  
Finality the curse  
We forsake  
Love  
Fearing its end  
Grimace scorn  
Suffer  
Punish self  
Refusing love  
Resisting love  
Heavens rumble  
Blighted by lives  
Never risking  
A smile  
Never awakened  
To spring's fragrance  
Falls colors  
Doom torment  
Lambent tree  
Contorted  
Still finds  
The sun  
NB

***I stumble into town just like a scared cow***

*Visions of swastikas in my head*

*Plans for everyone*

*It's in the white of my eyes. "China Girl," "The Idiot" David Bowie Iggy Pop*

***Young Americans the squashed remains of ethnic music as it survives in the age of Muzak rock. David Bowie***

***Barnyard Pecking Order***

*High toned*

*Black mouths*

*Can be rough*

*In laundry room*

*Overheard*

*Neighbor*

*Commenting*

*On the 4 foot*

*People*

*Who dominate*

*The laundry room*

*During the day*

*Better known as maids*

*Or helpers indentured*

*Or enslaved*

*NB*

***Truth and Beauty***

*Beauty*

*Old yet even new*

*Eternal Voice*

*and Inward Word.*

*But above all things*

*Truth*

*beareth away*

*the victory*

*John Greenleaf Whittier, The Shadow and the Light*

*... "When I proposed the theory of relativity, very few understood me, and what I will reveal now to transmit to mankind will also collide with the misunderstanding and prejudice in the world. I ask you to guard the letters as long as necessary, years, decades, until society is advanced enough to accept what I will explain below. There is an extremely powerful force that, so far, science has not found a formal explanation to. It is a force that includes and governs all others, and is even behind any phenomenon operating in the universe and has not yet been identified by us.*

*This universal force is LOVE.  
When scientists looked for a unified theory of the universe they forgot the most powerful unseen force.*

*Love is Light, that enlightens those who give and receive it.  
Love is gravity, because it makes some people feel attracted to others.*

*Love is power, because it multiplies the best we have, and allows humanity not to be extinguished in their blind selfishness. Love unfolds and reveals.*

*For love we live and die.  
Love is God and God is Love.*

*This force explains everything and gives meaning to life. This is the variable that we have ignored for too long, maybe because we are afraid of love because it is the only energy in the universe that man has not learned to drive at will.*

*To give visibility to love, I made a simple substitution in my most famous equation.*

*If instead of  $E = mc^2$ , we accept that the energy to heal the world can be obtained through love multiplied by the speed of light squared, we arrive at the conclusion that love is the most powerful force there is, because it has no limits.  
After the failure of humanity in the use and control of the other forces of the universe that have turned against us, it is urgent that we nourish ourselves with another kind of energy...*

*If we want our species to survive, if we are to find meaning in life, if we want to save the world and every sentient being that inhabits it, love is the one and only answer.  
Perhaps we are not yet ready to make a bomb of love, a device powerful enough to entirely destroy the hate, selfishness and greed that devastate the planet.*

*However, each individual carries within them a small but powerful generator of love whose energy is waiting to be released.  
When we learn to give and receive this universal energy, dear Lieserl, we will have affirmed that love conquers all, is able to transcend everything and anything, because love is the quintessence of life.*

*I deeply regret not having been able to express what is in my heart, which has quietly beaten for you all my life. Maybe it's too late to apologize, but as time is relative, I need to tell you that I love you and thanks to you I have reached the ultimate answer! "*

*Your father Albert Einstein*

*Letter from Albert Einstein to his daughter Lieserl*



*" The pursuit of knowledge for it's own sake, an almost fanatical love of justice, and the desire for personal independence- these are the features of the Jewish tradition which make me thank my stars that I belong to it." Albert Einstein*

*" At any rate, I am convinced that he (God) does not play dice." Albert Einstein in a letter to Max Born 1926*

.....

***Jordan has the terrible**, inevitable feeling that he will never find someone and will die alone....*

*I was tackling: Oh my God will I ever have love again? What's the next phase of my life? What's it like to be single?*

*How do you live when you know you're not living the life you ought to be living?*

*What do you do with Judaism?*

*Joshua Harmon, Playwright, "Significant Other", "Bad Jews"*

.....

***Her face is thin with the thinness of a failed lover.** It is so difficult. Joy Williams*

## **New canvas**

*To splatter  
Splurge  
Emerge  
Sludge  
Budge  
Smudge  
New canvas  
To begin a day  
Writer  
Or not  
Splatter  
Utter  
Mutter  
Freely  
Irreverently  
Truthfully  
Fearlessly  
Future  
Mist  
Moored  
Death  
There  
Within reach  
Promise  
Of a thwarted self  
To keep*

NB

**The clock of which I speak** is electronic and has an alarm. The brand is Sveglia, which means 'wake up.' Wake up to what, my God? To time. To the hour. To the moment. To the instant. This clock is not mine. But I took possession of its internal tranquil soul.

*...without anesthesia the terror of being alive – unhinged and fragile.*

*God: I know how to die. I have been dying since I was little. And it hurts but we pretend it doesn't. I miss God so badly. And now I am going to die a little bit. I need to so much. Yes. I accept, my Lord. Under protest.*

*They treated me as if I already lived in their future hotel and were offended I hadn't paid.*

*The terrible duty is to go to the end.*

*Clarice Lispector, Brazilian writer, "The Complete Stories"*

## **Elizabeth Bishop**

*Never included  
In women's anthologies  
And yet  
Her body  
Fit tight  
With woman  
It ached  
And yearned  
For the female form  
And yet  
Ignited as poet  
Neutered  
Genderless  
Lesbian  
Poet  
Soporific  
Squat  
To lie so  
About gender  
And her art  
Virginia Woolf  
She is not*

NB

**The art of losing** isn't hard to master;  
so many things seem filled with the intent  
to be lost that their loss is no disaster,

*Lose something every day. Accept the fluster  
of lost door keys, the hour badly spent.  
The art of losing isn't hard to master.*

*Then practice losing farther, losing faster:  
places, and names, and where it was you meant  
to travel. None of these will bring disaster.*

*I lost my mother's watch. And look! my last, or  
next-to-last, of three loved houses went.  
The art of losing isn't hard to master.*

*I lost two cities, lovely ones. And, vaster,  
some realms I owned, two rivers, a continent.  
I miss them, but it wasn't a disaster.*

*- Even losing you (the joking voice, a gesture*

*I love) I shan't have lied. It's evident  
the art of losing's not too hard to master  
though it may look like (Write it!) like disaster.*

*Elizabeth Bishop*

***I am in need of music*** that would flow  
Over my fretful, feeling fingertips,  
Over my bitter-tainted, trembling lips,  
With melody, deep, clear, and liquid-slow.  
Oh, for the healing swaying, old and low,  
Of some song sung to rest the tired dead,  
A song to fall like water on my head,  
And over quivering limbs, dream flushed to glow!

*There is a magic made by melody:  
A spell of rest, and quiet breath, and cool  
Heart, that sinks through fading colors deep  
To the subaqueous stillness of the sea,  
And floats forever in a moon-green pool,  
Held in the arms of rhythm and of sleep.*

*Elizabeth Bishop*

***Think of the long trip home.***  
*Should we have stayed at home and thought of here?  
Where should we be today?  
Is it right to be watching strangers in a play  
in this strangest of theatres?  
What childishness is it that while there's a breath of life  
in our bodies, we are determined to rush  
to see the sun the other way around?  
The tiniest green hummingbird in the world?  
To stare at some inexplicable old stonework,  
inexplicable and impenetrable,  
at any view,  
instantly seen and always, always delightful?  
Oh, must we dream our dreams  
and have them, too?  
And have we room  
for one more folded sunset, still quite warm?"*

*Elizabeth Bishop, Questions of Travel*

***But they made me realize*** more than I ever had the rarity of true originality, and also the sort of alienation it might involve." *Elizabeth Bishop*

**Close, close all night**  
the lovers keep.  
They turn together  
in their sleep,

Close as two pages  
in a book  
that read each other  
in the dark.

Each knows all  
the other knows,  
learned by heart  
from head to toes."

Elizabeth Bishop, *Edgar Allan Poe & The Juke-Box*

There are lesbians, God knows  
If you came up through lesbian circles  
In the forties and fifties in New York  
Who were not feminist  
And would not call themselves feminists.  
Audre Lorde

**By, Sappho**

***I have not had one word from her***

Frankly I wish I were dead  
When she left, she wept

a great deal; she said to me, "This parting must be  
endured, Sappho. I go unwillingly."

I said, "Go, and be happy  
but remember (you know  
well) whom you leave shackled by love

"If you forget me, think  
of our gifts to Aphrodite  
and all the loveliness that we shared

"all the violet tiaras,  
braided rosebuds, dill and  
crocus twined around your young neck

"myrrh poured on your head  
and on soft mats girls with  
all that they most wished for beside them

"while no voices chanted  
choruses without ours,  
no woodlot bloomed in spring without song..."

**You may forget but**

let me tell you  
this: someone in  
some future time  
will think of us

**Awed by her splendor**

stars near the lovely  
moon cover their own  
bright faces  
when she  
is roundest and lights  
earth with her silver

***Blame Aphrodite***

*It's no use  
Mother dear, I  
can't finish my  
weaving  
You may  
blame Aphrodite*

*soft as she is*

*she has almost  
killed me with  
love for that boy*

*Sapho*

**Unknown faces in the street**

And winter coming on. I  
Stand in the last moments of  
The city, no more a child,  
Only a man, -- one who has  
Looked upon his own nakedness  
Without shame, and in defeat  
Has seen nothing to bless.  
Touched once, like a plum, I turned  
Rotten in the meat, or like  
The plum blossom I never  
Saw, hard at the edges, burned  
At the first entrance of life,  
And so endured, unreckoned,  
Untaken, with nothing to give.  
The first Jew was God; the second  
Denied him; I am alive.           *The Turning Philip Levine*

.....  
**The mirror holds the ruins of my face**

Roughly together, thus reminding me  
I should have played it straight in every case

I am alone and now the end is near...

What is it worth, then, this insane last phase  
When everything about you goes downhill?  
This much: you get to see the cosmos blaze  
And feel it grandeur, even against your will,  
As it reminds you, just by being there,  
That it is here we live or else nowhere.

*Clive James "Sentenced to Life"*

**The things you're closest to** are often the things you know least about."

Mathew Desmond, Harvard Professor, MacArthur Genius author of  
"Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City"

**You know the moment of quiet beauty** that arrived into your life and was humbling, really.  
Paul Graham, photographer, artist

**So much depends** upon a red wheel barrow glazed with rain water beside the white chickens.  
William Carlos Williams, poet

**Got love all wrong**

Fell in love at  
First sight twice  
A boy and a girl  
We were fixed  
Strange satellites  
Glowworms  
In love  
Fireflies  
Flashing  
Spits of light  
Suicide  
Love  
Cross-purposes  
Cross bows  
We shared  
Love and death  
Wanting to love  
Wanting to die  
Delirious deft  
Life taking  
By suicide

She and I  
We never touched  
Our words  
Shaped us as lovers  
Camus Medea  
Used bikes  
Ohio farm fields  
Why didn't I  
Couldn't I  
Reach for her  
Grab her  
Kiss her  
Madness  
Kinship  
Vocabulary  
To repulse  
Yet to form  
My heart  
Yearned  
And yet  
My hands  
Cupped my



Head reclining  
In the richly  
Blossoming  
Harvest ready  
Cornfield  
She spoke of Camus  
Shared she  
Wanted to play  
Medea  
Words breeze swept  
Lifted in tufted clouds  
Only her voice  
Resonant  
And my heart  
Clamoring  
It was my touch  
To make  
Less risk less danger  
She imploding  
With lust for me  
Medea Camus  
Egg cream soda  
Bagels and...  
The words  
Washed over me  
Camus deadpanned  
Proclamation  
NB

***Mother died today.** Or, maybe, yesterday; I can't be sure. Camus, *The Stranger**

***"Stronger than lover's love is lover's hate.** Incurable, in each, the wounds they make."*

*"Hate is a bottomless cup; I will pour and pour"*

*"Of all creatures that can feel and think,  
we women are the worst treated things alive"*

*"I know indeed what evil I intend to do, but stronger than all my afterthoughts is my fury, fury  
that brings upon mortals the greatest evils."*

*Euripides Medea*

## **I Was Out**

Of my element  
Her heart  
Full of Medea Camus  
Of me  
Exhumed moment  
Reclining body's  
Touching  
In an Ohio cornfield  
And I breathed  
In her words  
Her declamations  
Felt he body  
Full as the stalk  
Ripened  
And yet  
I had not a clue  
Had I understood  
I would  
Have climbed  
My bike and fled  
Camus Medea  
I was excised dislocated  
Jew from Ginsberg's  
Newark New Jersey  
Hot Housed  
In Philip Roth's  
Neighborhood  
How to come  
To this moment  
Of love  
I was to  
Mover her  
Into my arms  
And say yes  
Camus Medea  
No Web them  
Next day  
Go to library  
And borrow  
Copies of  
Camus Medea  
The immediacy  
Swept by  
As with the

Soft if urgent din  
I was  
Out of my element  
Out of my niche  
Eighteen year old  
Miles from despotic  
Lunatic mother  
Yet to shed  
That skein  
My heart  
Flickering open  
As my eyes  
And yet  
We were two girls  
Without suicide  
Would flit  
One of us  
Ultimately take –

Fall afternoons  
Drifted into  
Plowed farmland  
Preparing  
For wintery drift

Bikes leaning  
Unlocked in shed  
We walked the campus  
Talking little  
Camus and Medea  
Relocating  
To in interior being  
She left college  
After our first year  
Promising  
We would camp  
Beneath the redwoods  
Sometime in the future

Now nearly seventy-five  
Ripened readied  
For death  
I know  
I left a kiss  
An embrace  
In an Ohio cornfield

After failed attempts  
She killed herself  
In her late twenties  
Proclaiming  
Her love for me  
Letters left un-mailed  
Forwarded by her mother

Unlike Sappho  
Unlike Elizabeth bishop  
Never had love  
Join wit abandon  
With wildness with madness  
Never battered  
The steely barrier  
Of fear  
Let love lapse  
Let her go  
Untouched  
Soon I will  
Fix on her  
A firefly  
A twinkling star  
The San Francisco Bay  
Floating a lost love  
In its current  
Flickering stars  
Hold the promise  
Of an afterlife  
In some constellation  
We will become sisters  
Lovers reincarnate  
Some youthful  
Squirring adolescent  
Females heated over  
With desire  
Without thought  
Or fear  
Express a love  
Destined for expression  
I must believe  
That you did not die  
Without ever  
Knowing feeling  
The free flow  
Of love I had for you

Two nubile girls  
From disparate worlds  
Will love  
With great abandon  
On a farmer's cornfield  
Thick with harvest  
In close proximity  
To Xenia Ohio

NB

***To behold the day-break!***

*The little light fades the immense and diaphanous shadows,  
The air tastes good to my palate.  
Hefts of the moving world at innocent gambols silently rising freshly exuding,  
Scooting obliquely high and low.  
Something I cannot see puts upward libidinous prongs,  
Seas of bright juice suffuse heaven.  
The earth by the sky staid with, the daily close of their junction,  
The heav'd challenge from the east that moment over my head,  
The mocking taunt. See then whether you shall be master!*

Walt Whitman "Song of Myself" 24

***Dazzling and tremendous how quick the sun-rise would kill me,***

*If I could not now and always send sun-rise out of me.  
We also ascend dazzling and tremendous as the sun,  
We found our own O my soul in the calm and cool of the day- break.  
My voice goes after what my eyes cannot reach,  
With the swirl of my tongue I encompass worlds and volumes of worlds.  
Speech is the twin of my vision, it is unequal to measure itself,  
It provokes me forever, it says sarcastically,  
Walt you contain enough, why don't you let it out then?  
Come now I will not be tantalized, you conceive too much of articulation,  
Do you not know O speech how the buds beneath you are folded?  
Waiting in gloom, protected by frost,  
The dirt receding before my prophetic screams,  
I underlying causes to balance them at last,  
My knowledge my live parts, it keeping tally with the meaning of all things,  
Happiness, (which whoever hears me let him or her set out in search of this day.)  
My final merit I refuse you, I refuse putting from me what I really am,  
Encompass worlds, but never try to encompass me,  
I crowd your sleekest and best by simply looking toward you.  
Writing and talk do not prove me,  
I carry the plenum of proof and every thing else in my face,  
With the hush of my lips I wholly confound the skeptic.*

Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself" 25

...**the multiplicity of alternatives** that could shape our lives at every moment. Review of "Heisenberg," NY Times, Ben Brantley 6/4/15

***I would love to see grandchildren, to see weddings, to be a part of these amazing things for more time, but I love life and don't want to spend any of it mourning the loss of that which I can't have. I'd much rather embrace that which I do.***

*Rochelle Shoretz, Obituary, 42 years old, NY Times 1/4/15*

***For White was certainly interfering with time. He was turning it backwards. In that green mound of a grave he had achieved invisibility, and after he emerged he felt he 'had turned St Lucie's day', the shortest, darkest day of the year from which the earth rolls back toward spring. He spoke of that time as a rebirth: wrote that life 'seemed to be creating itself, seemed in the blank walls of chaos to be discovering an opening, or a speck of light'. In his imagination, the grave was his dissolution. He had lost the war with Gos, and it had killed the man he was. But now, with his apocalyptic, child's vision of redemption, he saw himself reborn into the world with wisdom. And reborn, too, as a man living backwards in time. I used to think Merlyn was a magnificent literary creation, but now I think of him as a much stranger invention – White's imagined future self. Merlyn was 'born at the wrong end of Time'. He must 'live backwards from in front, while surrounded by a lot of people living forwards from behind'. This backwards life is what gives Merlyn has ability to predict the future – for him, it is always his past.***

*All what must do is stay put, wait four hundred years and the Wart will appear at his door. Merlyn's cottage, and all the things inside it, are souvenirs of the distant future. 'I have always been afraid of things,' White had written. 'Of being hurt and death.' But now he was recreating himself as someone who would become – who was already – immortalized in legend.*

*Helen Macdonard, "H Is for Hawk"*

***I am really a submerged writer*** but the exigencies of the period have driven me into social action.

*Pauli Murray, African American poet and activist friend of Eleanor Roosevelt*

***Frontispiece***

Deciding to rewrite my life  
As I should have lived it  
Could have lived it  
Would have wanted to live it  
This story starts  
In the aftermath of leaving  
The terror of home life  
The torture chamber  
Besieged by mad mother  
Hair obsessed by Jewish curls  
When not if Nazi's come  
Aryan straightened  
Hair brushed until scalp  
Reflected moon and starlight  
Boomeranging beams  
Orbiting night sky  
Unconscious mind  
Unravels in aurora borealis  
Of spitfire revelation



Ecstatic exhausting  
Transformational  
Rewrite as I would have  
Had it happen  
Beginning with  
Falling in love  
On a stairwell  
At Antioch College  
Twice  
Once with John  
And then with Karmalee  
It was love at first sight  
Spun into cotton candy flight  
If I could begin again  
My heart would open  
Spring tulips  
Cupping sunlight

## Stamen and pistil



Fanning out kaleidoscope  
Ripened ribald erotic  
Mother suppressed  
Brushed root tugged  
Hair straightened  
Restraints for mad desire  
Wrapped tight around my heart  
My mind ironclad tight mouthed  
Spring blooms drive me sad  
Tulips full ripened full petaled  
Heart thrums beyond restraint  
John and or Karmalee  
To have loved either  
Without constraint without fear  
The girl who's hair was left curled  
Would have chosen sunlight and love  
Springtime blooms tulips in full blossom  
Umbilical cord severed fleeing Vulcan mother  
Behold loving in springtime  
Imagining a girl with wild unruly curls  
Whose heart arced  
With a tulip in full bloom  
As open as rapturous unafraid  
Bees suckling wings flapping madly  
Humming birds flitting from flower to flower  
Girl with curls filled with a soupcon of birth cry  
The botany of love  
Stamen pistil pink petals to sun

NB

**Different old than grandma**  
Different young than grandma  
I was not her clone after all  
Just lived as if I was one

NB



**When life seems full of clouds an' rain,**  
And I am filled with naught but pain,  
Who soothes my thumpin' bumpin' brain?  
Nobody.

Bert Williams, "Shuffle Along"

**Alone, in the wilderness,**  
*I want to weep like the rivers, I want  
to grow dark, to sleep  
like an ancient mineral night.*

*Beneath the pavilion, let  
me suffer and sink like the lifeless  
root that will never beam forth.  
Beneath the harsh hard night  
I'll descend through the earth until  
I reach the jaws of gold.*

*I want to stretch out on the nocturnal stone.*

*I want to reach calamity.*

Pablo Neruda – Elogy XVI

**I still know nothing about New York,** whether one moves among madmen here or among the most reasonable people in the world. Albert Camus

**It was there that they learned...**that one can be right and yet be beaten, that force can vanquish spirit and that there are times when courage is not rewarded.

Albert Camus, "Men of my generation have had Spain in our hearts."

**Just because you have** pessimistic thoughts you don't have to act pessimistic. One has to pass the time somehow. Look at Don Juan. Albert Camus

**You know, I can get a film contract whenever I want.** Albert Camus

.....

**I, too, dislike it:** there are things that are important beyond all this fiddle. Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it, one discovers in it, after all, a place for the genuine. Marianne Moore Poetry Poem

.....

**To be real is to be mortal;** to be human is to love, to dream and to perish.

Steven Spielberg, "Artificial Intelligence"

**Regarding my kids,**

Jaundiced eye  
Went dark...

*Cataract apoplexy  
Epoxy apocryphal  
Surgery or not to be surgery  
That is the question  
How well do I want to see  
At dawn of death  
Death's dawn  
How beautiful how clear  
Do I want the world to be  
Dimming blurring bluing  
Darkening dying made easy  
Razor sharp blinding  
Won't want to go about  
The business of dying.*

NB

***If you've known a lot of actresses and models, he once confided with characteristic plain spokenness to a rapt audience at a literary gathering, you return to waitresses because at least they smell like food.***

*Beauty takes my courage  
away this cold autumn evening,  
my year-old daughter's red  
robe hangs from the doorknob  
Shouting Stop.*

*Jim Harrison author poet "legends of the Fall"*

***I am gleaming with survivorship. Susan Sontag***

.....

***"God is a Question, Not an Answer"***

*essential question: hold "doubt of indifference" or "doubt of desire".  
Essay, NY Times, William Irwin, Professor Philosophy King's College*

.....

*I've spent half my adult life in the hospital. Bill Walton NBA legend looks back with surprising gratitude on a life plagued by physical agony. NY Times, "The Luckiest Guy in the World," by Sam Anderson*



**Marina Abramovic, «Art must be beautiful», 1975**

*I brush my hair with a metal brush held in my right hand and simultaneously comb my hair with a metal comb held in my left hand. While so doing, I continuously repeat 'Art must be beautiful', 'Artist must be beautiful', until I have destroyed my hair and face.*

Marina Abramovic

*The love we have for our hair and our bodies is a pathway to the beauty that lies within. -*

*"We have to have these broader conversations about power and culture and beauty ideals in order to really understand why so many curly girls ... six out of 10, don't think their curls are beautiful,*

*Love Your Curls, Taiye Selasi, e-book (Dove)*



Brush and comb assaulting mauling desperate lioness mother  
tugging, pulling until I could pass for Wasp little girl  
having a formal portrait taken. In perpetuity -



*Mother of two resting in solarium of parent's home kids in yard. Mushroom light fixture fixing a hallow around the tuft of curls left to grow untamed wild.*



*Weeks before my marriage after a three week courtship. Still on the Navajo Reservation. Hair washed with yucca roots and fixed in traditional bun wearing traditional Navajo clothes. The donkey and I more family than guests in the Yazzi Morgan household and Hogan.*



*Afro mama my youngest son calls me when he views the photo. I was in my thirties working fulltime and spirited with some Angela Davis courage. Working-woman mother feminist heart heavy with despair at the failed marriage slowly rupturing.*



*Animal crackers in my soup  
Do funny things to me*

(Shirley Temple Curly Top, 1935 –song Koehler and Henderson lyrics)

**Where my smile mama**

But Shirley Temple wasn't Jewish  
Movie *Curly Top* 1935  
Five years before  
You pummeled your tummy  
Learning you were pregnant with me  
Osmosis implants dread  
From where the curly hair

Photos of a little girl  
Claiming to be me  
Has ringlets  
Tight as a pig's tail



Ringlets coiled corkscrewed  
Curly curly curlicues  
Calligraphy gliding sunbeams  
Ringlets orbits of refracted light  
Fingers tangle in curls



Mama blind-sided  
By boomeranging sunbeams  
Curls entangle disrupt  
Mother's sight delight  
Wee girl beneath curls  
Repulsed sickened  
Jewish momma gagging  
Displacement caught  
In jaundiced eye  
Repelled scared  
Baby drawn from her  
Gilded with golden locks

She tugged she pulled  
Bruising 100 strokes  
Pig in poke curls  
Squiggled in place  
She pulled and gagged  
As if momma chimp  
Sorting through scalp  
Fingers frayed curls stayed  
Curls totemic yellow stars  
She bellowed she screamed  
*Unruly untidy Jewish girl*  
Submersing child  
In face covering bathwater  
Tantamount to killing off  
Lily pod girl lifts up  
Flowerets of curls  
Billow unfurl

Holocaust shame  
Residual displacement  
She longed for Aryan baby

*Nazi poster girl who was declared the ideal Aryan baby in propaganda material is revealed to have been JEWISH*

*An 80-year-old Jewish woman has spoken of how a picture of her at six-months-old was declared the image of a 'perfect Aryan baby' by the Nazi party and used in propaganda material.*

*Hessy Taft was taken by her mother to well-known Berlin photographer Hans Ballin to have her baby photograph taken in 1935.*

*Unbeknown to her family, Mr Ballin submitted the picture to a competition run by the Nazi party to find the 'perfect Aryan baby'.*





+4

Hessy Taft, an 80-year-old Jewish woman, has spoken of how a picture of her at six-months-old was declared the image of a 'perfect Aryan baby' by the Nazi party and used in propaganda material

Prof Taft told Germany's Bild newspaper: 'I can laugh about it now. But if the Nazis had known who I really was, I wouldn't be alive.'

The picture was believed to have been chosen as the winner by Nazi propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels, The Telegraph has reported.

Prof Taft's mother, Pauline Levinsons, was unaware the picture had been submitted to the competition until she saw her daughter on the front cover of a Nazi family magazine some months later.

A Shirley Temple look alike

Gliding stem to stern

*On the good ship lollipop*

*its a sweet trip*

*to the candy shop*

*where bon-bon's play,*

*on the sunny beach*

*of peppermint bay*

*Lemonade stands,*

*everywhere*

*crackerjack bands,*

*fill the air,  
and there you are,  
happy landings on a chocolate bar. (Whiting and Clare)*  
Notorious sweet teeth for chocolate  
Never forgave unto death her daughter  
For the curls a wig a disguise  
Showy display evidence  
Of how to spot a Jew  
Split tongue rattlesnake tongue  
Jewish woman mother of girl  
With irrevocably curly hair  
At once revered an despised  
NB

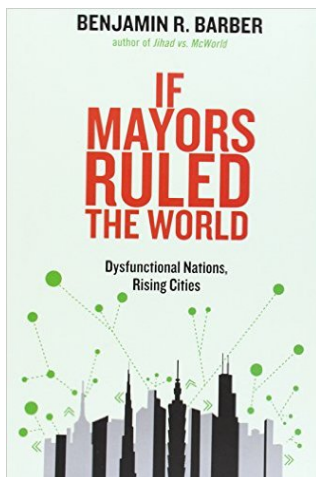
***People ask, Are you happy?*** *I don't understand happiness only as someone just always smiling and laughing. It's more like inner happiness, where you feel you have done everything right in your life, you haven't made anybody unhappy. You have a certain kind of peace and balance in yourself, and you are not anxious about what will happen the next minute or the next day. You let it go and you don't worry and you lead a balanced life. I'm talking about myself. He said he never worried about the future. Even now he tends to wake up without plans, then pursue whatever suits him on a given day.*

*Joe Mkas, 92, works as filmmaker, writer, poet; a founder of Anthology Film Archives  
The Oldest Old: A Group Portrait – NY Times 6/7/15*

***Ms. Duke summed up her quicksilver life in lines whose final word fairly rings with resonance. I've survived. I've beaten my own bad system and on some days, on most days, that feels like a miracle. Patty Duke, Actress***

## Ex-husband Number One

*I travel more than ever*  
*Germany, Belgium Egypt Russia China*  
*Syria Libya Poland Argentina Latvia*  
*France Switzerland South Africa*  
A run-on sentence of countries  
Time zones geographies  
Plane first class  
Not a penny of his own  
Mayors begging him  
To come wanting to join  
His parliament his congress  
His new world order  
A league of cities and mayors  
Nation States no longer working  
The United Nations impotent  
This congress born  
In the quark of his imagination  
Death closes in he seventy-six  
Chases visibility acclaim with even  
Greater fervor desperation  
de Gaulle's ambition feckless small  
He is creating a new organization  
Governed by parliamentary rules  
Girded guided by a constitution  
He the founding father of  
"If Mayors Ruled the World"  
The sole monarch king



This the man  
Who belted me  
Held me at gunpoint  
Father of my two  
Body born children  
This the man  
Who married me  
At twenty-two  
Took me off to Switzerland  
And then completely  
Forgot about me

This the man  
Who sucked sucker punched  
Vampire teeth serpent tongue  
The life out of his young bride  
His new wife

This same man  
Ardent playwright  
Slammed the front door  
Dashing off to live  
With the young actress lead  
In the dank basement  
Production of his play  
The slammed door  
Reverberated in our bodies  
A rumble an earthquake  
Crackling thunder and lightening  
Stunned startled shocked  
The kids two and five and I  
Disoriented as if after a geological shock  
Huddled tight knot of disbelieving hearts  
He had warned threatened  
*Don't move until I get back*  
Whenever that is  
And left a schedule routines  
For us to follow to the letter as he did  
For each of his multiple trips  
Catching my breath raced for the piano  
Pounding out Mr. Rogers's  
*Your Growing Just for Once Tree Tree Tree*  
Revived resuscitated with song  
We snaked the living room  
In a ritual ceremonial *Hora*  
Chanting the song *Hava Nagila*

Their grandma my mother  
Infused our lives with Yiddishkeit  
Forever grappling herself  
With the turmoil of Jewishness

Calling from a trip to the Middle-East  
He proclaimed that he finally knew  
How to identify me  
*You are the State of Israel*  
Time to leave the therapist said  
The man who battered  
And wielded a loaded gun  
To keep me in place  
Fixed me as audience supreme  
And concubine for regularly  
Scheduled night times  
Documenting every  
Hand generated anomalous  
Like a dangling participle orgasm  
*Your sex is so adolescent so immature*  
The therapist commented  
Thereby burying my id in cement  
Instant numbing dormancy death  
His holiness rationed air for us  
To breath quantiles awarded  
By attentiveness to him  
My mother always asking  
*So how is the autocrat?*  
Took one to know one

Robotically methodically following  
His court appointed therapist  
I removed the gun  
And then started legal action  
To extricate myself  
Never up to his howl his threats  
I kept the children for half weeks  
He kept them largely to ignore  
Avenging himself  
And for glossy *show and tell*

This man who now builds  
A new world order  
If in his own image –  
This man *who would be king*

When a new bride I wrote  
Writing my stave  
Against instant suicide  
*Come my lion my king*  
*Let's begin*  
*Our kind of living*

We are 76 and 75 retrospectively  
I muster the bluster the courage  
To find when and where  
To end my life  
A graceful not desperate end  
While I have my wits  
Capable of lifting pills to mouth  
He travels to the far ends of the earth  
Hunting out mayors of cities  
To be signatories to his new world order  
To gavel into order a convening  
On yet the grandest scale of all  
*All the world's a stage (Shakespeare As You Like It)*  
And we merely players in it obscured pushed aside  
Ruling his new universe always that titanic  
We always that inconsequential that small

NB

***"The Man Who Would Be King" (1888) is a novella by Rudyard Kipling.***

.....

***In "Reunion," Fred Uhlman's extraordinary novella exploring the Jewish loss of Germany, the teenage protagonist Hans Schwarz muses on his condition as Hitler rises to power: "All I knew then was that this was my country, my home, without a beginning and without an end, and that to be Jewish was fundamentally no more significant than to be born with dark hair and not with red. Foremost we were Swabians, then Germans and then Jews. How else could I feel?" His father, a doctor twice wounded in World War I, is convinced the rise of the Nazis "is a temporary illness." The proud physician lambasts a Zionist who is trying to raise funds for a modern state of Israel: "Do you really believe the compatriots of Goethe and Schiller, Kant and Beethoven will fall for this rubbish? How dare you insult the memory of twelve thousand Jews who died for our country? Für unsere Heimat?" This book, with one of literature's most shattering final sentences, is a reminder of the German Jewish devotion to the Heimat that was as fervent as it proved misplaced. Jews departed or went to their deaths. A few, like Kurt Lurig, came back from the camps. Europe's Deepest Debt - Roger Cohen NY Times 8/11/16***



### **Connect Disconnect**

All I have left in me  
Is to sit beneath  
Arbors of spring budding leaves  
Among stems of tulip leaves  
Waiting expectantly excitedly  
For cupping petals  
Colors defiantly bold  
I visit the Conservatory Garden  
AS if a bee extracting honey  
A hummingbird flitting about  
Momentary fragments  
Of conversation  
Meeting eye to eye  
Heart to heart  
A fleet frail moment  
Of connectiveness  
Filled with sweet nectars  
Move on no more  
Heart mind for deeper  
More probing conversation  
I am alert awakening  
To the realization  
That time is breaking off from me  
Fragmentary moments of easy talk  
*Lovely day beautiful garden*  
Commingling communing  
With all this burgeoning new life  
I feel the dawning of death coming  
My own life at its ending

NB

### **What Motherhood has Meant to Me -**

#### ***"The House I Live In"***

*What is America to me?  
A name, a map, or a flag I see?  
A certain word, "democracy"  
What is America to me*

*The house I live in, a plot of earth, a street  
The grocer and the butcher, and the people that I meet  
The children in the playground, the faces that I see  
All races and religions, that's America to me*

*The place I work in, the worker by my side  
The little town or city where my people lived and died*

*The "howdy" and the handshake, the air of feeling free  
And the right to speak my mind out, that's America to me*

*The things I see about me, the big things and the small  
The little corner newsstand and the house a mile tall  
The wedding in the churchyard, the laughter and the tears  
The dream that's been a-growin' for a hundred and fifty years*

*The town I live in, the street, the house, the room  
The pavement of the city, or a garden all in bloom  
The church, the school, the clubhouse, the millions lights I see  
But especially the people  
That's America to me Albert Maltz, lyrics for film 1945 performed by Frank Sinatra*

Father warned me  
He will only bring you sorrow trouble  
This about Luca  
Little did he know of what he spoke

Father who shoved me into the arms of a stranger  
And kicked the man I loved out of my life  
Father the barrier on broken road way  
*Two roads diverged*

Motherhood or love  
Could not have both  
And there I stood  
In the underbrush  
Tangled web  
Truth lay bare

Motherhood had me becoming  
My own mother myself as infant  
Growing up loved by a mommy  
Motherhood my salvation

Motherhood ominous  
Babies make monsters of mothers  
At first suckle howl scream  
Dissembling mentally fraying  
Babies destroy mommies  
Extract vitality make them crazy  
Mother mad as a hatter  
Her de Kooning self splayed paint  
Not post partum depression

Made her fray mental tumbler twister  
From the moment she heard  
*You are pregnant*  
Twisted devilish spirits overtook her  
Motherhood my way to repent  
Free myself from punishment  
From self-contempt

Motherhood took my teeth my hair  
My scalp refracts glistens with moonbeams  
Asteroids startling night sky  
At twenty-two womb filled with dead fetus  
Body limp with rot stench distemper  
Emptied out body lurched fixed on  
Crazy cravings for a baby  
My breasts swelled with milk

Backward glance emptied of regret  
Saw a bride dying making forever promises  
Daughter concubine of fraught father  
Monster mother relieved delighted  
To have a partner with whom to conspire  
Married a man with swagger  
A complete stranger  
Bonded like magnet maggots  
Duo duodenum husband and mother  
Body fell into inferno of desire  
With the loss of that infant  
Killed off by unsustainable maladies

Two years after stillbirth  
I was with child and  
The sunrise became mine  
Leap frogging prophetic biblical pain  
Behold a newborn prince  
I sang out holding my infant son  
Defiant warrior mother  
Nobody again ever to invade  
Fester in my mind my head  
Dwindling me consenting concubine  
Supplicant daughter of weary father  
With that first birth cry  
The day the world became mine

Revealed prescient ominous  
There would be no adult love

Motherhood was my bounty  
Fired up frozen heart tyrannical love  
Motherhood was what my life could hold  
Babies claiming me triumphantly

All in all I had four children  
Two from my body  
One a foundling  
from the sub-continent rainforest  
And one born on a mid-July morning  
Hallow hollow scream transforming woman  
Into a demonized tormented traumatized mother  
Now at final end stages of life  
Understand finally  
I did not have the mythical power  
To turn an innocent new mother  
Into a frenzied lunatic  
She barreling out of a shotgun  
Each day as she laid her eyes on me  
I gave birth to myself  
With its concomitant renewal spring  
Milk flooding infant's suckling mouth  
Watching me nurse sent her spasmodic  
Twisted frenetic hands grabbing out  
To pull infant son off my breast

Not again mom I am out of reach  
Swaddling and suckling  
I refound myself in mothering  
And yet sadness eclipses for moments  
That love for a man or woman impossible  
Could not have both love and motherhood  
Akin to a Queen Bee  
Impregnated by drone husband  
Mate ripped off splayed apart dies off  
Birthing beginning life and death of love for me

NB

**About his father:** *the rivers of his hands  
poured into his good deeds*

*About his mother: I want to walk through  
the deep ravines between her sobs*

*...with only a hyphen between them  
I hold onto the hyphen with all my might  
like a lifeline, I live on it,  
and on my lips the vow are not to be alone,  
the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride,  
the sound of the children laughing and shouting  
in the streets of Jerusalem  
and in the cities of Yehuda.*

*Yehuda Amichai*

***She is not like a plant, but like an ant, “driven to find and carry single dead needles,  
one after the other, all the way across the forest and then add them one by one to a pile  
so massive that I can only fully imagine one small corner of it. As a scientist, she goes  
on, she is indeed just and nat, “insufficient and anonymous, but stronger than I look  
and part of something that is much bigger than I am.”***

*Hope Jahren, “Lab Girl”*



## **Gypsum Quick**

*A soil amendment* (Merriam Webster)

An embarrassment

Ideologically crushing

Moment

Quicksilver miss

Says Yes and Yes and Yes

Three weeks to the day

Of the first coffee

Bride I'll show you

Stick it in your face

I'll marry a man

I didn't know

Moment of grace

Moment of disgrace

Body detached

From soul heart

Body of woman

Came alive

Not for love

Birthing stomach

Round as a full moon

Entered the fray

Two glorious babies

Meaning to this manic

Breathless vow

If not for fear of love

If not for flight

Perhaps in this

I'll show you marriage

Maternal love found me

This being the right marriage

If for the wrong reason

NB

**Naomi Weiss Barber: 1940**

Futility utility  
Making silly  
Days made up  
Out of fluff  
Imagination  
Down to its  
Last tallow  
Breath  
Flame enter  
Silly dance  
Consilience  
Bringing  
It all together  
The futile the absurd  
Kept making  
Wrong turns  
Commentary  
Bled pain  
Tired  
Of waffling  
Want  
Confrontation  
Exasperation  
Frustration  
Scream won't budge  
Stays lodged  
Like hard shelled  
Crab leg  
I need a break  
I need to  
Stay awake  
Be awake  
Wide-eyed clear-eyed  
Stand before  
Full-length mirror  
Pull eyes back  
From aghast  
How did it happen  
Nubile fruited  
Fluted girl  
Got so gob-smacked  
Tourniquet applied  
Pressure turn off

Pulsating late teen life  
I was a whirligig  
Of possibility then  
Got scared off  
Got I told you so  
Pure heart  
Turned squeamish  
Revengeful  
You want my life  
Here take it you bitch  
Married the first man  
Who said he would  
Fled into  
The hinter wood  
Of my 11 year old  
Prophecy  
Single always  
Alone and old  
Gratification gone  
Sacrificed  
The adorable young girl  
The wonder  
To jaundice eye  
And gulping mouth  
Mother had all of me  
I gave it gratefully  
Now full-stop  
Too late to take it back  
A future lobbed off  
With one quick yes  
I lived to  
Regret – regret - regret  
NB

**Consilience/Sillience** (the linking together of principles from different disciplines especially when forming a comprehensive theory – Mirriam-Webster)

***I've been very bitter, and there have been times when I've been on the brink of closing down and walking away, disappearing into the woods. I'm still writing good songs. I got a stack of stuff this high up at the house that'll probably never be recorded.***

***Merle Haggard, Outlaw Country Music singer and Songwriter NY Times 4/7/16***



## **Vast waterless desert**

Empty time  
Want to be left alone  
No appointments  
No need to fabricate  
Preludes to conversations  
Convert hours  
Forming expectations  
Barren empty land  
Atacama bones the dead drift  
Palette of neutral neutered colors  
I am on the conveyor belt of descent  
Descant of goodbyes nearly said  
I am more than dead  
I have gone invisible  
Phone silent  
No unnerving ringing  
Jarring stirring  
Up ungodly premonition  
Day of the unafraid  
Nothing planned  
Equipose in nether neutered state  
Neither here nor there  
Still too human  
Too filled with longing  
For food for love for friendship  
Displaced among regrets  
Somnambulist soliloquy solitary  
Deadbeat played out elderly woman  
Splits of champagne conversation  
Momentary connections  
Loneliness pinches like too small shoes  
I put myself in this predicament  
Worshipping solitude  
Inauthentic denials needing love  
Abject denigration defector  
Ran from the fray  
Lapse into final hours  
Without a hand to hold  
Someone to lie near me  
In leisurely conversation  
About nothing much just stirring  
Startling human connection interaction

NB

### **Other Eyes I Use for Fuel**

I wrote that  
Before I was twenty-five  
Now shutting down closing up  
Morning glory mid-day  
Don't want to be noticed  
Want to be ignored  
Want to become smaller  
And smaller and smaller  
Until I disappear  
One less star at midnight  
NB

### **My son**

The found one  
Like a farm laborer  
Holding guest worker pass  
Soil depleted harvest done  
Time to leave go home  
NB

### **Punk'd Jumped**

Hijacked fucked  
Didn't want  
Dental implants  
Can't grow new teeth  
I am 75  
On the way to dying  
Objection pushed aside  
Drilled down mouth  
Dental implements  
Silence resistance  
Drilling into flaking bones  
Inserting post to stick  
Perfect porcelain tooth on  
\$5000 less to bequeath  
My mouth juggernaut of contradictions  
Bottom gum filled up root canals  
And pop in and out false teeth  
Top gum jagged front teeth wobbly  
No more apples to bite into  
And now the piece de resistance  
A dental implant  
Suicide whips me into frenzy  
Couldn't advocate stand up for my mouth

Protestations went unheard  
Dentist clasps crisp thousand dollar notes  
I despair a perfect porcelain tooth  
Weary sucked dry of words  
Want to die off bit by bit  
Now a tooth costing a fortune  
Will resist fiery pyre  
Smoking hot crematorium  
Worse than rape at my age  
To be so violated  
Horried demoralized  
Against everything I claimed  
To hold dear with a mouth  
Worth more than any jewel  
Any heirloom I can hand on  
Plundered violated  
Torture chamber dentist chair  
Dashed crashed a moment of grace  
Humiliated disgraced  
Not to behold evermore in the gray  
Cinder and ash post death  
A pearly white porcelain tooth  
Will beam out remnant of gone life  
*Ashes to ashes dust to dust*  
Never to replenish biodegradable  
Tooth attracts dog paws  
Memento of blinding quirky smile  
Beyond twigs and bone chips  
A tooth will never decay  
Dental due diligence  
A perfectly constructed implant  
Mouth mocks dimming eyes  
Haze of cataracts finds tooth  
Refracting torque of blinding light  
In the haze of death  
It happened in a dental chair  
Deceit defeat puerile grief

NB

***Old memories are very easy to get, except that once you write about something, you've destroyed it. You no longer have the memory. You only have the memory of what you've written. Annie Dillard, author "Pilgrim at Tinker Creek"***

*It's as if, having once been placentally connected to your beating heart, having once inhabited your actual body, your children continue to live there with you. For better or worse, you are never alone again. Parental love defies your apartness from another person. Catherine Newman, author, "Catastrophic Happiness" NY Times Book Review 4/10/16*

### **All this Squealing Squalling Kvetching**

All this animus self righteous hatred  
Analoging cataloguing commemorating  
The way he hurt me abused me  
His tart twisting mouth  
Spewing a diatribe of hatred words my way  
His body stiffening near me  
Not his member rising oohing and aahing  
He backing away stiffening with departure  
Nefarious ill-tempered mean-spirited bastard  
He was all that and more harmful than that  
But what I've come to see ouch  
He just didn't love me  
Hung on my apron strings a newly weaned piglet  
Gruel food to steady his backing away strides  
Alone now midnights and daytimes as well  
Binging on movies one after the other  
Mostly lighthearted balancing  
Tempering the fears riding me  
Completely alone at this  
The co-terminus very end of life  
Without a hand to hold  
A body to press against me  
Someone to kiss my long ago deserted lips  
This one claimed me as a steppingstone  
I read bled love into it  
He would regularly say "I don't know what love is"  
Until he toppled head over heels mounting  
The orgasmic thrills with a woman in Brazil  
I was the Bonnie to his Clyde  
As he raided the academy  
Thieving a Ph.D. from his advisor  
Who called him her feral student  
And there I was the gun moll wife  
Of a feral man ferreting out a future  
Guaranteeing his place in the sun  
To going as far as marrying me  
The vows head spinning vows  
That got me permanently maimed and undone

NB

## Juggernaut won't be stopped

Inevitability to it all  
No longer wisp of a girl  
Elderly woman enters bus  
Gets offered seat after seat  
Getting near time  
For deep freeze forever sleep  
Death in earnest pressures  
When how and where  
To draw down final breathe  
Daft slaphappy angels  
Flutter leap Pas de Deux to escort



Inelegant cowboy bowleg strides  
Labored walking room to room  
Hues of crystalline tier refracts light  
Dancing rainbows to somber  
Tear-streaked glooming gloom  
Body takes a deep end nosedive  
Eyes dry ducts for years weep  
Recumbent remembered yens  
Strain appetite urged to eat less  
Fanciful Italian carved walking sticks  
Pretense prehensile un-canes  
Stumble inelegant strides  
Urgent constitutional walk in park  
Walking necessary for heart to beat  
Lungs to breathe legs to uncramp  
It is fall Mums in full bloom  
Fall leaves redolent with color draining off  
My mind alert stiffens with imagination  
Begging not to lose the fanciful  
Feral autodidact yet culling  
Feral wild wondrous unknown

Internet beams across time place  
Each word precious sacred key  
To whirl of worlds to know  
Thought stumping stunning  
Colliding colluding images  
Time to disassemble forgotten  
Fragmentary recollections  
Regrets lambast mock tyrannical  
Mind jiggers untethers rigging  
Connective tissues fray  
Gather up equipoise equilibrium  
Sweat gathers knees weaken  
Stumble stubble memory  
Flickering images collect  
Dimming memory elusive  
Nectar dipping butterfly

I am a mother  
Who has for a decade  
Watch a young son  
Die revive survive  
Son herculean effort  
To come again alive  
Counterweights counter foil  
Barbells punching bags  
Body twisted life blocking  
Intestines threaten  
Concave truculent averse gut  
Wrenching gall puking bile  
Surgeon grabs gobs of intestine  
Large intestine gone  
Contraption on tummy  
Captures falling poop  
Drain for odious food remains  
Oh god egregious fate  
Once again struck alive  
Foundling child chases down food  
Recumbent redolent tastes  
Drinks prickling tongue awakens  
Death's mortification  
Eat drink imbibed  
At this precarious daybreak  
Once again fearful fraught juncture  
When how will it all end  
My son's several lives  
Multiple rebirths rival death's incursion

Annotated fable precariously unrevealed  
*A tale to be told by an idiot (Shakespeare Macbeth)*  
He my son not yet ready ratatat  
For his tightly encrypted prophetic destiny  
NB

**Inevitable**

As Greek tragedy Shakespeare drama  
All our marriages would end  
Upending children and family  
Unnerving narrative thread  
Pogrom Holocaust  
Crazy bi-polar mother  
We selected partners  
Whom we had to leave  
As they broke us apart  
Took us down  
Pogrom Holocaust  
Fucking disastrous divorce  
Your father and I  
It was in the cards  
We would chose wrong  
Found our parent hearts  
In the pools of demise  
Inevitable marriages break apart  
Inevitable that love out of reach  
Perhaps maybe a chance  
That you will have a love  
To wrap around and pleasure you  
And your heart leapfrog  
Grandpa in Catskill pond  
Hopes for nothing less  
As we move on  
Legacy of lovelessness  
Marital displacement  
Time to move on  
NB

Experiences the levitating touchstones in our lives - NB

**Vigée Le Brun never remarried**, continuing to dedicate herself to her art until her death in Paris at 86. As she wrote in her "Memoirs": "The passion for painting was innate in me. This passion has never diminished; indeed, I believe it has only increased with time. Moreover, it is to this divine passion that I owe not only my fortune but also my happiness."



*Marie Antoinette and her Children, 1787 Vegee le Brun*

**...divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will -Hamlet, Shakespeare**

**We are all agreed that your theory is crazy. The question which divides us is whether it is crazy enough to have a chance of being correct.**

**Referring to Niels Bohr -Wolfgang Pauli, Scientist**

**The lump of grief that never leaves her throat. The hot, shocked space behind her eyes.**

**Julie Myerson, The Stopped Heart**



***I've painted all my life. It makes me feel good. Don't do it she said with a chuckle about being 100. It's horrible. Carmen Herrera, artist, at 101***



*Carmen Herrera, Artist*

**Exactly, Excerpts from Gabriel a Poem by Edward Hirsch**

*Chaotic wind of the gods  
He was trouble  
But he was our trouble*

*I couldn't sleep I never could sleep  
I just stared out the window  
Into the blankest space*

*Not thinking exactly  
Worrying obsessively  
Waiting for daylight*

*We had been waiting for four days  
We had a disease no one wanted  
To help us it could never be cured*

*At Section 3 Row R Grave 12  
Rest in peace at last hyperactive one  
I will stand above you aghast*

*I sat at the bar drinking a Diet Coke  
And reading Apollinaire while he hurtled  
From game to game in Dave & Buster's*

*He loved strong coffee specialty beers  
Tamar's oatmeal cookies California burgers  
Spicy Thai Indian and Mexican food*

*Dogs were his natural friends*

*He loved his twenty-second birthday  
Above all others it was the night of nights  
Night of celebration*

*To help him mourn the child  
Whom Oblivion obliterated  
With such uncanny force*

*Wisdom for me was castles in the air  
I'm hurled like all the others  
From the topmost stair (Kochanowski)*

*Grief broke down in phrases  
And extrapolated lines  
From me without myself*

*His mother also slipped into black  
Treachery of the parents  
Who outlive their son*

*It was too late to warn him  
What had already happened  
He was going ahead alone*

*The wretched sound  
Started coming out of me again  
He was there in the coffin  
He was not there in the coffin*

*It was Gabriel it was not Gabriel  
Wild spirit beloved son  
Where have you fled*

*Gabriel A Poem Edward Hirsch*

## **Walking into Words**

Worlds  
Bumping into myself  
Yearning  
For a quick getaway

Looking for a place  
To deposit the scream  
That rises volcanic

Where can my mouth open  
And burst out  
Into sky filling  
Lamentation

Death waits  
For me to empty out  
My sorrow  
Clean and bleed out  
Sadness reeks  
Seeps embeds like mold

Where to scream  
Deafening decibels  
Alone and afraid  
No one to hear or witness  
If alarming nature's congruity  
Startled birds chipmunks bees  
Scatter sounds fray

Wilt somber relief  
In the aftermath  
Wounded animal squall  
Emanating  
From the center of my being  
Scream piercing sound barrier  
Day of rebirth day of echo  
Reverberating lightening  
Splitting family tree  
The words that find me  
*Requiem Requiem Requiem*  
That solemn plaintive  
Knelling sound  
*Agnus Dei Verdi's Requiem*

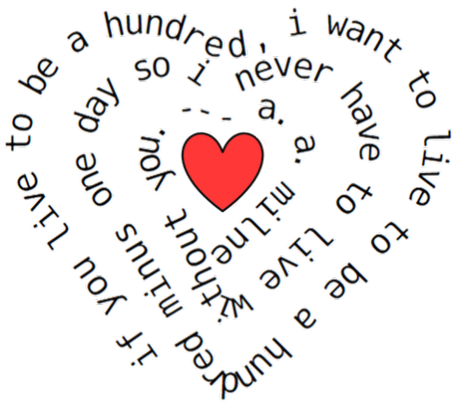
Cataracts blur dense fog  
Adult children of my body  
Break up marriages  
Necessary brave steps  
Three children each  
Six eyes follow and observe  
Cringe fearful  
*What about me?*  
Found child my little Olinquinto  
*Glad you adopted me*  
*Our family is close*  
He shares packing  
To move to Cali as he calls it  
His body quicksand  
Pulling him toward  
No good end  
Mother to chronically ill  
Maybe dying kid  
What word words  
The scream builds  
And builds beyond

How to relieve  
Motherly anguish and fear  
Oblique obsessive unnerving  
Sits in the hot center of me  
Lava curdles spit  
Emitting spurts of sobs  
The wail waits  
No returning once unleashed  
It is the truth that splits wood  
An ancient tree felled

Ranting squalling screams mount  
Soon to erupt wretchedness rasping  
And then quieted freed  
Lambent willow breezy sway  
Laying in the downy fallen off leaves  
Descend into liturgical  
Litany of quiet sobs  
Relieved scream gone  
With its life force  
Composite of what was me  
Minutes left to free up  
Fierce wounded animal scream  
Prescient catastrophe near

Tidal wave pulling on me  
The damn to burst overwhelm  
Overwhelm by calamitous  
Decisions choices that trapped me  
Vitality ebbing weak-kneed  
Breathing labored  
Heart erratic leapfrog jumping  
I will be taken out in restraints  
If my voice explodes out of me  
Present calm *Verdi's Requiem* playing  
Retrained waiting for the moment  
When the lilt and lift gently call out  
*Requiem Requiem Requiem*

NB



pooh singing in the place of nothing - still occasional occupants jeremy and rebecca and luca and their mom xo (milne)



“Off the hook” by Nari Ward, 2016.

**LIVE, DIE: A GHAZAL**

*The door of the hospice room in which you die  
stays open. Dreaming, you drift there, dying*

*in that floating bed of fierce arguments that live  
on, until the moment when you no longer live.*

*Cheered on by a chorus of voices as you die,  
“Go now! Go to the light!” Still, Don’t die!*

*Cries a dissenting voice within: a flickering live  
Wire behind the nightlight’s angel face. Live*

*News at 7 AM, after the great orange moon dies.  
Sunlight fingers a blue bowl of shaved ice. Die?*

*No. Not now. A tiny version of you pops out alive  
From a burning wood, swims upstream, panting. Live*

*as Nurse Good’s softshoe entrance to applause, dying.  
She smiles, squints at her syringe, held up, lit, like dye*

*bubbles lengthening in a radiant corridor: see lives  
unborn (half-souls blindly pushing toward life)*

*gather outside time, inside your mind. Move! Die!  
they cry. You won’t acquiesce. Mother, I cannot die*

*For you, I don’t know how. You brought me here alive.  
You taught me everything but how to let you die.*

— CAROL MUSKE-DUKES

### **Walls closing in**

Wandering about  
In my own home  
My spider web womb  
Enshroud entomb  
Truth folds over me  
Shifting sifting sorting  
Morning evening light  
What I thought believed  
Yesterday jabs barbs  
Barbarous traitorous  
Long held narrative  
Blows up an *IED (Improvised Explosive Device)*  
Scrap metal of mendacity  
Versions of the past  
Flairs of doubt  
Decisions choices  
Executed directed  
By the story  
I was then telling myself  
Hard to think cribbed  
Crafted action based  
On utterly false narrative  
Perspective skewed  
Need for self-deceit

Scraping rock bottom  
Archaeological pursuit  
Uncovering digging up  
Ruthless murderous truths  
After all choke stammer  
I did love Ben  
And he did love me  
Fists swinging  
Loaded gun ready  
Still Id buried burrowed root  
Two half-formed  
Neonatal trapped lovers  
Suffering from massive  
Metastasized incompleteness  
Had indeed found true love  
Shrink wrapped deep in a  
Tautological expansive mythology  
Coatings castings rigid fixed  
Depicted as victim of fist hurtling

Gun swinging madman  
Wife seized and kept  
In self-imposed incarceration  
Filling up with engorged with hatred  
Words embellishing mythic agony  
Held no escape for witless virtuous virgin  
Rape of the *Sabine women*



Giambologna

Pithy pathetic grandiosity  
For self-made circumstance  
Embellished sacrificial wife  
Crippled girl inadequate girl  
Met the man of her dreams  
And then vengefully artfully  
Crafted a monster  
To hate and leave  
He was me I was he  
Synaptic snapping turtle memory  
Crystalline with clarity  
Emboldened by dagger digging  
Rigging unmasked truth

A second succulent truth  
In marriage's aftermath  
The man who seduced me



On a football field was a predator  
I was ripe with desire  
Believed my Casanova had come  
A man to love me youthful young  
Truth scutters fear at this late date  
Never not for a moment did he love me  
Service station attendant prince  
After years of careful scouting  
Saw I would be the woman  
To give him another leg up  
Dog against a hydrant  
Foolishly mindlessly would ask  
Do you love me why not hold hands  
*Don't know what love means*  
*You put your arm around me*  
Divorce lawyer described him as cute pup  
Menacing cruel plundering scoundrel  
And I the foolish self-deceiving girl  
Humiliation covers me like slick oil spill  
Cower before my harrowing blind-sidedness  
Time has come to make peace  
With this overhang of ruthless truth  
Torture worthy life choices  
Have me on my knees without time  
Just collect myself and make amends  
Find a way to apologize to myself  
Regret was not who I chose to love  
But that I chose not to love  
High beam of fear kept me in place  
My body starving dying out  
Will not have experienced  
Even one transcendent moment  
Of Sapphic love

NB

*all the violet tiaras,  
braided rosebuds, dill and  
crocus twined around your young neck  
Sappho*

## Snagged Dragged

Snapped synapsed pimped  
Invasive inoculator justice miscarried  
Destroyed option for natural death  
Pneumonia sunk deep in lungs  
Labored breathing death rattle  
Dead silence body stilled  
Heart set on dying from pneumonia  
Causal elderly patient vindicated  
Imagined rendering of life ending scene  
Doctor nose to chart steadily recounts  
*You had a pneumonia shot ten years ago*  
*New vaccine extends to a decade longer*  
*You should have it will send in nurse*  
No signed consent no nothing  
Syringe plunged into upper arm  
Adhominem concoction  
And it was done finished over  
Pneumonia off death wish list  
Tricked duped pimped  
Not even a riff an *end of life* talk  
The doctor noting no flu shot as well  
*You could have gotten one at pharmacy*  
And with that it was tautologically determined  
I never blinked let loose disconcerted sigh  
Whoring anything to extend life patient  
Collapsed without as much as a question  
Stalking death mocked sneered jeered  
Inoculants odds on winning combatant  
Winnowing elusive natural death options  
My face morbidly tightly inexpressive  
Heart heaves cleaves doubt occludes  
Bid fare-thee-well adieu to this tithing  
Pneumonia is the gift to the elderly  
Or as Dr. Zeke Emmanuelle wrote:

*Once I have lived to 75, my approach to my health care will completely change. I won't actively end my life. But I won't try to prolong it, either. Today, when the doctor recommends a test or treatment, especially one that will extend our lives, it becomes incumbent upon us to give a good reason why we don't want it. The momentum of medicine and family means we will almost invariably get it. My attitude flips this default on its head. I take guidance from what Sir William Osler wrote in his classic turn-of-the-century medical textbook, *The Principles and Practice of Medicine*: "Pneumonia may well be called the friend of the aged. Taken off by it in an acute, short, not often painful illness, the old man escapes those 'cold gradations of decay' so distressing to himself and to his friends." My Osler-inspired philosophy is this: At 75 and beyond, I will need a good reason to even visit the doctor and take any medical test or treatment, no matter how routine and painless. And that good reason is not "It will prolong your life." I will stop getting any regular preventive tests, screenings, or*

*interventions. I will accept only palliative—not curative—treatments if I am suffering pain or other disability. The Atlantic 2014*

Betrayal deep and mocking  
Violated deepest cut dignity frayed  
Dislocated disarmed harmed  
Requesting cataract surgery led to this  
Reading labored words sunk  
Dense thicket of blur gruel  
Stunned fraught exasperated  
Throbbing upper arm sears scares  
Thrown off my game  
My body armored shielding me  
From getting pneumonia  
Decked killed off right hook



Crossed off checked pneumonia  
No longer writ on death certificate  
Breathe stumbling starting and stopping  
Embattlements breached pneumonia slinks off  
Lumbered off left the office the fool  
Encroaching death to amass piss and drool  
She never asked I sunk slinked off in silence  
*Need your upper obediently*  
Pulled one arm out of my sweater  
Submitted the injection plunged in  
Ambled away humiliated horrified  
Mortified weak kneed

NB

## **New York New York**

Under limp dick de Blasio  
Old ladies on walkers  
Every other store for lease  
Slashing's at subway stops  
Face arms neck back  
More brutal more frontal  
Mayor Flub-a-Dub  
We fell for you  
High-falutin cunnilingus  
Seductive vocabulary  
He fool we drool  
Pull lever for him  
Breathe bating excitable  
We loved his ex-lesbian black wife  
Son with mile high Afro  
Daughter with drug problem  
With laurel wreath woven into hair  
We forgot about you Christine Quinn  
Real honest-to-goodness lesbian  
Wholesome married with wife  
A battling politico New Yorker  
We betrayed you voting  
Feeling expansive open-minded  
Fist high bumps fall now limp as his dick

NB

**Rewrite my life**

Reinvent

Recreate

Myself

Picking up

Where

I left myself

Off

At 20

I didn't

Kill myself

Did not

Commit suicide

At 22

I let life

Drift

Stepped out

Of who I was

Becoming

Something else

A wife

For a husband

I only knew

Three weeks

From start to finish

Soup to nuts

At 22

I relinquished

A future

Over which

I would have

Dominion

For this

Unearthly

Hellish

Self-hating

Self-deceptive

Union

What would

Have happened

Had I become

Me?

No longer

Relevant

Or possible  
To contrive  
Idle time  
Derivative  
Could have been  
The life  
I would have lived  
If...  
I hadn't  
Been so  
Scared  
So fearful  
Afraid  
For anyone  
To know to see  
Voracious insatiable  
Like slurping gargoyle  
Appetites desires needs  
Pillow suffocate dreams  
Breaking daylight  
Stub toe boomerang  
Forward motion  
To create life  
I wanted to live  
Failure startling exits  
Abandonment  
Pushed aside  
Would have  
Written  
Played the cello  
Had babies  
Lived in an African village  
A Parisian arrondissement  
Bali Hampstead Heath Maine  
Each day a song  
Each day snug secure  
Tipped fragmentary fear  
Someone would have loved me  
Without being overwhelmed  
Overcome by hades hot embolism  
This is the life I will remember  
As I shut my eyes for last time  
The one dreams feared to chart

NB

**Walt Whitman Song of Myself Leaves of Grass**

*Were mankind murderous or jealous upon you, my brother, my sister?  
I am sorry for you, they are not murderous or jealous upon me,  
All has been gentle with me, I keep no account with lamentation,  
(What have I to do with lamentation?)  
I am an acme of things accomplish'd, and I an encloser of things to be.  
My feet strike an apex of the apices of the stairs,  
On every step bunches of ages, and larger bunches between the steps,  
All below duly travel'd, and still I mount and mount.  
Rise after rise bow the phantoms behind me,  
Afar down I see the huge first Nothing, I know I was even there,  
I waited unseen and always, and slept through the lethargic mist,  
And took my time, and took no hurt from the fetid carbon.  
Long I was hugg'd close—long and long.  
Immense have been the preparations for me,  
Faithful and friendly the arms that have help'd me.  
Cycles ferried my cradle, rowing and rowing like cheerful boatmen,  
For room to me stars kept aside in their own rings,  
They sent influences to look after what was to hold me.  
Before I was born out of my mother generations guided me,  
My embryo has never been torpid, nothing could overlay it.  
For it the nebula cohered to an orb,  
The long slow strata piled to rest it on,  
Vast vegetables gave it sustenance,  
Monstrous sauroids transported it in their mouths and deposited it with care.  
All forces have been steadily employ'd to complete and delight me,*

*Now on this spot I stand with my robust soul.  
O span of youth! ever-push'd elasticity!  
O manhood, balanced, florid and full.  
My lovers suffocate me,  
Crowding my lips, thick in the pores of my skin,  
Jostling me through streets and public halls, coming naked to me at night,  
Crying by day Ahoy! from the rocks of the river, swinging and chirping over my head,  
Calling my name from flower-beds, vines, tangled underbrush,  
Lighting on every moment of my life,  
Bussing my body with soft balsamic busses,  
Noiselessly passing handfuls out of their hearts and giving them to be mine.*

**Old age superbly rising! O welcome, ineffable grace of dying days!**  
*Every condition promulges not only itself, it promulges what grows after and out of itself,  
And the dark hush promulges as much as any.*

*Is this then a touch? quivering me to a new identity,  
Flames and ether making a rush for my veins,  
Traucherous tip of me reaching and crowding to help them,  
My flesh and blood playing out lightning to strike what is hardly different from myself,  
On all sides prurient provokers stiffening my limbs,  
Straining the udder of my heart for its withheld drip,  
Behaving licentious toward me, taking no denial,  
Depriving me of my best as for a purpose,  
Unbuttoning my clothes, holding me by the bare waist,  
Deluding my confusion with the calm of the sunlight and pasture-fields,  
Immodestly sliding the fellow-senses away,  
They bribed to swap off with touch and go and graze at the edges of me,  
No consideration, no regard for my draining strength or my anger,  
Fetching the rest of the herd around to enjoy them a while,  
Then all uniting to stand on a headland and worry me.*

*Walt Whitman Song of Myself Leaves of Grass*

***Inclined to living*** at a certain distance from life, I fell unexpectedly in love, for God's sake, I was in my 77<sup>th</sup> year which meant relinquishing the habits of a lifetime's solitude like decades of meals that consisted mostly of cereal or sardines, eaten out of the tin, standing up, in 30 seconds.

*Above all I have been a sentient being, a thinking animal, on this beautiful planet, and that in itself has been an enormous privilege and adventure. Oliver Sachs, NY Times 8/31/15*



## **My family**

My family is a scrambling  
Rambling mess  
Breaking apart  
Tossing aside lives  
Promises broken  
Evil has spoken

We are a mess  
Messy messy  
Son chases after  
Drunk wife  
Who screams  
How he has  
Ruined her  
Cleaned her out  
Emptied her  
Like a robber-baron  
Kids have bruises  
Like scouts badges  
She is shedding  
Her mommy self  
Spring cleaning  
He panics  
He is twelve  
Time switches  
Twitches horses tail  
There in time stalled  
I am leaving him  
Breaking up his family  
Ending my marriage  
To his father  
But not until  
I removed his gun  
Like taking nail  
Off trigger finger  
My face hues of purple  
Bruised banged  
Morning sickness  
Concussion provoked  
Overwhelmed overcome  
Run had to run  
My body my being  
Submerged in fear

Turmoil exposed

Couldn't find a way  
To put Humpty Dumpty  
Back together again  
Quicksand of past  
Dynamite to respectability  
My son nearly 50  
Panics as if  
His old 12-year-old self

My daughter portrayed  
The good little wife  
Cowered with fear  
Of her own feelings  
Husband saw fear  
Brought her to knees  
Submissive acquiescent  
Steaming scheming  
Leaving inevitable  
Is it always  
Children scratch heads  
Scramble t'is a puzzlement  
Which night which place  
Which parent on what night  
My daughter ends marriage  
Agog at her single mindedness  
Severing partnership exacting  
As fit with finely sharpened Chef knives

M youngest child  
The found one  
The boy without  
Large intestine  
Diseased small one  
My very own stoner  
A stoner with stoma  
The mother now 75  
Went over the mountain  
And the above is  
What she found  
What she could see

NB

*The bear went over the mountain,  
The bear went over the mountain,  
The bear went over the mountain,  
To see what he could see.*

### **Buber loves**

Life long friends on a park bench  
Life long loves  
Lasting but moments

NB

*"When two people relate to each other authentically and humanly, God is the electricity that surges between them." Martin Buber*

*"Everyone must come out of his Exile in his own way." Martin Buber*

### **No! Don't Want Cataract Surgery**

Eyes suppose to dim  
Why see more clearly  
Life ending  
Beautiful day  
Harder to crush  
Like prom corsage  
Petals in a book  
Wilted browning  
Still fragrant  
With memories

NB

## **Exhausted**

Tired of spilling emotions  
Of passion  
Of sorrow  
Of sadness  
Convulsive propulsive  
Churning up  
Storms in me  
I am tired  
Of sorrow  
Of our politics  
Of the hatred  
Roster white out  
Voters' names  
Women crouch  
In shadows  
Searching way out  
Of unwanted pregnancy  
Country without will  
To end gun violence  
Submachine guns are as common  
As coffee table trophy art  
I am tired of this country  
Where nine people shot dead  
While in a prayer circle  
The shooter saying he had to do it  
*Because they rape our women... (Black Men)*  
Shattered filled with disbelief  
And even hatred for this country  
Devilish men devilish politicians  
I am a woman of seventy-five  
Whose relatives escaped the *Holocaust*  
To live in a country without conscience  
Here we live on tilt on edge clipping stock coupons  
While carbon fumes fall over and suffocate us

NB

***and she said that he had*** *reloaded five different times...and he just said "I have to do it. You rape our women and you're taking over our country. And you have to go.*

*Father brought him a 45-caliber handgun as a birthday present.*

*Dylann Roof, 21 shooter Columbia South Carolina Church Prayer Meeting*

***Feminist – Activist –Freethinker (inscription for small tombstone)***

*Please plant something flowering when weather permits. Take care of each other.*

*Anne Gaylor, Obit. founder, Freedom from Religion Group*

**Mr. Bluebird**

*Oh, Mr. Bluebird on my shoulder  
(What's up Mr. Bluebird?)  
It's the truth, it's actual  
And everything is satisfactual*

*Zip-a-dee-doo-dah! Zip-a-dee-ay!  
Wonderful feeling  
Wonderful day*

*Come on everybody it's a doo dah day!  
Come on everybody have fun this day!*

*Oh, Mr. Bluebird on my shoulder  
(Isn't he cute?)  
It's the truth, it's actual  
And everything, and everything  
And everything is satisfactual  
Yup*

*Stevie Brock lyrics*



*Eastern bluebirds are known for their vibrant coloring and sweet songs. Photograph by Richard Day*

*It's the truth it's actual everything is satisfactual*

Little one Bitsy Leelee Owen Shepherd Hart  
You have nothing to worry about  
I will have birds to talk to  
When Luca leaves  
I will not be lonely  
But I surely will miss him  
He will take a piece of me  
To LA with him  
Kids leave their mommies  
Their nests some to school  
Some to their own flight paths

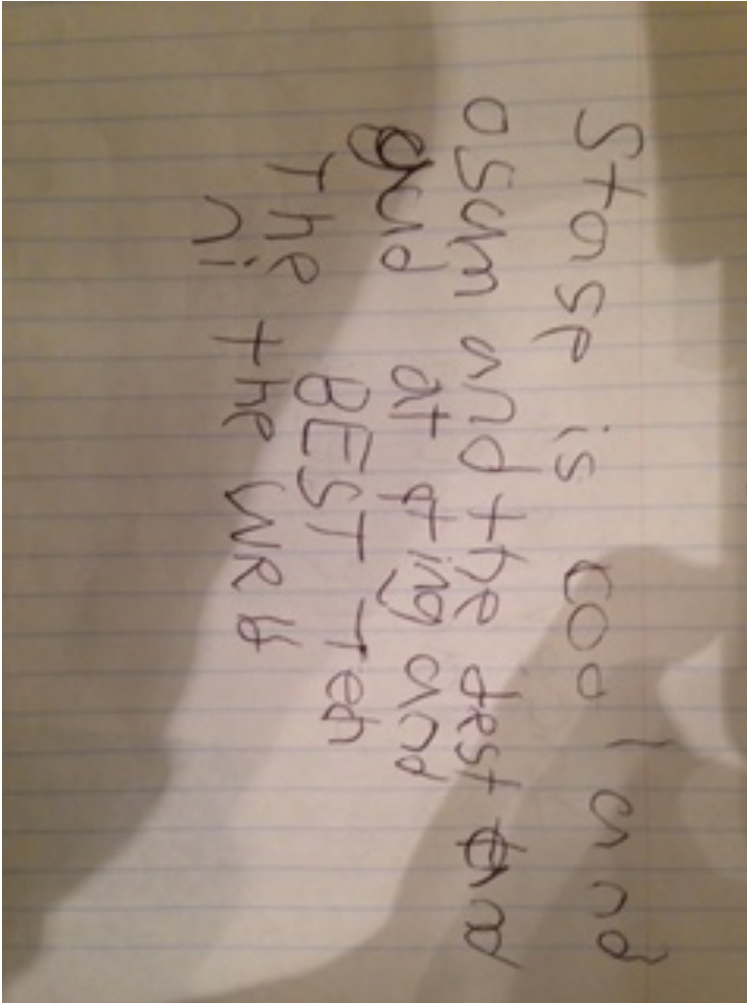
Leelee please know  
I have a bluebird on my shoulder  
And birds in the park chirp and flutter  
And dogs I really do love dogs  
But my dog-walking days are over  
Now I have dogs in the park  
To watch as they poop  
And carry sticks in their mouths  
Petsie used to carry balls or sticks  
When we went out to walk  
His morning bark woke up  
The entire neighborhood  
But he never barked in the house  
He was just happy  
To be near trees and birds and flowers  
To sniff around other dogs  
If they were friendly

And I have you Leelee  
To watch *Ninja's* with  
And to build train tracks  
And blocks with  
Those were Luca's  
He wanted you to have them  
How like Luca you are  
Both wonderful architects with blocks  
And trains and magnet tiles



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Sitting close to you reading  
Or talking or watching shows  
Makes my world complete  
You are the loving bluebird  
Of happiness on my shoulder  
*It's the truth it's actual*  
Soon to the moon on bluebird wings  
Sweet song filling the sky  
Soaring and humming and loving you  
NB



Owens letter to his tutor tonight - April 22, 2016

and yours and rebecca's birth certificates - and all of the grandkids xo

Blindness is a gift Jeanne. And of course a curse. Tutor is a genius. And the poem and that note should absolutely live side by side alongside the Reynolds Bible and that 44 Revolver. Jeremy Barber

I've just made it my screen saver.  
But I will absolutely print it and frame it and hang it next to willas I died I died poem. Rebecca Barber - Mother

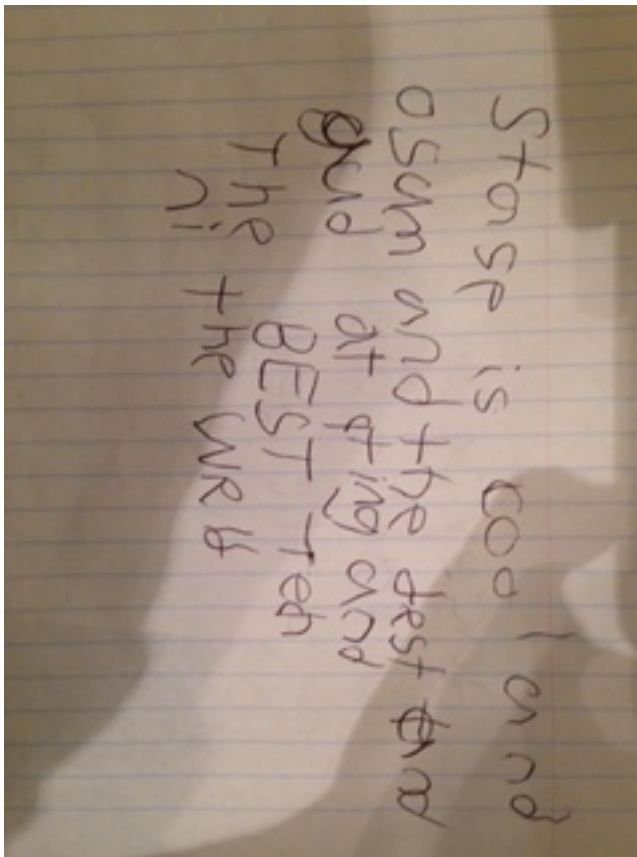


That is a thing of beauty.  
Frame it and keep it please.  
So proud of you.

Best  
Jeremy

Owens letter to his tutor tonight.  
Love that kid.

That is pooh writing to his so loved christopher robin - this is the place doing  
**nothing** - sacred and special - xo mom



July 17, 2015 -

Grappling  
It is here  
The day  
The touchstone  
No regrets  
Permit issued



Headstone capstone  
Inscription on tombstone  
Swamp weed algae  
Ash to seedling  
Harlem Meer  
Conservatory Garden  
Park bench  
Tiny bronze plaque  
Inscribed so  
*Naomi Barber*  
*Mother*  
*Grandmother*  
*New Yorker*



*Terrible patience wild patience (Adrienne Rich)*  
Kept me moving forward  
Against all odds  
*I can't go on I must go on I'll go on (Samuel Beckett)*  
Finished going on  
No longer tantric din  
Hum beneath my step  
Feel free even if not

Death's got me  
Caught up with me  
Free will will-less  
No longer a choice  
*To Live or Die* (Anne Sexton)  
To die closer close enough  
Grappling with endings  
Struggling arm wrestling  
Searching for the pills  
First to stop eating  
Easing into the countdown  
The tablets of my tablet  
Ornamental last moments  
Searching for that place  
Extravagant natural beauty  
Solitary hand cupping mouth  
Then final figurative breathes

***"I believe that when I die I shall rot, and nothing of my ego will survive. I am not young and I love life. But I should scorn to shiver with terror at the thought of annihilation. Happiness is nonetheless true happiness because it must come to an end, nor do thought and love lose their value because they are not everlasting. Many a man has borne himself proudly on the scaffold; surely the same pride should teach us to think truly about man's place in the world. Even if the open windows of science at first make us shiver after the cozy indoor warmth of traditional humanizing myths, in the end the fresh air brings vigour, and the great **spaces have a splendour of their own.**"***

*"I must, before I die, find some way to say the essential thing that is in me, that I have never said yet -- a thing that is not love or hate or pity or scorn, but the very breath of life, fierce and coming from far away, bringing into human life the vastness and the fearful passionless force of non-human things."* **Bertrand Russell**

.....  
*I Fucked Everything Up and Now I Must Die – Paul Ford*

Free wheeling quotes  
Searching for the words  
The final words  
The calling out words  
The yelling out  
Then the sputtering  
Then the whimpering  
Then the death rattle  
Then the silence

Free to drop dead  
To die at my own hand  
*75 is a good long life*  
Just ask Dr. Zeke Emanuel

***Why I Hope to Die at 75*****An argument that society and families—and you—will be better off if nature takes its course swiftly and promptly. Ezekiel Emanuel, MD**

*Free at last free at last*  
*Good lord I am free at last*

***'Free at last, Free at last, Thank God almighty we are free at last.'*** (Martin Luther King, Jr.)

To take my own life  
To finally die  
I have come to the end  
I existed I endured  
Faced the unfaceable  
Unfazed  
Come to terms  
With the no more  
Not again  
No more chances  
No more choices  
What was was  
*Writ in the wind* (Roger Daltry)  
The past lives  
Passive verb  
Deep irrevocable slumber  
Some of the facts  
*Ouch* make me squirm  
Water on a worm  
My turn  
What have I learned  
I yearned for love  
But not enough  
Tepid desire fear  
Overshadowed desire  
Mine was the hand  
To pull me back  
Hack at love  
Desire fizzled  
Frayed fear  
Seized snatched  
Capsized sunk  
Dreams kerplunk

Big pretender  
Craving love craven  
Stillbirth dreams desires

*Oh-oh, yes I'm the great pretender  
Pretending that I'm doing well  
My need is such I pretend too much  
I'm lonely but no one can tell  
Oh-oh, yes I'm the great pretender  
Adrift in a world of my own  
I've played the game but to my real shame  
You've left me to grieve all alone  
Too real is this feeling of make-believe  
Too real when I feel what my heart can't conceal  
Yes I'm the great pretender  
Just laughin' and gay like a clown  
I seem to be what I'm not, you see  
I'm wearing my heart like a crown  
Pretending that you're still around  
Too real is this feeling of make-believe  
Too real when I feel what my heart can't conceal  
Yes I'm the great pretender  
Just laughin' and gay like a clown  
I seem to be what I'm not, you see  
I'm wearing my heart like a crown  
Pretending that you're still around - Platters*

Mythic rendering  
Afraid would devour  
The whoever other  
Appetite too great  
Rapacious hunger  
Threatened doomed  
Hot desire singed pinned in  
Serpentine surrendering  
Vulture picking at bones  
Of dead end dreams  
Time to die  
Without a great love  
Oh no how could it be  
For someone for whom  
Love was the life source  
The prepossessing  
Encompassing need  
Bitter tears bite face and lip  
Grip the sky the stars  
To slip away filled  
Wilt and mourn

Clenched fist  
Wring neck of regret  
I will die virginal untouched  
By a great or true love  
A tautology a truth  
Crush heart pestle and mortar  
It refuses to give up beating  
Betrayed enraged defeated



NB

*Let your last thinks all be thanks. W.H. Auden*

.....

## **Drum roll**

*Fan Fare for the Common Man (Aaron Copeland)*

I am the reveler  
Bystander witnessing  
Life without me  
Definition blurry  
Botched concocted  
Cataracts smudge clarity  
Drain the swamp  
Marinating self  
Preparation for the grave  
Watching world drift on  
Minus me  
Gloopy gaze cataract haze  
Standing back  
This will be the world  
My world without me  
Stepping aside time to die  
Elision diminishing self  
Arrival at *Elysian Fields*



The Elysian Fields or Elysium refer to a beautiful meadow in Homer where the favored of Zeus enjoy perfect happiness. This was the ultimate paradise a hero could achieve: basically an ancient Greek Eden.

Glissando pianissimo  
*No light at end of tunnel*  
Earth opening its mouth  
To swallow me up  
Old age nips displaces  
Forgetting misplacing  
Grinding haltingly falteringly  
Steps gingerly fear of falling  
Hip fracture death follows  
Synapse snap mortal collapse  
Fear losing control  
Finessing Hippocratic Oath

Body's ultimate heave ho  
Coddled egg nesting bird  
*Antsy pants* death stalking  
Memory sputters fits and starts  
Enacts retracts redacts  
Can't remember name of movie  
The one before the one before  
Future time contracts  
Death at whose hand  
Still an option  
Slipping into shadow  
Not to call attention  
As I falter and despair  
Cells won't regenerate  
No reclaiming lost ground  
Watching my family  
Choreographer  
Of great stress imbalance  
Pantheon mythic mother  
Sanitized patronized eulogized  
Twisted tourniquet  
Fear of being cared for  
Moving away leaving alone  
Rupture fracture connection  
Inevitable parting  
Troubling death  
Rumbling it is coming  
Time to compose  
That final narrative  
*Die Another Day (James Bond)*  
Time for hymnal processional  
*Gabriel* blow your horn  
Flags and bugles  
*Verdi's Requiem*  
*Requiem Requiem Requiem*  
Voice tapers whispery  
Denouement quiet end  
Church bells knell  
A moment of silence please  
Diaphone of summer breeze  
Liturgical elliptical  
Lift my hands  
Baptist preacher  
Recites litany  
*Gabriel's* horn  
*Paul Winter* solstice



With whimsy  
Greif bent  
Smile or sob  
Particulars  
Of denouement  
Tumultuous  
Identity  
Twisted up  
Spasming intestine  
Processional  
Walk circular park path  
What to see  
Final sweep of eyes  
Bright sun blinding  
Cataract thickened eyesight  
I must act  
Knell final bell  
*For whom the bell tolls (Hemingway)*  
This time for me for me  
Paul Bunyon axing tree



What will it be  
Willow maple linden  
Evergreen ginkgo  
Time's run out  
Shaping final thoughts  
Life flashes before eyes  
Reviewing silently  
Bemused  
Revelatory parsed  
Microscopic bits  
Time's come  
Life's run out  
The possible  
Impossible  
Roll the drums  
The end is come  
Fanfare hoopla

Hosannas  
To die quietly  
If defiantly  
Didn't honor  
Being radically alive  
Sought overhang of *Nothingness*  
Scrunched body mouth  
Searching for essential  
Connection  
Recoiled from loves reach  
Just made it as mother  
Paul Winter Gabriel  
The final fanfare please  
Denouement  
*Requiem Requiem Requiem*  
*Verdi's Requiem*  
The liturgy quiet pleas  
Not to die morbid mordant  
Garlands of grace and ease  
NB



**...a world of never ending happiness - in this life, you're on your own.**

**We're all excited  
But we don't know why  
Maybe it's cause  
We're all gonna die.**

**Excuse me but I need a mouth like yours, to help me forget the girl that just walked  
out my door - I'm in love with God. He's the only way, cus you and I know we gotta die  
some day.**

**Prince**

**"The People That You Never Get To Love"**

*You're browsing through a second hand bookstore  
And you see her in non-fiction V through Y  
She looks up from World War II  
And then you catch her, catching, you catching her eye*

*And you quickly turn away your wishful stare  
And take a sudden interest in your shoes  
If you only had the courage but you don't  
She turns and leaves and you both lose*

*And you think about  
The people that you never get to love  
It's not as if you even have the chance  
So many worth a second life  
But rarely do you get a second glance  
Until fate cuts in on your dance*

*And you'll see her on a train that you've just missed  
At a bus stop where your bus will never stop  
Or in a passing Buick  
When you've been pulled over by a traffic cop*

*Or you'll share an elevator, just you two  
And you'll rise in total silence to the floor  
Like the fool you are, you get off  
And she leaves your life behind a closing door*

*And you think about  
The people that you never get to love  
The poem you intended to begin  
The saddest words that anyone has ever said are  
'Lord, what might have been'  
But no one said you get to win*

*Still you're never gonna miss what you don't know  
And you don't know who you'll meet at half past three  
It could be a total stranger  
Who looks something just exactly much like me*

*One of the people that you never get to love  
One of the people that you never get to love  
The people that you never get to love*

***The saddest words that anyone has ever said are 'Lord what might have been.'***

**Rupert Holmes – The People That You Never Get to Love**

### **No Tidying Up**

Leaving loose ends  
Parting words  
Crossing Styx  
Very old woman  
Never anyone  
To share a beer with  
Down to nub and bone  
Solitary and alone  
No begging  
For one hour more  
Tinsel wattage garbage  
Time to put hatred aside  
Time to extinguish light  
Mouth worn out  
Gabfest words  
Without meaning  
Flickering quick  
Love affairs  
Friendships  
Without promise  
Self-constructed  
Synthetic inauthentic  
Plastics not biodegradable  
In drift and sludge  
Life never caught on  
In a flickery wick of time  
It has come and gone

NB

*Precious Lord, take my hand*

*Lead me on, help me stand*

*I am tired*

*I am weak*

*I am lone*

*Joey Feek, singer, died of cervical cancer at 40*

*The sad irony of all this that Garry (Shandling) is reunited with his mother for all eternity. (Shandling was known to have a fraught relationship with his mother.)*

*A young man named Tomás has recently lost his son, his lover and his father, a trifecta of death that's left him so turned around by sorrow that he walks backward. "Some people never laugh again. Others take to drink," Martel writes. "Walking backwards, his back to the world, his back to God, he is not grieving. He is objecting. Because when everything cherished by you in life has been taken away, what else is there to do but object?" Yann Martel, "The High Mountains of Portugal"*

### **Stages of Dying as Chronicled by Myself**

No expectations  
No obligations  
No pressure  
Back at ground zero  
Death looming  
Nothing more  
Bad can happen  
The worst  
Perspiring in salty bits  
Pouring out of me  
Set off by radiating sun

Envisioning imagining  
How I will be remembered  
Family anecdotes  
Stories tall-tales  
Recollections gathered  
In the storm centers  
Of their own needs  
For remembering me  
Hated or loved  
Falls without challenge  
From disparate tongues  
Culled from need myth creed  
Recollected moments scattered  
Along a fictive timeline  
Death compressing life  
Into random irreverent  
Points of crushing pain  
Tintinnabulations of joy

I watch myself  
Scattershot moments  
Come to me  
I am in a kitchen at 924

It is Sunday morning  
Lover's embracing on the corner  
Reluctant goodbyes departures  
Waiting for Jeremy and Rebecca  
Pancake batter ready  
Bacon draining on toweling  
I am young  
Thirty-one or two  
Diffused confused  
Last night our night off  
My body left untouched  
Moving off the edge  
Of the bed before 6 am  
Watching lover's turnip kiss  
Turbulence stirs up  
Love's discarded dreams  
Pancakes ready  
It is Sunday  
Tears oblique  
Sodden sudden  
How did I put myself  
Into such an absolute  
Abrogation of will  
Doomed afraid  
Of my rapacious  
Desire for love  
Of losing control  
Manifest wild thing  
Devouring another  
Sundays watch the lovers  
At the corner  
Of Bdwy. and West 106  
Children straggle in  
Eyes still filled with sleep  
Grab me from behind  
Giving almost toppling hug  
Take their place at the table  
Bacon pancakes butter syrup  
Hot chocolate some silliness  
Looking back at this point  
On the timeline  
Regret still open season  
Desperation stuns  
I grab onto other men  
Hug me hold me I beg  
My husband records

Last night as off  
Infant urges  
Demand feeding  
Drone's schedule  
Two on one off  
He had the loaded gun  
I did not have the guts  
The strength the fortitude  
To chose to act otherwise  
Sequestered bride put  
On a biblical calendar  
A sexually oriented  
Love assailing star

Desperate attempts  
For solace in shadows  
Behind my own back  
Escaping now and then  
The din the hunger  
The desire for love  
Inside the wedding band  
*From now to forever*  
A distant point  
A window in the kitchen  
Beyond sorrow horror regret  
Harrowing decisions  
Death's to reckon  
No reconciling  
Never awakened  
The girl and love  
Tincture of courage  
Squandered illicit  
Grabs for the sensation  
Trash dung scented  
Embattled heart  
Squalls screams taunts  
Last hard look back  
Never ever experienced  
True love and that is  
The artery hardening fact  
NB

***The art of losing isn't hard to master;  
so many things seem filled with the intent  
to be lost that their loss is no disaster.***

*Elizabeth Bishop "One Art"*

***My grandma said nothing real can be threatened. True love brought salvation back  
into me. With every tear came redemption, and my torturer became my remedy. So  
we're gonna heal. Beyonce - Lemonade***

*"You want me to be a tragic backdrop so that you can appear to be illuminated, so that people  
can say 'Wow, isn't he so terribly brave to love a girl who is so obviously sad?' You think I'll be  
the dark sky so you can be the star? I'll swallow you whole." Warsan Shire*

*but you are always too intense  
frightening in the way you want him  
unashamed and sacrificial  
he tells you that no man can live up to the one who  
lives in your head  
and you tried to change didn't you?  
closed your mouth more  
tried to be softer  
prettier  
less volatile, less awake  
but even when sleeping you could feel  
him travelling away from you in his dreams  
so what did you want to do love  
split his head open?  
you can't make homes out of human beings  
someone should have already told you that  
and if he wants to leave  
then let him leave  
you are terrifying  
and strange and beautiful  
something not everyone knows how to love." Warsan Shire*

*"two people who were once very close can  
without blame  
or grand betrayal  
become strangers.  
perhaps this is the saddest thing in the world." Warsan Shire*

***All men die in disappointment. Brian Eno's father-in-law***

***She had deep, inexhaustible reserves of coldness inside her. Marie NDiaye, "Ladivine"***



**Suffering from**

Stage four  
Old age syndrome  
Body will spirit  
Going dark  
Old age  
Advancing  
Hair eyes teeth  
Gravity pulls  
On the rest of me  
Suffering from  
Terminal old age  
Hours days moments  
No longer  
To be patient  
Past present future  
Pluperfect  
I am more gone  
Than here  
Time to reconcile  
Tie up loose ends  
No more forgive and forget  
I do want to go gentle into that good night

*And you, my father, there on the sad height,  
Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.  
Do not go gentle into that good night.  
Rage rage against the dying of the light. (Dylan Thomas)*

Regrets dissipate  
Raging fist unfurls  
Saying goodbye  
To trees to sky  
Each color of lilac  
Has a distinct fragrance  
Ducks spin just above  
Dive bombing into the Meer  
Time closes in hushed quiet  
Arc of voice music bird song  
Eyes flutter closed angels harken  
The glorious finality of *Verdi's Requiem*

NB

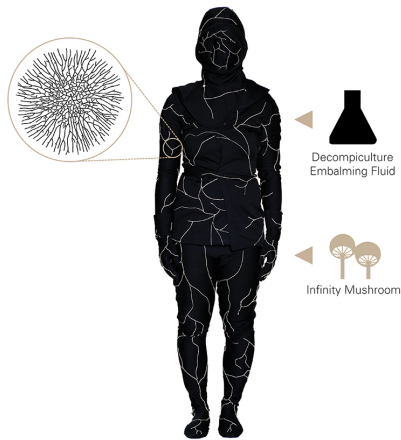
*...crumpled by the invisible weight of unrequited love – killed by it even.*  
*Natalie Bell, curator, New Museum*

### **Suit me Up I'm an Environmentalist**

Biodegradable body bags  
Like snow suits lining filled with  
Dead people eating mushrooms  
*Mushrooms meant to break down a human corpse*  
*Cleanse it of toxins and distribute nutrients back into the soil*  
It is called **the Infinite Burial Suit**

Put me on the list  
*I think death acceptance is a critical aspect of protecting our environment.*  
*Jae Rhim Lee*

Further, *Undertaking LA* operates a “Do your own Death” workshop to give people the tools to plan home funerals. There is an authenticating **Green Burial Council** for entrepreneurial Kickstarters’. **I hope the mushrooms eat you faster** than tree-growing urns or egg-shaped pods, other new products –a critic wrote to Jae Rhim Lee in an email. Given her goals she takes this as a compliment.



**Infinity Burial Suit**

## *Mushroom Suits, Biodegradable Urns and Death's Green Frontier*



*Jae Rhim Lee poses for a portrait wearing the Infinity Burial Suit she created. The suit is seeded with mushrooms bred to feed on the toxins stored in our bodies. Jae Rhim Lee wants you to be less squeamish about death, and she thinks a suit lined with flesh-eating mushrooms might do the trick. Ms. Lee, 40, is an artist and entrepreneur who has long been intrigued by how people relate to their environment. So, to start the process of un-freaking people out, she created what she calls the Infinity Burial Suit. It's a \$1,500 outfit that incorporates mushrooms meant to break down a human corpse, cleanse it of toxins and distribute nutrients back into the soil. No one has been buried in it yet, but she said that a man who suffers from a chronic illness has agreed to be the first. "I want to propose a different way of thinking about death that moves us toward death acceptance," she said. "I think death acceptance is a critical aspect of protecting our environment." Ms. Lee is among a growing group of entrepreneurs trying to disrupt death. She offers her mushroom suit as an alternative to what she calls the "death denial" practices of the funeral industry — which is still embalming bodies then putting them in coffins entombed in concrete liners — and the cryonics field, which aims to preserve dead people for later revival. Her pitch: Why not just accept that we're going to die, and do less harm to the environment in the process? Happy Earth Day!*

### **Death innovators**

#### **Dying hyperbole**

*Worms crawl in the worms crawl out*

*My temple subjected to third world rigors*

*Mites, lice, and chiggers*

*Fcal particulates undermining hygiene*

*Larvae gestating*

*Nematodes penetrate through bare cutis*

*Budding hydatid cysts*

*To legions of parasites I will cater*

*A human incubatorBowels transmuted into stygian pits*

*Diarrhic fits*

*Omentum impacted by a septic infusion*

*Intestinal occlusionInvasion precipitated by a vermes wermacht*

*Treatments are for naught*

*Burrowing through my sebacious glands*

*Muscles serrated into strands*

*Domestic quarters for all manner of vermin  
Inside of me squirming'  
Linear lesions across my forearms and hands  
Larva migrans Plerocercoids gorge and migrate  
Tunneling will not abate  
Uretal fibrosis from the rubble  
Now, urine trouble  
The worms crawl in  
The Wohlfartia fly is making a nest  
My epidermis, a home for the pests  
Gasterophilial infants are binging  
As the creeping eruption is inching  
Viscera gnawed away  
By parasitic larvae  
This life, I have rued  
Reduced to worm food  
Sparganosis generates fundal ulcerations  
Adiposal liquidation  
A mass of scolices clotting the cecum  
Impacted scybalum  
Quenching parched mouths on my succus entericus  
Ingesting the viscus  
Through the shinc-door, the pupa are lured  
The early worm catches the turd  
Hyperemesis induced for tniacide  
Useless tonics imbibed  
Atheroma results in gangrene  
A voracious maggots dream  
The worms crawl in  
The worms crawl out (Music Sean McGrath Lyrics Ross Sewage)*

Amorous death  
Enamored with death dying  
Tidying up before leaving  
Leaving what  
Saying goodbye to whom  
Where do they go dead people  
Nobody really ever knows  
Death I'm hooked  
Can't get you out of my mind  
Resigned by design my time is up  
Death obsessed possessed  
Tinkled pink by you  
Down by the Bayou  
Alligators and tin drummers  
Top haters lift knees  
Marching down  
New Orleans streets  
White horse driven hearse  
In the recesses of my mind

In the recesses of my mind. *Suicide. Why do I constantly think of suicide. Is it because of the wanting to be wanted. Is it a release. Is it because I no longer want to be. Is it because of the memories I have of you and me. The memories of childhood ...the yelling, the screaming, the fighting. the oath I made to myself never to be a mother...never to be married if that was what love was about. I reach into the depths of my mind and I look for the answer but I don't know what it is. I think of my mother telling me that I wasn't talented...that there were far more talented people in the world than me. I think of you when I met you. The feeling of electricity between us. The feeling of knowing of my want for you...and wanting you to want me like I wanted you. The years I thought that you did. Then you told me years later that you didn't. The times that we went through. How you married me. My believing that you loved me...but didn't. Waiting for you to come home when you were with other women. And the time that you held me and started to make love then opened your eyes and look at me and, oh...instead of saying loving wanted words to me...your words came strong and struck my heart like a...knife piercing through it as you said...'oh it's only you! I thought it was someone else'. These are the words that you said before you pushed me out of bed...and I landed on the floor...wounded once again by you. I have reached to the depths of my heart to tell you all this after I asked God why I have been sent when all I seem to do is live in my memories...sad and constantly circumventing with every step. He gave me the words of which you have just heard...Isn't life absurd! C.J. Lewis*

Wounded wounded all  
Suit up pills in hand  
Mushrooms already puncturing  
Skin to get to fatty parts  
And so we get to  
The beginning of the end  
Back to the shifting tides  
The ocean's dying bride  
The grasping undertow  
Pulls me in and under  
Clouds darken  
Thunder rumbles  
Lightning bolt warning  
Not to let pills as in Still Alice  
Tumble from fraught hands  
Got to make better plans  
Worldview makes me  
Not a good fit  
For *Infinity Burial Suit*  
Sorry Jae Rhim Lee  
Must make my own way  
But God no not the  
Hospice hospital bed  
In living room route  
Precise dosages of morphine  
In refrigerator

God help me god save me  
It is not fear of death  
That imprisons me  
It is fear of the roiling sea  
Got to go to Coney Island  
On the subway  
And sit near Nathans  
Beneath the Ferris wheel  
Take it all in become friends  
With the oceans whirl and twirl  
Movie stills fill my dreams  
I will die beneath  
The rocky bluffs in Maine  
Star lit nocturnal life lifting off  
Wave closing over taking me  
Already adrift consciousness dimmed  
The eco system I will to join  
Salt and brine and tides and moon  
*Star light star bright first (and last) star I see tonight*  
*I wish I may, I wish I might have the wish I wish tonight*  
NB

**Orbit bits and pieces of days circling Meer**

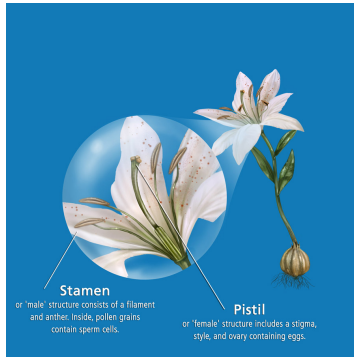
The Conservatory Garden  
World now blocks wide  
Won't get to Greece  
Who wants to get there now  
Migrants from Syria  
Escaping genocide  
The same genocide  
That brought our family  
To Lady Liberty and Ellis Island  
But me no longer need to flee  
My legs just won't take me  
Wander around my home  
Find it a marvel a composition  
Sort of pre-death mausoleum  
Me inside out what a wonder  
World getting smaller and smaller  
Jane E. Brody's NY Times column  
"Thriving at Age 70 and Beyond"  
That is my cohort my peer group  
I am in my eighth decade  
Plunked right smack in the middle

Time to get my house in order  
Will completed medical papers on file  
Don't dare touch me  
Don't dare revive me  
Glory be let me be  
I am old  
I carry a stylish walking stick  
Have one with carved duck's head  
Hand carved in Italy with glass amber eyes  
Don't want to have a plan for a day  
Need days to be open ended plain swept  
Need to walk off if gingerly my regrets  
Now no longer need other's eyes as fuel  
Don't care about being witnessed  
Kaleidoscopic stamen and pistil  
Majesty mystery held within tulip petals  
The sumptuous carefully stenciled  
Stunning startling variations of colors  
Look deep inside enflaming passion struck



Take in fragrance of lilacs coming into bloom  
Don't need to have anyone admiring me  
Finding me a wonder  
Little loves little conversations  
Circumvent circumambulate  
Circumnavigate my world  
Walking taking in my world  
Within a circumference three blocks long.

NB



Plant reproductive structures stamen and pistil, copyright by Daren Carr

***You're only ½ the Artist You Could Be! And a Little Less Than ½ as Weird as You Think You Are! Nicole Eisenman, artist***

### **El Greco Elongated**

Tickly prickly  
 Mile high shoes  
 Leggings like second skin  
 Face stretched tight  
 As if a canvas on a frame  
 Primed to confront or contain  
 A reality to grasp and control  
 Eyes pushed to the limit of sight  
 The long tall girl on stilts  
 Stick figure of a woman  
 Came from my body  
 She finds food  
 A cumbersome unwieldy necessity  
 El Greco and Diet Coke  
 Power bars and self-regard  
 Who is this  
 This is my daughter  
 She is forty-seven  
 I am seventy-five  
 We each inhabit  
 A reality composed  
 Of widgets and fidgets



And forget-me-nots  
El Greco sallow cheeks  
Grasping mysterious reality  
She is my child I her mom  
I have lost three inches  
Need a walking stick to hold me up  
She searches for courage within and without  
With each gangly spike shoe stride

St. Martin and the Beggar



Resurrection



Laocoon

## Drifting Dribbling Toward Irrelevance

Swept over by sadness  
Tumbleweed on Kansas plains



Fraught overwrought distraught  
Ages and stages plied through  
With a fine toothed comb  
Hair follicle by hair follicle  
Thinning winnowing  
Spare sparse bedraggled

Didn't commit suicide  
*When I was one-and-twenty (A.E. Housman)*  
At that death ruminating time  
And here I am still alive at 75  
College love if never touched  
Killed herself undiscovered  
For ten days beneath  
The Golden Gate Bridge  
Bound rupturing unraveling  
Love dreaming of me  
To death's taunt  
Turned the other cheek  
Rather married  
Gun slinging toting madman  
Slung on shoulder sheepskin  
He grand archduke doctor of philosophy

Absurdist fragmentary  
Fractured abrogated  
Negated lost my mind  
Spanned seventeen years  
Fractured spineless  
Tinctured parsed

Lyme tick lies lives  
Next married a man  
Who appeared normal  
*Ripley's Believe it or Not*  
Feigned an innocence  
Finally moving beyond  
Guns head beatings  
Oven stuffing threats  
To do away with self  
This guy pooped slept ate  
Easy as hands moving  
Around a clock  
Lips unlocked  
Projectile verbiage  
In poison dart speech  
*Good man nice man*  
Describing himself  
Pooping regularly man  
Made monster mother  
Gun slinging fist flailing  
Husband number one  
Appear like family

Wobbly baby lambs  
Innocence shattered  
Veneer Vermeer  
Light finally filtered in  
Exposing his sullen  
Sodden ugly inner self  
Ordinary feral man  
Crept into my life  
Reptilian aggressive  
Never ever claimed  
To want or love me

Moving slowing  
Turtle back to sea  
Eggs tucked  
Beneath bramble  
Lumbering instinctive  
Rhythm of waves entice  
Sand grasp and crawl  
Shell encrusted life  
Getting progressively  
Closer to death to dying  
More now easily

Conceived believed  
Just *slip sliding away* (Paul Simon)  
Not too many more awkward  
Aardvark awkward  
Clump lump dump days left



I was happiest next to my  
Aardvark babies

Bequeathing still  
Raspy voice wisdom  
To my eldest 50 and 47  
Who indulge me  
Even reverently  
Don't leave  
Don't go away not yet  
Obstacle course ahead  
Jelly rolled tumbleweed to death  
Incontinent drooling in their care  
Brimming Brimfield flea market tears  
Dribble down my check  
Host *Holy Ghost* time is up  
Galvanize breakfront  
Miasmic energies  
Quit to just quit  
When where will he she be  
Questions dormant  
Fall on deaf ears  
Doomed to dribble drool  
Incontinent parched  
Breathe faltering  
Refusing to quit  
Come to *Ravenswood* (supernatural teen drama)  
Ravenous raven  
Quoth sing out trill  
Betrothal bidding

*Nevermore nevermore nevermore  
And my soul from out that shadow  
that lies floating on the floor  
Shall be lifted—nevermore! (Edgar Allen Poe)*



Existing nevermore  
*Parting is such sweet sorrow  
That I shall say goodnight  
Till it be morrow (Shakespeare Romeo and Juliet)  
Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day (Shakespeare Macbeth)*  
Thrombotic legs lumber on  
Turtle to sea's mad seduction  
Fear of waves and undertow  
Impervious rallying come-on  
*Conquer your fears*  
Luca my found princeling  
Once shouted out to me  
The currents of Wellfleet waves  
Roiling rolling and rollicking  
He frolicking down dunes  
To waters bob and weave  
Time to leave  
Ocean beckons me  
No vultures no body rot  
No cremator to call up  
Go forward dive beneath  
The hurl and burl of waves  
*Death comes one way or another (Blondie)*  
Hearken the ocean's tumble rumble  
Swirl twirl undercurrent  
Undulating roar unstoppable din  
Come begin the unraveling  
Down by the briny salty sea

NB

### ***The Idea Of Order at Key West***

*She sang beyond the genius of the sea.  
The water never formed to mind or voice,  
Like a body wholly body, fluttering  
Its empty sleeves; and yet its mimic motion  
Made constant cry, caused constantly a cry,  
That was not ours although we understood,  
Inhuman, of the veritable ocean.*

*The sea was not a mask. No more was she.  
The song and water were not medleyed sound  
Even if what she sang was what she heard,  
Since what she sang was uttered word by word.  
It may be that in all her phrases stirred  
The grinding water and the gasping wind;  
But it was she and not the sea we heard.*

*For she was the maker of the song she sang.  
The ever-hooded, tragic-gestured sea  
Was merely a place by which she walked to sing.  
Whose spirit is this? we said, because we knew  
It was the spirit that we sought and knew  
That we should ask this often as she sang.*

*If it was only the dark voice of the sea  
That rose, or even colored by many waves;  
If it was only the outer voice of sky  
And cloud, of the sunken coral water-walled,  
However clear, it would have been deep air,  
The heaving speech of air, a summer sound  
Repeated in a summer without end  
And sound alone. But it was more than that,  
More even than her voice, and ours, among  
The meaningless plungings of water and the wind,  
Theatrical distances, bronze shadows heaped  
On high horizons, mountainous atmospheres  
Of sky and sea.  
It was her voice that made  
The sky acutest at its vanishing.  
She measured to the hour its solitude.  
She was the single artificer of the world  
In which she sang. And when she sang, the sea,  
Whatever self it had, became the self  
That was her song, for she was the maker. Then we,  
As we beheld her striding there alone,  
Knew that there was never a world for her  
Except the one she sang and, singing, made.*

*Ramon Fernandez, tell me, if you know,  
Why, when the singing ended and we turned  
Toward the town, tell why the glassy lights,  
The lights in the fishing boats at anchor there,*

*As the night descended, tilting in the air,  
Mastered the night and portioned out the sea,  
Fixing emblazoned zones and fiery poles,  
Arranging, deepening, enchanting night.*

*Oh! Blessed rage for order, pale Ramon,  
The maker's rage to order words of sea  
Words of the fragrant portals, dimly-starred,  
And of ourselves and our origins,  
In ghostlier demarcations, keener sounds. Wallace Stevens*

***What I did manage to gather made me realize that as I had been floating along on a river of bliss, he had been mentally cataloging evidence of my flaws.***

***Tonya Malinowski, producer ESPN***

**Presumptuous sumptuous**

The slow slough of goodbye  
Staring startled at my own life  
People need friends  
Like water soaked plants  
But never mean  
Parched drying out  
Like dried beans  
Took vow when eleven  
To be alone  
Anticipating fear dread  
I compiled for myself a dead end  
No camaraderie for me  
Friendships more than minutes long  
Scare me feet scuttering fleeing  
*Alone! Alone! Alone!*  
Mother cried out wailed  
Thank god I am solitary alone  
Friends' friendships scare me

NB

***You can do the crossword and mind puzzles, stretch, take long walks:  
There is evidence that these activities correlate with keeping memory loss and, you  
know, death at bay, for a while longer: two, four, six years. Maybe.***

***Practicing for a Better Old Age, Gerald Marzorati, NY Times 5/1/16***

## Carnal Leg Collapse

Carnal carnival leg collapse  
Folding infant foal under me  
Like *Petsie Wiener* (we called him)  
Our rescued chocolate lab  
End of life hip dysplasia  
Dysplasia dystopia  
Time to go move on

Mother stopped driving  
She was 92  
Spinal stenosis  
Kept her foot off gas pedal  
*Man killed aid*  
*Guiding him out of parking space*  
*At the Millburn Diner*  
Murderous wrathful woman  
Didn't want to be caught  
Killing anyone in public  
Our Jewish *Lady Macbeth*  
Came oh so close  
Trying to contract out  
The murder of her husband  
These health aids without papers

Mortal leg collapse  
Eyes dim  
Teeth all but gone  
*Need to press on*  
*Pubic bone to pee*  
This cautionary note  
A veritable motherly quote  
As said from a stall in ladies room  
At Millburn Chinese restaurant  
T'is true got to press like wine  
To get urine to flow from body  
As if giving birth  
To a form of diminishment  
The disappearances onslaught  
I exist in a body collapsing dying off  
Nullify codify surmise check points  
Tilt forward right angel to sun  
Bring knees to chest  
Relieve stenosis symptoms *(WebMd advises)*



Weary self, sad self  
Sodden muddled self  
Sorrow not dysplasia  
Taut gravity pull  
Drags down forecloses

Again post-operative son  
Lies in next room  
Blunt flickers near bed  
Teeny tweezer held toke lit  
*Can't drink that crap in refrig.*  
No pulp in orange juice  
*Paul Newman* virgin pink lemonade  
Orange and pink Gatorade and Seven Up  
*None of these get me cranberry 7 UP*  
Back bending to please  
A litany of psychotic  
Psychedelic infused food orders  
Spill out of pot stoked mouth  
Shouted out without decorum or grace  
He gets swept over by yens for foods  
Gallop calliope of foods  
Surfing calamitous appetites  
Drug hazed images  
Grafted from far side of moon  
Mom he shouts calls out  
Fingernails scratching chalkboard

Seventh or eight surgery lost count  
Slicing away at his small intestine  
Large one long gone  
Cold morgue like setting waiting room  
Family members faces struck in fear  
Waiting to be called to hospital phone  
To learn results of surgery  
Strictly chance-encumbered world

Luca's father spouts  
Echolalic soliloquies nonstop  
How he did his best  
How my friends treat him to this day like shit  
Claims he didn't know who he was back then  
*I did my best - made mistakes everyone does*  
He got a girl, me, who could stand in front of him  
Whom he could stand behind and shadow  
And then bellowed at being overshadowed

For what am I being verbally pummeled punished  
He asks in the lame whipped whippet dog way  
As I jam him a bumper car  
With random disjointed retorts

*You are no writer I tell him  
I am having something published in...  
Rarely in print always about forgiveness  
Still believe in integration  
I had nothing when the marriage broke up  
You had your Brazilian girlfriend  
She was in Brazil  
When you changed the visitation  
It almost killed me  
Marshall Berman is in documentary  
Had panic attacks after his class at City College  
Your son wrote a letter to Luca  
Telling him I was not a nice good man  
I didn't speak to your daughter  
When she left for college  
Because I didn't like her friends  
Didn't think they were good for her  
AND YOU WERE?*

*Told my father Luca shares with visiting friend  
While I was having blood drawn  
That he had notches on his penis  
Snorted coke while having sex with three women  
Tried to buck him break him to size  
Blurting spilled spewed from guts  
Swollen with urgent need to harm  
Friend visiting hospital wants to go to Bank Street  
When father enters I shout out  
Perhaps too emphatically forcefully  
Here he comes Frank he can help you  
He is the chair or dean of the leadership department  
Ben was the big shot I am nothing  
He confabs in response  
Ben meaning my first husband  
Small man quiet man invisible man  
Bitter juices roll rile his tongue  
Bile forked tongue man surface scum*

Life bumbles on  
Legs collapsing  
Eyes dulling

Teeth long gone  
Badgered by second husband  
Bullied by found son  
Desperate prone tropic to find the sun  
Leaves are in full foliage bloom  
I will miss most of their radiant hues

There is not another fall in me  
Beaten down and yet unfound  
The motive the reason  
The choice the decision  
Not never to adopt an infant  
Dragging him all the way here  
From rain forest Paraguay  
But how but why was I  
Ever with this man  
Fear sadism death wish  
Rising slathering shattering me  
In a thick murky yucky algae-like loam  
No longer plucky thrusting into the fray  
Barbs off my tongue dangerous lightening  
I am sickened morbidity not childbirth  
Has me this nauseous  
How long to stick around  
Probe scour learn more  
The past retreats unknown  
Unknowable  
Slathered in defeat  
Truth be told he never loved me  
He never even liked me  
Out of roughage I created a prince



**Roughage For Constipation**

Strange strangulating confluence  
Found son without large intestine  
Can eat spicy food goat curry et al  
But not fruit and vegetables  
Odd juxtapositions

Criminal mouth explodes  
I implode still hold him accountable  
For my fairy tale imaging

My demise can't come quick enough  
Will leave the unfinished study  
Of my life undone  
I plead with myself  
To bring it all to a riling  
No chance for error end  
Death release me  
I no longer want to know  
To have a final accounting  
Of what in essence is unknowable  
Wince gag shudder stomach turning  
My corner of earth depletes decomposing  
Turning arid stumble unsettle stubble  
Untenable unapproachable for recollecting  
Reimagining remembering harvesting

NB

### **Is he dying**

Is he wanting to die  
Stuffed against the wall  
Feverish peeing in bottles  
Not drinking  
Fever and despair  
Hand-to-hand combat  
What do I do  
Mother spurned  
Is he protecting me  
Deflecting  
Or regaining control  
Disabusing denying  
Help from me  
Hours will tell  
Do I mourn  
Do I panic  
His death and mine  
Vines intertwined  
Fate wait I wait  
Breath held

NB

*People don't see you – men don't – don't even admit your existence unless they're making love to you. And you've got to have your existence admitted by someone.  
Blanche DuBois, Tennessee Williams, Streetcar Named Desire*

*You will not be inhibited from improving by the perceptions of others. No one is paying attention to you!*

*There just isn't the time to be righting reversals. Time is the province of the young.*

*You seize time and make it yours. You counter the narrative of diminishment and loss with one of progress and bettering. Immerse yourself in the as yet.*

*The time the only one for looking ahead, at least for a little while longer, is something done without wistfulness, or a flinch.*

*Gerald Marzorati, Practicing for a Better Old Age "Late to the Ball"*

### **Wondering:**

Why be alive?

Why stay alive?

When the right time to die?

*I exist, that is all, and I find it nauseating.*

*I must be without remorse or regrets as I am without excuse; for from the instant of my upsurge into being, I carry the weight of the world by myself alone without help, engaged in a world for which I bear the whole responsibility without being able, whatever I do, to tear myself away from this responsibility for an instant. Sartre "Being and Nothingness"*

*In the social jungle of human existence, there is no feeling of being alive without a sense of identity. Erik Erikson psychologist*

*Live or Die – Anne Sexton*

*All day I've built  
a lifetime and now  
the sun sinks to  
undo it.*

*O starry night, this is how I want to die  
Sometimes I fly like an eagle but with the wings of a wren  
Live or die, but don't poison everything...*

*Even so,  
I kept right on going on,  
a sort of human statement,  
lugging myself as if  
I were a sawed-off body*

*in the trunk, the steamer trunk.  
This became perjury of the soul.  
It became an outright lie  
and even though I dressed the body  
it was still naked, still killed.  
It was caught  
in the first place at birth,  
like a fish.  
But I play it, dressed it up,  
dressed it up like somebody's doll.*

*I promise to love more if they come,  
because in spite of cruelty  
and the stuffed railroad cars for the ovens,  
I am not what I expected. Not an Eichmann.  
The poison just didn't take.  
So I won't hang around in my hospital shift,  
repeating The Black Mass and all of it.  
I say Live, Live because of the sun,  
the dream, the excitable gift."  
I say Live, Live because of the sun,  
the dream, the excitable gift."*

*Surely all who are locked in boxes of different sizes should have their hands held.*

*Anne Sexton*

Constructing words world's reasons  
I cannot fix myself place myself  
Dangling tree branch color drained  
Twist and break off  
Where am I  
Where am I to go  
Why stay alive  
How much more of the past  
To reckon with recognize  
Memory spans out peacock's tail  
That fanciful that misleading  
It is as if I am plagiarizing stealing  
Best bits of other's lives



*Wishes don't make dreams come true*  
*Mr. Fred Roger's sang*

*Everyone wishes for scary, mad things.*  
*I'd guess that you sometimes do, too.*  
*I've wished for so many*  
*And I can say*  
*That all kinds of wishes*  
*Are things just like play.*  
*They're things*  
*That our thinking has made --*  
*So wish then*  
*And don't be afraid.*  
*I'm glad it's certainly that way, aren't you?*  
*That scary, mad wishes don't make things come true.*  
*No kinds of wishes make things come true.*

Now at the end game  
I am summoning them  
From that dark unremembered space  
Breathing like a monsoon wind  
Wishes dreams into reality  
As real as Geppetto's Pinocchio



My life's arc my narrative my memoir  
May or may not be true  
Stored in an undisclosed website  
No one to contradict posthumous writing  
Here fiction holds more traction than truth  
Confession obsession rejection abstractions  
The contradictory confabulates fabricates  
Conflates translates ordinary  
Into hypertexted click point extraordinary  
Clouds fray fragments breakthrough  
Visible sum of all that was sickening  
Where to begin ring toss of years  
Bedrock of betrayed dreams  
Existed in a contorted patchwork of defeats

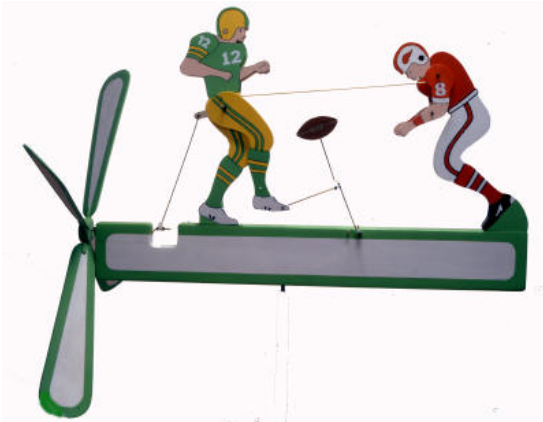
Weak kneed never able to leave  
Run off still viable still strong  
Needed to be crushed messed up defeated  
Crawled off on all fours they opening all doors  
Addicted to a motherly fix  
Torment mocking jeering  
Gory tales of defeat even death  
Divorced mother penniless  
Throws herself beneath bus wheel  
Die die die tail swatting fly  
Strip me of my inner pain suffering  
You drive me manic wild  
Sunday phone conversations  
Sylvan serpent tongue  
Pushing me toward the abyss  
Always just a mere miss  
Listened with deft troubled ear  
Affirmation for self-contempt  
Wacky mother daughter  
Triangulation strangulation  
Just firefly combative  
Moments of estrangement  
Desire sensuality love  
Tucked deep festering  
In unremembered dreams

Predatory mother vulcanizes daughter  
She lived too long into my life  
For me to exist without her  
Parasitic incompatible contemporaries  
At her death – she 94 or 93  
Me twenty-two years less  
Make us elderly female equivalents  
Pestered plagued questioning  
Live or die and why  
I can't find an answer  
To why be alive  
What good reason  
Old age body breaking  
Down into elemental parts  
No chance to recoup  
Or have new love  
Drag around ghost of dead mother  
Still appending her script for me  
*Afraid of being afraid - Sartre*  
*Death do not be proud with me*



*Death, be not proud, though some have called thee  
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so; John Donne*

Time for release to let go  
I cannot reconcile my worlds  
My whirly whirring whirligig  
Warring jarring worlds



Impatient to leave  
Fear of what I will hear  
Of what is to come  
Time to say no more and mean it  
I cannot find the reason (s)  
To take a walk today  
In almost disappeared foliage  
To find a movie to watch  
To sip wine and drop off to sleep  
I don't care who will be president  
In my mirror a scrambled reflection  
Refraction of multiple faces  
Foundling Native American prince  
Most of his stomach surgically removed  
Holder of the one pure joyful smile  
Children born of my body  
Confused suffering unloved  
As they break off their marriages  
Six small children can't remember  
Which night which day which bed which home  
Despair solitude footfalls for the young  
Regret mocks no time left to amend or correct  
Resurrect a girl who lived half and remained so  
*Death the mother of beauty*

hence from her, alone, shall  
come fulfillment to our dreams  
and our desires. Wallace Stevens  
Death by my own hand in my own time  
Bountiful beautiful still within grasp

NB

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### The Gospel of Jane E. Brody

***To son in LA when asked what I might do if I could no longer live in my house, and I flippantly replied, "I'm coming to live with you." The disadvantages: I'd lose a familiar community and a host of friends, and his house, unlike mine, is on a steep hill with no nearby stores; if I could no longer drive, I'd have to be chauffeured everywhere.***

***Probably my biggest deterrent would be my independence and the incredible number of "treasures" I've amassed over the last half century. The junk would be easy, but parting with the works of art and mementos would be like cutting out my heart. Jane E. Brody, Aging in Place, NY Times 5/3/16***

Ages and stages, from being potty trained to pee drip dripping a leaking faucet into your underpants and down your thigh raindrops down a windowpane. It is then that you place an ultra thin pad in the crotch of your underwear. Not yet ready for *Depends*. Hope it all ends before *Depends*. It is up to me still.

No grand inquisition from my kids yet. How will you get around? Do you need anything? But meaning it. Gone subterranean with aches and pain. I spend half my day with a heating pad behind my back or under my thighs. Put myself under a strict no compromise gag order. Not to speak about eyes teeth pains in legs. Jaunty walking sticks more stylish than seeming necessary - Necessary!

Final irony, think I have spinal stenosis, mother's final body snatching invasion of me. And soon I will have to go to podiatrist to cut my toenails. Another medical exigency she described to me as part of her motherly guidance on how to prepare for the unavoidable descent to death my body's final radical diminishment.

I live in sync in a sisterhood with Jane E. Brody. Her Wednesday *Well Columns'* in the *NY Times* have informed so much of my life. I live parallel to her. Her writing about old age and getting to be 75 bring her to me as soul sister truth sayers. She had twin boys, one of whom lives somewhere in the hills of LA. I am a devout follower of Jane E. Brody and her Gospel. Grateful to find the words the expression of what moves within me preoccupies my mind keeps my body restless nights. So thank you dear Jane E. Brody. Don't know who will get to death to die first. But my heart will struggle if on a Wednesday I read you are deceased. NB

**Question: Do you know you are dead? NB**

**Why don't they suspend tenured professors who strike wives? NB**

*He was a parasite. It was a disaster for the family. He basically destroyed our life.  
Eric Ripert, French Chef, Le Bernardin, describing step-father.*

**Again and again and once again**

Trying to pick myself off the floor  
Stop the tears from falling  
Surgical floor splattered  
With the septic squish  
Wound throbbing lobbed off  
Piece of his small intestine  
Large intestine long gone  
My son thrown back to bed  
Not eating  
Demanding food and drink  
His tongue recoiling  
No tastes to appease  
After yet another surgery  
Hobbled mean-mouthed  
Fighting with his girlfriend caregiver  
Driving her off begging her to save him  
I am overloaded witnessing overseeing  
Yet can't pull away remove myself  
From this inconceivable predicament  
More than a decade watching  
Death strafe my child  
Hold up I tell myself  
Deep riveting connective tissue  
With an ensemble of mothers  
Never knowing if this is the day  
A dead child will lie limp  
Wail finally released

I have a son a foundling  
With barely any stomach left  
Felled as life came back into his stride  
Going off an expectant miner  
To California to seek his fortune  
To find his golden nugget  
Moving in with a friend in the *Valley*

Sherman Oaks, California  
Eating his way through nearly  
Every restaurant and fast food chain  
*Bulking up* he would say  
Each place had a favorite food  
He roved moved like a restaurant critic  
And once again that prescient feeling  
*That something was wrong*  
New doctor in LA thought  
Surgery might not be necessary  
My migrating bird flew home  
To have his surgeon once again  
Take a knife to him  
Yet again a mother's stifling  
Jarring jostling sacred moan  
Boy writhing in pain  
His body refusing to digest  
Bring food through  
The aperture on his tummy  
Medically known as an ileostomy

Once again a boy submerses self  
In steam streaming hot bath waters  
Next room forming mantra  
Of cable news television commercials  
No longer even closely desirable  
For a man to take Viagra  
Prematurely on the arms of friends  
Returns to Cali as he calls it  
Orders wheel chair at airport  
Phone phobic anticipating his call  
But he won't pick up  
Not ready for questions  
Trained not to ask  
Refusing texts from his father

Luca you left me in pieces  
Broken uninhabitable  
Body mind spirit  
Can't find a reason  
Any way to go on  
Pot has become  
Your surrogate mother  
It keeps you alive eating sleeping  
I have tumbled into the unsavory  
Along with your father

And have become part of the duo  
Known as *hey you guys*

Time to catch and release  
Biblical moment revelatory  
Mother releases self  
And foundling prince

*And the fishermen will lament, and all those who cast a line into the Nile will mourn, And those who spread nets on the waters will pine away. Isaiah 19:8*

*"Behold, I am going to send for many fishermen," declares the LORD, "and they will fish for them; and afterwards I will send for many hunters, and they will hunt them from every mountain and every hill and from the clefts of the rocks. Jeremiah 16:16*

*And He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." Mathew 4:19*

NB

***To be solitary is to be***  
*inside yourself with no*  
*need for escape – a*  
*separateness without the*  
*human ache of isolation.*

Alan Feuer, reporter, NY Times

### **I release you from my friendship**

From pursuing friendship with me  
You already belong to somebody  
I to no one  
There in the incompatibility.

NB

***Romantic love has been elusive. "I've never had a Valentine's Day," she said, matter-of-factly. Ruth Arcone, Baker, Cupcake Café - lives in shelter - The Pie Maker's Tale - NY Times 5/8/16***



Antonio Rosaspina Bagnante, 1863

### **Absurdist Legend of Naomi the Virgin**

They call it theology  
Demonically chronically preoccupied  
By the miserable salty  
Subterranean seas of sexuality  
I walked about a fully mature woman  
Wondering how baby's get born  
What we needed sex for  
Naively exquisitely innocently  
Asked therapist whose Cheshire cat grin  
Excised exorcism amputate cut off  
The erotic surgically precisely terminally  
Body grew more resistant than Mary's  
To supreme sensual pleasures  
Fascinated fixated on stories  
Of adultery of being gay  
Of having sex for fun  
Imploding suddenly thrashing out  
Surreptitious hunts for someone  
To grab me hold me stir me up  
For body to be swept up with ardor  
Dangerous forays into the forbidden  
Banished excised purged extruded  
If they dare flicker to mind  
A horse hind leg kick to stomach  
Fist of thunderous truths impound

As for sex I fucked to get babies  
And one I got without fucking  
I was one of Jesus original whoring Jews  
Enslaved by Catholic doctrine  
Fuck your brains out  
To have one kid after the other  
No birth control no abortion  
And god no gay sex  
Mother goddess priestly disciple  
Canonical pontifical apostle  
Lived chaste monastic cloistered

*Mums the word*

*Seal up your lips and give no words but mum (Shakespeare Henry VI, Part 2, Act 1, Scene 2)*

Novitiate dumb numb wordless silenced  
Cock rooster cocka-doodle-doo fell on deaf ears



I will die, god help me  
With a body rarely  
No never ever touched  
The sensual un-lived  
Curious mind obsessed  
By other's lives  
Tulip petals fall gone  
After brief bloom  
I will have lived  
Untouched  
Without ecstasy  
Without passion  
Without my body  
Combining heavenward  
Erotic Mahler moans  
Silenced impending jeopardy  
Anticipating implosion  
If desire dipped into  
Ignited excited  
Stern demagogic  
To stalking inner self  
Became sterile stern righteous  
Apostolic Nibs  
Tricking torturing myself  
Imagining my body fetus unborn  
Preserved in a jar of formaldehyde  
I so missed the boat  
Off I go to Byzantium  
On that plaintive note

NB

***The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace.***

***Let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God. Apostle Paul***



**Virgin Bride**

*Every animal he said at last  
After intercourse is sad  
But the back row loves  
Looked oblivious  
And glad*

*Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Picture of the Gone World*



**Virgin mother**

*A Poem is a Mirror Waling Down A Strange Street. Lawrence Ferlinghetti*



**The fear so great, certain days of finding oneself...left, with hours still to run,  
before the bell for sleep, and nothing more to say, nothing more to do.  
Samuel Beckett, "Happy Days"**

**Disconnect**

Lowest common denominator  
Rock bottom  
The umbilical cord  
That never was  
Finally severed  
*Apple and Eve* juice boxes  
*White grape and cranberry*  
Push my cart skidding fast  
Tears welling  
What am I dreading  
Why juice boxes  
Bring me to tears  
I am falling failing flailing  
Rock bottom desperation  
Seizes hold  
Imagination's machination  
Pyre fire ignite  
Ignoble self wallows  
Regret implodes  
Sorrowful woman  
Stuck ignominiously in fear  
Reaped havoc  
Feeble weak-kneed collapse  
Muted inner voice  
Self-destruction easier  
Than coming out of shadows  
Disarray havoc  
Of indeterminate inimitable truths

Reached sunk to my lowest  
Common denominator  
Cut myself off truncated  
Don't talk to me  
Need to be alone solitary  
What? You are always alone  
Causing alarm in my oldest kids  
Attention grabber  
Cast a worrying cloud  
Mother out of reach

They each steeped  
In the kind of pain  
Coming face to face  
With the ultimate  
Decision made  
Jammed down the necks  
Of three offspring  
Mother and father untethering  
Far reaching overwhelming  
Look at how my whelps  
Are dissolving  
Breaking marriage vows  
Three babies each  
Now to live with  
The unfathomable  
A mother and father  
Who hate each other  
Can't stand  
To be near one another  
Reckon reconcile

I am not without guile  
Set precedent  
Led the great descent  
Decibel tympanic  
Gabriel's horn  
Blowing eardrums to bits  
I standing *Trojan Woman* tall  
At neon blinking exit signs  
Leaving everything behind  
Untouched even dusted  
Follow me finding another destiny  
The unfathomable self  
The unexamined  
Metastasized past  
Unearthing the heat of hatred  
And vengeance for what  
Gave my life freely on a whim  
Triumphantly marched off  
To nothingness  
**Leaving** is my greatest gift  
And now watch my children  
The two born of my body  
Extricate walk off  
Leave ending in tatters  
The marriage the family

For which they were architect  
Contractor and held title  
Scraping over and over  
The same old ground  
Leave it fallow it is arid  
Depleted plundered  
In its need to bring to seed  
Reasons rationalizations  
For these incredible  
History making retreats  
Confronting that once again  
The *Arc de Triomphe*  
The arc of our lives  
The penultimate  
Is ending breaking up marriages  
Convincing three children  
To stick with us

Death somewhere lurking near  
Sorcerer keeper  
Of usury dark plan  
Tithe for muting troubles  
Beaver tamping down  
Twigs and mud damming  
A past that just rushes on  
Nocturnal architect  
Damming the breach  
Twiglets muck break  
In ski slide white water  
Reached rock slime bottom  
Lowest common denominator  
And here in market aisle  
A great life truth  
Tears pure glacial fall  
Juice boxes bring me to my knees  
My foundling son  
Eyes smart stomach churns  
Juice boxes stun gun  
Unraveling undone  
Ward of life's endings

Six grandkids faces fixed  
In question marks  
Fraught with uncertainty  
Cling to the parent  
Of the particular

Assigned weeknight  
Lambent moment  
Restless moment  
Time for me to venture away  
To cut the umbilical cord  
Frayed flailed braiding  
Us to one another  
Subliminal murmur  
Children step from  
The clamor of disarray  
Find a place  
No longer displaced  
In which you can stay  
Find the courage of yes  
Leaving signifying  
Mess tempestuousness  
Juice box sobs stop  
Dangling disentangling me  
Mid-sentence breath stops  
Imagination perks picks up  
When and where life leaves off  
Family lore never more than fiction  
Stories recollected retold  
Beauty post-death narratives  
Veracity by circumstance left unchecked

NB



**Ferdinand Valentine Hodler-Garel on Her Death Bed**

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## **Confession Booth Concession Both**

### **1. My Margot Did I Say I Love You**

Or stay once removed  
Disdain dripping off lips  
Margot in all of those phone calls  
I was once removed  
I never knew you were learning  
An ancient form of Celtic  
Spending a winter month  
Living above a tavern  
In some small Irish town  
Or that the children joined you  
The year before you died  
Quick death, lung cancer  
Never a smoker  
Children lay about you  
A potpourri of flowers  
Summoned to your bedside  
Weeks before you death  
Your oldest calling me  
Two day long visits  
Lying next to you  
Looking at old photos  
Sharing recollections of the past  
We shadowed each other  
Sleepovers on the way to the Cape  
Truth be told I did share with you  
Deep fears uncomfortable truths  
Your interpretations dipping into  
The darker pathologic side  
Margot you were a good mother  
Margot you were a good friend  
I don't wear friends well  
Now stripped of you  
Never on the other end of the phone  
Margot I miss you and am sorry  
I deprived myself of my love for you  
Rounding the corner  
To a more natural old age death  
I have come to see  
That if at a distance  
You truly held the place  
Of best friend in my life

NB

## **2. Back on the farm team**

Reduced like gravy  
You came too close  
Your husband bristled  
He doesn't share you well  
You backed away  
Toxic Jew disarms alarms  
You're past lobbed off  
Cut off from time and place  
Your life began  
As you ran from your father  
Into his open arms  
You describe yourself as nomadic  
Before meeting him  
He anchored you in the academy  
In the Canon  
Penultimate whirling world  
Of New York intellectual  
French speaking Pan-European  
Art and poetry the avant-garde  
The frontier of literariness  
I am too crude too limited  
Too probing for him to let me in  
Have me get too close to you  
I have tried to find a place  
In the closed circle of your lives  
I've read his and acknowledge  
If obscure his poetry real  
Used connections to get  
Grandkids into high school  
Listened to the sordid  
Pain riddled stories  
Of daughter's drug addiction  
Warnings of losing his grip  
Barriers went up to our meeting  
Fire spewing creatures  
Called up by his ire fear of  
Conspiring stories of life before  
Keeping you out of present time  
Dredging up the past  
Faux Jewish Upper West Sider  
Home breaking wrecking ball  
Dropped back to the farm team  
Will never know what it means

To live as wife of husband  
For more than 50 years  
Back to the now and then  
Mornings in my kitchen  
Greeted by swirling rainbows  
Glinting off the prism  
Of a chandelier tier  
I have had for more than 50 years  
I reside in the outskirts  
The hills of Austria  
Where plain folk turned their backs  
At the scent of genocide filling the night air  
You ran off with a Jew  
Your father turned his back  
And now your husband says  
Either her or me  
If just for an occasional lunch  
Now maybe just a coffee  
Banned banished relegated  
To a time frame controlled  
Metered monitored  
Fear of subjugation  
Bullied tender to be bartered  
Slipknot friendship  
Again to be reckoned with  
Going from major to minor  
*Every time we say goodbye, I die a little*  
*Every time we say goodbye, I wonder why a little*  
Dear friend no longer wonder why shutout  
Coffees on a clock  
He sensed the fragrance of friendship heating up  
When you're near  
There's such an air of spring about it  
I can hear a lark somewhere begin to sing about it  
There's no love song finer  
But how strange the change from major to minor  
Every time we say goodbye  
My heart has shut you out  
Now to contend with pretend with  
A carefully choreographed invite  
To coffee or lunch before you leave  
For your annual summer in France  
Post card sometime after two weeks

NB

Otherwise it was a perfect spring morning. White hyacinths gasped in the embassy lawn. The sky was September blue and the pigeons went on pecking at bits of bread scattered from the bombed bakery. Broken baguettes. Crushed croissants. Guttured cars. A carousel spinning its blackened horses.

...turn bones to sonatas...touch family back from extinction.

Ocean Vuong, poet, "Night Sky with Exit Wounds"

Queen Esther: she wolf - a multiplex of men women - plunderer of other's stories talks rubbed like a genie bottle to life to write by her husband each night. NB

Mausoleum for me! Hell! I've never been closer truer to myself! I love my home! I will miss my home! Got to soak in my home! While senses still function! NB

Waiting always for the boom to fall! Waiting like Godot for the end of nothing, nothing much, nothingness to end! NB

My hair iceberg lettuce shreds! Too skimpy too tinsel thin to make dreadlocks with. Whimpering wispy strands depleted strands once wavy curly remembering when with one flick of afropick it piled Angela Davis - Esperanza Spalding high and I a member of the African boot black lost tribe. Looking down on me now one could get blinded eyes smarting stung by the sun's reflection bare skin a primed canvas. NB

Cornucopia of unmet desires. Stampeding conflicts id driven pounding feet grapes off vine - virgin nouveaux first Beaujolais wine.

Cornucopia copious consumptive excuses - just fucking missed the boat -life circumstance - clock beat me out - no more chances - for redemption for pleasure for the sensual for love for friendship. I love flowers sky trees birds ducks. I love the Internet. I love my children. I love my grandchildren. I love New York City. NB

*Guttural and operatic, baleful and inconsolable, spiritual and earthy, polyglot and wordless, nuanced and unhinged - Diamanda Galas at her concert. NY Times Jon Pareles, 5/12/16*

*Lifted plagiarized does she have a copyright - want to take those words an epithet to describe me - NB*



**To think that Fernand is dead**  
To think that he's dead, Fernand  
To think that I'm alone behind  
To think that he's alone in front  
He, alone in his final coffin  
Me, all at sea  
He, in his hearse  
And me, in my desert  
In front there's just a white horse  
Behind there's only me, crying  
To think there's not even a breeze  
To shake my flowers  
As for me, if I were the good Lord  
I think I'd feel some guilt  
To think that now it's raining  
To think that Fernand is dead  
To think that we walk through Paris  
In the bleak early hours  
To think that we walk through Paris  
And it looks like Berlin  
You, you, you don't know, you're sleeping  
But it's a heartbreak  
To have to depart  
While Paris is still asleep  
As for me, I'm dying to  
wake some people up  
I would make up a family for you  
Just for your funeral  
Also, if I were the good Lord  
I think I wouldn't be proud of myself  
I know, you do what you can,  
But what about skill and style?  
You know, I'll come back  
I'll come back often  
To this damned field  
Where you are to rest  
In the summer I'll give you some shade  
We'll drink from the silence  
To Constance, who doesn't  
Give a damn about your soul  
Now adults are so goddamn stupid,  
They'll manage a war for sure  
Then I'll go for good  
To sleep in your graveyard  
And now, goddammit  
You'll have a good laugh, my friend  
And now, good Lord  
Now I will cry.    Fernand -Jacques Brel

## **My Muse Don't Abandon Me**

She said impressive – *you are an impressive poet*  
The book doctor commented  
After reading my poem *God What God*  
Written after the massacre in Newtown Conn.  
Muse if I am faithful  
Sit at the computer each morning  
Will you send words to me  
Will you cut through  
The tinsel of my fear  
Fear of being fully alive  
Truly present  
I am trying  
To push out of myself  
Finally deliver  
The child  
That was to be me  
Muse send a bolt  
Of lightening  
Stun gunning me to life  
Send a fickle frenzied  
Transcendent moment  
*Four Horseman of the Apocalypse*  
Never remembered  
That my father wrote  
*That I should give up the cello*  
*Work on the piano*  
*I didn't really know how to count*  
*Well enough to be a cellist*  
*And I could give piano lessons*  
*And that I should spend the*  
*Time writing poems*  
*Thought I was a good writer*  
*With possibilities*  
This when I was twenty-two  
Having just delivered a still-born  
Living in a former hotel in the Alps  
A room above the ballroom  
Used to dry out meat  
Preparing the delicacy  
Bundnerfleisch –  
How to adapt  
To the scents of festering  
Putrid slabs of beef hung upside down  
Casting shadows of frozen-stiff dancers

The whiff of the decomposition  
Like dead bodies left on slabs  
To rot becoming skeletal residue  
There with a man I hardly knew  
But called husband  
The cello and schnapps kept me  
Sanguine sane  
Went into Coventry silence  
As a cloistered zealot nun  
Became a bug splayed  
Upon a wall waiting for a  
Kafkaesque *Metamorphosis*  
Reading Musil *Man Without Qualities*  
Really reading gruel gibberish  
Nothing makes sense  
Book keeps me hidden sodden  
Descending almost rhapsodic  
Numb dumb sight stun gunned  
Into the kind of cruelty  
Banished and punished  
For trying to break loose  
And find my own way  
Write you told me  
How dare you  
All I dreamed  
Was to write  
All you did was to pull  
The pen the nub out of my hand  
Sensing I was dangling  
On a dangerous precipice  
Gone insane  
Playing Bach on the cello  
Drinking schnapps  
Watching the shadows  
The Alps pressed jagged  
Closing in shifting sun  
Perambulating short hours  
Claustrophobic narrow valley  
Dark and forbidding  
Write you suggested  
Tyranny of father  
Who kept daughter  
As alternate bride daughter  
I am seventy-five  
Pretending to write  
Or siphoning off furies pain

To keep moving through  
Conciliatory rhetorical  
Carefully choreographed days  
I write commiserate with  
A thing I call muse  
Driven to sit here  
Let off steam  
Drain the combustible me  
No longer that girl  
Shut down just as she peaked  
Now old very old beyond time  
Disappointed by my life  
Disappointed I didn't write  
Except for dear life  
Dad righteous  
Mad exploiter of daughter  
You trifled with me  
Trying to be fatherly  
Now a muse sits on a cloud  
Bemused by my effort  
To make myself visible with words  
Unnerved perturbed disturbed  
Lost my verve my nerve my appetite  
Still I sit here to write  
The desire to be alive  
The thrill of an unknowable day  
Portray betray stay

NB

***Death will come with your eyes—***

*this death that accompanies us  
from morning till night, sleepless,  
deaf, like an old regret  
or a stupid vice. Your eyes  
will be a useless word,  
a muted cry, a silence.  
As you see them each morning  
when alone you lean over  
the mirror. O cherished hope,  
that day we too shall know  
that you are life and nothing.*

*For everyone death has a look.  
Death will come with your eyes.  
It will be like terminating a vice,  
as seen in the mirror  
a dead face re-emerging,  
like listening to closed lips.  
We'll go down the abyss in silence. Cesare Pavese*

***I know you'll excuse me if I say goodnight***

*I've got a promise to fulfill  
Thank you for listening to my troubles  
Pardon me, I've got someone to kill  
I warned him not to try and take her from me  
He laughed and said if I can You know I will  
So tonight when they get home I'll be waiting  
Pardon me, I've got someone to kill  
I know I'll surely die for what I'm about to do  
But it don't matter I'm a dead man anyhow  
This gun will buy back the pride they took from me  
And also end this life of mine, that's worthless now  
By the time you tell the sheriff, it'll all be over  
He'll find me at their big house on the hill  
He'll find a note explaining why I killed us all  
Now it's time to go, I've got someone to kill  
Pardon Me (I've Got Someone to Kill) Johnny Paycheck*

***Art is an expression that every human has – whether mentally ill, indigent, imprisoned, hobbyist or folklorist. This creative spirit is core human stuff. My dad documented this universe. John R. Hedges IV son of outsider artist and collector. NY Times 5/13/16***

.....

*It is what paradise should be: infinity found in enclosure, embodying a vision of nature guided by two feelings, the love that drives us and the humility that corrects us. Roberto Burle Marx, Brazilian landscaper and artist*

.....

*Sometime in 1968, Guston would release these motifs onto small panels, initiating his feverish pursuit of an apostatic, no-holds-barred final surge.*

*About Philip Guston, artist, "Abstract Expressionisms' Restless Mutineer  
Roberta Smith, review NY Times 5/13/16*

.....

*Like the Rothko Chapel, this is a space for mediating on terrestrial perception and cosmic ineffabilities. Steel Behemoths that Get Into Your Head review Richard Serra by Ken Johnson NY Times 5/13/16*

.....

*No tremor bodes eruptions and alarms  
They are listening to this not-quite-new audacity  
As though it were by someone dead – like Brahms.  
Siegfried Sassoon – Concert Interpretation*

### *I Wish I Were Dead*

Obverse converse subversive  
Universe cockamamie furies unleashed  
Conspire perspire fired up  
Mistletoe mix of wishes and kisses  
Mantra Hail Mary Avinu Malkeinu  
Transliteration alliteration  
*Our father our king*  
Zealot madness mockery  
Judaism sex other's breath  
Gave her the heebie-jeebies  
The willies - Willie husband  
Always grabbed pulled  
Her back from brink



*Lodz, Poland, Three Jews wearing tefillin (phylacteries) kneeling as an act of humiliation.*

Tefillin phylacteries  
Wrapping tightly knotting  
Around her wrists and neck  
*Gathering up steam*  
*A murderous throttling roar*  
*I wish I were dead*  
Blaming Judaism being Jewish  
*Pogroms Holocaust*  
Which she took personally  
Mother the archetype Jew  
Hitler's poster girl  
Blond ringlets blue eyes  
Drove her wild  
I was to be that child  
To spill out of her

Aryan bone and frame  
*I wish I were dead*

A prayer for the dead for death  
Said every morning every evening  
As if blessing braided bread  
Confabulation twisted limerick  
Words mishmash  
Ticker tape dread  
Really meant to say  
I need to live forever  
I can never be dead die

*"What if the worst is true? What if there's no God, and you only go around once, and that's it? Don't you want to be a part of the experience? You know, what the hell? It's not all a drag, and I'm thinking to myself: Geez! I should stop ruining my life searching for answers I'm never gonna get and just enjoy it while it lasts. And, you know, after--who knows? Maybe there is something, nobody really knows. I know that maybe is a very slim reed to hang your whole life on, but that's the best we have." Woody Allen, Hannah and Her Sisters*

You mean we go through  
All of this just to die  
Somewhere between  
*Albert Speer and Woody Allen*  
Our lives hung in the balance

Decoding mother  
*I am afraid of death dying*  
Begging for the opposite  
Pleading bargaining with god  
To make her case  
Implode propulsive implore  
*Poo Poo* casting bewitching spell  
Ward off evil curse life's end  
Superstitious braiding garlic strands  
About her neck  
To keep bad things at bay away  
Like loving your children  
Like loving your husband  
Like not sticking your head in the oven

Transpose decode transcribe  
We cringed sacrificed  
Wagering against her  
Incessant death threats  
Our mother our father's errant bride



Shrieking whimpering whining  
*I wish I were dead*  
*Wolf howls Allen Ginsberg's*  
She took to heart  
*Follow your inner moonlight*  
*Don't hide the madness*  
She took literally to heart

Vulture circling  
Scent of death rising  
Parasitic fits  
Wingspan eclipsed  
Carnivore mother ate off us  
Communion wafer creed plea  
Munching on our realities  
Would have her skip death  
On her myth riveting monopoly board

*First you get down on your knees,*  
*Fiddle with your rosaries,*  
*Bow your head with great respect,*  
*And genuflect, genuflect, genuflect!*

*Do whatever steps you want, if*  
*You have cleared them with the Pontiff.*  
*Everybody say his own*  
*Kyrie eleison,*  
*Doin' the Vatican Rag.*

*Get in line in that processional,*  
*Step into that small confessional,*  
*There, the guy who's got religion'll*  
*Tell you if your sin's original.*  
*If it is, try playin' it safer,*  
*Drink the wine and chew the wafer,*  
*Two, four, six, eight,*  
*Time to transubstantiate!*

*So get down upon your knees,*  
*Fiddle with your rosaries,*  
*Bow your head with great respect,*  
*And genuflect, genuflect, genuflect!*

*Make a cross on your abdomen,*  
*When in Rome do like a Roman,*  
*Ave Maria,*  
*Gee it's good to see ya,*  
*Gettin' ecstatic an'*

*Sorta dramatic an'*  
*Doin' the Vatican Rag! Tom Lehrer The Vatican Rag*

Anthem transubstantiation  
Vaulted asylum  
To seal her from death  
Infantile primitive thinking  
That she could fool death  
With pleas taunts to come get her  
Head stuck near lip of unlit oven  
And that was only the overture  
She held the world  
Of her family cringing  
Begging her not to do it  
Bringing her back from the brink  
The furnace lip the oven door  
Landmines toenail hair triggered  
The penultimate exculpatory  
Rhetorical rant  
We were her murderers  
Mad mother tourniquet twisting  
Air sizzled electric currents  
Convulsive propulsive  
Sizzling white-hot lashing out  
If we approached got too near  
Stepping into her orbiting madness  
Each day another perimeter border  
Provoked by just the sight of one of us  
Got her spinning spiraling  
Head thrashing fingering oven door  
Mutation amputation alliteration  
She was Freud's penultimate hysteric  
Fear rode our faces like shingles  
Stirred her to frenzied furious levitating  
Our own salty stinging life grabbing **La Niña**  
Shrill animal trill begging for everything  
Free floating in wash of desire  
Death stampeded threatened  
Her every whim wish  
We were the *three headless horsemen*  
Coming to get her snatch her up  
Black bleak carnage  
Attempts to vaporize us taunt us  
With her words her threats  
Enflamed frenzied flailing beating her head  
Opening the oven door death's trickster

Impounding us unnerved petrified  
We were the amassing enemy daring her  
To open the oven door stick her head in  
She never did lie a slab of beef  
Smoked on a roasting tin not ready for slicing

Mother inhabited a multi-faced woman  
Embodiment of *Picasso de Kooning* women  
*Edvard Munch* The Scream  
She was gaunt *El Greco* clinging to a cross  
Like the mental patient she attended to  
When at nursing school  
She festered smeared  
Fecal matter miasma of *Holocaust*  
She was his wife she was our mother  
The Yiddishkeit *Poo-Poo*  
The oven door the furnace  
Props for our grand doyenne  
Crafting life narratives from canvas  
Fixed reality in paintings  
Hieronymus Bosch her settled space  
Flailing fists against head normalized  
She was fleeing Hitler  
She was fleeing annihilation  
She was fleeing her own death  
Dying didn't get to her  
Until she was nearly ninety-four  
PooPoo'd death almost a hundred years  
Daughter seventy-five now  
Got too old to live without her  
She became a habit  
Compulsive repulsive warring mother  
I chose to stay never run for cover

NB

*O, Death  
O, Death*

*Won't you spare me over til another year  
Well what is this that I can't see  
With ice cold hands takin' hold of me  
Well I am death, none can excel  
I'll open the door to heaven or hell  
Whoa, death someone would pray  
Could you wait to call me another day  
The children prayed, the preacher preached  
Time and mercy is out of your reach  
I'll fix your feet til you cant walk  
I'll lock your jaw til you cant talk  
I'll close your eyes so you can't see  
This very hour, come and go with me  
I'm death I come to take the soul  
Leave the body and leave it cold  
To draw up the flesh off of the frame  
Dirt and worm both have a claim*

*O, Death  
O, Death*

*Won't you spare me over til another year  
My mother came to my bed  
Placed a cold towel upon my head  
My head is warm my feet are cold  
Death is a-movin upon my soul  
Oh, death how you're treatin' me  
You've close my eyes so I can't see  
Well you're hurtin' my body  
You make me cold  
You run my life right outta my soul  
Oh death please consider my age  
Please don't take me at this stage  
My wealth is all at your command  
If you will move your icy hand  
Oh the young, the rich or poor  
Hunger like me you know  
No wealth, no ruin, no silver no gold  
Nothing satisfies me but your soul*

*O, Death  
O, Death*

*Wont you spare me over 'til another year  
Wont you spare me over 'til another year  
Wont you spare me over 'til another year*

**Songwriters**

*JO-ANN KELLY, TONY MCPHEE /*

*Oh, love as long as you can love,  
Oh, love as long as love you may!  
The hour will come, the hour will come:  
By graves lamenting you will stay.*

*And ever keep your heart aglow,  
And let it foster love with care,  
As long as still another heart  
Beats with it warmly anywhere.*

*If one unseals his breast to you,  
Ah, do him all the good you can—  
And all his hours with gladness fill,  
And grieve him not for one hour's span!*

*Your tongue—ah, hold it well in check!—  
Is quick to say an evil word.  
Oh God, it was not meant so ill!  
Yet pained he turns away who heard.*

*Oh, love as long as you can love,  
Oh, love as long as love you may!  
The hour will come, the hour will come:  
By graves lamenting you will stay.*

*Then you kneel down before the grave,  
And hide your tearful eyes—alas!  
They see the loved one now no more—  
In long and dewy graveyard grass,*

*And say: "Look down upon me here  
Who by your grave am weeping still;  
Forgive that I have given pain:  
Oh God, it was not meant so ill!"*

*He sees you not and hears you not,  
And seeks not your embrace—ah, no,  
The lips that kissed you oft, no more  
Say: "I forgave you long ago."*

*He did forgive you long ago,  
And hot fell many a tear as toll  
For you and for your bitter word—  
But hush!—He's resting at his goal.*

*Oh, love as long as you can love,  
Oh, love as long as love you may!  
The hour will come, the hour will come:  
By graves lamenting you will stay!  
The Duration of Love  
Ferdinand Freiligrath (1810 -1876)*

*I think I have never met anyone more lonely. Peter Trachtenberg, ex-husband Mary Gaitskill, author*

*...the lovely and lovable world which quietly persists – Nabokov*

*I did want to kind of hold on to something lovely and lovable in the book – Mary Gaskill, speaking of her new novel The Mare – ( In her new novel, Mary Gaitskill – known for depicting violent sex and lovely lives – delves into the most frightening subject of all: real connection. Parul Sehgal, NY Times Magazine, 11/8/15)*

.....

***We are slaves, deprived of every right**, exposed to every insult, condemned to almost certain death, but we still possess one power, and we must defend it with all our strength, for it is the last – the power to refuse our consent. Primo Levi*

*Note: What Levi values most – more than life, more than happiness – is the power to remain oneself, even in the face of death. The above was said of himself and his fellow prisoners t Auschwitz.*

.....

**Raw as yesterday  
Embracing goodbye at airport  
My soldier got into the plane  
I went to class  
The goodbye to last lifelong  
Recalled as if yesterday  
His tight embrace  
His walking off to the plane  
NB**

***The theologian Karl Barth described midlife** in precisely this way. At middle age, he wrote, “the sowing is behind; now is the time to reap. The run has been taken; now is the time to leap. Preparation has been made; now is the time for the venture of the work itself.”*

*The middle-aged person, Barth continued, can see death in the distance, but moves with a “measured haste” to get big new things done while there is still time.*

***Not everything is about you, she shouted***

This when I asked if Willa was wearing a helmet  
When she rode her scooter home from Broadway by herself

***Mom we've got to keep Luca the focus now not on or about you***

Tired impatient with me  
I have become controversial and tiresome  
I am beginning to watch my immediate world  
As it will go on without me

***You can't come if you act annoying*** Luca called out

When I shared I was getting to LA tomorrow  
Where he is in the hospital

Guess when your kids start to hate you  
Distance themselves are easily annoyed  
They are preparing to live without you  
Reacting finding all that was unfortunate  
Or not to like about me  
Or to resent  
Or hate –

Love longing missing  
Happens in the aftermath  
Dispersing ashes in the Park  
A lump will form  
They will laugh about  
How I liked trees and ducks

But simmering just beneath the surface  
Bubbling up backing up  
All the ways I have harmed them hurt them  
The limits of my being held with fine tuned regard  
Warmth follows much later  
Remorse for what was left unsaid  
Too late for the dead  
How I am regarded by them  
Is not mine to persuade argue or shape  
In the wake the reprieve that comes to mind  
Is not that I did my best everyone makes mistakes  
But how ill equipped I was to project my love for them  
How little able I was to protect them from me  
In time they will make me small and manageable  
Eulogies with laughter and take me along with them  
Their turn to move through time  
And take me along however they want or desire to - NB

**You particularized my face**

Rearranging it as if a lump of clay  
Propping up my chin falling collapsing  
Undertow of gravity and aging  
Despair yielded to greater flaccidity  
Fix hair fix teeth  
Fix how you walk talk cook  
Never a pause trying  
To turn me into someone else  
What woman women image  
Did you have in mind  
You looked with a jaundiced eye  
Searching for a way to come to me  
I saw the disfavor  
The twisted knot of repulsion  
Finally braces on teeth  
Becoming someone  
I was growing to hate  
Had to push you out  
Before it became too late  
NB

**The House Has Gone Dark**

Treads worn out  
Time to remember all I can  
Time to stop longing  
Time to stop acting  
As if I am fully alive living  
Death is coming  
Time to stop fearing  
Did not do justice  
To the time given  
Regret irrelevant  
Apologies insufferable  
Parting is filled with sweet sorrow (Shakespeare Romeo and Juliet)  
NB

***Exit-seeking: Mom's biorhythms were upside down. She'd often sleep during the day and be up all night doing what is known as "exit seeking".  
Mary Claude Foster, "Without Memories, Enjoy Now" NY Times, 5/17/16***



**Don't want a patch up**

Patchwork quilt  
Of repairs  
*Cataract surgery is nothing*  
*Anthony Hopkins had it*  
*You love to read*  
My oldest son  
Almost pleadingly  
As if *don't quit*  
*Not yet*  
Sharp pains  
Race my legs  
Ankle to groin  
*Spinal Stenosis*  
Drag my leg around  
*Captain Hook in Peter Pan*  
Bluma's final revenge

*Bach is too beautiful*  
He our father said  
When he quit eating  
*Enough is enough*  
If I see better  
Will I want to prolong it  
Being alive living  
What then will break down  
What other part need repair  
My world is blurred blunted  
Nothing concise and clear  
Harsh light sunrays  
Raid my sight numbing  
As my eyes cloud over  
Turning from brown  
To gloomy gray  
Time to call it quits  
I am moving off  
The beam the arc  
Daylight to sunset  
If my eye sight sharpens  
Blades of grass etched wet  
After hard rain  
If I can see that clearly again  
I won't want to leave  
To die to depart  
Old eyes dim for a reason

Life moving into final season  
*Life cannot again become too beautiful*

Worshipped death suicide as a girl  
Sun pulled me upright again and again  
Now sun sears lids flutter  
Mad bird to protect from the pain  
Cataracts blur cataracts stunned by sun  
Walking less and always  
With if stylish walking stick  
Girl of twenty wanted to die  
Woman of seventy-five feels  
Death in earnest coming  
Not good at waiting  
Severed soul breaking  
Promise to wait for my soldier  
Heart never recovered from disloyalty  
Short-circuit endings  
Courage challenge  
To run out on life  
Before deaths gets me  
In its irrevocable grip

NB

*If it takes forever I will wait for you  
For a thousand summers I will wait for you  
Till you're back beside me, till I'm holding you  
Till I hear you sigh here in my arms*

*Anywhere you wander, anywhere you go  
Every day remember how I love you so  
In your heart believe what in my heart I know  
That forevermore I'll wait for you*

*The clock will tick away the hours one by one  
Then the time will come when all the waiting's done  
The time when you return and find me here and run  
Straight to my waiting arms*

*If it takes forever I will wait for you  
For a thousand summers I will wait for you  
Till you're here beside me, till I'm touching you  
And forevermore sharing your love*

*I Will Wait for You The Umbrellas of Cherbourg Michel Legrand, Jacque Demy*

### **Walking back from the brink death**

Mother and son star crossed  
We watch each other  
Eerily creepily  
Flare ups of tempers  
Tempest fury outrage  
Projectile vitriol  
Bent over knees to chin  
Waves of nausea on tilt spin  
Protecting myself from him  
We are embroiled in darkness  
Unremitting unrelenting insufferable  
The clock moves slowly in its orbit  
Sky writing obituaries  
Boy dying not dying  
Mother dying  
Old age enveloping  
Boy plugged up with wires  
Incessantly beeping  
Breaking the morbidity  
The eerie silence  
Nurse enters  
Pushes buttons exits  
We are left alone  
Boy with broken body  
Boy with no upper stomach  
Slivers of small intestine snipped  
Wound abscessed oozing  
Rallying urgent intervention  
Medication stun-guns  
Kidneys into trauma  
There is no end in sight  
His body will not get  
Replacement parts  
Still no *Nano* genomes  
To regrow upper intestine  
Poop bag droops on tummy  
Scarred wound oozing  
He walks bent  
Like a broken sunflower stalk  
Time to take blood  
Sends him frenzied  
Fear flares dragon heat  
Gets a grip  
Blood taking technician

Retrieves three tubes full  
All trending right  
The doctor's resident reports  
Kidney trauma, fever, infection  
All going the right way  
Sending home with drain  
Boy resists refuses relents

Postmates Internet website  
Delivers outrageous orders  
Boy with no stomach  
Hooked up maze  
Of intravenous tubes wire  
Takes a bite or two  
Food sits in open wrapper  
Mother takes bite  
Throws out remainder  
Of Philly cheese steak  
Boy freaks out  
*Now I will go hungry*  
*Never eat* he cries out  
Lambasting the angel  
By his side  
Eyes are awash  
Tears run cheeks  
Moist glisten  
Darkened room conceals  
Mother does not speak  
Her voice is give away  
And so we order and order  
Take small bites and toss  
Exacting yens for drinks  
Blue not orange Powerade  
Snapple lemon ice tea  
Lemonades rare mixtures  
Recollecting a sip a taste  
Of some other time place

We are released  
From this particular hell  
Drain still inside  
No broken boy persuasion  
Gets them to remove  
We go home  
This pioneer moved West  
Lives in Sherman Oaks LA

TV never turned off or low  
More Postmates arrive  
Two or three a day  
Drinks and meals  
Tacos hamburgers cheese fries  
Boy moves up levels of  
Brutal warfare games  
Flares of weapons  
Muscled warriors rampage

Permitted to sit with him  
If I don't talk  
Or relegated to back bedroom  
Arthur's room roommate away  
Day comes to see doctor  
Hopefully to remove the drain  
I watch the clock  
Bite my tongue to bleeding  
Not to talk or urge on  
We cut razor thin into time  
We get to doctor on time  
My tongue throbbing  
Doctor arrives  
Luca's face lights up  
Accompanied by resident  
Luca's favors  
We are going to remove drain  
How much can a mother witness  
Son becomes wild with fear  
Eyes flare fright  
Wounded animal cowering  
Or lurching screeching  
Animal sounds emit  
Doctor encircles boy  
With Jesus like compassion  
Boy submits  
Mother shudders suppressing howl  
Tears spit from stunned eyes  
Resident puts hand on my arm  
*He has been through so much*  
He says normalizing  
The moment of god thundering fear

Code Red, fire for real  
We are last to leave the building  
Luca chats with woman with walker

As we wait for the car  
She speaks only Spanish  
They form a bound of wound and pain  
Girl about Luca's age stumbles by  
Erratic ticks her father holds her arm  
Body shuddering unstopably  
Some neuropathy  
We live on an equal plane  
Star crossed trickster life  
Humbles a mother and a father

*Ma* he calls excitedly  
I exit Arthur's room  
Glued to news flash  
San Bernardino massacre  
Wondering how we live  
Stalked by such frequent rampages  
The wound is closing he shares  
It is as if I just won the lottery  
Or some Jesus Mary miracle  
Perhaps this time this time  
He walks moves toward healing  
His body mutilated  
So badly compromised  
I continue my journey  
Into a darkness without end  
Count my blessings  
*We have much to be thankful for*  
My big son says a bit too severely  
Live with premonitions in extremis  
Hellish existence  
Son lives on the lip of precipice  
Death menacing threatening  
I stand in close proximity  
Watching my son die and un-die  
Can feel the heat of the end  
On my neck  
Wide-eyed alert awakened  
I stood stalwart mother  
Rather than flee or cower  
The hour is near  
His death yet determined  
Mine out of time on actuarial chart  
Wishing upon a fierce LA star  
To be the first to cease breathing

NB

*The Beginning of the End – Gerard Manly Hopkins*

*My love is lessened and must soon be past.  
I never promised such persistency  
In its condition. No, the tropic tree  
Has not a charter that its sap shall last*

*Into all seasons, though no Winter cast  
The happy leafing. It is so with me:  
My love is less, my love is less for thee.  
I cease the mourning and the abject fast,*

*And rise and go about my works again  
And, save by darting accidents, forget.  
But ah! if you could understand how then*

*That less is heavens higher even yet  
Than treble-fervent more of other men,  
Even your unpassion'd eyelids might be wet.*

*I must feed Fancy. Show me any one  
That reads or holds the astrologic lore,  
And I'll pretend the credit given of yore;  
And let him prove my passion was begun*

*In the worst hour that's measured by the sun,  
With such malign conjunctions as before  
No influential heaven ever wore;  
That no recorded devilish thing was done*

*With such a seconding, nor Saturn took  
Such opposition to the Lady-star  
In the most murderous passage of his book;*

*And I'll love my distinction: Near or far  
He says his science helps him not to look  
At hopes so evil-heaven'd as mine are.*

*You see that I have come to passion's end;  
This means you need not fear the storms, the cries,  
That gave you vantage when you would despise:  
My bankrupt heart has no more tears to spend.*

*Else I am well assured I would offend  
With fiercer weepings of these desperate eyes  
For poor love's failure than his hopeless rise.  
But now I am so tired I soon shall send*

*Barely a sigh to thought of hopes forgone.  
Is this made plain? What have I come across  
That here will serve me for comparison?*

*The sceptic disappointment and the loss  
A boy feels when the poet he pores upon  
Grows less and less sweet to him, and knows no cause.*

.....  
*jer, from the beginning tonia was an inadequate mother - there was never a moment when you did not try to give her an opportunity to grow - helped with school papers - though never pressured - bought her a sewing machine - bought her cameras most photographers crave - got her a caligraphy tatoo - bought her a job with dance camera west -got her the help she needed to best mother the kids - she never told the truth - she probably stole money - always had difficulty reigning in her drinking - shed friends like snakes shed skeins - you bought her lovely jewelry and beautiful dresses - tried to share the opera and concerts with her -your love for her enhanced so many dimensions of her life - to say nothing of the resources available to her from UTA - she didn't welcome your friends - and was always "too tall, too pretty, and too thin" to have friends in the land of too tall too pretty too thin -*

*i have always treated her with respect and will continue to paramount for the kids -*

*i too have tried to help her in every way on your behalf (including helping to prepare a resume and statement for dance camera west)*

*she is a leaver - she told me when she got to new york after all of the struggle and work she asked herself, "what now?" she got a husband and family and then has asked "what now?" -*

*she did nothing but talk negatively and terribly about you to me and then would catch herself and say, "shouldn't talk like this to you - you are his mother"*

*please do not blame yourself for this divorce - she was always going to leave you -*

*you are loved and respected - i am so proud to be your mom - and i adore your kids and know you do - they are considerable people and glad you got your upton back - he is terrific -*

*i am here but do not want to intrude - xomom*

.....  
*Mom*

*Thank you for your candor. I appreciate it.*

*Best,*

*Jeremy*

.....  
*With her bare, alert senses she could almost hear violets grow and feel the robin's heart beat. Like Emerson, she found in each drop of dew, in each grain of sand, a copy of a universe.*

*A Delayed Obituary for Emily Dickinson, Nardi Reeder Campion, NY Times 1973*



## **The Revenant -2**

### **Still dead**

Returning dead  
Stillborn from  
Head to toes  
From yearning  
To fleeing  
Dead head  
Deadened head  
Heart in fury rage  
Never had  
Time to beat  
A retreat  
To flutter open  
Immaculate  
Sunrays  
Waiting  
To be awakened

**NB**

## **The Revenant - 2**

Ghoulish  
Gulag – ish  
Forensic  
Deposits  
DNA  
Conclusively  
Shows  
The revenant  
The excessive  
Fear of  
Rejection and  
Abandonment  
The barking dog  
The whiffenpoof  
Of reason  
Historical  
Landmines set  
Wounded

Supplicants  
Scour universe  
For partners  
Who would  
Never ever  
In their  
Wildest dreams  
Leave them  
The stayers  
The stays  
In Victorian  
Bodice bonbon  
Seduction  
Assination  
Tryst  
Mesmerizing  
Body  
Double entendre  
Lego fit  
Mating dance  
Sage grouse  
Strutting  
To extinction  
Maddening  
Riveting  
Stamping  
Hewing and huffing  
Intimidating  
Sexual saturation  
Hysterical breeding  
Love call  
Arrhythmia  
Heartbeat  
Scattershot  
Enclosing  
Closing in  
Life numbing  
We kept  
The glorious  
Sage-Grouse



Hidden  
Fear of  
Being left  
Abandoned  
Rejected  
Fear amasses  
Metastasizes  
The lure and bait  
Of a partner  
A mate to hate  
Foundling love  
Founders  
Captivated  
By allure  
Mirage  
Of finding  
Safe harbor  
In which  
To procreate  
Replace self  
Into whose  
Hands  
Did we fall  
Interred  
With these  
Bones  
Henchmen  
With scythe  
Predatory  
Lover  
Smelled  
Us out  
Our fear  
Their domination  
Dominion  
The stealth self

We lain hidden  
Disguises  
Alter selves  
Yielded  
To murderous  
Hands  
Blood curdling  
Screams  
Emitted  
Soundlessly  
Errantly  
Captured  
Captivated  
Hidden away  
Vulnerable  
Unworthy  
Swept off  
Feet  
Promise  
Never to leave  
Never to reject  
What could not  
See or known  
So heartily hidden  
Fear fanned  
Became visible  
Before plundering  
Eyes to despise  
What got revealed  
A desperate  
Soul needing love  
Water to quench  
The barren soul  
Fled left in shambles  
As we became  
More vivid more real  
No longer  
A construct  
Of haplessness  
You are the state of Israel  
You are a man  
Who desires me  
You want affirmation  
Affection love  
When life  
Became too real

Sage-brush  
Stampede  
Greedy to be alive  
Still the nullifying  
Universe  
Of its extinction  
Tilt of universe  
Toward  
Self-truths  
The fled  
We are left  
Unhidden  
No longer concealed  
Too blown asunder  
To find another  
That true other  
Blistering  
Blustery  
Splintered truth  
Burnt off sight  
Of host possibility  
Of lost youth

NB

### **The Revenant - 3**

Move through  
Swamp of doubt  
To a clearing  
Cantilevered  
Cantata  
Catapulted  
Consigliere  
Conciliatory  
Oratorical  
Sartorial  
Hysterical  
Historical  
Levered  
Doubt  
Dispersed  
Life could  
Have been better  
Or worse

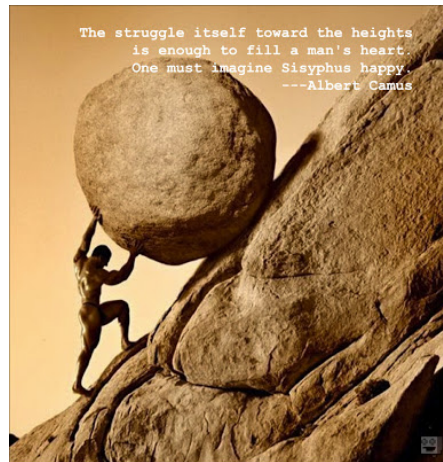
NB

## I can feel the cello



Trembling tremolo  
Thrumming within me  
I can feel my fingers  
Proud callouses  
Glide the strings  
Passion wielding  
A mean bowing  
Musically numbing  
I was in the height  
Of finding my baring  
Suffering into song  
If insufferable  
Musically numbing  
I was no *Jacqueline du Pre*  
Desperate soul clamoring  
Cello pressed tight  
Breast bone a palate  
Of grit-bruising colors  
Mind pushing to take flight  
To give up the fight  
Life in a quandary  
Couldn't step from  
Steeped in agony  
The rumbling  
Suppression oppression  
Plotting escapes  
My feet wouldn't take me to

Moving thrusting bow  
Brandishing strings  
Sing resonant redolent  
Pressing hard  
To reach a life  
Self-pity  
*Sisyphus* climbing  
Always just  
Out of reach



Resistance  
Stalwart  
Slingshot missed  
*Golgotha Goliath*  
Site sluiced washed  
Over any will to live  
Slaughtered desire  
Pungent repelled  
Refused to hear  
Swell of psalm  
*The Swan (Saint-Saens)*

VOX200

Le cygne

Arranged by Zoltan Talyasz  
 A. Angulo  
 Camille Saint-Saëns  
 1875-1921

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Mining recollection  
 When ten already aware  
 Prescient of an existence  
 Of punishing solitude  
 Attending a concert  
 Where a young cellist  
 Played *The Swan*  
 Captivated mesmerized  
 Became wedded welded  
 Yearning to hold  
 Such a thing as the cello  
 Close against my body  
 Expectations of progeny  
 Eclipsed prosaic  
 Ordinary unworthy  
 My legs parted  
 Bringing to my body  
 My stunted soul  
 Grand percussive  
 Humming  
 If inelegant  
 Music the cello  
 Kept me  
 Breathing living

NB



*...the passage of time conveys a bittersweet awareness of the fragility of beauty, which for him, is synonymous with melancholy.*

*What we call the present is really the past. Life is only what we remember, and all of us are soon forgotten. And yet, there's that music in the air from a faraway place.*

Review of Sunset Song movie Stephen Holden NY Times 5/13/16

### **Saying goodbye**

Slowly  
Surprisingly  
Easy  
Time right  
Nerve endings  
Raw  
So much probing

Saying goodbye  
To myself  
Slowly carefully  
Ruefully  
Balefully

Time has come  
To look back  
One long  
Last look  
Let the  
Wounds ooze  
Still flinch  
Jerk head about  
Divert eyes  
Horrible sight  
Woman  
Blinders on  
Married  
The absolutely  
More wrong man  
The a second time

Went back  
To natural habitat  
Grim gothic  
Menacing  
Fell back  
Into mother's arms

Her mouth  
No forgiving  
Myself here  
Lived more  
Than a decade  
Not able  
To make sense  
Grant a pardon  
For that  
Disastrous mistake

Trying to  
Extricate myself  
Give up  
Time and place  
Empty the world  
Of me  
Can't let myself  
Become a burden  
A slobbering  
Peeing  
Pathetic  
Old woman  
Trapped  
Hands unable  
To reach mouth

Everything  
Is timing  
When the  
Moment ripe  
To rip myself  
Off out of  
Time and space

*Dying is so hard*  
My mother  
Would often say  
Fighting  
Tooth and nail  
To stay alive

Without melancholy  
Without sentiment  
Without bathos  
Why live if die

Woody Allen asked  
Why indeed  
No choice there  
Just happenstance  
But dying  
While still  
In hand  
Take command

*"Life is full of misery, loneliness, and suffering - and it's all over much too soon." Woody Allen*

Saying goodbye  
In earnest  
And mean it  
This time around  
Karmalee Margot  
Maxine  
So dear to me  
Now gone

Maxine called  
For her long  
Dead daughter  
To be with her  
When she finally  
Closed her eyes

My father refused  
To listen to Bach  
*Too beautiful* he said  
Then stopped eating  
Lips just brushed  
With sugar coated  
Wet sponge on a stick  
Crucifix of pre-determined  
Self-imposed death

Process begun in earnest  
Caught off guard  
Need to mean it  
Goodbye Naomi  
Time it is time  
Take one last  
Sweeping look  
Back over shoulder  
It was what it was

Cannot be any other  
How you memorialize  
The time your words  
Your story  
Your narrative  
You tell yourself  
How you couch it  
Frame it  
Still cringing  
Get you  
Mean parting  
Bad ending

Saying goodbye  
To myself  
It is all within me  
The past  
As if a collage  
A stand-alone  
On a single page

Goodbye self  
No self-aggrandizement  
No severe punishment  
It was a life  
Like any other  
Shaped by history  
I did not live  
Hobbled by drought  
The ruthless crusades

I lived in the aftermath  
Of the Holocaust  
And the scars  
And damage  
Displacement harbored  
Mad crazy mother  
Never regained  
A sense of balance  
Wanting to be a mother  
Who had a daughter

Saying goodbye  
To myself  
Holding tight  
To the totality

Of it  
My life was...  
No answer  
No ending  
No postscript  
No final word  
The rest to be said  
To be told  
Well after  
I am dead or not  
NB

*"In my next life I want to live my life backwards. You start out dead and get that out of the way. Then you wake up in an old people's home feeling better every day. You get kicked out for being too healthy, go collect your pension, and then when you start work, you get a gold watch and a party on your first day. You work for 40 years until you're young enough to enjoy your retirement. You party, drink alcohol, and are generally promiscuous, then you are ready for high school. You then go to primary school, you become a kid, you play. You have no responsibilities, you become a baby until you are born. And then you spend your last 9 months floating in luxurious spa-like conditions with central heating and room service on tap, larger quarters every day and then Voila! You finish off as an orgasm!" Woody Allen*

### **Tithe Toll Too High**

To cross over  
To pull up a car  
If I could still drive  
To park just beneath  
The heavy limbed  
Old tree –  
Stomach clenched  
Big smile stuck to face  
Preparing to be  
Estherized anaesthetized  
Getting ready  
For subservience  
Ready to be mesmerized  
The tithe the toll  
Complete abrogation  
Of a self to impose  
To offer up  
Here there is only Esther  
Parked car  
Ready to be a prop  
An audience  
Every moment  
Homily of envy  
Why couldn't I  
Why shouldn't I  
As stalwartly  
As that stately tree  
I want to swap me  
And become she  
Herded as flock  
Witness  
Reverent obliging  
She got fucked every night  
She shared with me  
Over bagels and lox  
*You have found*  
*Your writer's voice*  
She assured me  
Steeped in her lore  
In the clutch  
Stepped over gully  
And gulch  
Of my fanatic

Fantastical desire  
To be a writer  
Arriving alone  
At her  
Catskill country kitchen  
Winter soup cooking  
Zabars cheeses  
And breads spread  
On the country  
Kitsch strewn kitchen table  
If only if for moment  
We could swap identities  
Smile fixed on face  
A bottle of wine  
A country pie  
To dine with Esther  
Is to die  
Desiring to be Esther  
Is to eat yourself up alive

NB



Queen Ester by Edwin Long 1879

**I am in deep**

Screaming squelching  
Mourning  
Grief stricken  
About a goodbye  
More than  
Forty-five years ago  
Agony agoniste  
Hard to hold  
Myself together  
Stiffened with  
Grief pain  
Insufferable pain  
Excruciating  
Pain that one  
Cannot live with  
I am undone  
By the sunrise  
Each day  
Having to wait  
For the sky  
To darken  
I am scared  
I am afraid  
I am grieving  
A lifelong loss  
A goodbye  
Tossed out  
As if it could be  
Taken back  
Taken aback  
By my stupidity  
My feeling of  
Invincibility  
That I could  
Shape my fate  
After that fatal  
Hand wave  
Him disappearing  
Into an airplane  
Returning



To the army  
Assigned  
To the Berlin Wall  
Some things  
Some actions  
Can't be taken back  
Spurned scorned  
Unraveling  
Weak-kneed  
Bent over  
Grief stricken  
Absolve  
Fatal resolve  
Stuck stricken  
By final goodbye  
I live in  
Its aftermath  
Never again  
To put back  
Together  
Humpty Dumpty me

*Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,  
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall;  
All the king's horses and all the king's men  
Couldn't put Humpty together again. Mother Goos*

Vanquished by  
A single sad  
Wave of a hand  
NB



Egyptian women in a sorrowful gesture of mourning

**Chance favors the prepared mind. Louis Pasteur**  
**Reap What You Sow**

Worlds come apart  
Planets collide  
Brides grooms tainted  
By bloody  
Violated vows  
To the end of time  
Till death do us ...  
Inviolate  
Conjugal bliss  
Beds tumble  
Into the great abyss

I stand over  
The heaving mess  
Blood on my hands  
Weakness crawls  
My body  
Maggots gut  
Personal failure  
Abrogation  
Internment  
I watch history  
Shadow encroach  
Life a mish mash  
Contorted splattered  
Pollack canvas  
Encrypted code  
Story unfolds  
Truth be told  
Inevitable  
That babies  
Born of my body  
Hovering  
Pushing fifty  
Have lives  
Tumbling  
Unraveling  
Coming apart  
After all  
Body and being  
Foretold the

## Encrypted script

Scouring the universe  
A genetic pool  
Time to reproduce  
What force  
Reduced us  
To barnyard animals  
To coupling  
Needing to embark  
On Noah's arc  
Replacements  
Love never entered  
This biblical obligation  
Ordination  
Bringing to fruition  
Babies to live beyond  
Inheritors of the earth  
On which we promised  
To stick it out  
Breadth to death  
What depleted soil  
Abrogate breach  
A word sworn  
Sacred rite  
Tattered disabused  
Duplicity urgency  
Reproduction  
Tendered  
Promises inviolate  
Families tumbled  
Into this troubled  
Sacilege  
Love never  
Figured into  
The equation  
Begetting  
Tilting a world  
To instinct  
Soul heart love  
In absentia  
Void vacant

How did love  
Fall into  
Such disregard  
How did we fool  
Ourselves  
Into promising  
To marry individuals  
To mate and copulate  
True love  
Never entered  
This equation  
This webbed contract

How did fate come  
To organize our lives  
Around reproduction  
Keeping us  
From the bliss  
And turmoil  
Of true love  
Into what  
Bed of thorns  
Ring toss  
Barnyard coupling  
How did we dare  
Have children  
Without even  
The pretense  
Pretext of love

I married a man  
I knew but three weeks  
My daughter married a man  
She resisted for ten years  
My son married a woman  
He knew but little  
Stretched over a month or two

The knew us  
Those whom  
We promised  
To love and cherish  
They knew

Ransacked  
Desperation  
Will-less  
Compunction  
For overlords  
To cover  
Archaic wounds  
Vulnerability  
Three proud  
Narcissists  
Plundered  
Stole  
Foraged weakness  
Whiff of fear  
Provoked stampede  
Swamped by fear  
Of love  
Hostage  
To reckless loveless  
Love toxic dangerous  
Desire explosive  
Implode with  
Contentious neediness  
We built lives  
And families  
To avoid love  
Fear of being undone  
Consumed  
By the flames the heat  
Of a love  
That could be breached  
We found safe harbors  
With partners  
Lured reeled in  
Capturing captivating us  
While mocking hating us

Six babies  
Mouths open  
Jousting for  
Sustenance  
Gasping for air  
The earth moves  
Under their feet  
I turned tilled

The depleted soil  
We now reap  
Legal claptrap  
Divides children  
Arbitrarily  
By days hours weeks

Endings brokered  
When the vow  
Was spoken  
Commitment  
Prescient  
Expedient  
Reckless  
Tongue swaggering  
Punctuating  
Pontificating  
Equivocating  
With *I do I will*

Marriages foredoomed  
Endurance test  
A decade  
Fifteen years  
Bed emptied of  
Fornication  
Inviolable lifelong  
Lovelessness  
To what sin  
At life's end  
Broker confess to  
Despair despondency  
Look to grandbabies eyes  
Look into children's lives  
Anger wells  
Even hatred for the woman  
Who abrogated the first vow  
To keep love hostage  
Far from a starved heart  
Fear of being truly alive  
Brought all of these babies to life

NB

*Poets are a special breed and I have no idea what generates them, it isn't the thing I always thought when I was younger, that artists were people that could draw pictures. **Artists are people that live unmastered.** That is, they're loyal to no one but themselves. True artists. If you do that in our modern world, That means you don't work for anybody. That means you have a hard time making a living and paying the rent. D.A. Pennebaker, filmmaker, "Don't Look Back" writing about Bob Dylan NY Times 5/20/16*

### **You Didn't know When My Mother Died**

I was awash in your greater family history  
Facts dates recounted with astounding accuracy  
Read your husband's books  
He is indeed a wonderful poet  
But somehow didn't fit in  
To your always widening inner circle  
I was unfit not good enough  
Happy to serve as source resource  
Helping to get your grand daughters into high school  
Something I did not do for my ex-husband's daughter  
And yet you did not know when my mother died  
I am tired tread worn of ingratiating myself  
Hoping for a better place position in the circle  
Relegated to an occasional friend  
Lunch or coffees – husband checks in  
Too close together too often  
You get reeled in I get moved  
To ever widening gap on your calendar  
You have been married fifty-years  
My two unfortunate marriages add up to about thirty  
You are harming me inviting me in close  
And then carefully spacing lunches and coffees  
You didn't know when my mother died  
I know yours died on an Austrian mountain climb  
I can almost feel your husband's distaste for me  
His humor not letting a word in edgewise  
Your family secrets are safe with me  
My heart opened too far at our last lunch  
You slammed the door in my face  
Harmed by your come on I nneed to shut you out  
You didn't know when my mother died.  
Yours died on an Austrian mountainside.

NB

## Inevitable

Walk backwards  
Gather up time  
*Written on the wind (Roger Daltry)*  
In the beginning the end  
Marriage vows  
Spawn death despair  
Quixotic deceitful  
Expedient tethering  
Of hearts  
With nothing  
In the offing  
Flagrant ring toss  
With fate  
Words promises  
Sly tongue  
Serpent pronged  
Pierce love  
Starved heart  
Promises flipped  
Off tongues  
Bull-winkle flapjacks  
Shaved skinned  
Body yields  
Bone chips  
Conflate conflagrate  
Toy with fate  
Predicated on  
Life being eternal  
Another always  
*True love just around the corner (1934 song Gensler and Robin)*  
Round robin love  
Marry elusive figure  
Imagination thought up  
Weary wary  
Why not?  
I do and I do not  
Pledge promise  
Unhinged pinged  
Remorse doubt fear  
Soupçon sparking  
Sneering jeering fate  
Visiting sins  
Burnt wood chips  
Conflagrate



Devil may care  
Grandiosity  
Sublime pathos  
The soul laments  
Tempting fate  
And in the end  
In the end  
The inevitable  
Lifts its mocking head  
Bending twisting you  
Into wind stunted tree  
Coming from  
This tomfoolery  
Hedging bets  
Spurned heart  
Finds love  
Having babies  
Vow and promise  
Probe and dig  
Humbled plead  
How did we  
How could we  
We did and could  
Breed lies half-truths  
Twig sullied  
Wash of debris  
Handed off  
To offspring  
In the beginning  
Married a man  
I only met  
Three weeks  
Before petals  
Fell on guilt filled  
Gilded wedding aisle  
Knew him for a scant  
Three weeks  
I knew him not at all  
I knew him well  
He was an alter-me  
Layered lacquered  
In woundedness  
Assuaged in solitariness  
Babies suckled  
Abandoned heart rebelled  
Desiring love passion

No longer wanting to die  
 Babies were my undoing  
 The fruit of a primal tree  
 Grand awakening  
 True love and babies  
 Could co-exist  
 In the could not  
 Bring both to flower  
 Now time  
 Swallows me up  
 My older children  
 Unravel impossible  
 Improbable marriages  
 Loving enamored  
 By their children  
 Still we are building  
 Unsustainable domiciles  
 Inevitable this swallowing  
 Wallowing in an arcane past  
 Inseparable unsparing  
 Our collective woundedness  
 Not yet able to step  
 Beyond the inevitable  
 Foundries of sinfulness  
 Time has come  
 To end dead-end lovelessness  
 This a statistical dead heat  
 To put an end to the inevitable  
*Wish upon a star (Harline and Washington for movie Pinocchio)*  
 For love to fruit and flower



Vows given full throated  
 Beneath a laurel tree

*How but in custom and in ceremony  
 Are innocence and beauty born?  
 Ceremony's a name for the rich horn,  
 And custom for the spreading laurel tree. (A Prayer for My Daughter W.B. Yeats)*

Moving beyond  
Fear of losing love  
To having a love  
Rather set a heart  
To twirling singing  
Happiness levitating

NB

### **Peculiarities Ironies**

In the five years  
Becoming seventy  
Was victimized  
By a series  
Of life-threatening illnesses  
Eyes being shoved from socket  
By something called  
*Thyroid Eye Disease*  
Held back  
By brain killing  
Radiation rather  
Went into remission  
Then collection  
Of respiratory ailments  
Nose plugged up by polyps  
Like bunches of grapes  
Spawned by unruly sinuses  
Lungs clogged by pneumonia  
Bronchial tubes shutting  
Down breathe catching  
Body collapses  
Overrun by welt size  
Hives from neck to ankle  
Itching to distraction  
And blood letting scratching  
And then the piece de resistance  
Life threatening kidney disease  
Out of nowhere an anomaly  
Boston doctor captivated  
Source of his federal funds  
And research ordered  
Infusion of biologic medicine  
Lined up with cancer patients  
Infusion rooms real leveler  
If ever one believed

They were a person apart  
That place cuts you to size  
And then I got to seventy-five  
Had *EKG* exam  
Blood drawn urine samples  
Doctor shares all normal  
You are in very good health  
See you in six months  
Send her a thank you note  
For bringing me through  
Such life threatening illnesses  
And sent her a poem  
God What God  
Shared spending time writing

Not to follow in the grand tradition  
My father's footsteps  
Time has come  
To prepare for death  
My father waited until  
He was as fit and healthy  
As he could get  
And then said clearly firmly  
*No more Bach it is too beautiful*  
He just stopped eating  
Angel caregiver swabbed his lips  
With moist sugary cotton brush  
Basting body preparing it  
For taking a final breathe  
This is the death  
Bequeathed to me  
Finally mentally ready  
For the grand descent  
Moved body  
Through multiple ailments  
From the ultimate indignity  
Of this kind of suffering  
Wisdom a legacy given me  
Best to end life  
When if in the public domain  
Considered the elderly  
Alert healthy aware  
Choosing then deliberately  
Dying with grace still silently

NB

May 17, 2016

Dear Dr. Painter,

*You have guided me through some frightening and possibly cataclysmic illnesses in the recent past: thyroid eye disease necessitating radiation, nearly a year of polyps prohibiting breathing along with pneumonia and bronchial asthma causing me to cough through weeks and perhaps months of nights and a body from neck to ankle with hives and welts that itched like hell. There were a number of Friday evenings when you called me at home to get a status report and reassure me when I was at my lowest, "that you will get through this I don't know when or how but you will." That alone kept me going.*

*Referrals to fine physicians truly were able to intervene medically in appropriate and helpful ways.*

*And then came the kidney disease potentially life threatening out of nowhere just a close look at urine sample and an infusion medication with a targeted biologic that put my body in full remission, a rare event, if it took my immune system a year to regain its viability.*

*Most importantly I have been able to share my life view about health and aging as well as the hard time it is to be the mother of a seriously ill child.*

*There have been many blessings in my life among them is having you Dr. Painter as my physician thanks to a friendship that my son Jeremy shared with Margaret from their days in pre-school.*

*I am enclosing a piece I wrote. Writing has given this time of my life such meaning.*

*Thank you again.*

*Truly,*

*Naomi*

**God what God**

*Where God*

*There is no God*

*Six- year-olds shot dead*

*Sitting in a circle*

*Discussing the weather*

*And the date*

*On December 14, 2012*

*God shot dead*

*Silenced by a Bushmaster*



*God our invention*

*Murder imponderable*

*God lay down*

*In a pool of blood*

*Stuck clotted to the floor*

*Of a classroom*

*Of six-year-olds*

*In Newtown Connecticut*

*Why and how come*

*Apple bite drove Adam*

*From the Garden of Eden*

*He just showed up*

*In a classroom*

*At Sandy Hook elementary school*

*Adam lay dead near the children*

*In a pool of his own blood*

*His Eve his mother frozen*

*With fear and ambivalence*

*Unable to nudge her son*

*Toward sanity*

*He shot her first*

*Into her sleeping face*

*Was God in Adam Lanza*

*Or God looking out*

*From his mother's vacated eyes*

*Adam murdered his Eve*

*Rifles offered instead of apples*

*Adam mowed her down*

*She signaled a come-on*

*An incautious seduction*

*Felled by an Oedipal fuck*

*In great mythic tradition*

*Invigorated energized*

*Adam moved to Sandy Hook*

*Snap dragon killing of six-year-olds*

*Adam anamorphically blinded*

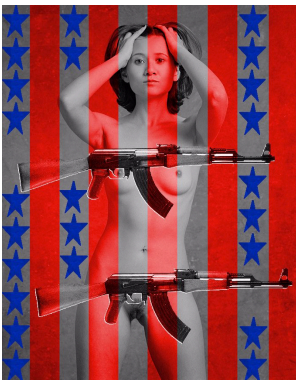
*By his old six-year-old pain*

*Adam the shooter*

*Mother bought him guns*

*Took him to shooting ranges*

*Enticing with shot gun erotica*



*Victoria Van Dyke*

*Seductress mother taunts dares*

*Son shoot me kill me please*

*Responding to her plea*

*Blasted off her head*

*Shot at her face*

*While she lay in uneasy sleep*

*The boy she kept hidden remote*

*Removed from scrutiny*

*Vigilant fearing what was to come*

*Her son murdered*

*Twenty six-year-olds and six educators*

*In her heart she knew*

*Death would come*

*Mother and son intimacy*

*Culled murderous ambition*

*Mother and son*

*Adam and Eve*



*Driven from*

*The ecclesiastical exalted*



*River sky flower bird tree*

*Paradise lost to them*

*Behind shuttered windows*

*Mother son*

*Pas de deux at rifle ranges*



*God died*

*Actuarial tablet*

*Two thousand twelve years*

*Murder rape rapine*

*Enough is enough*

*God be gone*

*"If some one loves a flower of which just one example exists among all the millions and millions of stars, that's enough to make him happy. . . . But if the sheep eats the flower, then for him it's as if, suddenly, all the stars went out."*

*Twenty stars blinkered off*

*Twenty six-year-olds lay dead*

*Flowers stars moon sun*

*Yield single rose on asteroid*

*After Sandy Hook murders*

*We are left wondering*

*Who and why God?*



*Naomi Barber*

*"Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then he is not omnipotent.  
Is he able, but not willing? Then he is malevolent.  
Is he both able and willing? Then whence cometh evil?  
Is he neither able nor willing? Then why call him God?" Epicurus*

*"I do not believe in God and I am not an atheist." Albert Camus*

*"Is man merely a mistake of God's? Or God merely a mistake of man?" Friedrich Nietzsche*

## Cerulean Caliphate

I live within a cerulean caliphate  
Sunbeams boomerang my sparse scalp  
Shreds of hair limp with fledgling bounce  
Eyes dimmer cataract enshrouded  
Bring books newspaper nose level  
Arthritis rides triggers  
Circuits like flash lightning  
Circadian rhythm sparking  
Don't know night from day  
Darkness mocks  
Roils twists  
My legs knot with sharp pains  
What time is bedtime  
What time to wake up  
Inner clock nature perplexes  
Moved into a haven  
A cerulean caliphate



The rules rile reveal themselves  
A sense of order scrambled  
Release not to fight it  
Get comfortable scrambled  
Talk less wander home  
Illumined by its wonder  
Mausoleum in which to dwell  
As hours days dwindle  
Released slowly to the ending  
My face turns abruptly away  
Wincing at this stranger's face  
Cull up pride  
Calibrate time to die  
With one look back  
Sweeping with pleasure  
NB

## Christmas Day 2015

Craig cooked "for the Barber's" as he said  
Ex's or near ex's to share a turkey at three  
Who is this other man his wife and daughter  
Was he really my first husband  
The father of my two oldest children  
Did we scatter to opposite ends of a marital bed  
Did he really clamp a yoke on my neck bells on my ankles  
Did he slap my face silly blooming with morning glory colors  
Was there really a gun in a rare book holster  
Pages cut precisely holding a pistol wrapped in delicate muslin  
Safety catch jiggling like a broken door latch  
His current wife the dancer nearly two decades younger  
Greeting with warm hug kiss on both cheeks  
And the daughter soon 25 dressed bizarrely  
Tiny skirt sequins beaming disco lights  
Bra-less tits bobbing pears low hung fruit  
Large earrings hair piled on head  
She the bard of millennial Brooklyn  
Editor of online poetry journal originating in London  
Her poems starched and precise  
Red circles professor comments fading

Soon after the last crumb of pumpkin pie eaten  
Civility at great cost  
We are eating each other alive  
My daughter his wife  
Could never fathom counter moves  
Never even dreamed up or imagined  
Feigned generosity had her caught  
In concentric circles riptide upending  
Her desire to flee leave  
Future eclipsed frayed stripped bear  
Mock ritual Buddhist wedding ceremony  
Bells rung rice flung gongs stunned  
Witnesses watch a bride disappear  
On a bed of wedding vows  
False promises feigned security  
Short-circuiting her young life  
*He would never ever leave me*  
My daughter reasoned  
He was never ever with you  
Penultimate etiquette  
Chef for family Thanksgiving  
That he was on the verge of leaving NB

***My tongue will tell the anger of my heart, or else my heart, concealing it, will break.  
Shakespeare, Taming of the Shrew, Act 4 Scene 3***

.....

***Solitude is ultimately an illusion. A fantasy that can be enjoyed for a while but must  
always end in acknowledging others – how they make us who we are.***

***Being alone is a sign that something is about to go wrong, perhaps catastrophically so  
Christine Smallwood, New York writer, former associate literary editor of  
The Nation, quotes from NY Times, Solitude and the Sea***

**Stay with me**, I want to be with you.  
In this burning country  
words have to shade.

Yehuda Amichai

**A View of the Kidron Valley from Abu Tor**

Where my feet once walked  
my eyes now go,  
and later my memories,  
and later the memories of me.  
The spirit of God hovers over  
what should have been water  
and really is water.

The crocuses have flowered early.  
They have blossomed in my corruption  
they have ripened in my desire.

**First Love**

I was blind to you when you loved me long ago.  
I switched you for another, like Isaac,  
for a smell, and a taste, and an appetite for meat,  
for a fragrance of the field, and a house, and a little heat.  
I have forgotten the words  
of the only letter I wrote to you.  
All that I remember is the taste of the glue of the stamp  
on my tongue.  
The fate that determined us was not really  
destiny,  
but it was as strong and sure as the finger of the violinist  
that determines the fate of a note,  
though it too, is as final and as decisive  
as death.

Yehuda Amichai

***The Eve of Rosh Hashanah***

*The eve of Rosh Hashanah. At the*

*House that's being built,*

*A man makes a vow: not to do*

*Anything wrong in it,*

*only to love.*

*And ends:*

*And whoever uses people as handles*

*Or as rungs of a ladder*

*will soon find himself hugging a stick*

*Of wood*

*and holding a severed hand and*

*wiping his tears*

*with a potsherd.*

*Yehuda Amichai*

## The Sparkler Shoots off Spinning



Suddenly has gone crackling dark  
Crackle dried cod shooting stars  
Pistol-whipping man  
Onerous omniscient omnipresent  
Pistol-whipping man  
Tongue lashed thick lugubrious  
A forked poison spluttering  
Sputtering the spark is gone  
Uncommonly reticent  
Still bitterness  
Drips off his lips  
Old days gone by when  
He would suck you into his vitriol  
Corralling you into his tight circle  
Of tolerance menacing veiled threats  
The sparkler gone dark  
Could I have stayed the distance  
Wonder at 75, he 76  
Why did I have to crack apart  
Break the vital bonds of marriage  
Fleeing a home leaving  
Without a trace of departure  
Didn't trash it break dishes  
Burn his journals smoke and singe  
Not a trace of me left  
As if having died off suddenly  
Dusting and vacuuming first  
Duty bound wife provided sex  
He strayed a feral cat  
The whirling world his oyster  
He belonged everywhere  
Poseur playwright professor  
What would have happened  
Had I stayed had I stayed



How would life had played out  
There would be no Luca  
But then no Frank  
For whom I served as a tour guide  
Rebecca Jeremy and I  
Would continue to live fenced in  
Restricted passport carrying  
Within his contrived Apartheid  
His compulsion to travel  
Finding new affirmation  
In alternative realities in the elsewhere  
When the door closed behind him  
We ate with our hands and fingers  
Laughed ourselves silly dancing Horas  
These interludes kept us sanguine  
Life would continue being absolutely predictable  
Had I stayed married to his father  
Jeremy would not mispronounce *divorus*  
Rebecca would not have held her breath  
Counting the hours minutes days  
Until she came home to her mommy  
Had I stayed we would have had two cars  
A sports car and a family Volvo  
Stephanie, Wilson and Joan still be family  
And the warmth of the attachment  
I walked away fled a rare if suffocating security  
The spark the deafening orders of an autocrat  
Are gone along with the threats  
He beat me up a couple of times  
He kept a loaded gun without safety catch  
He dictated life as to be lived each day  
Issuing dictates of do's and don'ts  
Though his fixed narcissism kept him  
For ever noticing our straying wandering off  
His encyclicals more restrictive than the Pope's  
We were an anarchistic gorilla underground trio  
Deviant resistant cunningly compliant  
We were afraid of him  
Forced for survival to act stealthily contrarily  
Why didn't I stay why did I run away  
I needed an enemy to flee  
Living off big infusions of victimization  
I married him three weeks from the first coffee  
And with the same switch left walked off  
Neither decision held any merit  
I lived frightened by myself

Exercising this illusory stealth self  
Marrying mindlessly as if behind my own back  
I married another version of me  
I lived beside myself renouncing will and dream  
Asking now why I left him finding no good answer  
Hurt twisted up harmed damaged two children  
Who now have the same inner demon driving them  
Both entering hellish marriages  
Having righteous reason for *divorus*  
Three children backpacks always ready  
To haul *is it mother or father's night*  
One of the three children designated to remember

NB

### **Tear in Small Intestine not Dropped Surgical Stitch**

In the aftermath wept  
We wept and wept and wept  
Why and why and why he asks  
Why I don't know why my son

My little whelp yelps  
My little pup  
My rescued boy  
My foundling

Eyes pitched to sky  
Why why and why  
There is no answer  
Not even from God

NB

***Why Am I, A Righteous Man, Suffering? Job 3:1-26***

## Grief Grieving (Fall 2015)

Anticipation is funny  
*Mother, (I,) died today.*  
*Or maybe yesterday: I can't be sure. (Camus, The Stranger)*  
Slobbering all over myself  
Bent over suffering  
Tumultuous reckoning  
Fist to sky  
Why do I have to die  
Why do I want to die  
Need to purge  
Desire to be alive  
For yet another day hour  
David Bowie wrote and sang  
Because of or relief from  
*Loneliness isolation*  
*Need for the spiritual*  
*And to communicate with others*  
Shared during a *60 Minutes* interview  
David Bowie died  
Three days after becoming 69

Building a common language  
A common experience  
Continuing in the proud tradition  
Of annual subscriptions  
To the *New Yorker*  
Renewed yearly from my mother  
We now share books and CD's  
Primarily on my initiative  
I have time in the wane  
To research follow up leads  
Reading daily *The New York Times*  
*David Bowie died Sunday night*  
*Surrounded by his family*  
*Following months of struggle with cancer*  
*Blackstar* his final CD released days before  
Sent to Jeremy Rebecca Luca and one for me  
Suggested when we had our CD's  
We synchronize listening  
David Bowie submerged afloat  
In mother-death's amniotic fluid  
Final music video of *Lazarus*

Has him writhing on a hospital bed  
Lifting falling railing  
Face masked by bandages  
Black stones or holes for eyes  
His ode to death last breathes  
Body shudders swept up  
In hellish recollection  
Backs into open door  
Stratosphere  
Night sky billions of stars  
Life's end twinkling firmament

Tears ducts dikes washed over  
Miasma plasma taut canvas  
Imagination aghast collapsing  
Into reality's ruthless clasp  
The boy, my son, limp drenched  
Lying on a hospital bed  
Infusions transfusions  
Drip drop by drop ceaselessly  
His body refusing to die  
His mind steadies  
Scans peruse possibility  
Drawn from a world  
Filled with black holes  
How did I get to be a mother  
At the bedside of a son  
Whom for more than a decade  
Has tangled death  
Wrestling it down  
Pulling loose  
*Star bright starlight*  
Refusing to submit  
While so many others  
Drape over a day  
Like a drop cloth  
Indifferent to the sun's rays  
And I mother at the bedside  
Murmuring *stay stay stay*

I too finally in earnest am dying  
I am seventy-five  
Possibility for the surprising  
Dead ended just exhausted  
Refusing to dream on

Finished moving through  
Abscessed puss-filled time  
Searching for life's truths  
Ugh! Enough already!

Here we are again  
Around the *High Holidays*  
Sitting encapsulated  
In the sanctuary temple  
Of a hospital  
Surgical waiting room  
Almost exactly a year after  
Our son our foundling  
Underwent the surgery  
That would end  
Any possibility of living  
Without an *Ostomy* bag  
He is back  
In the operating room  
Back in the operating room  
With his trusted surgeon  
For whom  
He returned from LA  
The surgeon continuing  
To prune our son's insides

Knees nearly touching  
His father also waits  
Eyes scattering like a feral cat's  
*With his WHAT?*  
His father anticipating  
That fateful surgeon's call  
*Avinu Malkeinu Our Father Our King*  
I have sinned I need to repent  
Empty pockets into this  
Bleakly functional waiting room  
Murmuring to myself  
Wondering how why  
I even knew this guy  
Our son's father my ex-husband  
Frank the father blurts out  
Toe stubbing *Jabberwocky* bluntly  
*Did you sleep with Antonio*  
*Did you have an affair with Antonio*  
*I have my reasons for wondering asking*  
Twisted mind bending mythic

Antonio the lawyer with whom  
Infant Luca and Mother Mary Naomi  
Lived while he Antonio  
Attempted to extricate our papers  
From the fist of arbitrary autocracy  
So that we could leave Paraguay  
Mother with son  
Even in this terror riven country  
I was deemed rightful mother  
Of this my adopted infant son  
Waiting body brittle as tinder  
To hear if Luca survived the surgery  
And what the future would bring  
Sucker punched by this inquiry  
This improbable  
Twisted backward look  
Some twenty-seven years later  
The query stun gunned me into  
A plane of higher wide awakesness  
This in my year  
Of chronological dwindle  
Rawness hurt pain agony  
Soul bashing unnerving harm  
Buzz sawing nerve endings  
Blight of dim recollection lifts off  
*Are you fucking kidding me I aksed*  
Abashed stunned blurt babble out  
*Are you fucking kidding me*  
Thinking you who  
Held your nose fucking me  
Reigning me  
Into a wrecking ball coupling  
To avenge belittling at City College  
Disheveled Jewish professors  
Offering disdain and indifference  
Hunted down an authentic an original  
*German Jewish female with rare book library*  
*Are you fucking kidding me*  
*Did I have an affair with Antonio*  
*Our Jesuit Paraguayan adoption lawyer*  
This in the damn waiting room  
Our foundling our son under the knife  
My eyes jack knifed opened  
Rising like a comatose Christ  
A snoring sleeping Rip Van Winkle  
Did I what and with whom incredulous

*I have my reasons* tongue thrusting man  
In full view his repugnant gargoyle face



*He the father the son the Holy Ghost*  
Who hoped the next  
Scheduled flight out of Paraguay  
Leaving me with our infant son  
Whom he held new father awkwardly  
For less than two days  
Mother's don't abandon sons  
Stayed behind so that the lawyer  
Could wrestle down authorities  
Extortion usury entreaties  
Blackmail necessary to fortify exit  
Searching for the weak political link  
In the chain link of corruption  
We were there until Antonia  
Had valid stamped immigration papers  
For our infant son  
I could leave at any time  
I had my USA passport  
Paraguay known to have  
One of the harshest longest reigning  
Dictatorships in the world  
The father bound by the same  
Sworn declaration before a judge  
To love and cherish Luca fled  
Antonia invited us to live with his family  
While he found a way to get us out  
At my urging we had already paid his fee  
When he picked us up at the airport  
Antonio noted your bags packed  
Ticket and passport in hand  
Staying one single night after all  
Flights only twice a week  
Quick airbrush kiss goodbye

Fled into waiting cab to head for home

Some judicial coup held our papers up  
Antonio promised to get us home  
But had no idea when  
We were there for an indeterminate time  
*Did I fuck Antonio the lawyer*  
*I have my reasons for asking*  
Small man empty suit man  
You vanished before my eyes  
Persistent and gnawing  
How did I know a man  
Who could pose such a question  
When he air fucked every women  
Who if for reluctant moments came close  
In surgical waiting room  
Shocked stunned thrown  
Jiggling jangling dangling  
My tongue running stone dry

Did I grow to love Antonio  
As he struggled to free us  
And get us on one  
Of the two weekly flights out  
Did I grow to love and fear his wife  
Did I attach myself like a barnacle  
To the other women in residence  
Never exactly sure who they were  
Did I adore the two young boys  
Who rushed from school  
To push our infant son around  
The courtyard aflutter with sun  
Blushed iridescent humming birds

All I knew as I sat in that courtyard  
Was that I was legally  
Legitimately our son's mother  
And that we couldn't leave until  
The papers were in order  
The authorities refusing to sign off  
This was law arbitrary and ruthless  
I accompanied Antonio weekly  
To the American consulate  
Each time almost being thrown out  
As we demanded help  
*We don't interfere in foreign governments*



Antonio accompanied us  
To the pediatricians for requisite checkups  
Our foundling son at first  
Struggling to thrive becoming  
Increasingly plump a bouncing baby boy

I went with Antonio to the local  
Offices of immigration  
To see if they would intervene  
And weekly Antonio would  
Trek on that overnight bus ride  
You so heroically romanticize  
To attempt to solve our case with  
Bribes payoffs spurned  
Now is not yet the time  
Stationed outside the house  
And around the neighborhood  
Police with drawn submachine guns  
Keeping order for the dictator  
Antonio brought Luca and me  
To a weekend in the country  
With his extended family  
Warning me not to say a word  
Fortunately could neither understand  
Or speak Spanish but for a word or two  
My expression tight with forced smile  
An outsider's stranger's fixed expression

*Did I fuck Antonio*

This ex-husband dared ask  
In a surgical waiting room

I settled into life in Paraguay  
As if it were going to be forever  
Never able to learn a second language  
Lived as a regular family member  
While Luca was always being held  
Cradled cooed fed and bathed  
Loved back into vitality  
The chorus of nannies  
Had me resting in a reading chair  
Within and among the hummingbirds  
And exquisitely flowering gardens  
Amazingly brought with me  
*The Book of Women Poets from Antiquity to Now*  
Perhaps anticipating this extended stay

Embedded in time culture language history  
Pages 257 to 302 thumbed constantly  
These the female poets of Latin American  
Recorded from 1837 to the 20<sup>th</sup> Century  
Sanctuary of words sacred and profane  
Probing what being a woman meant  
Words split spilt from the gut  
A manifest record of female history

*Did I fuck Antonio*

I never even touched his hand  
Until we mounted the plane  
Free to finally leave go home  
He hugged our son and me  
As we settled into our seat  
Never thought I was going to leave  
Would never leave with out our son  
As you suggested  
And then to come back and fetch him  
When all the legal mumbo jumbo got cleared up  
Yeh! Go back into the dark epicenter  
Of a ruthless dictatorship to claim a son  
When and if they ever decided to let him leave

*Did I fuck Antonio*

The essential question riling me  
How did I ever let him touch me  
Fucking me while holding his nose  
Wondering in this  
Gorgeous Latin American garden  
How could I now ever go back  
To a man who fled days into fatherhood  
The garden the poems brought me to the  
To the excruciating reality  
That I had married such a man  
Ruthless and coldhearted as any despot  
Gathering chestnuts reckless  
With those entreated to help him  
Recognizing that it was I  
Who led him down the  
Hot coal path of adoption  
For twenty-six years we have shared a son  
Divorced on our tenth anniversary  
Luca ten years old as well  
Filled in the waiting room  
With a profound sense of nausea

Recalling gossamer glimmer of a girl who was  
Vanishing now disappearing  
Deep into shadow and myth  
I had become a stringer  
In a third rate actors roster of women  
Stuck recoiling in a sentimental  
Sentient soap opera  
I am gagging so irreverently unsettled

*Did I fuck Antonio*

Betray a trust however the temptation  
Luca and I were firmly in Antonio's hands  
He tirelessly making if futile  
Attempts to extricate us  
Tapping into the nerve endings  
Of this authoritarian state  
Without his wile wits guts  
His Jesuit stalwartness  
It was possible  
That Luca and I would have remained  
Looking over at the man who deemed ask

*Did you fuck Antonio*

I think that might have been the better place  
The far better place – the food the familiar  
The Iquatzu Falls the song

How did I let myself get stuck with him  
Get so short-circuited go so wrong  
How why I ask over and over  
The gargoyle gag unlatched

*Did you fuck Antonio*

The repulsive reptilian had this question  
Festering for nearly twenty-six years  
Asking as we sat a cold hospital anteroom  
While our son was having  
Yet another surgery underlying anxiety  
Will he live or die  
How compromised will his body be this time  
The question is for me to ask  
How did I ugh! Let you mount me terrorize me  
Mock me continually with abject disgust  
Obligatory performe performance perfidy

We wait to hear from the surgeon  
In the aftermath of this feckless question  
Transformed transubstantiation

Where is the fucking holy wafer  
The phone rings the surgery went well  
The kid the son the foundling is fine  
Yet again to survive against all odds

If on a bed of denigration subjugation  
A mother grew to love a son  
Beyond anything imaginable  
Love forming from flower and hummingbird  
And the affirming sisterhood of poetic words  
Comforted mesmerized transformed  
By their insight agony majesty  
Holding now the good word  
Our son will live beyond this day  
Awakened in m by your feckless question  
The madness agony within me  
That dark bleak place  
Of perpetual dislocation  
As any person imprisoned  
If in good circumstance  
Terrified each night  
That Luca and I would be held captive  
It is the not knowing  
The uncertainty that is maddening  
The call reassuring having lapsed  
Into a returning reveries  
Of being in that garden  
Joined in a sisterhood of women  
Preyed upon impounded plundered violated  
By men who believed it was a given right  
I see I reside in a realm of great biblical dimension  
With and among women held captive still  
If whimpering holding their breath silent  
Being mishandled mistreated raped  
Carnal subjugation predatory  
Believing I was unworthy of love  
I settled for your serpent tongue  
A temporary acquisition  
Of Jewish canniness and connection  
Antonio was a saint I loved more at a distance  
Than ever in horrifying proximity with you

NB

***Another Song of the Same Woman, to Some Partridges Sent to Her Alive***

*These birds were born  
singing for joy;  
such softness imprisoned  
gives me such sorrow –  
yet no one weeps for me.*

*They cry that they flew  
fearless of capture  
and those whom they shunned  
were those who seized them:  
their names write my life  
which goes on, losing joy,  
such softness imprisoned  
give me such sorrow –  
yet no one weeps for me.*

*Florencia del Pinar (late 15<sup>th</sup> century)*

***The Eve of Rosh Hashanah***

*The eve of Rosh Hashanah. At the  
house that's being built,  
a man makes a vow: not to do  
anything wrong in it,  
only to love.*

*-and ends:*

*And whoever uses people as handles  
or as rungs of a ladder  
will soon find himself hugging a stick  
of wood  
and holding a severed hand and  
wiping his tears  
with a potsherd.*

*Yehuda Amichai*

*Potsherd: a broken piece of ceramic material, especially one found on an archaeological site.*

## Rationalization Reason Following in Father's Footsteps

*It's nothing removing cataracts  
Anthony Hopkins had it done  
You love reading...  
Scolding older son agent says*

Mornings eyes fluttering open  
To dimmer day  
Steeped sunk in haze fog  
Newspaper rubs nose  
As eyes search words  
Glasses part of face  
Glasses bring no clarity  
Vision the same  
On or off –

Bus coming can you tell me which  
Until practically under wheel  
Can't make out which bus line to mount  
Cataracts I explain  
*Oh I had that easy to fix she said  
No one to touch me no more  
I live each day  
Climb on bus go out  
Blessed day she says  
Still able to go out  
She is older than me  
I am 75 I say  
I am 82 she replies  
I get off wave goodbye  
Blessed day she calls after*

Another one of my brief loves  
Momentary glances  
Brief conversations  
Hearts swapped  
Love currents tap the air  
No names nothing more  
*My cup runneth over (Psalm 23:5)*

There will be no brighter days  
I cannot tolerate anyone touching me  
Refuse to back sight into focus  
Growing dental implants on my gums

No more the drawing down of the day

*Bach too beautiful* my Dad simply said  
No more Bach not again  
Ending life impossible  
Heart soul opening to such beauty  
*No more Bach it is too beautiful*  
No cataract surgery  
My sight needs to dim  
I cannot look toward another novel  
To envelope engage me in sleep  
Don't want a tree or bus sign  
To be brought into greater focus

Pains reach deep into joints  
Throbbing constraining hobbling  
Playful twirl of fashionable walking stick  
Not yet ready for cane or walker or market cart  
One day left without my glasses on  
Blocks from the house  
On one of my constitutional walks  
Felt my face no glasses vision the same  
Just face felt pained without prop  
Another day I left without my teeth  
Swirling my tongue around my gums  
On the number 2 express train  
Abruptly got off first stop  
Flagged a cab for home  
Heart palpitating  
What will happen if bridge is lost  
Bumped into coop president  
Spoke to him mouth half closed  
Teeth soaking waiting awash  
In sea salt and peroxide and water  
Paradigm of aging  
Staging a day  
Within the constricts  
Of fading clouded eyesight  
Temporary crown wobbling around  
Favor eating without chewing  
Good grief cataract surgery is nothing  
Dentists cost a fortune  
Why I ask why  
Fix up one part of myself  
As the rest deep dives disintegrates  
Each day at a quickening pace

I would like to be able to read more easily  
Keeping a book more than inches from my nose  
Breathing in the residue of pulp and print  
Would like my gums to hold my original teeth  
Long gone my mouth a disgrace  
Exacting the sentinel mouth of poverty  
Elitist norms dictate that we go regularly to dentist  
Diagnosed gum disease travelling to my brain  
Stopped just in the nick  
Leaving me with fewer teeth scattered  
Dispersed along my gums highly polished gem stone

I exist a bas-relief of aging  
Chronological purposeful  
No amount of fixing up  
Will bring back vibrancy youth  
My grandson six noticed  
Playing pool in a Hampton's rental  
*You can be good at pool*  
*Your skin is so loose on your hands*  
And moved to demonstrate  
Holding pinching the skin  
Between thumb and fingers  
AARP would enjoy this rendering

Can't beg for just one more da  
Finding the world  
Crystalline pristine sparkling clear  
Weakening resolve to end my life  
While it is still in my hands  
Wandering the Conservatory Garden  
Soil turning recently held tulips  
Ferns perennials delicate blooms  
Fill gardens moving into summer  
Chant silently to myself  
A prayer learned so many years ago  
When a girl twenty-one  
Lived with Navajo family in Arizona

*Today I will walk out, today everything negative will leave me*  
*I will be as I was before, I will have a cool breeze over my body.*  
*I will have a light body, I will be happy forever, nothing will hinder me.*  
*I walk with beauty before me. I walk with beauty behind me.*  
*I walk with beauty below me. I walk with beauty above me.*  
*I walk with beauty around me. My words will be beautiful.*



*In beauty all day long may I walk.  
Through the returning seasons, may I walk.  
On the trail marked with pollen may I walk.  
With dew about my feet, may I walk.  
With beauty before me may I walk.  
With beauty behind me may I walk.  
With beauty below me may I walk.  
With beauty above me may I walk.  
With beauty all around me may I walk.  
In old age wandering on a trail of beauty, lively, may I walk  
In old age wandering on a trail of beauty, living again, may I walk.  
My words will be beautiful...*

*Walking in Beauty Closing Prayer from the Navajo Way Blessing Ceremony*

More fully conscious more wide awake  
I am aware know that  
Beauty before me not again  
Beauty behind above and around me  
Drifting off to final untroubled sleep  
Will see yes that I did relish and behold  
The world in its vast naturalness and beauty  
Time for an ending  
Out of focus blurry vision a warning  
My eyes remind me there is no way  
To really put youth back into an aging body  
Want to hold a steady  
Command a death by my own hand  
Drawing to a close my life  
On a most beautiful if reckoning day

NB

### **It's Not About You Mom, But it is...**

Jousting justifying head storming  
Looking examining what I've produced  
Hydra-headed monstrosity  
Six grandkids  
Nomads Bedouins schleppers  
Traveling bed to bed  
Home to home  
Which night, which parent  
*Think that is at Daddy's*

What heresies did I bequeath  
We are walking in circles  
Re-enacting our own  
Tortured past  
A lethal trinity  
Anguish agony suffering  
We break up homes  
Repeat the past  
Echoes reverberate  
Echolalic our spirits words  
The looming chorus  
Of self-imposed tragedy  
What we hated what crushed us  
Pestle to mortar  
A brother and a sister whose lives  
Were carved along hemispheric divides  
Obligated by the courts divorce decree  
Three days here four days there  
And forever alternating  
Adult children perpetuate  
A court docket's decrees  
Weeks splintered divided up  
Warring parents sign off  
Marriages ended children's lives upended  
Do we marry to incarcerate and split apart  
Choosing finding that singular mate  
With who to have babies procreate  
The nursery shadowed by distaste  
Children born in a world of whirl  
Still searching a promised land  
Children fleeing the tyranny  
Distempered marriages  
Children night travelers

Turtles with knapsacks  
And schedules stuck in pockets  
Telling them where to go  
Which night is which  
They learn to roll off their tongues  
*Mom's home at Dad's*

*"Who Killed Cock Robin?  
Who caught him with a shot  
and put him on the spot?  
Who killed Cock Robin?  
And vanished like a phantom in the night? WHO?"*

It is I who slayed a future  
Children programmed to repeat  
The brutal dissecting past  
Mesmerized caught  
In the undertow of displacement  
Crushing sweetly opening hearts

God I hate you  
I hate that I kept sins streaming  
Wombats wandering for sustenance  
Nesting in the hither and yon  
Gospel docility impermanence  
Crafted in the expedient and temporal  
Woodcut in its umpteenth printing  
What genes what disturbance got passed on  
We sniff the ground to hunt  
The penultimate narcissist  
To crash us thrash us upend us  
I am the mother who set precedent  
Cower but smile blindingly  
An appearance of openness  
That is shut airtight

*It's not about you Mom he warns me*  
Shushes me silences me  
*You were a good mother*  
Assuages don't worry  
Look at what has become  
Of the future  
Six grandchildren who travel  
Turtles with backpacks  
Their things hither and yon  
Never a nights rest without

Having to pry tomorrow's night  
From a custody calendar  
What hath I wrought  
The poisonous fruit yielded

I have caused generated  
Such irreparable harm  
Six grand children wander  
Bedouins Nomads schleppers  
One home to the other  
Mom's dad's what nomenclature  
They have normalized  
The horrific instability  
It becoming a virtue  
We ride around in bumper cars  
Crashing into a bleak future  
Beginning again and again  
Written indelibly into vows  
We flee we leave behind  
Perhaps the one true love  
Unable to ask will you  
Numbed benumbed bequeathed  
To those from whom  
We should have fled run

**NB**

### **Thinking suicide self-centered**

Not when you reach 75  
It is called known as an honor killing  
No longer solipsistic twenty-year-old  
Romancing death afraid of adult life  
The time has come to end my life  
Death cavorts lollygags  
An applecart turned over  
Apples rollicking rolling  
Tumbling hither and thither  
Juicy on a serpent tongue

Do I want the fist of death  
To squeeze me dry  
Pummel life out of me  
Eclipse chance choice  
Grab back footsteps forward  
The untoward the unexpected  
Back away from flee run  
The pot of gold at rainbow's end  
Was a distance too far to go  
Winnowing diminishing  
Tiny flighty minnow  
Satin sheen in sunlight  
Scuttering just beneath  
Short-circuiting my art  
It is all in the timing

*"There is a right time for everything:  
A time to be born; A time to die;  
A time to plant; A time to harvest;  
A time to kill; A time to heal;  
A time to destroy; A time to rebuild;  
A time to cry; A time to laugh;  
A time to grieve; A time to dance;  
A time for scattering stones; A time for gathering stones;  
A time to hug; A time not to hug;  
A time to find; A time to lose;  
A time for keeping; A time for throwing away;  
A time to tear; A time to repair;  
A time to be quiet; A time to speak up;  
A time for loving; A time for hating;  
A time for war; A time for peace;"*

Ecclesiastes 3: 1-8

Therapist's asked  
When I was twenty  
*Describe how you would  
Kill yourself*  
I want to stab eviscerate  
Crush bloodless my uterus  
Kill harm the baby in my mother's body  
Pummeling herself three months a bride  
Hearing she was pregnant  
I made the witch's brew  
To set her off into madness  
Long gestating to bring harm  
To the baby who transformed  
Her mother into head beating  
Ranting manic oven stuffing

Went on to marry wrong twice  
Along the way gave birth  
To a son and a daughter  
Who are now re-enacting  
Our family's ritual slaughter  
Blowing marriages asunder  
Our collective embattled  
Unconscious mind drives us  
To marry people to harm us  
Ghosts of the past left unexamined  
Cavort unchallenged unexamined  
Sadly this misery  
Does not come from  
A revisionist family history

I am the eye of this storm  
Clamored to climb into a lion's den  
Even wrote *oh my lion my king*  
*Let's begin our kind of living*  
This when purity poured from my pores  
When innocence and goodness  
Held my demeanor a still-life  
I married a man a hardly knew  
Three weeks from a first coffee  
It was not stumbling drunk or stoned  
It was not haphazard  
I could not tolerate my innate  
Freedom to chose a mate  
Unable to become a woman

Swept up  
In the incalculable force of loving

In the exacting aftermath  
My seven-year-old grandson  
Stared out my window  
Wondering if ever  
He would find the sunrise  
Lift out of the sky  
In the same place  
If from the corner of his eye  
Sandman particles rubbed off  
Looking over shoulder  
Oh it was here I spent the night  
NB

Slow foods  
Slow love  
Slow death down  
Eclipse of the sun  
Well done  
NB

*...the yearning her breasts seem to have developed for her waist –  
Arlene Heyman, author, Scary Old Sex*

**Flapper jackers is what I** call my breasts  
As they respond to the call of gravity  
My granddaughter asked when they settled  
Between belly and shoulder blades  
*How come your breasts are so saggy*  
*Old age part of the aging process I respond clinically*  
*You're going to remember that I asked that forever aren't you*  
Yes I will I think  
No my garbled response

Flapper jackers I call to them each day  
Fascinated captivated as they fall flatten  
Move down my body  
Bodies advise and consent the end  
Self turns from life to wilt

Upper arms small curd cottage cheese  
Search incessantly for the right words  
To describe my grand very mortal descent  
Descant rumination ultimate ruination  
Death encircles defies boundaries  
The overhang of death scents the air  
Greedy hungrily impatiently  
How much of my body my mind my spirit  
Will I let slide into ruination unrecognition  
When to know the evidence is clear  
Time has closed in courage falters

Stand your ground for once  
I argue with myself  
You quicksilvered out of so much  
Suicide is a way to assert your will  
The unregulated body disintegrates  
I am finding myself repulsive  
Even with eyes washed over with cataracts  
The body excises due diligence  
The mind begs while it can remember  
Memory parsed the past beyond regret  
Self - she excoriates abrades  
Stand your ground while you can  
Take control of the end of your life  
While you still have the chance

NB

*There is but one truly serious philosophical problem and this suicide. Albert Camus*

*I felt myself in a solitude so frightful that I contemplated suicide. What held me back was the idea that no one, absolutely no one, would be moved by my death, that I would be even more alone in death than in life. Jean-Paul Sartre*



### **Reflections in a minor key**

Conversations to say  
Goodbye little by little  
Easing my way  
Leaving things incomplete  
There is no finishing up  
To dying  
Sick child my pain my idol  
Alive by sheer dint of will  
World getting smaller and smaller  
Stripping down to bare essentials  
One day breathing stops  
Whether by own hand  
Or deaths smother  
Decision choice still mine to make  
Undertake each day to bid adieu  
Inauthentic disbelieving or true  
Today the sky is blue  
The clock moves ahead on Sunday  
The lady on the park bench told me  
Eating her lunch quickly during break  
Advance clock foreshorten days  
Truncate time  
Either way the end hides  
In the shadow of  
Of early spring tree bark and bare branch  
A pair of hawks glides in and out of clouds  
Even on this glorious day  
I cannot stop myself  
Planning for and contemplating suicide

NB

## Conversations with Myself

When to call it quits  
Problematic  
Hedging bets  
Will I get to myself first  
Or will squatter death  
Jam me in maladies  
The inevitable  
Almost prosaic  
Death rattle in throat  
Tongue hanging over lower lip  
Breathe ceasing guttural its end  
And then fluids leave body  
Like spring thaw  
Oh god good god  
Not that  
Don't want a code  
A salutatory salvaging moment  
Doctors' hands  
Prodding and pushing  
Last little bit of life  
Drawn out stuck in facsimile  
Final aria of *La Traviata*  
Dying singing hand wringing  
Sobbing clinging  
Do I want to lie  
In hospice bed rails up  
Faces suppressing tears  
Artificially soothing consoling me  
Aghast watching  
As my body departs depleted  
Memory losing grip  
Soon as blank as a table rasa  
Oh god good god  
I can see feel life drain from me  
The first leg of departure  
Teeth hair eyes  
Arthritic hips joints  
Still pretending elegance  
With walking stick  
Almost ready  
For those four prong canes  
No slippage  
Lugging each step  
Trying to remember

How to lift and step

*You're so vain, you probably think this song is about you  
You're so vain, I'll bet you think this song is about you  
Don't you? Don't You?*

*I had some dreams they were clouds in my coffee  
Clouds in my coffee, and...(Carly Simon)*

Am I too vain  
To be viewed dying  
Want it to just be  
Me and my death  
My bringing on death  
Need to plan obsessively  
What date certain  
Composing a death  
First to make peace with regret  
I lived the life I lived  
Too late to re-imagine replay  
I got old I just got old  
The art of self-imposed death  
Is to fix the time  
When the control is in hand  
Fully conscious intentional  
Time to draw down  
Foreclose on promise possibility  
When to die  
When the right time  
When to write the epilogue  
Too prideful or spiteful  
To let my children  
Cupping their wails  
Diligently cleaning me  
Holding my hand  
Taking their time  
Parting from me  
Want to die alone  
Just me and death  
Quick irreversible intentional

NB

**Regret Forget Forgive Move On**

Bitterness lodged in my heart  
Its chambers filled with  
Detritus artifacts of regret  
I am filled with hate  
Won't abate can't concentrate  
Get my mind off that misery that injury  
I harbor an industry of fire and regret  
It occupies my body  
Staunchly guarding boundaries  
Its narrative its life story

Seventeen years  
That is as long as  
I lived in my parent's house  
Seventeen years  
I put manacles on my wrist  
Incarcerated myself  
Sold myself chattel  
Rushed into his arms  
As if pushed along  
Tornado rush  
Embellish forced silence  
Must perforce recapture  
Moment of rapture  
Joyfulness playfulness  
No matter how infinitesimal  
Moment of pleasure  
Peruse sort through marriage  
Scrum of moments days  
Dim grim sadness permeated  
Old gal pathetically  
Spewing overflow of bile  
Wily scorched earth hatred

*Regret is the poison of life*  
My daughter told me  
She was less than twenty  
I think I have handed on  
Regret stitched homily  
We live our lives  
To deny we lived our lives  
Salvation coming  
Forgiveness snuffed out  
Resistance impenetrable

Forgive forget regret move on  
Stuck in place  
Past crawl stuck in throat  
Scream garbled muted  
Voice too clotted to even whimper  
A life lost two decades spent  
In the arms of an artful punisher  
A poacher a Jew gatherer  
Legitimacy affixed Jewish Ms.  
Death turning me down  
Until I can find one moment  
One nugget of pleasure of joy  
Subjugation without reward

Forgive forget regret move on  
Option last thoughts self-hate  
How did I find myself  
Lying next to a man  
Who was repulsed by me  
Was that not an early  
Brush visit from death being dead  
Hunt for a moment of requite  
Glint of jaded manacles  
I placed firmly on my wrists  
Limp dick empty suit  
Women flock flies to light  
He fucks women to enslave  
He captures them  
In one crazy ecstatic orgasm  
Biblical fisher boy  
Catch release too small  
Too little to offer  
Back for you into the holy water

Forgive forget regret move on  
*You disgust me* she my mother said  
When she greeted me at the door  
*You disgust me* he chimed in  
Decades later a tithe  
If you want to go to Italy  
Go take Italian lessons  
Mental block incapable  
Of learning other languages  
Sat in Italian language town house  
Foreign stranger yet to myself

Thrust forward to utter in Italian  
Some cheese bread wine please  
This in an Umbrian village shop  
Cat got my tongue  
Pointed to cheese and bread  
Opened fist full of Italian currency  
He too busy to observe charade  
Stray dog panting nose sniffing  
A gaggle of very young Italian yet women

*Forbid you to make Marinara sauce*  
Fork in fist pounding table  
9pm he home from teaching  
I back from second job  
Bathing and feeding our toddler  
*Told you to shadow Nana (grandmother)*  
Too jabberwocky maddening  
To invent make up

Forgive forget regret move on  
Go get your teeth fixed you need braces  
Your front teeth jut *Ollie of Kukla and Fran*



*Kukla and Ollie*

Braces glint gums run with raw sores  
This during my most high profile job  
Chain link keep pearly wisdom from mouth

Schlepped off to fact lift doctor  
Was just forty-one  
You can wear big earrings  
To cover up the scar

The doctor proffered offered  
Husbands bobble head Cheshire grin  
You are old eons older than me  
I am on the way up  
You on the way down  
I kid you not  
This the din continuo

Forgive forget regret move on  
Daring me to climb a mountain  
In Scotland *only experienced climbers*  
Sign warned we pushed ahead  
He abandoned me on a granite ledge  
While he trucked ahead  
A wind gathering me up  
Resistance lapse if a moment  
Would soar free lifting up and off  
For the first and last time  
Could not come up  
With an escape no plan b  
I was out of my element my depth  
He came back to claim me  
Between Stockholm syndrome  
And bloody handed Lady Macbeth  
*Cat got tongue again*  
Too unnerved to utter a word

Forgive forget regret move on  
I scour seventeen years  
As if combing lice from a head  
Not even to feign an *Emoji* smile  
We don't share a biologic child  
Can't tally in that excuse  
Good genes good babies bad marriage  
Redeeming oneself in genealogy

I am cratering falling apart  
My body has a strangled hold on me  
A tightening vise of ailments  
Rage busting out all over  
Clown jumping through flaming hoop  
Caught in mad battle  
He made off with my smile

I can't release relent I am spent  
The sad fraudulent images  
Have me in a choke hold  
Am I refusing  
To forgive forget regret move on  
Using him  
To bring myself to a hard end  
Primal exit drubbing  
Religious whipping to frenetic frenzy  
Welts oozing with putrid pussy poisons  
No chance for healing soothing

*My one regret in life is that I am not someone else. Woody Allen*

*Were it not better to forget than to remember and regret?*

L.E. Landon English poet 1802-1838



Yes there it finally is  
I regret everything every moment  
Every hour every day  
Of the seventeen years spent  
Near Ugh! You.  
I savor none  
My hatred vintage keepsake  
Relieved not have to  
Forgive forget regret move on  
I lay on a wifely bed of thorns  
Thoughts of you fill me with nausea  
Satre's nausea for which there is no antidote cure

*Everything has been figured out, except how to live.*

*Man is condemned to be free; because once thrown into the world, he is responsible for everything he does.*

*Like all dreamers, I mistook disenchantment for truth.*

*J.P. Sartre*



Forgive forget regret move on  
I dwelled in a house of horror  
I escaped got out moved on  
But dragging lugging the weighty  
Cross-of sin and sacrifice  
How to release you  
How to wipe any memory of you  
From my mind  
Live still under the fraught overhang  
Of how could I have?  
I must move on  
I refuse to die hating you  
Hating myself for being with you  
Finally genuflecting for an out  
You followed the scent  
Of a Brazilian woman scouting  
For an outrageous sky tilting orgasm  
My good fortune your penis  
Moved onto another landscape  
This woman could speak multiple languages  
With you her desire for the erotic peaked

*I regret those times when I've chosen the dark side. I've wasted enough time not being happy. Jessica Lange*

I chose to be happy  
I am going to be happy.  
I am willing myself to be happy.  
I will lick a salt stick of pleasure j  
Each minute of each hour of each day  
I will find that soulful peaceful dream  
Die without understanding  
How I came to all of this  
The vile nature of such a choice  
I want to feel happy with myself  
Forgive forget regret move on  
Easy with final breathes  
Exalting in tree bird flower  
Now I lay me down  
It will be in a final sweet sleep

NB

*I exist.*

*It is soft,*

*so soft,*

*so slow.*

*And light.*

*It seems as though it suspends in the air.*

*It moves. J. P. Sartre*

*Whatever you're trying to hide is what you need to write from.*

*Whatever you're trying to hide is what makes you an interesting writer.*

*Gordon Lish, Literary Editor, Writer*

*...how you really love a song after you've heard it over and over, how your body feels almost desperate for the next part.*

*The dusty haze of sun coming in streams through the drapes in the midst of my afternoon solitude.*

*Dana Spiolta, author, Innocents and Others*

***The prospect of surgery frightens me.*** *I'd like to observe how my face changes with time. I'd like to see myself grow old, to discover what I can discover truthfully. I want to take that on. Charlotte Rampling, actress*



**Sparked by fright at just the sight of who – you/me...even a cat? nb**

**Boy dies surfing parents donate heart...**

***Simon's brain drowns instantly in its own blood – surfing accident. His body is harvested for organs; and his heart saves the life of a 51-year-old woman.***

***Their son is in an irreversible come:** His voice has “become suddenly strange, because it comes from a space-time where Simon’s accident never occurred, an intact world light-years away from this empty café; and now it was dissonant, this voice, it was dis-orchestrated the world, tore apart her brain: it was the voice of life before.*

*...she realizes she’s going to have to tell her friends. “She is not ready to hear them panic and suffer.”*

*...they see “a young god in repose...” “How could they even contemplate it, this death of their Simon, when his skin was still pink and soft?”*

*heart transplant...”The beats, strangely fast but regular, soon form a rhythm, like an embryo’s pulse, and what we are hearing is indeed embryonic – the first heartbeat, new dawn.*

**Maylis de Kerangal, author, “The Heart”**

## Looking down the canyon of death

Grieving for someone  
Not dead yet  
It is me who I grieve  
Mourner cleft to rim  
Body teeters tooters  
Wobbly at the ledge  
Today this day  
To take on living  
To take on dying  
Inevitable reflection  
Metastasizing occupying  
Overhang clouding  
Possessed can't stop  
Live or die Anne Sexton warned  
*Live or die, but don't poison everything...*  
That was when she was  
A young full twigged maple in her yard  
When wondering when to plant bulbs  
Early fall contemplation forewarning  
Against self-imposed death  
*I say Live, Live because of the sun,  
the dream, the excitable gift.  
Anne Sexton killed herself in 1974  
She was 45  
She put on her mother's old fur coat  
Removed all her rings,  
Poured herself a glass of vodka,  
Locked herself in her garage  
And started the engine of her car,  
Committing suicide  
By carbon monoxide poisoning (Wikipedia)*  
The baking sun the moist ready soil  
Couldn't dissuade alas no blubs  
No spring bloom  
Contemplation riveting  
Driven to choke off life  
Full-blown toxicity of carbon monoxide  
She couldn't help herself  
She was 45 I am 75  
The contemplation webbing me  
Bartering with reality  
This not an Oh No!  
This not a Why?  
Cleft to the rim  
Of the Canyon of Death

Impasse with fate  
Whether to submit  
To slow creep of death  
Ever more present  
Undeniable signs of decline  
Mustering will  
To decide when to die  
Evidence clear  
If smarting my sight  
I have ripened into old age  
Still within reach  
To short-circuit  
The inevitable onslaught  
While my mind is alert  
If horrified mortified  
That actual decay amasses  
Like thick dank swamp fog  
Blessed beatitude of endings  
Ravishment of body and soul  
Trickster fate vulture body bites  
Desire sucked up vampire sustenance  
Who has the final say  
When is too late too late  
Noble universal contemplation  
Preoccupies casts a pall on each day

*"Our age is essentially one of understanding and reflection, without passion, momentarily bursting into enthusiasm, and shrewdly relapsing into repose. . . . Nowadays not even a suicide kills himself in desperation. Before taking the step he deliberates so long and so carefully that he literally chokes with thought. It is even questionable whether he ought to be called a suicide, since it is really thought which takes his life. He does not die with deliberation but from deliberation." Soren Kierkegaard – Our Present Age*

Exactly the problematic  
Vanity now a better angel  
Reluctant to be viewed  
In wild restive decrepitude  
Decay has taken root  
There are no fixes no remedies  
Death by own hand an enticement  
Finally to be in full control  
Affirmation of will and desire  
Abhor the thought  
Of my children  
Watching me debase  
Distressed hypertonic

Howling wailing whimpering sobbing  
Time for the last dear parting words  
We have come to the end  
Everything that could be said is said  
Morose sunken opiate riven insane  
Hallucinatory rhetorical morbidity  
Exorcist heretic doctor save me  
Cleaving to the day  
When the mortuary fires  
Exhume and return ash  
Forgiven for having  
Shared my death with no one  
Wanting ash spread  
Tree bed and weed  
Harlem Meer edge  
Where spring turtles  
Lounge head to sun  
On a neighboring park bench  
Naomi: Mother Grandmother New Yorker  
Recollecting funny moments happy times  
Last looked gray hairs  
Thin elastic skin on hands  
*Makes you a good pool player* Owen said  
Have I the courage to die  
Last gasp death rattle throttling throat  
Children never able to vacate  
The image of death's pall  
Seizing obliterating what was the familiar me  
NB

***Ars Moriendi – An Art of Dying – Latin texts dating from about 1415 and 1450  
Death Poems Reflections Conversations***

*Five temptations that beset a dying man: lack of faith, despair, impatience, spiritual pride and avarice.*



*Temptation of lack of Faith engraving by Master E.S., circa 1450*

.....  
*How do you get through your life, your lack of life, your lack of love?*

*How do you get through the brokenness in yourself and in the world?*

*Anton Chekhov - plays ask...Eric Grode NY Times, 3/13/16*

### **The Butterfly**

*Should I say that you're dead?  
You touched so brief a fragment  
of time. There's much that's sad in  
the joke God played.  
I scarcely comprehend  
the words "you've lived"; the date of  
your birth and when you faded  
in my cupped hand  
are one, and not two dates.  
Thus calculated,  
your term is, simply stated,  
less than a day.  
Who was the jeweler,  
who from our world extracted  
your miniature –  
a world where madness brings  
us low, and lower,  
where we are things, while you are  
the thought of things?*

*Should I say that, somehow,  
you lack all being?  
What, then, are my hands feeling  
that's so like you?  
Such colors can't be drawn  
from non-existence.  
Tell me, at whose insistence  
were yours laid on?*

*There are, on your small wings,  
black spots and splashes –  
like eyes, birds, girls, eyelashes.  
But of what things  
are you the airy norm?  
What bits of faces,  
what broken times?*

*What places shine  
through your form?  
As for your nature morte;  
Yet you're akin  
to nothingness –  
like it, you're wholly empty.  
And if, in your life's venture,  
Nothing takes flesh,  
that flesh will die.  
Yet while you live you offer  
a frail and shifting buffer,  
dividing it from me. Joseph Brodsky*

*Spinning like a shaman in the room,  
I wind its emptiness around me in a ball. Joseph Brodsky*



***The greatest disappointment  
Age withered him and changed him. Lou Reed – Junior Dad***

*Junior Dad  
Would you come to me  
If I was half drowning  
An arm above the last wave*

*Would you come to me  
Would you pull me up  
Would the effort really hurt you  
Is it unfair to ask you  
To help pull me up*

*The window broke the silence of the matches  
The smoke effortlessly floating*

*Pull me up  
Would you be my lord and savior  
Pull me up by my hair  
Now would you kiss me, on my lips*

*Burning fever burning on my forehead  
The brain that once was listening now  
Shoots out it's tiresome message*

*Won't you pull me up  
Scalding, my dead father  
Has the motor and he's driving towards  
An island of lost souls*

*Sunny, a monkey then to monkey  
I will teach you meanness, fear and blindness  
No social redeeming kindness  
Or – oh, state of grace*

*Would you pull me up  
Would you drop the mental bullet  
Would you pull me by the arm up  
Would you still kiss my lips  
Hiccup, the dream is over  
Get the coffee, turn the lights on  
Say hello to junior dad  
The greatest disappointment  
Age withered him and changed him  
Into junior dad  
Psychic savagery*

*The greatest disappointment  
The greatest disappointment  
Age withered him and changed him  
Into junior dad*

*Lou Reed*

## Saying goodbye to the cello

Apologizing to the broken down instrument  
That leans dusty and forsaken in a corner of my room  
I loved playing came as close to ecstasy as I would  
Listening now to a CD of *Pablo Picasso playing Bach Suites*  
My fingers still feel the swell and throb  
Playing sections of those Suites between sips of schnapps  
As I watched days gathering shadows on the Alps  
I quipped after my divorce when I just quit cello cold  
That playing the cello kept me married so long  
Pressing the rim of the wood against my breast  
The neck resting against shoulder bone tilt of head  
I spun a yarn of survival of finding no harm  
As my body clasped the cello protective body armor  
Soul and sorrow breathed like dragon fire  
My knees pressed in tight  
As the bow ripped tugged and pulled into the strings  
To my ears to my brain to my body  
I was safe as long as my arm could draw  
The catgut bow back and forth  
Rhythm never held too couldn't count well  
As my father so pointedly forcefully spoke of  
Play with your heart the seductive overlord father said  
Goodbye dear sweet broken down cello  
It no longer matters if I was mediocre or just good enough  
*Jacqueline du Pre* died of a horrific multiple sclerosis  
Her husband Daniel Barenboim abandoning her  
The majesty of the cello claimed further heights in her grasp  
*Pablo Casals* spoke of her radiance her art  
Goodbye dear cello perhaps the greatest pleasure  
The deepest joy the emboldening sensuality the ecstasy  
I felt when I wrapped my body around you  
Formed the great love I found holding you to me  
I was never built to be more than solitary  
With you near my body song and rapture  
Penetrating every cell every nerve ending  
Dear sweet cello playing you however badly kept me safe  
Savoring life rising beyond the prophetic to love my children  
Capturing those moments feeling the surge rush through my fingers  
The indelible song reaching beyond time  
Beholden to you dear musty dusty old broken down cello  
You kept me alive you saved my life  
And *Pablo Casals* never had to hear thank god  
As I bowed and savored his beloved *Bach Suites*

NB

*One day we were born, one day we shall die, the same day, the same second...Birth  
astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it's night once more.*

*Samuel Beckett*

***What kind of life exists without language?***

***Mortal responsibility:*** *Our patients' lives and identities may be in our hands, yet death always wins. Even if you are perfect, the world isn't. The secret is to know that the deck is stacked, that you will lose, that your hands or judgment will slip, and yet still struggle to win for your patients. You can't ever reach perfection, but you can believe in an asymptote toward which you are ceaselessly striving.*

***Diseases are molecules misbehaving;*** *the basic requirement of life is metabolism, and its cessation. Paul Kalanithi, "When Breath Becomes Air"*

***Webster was much possessed by death***

*And saw the skull beneath the skin;  
And breastless creatures under ground  
Leaned backward with a lipless grin.*

*Daffodil bulbs instead of balls  
Stared from the sockets of the eyes!  
He knew that thought clings round dead limbs  
Tightening its lusts and luxuries.*

*And even the Abstract Entities  
Circumambulate her charm;  
But our lot crawls between dry ribs  
To keep our metaphysics warm.*

*T.S. Eliot, "Whispers of Immortality"*

**On the day you were born  
I put on my first fearless face  
NB**

**Your cruelty festers  
Like a mad man  
Seizing death's clutch  
Off my throat  
Until I forgive you  
And I can't  
NB**

## Mirror Mirror on the Wall - Yikes!



Yikes! Who is that?

Looking back at me

Me? Can't be!

There is some old lady

Camera lens shattering  
Camera lurks jerks hand  
Image too startling  
Too brutal too telling  
Too humiliating  
Family members  
Pitch camera askant  
Authenticate image  
In focus  
Life's terminating point  
Who is that?  
Staring back at me  
Eyes squinting  
Bluish with cataracts  
Face hardened into upheaval  
Sun glints off my bald spots  
Hair frizz frizzled porous thinning  
All too upsetting too frightening  
Bathroom mirror dooms  
Turn away don't look  
Quick rushed glimpse turn away  
Where did she go?  
The you that used to be me

Is she somewhere else in hiding  
Exiled on the ramparts of what was  
Look under couches behind doors in closets  
Picture frame all sizes hold her image  
Frieze framing  
A vast array of moments in time  
I remember her  
I know her  
I knew her  
All ages all stages  
Even the infant  
In the wicked witch's arms  
What a photo to behold!  
Fading eyesight  
As if in a fog or underwater  
I am 75 years old  
Don't want cataracts repaired  
Don't want to see better  
Fix with gasping sorrow  
What I will be leaving behind  
Mourning my death  
A chorus of wailing  
Women clicking tongues

Who the fuck is the image in there

Unseemly sight to behold

Must get Hijab to wear



Around the house

The image peering back

Will not see

What has become of me

Sadly there is no kinder light

Transformation unfathomable

How could it be me in there

Reflection jeers

Age comes on you ugly gross

Repulsive frightening

My hands chicken claws

My gums without teeth

Without chance for growing more

Dental implants deceive

My front teeth crooked

Bent out of shape for years  
Despite braces  
Or because of braces  
When I was charnel  
To husband two  
Who refused to look  
Directly at me  
Crooked teeth crooked smile  
Death lurking in shadows  
Spills of light  
Girl long gone  
I sweep past images  
Of my past tense  
So many past tenses  
Suddenly I understand  
Why my home  
Has become a gallery  
Of photos of the old me  
I am a reviewing stand of one  
Time to bid goodbye  
To that girl with that face  
Memorialized on that day  
Time to wave a white hanky



Retreat truce ceasefire  
Ready to negotiate  
Way out end in sight  
The mirror mocks me  
Cajoles not another day  
Where the fuck did she go  
The me who was me  
In olden prickly pear days  
Poetry attests to unhappiness  
Photos reflect a woman  
At peace enjoying herself  
During my first marriage  
Became a local fashion icon  
In my second marriage  
Blistered with shame  
Still trying to figure out  
How I brought that on myself  
Mirror mirror on the wall  
Not long now  
I know where she went  
I see her in photos  
In every corner on my house  
Old age shames me

This vision of the great descent  
Now I sit uncomfortably for photos  
Keepsakes for children grandchildren  
It is the same image  
As reflected in the mirror  
No escape  
Hair stands on end YIKES!  
I can't get used to you  
See you in there  
Sad barren faced women  
Eyes blurred teeth scant  
Dying does this to you  
You don't want to look  
At yourself anymore  
Think I will cover  
The mirror  
With a blowup  
Of an old photo  
Maybe when I was  
Thirty or so  
Momma of two  
Heart bleeding within  
Body draped with great

Fashion aplomb ease

Freeze frame

Stay that way

Punish myself

Sadism lurks

Viewing that image

Looking back at me

Photos everywhere

With great intention

Placed here and there

How did this happen

This face in the mirror

Time to move on

The abhorrent image

Held in the mirror

Beholden self

Signals it is so

NB

*All truths wait in all things,  
They neither hasten their own delivery nor resist it,  
They do not need the obstetric forceps of the surgeon,  
The insignificant is as big to me as any,  
What is less or more than a touch?*

*Logic and sermons never convince,  
The damp of the night drives deeper into my soul.*

*Only what proves itself to every man and woman is so,  
Only what nobody denies is so.*

*Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself"*

## **Giddy No More Rules**

No longer daily subjugation  
Having to create pursue meaning  
Create a mythic friendship circle  
Spark connectors connection community  
Friendships tenuous nebulous  
Fictive discursive made up  
No longer to explain myself  
Offer up a pound of flesh  
A confessional box of bonbons  
To keep friendship viable  
No longer having to flank  
Deep leagues of sea  
Searching for bits of integrity  
To unearth common ground  
Tincture of necessariness  
Fraudulent confabulations  
Now in a wilderness  
Coming up with eiderdown  
Unearthing root and mushroom  
Longing to be a wood nymph hidden  
Electric with stress at mere expectation  
Lunch gulp what to talk about  
Rip my heart out splay it say it  
Do we ever connect with words  
What is friendship  
Arm wrestles of power struggle  
Tally sheets of owingness  
The leaky cloud the onus that indeed  
We are our actions our choices our decisions  
Now hobbled humbled  
Left to wallow in the shoals of  
Where I have been what I chose to do  
Contaminated constructions of public selves  
Who will ever know my truths my secrets  
No one will  
I lay on marital beds conjuring riggers  
Triggering physical and mental escapes  
Deceit and racing heartbeats  
In my mind never in my flesh  
I see the rush the twisted torque of love  
Selves suspended merging melding  
Arching blending bending as one  
In my mind that suspension of self  
The willingness to give up

Boundaries and borders  
And the sanctity of secrets  
To love in that way  
Just my mind portends  
Pretends that is life as it begins  
The pure infant yielding  
Fierce fearless wild unwieldy  
Imagination grinds out images  
Of this wonder  
Constructing two hours for friendship  
Scripts and subtexts is what I know  
Never ever this and now  
When time has left me  
What do I do  
With this brutal brash expose this truth  
I never ever truly loved another  
Never felt the heat the courage  
To have someone seize me  
Pull me toward abandonment  
Tincture of rose held to lens fleetingly  
When time was endless  
Flickering invincibility  
I unraveled scrolls of roles to play  
Distinct tailored without merit or substance  
Sustainable as a droplet of ink  
In fractured fragments of time  
Attempting trying to die  
Without the stain of untruths of lies  
Metastasizing the wombat of fact  
I lived to be 75  
And never loved or was loved  
Self-sufficiency was the orbit  
I travelled on  
Needing no one ever my golden rule  
How can I let my body my mind  
Become sparked into ash  
Fall into the infernal final fire  
Never having ever had  
Someone hold me love me  
How could did this happen  
Rosy tincture fades  
See in the gray befuddled  
Muddled dimness  
The heaving portent the descent  
I am spent I won't relent  
Life now a matter of subtraction

*Sylvester Stallone* obliquely shared that  
 With young apprentice *Adonis Creed* (*Creed*, movie)  
 Life is a matter of subtraction  
 Of eradication of redaction  
 Of no tomfoolery  
 Now finally I can do  
 What I want with a day  
 Not to explain or apologize  
 I am preparing for my ending  
 My conclusion no doubt no delusion  
 By design by my own measure  
 I have broken up with life  
 Fractured fragmented willy-nilly  
 At odds and ends  
 No sublime peace  
 Past will torment spurn scorn deride  
 How did you dare live so unborn unformed  
 T'is a pity she was never a whore  
 Or anyone else of quirk  
 Curdling dice spinning quark  
*Fly by night disciple*



Eraldo Carugati artist

Fierce eyes yet no will no appetite  
 For the dailiness of life  
 Requisite contact hours spent  
 Cultivating an unruly garden of friendships  
 Unguarded raw intensity eschews appetite  
 For my type of disclosure connection  
 No more forays trepidation tremors  
 Preparing to sit through a lunch  
 Beside myself not to frighten off  
 Urgency of fierce suckle at the tit  
 She sits in innocence I banter  
 Two hours of this and that's my limit  
 Portend of loneliness building

Snubbed left cold no hand to reach  
For the knobby chicken bone of mine  
Today I declare myself free  
Of longing wanting reaching for a friend  
Stand scuttled by desire  
Ruled by the grateful mist of anarchy  
No more to claim I have friends  
There were but few true ones  
My friendship figuring algorithms  
Dimensions latitude longitude  
Proscribed interaction  
Forced spontaneity in the equation  
Past proofs bonds of love mock jeer  
My bond with yet another new day  
Complete floppy doll resignation  
There will never be one to say  
Behold my love behold  
A besotted prince mesmerized  
Pinned against shards of glass  
Stabbing jabbing mockery jeering possibility  
Perusing pinched heart my loveless past  
How did I so miss the boat  
Run a blind eye against the tide  
Tangled net of arbitrariness  
Need no one ever  
My whale mouth grabs for love  
Engorges displaced



Into this anarchistic moment revealed  
Love's force fractious fictitious meaningless  
Titter tatter natter conspire console  
My heart enshrouded entombed  
My lips fell clamshell shut  
My tongue a veiny membranous gulch  
Logged friendships to legislate  
Legitimize analogue catalogue  
To consecrate regulate authenticate  
Once a sacred spontaneous moment



My mind scrambling pre-diction  
Pre-language for words actions to respond  
There we were in a farmer's field  
Among freshly plowed summer corn  
Stalks here and there barren and browning  
She reached over to me talking *Medea Camus*  
Heat rushing me  
A furnace of fiery passion rising  
Yield don't think throw caution to wind  
The moment has come where you begin  
A breeze gathered angel wings  
A potent power hovered  
Seduction our moment to love  
Without fear or definition  
Courage challenging submit  
The moment came and went  
I fled reneged filled with dread  
This the guts and knottiness  
Dear *Camus*, I failed  
And it was never offered again

Never a moment of reprieve  
For a stricken heart  
Frieze framed in perpetuity with remorse  
My existential moment my reprieve  
Gone done never again her open heart  
Moving toward my closed one  
She killed herself some years later  
Professing sexual love dreams of me  
I by then was long gone  
Never much more than a moose head  
On an Adirondack camp site wall  
Entered the fraudulent world of pretend  
I read the tea leaves right  
Found others needs for me  
Saw through the ambiguity  
Like infant demand feeding  
I fed friends friendships  
Love for my children lawless  
Rule-less chaotic crisp  
No algorithm for that  
I was most at ease and unnerved  
By motherhood  
Love struck me over the head  
And I became a slaphappy mindless fool  
No rules no obligation haphazard and unnerving

It is with the full moon the ocean's tides  
The crisp periwinkle sky  
The trees entwined roots  
Limbs in anarchic entangled trance  
Trees trenchant necessary to each other twig and bark  
Never even a sparking moment for such entanglement  
Heaving shoal canyon yarn departs  
With heralded motherhood  
I heard *Gabriel's* elegant horn calling me



I am not a good or gifted writer  
I will never be known or thought of as a writer  
Pushed through finger nub to purge  
Head spun cotton candy mad moments  
Words splitting through me atoms  
In the end this is what I know  
I have been and will die alone  
No fictions no friendships no false hope  
I know myself to love entertain words  
Ambient searches through dictionaries  
As did my father never left  
A single word dangling unknown  
And behind my own back wrote and wrote and wrote  
Errant truth held me captive instinct urge  
Or burst apart in opiate repressive desperation  
I am an **I can't help it writer**  
Squandered love moment came stuck in caw  
Words fall from me to explain to explain  
Still no answer still rooted  
Deep in haphazard narrative  
And so coming to and through  
My hobbled chicken arthritic fingertips  
Words flooding to mind analogue fingers oblige

NB

**Do you think they should get married**

So when he is dying (implied)

She will have the final word

**I'm just saying**

If they are not married

They may not even let her enter the room

The gapping tomb blasted sinkhole hole

Wounding damning damaging intrusive thought

The mouth of death putrid rotting stanching breath

I'm just saying

Maybe they should get married

Just in case

She will be able to hold up the stop sign

A school crossing guard

And tell them they have

Or have not gone too far

Trying to save him

On a whim on a gesture

On the conscience clearing *Hippocratic Oath*

They will ask her to leave

As he is intubated

Pumped up with salvation

Keeping doctor's consciences like their asses clean

Who is she to suggest this

Who is the woman from Kansas

Who speaks in blank verse

To nosey in and predict the worse

Pre-ordain his girlfriend as wife

Ministerial hands on prayer beads rolling

I who have lived with death

Cleft to life with my dying son

Now over a casual lunch

A friend saving catch up

Because it says somewhere

In the ledger in the Farmer's Almanac

That old people need connection

Need friends friendship

To keep buoyant to keep vital alive

Now blood drains heart rate quickens

As I hear this salvo of innocent just saying advice

If I could have cut off her tongue

Sitting across at a table

In the savory *Marcus Samuelson American Table* restaurant

This chef an Ethiopian adopted by Swedish parents

Salty dog connection I too am the mother of a found child  
There she is gingerly taking spoonfuls of spicy tomato soup  
I bite into my extra long kosher hotdog  
Her saliva dripping over her slurping lips  
I cut off some of my hotdog and offer it to her  
Not too much she says grabbing for the bite  
From where how does she have a right  
To suggest and I only want to help out  
That my son and his girlfriend marry  
So that she can be by his side  
And have the final say over whether he lives or dies  
Today a foreign body invaded my body my space  
So prosaic so excruciatingly ordinary  
To create upheaval stir up uncertainty  
Sparking an urgency into an already toppling family reality  
This is why I never can say yes to friendship's upkeep  
I am a mother drowning head bobbing  
Carefully calculating the ebb and flow of memory  
A mother who has lived this past decade or more  
At the side of her half dying half living found child  
Sinister reality I opened myself to this  
Consenting to attend a rehearsal of the Philharmonic  
As a way of easing nearly a year of excusing myself  
Freakish foreplay finding falling from rumbling from  
Yula Wang's fingers an almost unbearable rendering  
Of Messiaen "Tirangalila" with program commentary attesting to  
*Messiaen's idiom being a universe unto itself. Relish for the vibrancy of life*  
*"Jardin du Sommeil d'amour movement, sounding like a distant call*  
*From reality in the midst of a dream. (George Grella New York Classical Review)*  
Dissonant dominant heart stopping life came to life as she played the piano  
Another moment opening me up to why be alive  
Her advice said with palliative cloverleaf friendship  
Is reason enough to be dead  
She can't be another voice in my head  
The price of the free ticket  
Her hard-edged evil indulgent unnerving advice  
Not a sticky wicket of skin of a guile gullible thought  
There it was that devil glint in her eye firing off a warning  
Not again to offer myself up a singed pig on a spit apple in mouth  
As complex and fragile as a spider's web  
I live in a protracted proactive agreement with death  
Steady silent solitary not to tousele jostle life's unnerving claim  
Balancing act wondering daily for how long does  
He my son need me to be on the other end of the phone

NB

**Dear Naomi and Ben,**

**Your description of the poor confused distraught cows who are caught off guard with the mysterious and rapid change of seasons is a literary gem. Naomi, why don't you concentrate on writing since you seem to have a great flair for it. The letter before the last one read like a movie script (foreign film of the The Italian romantic type.) I mean this seriously. You ought to capitalize on the leisure free time you apparently have and develop into a first class writer. You certainly are having a multiplicity of unusual experiences.**

*Play the cello with you heart and remember that is the most important way to play it even though your counting causes difficulty in ensemble playing. Don't fret about it and don't waste too much time on unimportant trio passages your Alexander (?) not withstanding. I would suggest that you invest your money, time, and energy in piano lessons if the spirit moves you. In the long run, that will pay-off and not your increased skill in cello playing. So many young women are able to help supplement their family incomes by giving piano lessons in their homes.*

*Al D'Amico's wife has gone back to teaching piano. She has 12 pupils. I know for certain that she is no great shakes as a pianist.*

*Love, Pop*

*William Weiss, October 18, 1964*

**Why didn't I hang myself**

After reading those words  
Did attempt to leap to my death  
From a rocky ledge high above Nice  
Pushing out from overhanging vines  
Heavy with ripened grapes  
My husband pulling me back  
Kept me from my solo  
*Leap of Faith*  
Why didn't I hang myself  
After reading those words  
I was twenty-four  
Living in an Alpine Village  
Where the Alps formed a narrow valley  
Sun given to shine four hours a day

Sitting each day with French doors ajar  
Playing *Bach Suites*  
My heart swept up by the sonorous urgent notes  
Sipping Kirschwasser  
Watching skiers sashay on virgin trails

The cello kept me sanguine  
Kept me alive jump started  
My pulse my heart  
My life scrubbed down  
To sheer madness  
Just two years before  
Driving convertibles  
Around the southwest  
Living in a *Hogan*  
With a *Navajo* family  
Riding in pickup trucks  
Beer splattering  
To and from *Westerns*  
At the local drive in  
They almost forgetting  
I was not *Indian*

Now married stranded  
Abandoned in an Alpine village  
My body still yearning  
For the infant lost at birth  
No one really wanted to speak with me  
This was an ingrown toenail  
International college  
Devoted to the writings of Albert Schweitzer  
*Reverence for Life*  
Guess I didn't fit into that formulation  
The kitchen staff sent me on daily walks  
Mountain flowers sandwiches  
Sweet aromatic juices  
Once a week took cello lessons  
Holding my breath  
As I hugged the road  
Driving the *VW Bug*  
Seven miles up and down  
The mountainside

Days following  
Trembling with exhaustion  
Moved myself away from the cello  
To wander off  
Laying deep into mountain flowers  
Who I was – was no more  
I was parched silent  
As if taking a vow of silence  
Drawing the bow

*Bach Suites* calling out  
To mountain and flower  
My husband who didn't know me  
I had become archetype young wife  
He was already screwing the students  
Forbidding me to travel  
When asking meekly permission to go to Italy  
Testing those words  
Throttled bruising skin threatening

Reading father's words over and over  
Why didn't I hang myself kill myself  
I was already more than half dead  
My song was the mortuary din  
Couldn't escape the overhang of him  
Even in the Alps  
Couldn't keep him off me  
Urgent life or death  
To purge myself  
Expunge rid myself of my father  
I hung like an opossum  
Dangling teeth athwart  
From his lips



This the dad  
That dictated  
*A dear john letter*  
To dear john  
The very love  
At first sight man  
Who broke me into me  
Finally taking my innocence  
Sadomasochistic Oedipal  
*Secretary/daughter and father (Secretary, director Steven Shainberg))*



Father knew we had sex  
Confessional and three *Hail Mary's*  
Urging me to leave college senior year  
To go to live with him  
*If I felt I couldn't live without him*  
Packing bags in a flibbertigibbet minute  
My John called back into military service  
To guard the newly constructed Berlin Wall  
No sooner had his plane landed  
Than my tear-stained letter mailed  
Ass up in the air pen in hand  
Took dictation  
My father extracted offered edicts  
For a daughter's monastic devotion

Why didn't I hang myself  
When I read those words  
The man I married  
My father's embrace of him  
Was highly suspect  
Veering on the erotic  
This wedding  
Three weeks after  
A first coffee or beer  
Oh dear what can the matter be

*Oh, dear! What can the matter be?  
Dear, dear! What can the matter be?  
Oh, dear! What can the matter be?  
Johnny's so long at the fair.  
He promised to buy me a trinket to please me  
And then for a smile, oh, he vowed he would tease me  
He promised to buy me a bunch of blue ribbons  
To tie up my bonnie brown hair. (Traditional English Author Unknown)*

The very father who waited  
Robe ajar adrift loosely held together  
As midnights struck  
Little girl daughter returning from dates  
When love pricked his barely held together



Stoic stolid righteous demeanor  
The ramparts of his parent's role  
Topped like the *World Trade Towers*  
Toxic dust splintered bones  
I was in the mix of the topple  
Dear Dad how dare you suggest  
I become a writer in earnest  
That I get back to piano  
Where counting excellence  
Doesn't matter  
You who chiseled moments  
Into incremental precision  
Nothing ever amiss  
How dare you suggest  
I start preparing to teach piano  
Play the cello to my heart's content  
Discounting counting  
Cello was the glue the bond  
That kept me tethered together  
My onerous bondage  
My marriage  
You Dad you fucking *Abraham*  
Offering his daughter  
For slaughter  
Cello defibrillator jolting  
My heart into beating  
And so I found true love  
And so I lost true love  
Daddy's obeisant good little girl

Why didn't I hang myself  
When I read these words  
From the very moment  
Words formed in my mouth  
Shot out from my brain  
I wanted to write to be a poet  
I wrote a poem a day  
I was the poet laureate  
Of my high school English class  
I blanch at being  
So forthright so outed  
So disclosed so unashamed  
I lived beneath the roof of scorn  
I lived the image  
Of an incomplete child  
For him clotted

With sin of longing  
For her a second skin  
A second chance for life  
Sacrificed on sacramental hungers  
Believing unequivocally  
That had first dibs first rights  
On my life  
I obliged oh my how I obliged

Why didn't I hang myself  
When I read those words  
Finally abrogation searing truth  
The manipulation scouring  
Dear John Dear Daughter  
Teach piano don't waste time on cello  
Write you write so well have a flair

Why didn't I hang myself  
The neck burns from the taut belt  
Were as evident  
As a goiter concealing choker  
I was already dead  
Never to have a love again  
Wastrel musician  
*A wandering minstrel I a thing of ...*  
Voluminous author hidden nuggets  
Of poems succor  
For my endless hibernation  
*Naomi Nation*  
Lived subservient handmaiden  
Indentured daughter  
Two first generation survivors  
*Of Holocaust Pogrom*  
The stench still just beneath the skin  
Sunk in the marrow deep in their bones  
Avenging their half-lives  
Holding by the scruff neck  
Their first stillborn daughter

NB

***It needed a very serene or a very powerful mind to resist the temptation to anger.***

*The history of woman lies at present locked in old diaries, stuffed away in old drawers, half-obliterated in the memories of the aged.*

**Virginia Woolf**

*Are we meant to change so utterly? In giving life to others, do we lose our own vitality, and sink into dimness, nothingness, and living death?*

*My thoughts grow daily more insignificant and commonplace.*

*You cannot, cannot know the history, the inner history of the last four years.*

*...beginning to write – the history of a strange being, written as truly as I knew how to write it... never tried to publish it – granddaughter found writing “10 boxes of unsorted prose manuscripts and speeches.*

*I make myself obscure in order not to shock other women.*

*Children their mother through a window:*

*They watched me, as Astronomers  
Whose business lies in heaven afar,  
Await, beside the slanting glass,  
The reappearance of a star.*

*But mark no steadfast path for me  
A comet dire and strange am I.*

*...her husband raged said her poems “border on the erotic”*

*I have been married 22 years today, in the course of this time I have never known my husband to approve of any act of mine which I myself valued. Books – poems – essays – everything has been contemptible or contraband in his eyes.*

*...woman who are mothers can still expect, more often than not, to fair. A comet dire and strange am I.*

**Julia Ward Howe, Battle Hymn of the Republic and**

**Passion-Flowers – The Hermaphrodite -**

*Taken from NY Times book review 3/6/16:  
The Civil Wars of Julia Ward Howe, by Elaine Showalter*

### **When I was twenty-four**

New bride  
Living in exile  
In the Swiss Alps  
Having just miscarried  
My husband  
Running off  
The first night  
Forgetting about me  
That I was there  
My father wrote  
When I said  
I was taking cello lessons  
Don't do that  
You don't count well enough  
To play in ensembles  
Study piano  
You can make money  
Giving piano lessons later on  
And write  
You write it reads like poetry  
Why I didn't kill myself  
Then and there  
Is the startling estranging mystery  
I was playing the cello  
Hours every day  
While drink schnapps  
Kirschwasser to be exact  
If only once had he said  
Before I stepped off  
The ledge  
Stepped out of the orbit  
Of my life  
Write play poetry  
Travel not yet to marry  
Instead he believed  
I was becoming a slut  
A Cambridge whore  
And since he couldn't have me  
He told me better  
Hurry up get married  
Or no one sub-text  
Will want you  
Said and done  
Three weeks later

Married a man  
I didn't even know  
When he uttered  
Those precipitous  
Prophetic self-serving  
Words warning

NB

### **Swallowed Up by my Own Gag**

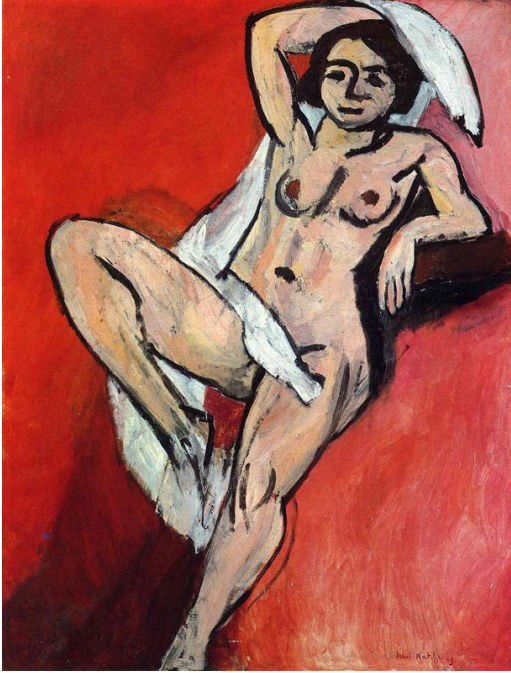
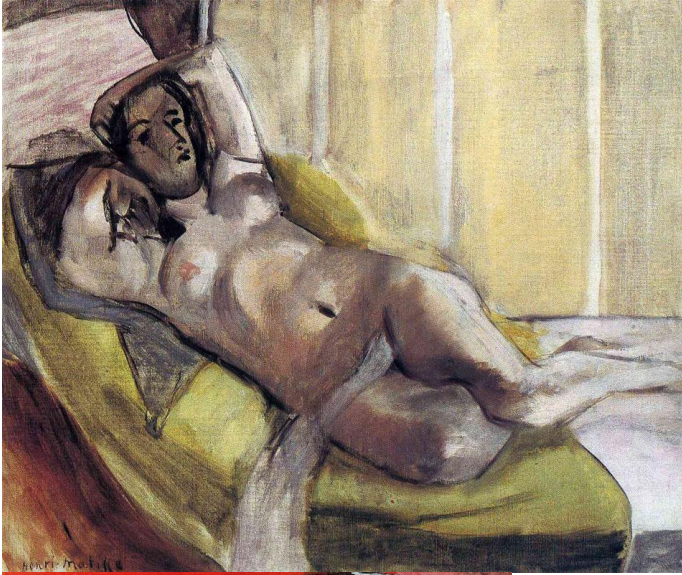
Sorrow subjugates alienates  
Sobbing slobbering over  
The dung heap  
That was my life  
The tragedy of sour notes  
Of bad bargains  
Of sluicing myself  
Feet stumbling  
Falling all over  
Themselves fleeing  
I am swallowing up  
Myself alive  
Toxic landfill  
Conscripted girl  
Gagging on  
The *yes's* the *I do's*  
Swallowing myself up alive  
Wallowing like a pig in sludge  
The arrogance of self-pity  
The abrogation of self  
Nullify numb benumbed dumb  
Come to greediness  
For displacement sensation dislocation  
Sensate abrogate negate profligate

Words falling all over themselves  
To condemn point fingers blame  
Mock jeer fear final aghast thoughts  
Saturated steeped deep in sorrow  
Swallowing wallowing flailing  
Fledging disregard for a past unspent  
How could a girl now old lady die  
Lament serpentine denouncements  
Denouement of goose down feathers flying

My lungs filled up stuffed to the gills  
With solicitous righteousness  
I condemned myself to the rigors of suffering  
Punished myself denial lamentation unrelenting  
Did I really believe I made my mother mad  
With a birth cry turned her into zombie pathology  
Did I have the power to create a lunatic  
To foster craziness into full bloom  
*Bluma* the name our father gave her  
Her given name *Belle* beautiful bloom  
Nights shove me awake  
Twists and turns legs propped on pillows  
Thrombotic gestures never found  
The right way to embrace a pillow  
Prop head just right  
Dreams drift around remembered mornings  
Waiting until a twist and turning old woman  
Couldn't bread crumb a future path with them  
Swallowed up by my own sob  
Throbbing thrumming stumbling heartbeat  
Oh my god in whom I do not believe  
Gesture me with the time to do it  
Close my eyes for a final sweet sublime time  
Racing within me chasing me shadowing me  
The moments I let go the times I turned my back  
The times I wouldn't I kept myself from love  
Images of an errant desperate girl  
Clawing for a hold cleaving to an illicit moment  
Saturated by an estranged grabbing for  
Stepping from myself for a hug a hold  
Desperate for a touch  
Ran around outside myself  
And never got caught  
Punished by choosing a man  
Who held his nose held me in such low esteem  
Objectified what I could bring to his life  
No more than an elephant circling an arena  
Trumpeting a grave sense of displacement loss  
Why did I need to punish myself so  
Of what was I so guilty  
That I so dreaded feared being loved wanted  
Held and pleased almost to suffocation  
Abrogation of self to another by choice  
Drowning in my own sorrow my own sadness  
How can I die when I never experienced true adult love  
How in the land of privilege the place

My relatives struggled straggled to get to  
Only to spawn a girl a woman who fled love  
As if being pursued by an avenging dictator  
Did place myself in the hands of an absolute autocrat  
Married him in three weeks from first coffee  
I did place myself back into denial abrogation  
Held fixed by castanets of incarceration  
Confronting the ugly truth of my lame existence  
I inked up the waters squid squirts murkiness  
Invincible prophetic the future comes  
In the diorama I see myself chaise lounge in love  
Odalisque sonorous superfluous  
Agitated aggrieved love  
Why never me reclining designing  
Daydreaming reclining settling into  
An afternoon of transcendent love  
Not for me couldn't relinquish  
The hold I had on myself  
Bride bridled ridden riddled driven  
Sobbing dissolute at my ending  
Choking on remorse no wine to wash down  
Dismember distemper remove me lift me  
From my past it upsets me confuses me  
Bring me back to loving trees birds  
Outrageous spring blooms  
Colors defiant to defy imagination  
Any painter's palate  
Laughing singing slap happy dancing  
*Guys and Dolls Marlon Brando* singing  
*I'll know when my love comes along*  
I knew and withdrew  
No *Marlon* to draw me back out into the open  
Sobbing to stillness swallowed up by my own sorrow  
Don't know which is worse turning a back on love  
Or releasing life from myself drowned drained  
By my own sorrow and regret  
But there was *Marlon* and *Bach* and sunrise...  
I was fully present ecstatic even in off moments  
In spite of myself I laughed often if never  
Allowing myself to drain the self-hatred  
By a good hard storm-riven ripsnorting sob

NB



Matisse





### **Woe is Me**

I am listening to Mahler's 8<sup>th</sup> Symphony

Hapless hopeless disconsolate

Aggrieved aggravated agitated

A whole life went by

I didn't seize remained unknown

Holding myself in reserve

*Now I lay me down to sleep*

No angels in my keep

Woman weeping death pending

Fixed in time steeped in sorrow

Diffuse crying at ending

Descending

God don't know

Which I dreaded more

Dying or living –

NB



The Weeping Woman Pablo Picasso

**More Conversations with Myself  
Predicament: Where or When**

Wait for the sledgehammer to come down  
Short-circuit the time  
My hands if knobbed still able to oblige

*It seems we stood and talked like this before  
We looked at each other in the same way then  
But I can't remember where or when  
The clothes you're wearing are the clothes you wore  
The smile you are smiling you were smiling then  
But I can't remember where or when? (Rodgers and Hart)*

Crooning along with *Frank Sinatra*  
But death is the lover I crave  
Whom I have met before  
Staved off turned back on  
But not anymore

Sledgehammer or natural cause  
Let body lapse slow sipping water  
Lull and glide body  
At some low-tide ocean side  
When do I stop eating  
When do I just lick water or sugar sticks  
No angel to guide me  
To brush my parching lips

Rapturous lifelong at being alone  
Almost with religious zeal  
Life and its death suddenly  
Becoming very real  
It is time  
The condensation of minutes  
Like drops of salt in hour glass  
How long no longer relevant

Who or what will trigger  
My ambition my pledge  
To die not by the sword  
Had enough of that  
But by my own hand

In life we have heard  
Timing is everything  
Bold or kittenish  
Squeamish back away-ish

*Everything is theoretically impossible, until it is done. Robert A. Heinlein*

*American Science Fiction writer*

*Jesus was very conscious of timing. He lived His life with an acute awareness of God's timing for His life. The gospel of John records these words of Jesus,*

*John 2:4 "My time has not yet come"*

*John 7:6 "The right time for me has not yet come"*

*John 7:30; 8:20 "His time had not yet come"*

Wrangle with struggle with  
Will be so disappointed in myself  
If I waiver  
If I don't manage my own descent  
Descant for death  
By my own hand in my own time  
Resolute repeat after me  
Mantra to reality  
Where or When  
When to begin the end  
When to know the end has come  
Doubt pushes me to diapers slobbering  
Doubt pushes me to sobbing children

Changing my diapers  
Clutching my claw-like hands  
Repugnant to the touch  
Repulsive to the eyes  
Let myself laps end that way  
Courage and timing  
Still remembering most things  
Still able to walk  
Without a shopping cart or cane  
Still able to laugh about missing teeth  
About eyes clouded over with cataracts  
Still able to brush over bald spots  
White hairs cover nicely  
Will I be here to vote on Nov. 7<sup>th</sup>?  
Will I know who is President  
Will I meet Jeremy's next love  
Will I watch Rebecca move in with Luke  
Six children in their collective keep  
Will I die while Luca still lives  
Will I forgive myself for Frank  
Stop despising him  
Still upheavals upend  
How could I have?  
When to separate move off  
To ocean waves beckoning of low tide  
Pills in hand body on the wan  
Slowly depriving myself  
Of sustenance and drink  
Once I open my hand  
And let time move away  
There is no turning back

*They can say the most wonderful words you just don't understand  
I can show you the way but I know that you'll never be there  
All the time, all the shine of your eyes I would never forget  
All I know there's no time, there's no life, there is no turning back  
There is no turning back  
There is no turning back*

*They can say the most wonderful words you just don't understand  
I can show you the way but I know that you'll never be there  
All the time, all the shine of your eyes I would never forget  
All I know there's no time, there's no life, there is no turning back  
There is no turning back  
There is no turning back*

*Gui Boratto/No-Turning-Back-*

When to bring the hammer down  
Close the curtain  
Suspend curiosity about the future  
When to know the time is come  
Resolute yet uncertain  
Brave enough, enough courage  
For so much of my life  
Thought about death  
Courted death  
Now in present tense wondering when how  
Open-ended as the day before me  
And is tomorrow truly another day?

NB



*Maria Lassnig/ You or Me. (2005)*

**Exactly! Yup! Short months from 76<sup>th</sup> birthday and...yes! NB**



**The Very Most End of  
Naomi Weiss Barber**