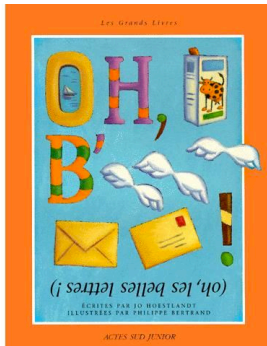


**Belles-Lettres – A Completed Life**  
**ROUGH CUT**



**Truth or Dare**

*The game has existed for centuries, with at least one variant, Questions and Commands, being attested as early as 1712: A Christmas game, in which the commander bids his subjects to answer a question, which is asked. If the subject refuses, or fails to satisfy the commander, he must pay a forfeit [follow a command] or have his face smutted [dirtied].*

***The time will come, though I stop here to-day and to-night. Walt Whitman***

*These modern-day manifestations have only created disharmony. I believe that every Jew is a Jew; we have one Shabbat, one God, one Torah and one faith. Esther Jungreis, Torah Scholar*

Vanity or world weary  
I've gone my mile  
I've done my mile - NB

*Life...million-petaled flower of being here – Philip Larkin*

*A completed life –withering, but when death can still be a choice...nb*

*If you will it, it is no dream. Theodor Herzl, architect modern Zionism*

*Festooned –  
Consume my heart away; sick with desire  
And fastened to a dying animal  
It knows not what it is; and gather me  
Into the artifice of eternity - W. B. Yeats – Sailing to Byzantium*

***No family is complete without a curse.***

***Anthony Lane, review "Julieta" New Yorker 12/19&26/16***

### **Ruth Black Piano Teacher**

Who taught Jeremy and Rebecca  
To bow to the Queen  
After each successful performance  
Of a piece of music  
Just in case, you never know  
When you will perform before the Queen

### *The Fisherman by Chigozie Obioma*

In which two sons slaughter each other  
The mother haunts the halls  
Of a mental institution in Nigeria  
With her wails her echolalia

Ruth Black's sons committed suicide  
Within months or weeks of each other  
One at the Hotel Chelsea  
Post-script affirmation  
Of other death driven ghosts  
Romancing his death  
In the roughened halls of sordidness  
Lapsed into unrelenting grief  
He bore the festering boils  
Of enslavement  
Blond beautiful pre-pubescent soprano  
Kept a concubine  
By his choir master on the run  
How to return from decades  
Of voice changing entrapment  
Sex slave boy man lark losing a song

His brother younger by a year or two  
Hung himself from a tree  
Just outside a mental health clinic  
At Reed College mere weeks later  
Clinic walk-in *help me*  
*My hand reaching to choke me*  
*Cut off air to breathe*  
Any slices on wrists or jugular  
Come back later backs turned  
As he stumbled out  
Leather belt in hand tree limb low and ready

Joint memorials at the Cathedral of St. John  
As unfathomable as the existence of God  
Arnie Black's musical tribute

Of his own composition  
The entire cathedral  
Filled with Upper West Side  
Grievers' disbelievers swaying davening  
As if in rhythm with some Talmudic text

Ruth Black did you succumb  
Disappear into madness  
Did you wave to the Queen  
Stalk straight standing  
In tearless lamentation  
Abject still silent dry eyed formidable  
Mother of sons dead by their own hand  
Beyond mythic beyond eyes gauged  
Medea moment near the Hungarian Pastry Shop  
In what well of desperation of hate  
Did this mother dip her hands  
Traces of hysteria traces of Holocaust  
Streams the blood of the residents  
Of the Upper West Side  
To what vein did these suicides tap into  
A community bent in communion  
Sirocco blown stained by interminable sorrow  
Webbed together all on sodden afternoon  
In the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine

Maxine called after her daughter  
Linda are you there  
Linda be with me  
As she closed her eyes  
One last time on her  
Ninety-five year life  
Linda died some forty years earlier

Death in life  
Life after death  
When children die  
How do mother's go on?  
The mother in Syria  
Whose son became  
The iconic five-year-old victim  
Of the savage despotic driven war  
Holding the gangly savaged body  
Of a yet older son bomb didn't spare  
What landscape holds that mother's grief?  
Motherhood is dangerous business

It is life on a precipice  
Premonitions prowl predominate  
Every hour of every day a wait  
For the inevitable sledge hammer  
The Barbary sword of disaster  
Always pending lurking  
I wait for what lurks  
My youngest son my found one  
Lives within a body of constant distress  
Unmanageable untamable  
One day will he give up give in  
I am out racing the clock  
A vaporizing disappearing act  
Death stalks old age old adage  
*Festooned to a dying animal (Yeats)*  
The mother in me begs to die first  
I don't want to know  
I don't want grief to overflow  
Hold me keep me year of Jewish mourning  
The woof and web of old age entangles  
Last breathe can't come quick enough  
My heart quickens when phone rings  
Until the first hello seized  
By undercurrents of unmanageable madness  
A mouth sprouting words echolalia tongues  
Just turned another page of art calendar  
Begging in each next day not to know  
Whose expiration date will come first  
I don't want to be regarded looked at  
Holding myself together  
As my mind falls apart or not - NB

*...the mysteries remain important: the accidental quality of existence, the poetry of memory, the impassioned life that is animated by awareness of eventual death. Shirley Hazzard, writer*

***What shame as fallen upon me in my old age. Nabucco, Verdi***

***The power to dream, to rule, to wrestle the world from fools. Patti Smith***

**This is your life this was your life...**



Syrian men carrying babies made their way through rubble after a reported airstrike on a rebel held area of Aleppo – Sept 2016



Aylan Durdi age 3 near Greek island of Kos fleeing in boat from Syria



Omran Dagnee age 5



Seeking Shelter After Fleeing Mosul  
ny times 11/5/16 Bulent Kilic/Agence France -Presse



Children on a carousel in Douma, Syria, on Tuesday, the second day of Eid al-Adha. Cease-fires can create something like a virtuous cycle, but there is also a flip side: the vicious cycle.

**Question: What have we done?  
What have we wrought?  
What is the point of no return?  
Blight stain humanity compromised  
The blood is on my hand  
The tears unstoppable  
The sentence immutable - nb**

*It seems its about an accumulating despair. Ann Case – economist Princeton*

**Babies Pawns**

Divorce civil war  
Conflagration  
Toss and burn  
Deafening mothers' wails  
Disregarded  
Adults heat up  
Hotter than sex  
Animal heat revved  
Gathers a funnel cloud  
Life of its own  
For moments  
World wide whimpers  
Shocked hush tones  
Commiserate  
But the babies  
Tried to lock 'em up  
In the Tower of Babel  
Noah's arc carried  
Procreative pairs  
Floods famine  
Stems stamen  
The sun comes up  
The waves roll in and out  
Countries go up in flames  
Babies lie dead at beachheads  
Infants brought to say what?  
Safety – safe harbors  
Rubble hot coals  
Volcanic vapors erupt

Five year old scratches his head  
Soot filled skin fingernails coated  
Wondering incapable of understanding  
This is his pre-school  
This is his early education  
If he lives moments or days or years more  
There will be no resolution  
No comprehending  
Just beginnings and endings  
Moments after he was saved  
His brother older by three years killed  
This is the world as it happens  
As it unfolds  
Fucking is never enough  
To siphon off hate  
We are meant built  
To kill each other off  
Poets form an essence with words  
Picasso painted Guernica  
Other realities unfold  
Naively nativity of hope  
Periscope of time  
Foreshortened  
All is relative  
We are still at sinning  
We are still rampaging  
Into the forbidden  
The forbidding  
Babies lie dead on beachheads  
Did he the baby lying their feel dying come on  
Did the boy covered with soot know  
He was extracted from bombs imploding earth  
Pontius Pilate privateer profiteer on open waters  
Lure desperate refugees onto rubber boats  
Poseidon's pitchfork lunged weighted  
Frantic faceless nameless freight plunging





Boy tiny lifeless body dead on beach  
Unfathomable unconscionable  
A life that will never unfold  
A future bloated with indifferent sea  
Limp lifeless if making it ashore  
I am the pilot of that rubber boat  
Revealed as my eyes tear my heart seers  
Eyes avert scream squelched  
Mother's child limp dead  
Political pawn divisive definitive  
Evil a barnacle on our lives  
No exit desperate what action  
Where the brawl the intolerance  
Lambs waiting to be saved  
Read the streaming salt  
In the swiftly waves  
How to be brave? nb

*Have nothing in your houses **that, you do not...believe to be useful or to be beautiful...rather elegant, efficient way of cutting through our era's clamor (and clutter) of volumes of "decluttering". Panache, grace, startling, calm...***  
*Peacock and Vine On William Morris and Mariano Fortuny by A. S. Byatt*

**Autophagy, Self-eating...It is a crucial process. During starvation, cells break down proteins and nonessential components and reuse them for energy. Cells also use autophagy to destroy invading viruses and bacteria, sending them off to recycling.**  
*Yoshinori Ohsumi – 2016 Nobel Laureate, Physiology or Medicine*

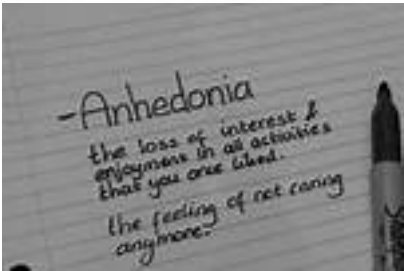
**"Richard Wagamese divined the secrets of human scars and knew that broken people are the strangest and most extraordinary people of all."** *Louise Erdrich, of*

**RichWagamese** – writer and member **Ojibwe Tribe** - ...escorts his chronically ill estranged father (Franklin) on a journey into the woods.....and if he was taciturn he was content in it, hearing symphonies in wind across a ridge and arias in the screech of hawks and eagles, the huff of grizzlies and the pierce of a wolf call against the unbrlinking eye of the moon. He was Indian....absurd ironic detail ...intractable sense of alienation – Richard Wagamese after speaking native tongue, Ojibwe – It felt all round and rolling, not like those hard-edged consonants. When I said it aloud, I felt like I'd really, truly spoken for the first time in my life....peendigaen, first word spoke in native tongue – defined as “come in”

Richard Wagamese, obituary – Daniel, E. Slotnik, NY Times

## Anhedonia

a state of mind in which the subject finds no pleasure in anything.



## Dysphoria dystopia melancholia

### **Disturbia** -

No more gas in the red  
Can't even get it started  
Nothing heard, nothing said  
Can't even speak about it  
All my life on my head  
Don't want to think about it  
Feels like I'm going insane  
YeahIt's a thief in the night  
To come and grab you  
It can creep up inside you  
And consume you  
A disease of the mind  
It can control you  
It's too close for comfort – Rihanna

### **Conked out junked used up**

No more fill her up  
Gone silent  
Not to let on  
Disturbia on my mind  
Resigned -NB

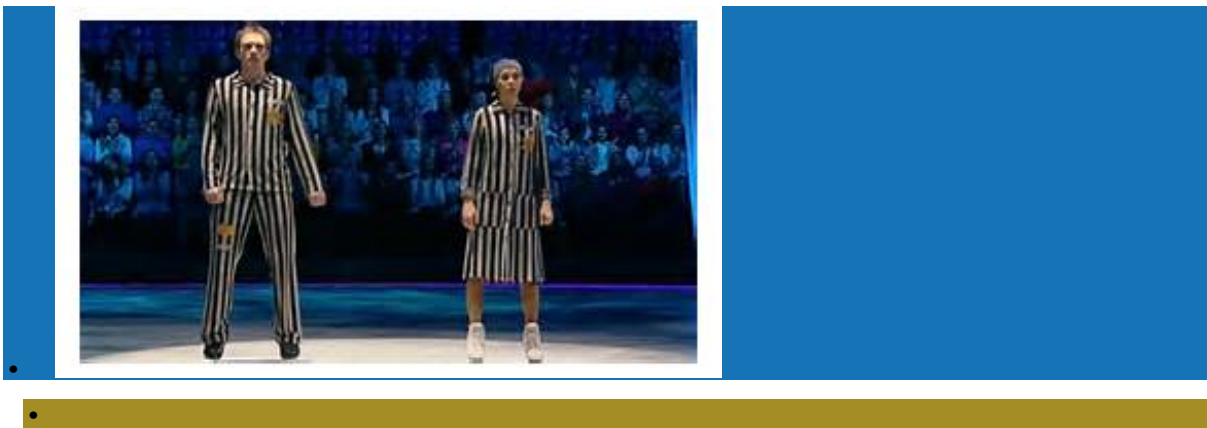
### **Hitler knew Goering knew**

Reverent apostolic ethnic cleansers  
Gothic singe char cholent (Ashkenazic stew consisting  
of meat, potatoes, and beans simmered overnight.  
typically served on the Sabbath.)  
Incinerator scents infiltrate this stew  
They knew the masses  
Worm slither crawl  
Hoist lift stiff arms  
Furor ardor mania  
Bellow rage *Sieg Heil*  
Arm hand flag unfurled  
Only the Jews refused to know  
Disbelieving disheveled  
Broken down Jews  
Eating themselves up alive  
Before entering the gas chamber  
The final solution  
Eliminate hang tooth bodies  
Malnourished being gone  
Hitler and his posse  
Of illustrious resumes  
University illuminated  
Aurora borealis sky spilling  
Self-congratulating mad scientists  
Drove the herd the Jews  
Cattle calls dovening prayerful Jews  
Stumbling in naked god forsaken  
Into the euphemistically called  
Showers sprays of lethal gas  
How to fathom plumb unearth  
How come why?  
I am a member of this tribe  
Ancient morbidity and sadness  
Keep me remembering  
Fleeing grandparents steerage  
Miraculously found  
They're way to Ellis Island

Families procreate on this new soil  
Off spring steeped into Jewish lore  
Pogrom Holocaust incinerating camps  
No wonder some descending into madness  
Dissembling breaking down  
The million-piece American puzzle  
Where none of the pieces fit  
Jews not being Jews  
Jews marginalized Jews kept apart  
Overzealous Jews passing for Christian jews  
Costumed Jews dressing as 18<sup>th</sup> century Jews  
Jews greedy hungry hurried to assimilate  
Climb the ranks of acceptance at any cost  
Grand gestures at assimilation  
Spring holiday nose jobs  
What is it to be Jewish Jews  
What are we Jews  
Race tribe culture ethnicity race  
Just can't stop being it mother said  
*Once a Jew always a Jew*

*These modern-day manifestations have only created disharmony. I believe that every Jew is a Jew; we have one Shabbat, one God, one Torah and one faith. Esther Jungreis, Torah Scholar*

**Say it isn't so!** What is beyond the absurd? What is totemic? Idiom of concentration camp replete with costume down to the yellow star theme of Russian Dance on ice. Well ice dancing is a shiksa goyishe sport.





.com



.png



Controversy in Russia over Holocaust ice dance

### ***Holocaust-Themed Ice Dance in Russia Draws Condemnation***

*MOSCOW — Dressed as concentration camp inmates, each wearing a striped uniform with the yellow Star of David sewn on, the couple glided in harmony, moving to a song from the 1997 Holocaust film :”Life is Beautiful “.*

*”Two million to three million Soviet prisoners of war were murdered by the Nazis.  
Ivan Nechepurenko and Sewell Channov 11/26*

How to remember  
Fathom the unfathomable  
Evil that men do

*The evil that men do lives after them;  
the good is oft interred with their bones. William Shakespeare*

If not for *The Plot Against America* (Philip Roth)  
I would have called  
My childhood nighttime vigils fraught  
Incredible unlikely anxiety  
Offshoot of a sky-flinging star

*Fear presides over these memories, a perpetual fear. Of course no childhood is without its terrors, yet I wonder if I would have been a less frightened boy if Lindbergh hadn't been president or if I hadn't been the offspring of Jews.. Philip Roth, The Plot Against America*

Philip Roth a decade older  
Thus he began his book  
Reassured that I was not crazy  
Holding nighttime vigils  
Sitting upright in my parents room  
Making sure they weren't carted off  
When the thick black smoke  
The black monster train engine  
Skidded stopping night air with screech  
And boot stepping soldiers  
Came into the bedroom  
In the thick of midnight  
And just took them  
Sleeping they barely struggled  
No I wasn't going to let this happen  
I was five or six  
I was a sentry on necessary watch  
Philip Roth had me see  
That the little girl guarding her parents  
From Nazi midnight raids  
Precocious born into distressing times  
Hyper-alert to the dangers lurking  
Way beyond comprehension  
Searing clarity aroused

Deeply rooted Jewish consciousness  
I was right to sit there  
Guarding my father and mother  
Fictive or true night after night  
As clear as vivid as any memory  
Doubting much of what I recall  
I remember being that little girl  
Sitting quietly in high back chair  
While her parents slept  
Ensuring that something bad  
Would not happen  
Chortle to myself the bad  
Could have been sex  
Of which I also knew nothing  
About which I knew all  
Nazi's or sex necessary to protect against  
My scrambling rambling mind  
Put at ease just sitting upright in that chair



Humming to myself the lullaby often to me by my father bedtimes –  
***Sleep and peace attend thee,***  
*All through the night*  
*Guardian angels God will send thee,*  
*All through the night*  
*Soft the drowsy hours are creeping,*  
*Hill and dale in slumber sleeping*  
*I my loved ones' watch am keeping,*  
*All through the night*  
*All through the night.*  
*Hark, a solemn bell is ringing*  
*Clear through the night*  
*Thou, my love, art heavenward winging*  
*Home through the night*  
*Earthly dust from off thee shaken*  
*Soul immortal shalt thou awaken*  
*With thy last dim journey taken*  
*Home through the night - Welsh Lullaby 1784*

***I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,***  
*And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made;  
Nine bean rows will I have there, a hive for the honey bee,  
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.*

*And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow,  
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;  
There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,  
And evening full of the linnet's wings.*

*I will arise and go now, for always night and day  
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;  
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements gray,  
I hear it in the deep heart's core. W.B. Yeats The Lake Isle of Innisfree*

***...that whatever existential pain separates black America from the world, it ain't nothing to do with our blood, it ain't nothing to do with our history, it is essentially a recognition, the most profound and basic human recognition that you are alone. I am alone. John Edgar Wideman, author***

***Death by a thousand Cuts – (Timothy Brook and Gregory Blue – slow slicing or linachi a form of torture and capital punishment practiced mid-centruy and late-imperial China – 10<sup>th</sup> century until its abolition 1905.***





## No escape

World brings means harm

Jews African Americans now Muslims

We all are in and among the designated

To be disposed of to be incarcerated

Disavowed expelled exiled

Displacement natural state

Constant state half-life hate -NB



Muslim women gather on Westminster Bridge to condemn “abhorrent” attack

***Khalid Masood drove a rented SUV along the pavement, mowing down pedestrians and leaving three with fatal injuries. He then crashed into railings outside the Houses of Parliament, left the vehicle and stabbed PC Keith Palmer to death as he stood on guard. Four days after the attack shook London, women from different backgrounds came together in solidarity to condemn the horrific crime and show unity in the face of terror.***

## Swaddling Diapers Depends

Euphemism Depends  
Catch fluids emptying out  
Body reflexes loosen grip  
Piss shit drool  
Condemned to infancy  
Body emptying at will  
Swaddling diapers Depends  
Life has span shelf life  
Beyond 75 an afterthought  
Beginning family mobilizing  
To attend to care fore  
Biblical duty obligation  
Who does what when  
To attend care fore  
Muster up courage  
Keep my word  
Won't be swaddled  
Won't wear depends  
Keep an eye on the clock  
Time for self-determined death  
End of life still within grasp grip  
Just one more day plea  
Lay over just not this day  
Tomorrow one day too late -NB



Beginning to the end....NB

## End of January 2017 Leg Collapsed Under Me

Like a baby lamb a colt  
Attempt to stand upright  
Just folded to the floor  
Floored stunned  
The end in earnest  
Has begun – NB



***Trump Oy Vey Iz Mir*** – Israel doomed apartheid for Palestinian not too far in the future of this archived contrived country and its two state solution –pogrom genocide – Solution final or otherwise – need new vocabulary –what happened to Tikun Olam – Trump happened daughter converts to Judaism and all hell breaks loose – Jared Kushner and Netanyahu – architects of Israel's graceless demise. NB

### **Perplexed Farmisht**

Mixed up confused crazy  
What higher power  
To whom do I pray  
What will be the last words I say  
What will I be thinking  
Jews *Holocaust* gas fumes  
Trains charnel chattel  
Racing toward Auschwitz  
Filled with grace and gratitude  
For the lamp lifted before the golden door  
What lore what story what to say  
Confess to what feel sorry for  
Amalgam of dark and light  
Still in the aftermath of death camps  
Being a mother that is what I will think  
How my body extended my legs parted  
And two new lives came  
A third child plucked from a rainforest tree  
Disbelieving life ever ends  
As I exhale my last and final breath - nb

*Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,  
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;  
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand  
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame  
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name  
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand  
Glow world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command  
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.  
"Keep ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she  
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"*

*The New Colossus Emma Lazarus*



## **Holocaust Always on My Mind**

Imagine Issy or Sarah or Eva or Saul  
My grandparents crossing ice crisp waves  
Bodies convulsed with nausea  
There they held in steerage  
In prayer shawl and phylactery  
The image in my memory  
As brittle as clear if yesterday



*The Steerage* by Alfred Stieglitz. This version was published in 1915.

Fragile identities formed  
Move toward the shofar horn  
Carved rams head plaintive sound



Shofar (by Alphonse Lévy) Caption says: "To a good year"

Life's end entering me  
Images of Jews naked  
Entering euphemistic showers  
Mother's head filled not with sugar plum fairies



But naked bald women herded toward gas chamber door



Naked women being driven toward the Krema V gas chamber at Auschwitz-Birkenau

Nothing to budge to purge  
That image from her head  
No matter how brutally pummeled  
She couldn't rid herself  
Drive out these fraught images  
Repulsed by my curlicue curls believing  
I grew them on my head to taunt  
Plunging my head in bath waters  
Hair fell straight when wet  
Mother never escaped from this displacement  
This disjointedness she lived lockstep  
Perpetual state of prostration anguish  
Stuck In the tales of *The Final Solution*  
Ablution sedation fists to head  
Breathing fumes of never forget  
Mother never strayed  
From the bound and webbed flock  
Bleating sheep following the lead  
Straight off the rocky cliff

Toppling from overarching self-denial

Even dear President Roosevelt  
Smacked down his braced up foot  
No Jews allowed in to USA  
Flight of possible death not to consider  
Mockery made of freighted ship of flight  
Jewish passengers with no entry papers  
To the promised land Palestine  
Shipped back by order British navy  
Sent to internment camps in Cyprus  
Fraught Diaspora *ship of fools*  
Believing if half shell human  
If nearly broken on the way home  
To Palestine the promised land



*Exodus 1947* after British takeover. Banner says: "[Haganah](#) Ship *Exodus* 1947".

*Exodus 1947* was a ship that carried Jewish emigrants from France to British Mandatory Palestine on July 11, 1947. Most of the emigrants were 4,515 Holocaust survivors who had no legal immigration certificates for Palestine. Following wide media coverage, the British Royal Navy seized the ship and deported all its passengers back to Europe.

***The secret source of humor is not joy, Mark Twain said, but sorrow.***

Epitome of Jewish lore  
Not Sholem Aleichem Teyve  
But Elie Wiesel -NB



***Because I remember, I despair.***

*Because I remember,*

*I have the duty to reject despair.*

*Because of indifference, one dies before one actually dies.*

*I decided to devote my life to telling the story because*

*I felt that having survived I owe something to the dead.*

*And anyone who does not remember betrays them again.*

*Man, as long as he lives, is immortal.*

*One minute before his death he shall be immortal.*

*But one minute later, God wins. Elie Wiesel*



The ship of fools, depicted in a 1549 German woodcut

***To have enslaved America with this hocuspocus! To have captured the mind of the world's greatest nation without uttering a single word of truth! Oh, the pleasure we must be affording the most malevolent man on earth! Philip Roth, The Plot Against America***

***It's not so easy to pick up and leave. As is the case in the novel, leaving home is an emotionally violent act. Mohsin Hamid, Exist West***

**Here I am**

Lumbering hobbled

Tumbled toppled toward

Final slumber...

NB

***I love to be a little***

*disgusting, to go as far as I can  
into the thrilling unloveliness  
of an elderwoman's aging.*

*Sharon Olds – "Odes"*

***Most of us live with a grief that there is someone*** who we don't get to share our life with. *I don't know a person who hasn't been through that, having someone in their life they don't get to keep. Laura Dern, actress*

***So, I shall repeat myself,***

*prayer, same prayer, towards fire, same fire,  
as the sun repeats itself and the thundering waters*

*for what else is there  
but books, books and the sea,  
verandahs and the pages of the sea,  
to write of the wind and the memory of wind-whipped hair  
in the sun, the colour of fire?*

**Derek Walcott, From 'Another Life' (1973)**

***There were two types of strong men:*** *those like Uncle Monty and Abe Steinheim, remorseless about their making money, and those like my father, ruthlessly obedient to their idea of fair play." The Plot Against America, Philip Roth*

***"A righteous man falls down seven times and gets up." –***

***King Solomon, Proverbs, 24:16.***

## **My Father Righteous Man – Good Man a Very Good Man**

Ineffably inextricably unexplainably  
My father was a good man  
The cantor at his memorial service said  
Bill Weiss was a *Righteous Man* (Like Schindler, my note)  
My father was our Jesus Christ  
Unfailingly stern always fair minded right  
Exception to clear sight and sanity  
He kept incessantly without fail pull our mother  
From the oven or furnace doors  
Her almost daily desperate forays race  
For release from the tyrant  
Of deep seated mental anguish  
Engulfed in the agony of insanity  
Thrashing pounding her head  
Mad mouth drenched spilling over foaming  
Prostrate falling on her knees as if in prayer  
Placing her head exhaustedly on the oven door  
Viewed skewed cockamamie giggly  
As a kosher Sabbath roasting chicken  
Mother was stuck in carnal obsession  
With incinerating herself  
*Holocaust* totemic unraveling  
Sub-conscious an inner voice  
Bedeviling driving her to slip out of life  
To inhale the poisonous spray of *Zyklon B*  
Her imagination welled caught up  
With depictions of Jewish women  
Shorn thick curls genetic evidence  
Of being a Jew akin to a circumcised penis  
Curls a dead give-away like wearing a yellow star  
My small shivery body in bath as she plunged  
My head beneath the water  
Attempting to straighten my unruly curls  
Nearly drowning me as if a runt kitty  
My mother hooked to perpetual  
Re-enactment anxious ritual  
Body breath drubbed numb images  
Of hording herded women succumbing  
Of a press of naked Jewish female bodies  
Dead decimated emaciated bodies  
In the aftermath piled stacked lifeless  
At sealed door carted off to mass grave



Demonic obsession to end life  
Screaming *I wish I were dead*  
Placing her head inside the oven  
Or desperately trying  
To pry open the furnace door



Ovens furnaces gasses Nazi  
Tools to eliminate exterminate  
Demonic images preoccupying  
Torment anguish excruciating  
Caught in the peripheral march  
Of Jewish martyrdom  
Furnace oven fists against head  
Totems symbols of relief



She incessantly adamantly re-enacting  
*Final Solution of Jews* herself as well  
Resisted slitting wrists sleeping pills  
Tossing herself off skyscraper roofs  
Those suicides were for the privileged *Wasps*  
Mother did father's righteousness drive you

Subliminally to furnace or oven doors  
Did he prove his love by grabbing you back  
My father was a *Righteous Man*  
My mother kept him vulnerable meek  
Did he need her madness her tirades  
To stand above the fray head in clouds  
Abiding always to do the right thing  
Weary well-trodden truths freeze-frame  
Bolt upright breath held waiting for  
This menacing foreplay or Nazi escape  
Nightly clockwork rise at *Hour of the Wolf* (Ingmar Bergman)



Stalked nightly rampages set in deep  
Mother and father now both dead  
Twisted tongue constructions prevail  
Father was a righteous man mother mad as a hatter  
And so my childhood was spent witness to  
Savior father and insane lunatic mother  
Born in 1940 history steeped in  
Nazi exterminations camps primarily of Jews  
Re-enactment daily mom a sacrificial lamb  
Dad a savior beyond reproach  
Mother in aftermath slept Dad wept  
*It was the first time I saw my father cry.*  
*A childhood milestone, when another's tears*  
*Are more unbearable than one's own* (Philip Roth, *The Plot Against America*).  
Webbed between my mom my dad my childhood -NB

## God Put Him on Earth

To love her  
He put her on earth  
To remember wearing  
Gray concentration camp garb



Head in gray wrap



Depictions of mother  
Eyes disbelieving  
One foot in front of another  
She lived as if *the Holocaust*  
Was just yesterday  
She was anguished  
Mengele menaced  
Father was brought  
Down to earth cerebral  
On a celestial harp



He loved her absolutely  
Absolution given  
Forgiven for his sins

None of which he could name  
 He was the universal archetype  
 Proverbial Jewish good boy  
 Bound and tethered blinded by  
 The absolute love for this woman  
*Here she comes* he would say  
 To my brother and I gagging as we  
 Awaited her *Loretta Young* entrance



*Beaudeful beaudeful Bluma*  
 Naked ardor for his flower  
 Consumptive our hatred  
 And fear of her our mother  
 This formidable beauty  
 Family caught in hereditary gulch  
 Grandson marries wife crazier meaner  
 Hard to believe than his grandmother  
 Ecstatic head over heels over her beauty



Disbelieving she would want him  
 She was cunning manipulative  
 Lip licking at her conquest  
 Circuit breakers needed  
 To stop end this bat-eyed curse  
 Jaded pursuit of a *Melania Trump*  
 Extolling rapturous serpentine conquest  
 Confounded bewildered turn to Judaism  
 Pleading *our father our king*  
 Absolve us rid us of this longing  
 We empty pocketful's

Of sins at local riverbeds  
Prostrate pounding chest  
Begging to end need for pretty women  
*Yom Kippur* draws us to synagogue doors  
*Avinu Malkeinu Our father our king*



Prayerful plaintive  
Pleading asking gut wrenching  
Why and how did my father  
Love this wild crazy  
Untamable mad hatter girl  
Trickster god gave her  
The aura of pretty  
It was pre-ordained  
By you know who  
And then handed on  
Warped jaundiced eyes  
Grandson hunts for pretty  
Glitch God put her on earth  
To give life to my brother and me  
My father reenacts Joseph lore  
Prescient precious lure of Mary  
Far-fetched wretched fate  
Got to scratch that far back  
To make sense of it all  
She nearly forsooth in truth  
With murderous Lady Macbeth grip  
Tried to kill our father  
Shackles for her or rescue of him  
Solomonic decision removing him



From his much loved  
And necessary hearth and home  
What steps to overtake wrathful past  
Killer Venus flytrap disguised  
As pretty bride then wife  
*Our father our king*  
Eradicate hunt for pretty  
Aryan quest for perfection  
Something about essential Jewishness  
We must finally confront and face - NB

**Each grandchild born**

Whom she called guardian angels  
And to whom she would sing  
Within days of their birth  
*Oifn Pripetschik*



Anointed babies  
Fully in the fold  
Blessing deep throated  
Jewish Yiddish reckoning  
Jewish Yiddish welcoming  
Soulful and promising NB

**Mother How I Longed For**

You to love me  
Permutations gyrations  
Metamorphosis of self  
If I were only like...



And I would try to become  
Than in whiplash moment totemic  
Perfect daughter exchanged  
For an even more perfect one  
Mother how I wanted  
You to love me  
Find me loveable  
Whoever I kept becoming  
Circling on air currents  
A Calder mobile



Whirligig twirly never fixed  
Mother how I longed  
For you to love me  
Wanted to kill myself at 21  
Height of my given beauty

Believed I had evil spirit  
Virtually lobotomized you  
With birth scream  
Excising fragile vestiges  
If any intact sanity remained  
Mother why didn't you  
Couldn't you love me  
I didn't kill myself  
Learned you beat your tummy  
Black and blue discovering  
You were pregnant  
Bruised banged around  
Longing for you in utero  
Ill-conceived pursuit  
Devil god got you pregnant  
Knew never to want a child  
Knew of danger and guile  
Mother long ago forgave you  
You could not control  
Shifting turnstile self  
Yet had me begging  
For just a single touch  
An unjaundiced look  
Mother could not help herself  
She was never completely freed  
Of self-loathing and hating me  
At doorway greeting me  
Recently divorced mother of two  
Blurted out ***you disgust me!***  
Surly tongue couldn't be held  
And so it goes and so it went  
Longing stopped the sobs not  
Night times find myself  
That small goldy locks girl  
Soulful and sullen



Astride her mother's loving lap -NB

### **Grasping What I Couldn't**

All pre-ordained  
Pogrom eviction chased off land  
Village gate closed  
Shut against fleeing Jews  
*Holocaust* shame  
Caustic fumes remain  
Clogging nasal membranes  
Fact-finding led me to this:

*I was taught I was innately bad  
And that I had to work at these rules  
In order to become something  
Approaching good. In the ultra-  
Orthodox school I attended  
In the ninth grade, I was taught  
To use the bathroom quickly,  
Lest my exposed unmentionables  
Lead me to sinful acts of self-examination.\**

Questions about sex at six followed  
By *don't be disgusting*  
Body shaming body's urges alarming  
No wonder parent nightly rumbles  
Furious flight to furnace door  
To ignite or subdue desire's lure  
Comes clearer and clearer to me  
She beat her head  
She was twisted diseased  
As a beetle infested tree  
But feasted on *Guernica*



Transfixed for hours  
When it hung at MOMA  
Studied El Grego –*Opening of the Fifth Seal*



Kandinsky – *Wholeness4All*



Prints art books from Newark Library  
Had these artists exhibited on our walls  
Crucifix of soul seduction of mind  
Child before Freud's latent years  
Exposed to images like these

Rousseau's *The Sleeping Gypsy*



Picasso *Woman Ironing*

Precocious girl with vivid imagination  
Dozed slowly eyes fluttering down  
Not to Goodnight Moon  
But to copies of these paintings  
Standing by the sink  
Mother would sing *Charlie is My Darling*  
And tell me how man who made coats  
Had none for his children  
And then reckon with nightly vigil screams  
***I want to die*** feet pounding steps  
On way to furnace door  
Nazi freight cars chugging behind  
Neighborhood Chunky Chocolate factory



Amazing I wasn't raving talking tongues  
Inner language formed death hyphenated  
Mother redeemed herself  
After spiritual spelunking trip  
Dangling off a cliff into a dark cave  
Chanting clasping enrapt group hold



She was sixty - I twenty-two years younger  
Shopping for particular pieces of marble  
Began her foray into sculpting  
Minus ever holding a power tool  
Carving deep into the marble  
She pulled out multiple renditions  
Of mother's holding babies

Pressed tightly securely against breast  
Succulent sensual gatherings groping  
Plump women evangelizing  
Matisse merriment



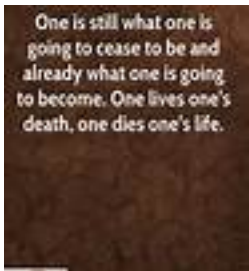
*To be or not to be*  
*To live or die*  
*Self-hating Jew or lapsed one*  
Hyperbolic hyphenated dangled  
And one day confounding no longer  
Understood the soil she sprung from  
*Pogrom* to run from  
*Holocaust* hold your breath from  
Sex vile body parts leave untouched  
Lust sexual appetite ever unrequited  
Semi-conscious father dragged her  
From furnace door she becoming  
Semi-conscious sex fiend  
Every orifice and more explored

*Very good man righteous father to contend*  
With ever volcanic erupting wife  
Held me daughter to a higher standard  
When he started counted  
Beyond 10 fingers men I dated  
Warned me *Who's going to want you?*  
*You're 22. You're wearing green skirts. \**  
As if I was whoring never seeing  
Sheer fear of another or another's touch

*And does someone have to be mentally ill to*  
*Feel hopeless after being rejected by her family?*  
*Does someone have to be extraordinarily sick*  
*to succumb to the despair she feels*  
*after having ventured out into a world*  
*where she is all alone, without the skills to survive? APOSTATES ANONYMOUS*  
*For young ultra-Orthodox adults who decide to leave their cloistered communities,*  
*daily life becomes a struggle over questions of food, faith and sex.\**

\*Taffy Brodesser-Akner – NY Times Magazine 4/2/17

Where to turn  
Lost cause from the beginning  
Hatched by mother ensnared trapped  
By Pogrom Holocaust and ough Sex  
She never figured out what being Jewish was  
She swung like a monkey from tree to tree  
Zealot agnostic practitioner disbeliever  
Warning you an never stop being Jewish  
You'll see when Nazi's come again  
We waited for Pesach table stranger  
And for that Nazi knock on the door  
Residue confusion madness twistedness  
Big hurdle to overcame not a suicide at 21



Sartre

Had two marriages three children  
Two of my body one found  
I believe I became a good mother  
Leapfrogging biblical fate  
Want to die with easy heart  
Knowing my past was what it was  
Prism images split screen  
Versions memories regrets  
One *salty-dog* package at the end  
Nascent autobiography writ small  
Includes Pogrom Holocaust Fear of sex  
Head held high as body goes limp  
I loved my kids made my heart sing  
And beyond my own being



Ducks on a pond with trees





Blues *Salty Dog* last song sung – NB



Oh won't you let me be your salty dog,  
I don't want to be your man at all,  
You salty dog, you salty dog.

**Oh honey baby, let me be your salty dog,**  
Salty dog, oh you salty dog.

There's just one thing that worries my mind,  
All of these browns and none is mine,  
You salty dog, you salty dog.

The scarest I've been in my life  
Was when Uncle Bud nearly saw me kiss his wife,  
You salty dog, you salty dog.

Lil' fish big fish swimmin' in the water,  
Come on here and give me my quarter,  
You salty dog, you salty dog.

Like lookin' for a needle in the sand,  
Tryin' to find a gal that ain't got no man,  
You salty dog, you salty dog.

God made a woman and he made her funny,  
Lips 'round her mouth sweeter than honey,  
You salty dog, you salty dog. (In public domain)

## ***Babi Yar***

*No monument stands over Babi Yar.  
A drop sheer as a crude gravestone.  
I am afraid.  
Today I am as old in years  
as all the Jewish people.*

*Now I seem to be  
a Jew.  
Here I plod through ancient Egypt.  
Here I perish crucified, on the cross,  
and to this day I bear the scars of nails.  
seem to be then  
a young boy in Byelostok.  
Blood runs, spilling over the floors.  
The barroom rabble-rousers  
give off a stench of vodka and onion.  
A boot kicks me aside, helpless.  
In vain I plead with these pogrom bullies.  
While they jeer and shout,  
"Beat the Yids. Save Russia!"  
some grain-marketeer beats up my mother.  
O my Russian people!*

*I am  
each old man  
here shot dead.  
I am  
every child  
here shot dead.  
Nothing in me  
shall ever forget!  
The "Internationale," let it  
thunder  
when the last anti-Semite on earth  
is buried forever.  
In my blood there is no Jewish blood.  
In their callous rage, all anti-Semites  
must hate me now as a Jew.  
For that reason  
I am a true Russian! Yevgeny Yevtushenko*

## Word stuck in my mouth

Confession of bereft mother  
Caught up in my throat  
Childhood always fraught  
Trying to remember  
If just one day  
Redolent with pure pleasure  
Trying to recapture remember  
If just one day  
Of pure unadulterated laughter  
Childhood spent hand-to-hand combat  
With erratic unhinged father  
Yes remember watching over and over  
*Jungle Book Chitty Chitty Willie Wonka*  
And even *The Mission* where you  
Believed you were the infant in the canoe  
Just below in the currents of the Iquatzu  
This is too hard for me to probe  
Not finding pure happiness joy  
Being your mommy always just fraught  
And if my body moved felt  
It had given birth to you  
A day was caught up  
In irascible omens  
Pending doom disaster  
Maybe because I am old  
And can remember further back  
To the childhoods  
Of Jeremy and Rebecca  
Twenty years older  
Why now having  
To grapple with this  
Tight fisted numbing truths  
Your childhood wasn't fun for me  
If the love I felt for you  
Took my breath away  
Parenthood for us cockfights



Childhood delight limned  
Thrashing biting ear  
Flinging puppy  
Dredging up the grim  
Unremitting horrifying  
Eclipsed my smile  
My heart stopped  
From pulling you close  
To running away  
Never rose above the fray  
What I remember  
Is the mother me whom I  
So recklessly  
And inordinately betrayed -NB

**Death not to arouse guilt**

But sadness  
Pure unadulterated sadness  
Could have would have  
Didn't just didn't  
Death means no more chances  
To make things right  
To make them happen another way  
More to the person now looking back  
Obstinate I was who I was  
Refused when love came  
To hear my heart's plea  
Death means it is too late  
To make amends mend up things  
Have them be otherwise  
Why wasn't our marriage happier  
What more could I have done  
Sadness permeates the darkening room  
Sadness falls unremittingly  
Death seizes chokehold  
The end has come no more chances  
To undo what was done  
Wince tears won't budge  
This long romancing death  
Stands ready to draw out final breath - NB

*...the clarity of limitation - Irving Howe*

## Thanksgiving Oy Vey Iz Mir



Thanksgiving triangulating strangulating  
Centerpiece of mother's life  
Jewish suburban family at the table  
Two errant children missing  
Daughter eschewed holiday table  
Rebellion pitched at empty chairs  
Archetype rebel psychiatric fathoming  
Akin Passover guest's chair left empty  
Blighted exposed family rift  
Totemic family gathering  
Adult children and their children missing  
By intention not to build ceremony custom

*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. William Butler Yeats – A Prayer For My Daughter*

Mother now dead years left uncounted  
Father a decade or more swayed rhythmically  
To his wife's our mother's every whim order  
Always barked out shrilly frazzled  
Veiled threat to savagely disassemble  
Among my insurmountable regrets  
That I didn't come to your home  
To sit in and among the Jewish relatives  
On your day to shine titular head  
Diaspora scattering safe landing  
At assimilation's table  
Adaptations fine-tuning  
Perfection flowers candles settings  
Transforming pine-paneled basement  
Blessed holiday sanctuary  
Beyond the Sukkot harvest  
With its symbols: *Etrog Lulav Hadas Aravah*



“and you shall take of yourselves on the first day (of Sukkot) the fruit of a goodly tree, a palm branch, the myrtle branch, and the willow of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the Lord you God seven days.” Leviticus 23

Jews pilgrims coming to these shores  
Celebrate Thanksgiving remembering  
How Native Americans gave earlier pilgrims corn



*Native Americans or original Americans taught pilgrims how to grow corn and help them survive the bitter winter of 1620. It is certain that corn were a part of the first thanksgiving dinner.*

*If imitation sincerest form of flattery  
Or adaptation necessary for survival  
My mother within the dank room  
Created the art of illusion  
Lifted from the pages of *Gracious Living**





Folding tables in basement  
Gilt-rim gold velvet folding chairs  
Father schlepping delicacies food  
Up and down the steep  
Ultimately fateful stairs  
Mother tumbled down those stairs  
Defiantly against all prudence and warning  
Contacting a friend gathered along the way  
Taken to the local emergency room  
Placed immediately in Hospice care  
*No excessive measures* yielded to death warrant  
Getting ahead of myself with the above aside  
Buffet of Bluma's delicacies elegant loving  
Each dish signatory recipes held tight  
The Jewish suburban *mishpocha* came  
The self-hating Jewish offspring stayed away  
Mother's Bat or Bar Mitzvah family celebrated  
Bluma always including *so as never to forget*  
Jewish delicacies accompany turkey and corn  
Potato and noodle kugel, sugar bowties  
Jewish rye bread assorted rugelach



noodle kugel





potato kugel



rugelach

Piece de Resistance Bubbe Bluma's cakes  
Steeped in the tradition of Thanksgiving  
Bluma's feast scintilla soupcon of perfection  
Celebration never encumbered by inquiry  
Where are Nibsie and Bobby and their kids  
Nicknames for cousins Bluma's grown children  
Bluma would have felt gratified  
At the simple memorial for Bluma  
Held in her living room  
The Thanksgiving family gathered  
Each with vivid and emotional memories  
Of Bluma's Thanksgivings  
Obviously centerpiece of family year  
Listening to stories of this annual gathering  
Felt despondent and bereft  
That although just across the bridge or tunnel  
Couldn't brave the distance beyond maligned childhood  
Left with amalgam of pain for both of us  
Turbulent life of mother and child long gone  
Thanksgiving became time for revenge  
As Bluma widowed frail and aging  
For Thanksgiving and Passover  
The Jewish family reciprocated  
Offering her an honored place at the table  
Bluma long dead the Jewish family remembering  
What comes around goes around so they say  
Favorite Uncle's wife dis-invited the children and me  
From our annual trek to Syosset for Passover

Holidays' time for revenge avenging past wrongs  
Power asserted holding tight to bloodline frayed bonds

*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. William Butler Yeats – A Prayer For My Daughter*

Ceremony and custom for the less beleaguered  
Jewish diaspora family tree built on residues  
Of suppressed rage and humiliation  
Otherness turned like spoiled food in our brains  
Holiday times became time to inflict harm  
Public humiliation infantile rebellion

My oldest son Jeremy hosted Thanksgiving  
As the centerpiece of his family lore  
Seated at the head of the table  
Family friends friends without family  
Swimming instructor piano teacher  
Children with their own beautifully decorated table  
Tables festive with turkey place cards  
Full fall flower centerpieces  
Sumptuous tradition meals often catered  
If wife claimed home made  
As the family disassembled came apart  
Thanksgiving invitations fell silent  
No Thanksgiving holiday table no guests invited  
Plans up in the air like so many helium balloons deflating  
My son is mourning the inevitable disintegration of his family  
No way to reassure no mother's hand to reach across country  
Bitterness snaps back trapped corrosive avoidance denial  
When you build a family on pretend truths rear  
I should know this prodigal son progeny  
Of parent's marriage brokered in three weeks  
First handshake to marriage vows  
Ghosts howl haunt left bereft of truth  
Jeremy shared at one of the last celebrations  
At which I was invited and present  
*My mother used to tell us we only have to remember  
We are Jewish when then Nazi's come again*  
Every one blushed laughing nervously  
Worthy cross-stitching for kitchen sampler



*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. William Butler Yeats – A Prayer For My Daughter*

One Thanksgiving bought dinner with trimmings  
From Dean and Deluca eaten off a tray  
Watching whatever followed the parade  
Strangely calm sanguine in my solitariness

*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. William Butler Yeats – A Prayer For My Daughter*

My youngest son now in Los Angeles with girlfriend  
Hosted for a decade or more dozen male school friends  
A table set with linen tablecloth and napkins best dishes  
Potluck all the fixings nothing amiss or missing  
Last year begging for a duck turkey or Turk duck none left  
This annual sit down meal held in consequence  
The purest and most direct form of décor and etiquette

Recollecting coming home one Thanksgiving evening  
Where our Brazilian houseguest had a dozen fellow students  
From International House sitting around a Thanksgiving table  
Perfectly re-enacted re-imagined if catered by Martha Stewart  
Irony abounded as they adapted to perfection  
A custom of their host country's founding celebration

Triangulating strangulating Thanksgiving  
Oy vey iz mir Jewish immigrants once removed  
Celebrate the holiday  
But just beneath the perfectly set table  
The sorrows the scars of diaspora  
The fumes of Holocaust still vaporous

Jews too fractured fragmented  
To adapt readily a Martha Stewart depiction  
Thinking back on this fall harvest festival celebration  
Want to say sorry Mother I wish I had come  
To your annual extended family Thanksgiving dinner  
Having a place at the table for the children and me  
This to honor to please you if just once  
But simply couldn't do it regret reached in too deep

Thanksgiving time for avenging family misdeeds  
Awkward comings together civility urged on  
Daughter's estranged husband prepares meal  
His parents' strong and dedicated Trump supporters  
We are asked to pledge not to talk politics  
Grandson newly eight goes off to room  
Mumbling "fuck trump fuck trump"  
Caught in moment asked where he heard that  
*We sing it on the bus on the way to school*  
School van could only travel New York roads  
2016 Thursday rain predicted terrorist threatening  
The Macy's day parade challenged by weather  
And global avenging warring politics  
And yet having brought my three assigned deserts  
Will sit lips tight never mentioning the recent election  
Jews know how to silence themselves  
Not to insinuate themselves into internecine family feuds  
Hearing if redundant *your not like the other ones* Jew  
Assimilation studied blending in Zelig-like  
While the alt-right currently salutes arms extended *Sieg Heil!*  
I will sit quietly obediently death knell beats in my heart  
From my withering age and for the sense of hopefulness  
Dying off like the leaves falling from winter ready trees

*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. William Butler Yeats - A Prayer For My Daughter*

Failed to remember custom and ceremony  
Slow death civility mutinous silenced  
Innocence and beauty fall victim  
Of fear dread silence retribution and reprisal - NB

***The wounds are too deep,***  
*I need to keep the scars*  
*To prove there was a time*  
*When I loved something more than life*  
*Unlike the last time here,*  
*I now have the means and a will sincere*  
*Your knight is nowhere near*  
*Unfortunate for you, this makes me your God...*  
*Closing your eyes, don't ever say you love me, whore*  
*You never meant a word, I know you lied*  
*When there is life, there is despair, indulge me now*  
*And stay alive this night... I promise you the end before the first light arrives...*  
*Mother always said "my son, do the noble thing..."*  
*You have to finish what you started, no matter what*  
*Now sit, watch and learn...*  
*"It's not how long you live, but what your morals say"*  
*Can't keep your part of the deal*  
*So don't say a word... Don't say a word - Ellie Goulding*

**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, One Art

*When you write my epitaph, you must say I was the loneliest person who ever lived.*  
*Elizabeth Bishop said to Robert Lowell*

**To put this color**

*green – exhausted grave grass*

*- to cinder blocks*

*takes on understanding of loneliness*

*and/or institutions that terrifies, Thomas Lux, Poet*

*Exchanging oneself for others means that you become the other and the other becomes you. David Shields, Other People – Tales and Mistakes*

**I is another. Rimbaud**



Erin K. Robinson

**How To Stay Sane While Black – Morgan Parker**

*I wish I could point to the moment when I first understood I was a thing to be hated. The first “I’m just not attracted to black girls.” The first “Do you work here?” When I was 15, I was told I have major anxiety disorder and moderate-to-severe depressive disorder. “Black people don’t go to therapy,” my dad said. I had been told to pray, but it wasn’t working. I was told to be strong. How strong do you need to be to want to die, and to be certain the world wants you dead, and yet to keep on living? As a little black girl in a little white suburb, trying to smooth down my hair and lick the ash from my elbows, I wondered, do white people have these thoughts? Is something wrong with me? Thirteen years later, still plagued by the exact same garbage — and worse, used to it — I tell my therapist I never stood a chance of loving myself. “Look at the ads in the subway,” I plead. “Look at my Tinder inbox. Look at the news!” Across from me in a wingback chair, a few feet above the panic attack of Union Square, she nods. We both know there is no solution, but even her agreement is more than I’m used to. I’m lucky to be able to articulate what hurts. At the end of our session, I pay my therapist \$1,800, a sliver of which will be reimbursed by my insurance. The bill covers several months of biweekly cognitive-behavioral talk therapy*

and medication management. I then pay Walgreens \$77.54 for two of the three psychopharmaceuticals I take regularly. I'm privileged to almost be able to afford this. It is an expense I will always have. On the Internet this year, I saw a poorly photo shopped graphic that read: "I didn't own any slaves, you didn't pick any cotton, case closed." I caught myself cackling — while factually true, it assumes a dangerously limited definition of "slavery" that black Americans know is completely beside the point. American slavery, the event, begot American white supremacy, the psychology. That psychology provides white Americans with privilege, power and the benefit of the doubt. Meanwhile, black Americans don't and will never know our real names; commercials for Ancestry.com feel like a personal attack; we are expected to prove to our government that we "matter"; and we fear that, in the event of our death, our life will be scrutinized and we will be presumed guilty. Sometimes I think my depression is the most normal thing about me. We should all get free therapy. We could call it reparations. It isn't just that I'm tired; it's that my mom is tired, my nana was tired, her mom was tired (whoever she was). It isn't that I'm single; it's that society believes that black women are not beautiful, and so maybe I believe that, too.

**In a study they did with mice, researchers concluded what we already knew: that trauma lives in our blood. Every time I tell myself that I am worthless, how do I know whether it's me thinking it, or the white voices I've internalized? Or it — my broken cells.** It would be inhumane to quarantine assault victims in a room with their abusers for hundreds of years and demand they act natural. Comparisons, of course, are cheap and unfair. I have come to understand my body as an argument, a site of proof and contention. **I try to use therapy to unload my specific personal demons, but anytime I dare to self-indulge, to be the center of my own story, I am reminded of my skin. My symptoms flare. I'm inundated with my insignificance. This is not the work of my disorder. It's my Twitter feed clogged with hate speech. It's nigger jokes. It's that scene in "Malcolm X," in the library, when he discovers that even our dictionary, our language, insists on our inherent evil.** And then there's the way it all compounds: average number of times a day a white person walks right into me on the street. Number of mornings a week a white girl flips her wet hair into my face on the subway. Number of black women with speaking roles on "Girls." Number of police convictions. Number of times I have been mistaken for another black woman. Number of days between the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation and Juneteenth, when slaves in Texas were finally informed of it. Number of ways in which this is a metaphor for contemporary black American life. **Some nights I turn over and over in bed groaning to myself, "Why do I feel this way? What can I do to feel better? How can I think my way out of this?" I realize I am in mourning. For the people I never got to be and never will be. I mourn my own possibility.** I had one therapist who told me that every neurosis and blockage could be traced to a locus of fear. She would ask me, again and again, "What is the fear?" and though I never liked my answers — alternately "death" and "abandonment" — I became obsessed with asking the question. For white police officers who commit murder, for white politicians and heads of television networks or publishing houses or universities who — though they admit their inefficacy in protecting, promoting and celebrating minorities, do not step down from their own posts to make way — the answer, always, is the fear of relinquishing control. **What is the fear? Is it that you worry we will treat you how you have treated us? There are two neuroses that I consider particularly American: the habit of forgetting, and the inability to imagine what has not been. We are even afraid to imagine our own rehabilitation. We have never been free, in that we have never been given the chance to define freedom for ourselves. When we love ourselves, it's a revolution.** In regard to restitution, I submit to the American government an invoice totaling fees incurred for medical treatment. I believe you will find the bill reasonable and fair, all things considered. Morgan Parker, NY Times 11/19/16





*...reeling from a divorce and custody battle – It was as if a furious mob had come to smash with sticks my porcelain figure of myself.*

*Diane Johnson, Natural Opium: Some travelers' Tales*

### **Mother, Why Did You Dare to Live This Long**

Curiosity connection

Begging like a dog in heat

To die each and every day

This in order

To stay buoyant

Relevant alive

*Poo poo poo-ing* the universe

**Poo Poo Poo**



### **Jews are superstitious. What's up with that?**

*I think that this is a tradition, but I do not know how it came about. Why when we wish to avoid ain horah do we extend the pointer finger and the tall finger when we spit three times and then say poo, poo, poo?*

### **Scaring death away**

### **The evil eye watching**

### **Death insides your soul**

### **Your insides your soul**

Deprecating punishing

Mother you were curious

Kept a rolling analogue

Of who and where

The Jewish mishpocha were

Tipping titillating the universe

Extant wildly mordantly successful

My brother and I never measured up

Anecdotes to keep us reeling

Feeling small needy undesirable

Fastened festooned  
On all of totems tangible evidence  
Of *Amerikanisch Waspish* success  
Rising volcanic vapor steam  
Icon Jewish lore humor  
My not-son the doctor  
My not-daughter owns gallery  
We never measured up  
Persevered undeterred even  
Hearing our crestfallen breath  
Sunday's presaged  
Haranguing cunning  
Manipulative calls  
Whipping up consternation  
Distraught diminished  
Children more than 40  
Break out hives shingles  
Skin searing blister bursting  
Rakish devil-may-care taunts  
To draw out crow caw cawing



Unfurling whip-mad response  
She was itching for a fight  
Needed verbal raging calisthenics  
Long distance squall to keep  
From disintegrating dissembling  
Remaining deliriously crazily whole  
Executed with legal jurisprudence  
Stories of success and failure  
Of death failure derision  
Other's narratives plucked edited  
Plagiarized groomed to taunt  
Diminish harm manipulate  
When children under ten  
We would prepare devise a story  
Thick with horror and heartbreak  
To share get they're first

Phone ringing with her Sunday call  
Mother Sunday at dusk suddenly  
Vacant empty dull silent  
Stayed alive until 94  
Bedside visits cunning startling  
Blood curdling familiar  
Beyond 75 living long enough  
Preparing myself training myself  
Concussing flinging madly boldly  
Into the universe taking it all in  
Cataract occlude clear sight  
Not to see too deeply query  
Into a world of family  
They're future beyond foretelling  
I want to die softly not loud  
*Life Killing me softly with his song*  
*Killing my whole life with his song (GimbelFox)*  
I am fading more quickly  
Than I had imagined I would  
Etched a singular aging woman  
Grasping death the end of life  
Funny mother's Sunday calls  
Unexpurgated still unnerving  
Drill down deep harm  
Cannot be last or final thoughts  
Writer's soul enlivened  
Story of my own to be told  
Remembering astounding array  
Of inordinate colors break  
And end of day sunrises sunsets  
Old thick knobby burlled filled trees  
One hundred years or more  
Never broke my eyes away  
Off a bark or thick  
Or the thick web of roots  
Crackling through earth and concrete



Keepsake images of swelling hues

Astounding array of colors  
 Fanning at end or break of day  
 Weary of regret of sadness  
 Temper curiosity about a future  
 Foundering unknowable  
 Rummaging recollection  
 Trees sky birds and ducks  
 Slain poisoned swan  
 Whose mate just flew off  
 And Pete our rescued lab  
 Backing away eyes flashing fearful  
 Sky darkening lightning and storm  
 Into this I was daily born and reborn  
 Hunkering down body fetal  
 Death's stealth entrance cats feet  
*The fog comes  
 on little cat feet.  
 It sits looking  
 over harbor and city  
 on silent haunches  
 and then moves on. Fog, Carl Sandburg*  
 Die without fuss or bother  
 Parting from life bloodless  
 Departure not grand  
 No epithets to retread repeat  
 Go without raging against the light  
 Defer to inner voice be silent at death  
 Dylan Thomas not the wise angel aflutter  
*Do not go gentle into that good night,  
 Old age should burn and rave at close of day;  
 Rage, rage against the dying of the light.  
 Though wise men at their end know dark is right,  
 Because their words had forked no lightning they  
 Do not go gentle into that good night. Dylan Thomas*  
 Rather dreaming departure drifting toward otherness  
*An aged man is but a paltry thing,  
 A tattered coat upon a stick, unless  
 Soul clap its hands and sing, and louder sing  
 For every tatter in its mortal dress,  
 Nor is there singing school but studying  
 Monuments of its own magnificence;  
 And therefore I have sailed the seas and come  
 To the holy city of Byzantium. W.B. Yeats Sailing to Byzantium*  
 Reading daily *Walt Whitman* love without restraint

Shattering overwhelming heart rendering  
*Let your soul stand cool and composed before a million universes.*  
*Nothing can happen more beautiful than death. Walt Whitman*  
Finally fate rests with poet's words  
My voice streams unfettered verse  
Suppressed erupting in spurts  
Days mine to devise structure  
Find my fingers drawing up  
An irrepressible well of words  
Unraveling spilling out  
No will to suppress  
To know who I am was  
As end of days descends  
Unkempt unrestrained  
Urgent if with panic and pain  
Autodidact on the loose  
Word sculpting word collages  
Word assemblages  
Scrubbed no more  
Soul's streaming  
Life culminates a threnody  
Uncensored composition  
Elegy without regret or apology  
Requiem of and for myself  
Ending then in impenetrable forever silence - NB

***Thou know'st 'tis common; all that lives must die,  
Passing through nature to eternity.*** Shakespeare, Hamlet

***The result is an upswelling of memory so strong that it feels like time travel. It is the umami of life, infusing ordinary days with unexpected flavor.***  
*Memories ...are a gift we give to ourselves – a transfer of spirit from our younger, fresh-eyed versions to the people we are right now. Peter Kujawinski, Journalist*

*This last period of my life is absolutely fascinating to me. I'm like, I'm outside, looking at a story, and I have no idea what's on the next page – none.*  
*I often look at the journey and I don't get it. I really don't. I have lasted longer than I understand why. I often feel that there must have been something that I should've done that I didn't do. But I can't identify what it is that I didn't do. That's the first difficulty. And the second is, what makes you think you're it?*  
*This is not modesty. This is part of a bigger search for me. What was all this about?*  
*Why?*  
Harry Belafonte, NY Times 2/5/17

### **Witnessing your**

Tectonic collapse  
Disappointed saddened  
Reflecting on the years  
Attempting to make  
Your marriage right  
To rehabilitate  
Provide wife with relief  
Following her sporadic  
Rampaging discontent

Boomeranged  
Mangled messed up  
Survivalist hex fix  
Unsettle confuse you  
Attempts further enrage  
Unsparing disparaging  
Viciously mocking you as  
Insufferably pathetic weak  
Professing she alone  
Could make you stronger  
Perform more competently  
Confidently in the real world

Imperious empress of illusion  
Sorceress lashing sadist whip  
Drawing on your desperation  
Married this wife within weeks  
After she was abandoned  
By Canadian Jewish billionaire  
She already three-quarters a Jew  
Sacked ruthlessly from your job  
Front page *Hollywood Reporter*,  
*Producer kicked out leaves with integrity*  
It was that word integrity  
Which drew her to you  
More than a decade later  
She wife and mother  
Of your three children  
Evident bond needs severing  
Integrity to bring her no harm  
To take the children and move beyond  
Pervasive pessimism unremitting fatigue  
Uncoupling from this subversive reality –  
While she is still thought pretty  
If only and alone by you -nb

## 8,000-Year-Old Female Figurine Uncovered in Central Turkey



A seven-inch figurine found in Turkey that dates to 8,000 years ago. *Note: Whoever she was, she had achieved celebrity status. At Catalhoyuk, an ancient site in central Turkey, archaeologists have discovered a rare stone figurine of a woman about 8,000 years old. Only a handful of statuettes of the era have been found in one piece. The figurine was found beneath a platform with a piece of obsidian, which suggests that it may have been placed there as part of some ritual. Such figurines are often thought of as fertility goddesses. The archaeologists, however, suggest the object represents older women who have achieved status. A Unesco World Heritage site, Catalhoyuk dates back nearly 9,000 years. Archaeological research has been conducted there since the 1960s. Jason Quinlan, Stanford University Associated Press*

**ME! ME! ME! Oy Vey Iz Mir! ME! She is me and I is she... NB**

*The Beginning of the End, or the End of the Beginning? NB*

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

***I get upset.*** *I stumble out of the nursing home desolate, and in a minute, I'm on the phone with my friend Herb. If I'm ever in this situation just get me the pills and book the trip to Oregon. I tell him. Don't let me exist like this. (After visiting her mother in nursing home having had a debilitating stroke at 89) Joyce Wadler, "The Dementia Diet" NY Times, 10/09/16*

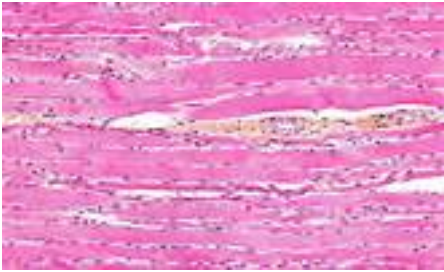
***Getting older is a process of getting lonelier*** and lonelier until, at the very end, you are completely solitary, and then you are officially dead. *The real question is what does it mean to live to full effect? How do you know if you are fulfilling your time, or wasting it? Age spots show up on my body with such frequency I feel like a special effect – the man who is turning sepia before his photograph can.*

*Ian Brown "Sixty" A Diary of My Sixty-First Year:*

## **Straight Jacketed**

Striated inner skin

Elbow to wrist



Pulpy fleshy pink  
Pummeled by time  
Striated inner arm  
Holds eyes in spell  
Etched edged strips  
Of skins articulated  
Streams rivulets  
Flesh spun runs  
Geiger counter  
Tallying strips  
Of skin running  
Counter to wrist  
Hands raised  
In cupped prayer  
More unfolding  
More yielding  
Tempest time twists  
My inner arms -NB



## Refuse Refugee Recluse

Disorder dislocation  
Unsettling displacement  
Expelled evicted fleeing  
Testimony as written in  
*The Sympathizer* by Viet Thanh Nguyen  
*A Tale of Love and Darkness* by Amos Oz  
Irreconcilable unsparing  
Unhinged unmoored  
Colliding colluding realities  
Irreversible irrefutable circumstance  
Excised torn severed  
Home untranslatable vocabulary  
Conjunction of convoluted reality  
Debased displaced silenced  
Remembering crippling excruciating

My mother a refugee  
Of the *Holocaust* once-removed  
Lived existed as if caught in the  
Barbary fence of the camps  
Her nostrils filled with fumes  
Her cough incurable  
Billowing with the black smoke  
Of incinerated relatives  
Those who were real  
Those fictionalized in her mind  
She was a jumble of inner voices  
Moaning praying wailing  
Ultimately silenced  
It was her collective madness  
And she violently fervently  
A penitent beat her head  
Attempting to obliterate  
The images mute the voices  
Jews filing naked barely viable  
Moved in synchronicity inhabiting  
A virtual *Buchenwald* in her mind  
She there pressed skeletal body  
Torn by the rusted jagged virtual fence  
Imprinted with rosy lumps of scar tissue



The *Holocaust* her lifeblood  
Her refusal not wanting  
To exist extant present tense  
She lived as if under the gaze  
Of a Nazi concentration camp guard



Traumatized relentless stalking  
She lived naked a press of women  
Shoved against the exterminator 's  
Crematorium door  
She despised being touched  
Refugee skin shield still raw  
Spastic stumbles fear rising

*Holocaust* proverbial excuse  
Torment voluminous rises  
Volcanic eruptions  
Set fists pounding head  
Images of detestable tormenting  
Replaying over and over in a loop  
The past not to be escaped  
Or transformed or externalized  
For how many generations  
Do refugees remained stalled  
Plunged into an intractable time warp -NB

## Foreclose Conversation

*Put another nickel in*

*In the nickelodeon (Weiss and Baum)*



Let's talk and talk

You and me

Mother and...



Lawrence Ferlinghetti

Fear tongue-tying

Conversation caught

Glottis lock

Lost way to talk

Years ago

Ambition bridled

Motherliness otherness

Severe circumference

Unbroachable unapproachable

Can't say what's on my mind

Walk on eggshells



Circumscribed circumspect

Scripted dreaded  
Open-endedness  
Grandma guest nest  
Pile grandkids on lap  
Read books hum



Sing songs go to park  
Sufi selfie stifle stuff



Levitate break away  
Words shoved back in  
Opinion advice lore  
Stories back when  
You were my little hen



Ken kin yen blend in  
She who changes diapers  
Gets the golden kin ring  
See you daily speechless  
Markers set margins  
Sensors censor  
My heart years  
Cries out for that  
Walk and talk

*Let's take an old-fashioned walk  
I'm just bursting with talk  
What a tale could be told  
If we went for an old-fashioned walk  
Let's take a stroll through the park – (Irving Berlin)*



Vocabulary for openness  
Lost along life's  
hHghways and byways



Oriented toward saying nothing much  
Limned quieted silenced  
Vernacular incipient nascent  
Fledgling Mommy-tongue left off  
While you were so very young - NB



### **Blacks stilled**

Silent about the voyage  
Stolen ripped from native land  
Stuffed into steerage  
Clamped shackled chained  
Cat o-nine-tails etched  
Along their backs  
Cut glass impermeable  
Property counted  
As three-fifths human  
If at all  
This is our collective shame  
Our collective disgrace  
Who are the ignoble savages?  
Steerage aboard slave ships  
Abhorrent detestable loathsome  
What creature made by God  
Thought this up  
Constructed such a ship  
Hauled such a cargo  
Where do we go from here  
When we bring inside  
The sins of our collective forbearers - NB



## **Full cycle life**

Epiphany

Divine revelation

Priestly ordination

Synod of restoration

Conclave of

Past present future

Pluperfect

Resounding redundant

Clang the symbols

Ring the bells

I have come

Full circle

Convening

Of disparate parts

Once partitioned

Compartmentalized

Necessary

Deviations

In path route

Remembering

Choppy discordant

Upheaval torment

Placate truncating

Whip snorting winds

Churning foment

Fury fear warning

Don't go there

Don't go there

Protect self

Mired myriad

Forget

Tidal wash

Blank dreams

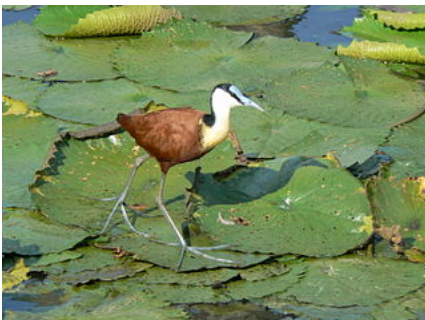
Gossiping

Voices within



Interminable din  
Recognizing  
Reconnaissance  
Death on my track  
Force-feed  
Recollecting  
Searching beneath  
Upheaval  
What is past  
Is mine to divine  
As body calcifies  
Break open mind  
Not to look away  
To hide from  
Not know  
Or own up to  
But I don't want  
To remember that  
Past in tatters  
Whip smacked  
Gob smacked  
Discordant  
Disconsolate  
Past recounted  
An accounting  
Mother locked  
Her jaws against food  
Daughter shoves  
Food around on plate  
Pecking at bits morsels  
Bird at seed feed  
Son mining pain  
Finds a woman  
Clinically diagnosed  
Bulimic anorexic  
Every which way

Sick in the head  
Food taunts her  
Haunts torments  
She shoves clumps of cake  
Down her throat  
Her body  
A study in anatomy  
Bones sculpted wrapped  
Fashionably packaged  
He found a wife  
With family tree  
Drawn vividly tightly  
In all its discordant  
Bounty beauty  
Now stumbling around  
Leg already too wobbly  
To hold me up  
Couldn't be a bird  
Roosted on lone tibia



Beneath a spreading

Chestnut tree

*Under a spreading chestnut-tree  
The village smithy stands;  
The smith, a mighty man is he,  
With large and sinewy hands;  
And the muscles of his brawny arms  
Are strong as iron bands.*

*Thanks, thanks to thee, my worthy friend,*

*For the lesson thou hast taught!*

*Thus at the flaming forge of life*

*Our fortunes must be wrought;*

*Thus on its sounding anvil shaped*

*Each burning deed and thought. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, The Village Blacksmith*



Food now preoccupies

What will I eat today

Where and when

Old lists of things to do

Tattered or left unwritten

What to eat today

What country

What culture

What foods entice

Recall places times

Visit a world for eating

One last and final time

Tastes of Japanese Korean

Italian Bar and brew

Dirty martinis too risky

Secular Jew  
Gefilte fish and kreplach  
Like dreadlocks  
Words jump around  
In my mind  
Freely associate  
Make often no sense  
Feverishly write down  
While a remember  
Slip knot my mind  
In milli seconds minutes  
Feverish scan books  
Newspapers for a quote  
To mirror a moment  
Lifts up recalled alerts  
Imagination founders  
Then come the right words  
**...oceanic emptiness in my gut**  
***My uncle emptied his colostomy bag, and***  
***Then I sent that cheesecake down the toilet.***

*Otessa Moshfegh, Homesick for Another World*

There it all is  
Not a figment  
Of my imagination  
Consolation  
Life attested for  
Real divined  
Found son lives  
With ostomy bag  
Art brut



The composition  
Of his still short  
Ever expansive life  
And then jiminy cricket



Take taxi to Zabars

Buy a Junior's Cheesecake

With cherries and without



Bring home

Slice one of each

Mid-day treat

This my

Cycle of life

Perfect circle

Colostomy bag and cheesecake

Nothing holier

Grander than that

Divine and intertwined

What more to read

Where the unfounded appears

What quote to inspire more

Talisman for remembrances

Colostomy bag found child

Cheesecake for mother

Who craved but wouldn't eat

Lying beneath the weighty spring bows

Of a full and fragrant cherry tree  
Dying before letting disease get to me  
No cravings nothing more  
To forage or desire to eat  
No more enticing treats  
Simple if bitter truth  
Life came full circle  
Bound up a fitting ending  
Encumbrance of ostomy bag  
Delicacy of cheesecake  
Simple formulation for life  
Lived just that matter of fact – NB

*the rhythm the rhythm—and your memory in my head three years after—And read \*Adonais’  
last triumphant stanzas aloud—wept, realizing how we suffer—  
And how Death is that remedy all singers dream of, sing, remember, prophesy as in the Hebrew  
Anthem, or the Buddhist Book of Answers—and my own imagination of a withered leaf—at  
dawn—  
Dreaming back thru life, Your time—and mine accelerating toward Apocalypse,  
the final moment—the flower burning in the Day—and what comes after,  
looking back on the mind itself that saw an American city  
a flash away, and the great dream of Me or China, or you and a phantom Russia, or a crumpled  
bed that never existed—  
like a poem in the dark—escaped back to Oblivion—  
No more to say, and nothing to weep for but the Beings in the Dream, trapped in its  
disappearance,  
sighing, screaming with it, buying and selling pieces of phantom, worshipping each other,  
worshipping the God included in it all—longing or inevitability?—while it lasts, a Vision—  
anything more?  
It leaps about me, as I go out and walk the street, look back over my shoulder, Seventh Avenue,  
the battlements of window office buildings shouldering each other high, under a cloud, tall as  
the sky an instant—and the sky above—an old blue place.  
or down the Avenue to the south, to—as I walk toward the Lower East Side—where you walked  
50 years ago, little girl—from Russia, eating the first poisonous tomatoes of America—  
frightened on the dock— Allen Ginsberg, Kaddish*

*Follow your inner moonlight; don't hide the madness – Allen Ginsberg*

Oh weep for Adonais—he is dead!  
Wake, melancholy Mother, wake and weep!  
Yet wherefore? Quench within their burning bed  
Thy fiery tears, and let thy loud heart keep,  
Like his, a mute and uncomplaining sleep;  
For he is gone, where all things wise and fair  
Descend; Oh, dream not that the amorous deep  
Will yet restore him to the vital air;  
Death feeds on his mute voice, and laughs at our despair.

*Percy Bysshe Shelly, An Elegy on the Death of John Keats, \*Adonais*

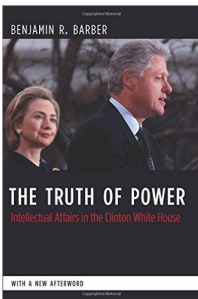
### **Exit Lanes**

We are in the exit lane  
Entered reaching  
The ripe old age of 75  
Time to die  
To think about dying  
Prolonging life  
Not a pretty picture  
At 101 slumped chin on chest  
Drool trickling from slack lips  
Breasts tumble onto extended belly  
Think commodification *pork belly's'*  
Departure date not yet set  
But you now know  
How if not when you  
Will fold into yourself  
Will move beyond  
Retribution regret remorse  
Beyond our reach  
Harm done to us by you  
No longer mainstay relevant  
But wait it reverberates  
Free of *fire next time*





Hatred harm rage  
Does not go the way  
If push pause after certain  
Death's final breathe  
Resurrected self  
Reincarnate philosopher  
Writes book  
Moves beyond  
Bombastic blunders  
Rebounding redounding  
*Another Comeback Kid*  
Kinship with Bill Clinton



Same hungers  
Drove them  
Visibility at all costs  
Cultivated regard  
Fiefdom of the extraordinary  
Narcissistic pomposity

Imagination embattling  
Streaking strafing horror  
Dooming disease destiny  
The stench of *mendacity*  
Permeates sorrow

"I've got the guts to die. What I want to know is, have you got the guts to live?"  
"In all these years, you never believed I loved you. And I did. I did so much. I did love you. I even loved your hate and your hardness."  
"Mendacity is a system that we live in," declares Brick. "Liquor is one way out an' death's the other." Tennessee Williams, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*

Flame of hatred flickers dims  
Embattled witness residue  
Of the incomplete  
To remain deft dangling  
You are the father  
Of my two body born children  
You were my first husband  
The marriage I understand  
If harrowing at times  
Didn't know how  
To manage embrace you  
As you now must  
Now manage embrace your exit  
Body rife stricken with  
Metastasized stage 4 cancer  
Pancreas and liver  
Death an overhang shadowing  
The death clock tick-tock  
Cathedral bells and carillon  
Plump putti angels bell ringers  
Calling out to you



No way to live beyond this  
You who were known  
To go for the juggler  
In competition

Have a no contest opponent  
Abhorrent horrific  
Fixed end outcome  
Flexed muscles  
Lashed out with tongue  
Ensured standing center stage  
No compromises ever made  
And now this dreaded diagnosis  
Pancreas and liver fester diseased  
Death has entered you your life  
It has entered mine as well  
More amorphous anomaly  
Envy and sorrow compete  
For my emotion my connection  
To you no longer wishing  
You were a better husband  
Or I a better wife  
Our marriage ending messily  
Giving lifelong harm to children  
Each about 50 struggling  
To extricate themselves  
For bad marriages  
Choices made overhang  
Victims off insufferable divorce  
Now your liver and pancreas  
Swollen with bile disease  
Death's almanac predictor  
What will come upon you  
In months days not years  
How much treatment  
What quality of life  
For a month or two more  
The end resolute  
I struggle grapple with  
Exiting by my own hand  
Select a way a date  
While my hand  
Can open a bottle of pills  
Coordinate fixing them  
Back of tongue  
So as not to spit out  
Now to reckon with  
What I feel about you  
About our marriage  
About our adult children  
Roles they will play

At your bedside  
Reparations no longer possible  
Are apologies forth coming  
The world was your oyster  
Now the irritant overtaking  
My death will happen  
When death fatigue engulf  
I was the girl who feared you  
But dressed pretty  
Felt a certain confidence  
Exuberant joy in motherhood  
You are the *State of Israel*  
You commented  
You couldn't tolerate my  
Becoming stronger and independent  
Indeed I became the State of Israel  
Strayed strafed mentally under siege  
Grapple how I will feel widowed  
Wife at 38 when the clocked stopped  
Living in wilderness  
How to name my sadness sorrow  
You live now *Tropic of Cancer*

*I have no money, no resources, and no hope. I am the happiest man alive  
At the bottom of every frozen heart there is a drop or two of love—just enough to feed  
the birds.” “I need to be alone. I need to ponder my shame and my despair in seclusion;  
I need the sunshine and the paving stones of the streets without companions, without  
conversation, face to face with myself, with only the music of my heart for company.”*  
*Henry Miller, Tropic of Cancer*



Entropy endings abound  
And then no more fury no sound - NB

**How swift, how far**

the sea  
carries a body from shore

How swift, how far

the sea  
carries a body from shore.

Empires fail, species are lost,  
spotted frogs

and tufted puffins forsaken.

After eons of fauna and flora, hominids have stood  
for mere years

baffled brains atop battered shoulders.

In a murky blanket of heavens  
an icy planet

made of diamond spins.

Our sun winks like the star

it was

billions of years ago, without ambition.

We bury bodies in shallow dirt, heedless of lacking space

or how long our makeshift planet will host us. Risa Denenberg, *Ice Would Suffice*

*...Nothing delights him more than the subway, which he cannot take without marveling at the lottery logic that brings together a random sampling of humanity for one minute or two, testing us for kindness and compatibility.*

*Bill Hayes, *Oliver Sacks and Me**

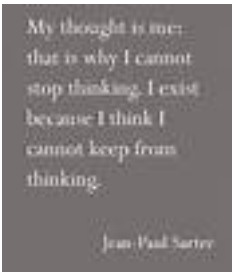


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*What can I do for you? Hayes asks. **Exist.** Bill Hayes, lover of Oliver Sacks at end of life, *Insomniac City* New York "*Oliver (Sacks) and Me.*"*



I exist  
 It is soft  
 So slow  
 And light  
 It seems as though it suspends in the air  
 It moves. Sartre



My thought is me: that is why I cannot stop thinking. I exist because I cannot keep from thinking.  
 Sartre



Jean Paul Sartre



### **Widow No More**

The sorrow  
Whip-startle  
Whip-chortle  
Moved on  
Murky memory  
Clouded up  
Reminded again  
That you were  
Frightening to me  
Scared me to  
Alarming palpitations  
Once again  
*Mad as hell and I'm not  
Going to take this anymore!*



*Network, movie Paddy Chayefsky*

Brief moment of grief  
You dying of dread disease  
Death charted on  
Medical actuarial timetable  
Grief struck  
Stunned saddened  
Had widow's  
Aura of sorrow  
As through  
The thick scum  
Of cataracts

I remembered you  
I saw you  
Hoisted up your fist  
Face level eyes smarting  
Sparkling with fear tears  
Gun-slinging Ph.D.  
From Harvard  
Mother worshipped  
Your academic degree  
That you married  
Her Nibsie  
Held in place hostage  
Gun kept me whip-snapped  
Inactive frozen in place  
Body riddled with disease  
As mine was with bullet holes  
Felt the pellets pierce implode  
Lived vaporous wounded  
Stuck in place  
But then I awoke  
I am your ex-wife  
Fled marital abode  
Widow no more  
Back to being  
Furious vengeful  
Just plain old sad  
No time left to forgive  
Make amends reconcile  
Your death portends  
Violent urgent death  
Chemicals strafe  
Body parts organs  
Scattering imploding  
Disease splatters  
Metastasizing  
Right before our eyes  
You are dying  
Mean man craven  
Dastardly vile  
Striding center stage  
Clutching family by scruff  
Opine for a marriage  
That never was  
Watches once remove  
Our common children  
Report your decline

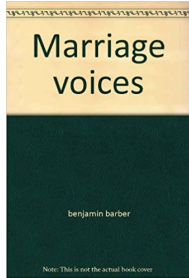


Complicities  
Wishing you dead  
Wanting you  
To have been a better father  
Motherhood calls  
Behooves me to comfort  
Without guile  
It is their time  
To wad into death  
Fraught  
And its aftermath  
Tasting the bitter  
With the sweet  
This was my husband  
The father of my two  
Body born son and daughter  
Called upon to deliver  
Once again whole  
Intact individuals reborn  
No more harm to be done  
No more expectation  
Of better to come -NB

***In a sense, the person we marry is a stranger about whom we have a magnificent hunch. Quoted and spoken in 1992 – chronicled in Weddings from the Heart by Daphne Rose Kingma***

**Present Time**  
Shell of opioid man  
Never to come back  
From the almost dead - NB

**Virginia Woolf He's Not!**  
*Marriage Voices*



*Note: Remaindered Missing Priceless Jong Quote*

Displayed in window

Barnes Noble 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue

Author estranged husband

Benjamin Barber

In the past few years

*I have read many novels about contemporary marriage,  
But this one is surely the most extraordinary. Erica Jong*

Author *Fear of Flying*

And I felt just like dying

Read threw up read threw up

Phone off hook weekend long

Finished closed book

Deadened nerve endings

Sad beyond relief

Pulpy fiction poorly written

Virginia Woolf he's not

If reviewed well

Determined to take

Leave of absence

And go on talk shows

Not averse to content

Liberal secular Jew

Not abide censorship

Seek just desert

Excoriate author

Literary canon

Violated

My life our life

Worth more

Than cheap pulp

Thrust across page

Written word betrayed

No longer to wonder

If I had not understood

What a complex  
If imperfect marriage it was  
Undignified drivel *treif* -(Yiddish word for any form of non-kosher food.)  
Jewish forewarning not to consume  
Erika Jong prostituted herself  
Only question left to ask  
Should I too be afraid of flying? NB

**Note:** Inner wedding band read  
From now until forever...NB

**Guns: These objects are so seductive it's almost impossible to control ourselves around them. Once you have access to this really powerful machine that gives you the illusion of power, it becomes really difficult to imagine yourself separated from it. You have to acknowledge that clearly there is some emotional connection going on, some deep fears and deep longings and deep love.**

*Martin Zimmerman, playwright, On the Exhale*

### **Can't take loaded gun**

Wrapped in elegant antique muslin  
Cradled in precisely cut pages of rare book  
The owner my husband had no license  
The gun no safety-catch



Kept bedside in drawer tauntingly ajar  
Wife's feet stuck in virtual blocks of cement  
Gun held me in place hostage wife  
Two small children ran freely about  
Liberal parents no guideposts or off limits  
The gun yet discovered remained in place  
Once I lifted the cover of the book  
There it was wrapped in fragile cotton  
Its scholarly holster nesting resting waiting  
Facing a therapist who took me on distraught wife  
Even though she knew about the gun  
Asked gingerly why I didn't remove it from the house

Take it away dispose of it  
*I can't I said without equivocation adamantly*  
Strange for me always wavering equivocal



At rock bottom terrified fearful wife  
*She always seems to so happy they said*  
It is too dangerous to have the gun  
With the children freely running about  
I can't I just can't started weeping  
*I am afraid it will castrate him*

*"He would have been half-hanged,  
taken down alive, castrated,  
his genitals stuffed in his mouth,  
his stomach slit open,  
and his intestines taken out and burnt,  
and his carcass chopped into four quarters."*

*John Broadbent: John Milton Introductions*

The absurdity lunacy culpability  
Absent obeisant somnambulant  
Woman mired in Freudian double-speak  
Jewish Upper West Sider torch singer blues  
*I didn't know the gun was loaded (Ford, Leighton)*  
For the sake of children's safety awaken  
Marriage vows knotted gnarled choking vines



Enamored moored stuck  
Anchored immobile  
Fear of his psychic mutilation greater  
Than having my head blown off  
The children gleefully snapping trigger

*I'm afraid it will castrate him*  
She didn't laugh her trained face  
Registered no expression  
The gun remained safe in dresser drawer  
Until during preliminary divorce hearing  
A court appointed psychiatrist  
Who he was obliged to see  
Called me on a Sunday saying  
*Get the children out of the house*  
*You are going to take his gun away*  
*He may go crazy have a friend present*  
*Alert his mother I will wait to hear*  
You may have to take him to emergency room  
Extreme reaction to removal of gun  
Attested to by psychiatrist further  
*He is capable of any kind of bizarre behavior*  
Without resisting sent the children off  
Called his oldest friend  
Who was not surprised  
By task at hand  
As he rested on couch in study  
His friend standing just above him  
I said, *I am taking your gun*  
He wailed ranted raged twisted up  
Body held in place by friend  
He screamed threatened  
Far beyond any imagined fear  
He was crazier wilder more upset  
Expressing greater upheaval torment  
The psychiatrist's anticipation warranted  
I took the gun in a brown bag  
To a neighbors without explanation  
Just not to touch would fetch in morning  
The furor rage lasted hours on end  
Until he fell asleep the friend stayed  
Guarding the agonized body at rest  
Kids came home knew marriage was troubled  
Psychiatrist informed deed was done  
Had stayed vigil at other end of phone  
If anything my fear not great enough  
Was eager to shed this wife he could  
No longer keep hostage under lock and key  
I did not castrate him  
But he had nearly emptied depleted me  
Keeping a gun safe kept a fraught marriage in place – NB



The Death of Marat by Jacques-Louis David  
The Marquis de Sade, the man after whom sadism is named.

### **Peccadillo Dildo**

Mr. Peepers  
Prowling the sensational  
Upper West Side windows  
For a peek as other's embrace  
Is on his way to dying  
Now raspy voice  
Pea green skin pallor  
In the end in the end  
What more to say  
My heart the harbor  
Of so much pain and rage  
At the hand of this man  
Consummate philanderer  
Husband and father  
Of my two body born children  
He can barely stand  
Shuffle walks  
He is his death  
He wears with grace  
Not pity in his living room  
With expansive river views  
Now with current wife  
More than a decade younger  
I am there with our kids  
Now 51 and 48  
We are way beyond forgive  
The ground levels out  
Competitive without restraint  
Once again you stole  
My fire my ire  
You the mostly likely  
First to expire -NB

*Thanks Lester for sharing your reflections -- as always a deeply thoughtful combination of the personal and the philosophical.*

*I'm dealing with a tough cancer challenge but lots of loving support from Leah and family. I am also using the battle against Trump (did you see my NATION cover essay?) to draw energy for the cancer fight.*

*Love, Ben*

### **When We are Called Upon**

Planted firmly in the present  
Betsy sat with her sons  
As Herb died  
Long married to another man  
We are called o in different ways  
But like a homing pigeon



Keeps coming back  
Motherhood calls  
No matter what  
The personal cost – NB





Kathe Kollwitz

## **Oh yes I was the great pretender**

*Oh yes, I'm the great pretender  
Pretending I'm doing w  
My need is such I pretend too much  
I'm lonely but no one can tell*

*Oh yes I'm the great pretender  
Adrift in a world of my own  
I play the game but to my real shame  
You've left me to dream all alone - Buck Ram*

*hi anne-marie,*

*feel i am suffering from a political malaise - it all is sickening - though heartened by  
resistance everywhere but sad my leg keeps me from marching -  
have to cancel out for friday - hanging out with owen who has no school  
and no nanny for that day -  
**why don't we think of a nice chilled glass of white wine when  
the daffodils are again in bloom more hopeful time** -Naomi feb 5, 2017*

*Hi Naomi,  
I understand perfectly. Everyday is another horror.  
It is wonderful to see so much civil disobedience, but  
we are only two weeks into this presidency, and so much  
international and national damage has been done.  
**Let me know when you think the daffodils are out, so  
we can see each other.** We are, as always, going to our  
timeshare in Antigua from March 11-25th.  
Love, Anne-Marie feb 6, 2017*



Chasing after  
Building up resume  
Popeye eating spinach



Poseur talks art poetry  
Following a groupie  
Glancing channeling  
His books gifts  
Artful commentary  
Let's meet for one of our lunches  
His wife and I at Le Monde  
Two or three hours  
She giving peeks over privet hedge



Breaking loyalty code  
If mother to mother  
Our dangling conversations

It's a still life water color,  
Of a now late afternoon,  
As the sun shines through the curtained lace  
And shadows wash the room.  
And we sit and drink our coffee  
Couched in our indifference,  
Like shells upon the shore  
You can hear the ocean roar  
In The Dangling Conversation  
And the superficial sighs,  
The borders of our lives. Paul Simon

*Hi Naomi,  
I understand perfectly. Everyday is an other horror.  
It is wonderful to see so much civil disobedience, but  
we are only two weeks into this presidency, and so much  
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Love, Anne-Marie 1/6/17*

*hi anne-marie,  
feel i am suffering from a political malaise - it all is sickening - though heartened by  
resistance everywhere but sad my leg keeps me from marching -  
have to cancel out for friday - hanging out with owen who has no school  
and no nanny for that day - why don't we think of a nice chilled glass of white wine when  
the daffodils are again in bloom more hopeful time -  
hope you and serge and the rest are fine - sorry, love, Naomi 1/5/17*

I too ordinary to run with that pack  
Of twentieth century intellectuals  
French intellectual poet-Jews  
Wife's connection symbiotic  
Her husband owns her  
I was owned once  
Know the symptoms  
Her daughter troubled  
Never should disclose  
Except when needing help  
Or with public schools  
I let dignity laps  
Pursuing that friendship  
Wanting to be included  
On the inside  
I was always Just tolerated  
Lived at the outer edges  
Of this dynastic intellectual aristocracy  
Rebelle no more lunch  
Can't get to enough galleries  
To fill up a full course meal  
When daffodils again bloom  
We can share a chilled white wine  
Relieved to pull away  
A bit embarrassed  
By my neediness  
Or aspiration to be included  
Tried to make myself necessary  
And they obliged asking

Closing that chapter of that book  
Good deeds chasing after  
And yet they never gave back  
Mocking my second marriage  
Which I should have avoided  
As I walked down the Cathedral steps  
Saw his sneer mirrored my own deceit - NB

***I go downstairs and outside and you still get mail***

*A week after you died a package with your name on it came  
And inside was a gift for our daughter you had ordered in secret  
And collapsed there on the front steps I wailed  
A backpack for when she goes to school a couple years from now  
You were thinking ahead to a future you must have known deep down would not include you  
Though you clawed at the cliff you were sliding down  
I realized that these photographs we have of you  
Are slowly replacing the subtle familiar  
Memory of what it's like to know you're in the other room  
To hear you singing on the stairs  
A movement, a pine cone, your squeaking chair* He also talks about seeing Ms. Castrée on  
"Seaweed," in which he details spilling her ashes outdoors, on a chair facing west. "But the  
truth is I don't think of that dust as you," he sings, then pauses, and for a moment, he sounds  
indisputably, reassuringly steady when he announces,

*"You are the sunset." "Real Death" - "death is real" Phil Elverum, Mount Eerie, "A Crow Looked  
at Me" Death of wife, 35, Genevieve Castree*

**I am wearing my grief**

I've been practicing my grief  
Mother loses child  
Twenty-eight soon twenty-nine  
Practicing as I did the cello  
Never ever did get better - NB

**Sanctuary**

Hollowed out spot  
To curl up in  
Nose to belly  
Feet tucked under  
Knees touching neck  
I am ready for whatever  
The whatever news  
The phone rings  
I spring  
My heart pounds  
This time  
Will I rebound? NB

*The runaway slave came to my house and stopped outside,  
I heard his motions crackling the twigs of the woodpile,  
Through the swung half-door of the kitchen I saw him limpsey and weak,  
And went to where he sat on a log, and led him in and assured him,  
Walt Whitman, Song of Myself (10)*



### **How Humiliating How Embarrassing**

To die out in public that way  
In that callow sleepless hollow  
Artificially pumped air arena  
Staging platform for all kinds  
Of medical miracles  
Dormant awakened  
Disbelievers pleading  
Bargaining with god and spirits  
For just that little more time  
Cursory chaplain visits  
Smooth talking beneficence  
Disingenuous perfunctory  
Ritual waving of hand



Hard to imagine you invincible man  
Lying there plugged up monitored  
Officious nurses aids clock in  
Take blood pressure temperature  
Come in shifts signing in on chalkboard  
For forty-eight hours they are all yours  
Doctors in teams like wolf packs



Escorting out the nighttime sky  
Lifting the daylight to begin  
Their conversations above you  
As if you were a slab  
On a lab table being autopsied  
They come in specialty teams hierarchical  
Student to resident to top dog chief honcho  
Stomach heart lungs genitalia  
Compartmentalized each body part  
Belonging to different  
Dynastic doctor specialty  
And then as you are resting  
A beeper goes off warning fluid blocked  
Travelling the tubes to your veins  
Fluids to keep your body hydrated  
Drugs to kill off disease often  
Impeding harming neighboring organs  
Luca in recent hospital stay with infection  
Received antibiotic that killed infection  
But impaired harmed kidneys  
*This other medication will return kidneys to function*  
Dizzying proclamations by doctors unnerve  
Crosscurrents sparking fear playing on tolerance



*You will have to stay another day*  
There is a rhythm to this  
Resist or submit you are an object  
A series of diagnostic renderings  
Requiring more scans to verify or check

If you had no money you would die at home  
Of in an emergency room ravaged  
Savaged encumbered by disease  
No miracle medicines  
For people on the margins  
Private room assigned by color code  
Platinum silver gold on insurance card  
Bronze relegates to doubling up  
Intruded upon by other's family members  
Dread in their eyes hand holding soothing reassuring  
Leaving rooms for corridors to shed tears  
No place in the hospital for sky rattling  
God challenging scream  
Patients permitted to fuss rant push back  
name it post-traumatic or difficult patient syndrome  
Asking you for your own sake dignity  
Don't die in public all plugged up  
Lifelong desperate search for acclaim  
Recognition notice fame not shaming self  
Publicly dying while begging for more time  
One more day signing off for more treatment  
A little fuse of hope cleaving at illusory relief  
Try another drug another cure  
Another write-up in a medical journal  
Or for a conference  
Medicine is a competitive business  
You are at their mercy if you are pleading  
Against all odds to be the one to beat this disease  
Competing you were known going for the jugular  
Perhaps once again flexing will keep your mind intact  
Perhaps embattled battling back will keep you sane  
Dear ex husband just go home with your wife  
Lie in your own bed looking out at the Hudson River  
A view I craved that could have been mine  
Had I stayed wanting always sunrises and sunsets  
You have sunsets and spanning hues of sunrise  
Have the doctors blast the clot from your lungs  
Although that provides perfect instantaneous death  
Go home take a full review of your life  
The people who have loved you  
The people who have feared you  
Who have felt abandoned unloved by you  
You dear autocrat exerted control over us  
As if we were an indentured family  
Travelling incessantly kept you buoyant  
Gave us freedom to eat with hands and dance

Go home don't plead for more treatment  
Confront the restive rising fear of dying  
Have the final white light sweep you  
Mortification of flesh and wound  
Minstrel variety dance of destiny  
Plan memorial service who is to speak  
Who is to come venue what music to play  
Triumphant *Fanfare for the Common Man* (Aaron Copeland)  
*SUPERMAN AND COMMON MEN:*  
*FREEDOM, ANARCHY AND THE REVOLUTION:*  
Title of first book written in 1971  
With your mentor *Carl Frederich*  
Write obituary for the Sunday yes Times  
Remember this is a *going home*  
Back to time of innocence promise  
Write a dramatic staged reading homegoing ceremony  
Framing final act in dialogue and discourse  
Die professorial dear political philosopher as Socrates did



*The Death of Socrates*, by Jacques-Louis David(1787)

We sentence you to death by poison hemlock  
You were guilty of abrogating role in family  
Of hostile captive aggressive acts  
We forgive you now sip  
The composite hemlock shake  
Take historical glance at ceremonies for the dead  
Imagine that ceremony for your going home



Funeral of Pope John Paul II(Roman Catholic)



Cremations at Manikarnika Ghat(Hindu)





Opening of the mouth ceremony(Ancient Egypt)



Kotsuage bone picking ceremony (Japanese Buddhist)



Sarcophagus prepared for luminary 's death  
First give us a chance to rage hate you  
Without remorse guilt necessary  
For our love to surface  
Don't break us with your death  
No apologizing no begging for forgiveness  
Look out at the River at dusk  
Slow breathing final exiting  
No longer able to swallow spit builds

Overflowing slackening lips  
Mercifully human imploding death rattle  
Then silence then quiet then sadness



Off to *Byzantium* sail your sunfish  
On a quiet tide staying in character  
With that your earth born final goodbye nb

**Epilogue:** Visit with our adult kids  
You just home from hospital  
Barely able to stand straight  
Or walk unaided  
Your voice a thread of fog  
Your pallor gray to green  
Liver brands and bleeds  
Stage four-pancreatic cancer  
Metastasized to liver  
Dooms day warrant  
Death issues warrant  
For your arrest – nb



## **The Truth Is...**

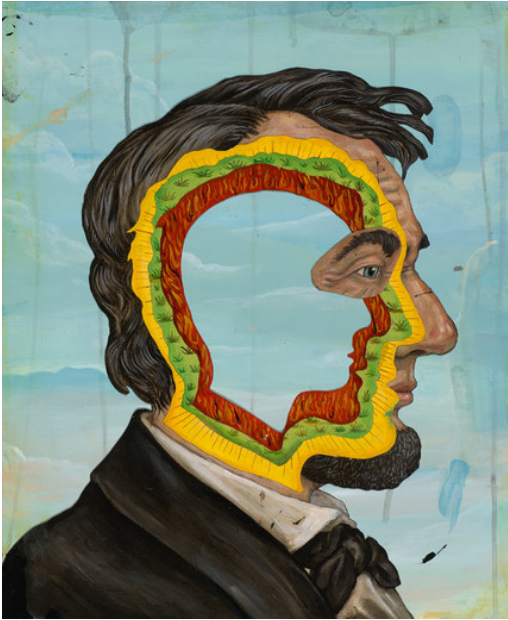
*Charlie is my darling*  
My darling, my darling  
Oh! Charlie is my darling  
The young Chevalier –(Scottish folksong)  
*Summertime*  
*Summertime and the livin' is easy*  
*Fish are jumpin' and the cotton is fine*  
*Oh your Daddy's rich and your ma is good lookin'*  
*So hush little baby, don't you cry*  
*One of these mornings*  
*You're goin' to rise up singing*  
*Then you'll spread your wings*  
*And you'll take the sky*  
*But till that morning*  
*There's a nothin' can harm you*  
*With daddy and mammy standin' by* George Gershwin  
Clear as a bell  
Clear as yesterday  
Standing at kitchen sink  
Can hear my mother  
Singing those songs  
The truth is  
I was in love  
Enamored  
Head over heels  
Infatuated  
Courted her  
Stared at her  
Couldn't take  
My eyes off of her  
The truth is  
Father he was  
A tight ass  
Austere severe  
Rod up ass right  
Crimp up crumble  
Recoil topple fall over  
When she unleashed  
A constant drum  
Drumming drubbing  
Of bedeviling assaults  
The truth is  
I was awe-struck  
Stuck glued  
Attuned enveloped by

The truth is  
I despised her  
I hated her  
Wanted to murder her  
Wished her dead  
Stuck hard  
My third finger  
Up in the air  
A warrior fist  
Behind her back  
Fuck you fuck you  
The truth is  
I believed  
The wizardry  
Of my birth cry  
Set her off  
Insane crazy  
The truth is  
A hodgepodge  
Compendium  
Dialectic  
Confused mired  
The truth is  
I admired her  
Worshipped her  
Adored her  
Despised her  
The truth is  
Getting down  
To bear bones  
Death breathing  
Down my neck  
The truth is  
I don't know  
Hobbled cobbled  
Tethered to  
A gaggle of whip  
Whip snapping  
Struggling straggling  
Strangling emotions  
And she lived too long'  
For me to detach  
Make sense understand  
Know down to it hurts  
What the truth is and  
That is what the truth is...NB

**Don't want Jeremy**

To be broken  
Into sadness  
So thick  
So penetrating  
Unstoppable  
Eating him  
Up alive –  
Veering close  
Tormented  
Hopefulness lost  
No other place but  
Desperation despair  
Don't quit on us –  
Is this how deep  
The need goes  
To be punished  
Whipped into  
Solipsistic  
Triumph  
Dying off  
Too sad  
To move on  
Or embarrassed  
Or horrified  
To pick up the pieces  
Go beyond - NB

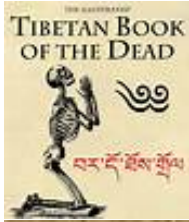
*Sir, if you are as powerful as I feel that you are, and as inclined toward us as you seem to be, endeavor to do something for us, so that we might do something for ourselves. We are ready, sir, are angry, are capable, our hopes are coiled up so tight as to be deadly, or holy: Turn us loose, sir, let us at it, let us show what we can do.  
...graveyard slave puts it inspired by the great man in his mourning – Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln in the Bardo, George Saunders – quote from review by Colson Whitehead, review NY Times 2/12/17*



Credit Jason Holley

*Bardo is designed to incorporate a lifetime of spiritual practice into the moment of transition we call “death”. It helps the dying person chart a path through the dissolution of consciousness as it is experienced after the physical death. The Bardo reminds the dying person (or the meditator) to constantly recognize that all phenomena are projections of one’s own mind. In this way it attempts to liberate the listener from clinging to old desire and beliefs of separation, which cause one the Dream.*





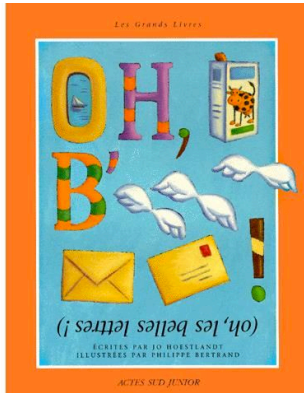
"With mind  
abstracted, never  
thinking, Death is  
coming. To slay  
away on the  
pointless business of  
mundane life. And  
then to come back  
empty, it is a tragic  
error."

*As you examine the more esoteric side of the **Tibetan Book of the Dead**, which is really understood only by a few initiates, we come to see that what the Tibetan Book of the Dead is a guide for the living, not the dying.*

*.... young ones are not meant to tarry unburdened by a lifetime's accumulation of failures and regret, they usually pass over quickly. Makin his way to his son't crypt in the darkness, the president is an exceedingly tall and unkempt fellow who might have been...a sculpture on the theme of loss. (Willie Lincoln died at age 11)*



*"Once you learn to read, you will be forever free." Frederick Douglass*



## **Belles-Lettres**

"*Belles-lettres*, a literary mode that originated in 17th-century France, signified writing in the style and service of cultivated society. The English mostly kept the French term but on occasion translated it as 'polite letters.' Belle-Lettres denotes a linguistic self-consciousness testifying to the superior education of both writer and reader, who come together more through literature than through life. Or rather, they meet in a world reconstructed by literature, for belles-lettres makes life literary, adding an aesthetic dimension to morality."

Myra Jehlen and Michel Warner, *The English Literatures of America, 1500-1800*

....template for a letter that can help people complete seven life review tasks: acknowledging important people in our lives; remembering treasured moments; apologizing to those we may have hurt; forgiving those who have hurt us; and saying "thank you," "I love you," and "goodbye."

Writing a 'Last Letter', "I wish I had loved you more."

Stanford Letter Project, by VJ Periyakoil, M.D. NY Times

***Grandmothers are a special part of all that's cherished in the heart. Needlepoint Inscription on a pillow near a window in Catherine Opie's home.***

**Dear Sophie Blue, (Blue Blue), Sophie Strong,**

After you are finished being angry with me, I'm asking you to remember all the moments we shared. They cannot be erased or forgotten they exist indelibly within you, just as I take with me the sweetest of life memories from our times together. After all blue blue, we are the *bookend war resistor sisters of the world*. You once asked me where people or where my father went after he died. I really don't know I answered. I just know that he lives in my heart and mind and soul. He is there in every word I speak and in every action I take. We chose how we want to have those people who were part of are lives live on within us. I trust I will be remembered just perfectly by you. Letters everyday when you were at sleep away camp. At stage door cheering like a mad teenage groupie as you emerged from a concert as a chorister and at Carnegie Hall to boot. Watching you enter a room that suddenly fills with warmth humor beauty and truth.



***As a breeze blows through my tangled hair***

*And sun beats down on my head  
My dad squeezes my little hand  
I look up and he smiles at me*

*Oh to have those days again  
The days of skipping through the sunset  
Dancing in the rain  
Living life on a cloud*

*The flowers in vibrant colors  
The bees buzzing by  
The scent of dewy grass  
Noises, smells, sounds, as nature surrounds*

*I eat an ice cream cone  
The taste brings me back to that day  
Senses evoking lovely memories  
Put smiles on my face and give me that feeling*

*I can do what I want to do be who I want to be  
Little things evoke the way I felt that day  
Nature brings back memories and feelings  
Nature is my pathway to true joy - Sophie Hart Jan 2017*

*-- Ten Minute Poem #1*

*Life is distressing  
I sit swaying back in forth  
All I can feel is the deep pit  
The pit that keeps me up at night  
The pit that controls the way I live  
The sinking pit of anxiety in my stomach*

*Contempt  
Why would they let this happen  
I cannot just relax and have fun  
I cannot just have peace of mind  
I cannot just live  
Without the pit of despair and fear stealing my mind*

*I want to be care free  
I wish I could just close my eyes  
If only I was able to just do something  
Without the pit ruling my life*

*They let this happen  
I vie to live without captivating fear  
They say it is what makes me me  
But it did not have to be – Sophie Hart Jan 2017*

Christmas Note to me read out loud before her parents and brother and sister –  
Omi – lifelong war resistor bookend sister

*Omi, I love you so so so much. You are the best grandma I could ever wish for. I am blessed to have you in my life and I would not be where I am today without you in my life and I would not be where I am today without you in my life. I am glad you are finally living out your dream of not having a husband and I have a surprise for you! Your dream is better than you could of ever imagined because of me and your six amazing grandchildren, and three beautiful children. Hopefully my present of Hamilton will come before I graduate high school. Thank you for being your saintly self and I honestly think you are the greatest human being to ever be on the earth )Better than Obama). You are the best thing and the most amazing grandmother to me thank you for always supporting me and being by my side through it all. I love you endlessly. Your biggest supporter/blue blue/sophie strong/war resistor bookend sister I love you more than every penny that I have ever and will ever be spent on a Hamilton ticket! LOVE YOU – Merry Christmas, Sophie Blue*

In her Catholic High School Marymount the students were asked to name a person they knew for sainthood or as a saint and she told me she named me!

Date: 6/14 Note from Sophie after spending a Saturday with me visiting work sites at Lehman College –

*Omi's work – Once upon a time a girl named Sophie went to Omi's work. She met difrint studends and they called her cute. (She hated that) Then they went to lunch with Eddy and got fruit punch juice fruit a bag of chips skittles and starburst. ( She still has some left) Then they went to Omi's office and went on the computer then they went to wave hill and it was raining. On the way home they got pickles on a tick. They ate them they danced and sang all the way home! The end. By Sophie Hart*

(Note: Middle school students Saturdays at Lehman spent the day studying physics and math and social students as part of college preparation program. Had lunch in the students' cafeteria. At Wave Hill middle school students were working with the City environmental protection agency collecting salamanders, which provided information about climate change and soil erosion. They learned to scientifically record their findings.)

## Sophie Blue Sonnet for Me

School assignment shared via email  
And then read full-throated  
Voice trembling with emotion  
I am Sophie's perfect person  
Better than either parent  
My father our Jesus Christ  
Stunted us dwarfed  
By the expansive irrefutable  
Fiefdom fertile loam of perfection

*here is a poem I wrote about you:*

*The memories of her laughter ring through  
The sounds of her singing while rocking me  
Back and forth — back and forth, beautifully  
“Blue blue, blue blue give me an answer true”  
“I’m half crazy all for the love of you”  
The scent of her home and warm hugs surround me  
Joy brought by her presence, brings utter glee  
She encompasses the best parts of me - and my life too  
Unconditional love, ability to laugh at life, encouraging words  
We thank the moon and flowers, and sit talk laugh love  
She lives at the full scope life should be lived, never blurred  
She lives by giving love and sharing life, never failing to rise above  
An exemplary example of the human being I should be - want to be - strive to be –  
sophie blue hart*

And in response:

*sophie strong blue blue, must have been dreaming of being your omi my entire life -  
way before i was even 15 - and there you were there you are  
full blown gorgeous beauty in every inch of your body - we (family) and the world up  
close and far away is blessed – thanks blue blue for all you have given me –  
bookend war resistor sister, omi*



Standing ovations to the moon  
Saying thank you to flowers  
For their essence their beauty  
Standing looking at Frederick Douglass Statue  
Calling out thank you Frederick Douglass  
For making the world a better place  
This with Owen who told me recently  
No more Frederick Douglass  
None of this contrived  
This an Omi (grandma) to her grandkids  
Thanking them for sharing this world with me



It seems that they're grandfather  
My ex-husband may die before I do

*The truth is dark under your eyelids.  
What are you going to do about it?  
The birds are silent; there's no one to ask.  
All day long you'll squint at the gray sky.  
When the wind blows you'll shiver like straw.*

*A meek little lamb you grew your wool  
Till they came after you with huge shears.  
Flies hovered over open mouth,  
Then they, too, flew off like the leaves,  
The bare branches reached after them in vain.*

*Winter coming. Like the last heroic soldier  
Of a defeated army, you'll stay at your post,  
Head bared to the first snow flake.  
Till a neighbor comes to yell at you,  
You're crazier than the weather, Charlie. Charles Simic poet*

It seems that they're grandfather  
My ex-husband may die first before I do  
Selfish incorrigible in his life with me

He will in this exit lane we both share  
Find grace selflessness as he departs  
We share six grandkids  
We share two adult children  
Now parents of three each  
Finding angel wings at life's end  
He is becoming the man  
I could have loved never wanting to leave  
The wife with her thin-skinned knobby hand  
To hold his as he draws a last breath –  
Well isn't this how things come into being

*John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

*John 1:2 He was in the beginning with God.*

*John 1:3 All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.*

**High time for that old time religion –NB**

***Old Time Religion***

***Now give me that old time religion***

***Give me that old time religion-***

***Give me that old time religion***

***And it's good enough for me***

***It was good for our mothers...***

***Makes me love everybody,...***

***It was good for our fathers,...***

***It was good for the Hebrew children,...***

***It was good for Paul and Silas,....***

***It will do when I am dying,...***

***It was good for the prophet Daniel,***

***It was tried in the fiery furnace,...***

***It will take us all to heaven,....Negro Spiritual***

**Request yet in my mind**

Dear Sophie Blue,

Will you join me docent

To learn about speak of

What is in my home

My art collection

My books some of which

Are Jeremy's Rebecca's Luca's

My notebooks my writings

The jewelry more sentimental than of great value

The knick-knacks scattered touchstones

A myriad tucked here and there assemblages

Inspired subliminally by Joseph Cornell  
Sophie Blue please come over  
So that we can take walkabout  
So that I can guide you and share  
What was on my mind in my heart  
How my life was shaped  
How I arranged artifacts knick-knacks art  
Expressing what who I was within me  
Totems tokens to remember remind me  
Life happened in particular ways  
Evidence of influences confluence  
Junction of object and heart  
Please Sophie Blue allow me to share  
Brought into the open the past  
As it was seen revealed to me



Joseph Cornell Boxes

*Somewhere in the city of New York there are four or five still-unknown objects that belong together. Once together they'll make a work of art. That's Cornell's premise, his metaphysics, and his religion. Charles Simic, poet*

Remembering as Patti Smith shared so unsparingly -nb  
*“every experience is unrepeatable,” Patti Smith*

**Dear Willa Bean,**

Willa Bean was there ever a girl with a more magnificent imagination. A girl filled with poetry and wisdom far beyond her years. You were reading knowing the world well before you had the words the language to express or share it. You were born with a fierce sense of justice of fairness unafraid to speak out when you thought it important. You have a tenacious spirit and I am absolutely sure you will not let anyone get in the way of where you want to be going. You once told me that you didn't care that your parents were getting divorced, you just didn't want them to mess with your childhood. Childhood is not an entitlement it is not a gift it is a right. I have always felt so privileged that you have so often let me in to share in a very close and real way. How very wonderful and meaningful for me.

***Christmas gift to Rebecca and Jeremy's families a donation to ACLU and the children's book Loving - The Case for Loving: The Fight for Interracial Marriage, by Selina Alko & Sean Qualls (ages 4-9)***

Willa thank you note said: *Dear Omi,  
Thank you for donating the money to the ACLU. You are helping many people by donating money. (attaching a photo of the two of us these are from Grandma Bluma -)*



*june, get today's ny times thursday styles - lead story - "sugar spice and all nice - by hayley krischer -important mom of tween - who has encyclopedic knowledge of everything tween on any device -*

## **The Plain Soccer Ball**

By Willa Hart

I am round and dull  
No one has used me in a long time.  
I see those new balls  
The ones kids use  
They are shiny and sometimes many bright colors.  
Getting kicked around, like everybody loves them.  
Soon they will become like me old and dull the ones people hate, the ones nobody  
uses.  
The ones who see the fancy new balls roll in to replace them and will never be used  
again.  
Soon I will be rolled in the dump as they replace me.  
Now I am in Haiti. Surrounded by trash and pretty jungle.  
I am an old ball.  
They still appreciate me.  
I am dull not shiny.  
I do not see new balls rolling in to replace me.  
I love the feeling of back massage while the kids kick me around.  
I know they love me and I love them. I know they hope for new balls, but they will  
not get them.  
They will have me the old and dull ball.

Willa Bean family poet laureate!

## **Dear Owen (Leelee)**

I didn't know so much fun existed in the world until I spent time with you. You are the singing sunniest person I have ever known. You have gifts that are rare. When you build with magna tiles or blocks you build with a true architect's sensibility. You are able to engineer with your Legos and other building toys feats many well-trained adult engineers struggle with. And I have never walked along with or side-by-side with a guy who takes such pleasure walking along creating a world to step in and out of as you go along. When we snuggle and cuddle reading or watching a show my heart practically breaks out in song. My heart grew so much more with love having you in my life and being with you.

*Dear Owen also known as Lee Lee,  
Your school just has to know that you needed to take a day  
For space exploration –  
You need to explore the great beyond!  
You do absolutely carry a whole entire world of wonder within you  
You are grand and wonderful and loving and have a bigger mind  
And heart than anyone I have ever known –  
So enjoy your day in outer space –  
The school will only be made bigger and better upon your return*



*Hopefully tomorrow –  
I love you as big as big as the sky and night stars as big as space –Omi 1/17/17*

*...thinking if owen had weakness in legs and needed physical therapy - we would be there rallying not that we aren't but don't know if we can truly understand how hard this learning to read is for him - it is the reading muscle that is weak or undernourished or something like that - so fists raised for a brave boy taking on an enormous challenge - maybe none of us but luca has had a bigger one - xoox*



Eight year old muses in novel "edgar and lucy" by victor Lodato - "He was bound to this world by a chain of wonder," Edgar thinks, "each link an unanswered question that surely only a long life would be able to undo. Always one had to ask: What happens next?" (reviewed in sunday's book review - just liked quote) - xoxomom

**Dear Daisy,**

From the first days sitting next to you near the window in your cradle I have been filled with song. It is absolutely true that just seeing you sent my heart tralalalalalal...I have watched you dance and play the piano and sing about kites on a stage and into a mike in your room to your dolls all dressed for the occasion. Your selection of dresses and clothing each day come from a deep sense of knowledge about yourself and how you want to be and appear in the world. Your sense of loyalty and love for the best friends in your life is clear and unwavering. I have sat as audience for your arabesques for your songs for you dance contests in your living room and knew you were born to perform and to become a true and actual star in whatever form of dance or acting or music theater you chose. I will always be somewhere in the room whispering, *She is mine, that one is mine.*

**Dear Hudson,**

Your energy and your desire to engage with me is such a privilege. I have held you through giggles and through tears. I have listened as you struggled with friendships. I have watched the command you have over your body on the tennis court riding some crazy bike or on a scooter or shooting baskets. You play and connect with such intensity and yet have such a remarkable sense of when you need time alone to think or dream or regroup. There is not another kid on the play yard in your school who has more fun or who appreciates the setting more. And when you connect with

a song on the piano it pierces the air with a depth and clarity. When you are interested in something you cannot be distracted. That kind of focus and intensity is rare. I have watched as you kicked a soccer ball around and when you have swung at golf balls. There is always a rare and expectant excitement in the air. You are also about the most loving guy I know. The world sparkles when you walk around the rocks to fish on Martha's Vineyard or you rush out to meet a wave. Few are as alive and as sensitive as you are which can make life a little difficult at times but never for a moment are you weak or do you back away from a challenge. You are true champ Hudson.

**Dear Upton,**

Glad we have been able to share your great and wonderful silliness and humor and have other kinds of conversations as well. You have so many wonderful things on your mind. I was so proud that you let me know how much you liked having sanitation trucks and enjoyed watching you play with them in your garage. I will always cherish the time at Weekday that you invited me to stay and be near you. Other children gathered around to watch you play with cars but it was your time alone. It was fun to read to you and then watch you read to your dad. Reading and enjoying books was just there in you. I marveled at the way you were able to continue a conversation as you balanced on a soccer ball. I appreciated hearing about your friends and your parties and even when some boy most probably jealous said that car were for babies at your party and that you didn't listen telling me I just like playing with cars. Your love of pets, whether small frogs or playful dogs like Cookie make you such a part of the greater world. So glad we had that time at Martha's Vineyard together.

**Dear Luca,**

It would be hard to convince me that you did not come from my body. In fact I believe with all of my heart that you did. What a time we have had. Don't think we have to say too much. Our life as mother and son is and will always remain an active verb. We will always be forever interconnected as souls and as a mother and son. I take such pride in being your mom. One entire document is for and about you and us.

**Dear Jeanne and Jer,**

I have done my mile. I have gone my mile. Please understand. I have no more to give. There is always so much more to live for. But I believe I have taken in far more that I have given. You were and have forever been the centerpieces of my life. I have relished every minute being the mom I became with each of you. No guesswork about how you will go on as wonderful individuals as parents. Believe that each of your will find and know another true love that someone probably is somewhere close nearby to you. Don't be angry or disappointed my choosing to die

at this time. I don't think it is vanity, not wanting to age more than I have, I don't think it was out pacing out running fear, fear has governed too much of my life. I think it was just time. The time had come. I have done my mile. - oxmom

### **Letters to Myself (Advertisements for Myself and other quotes – Norman Mailer)**

***Every moment of one's existence one is growing into more or retreating in less. One is always living a little more or dying a little bit. Mailer Interview with George Plimpton***

*With the pride of an artist, you must blow against the walls of every power that exists, the small trumpet of your defiance. Norman Mailer, Armies of the Night*

*Sentimentality is the emotional promiscuity of those who have no sentiment. Norman Mailer*

*Madness is locked beneath. It goes into tissues, is swallowed by the cells. The cells go mad. Cancer is their flag. Cancer is the growth of madness denied, Norman Mailer, An American Dream*

*There is a no man's land between sex and love, and it alters in the night. We go to sleep convinced we are in one state, we awaken in the other, and murderous emotions patrol the ever-changing border. Norman Mailer, The Deer Park*

*Writing can wreck your body. You sit there on the chair hour after hour and sweat your guts out to get a few words. Norman Mailer, NY Times, 2000*

### ***Of thee I sing lady "Of Thee I Sing (Baby)"***

*From the island of Manhattan to the coast of gold  
From north to south, from east to west  
You are the love, I love the best  
You're the dreamboat in the sweetest story ever told  
A dream I sought, both night and day  
For years through all, the U.S.A.  
The star I hitched my wagon to  
Is very obviously you  
Of thee I sing, baby  
Summer, autumn, winter, spring, baby.  
You're my silver lining,  
You're my sky of blue  
There's a love light shining  
Just because of you.  
Of thee I sing, baby,  
You have got that certain thing, baby  
Shining star and inspiration  
Worthy of a mighty nation,  
Of thee I sing. **George and Ira Gershwin***

## **Autodidact Supreme**

***My spider-sense was really tingling.***

*Zachary Turpin, Whitman lost book, The Sleepwalker – ny times 2/21/17*

***Nothing is ever really lost you*** really do start to believe it after a while.

*Long rank grass covered my face. Over me was the verdure, touched with brown, of trees nourished from the decay of the bodies of men.*

*At cemetery of Trinity Church. Walt Whitman*

***...a loner who doesn't want to be alone –***

*Patti Smith about Sam Shephard, playwright*

## **In this little bit of life good to live to the tilt**

Not to hold back nothing held in reserve  
When in and among the flowers  
Trees birds bees and butterflies  
In the Conservatory Garden  
My life more enriched  
Than can be calculated  
By my nearly daily walks  
If now with walking stick  
Through seasons and weather  
Watch as if a small craft  
My family moves further  
And further away from me  
Think I have drained  
The need for or desire  
For a meaningful purpose  
Can't be just a prop  
A life support at my awakenings  
Two friends bonds of sorrow  
At my wake  
Out lived Karm by more  
Than forty years  
And Margot by a decade  
Soon soon.... nb

## Why Be Alive?

***A primitive forest, druidical, solitary and savage – not ten visitors a year –  
broken rocks everywhere –shade overhead,  
thick underfoot with leaves –  
a just palpable wild and delicate aroma.***

*Walt Whitman, An Ulster County Waterfall*

### ***I wish I were dead***

An ecclesiastical chant  
Ecstatic rumination  
Didactic word mongering  
*I wish I were dead*  
Fraught  
We stood by  
She beat her head  
An unworthy opponent  
Boxing a rival  
A force that  
No matter what  
Kept living  
Before rigor mortis  
Stopped her short  
Giving up life breath  
*I wish I were dead*  
A stellar performance  
First the fist to head  
Then body wobbly  
Mouth hurtling  
Projectile insults  
Directed at whomever  
Was in relative proximity  
Transfixed mad eyes scouring  
Searching source of pain misery  
She stumbles downward  
She pushes open  
The oven door  
Puts her face just close enough  
But not inside not entering  
The holy pyre  
Oven may be lit  
It is around dinnertime  
Perfectly scripted  
Enters her husband  
Our father  
Pushing us aside

Pulling her upright asks  
What did you do  
To upset her so  
What was the trigger  
The presaging incident  
To get her to mount  
A ritualistic death quiver  
Sacrificed moments  
Of each day  
Watching her tumble  
Into this tumultuous  
Dramatic disarray  
The next rampage  
The next escapade  
Came at bedtime  
Father must have  
Reached for her  
Hot with desire  
Cue to escape flee  
Racing to basement  
Straight to the furnace  
He at a radical clip  
Chasing after her  
Grabbing her back  
Hauling her  
Crumpled body  
Back up the stairs  
She mute depleted  
Breaking silence  
Screaming out brandishing  
Upbraiding the night sky  
*I wish I were dead*  
*I wish I were dead*  
Child in next room  
Her body tense with fear  
Insanity lunacy  
Of parent's foreplay  
Sex frenetic frantic  
Frightening menacing  
Her body denied pleasure  
Lifelong remembering  
Mother's disruptive plea  
To die rather than let  
The rush the current  
Of arousal push her  
Toward the fraught

Frenzied uncontrollable

**I could feel them land on my face and crawl through my hair, searching for a hiding place. Each time she screamed, the animals flew out in small clouds like tiny gnats: little dragons, flying fish, headless horses.** Sam Shepherd, *The One Inside* (Remembering sex for the first time with his father's mistress, he recalls thinking that he could see tiny animals sail out of her mouth.)

The girl's nightly wait  
Fiery furnace exorcism  
Sexual current implodes  
Plea for death's release  
Daughter of this mother  
Lavishes affection  
On children infant's  
Held close nursing  
Trembles tightens up  
For other touching  
Deep diving episodic  
Fucking lovemaking  
Mother's forbidding  
Legacy ritual slaying  
Of any feelings of love  
Lifting up in her body  
Echoing reverberating  
*I wish I were dead*  
Deep entrenched  
Wanting to die rather  
Than let anyone in  
Come that close  
*Wishing to die*  
Lasted ninety-four years

*Wishes don't make dreams come true  
Everyone wishes for scary, mad things.  
No kinds of wishes make things come true.  
Wishes don't make dreams come true! Mr. Rogers*

Either mother didn't wish hard enough  
Or poo-poo-poo wishing to die  
Poo Poo Poo -simulates spitting three times to avoid the evil eye. (Yiddishkeit)  
Ominous bidding bad spirits away  
Body pleading for release  
Body captive  
Of Jewish debasement  
Body captive of fear  
Perpetual need to escape  
From being overtaken

*Wishing to die* life-long  
Her ferocity  
Her brute strength  
Extracting carving  
Carefully considered  
Sizable pieces of marble



She made miracles  
Mother's loving babies  
Never a power tool used  
Mother finding release  
Torment diminished with  
Each decisive cut of stone  
Relief mad vamping pain  
Legacy grandly realized  
Pieces of sculpture exhibited  
Throughout our homes  
Beautiful stirring miraculous  
Emotion shimmers off  
The spheres of stone  
Here she emerged artist  
Found love's expression  
Torqued existence  
Foreclosed on  
Body ran out on her  
Raptor death tongues  
Seizes her episode  
Of raw if divine fear  
The eyes went blind  
Feet chilled brittle  
Hyperbole last word  
*God is not Great – Christopher Hitchens*  
Hospice Rabbi fled  
Slowly gingerly  
She lapsed off  
Succumbed  
She cleaves close to us



Depictions portrayals  
Of embracing motherhood  
Brought from deep within hard stone  
She found her way to connect with us  
Solace mom then to rest in peace –NB



Not mother's pieces but close enough – capture the feeling the idea...nb



### **Speaking With Forked Tongue**

Got to Practice

Speaking truth

With children

Your own

No spiked tongue

No secrets crushed

On exhaled breath

Got to spit it out

It hurts

Spiking tongue

Spilling out

Got to practice

Conversation stunted

Deformed deflected

Twisted up

Gnarled rooted tree



Truth split hairs

Disunity disharmony

Family language

Propounds confounds

Dialect of its own

Vocabulary's codes

Family bloodroot

Got to speak truth

Practice otherwise

Blabber babble

Infant tongue twisters

Whirligig speak

Body gyrating  
Gymnastic feat



New words  
Spring eternal  
Spastic spasming  
Reckoning ultra-revealing  
New vocabulary  
Truth blanched  
Bleached obscured  
Apocryphal autobiographical  
Legacy past explored  
Tortured tutored or not  
What is to be gotten  
Stories dug out  
Reflect teller  
Tales told passed on  
Of half this half that  
Obscure devolve  
Swirling riptide lies  
Distances expand  
Conversations drift  
Into excess debris  
Particles of dust  
Shimmering light  
Blight flight  
Insight dulled  
Lies engulf  
Cult language  
Emerges family  
Internequine tongue  
Forbidden words  
Limericks of the absurd  
Wind talkers  
Word droppers  
Forgotten  
Delirious aphasic  
Got to practice truth

Corral circumspect  
What is left unsaid  
Unspoken adrift  
Stilling the words  
Never shared  
Secrets spared  
Left untold  
Fixate on genealogy  
Trace DNA websites  
*MyHeritage 23andMe*  
Fraudulent slipknot  
Truths blood lines  
Family ancestry  
Splash of DNA  
On a slide  
Bloodline genealogy  
Family history  
Myth and fluff



I thought I was  
But it turns out not  
**Quick aside**  
**What??????**  
**After all this**  
**I am not a Jew!**  
Truth needs practice  
Left unsaid gets harder  
Moves further out of reach  
Breach of life force  
Not to spill the beans



Never just a truth  
But a perspective  
It is that which we fear  
Getting ourselves  
More naked more revealed – NB

**Davies resurrects footfalls and shadows**, the pattern and texture of carpets, the sound of his mother's singing voice –the inner drama of undramatic things that are lodged in memory for a lifetime. Review of Movie, *The Long Day Closes*, *New Yorker*, 4/3/17

**...is that the author is giving us the park bench perspective** of what it means to be old and poor now, with no hope of reversing the downward trajectory. And more importantly, what it feels like. And what it feels like is a daily scalding of shame, humiliation and being disregarded as a nobody. ...in book *Testing the Current*, young subject blended crystalline musings of a preadolescent mind struggling to make sense of events. William McPherson, author, obit, *NY times*, 3/30/17

### **Ecstatic review of watch –**

*New Watch Moves With a Sense of Soul* – The point is to measure the anticipation toward a meaningful moment in the wearer's life – a first date, say, or a meeting with an old friend.

...the best moment in love is right before it arrives...Georges Clemenceau  
...not to make an alarm clock that says, now it's time, like a cellphone. The important thing is this hour before... - in other words, the important hour.  
It's no more about telling normal time. What is important is this very special Hermes spirit, we say in French, *decale* – which translates roughly to quicky or off the wall. They look at the earth from the moon, he said. Jean-Marc Widerrecht, watch maker. *NY Times*, 3/30/17



Self-portrait Cutting – Catherine Opie



Self-portrait nursing – Catherine Opie

**As if pierced**

as if going down deep  
as if gone beyond grief  
as if lies swept aside  
as if guilt killed off  
as if regret burnt at stake  
as if for this I was made  
motherhood Catherine opie style  
beyond denial  
beyond what got unlived  
beyond way beyond tears  
when torment mere sentimentality  
when terror lay down with Nazi's  
incinerators family gassed up  
back to Judaism  
back to eva grandma saint  
eva essence of motherhood  
of challah and hard boiled eggs  
of face cupped by hands  
swaying with Sabbath prayer  
braid plaited thick down her back  
Catherine Opie and grandma eva  
pure brute truth beauty  
motherhood the essential  
life force for which I lived  
lifted above the ashes  
biblically restored  
force of motherhood  
rivets culminates  
In those moments  
child sucking at breast  
found child  
sucking milk-less breast  
when I was my most alive  
coming to those moments  
a live never more full  
Catherine Opie self-portrait nursing  
Is too a portrait of me  
finding finally my truest self. nb

*I don't destroy; I create ideas that can go beyond the present chaos. I have always seen auto-destructive art as a constructive force. I still do. Gustav Metzger, Artist*

*Yesterday is a memory. Tomorrow is a mystery. Today is a gift. That is why it is called the present. Anne Friedman, one of her (Jewish?) mother's favorite sayings.*

*Do any human beings ever realize life while they live it?*

*Thornton Wilder, Our Town*

*At the very least, I want to look at trees a million more times. Is that too much to ask? Amy Krause Rosenthal, Children's Author*

### **Unruly Riling Ruling Me**

Combative chaotic

Stopping at nothing

To unnerve

Wild steaming

Waves break

It is the past

Intruder

Untoward uninvited

Dark images

Fall like moon dust

Midnight leitmotif

Recurring bad dream

But it happened

I was awake

Awestruck

Dumbstruck

Sickened

Unstuck

Dashed for bottle

Scotch Dewars



No single malt



No glass  
Just swig  
And swallow  
Cough choke  
Gasp cry out  
See a stiff  
Cardboard version  
Of my son falling  
Backward against  
The sink the toilet  
Stiff pulp caricature



Bottle in hand  
Aghast stun-gunned  
Where when  
Does the real end  
Grabbed him  
Dragged him  
Into my room  
Fell back  
Into rocking chair  
And on a rocking chair  
Pulled his rigid body  
Across my knees  
His eyes blank stair  
Organ stops shutting off  
Breathe that quieting

Rocked back and forth  
Rhythm of davening  
Swig and sob swig and sob  
***Don't die Luca! Don't die!***  
Hours on end  
Bottle near empty  
The sun tipped up  
Pale rosy and pink  
Called his father  
We each held a side  
As we walked him  
Into a cab  
To his doctor  
And the hospital  
Knew never to go  
To an emergency room  
In a true medical emergency  
He was admitted  
I reeked a Bowery drunk  
No one raised an eyebrow  
Faces averted  
Turn from stench  
Mother heart wrench  
Body drenched  
Booze oozing  
From every  
Nook and cranny pore  
Exhausted nearly  
Lost a son  
Coming frayed undone  
We have come close  
But this image  
Of him stiff  
As if mounted  
On cardboard  
To this day  
A decade or more later  
Have bottle of scotch  
On call ready to pour  
Down stiffening  
Ever unyielding throat  
My mouth attempts  
To call out howl roar  
No more no more no more! NB



[Swabian](#) painted wood Pietà of c. 1500



[Pietà](#), German, c. 1375–1400

*Evasion is a family's first language, and silences are filled with songs.*  
*Ben Brantley, review, Sundown, Yellow Moon*

**As if...**

We all live  
Accomplices to history  
Replaying and replaying  
Portrayals depicted  
Implanted wedded to  
Dynastic archetype  
Mother and dying child  
I exist within the framework  
Of those moments  
I am histories  
Mother and child. NB



### **Candles in the window at dusk**

Columbia students march down Broadway  
Protesting war in Viet Nam  
And perhaps stake in heart universal draft  
*Here comes the parade* my son age 6 calls out  
We hold our lit candles in the window  
To show our support – *no more war no more war!*  
In walks his father my husband  
Door barely closed shouting *what is this?*  
*We are showing our support for the student protest*  
*Blow those candles out* he bellows  
*Haven't you read Goethe, Rousseau*  
*Regarding protecting innocence of childhood*  
Semi famous or infamous professor of political philosophy  
Having just travelled the NJ Turnpike returning from Rutgers  
Where he is a tenured political science professor  
Hectoring lecturing scolding scalding his spittle steams  
It was all well meaning our son ran to the window  
Wanted to hold a candle up high  
The Episcopal nuns at his school  
March the students along side protesters  
He wanted to keep the spirit alive  
Deep dive shame incompetent semi-literate  
Inept unthinking *Marmee (Little Women)*  
Console combat *blow the damn candles out*  
Sulk scramble son scurries out of room  
No more than scullery wife hangdog apologizes



Did I say this stealth warrior walked out  
Children five and two to live with  
Newest girlfriend starlight of his showcase  
Performed in a dank basement on Upper Broadway  
War his its ramifications bloody quagmire  
Political lust raw badass ambition  
It took seven years more  
Until I quit this sanctimonious bastard  
He is now actively In the process of dying

From dreaded metastasized pancreatic cancer  
This some 70 years after the light of candles went out  
Goethe Rousseau blazened across my mother's heart  
Restrained no tallow dripped ever again  
As long as I stayed remained with him -NB

***The Sorrows of Young Werther***<sup>[1]</sup>



Charlotte at Werther's grave

## Death Shapes Penumbra About Me

I am at the outer reaches  
Of existence extant  
Stretching streaking  
Out of life's leafy arbor  
Done hibernating  
Living eating sleeping  
Heaven leaven levitate  
Heathen heave ho  
Slackened sloth  
Heathen collapsed  
Derelict dereliction  
Bound bonded to duty  
No longer have  
Port of calls  
Ain't necessarily so  
It ain't necessarily so  
It ain't necessarily so  
De things dat yo'liable  
To read in de Bible  
It ain't necessarily so

Methus'lah lived nine hundred years  
Methus'lah lived nine hundred years  
But who calls datlivin'  
When no gal'll give in  
To no man what's nine hundred years  
I'm preachin' dis sermon to show  
It ain't nessa, ain't nessa Ain't nessa,  
Ain't nessa It ain't necessarily so - Porgy and Bess, George and Ira Gershwin

Mean wean becoming  
Unnecessarily so  
Dying on the vine



Death by design  
Deign imperfect at best  
I'm coming home  
To final no equivocation

No bartering rest  
Wresting myself from...  
How will I know if...  
I won't !  
What is to become  
Of my family  
Testimony to my brokenness  
My heathen ways  
*My grandma Omi*  
*Is a secular Jew*  
*Who is not afraid*  
*To speak her mind*  
My beam of light  
*My war resistor*  
*Bookend sister of the world*  
As she and I  
Have named ourselves  
Mindfully considered  
Time to depart  
Exit leave be gone  
Have hung around too long  
Mom I said when she was 95  
In her hateful menacing  
Hospice care  
*Mom you can't die on me now*  
*You've been around too long*  
*For me to live without you*  
Already peaking over seventy  
Time for me to move  
Caterpillar glide  
Break cocoon of beingness  
And set off  
Into the wilderness  
Of my very own  
Virginal virtual  
Conscripted death  
Having them  
The greater they  
Need me less  
Share sparingly  
Move the needle  
Into expanding  
Concentric cycles  
Circles of life minus me  
Reconcile my final  
Good eternal



If eviscerating work  
Will be to excuse  
With a certain grace  
To disperse fly off die  
I am in truth  
At the outer edge  
That remote point  
Beyond which  
There is no more  
This is the chill  
Before brittle winter  
Cuts breaks in  
See page...  
*Farmer's Almanac*  
For precise date  
Easy to impose impede  
Force one self  
Seize middle guard  
Yield to your  
Superimposed  
Need of me  
Can't imagine  
Living without  
Where do the dead  
Actually go  
My war resistor sister  
Asks me one die  
And anyway  
How does a body die?  
Can't tug for attention  
Take away eyes  
From their own kids  
Had them later in life  
Methuselah grandma  
Baked caked already  
Noted coded as the elderly





Only fancy pretentious  
Walking sticks for me for  
Hide the despair  
Dragging *limpsey* leg around  
Word gotten from Whitman  
Won't linger more  
Won't have it  
Got to die right  
Take flight  
Move on off  
As the sun does  
Disappearing each day  
Off horizon's edge  
Slicing day from night



Follow fall off like the dying light  
*Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight  
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light. Dylan Thomas, Do Not Go Gentle...*  
Defiant defying  
Deafening quiet at dying  
Solitary solitude solicitous  
Of darkening light  
What a sight death is  
Presentation blood curdling  
Dumb limb brain goes weak  
Tongue wags slags slurps  
Gray matter devolves  
Death comes penumbral  
Shadowing imposing  
Bring me to a swell of sea

As it recedes holding tight  
As extinction extant comes  
Obliteration alliteration  
Start remembering me  
No longer be looking  
Over your shoulder  
Say what you will  
Speak your mind  
Speak me from the gut  
Archetypical topical  
No longer to hear you  
No longer to overtake  
Dispute half listen  
Cut you off mid-sentence  
Overarching overreaching censor  
How can I  
Imagine your lives  
Without me  
One day here  
One day gone  
Death by intention  
Not accident  
No sleuth stun gun  
Gasping hand gripping  
Sobbing witnessed death  
Slowing intense intentional  
Going on cats paws hate cats



Dears go on your own fleecy ways  
Daybreak will once again come  
But I no longer will once again wake – NB

*The fog comes  
on little cat feet.  
It sits looking  
over harbor and city  
on silent haunches  
and then moves on – Carl Sandburg, Fog*

***Looking at the Earth from the Moon.* (Jean- Marc Wiederrecht -watch designer)**

Lumpenproletariat *the unorganized and*

*Unpolitical lower orders of society*

*Who are not interested*

*In revolutionary advancement. (attribution wiki-something)*

*Hey folks this is me*

Lumpen-ordinary

Nice normal

Father's good

Very good girl

Armor of fear

Worn weathered

No Joan of Arc



Stampeding

The world around her

Self-pity solipsism remorse

Words as unseemly

As I have lived

A my non-life

Life-lite never let

The sword of another

Pierce my heart

That was my art

Ordinariness

Contrariness

Contraband whims

Not wishes made

To stars moon

Although did see

Harsh mortifying

Beauty in the moon

The night sky

The wind the stars

And oh trees

And birds

Sing mournful  
Saturated songs  
Just solely to me  
And ducks  
Getting me  
To park  
To hear the  
Cacophony of  
Their wacky quacking  
Drawn in suckered in  
As one duck mounted  
The other stuck there  
As sun swirled its way  
To sunset eclipsing  
Episodic drifting fornication



No one ever did me like that  
And flowers did I say  
Drawn to flowers  
Wilderness wildness  
So palpably alive  
Within me  
Drifting brokered  
Contained serfdom  
Desire bent broken  
Squandered withering  
Suppressed unexpressed  
I emptied myself  
**Pathos bathos**  
Squeamish squamous  
Metastasizing self-pity  
Scattered stars across  
A famished sky  
Squeamish self-pity  
Feeling self-pity  
At these the closing  
Formidable ending hours  
I am like a breaking away

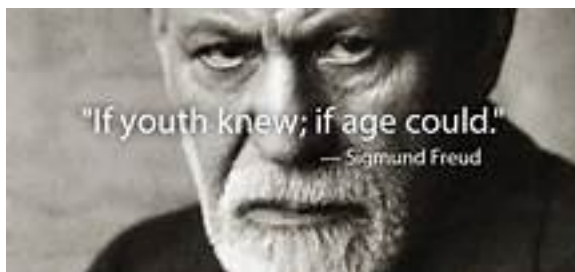
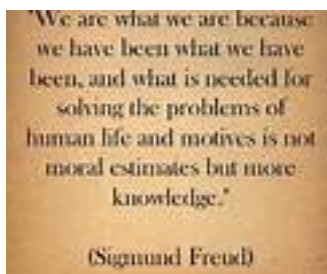
Balloon blowing heather and yon  
Soaring up and up and up  
Shearing clouds  
Shaping the day  
Unshackled sparking  
Vocabulary nips and tucks  
Wry words  
Tumble jumble out  
Not to edit  
Not to hold back  
Dyke got broke  
Water breaking  
Near delivery  
Me reborn finally free  
Saying whatever  
Falls off lips fingertips  
Sad so sad just as  
My body verges  
On collapse  
Heart withers  
Embattled beats  
I am getting freed up  
Saying whatever it is  
That comes to mind  
Words fly out of me  
Mean projectiles  
Drones buzzing me



Hovering hizzoner mayor  
Of my own order life  
I take full responsibility  
For empty clatter  
Arbitrary withholding  
Witty ditty silly  
Indulgent Madhatter



Speaking Yiddish gibberish  
Tongues as did grandma Sarah  
Death swaggered  
Stylistically toward her  
She spat back  
In devil-squatting tongues  
Brackish briny spiny  
Gibberish Yiddish  
Echolalia brute-speak  
Say what comes to mind  
Freely frothily no holes bared  
Without constraints  
That is what Freud said  
Freud at the end  
At the very tippy end



An aurora borealis  
Of words spill out  
Gushing fractured dam  
Water spills  
Birds dive down  
Fish drown  
I am climbing  
*Jacobs Ladder*

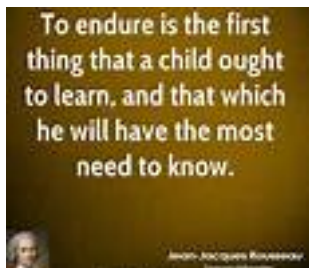
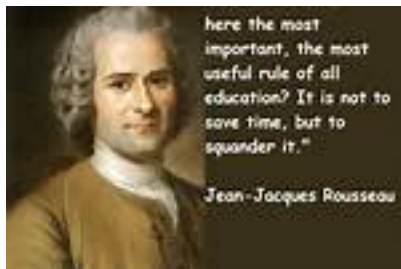


Ascending descending  
Dying in the end  
Desire bit me in the butt  
But too late far too late  
For me to bloom disrupt  
Old tired eroded-self  
To erupt burst into  
Mad song and flower- NB





## Goethe



## Jean-Jacques Rousseau

.....

*I am my own kind of damaged there,  
looking out the right-hand window.  
Spastic, palsied and off-balance,  
I'm taking crooked notes about this place.*

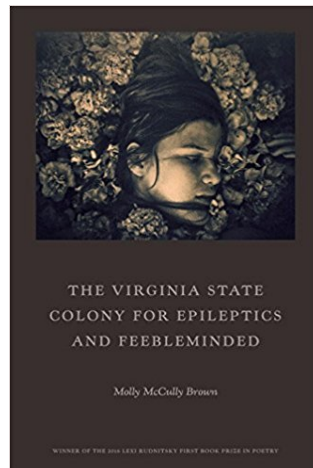
*Molly McCully Brown, poet has cerebral palsy  
A little like a stroke that happens when you are born.  
Haven't you heard the news?  
There is no longer enough in the world.*

*Always , they tell you to go  
where God calls you.  
What they don't say is that, sometimes,  
God will call you to the wilderness,  
gesture toward, the trees, and then  
hang back and wave you on alone.  
This is how I wound up granting absolution  
to low grade idiots and worn-out women  
who turn over in bed at night and,  
at dawn, go home to their own families,  
try not to think of ghosts  
wasting away in this world.*

*Women at this House of Bedlam were sterilized –*

*A woman tells us about her surgery –  
More people touch you  
in a single day than have touched you  
in all the hours of the last, dry year.*

Molly McCully Brown, author, *The Virginia State Colony for Epileptics and Feeble-minded: Poems*



***I want to die***

*I want to die*  
Seems to lie  
Differently  
In my mouth  
My being  
Mother tongue  
Still has a run  
Methodical random  
Din chant meme mantra  
Religious pastiche zeal



Blowhard death pretender  
The will forsooth to live  
Flickering out  
*I want to die*  
Yet who am I  
To let these words  
Form in my mouth  
I the mother of a son  
Whose body embattled  
Disease savages invasive  
Assaulting unrelenting fierce  
Staring death in truth  
Defiantly right in the eye  
Asserting unequivocally  
I am not ready to die

Jambalaya echolalic  
Jumble words  
Chewing of cud  
Descant death wish  
Never meant to keep



Mother distilled reverberates  
*I want to die*  
*I want to die*  
Contrite indulgent  
Cusp eclipse  
Elliptical a promise  
Rebounds redounds  
As I shadowy inhabit  
Corners of antiseptic  
Hospital rooms  
Bi-coastal indistinct  
Son again and again  
All rigged up  
*Rank your pain*  
*Scale of one to ten*  
Always above seven never ten  
We are vying for first place  
Contesting combatants  
Who gets to die first  
Mother or son  
Who predeceases who  
Dangling jangling participle  
The ineffable insufferable  
Question



*I wish I were dead*  
*I want to die*  
*I ask are you ready to quit*

*Or choosing to fight on*  
*Fight on* he answers  
We are joined in a pact  
Either to fight on together  
Or to let life just lapse  
This the bond  
The unclipped umbilical cord  
From a mother to found son  
Dissonant discordant timing  
Time has run out on me  
Ready or not *the end is near*  
As my father once shared  
When it was months away  
The words forbidding  
A cantilevered omen  
*I want to die*  
*I don't want to live more*  
Clanging cacophony dissonance  
Uttered at twenty-eight  
At seventy-five  
In perfect acapella harmony  
Wanting to short-circuit  
The interminable  
Heaven bound dying process  
Son's decision if it comes  
Holds the hard force of tragedy  
Time for me to break up  
End this dooming partnership  
I have come to a natural end  
He to take on the lonely  
If incomprehensible desire  
To keep on truckin'



Robert Crumb

Poignant sorrowful the odds so slim dim - nb

*Escaping the cage of your childhood can be one of the sublime miracles of growing up, though it sometimes requires more tools than the average jailbreak.*

*Jennifor Senior, review NY Times, Commonwealth, Ann Patchett*

**Death is rushing me turbulent troubling**

The end is gangbusters storming in

Finally suddenly I am no longer alone –NB

**A living space should be a sanctuary. It has to be a place where you can reflect on your life.** Tadao Ando, architect

**The spider, when he builds his web, he can't look back, because he'll break the web.**

**He can only look forward.** David Bouley, Chef

**A lot of vets won't seek help because what's haunting them are not heroic acts.** Brett Litz, VA Boston Healthcare System

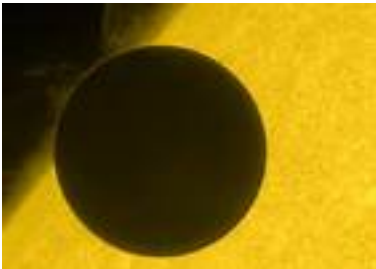
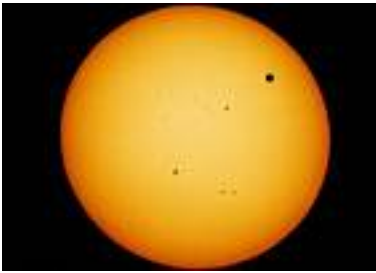
***They suffer from Moral Injury***...NY Times, 6/7/16 War Wounds That Time Can't Heal - Abigail Zuger, M.D.

Redeployment, by Phil Klay – National Book Award Winner 2014 – short stories speak to “**moral injury**”

***It is the past that tells us who we are. Without it we lose our identity.***

Stephen Hawking, scientist

*A transit of Venus across the Sun takes place when the planet Venus passes directly between the Sun and a superior planet, becoming visible against (and hence obscuring a small portion of) the solar disk. During a transit, Venus can be seen from Earth as a small black disk moving across the face of the Sun. The duration of such transits is usually measured in hours (the transit of 2012 lasted 6 hours and 40 minutes).*



Images of Transit of Venus

## Stranglehold relationship

**Transit of Venus** - *Equivalent of 6 hours and forty minutes*

Span of me

Shambhala jambalaya tumble rumble

Rubble stubble scramble twirl twist mist

Life span *six hours and forty minutes*

Fade to black speck fleck

Negligible or not

*At present you need to live the question. (Rainer Maria Rilke)*



*I'm Significant! Screamed the Dust Speck.*

Eyes shut on sorrow

Blinding the warning light

Urgent uncompromising

Blood curdling searing white

Immaculate startling impenetrable

Coming inexorable night

Steppingstones fade to black



Feet get cold eyes go blind

Breathing becomes labored

Execute plan for completed life

When there is no turning back

*There is no turning back*

*There is no turning back*

All I know there's no time,

There's no life, there is no turning back

There is no turning back Gui Boratto



Last moments blinker awareness  
Time to call it quits  
Moan elliptical  
*No more no more*  
Cryptic wings clipped  
Entrance god's unholy crypt



Quit struggle move off  
Entreaty one last wish  
Transit of self  
Journey comes to end  
Awakened forsaken  
Time to quite  
Questions quashed  
Which guilt which forgive  
Which live and let live  
*Six hours and forty minutes*  
In transit  
Yield bend be glad be sad  
No place for sorrow or regret  
Undignified paltry emotion  
I step onto perpetual *Byzantium* NB

**That is no country for old men. The young**

In one another's arms, birds in the trees  
---Those dying generations---at their song,  
The salmon-falls, the mackerel-crowded seas,  
Fish, flesh, or fowl commend all summer long  
Whatever is begotten, born, and dies.  
Caught in that sensual music all neglect  
Monuments of unageing intellect.  
An aged man is but a paltry thing,  
A tattered coat upon a stick, unless  
Soul clap its hands and sing, and louder sing  
For every tatter in its mortal dress,  
Nor is there singing school but studying  
Monuments of its own magnificence;  
And therefore I have sailed the seas and com  
To the holy city of Byzantium. Sailing to Byzantium, W.B. Yeats

## Grab Back Your Greedy Crab Claw



Asking pitifully for more just a little more  
What time? More time? To do what with?  
Body limp flower tilting over vase rim wilting  
Leg drags peg leg of Captain Hook



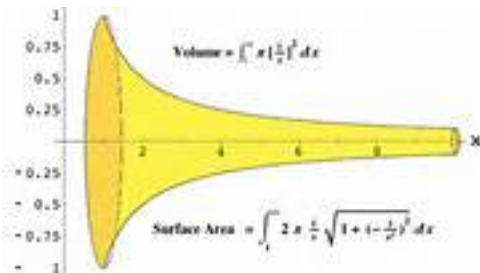
No more unfinished business  
No more regrets to tangle with  
Not an apologist *I did my best*  
Spilling guilt letting blood  
Deleterious false note  
Of inelegant departure  
Contrite parent dying diatribe  
Doctrinaire there was always more  
Love warmth support to give  
Not to plead just another day chance  
Living every day as if it were the last one  
Sloganeering feint duplicitous  
Alert rabbit ears perk listening for



Dick Bruna



Gabriel's clarion call  
 This is how it ends  
 Rabbit ears and horns  
 Hosannas and sobs





Morality tale infiltrates  
Of lives left behind  
I was given the gift of longevity  
In that specious territory  
Mind shrinks vocabulary eludes  
Self awkwardly finds footing  
Spirit and mind split fly off  
Into an ever eclipsing night sky  
So this is in truth getting one ready to die  
The past becomes jumbled blurred mused up  
Yet vivid as yesterday as I stand by the gate  
Watching my soldier John duffle on shoulder  
As he enters the plane a returning soldier  
*We will always have Paris (Casablanca)*  
*We will always have Rockport*  
You arriving unannounced  
The day you received military orders  
Your active duty uniform already on  
Two days before you had to leave  
We rode on your motorcycle  
To Rockport a final time  
Your arms wrapped around me  
We stood sea edge sun rising  
Without fully sharing with you  
I had been packing to leave college  
To move in with you in Washington  
*Girls who give up their virginity*  
*Who believe they cannot live without the other*  
*Move in and marry their boyfriend*  
Pressed lips severe Germanic  
My father said or rather ordered  
You were my chance for true love  
Father and his little obedient *Electra*  
Wrote you a Dear John letter



I have lived to rue the day  
Levees of feelings broke apart  
Emotions of regret flooded in  
No longer containable  
What I see so clearly a scene at an airport  
*Ingrid Bergman leaving Humphrey Bogart*  
Our goodbye as poignant and final  
I went on automatic pilot  
Had two biological kids one adopted  
Two husbands two failed marriages  
A chance meeting a decade later  
As if caught in gauzy diaphanous dream  
Spent a night or two together  
I married to a man who threatened  
To kill me if ever unfaithful  
You informing me you were to marry again  
I remember you as if yesterday  
When my heart never repaired stayed broke  
I am ready to move on go home  
No perking up of rabbit ears  
Maxine called after Linda daughter dead thirty years  
Margo became Jewish to lie next to John  
In Jewish cemetery dead twenty years  
And I will call silently for you  
Regret too small a word to encompass  
How in perpetuity I carried this life shattering loss – NB



*"Contrary to popular perception, death is not a specific moment." Dr. Sam Parnia of the University of Southampton in England. "It is a process that begins when the heart stops beating, the lungs stop working and the brain ceases functioning — a medical condition termed cardiac arrest, which from a biological viewpoint is synonymous with clinical death."*

## **SUNRISE**





**SUNSET**



## Sunrise Sunset

Don't want diamonds don't want pearls  
Want sunsets and sunrises  
And there we were  
Long divorced  
Sitting around a birthday table  
For Sophie Blue  
Our daughter's daughter  
On a roof terrace  
At the edge of Harlem  
As the sun  
Blazed to sunset  
Never remember  
It ever being  
More beautiful  
I had to look  
Beyond  
My ex-husband's  
Face head  
Just above it  
To keep  
It in sight  
I looked away  
Quickly  
Left the party  
Claiming ill-health  
Which was  
In part  
True  
My heartbeat  
Quickened  
My eyes  
Stinging  
Not with  
Direct look  
At the sun  
As it set  
Once again  
I took  
Something  
Away  
From myself  
My diamonds my pearls  
My sunset  
Said quickly



You must see  
Sunssets every night  
Facing the Hudson River  
In you're spacious  
Riverside Drive apartment  
I thought I had left  
All this behind  
No diamonds no pearls  
No ever moving on  
Pain as raw and fresh  
Bitter as lemon rind NB

### **Mouth quagmire**

Heartburn  
Upheaval  
Anger  
Fresh as spring daisy  
Body dry out  
Like fermented fig leaf  
Die hating him  
Envy purloins  
He has a river view  
I have none  
My imagination quashed  
Deadened unbeckoned  
Open sky out my window  
Searches for my blinded eyes NB

*Day is done, gone the sun,  
From the lake, from the hills, from the sky;  
All is well, safely rest, God is nigh.*



*Taps in C*

*The day is done, and the darkness  
Falls from the wings of Night,  
As a feather is wafted downward  
From an eagle in his flight.*

*I see the lights of the village  
Gleam through the rain and the mist,  
And a feeling of sadness comes o'er me  
That my soul cannot resist:*

*A feeling of sadness and longing,  
That is not akin to pain,  
And resembles sorrow only  
As the mist resembles the rain.*

**Henry Wadsworth Longfellow - The Day is Done**

## On an Island in Maine



Jeremy 12 Rebecca 9  
Along friend Gus drive  
To northern most Maine  
Where I had rented an island  
Sole property on island  
Old oversize log cabin  
Finding crank up turntable  
Kerosene lamps  
Rental agent gives us key  
Small motorboat  
To take us to island  
Single canoe tied to dock  
As suggested brought food  
And other goods and essentials  
As the afternoon spun out  
Stunned a single log cabin  
On such a remote island  
Truly existed  
Scrambling to explore  
Before the sun set  
Three weeks span before us  
In which to play hide and seek  
Launch multiple treasure hunts  
Find Jeremy and Rebecca  
Motoring around the island

Strictly forbidden  
Raucous laughter heard  
Dawn I pull canoe oars  
Wrongly against a wind  
Drifting backward  
Shouts from shore  
*Oar the other way*  
Boat to the general store  
Few and spare supplies  
This extremely impoverished  
Part of Maine near Canadian border  
Our very own Lake Hebron  
Host to loons



Nightly harsh calls to moon  
Ceremoniously at sun set  
We gathered by the dock  
Crossed handholding  
And sang *Day is Done*  
And umpteenth years later  
With Rebecca now separated  
Children 13, 10, 7

Rushing to the Bay  
In the Springs  
In the Hamptons  
Crossed hands  
And sang with all due  
Propriety and solemnity  
*Day is Done*  
Suppressed giggles  
And then dash about  
In the sandy dusk

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.  
*W.B. Yeats A Prayer for My Daughter*



### **Creepy corpuscles**

Crushed crepe paper  
Cottage cheese small curd  
Where the vocabulary  
Words to describe  
This phenomenon  
Skin loses elasticity  
No way to avert reverse  
Pushing weights riding treadmills  
Give illusory sense of wellbeing  
Beneath a little toning



Alas and alack body slackens  
No matter how driven  
How much Fitbit running



The body is drawn downward  
We shrink we get messy fleshy  
Dimming eyes keep spectacle spare  
Death prompts taunts become real  
Old age unsparing daring  
Equipoise equilibrium tempered  
Re-jiggering refiguring day  
Body moves in rampant decay  
Long sleeves conceal flab  
Dangling conspicuously off upper arm



Aging sagging slag slab of flab  
Muscles smushed mush  
Embodying loose flesh



Morose gross physically hideous  
In truth forsooth become *ugly as sin*  
Recoil image body full-length mirror  
Repulsed overtaken revulsion  
Repugnant horrifying  
Sight to behold



Saving grace grandson age seven finds  
*Loose folds of skin on hands*  
*Can make you a good pool player*  
Demonstrating pinching clump of skin  
Between thumb and pointer finger



I got old nearly 77  
Say rote by now  
*Living beyond 70*  
*Is icing on a cake*



So recipe for old age  
Cover up don't look in mirror much  
When skin on forearm dangles  
Dart eyes away avert  
Imagining pool hall of my mind  
Where god given gift  
To hold pool cue just right - NB

***Each life a heroic journey...***Bernie, philosopher, New School (Rebecca's mentor)



## **My daily bread**

Read Whitman in the seclusion and privacy of the privy  
Cutting to the quick quicksand probing

*How the soul loves to float amid such reminiscences!  
So here I sit gossiping in the early candlelight of old age-  
I and my book – casting backward glances over our travel'd road  
Result of seven or eight stages and struggles extending through nearly thirty years, (as  
I nigh my three-score-and-ten I live largely on memory...*

*Walt Whitman, A Backward Glance O'er Travel'd Roads 1888*

Walt Whitman was born in 1819 and died in 1892.

He was about 70 when he wrote these words

I am 76 as I write his these words

Whitman died when he was 72

We edge skirt dive duck embrace repulse these words

Of endings of farewells of fare the wells

### **King James Version (KJV)**

*The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be  
fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.*

And in translation transubstantiation transcribed

We are alive if we are fortunate span our time

For three score and ten minus or plus

I am on the perch the bough of an exalted tree

Ready to bound into the open sky

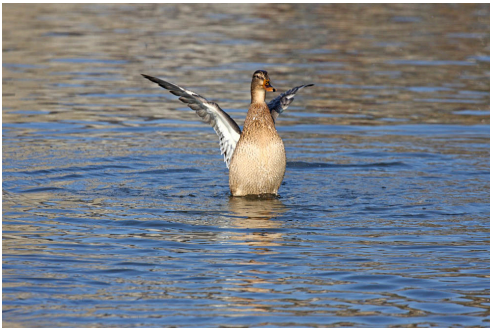
Saying my goodbye, goodbye goodbye

I bid thee farewell

Reincarnate as a duck on the Mer –

Who will the flap around flapping wings of my mate be

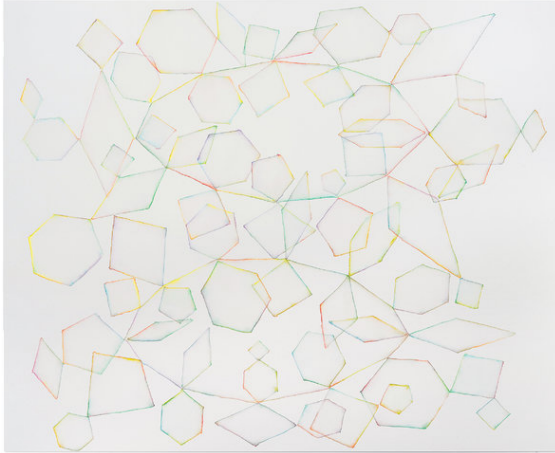
We shall see we shall see –



Me mating waiting mallard lover to mount me

The great descent – the moving descant -nb

**Imagining Life After Eden!** *The poet Sandra Lim and the artist Lionel Estève consider life for Adam and Eve after the fall, as a banal reality begins to crystallize.*



“Cristaux de Lumière ” by Lionel Estève, 2015. Credit © Lionel Estève, 2015. Watercolor on paper.

### ***LATER IN THE GARDEN***

*Ennui and unemployment.*

*White cyclamens bruise their imaginations.*

*Oh my darling, says Adam, I don't like the sound of that cough.*

*Mountains blacken above the water.*

*Time for spring cleaning.*

*They fashion the word moon to describe their hallucinatory loneliness.*

*They loosen the belts on their woolen bathrobes.*

*Now they have to live in their bodies.*

*A small crucifix opens to become a knife.*

*They see that the only reason they survived the first snake was their youth.*

*They consider how many times they have been loved.*

*Eve remarks, Waiters are so much nicer than people.*

*Time falls upon them like an ox.*

*What need is there for me to tell you about the dry anguish in the evenings. Sandra Limn*

## Subtraction

If I were to subtract you from my life  
Would be left with bitter taste in my mouth  
Memory nagging pain splitting hairs  
Barbary onerous malevolent tongue  
Like clawing a cat scratcher  
Trying to tear my down  
Your tongue slurping your venom  
No need to repeat the hollow echo  
Just to say  
These are the remnants what remains  
Of you in my life  
The ultimate discomfort  
That I let you in  
Not how you appeared or happened  
But That my half-ness  
Sought wholeness with you  
One of the talks left for me  
Before I draw down this life  
No more sorrow  
No more she died so young  
But you are on my list  
To cross off  
But did you add anything  
No never nothing empty space  
Lasting way too many years  
But wait I did experience normal  
Going to the bathroom  
Seeing a naked man up close  
Never let him see me naked  
In marriage one  
Walked around without clothes  
Just from bathroom to bedroom  
But still husband said  
Don't do it not good  
Never kissed him  
During sex after awhile  
But getting back  
To my own ground zero  
You – a hollow shadow  
Provoking shame  
When I think of enhancements  
Brought your way  
I think that without me

You would not have had a Ph.D.  
You would not have a son  
If adopted  
You would not have had  
Your job at Bank Street  
And you would not have  
A professor who believed  
She lost a sense of propriety  
Of integrity but advising you  
You were her feral student  
She would say –  
She felt she compromised herself  
She became my Saturday evening  
Dinner partner for almost fifteen years  
I did not need you never needed you  
You pimped me  
A flattering fox slinging words  
Gazing up an Aesop's Fable tree  
Got to purge the bitterness  
Got to go beyond my distress  
Got to know  
You brought me to my knees  
And left me there  
Begging for a brief reprieve  
A pat on the head  
A kind word  
A moratorium if for a day  
From your relentless Barbary word - NB

***The vast machinery of modern medicine, which can be heroically invoked to save a premature baby, when visited upon an equally vulnerable and failing great-grandmother, may not save her life so much as torturously and inhumanely complicate her dying.***

***Slow medicine is not a plan for getting ready to die. It is a plan for understanding, for caring, and for living well in the time that is left.***

***Our gratitude for the loving care she so selflessly gave to us has been enriched and deepened by our memories of the grace and patience with which she taught us how to die a good death. Dennis McCullough Pioneering Doctor Who Counseled the Virtues of a Good Death – Slow Death. NY Times 6/10/16***

***...so he doesn't have to be Whit Stillman...I'm not really sure I know what that means. As an American in Paris, I think I've enjoyed the isolation when I wasn't horribly lonely. Whit Stillman, filmmak***

### ***Is This the Right Place?***

*Your definition of the real is more like a hope about things that should prove to be real  
the real is like a construction something that builds  
piece by piece and then it falls on you or you move into it....*

*David Antin, poet, "talking at the boundaries"*

*I really have difficulty to place myself. It sounds too pretentious and too pathetic to  
say that music is my home. But my home, I would say, is my friendships, be they with  
composers or colleagues of the Kremerata.*

*I try to be onstage in tempus present. To live my life in tempus present, not to look  
nostalgically at 3- years of Lockenhaus or the 500 conductors I have played with. It's  
all past. And a successful concert is already yesterday. You have to do it again and  
again. Gidon Kremer, Violist, on turning 70*

*Create a living, working center for citizenship. When the arc of progress seems slow,  
remember: America is not the project of any one person. The single most powerful  
word in our democracy is the word "We. We the People. We shall overcome. Yes we  
can." Barack Obama, last days -*

***If there is no struggle, there is no progress.***

***...power concedes nothing without a demand. Frederick Douglass (1857)***



***"Those who profess to favor freedom and yet depreciate agitation, are people  
who want crops without ploughing the ground; they want rain without thunder and  
lightning; they want the ocean without the roar of its many waters. The struggle may  
be a moral one, or it may be a physical one, or it may be both. But it must be a struggle.  
Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will." Frederick  
Douglass (1857).***

***In a time of universal deceit, telling the truth is a revolutionary act. George  
Orwell***

***Why, if I would have died for him, am I still alive?" Jacques Demy The Umbrellas  
of Cherbourg***

**Why and Why and Why?**

Can't live without John  
Or Margo or Maxine  
And yet I go on and on  
Life's tight hold  
Found son's fate  
Bedside watch  
His life crater  
And then return  
I ask always  
Do you want to keep fighting  
If yes I will stay and fight with you  
If not, I will soon after you depart  
Does this ring hollow  
Is this way  
I live way beyond reason  
It was in my hand read fortune  
That I was to eclipse my life  
Cause my own death  
And yet and yet  
I wait for word from my found son  
If and when if and when -nb

***Life is a book. The fact that it was a short book doesn't mean it wasn't a good book. It was a very good book.***

***Amos Tversky, psychologist (ambiguity aversion)***

### **Brutally Butterfly Alive**

The big slalom slide  
Trolling my own death  
Facing mortality  
Where and when  
Anguished pulsing  
Turmoil and joy  
Periphery dissolving  
Epic inquiry wondering  
What happens when you die  
Where do the dead go  
Does anyone really know  
Are there angels fluttering  
Beyond stars behind clouds  
Is there afterlife a reincarnation  
Can I pick the animal or flower  
Metamorphosis transmutation  
Transformation at last blink  
Do we fall on our knees before god  
He with a flowing white beard  
Magic 8 ball twirling whirligig  
Revelatory revealing appalling



Disposition heaven or hell  
Or nowhere just a particle  
Some fleck of dust at loose  
In atmosphere stratosphere  
Have had a life of godlessness  
Emotions swollen rain cloud  
About to bust burst out



Passion spirit fate  
Rebirth akin to double-dutch  
Jumping leapfrogging side-stepping  
Animating an untidy flip book  
Stories unrestricted unrestrained  
Perhaps nothing familiar of me  
Death peculiar phenomenon  
Phoneme hieroglyph rune



Life transposed old tale ancient script

“Life ... is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing.” Macbeth, William Shakespeare

Somewhere I as daughter scribe  
Somewhere always nearby  
Feel my father dead 10 years  
His death imposed  
A mighty self-transformation  
Now I wander following  
The footsteps the path  
To my own death  
Duskiness darkness falling  
Held tightly in death's knotted fist  
Clutch of fingers form  
Paralytic arthritic grip  
Beneath the drama  
The sturm und drang



Truth is **I just got old**  
Stun-gunned into reality  
I am at heaven's pearly gate



Preparing myself  
For the great gray beyond  
One day here one day gone  
Just disappearing vanishing  
Tracking end truth or dare  
Scanning for a death vocabulary  
Afterlife image beyond despair  
Script for last and final words  
Shredded tattered left blank  
Parting endings ritual  
Of comings and goings  
Last word the last one spoken  
Said before the next one  
Speak only in present tense  
Days left I find myself consumed  
Obsessed by death by endings  
How will I be remembered and by whom  
Final words too late to assuage or change  
Who I was I was too late to repair  
To revise my story my personal history  
Remembrances personal expositions of self  
Vouchsafed yield to other's refracted view  
References keepsakes touchstones  
Diarist's biographer's fictive narratives  
Memories of me give death shape  
Entering into the lives of others  
Epilogue narrative no longer mine

Never ever really will know  
How or if I will be spoken of

My own death has begun  
Time to eat less sleep less

Leg wobbles with searing pain  
Walk leaning on walking stick  
However stylish necessary crutch  
Too prideful won't get  
Four-pronged tip  
Or walker with seat  
Moving to the edge of time  
Resigned almost ready if sad  
Slowly slowly ever slowly  
Letting life go its hold and  
**In the depth of winter,  
I finally learned that within me  
there lay an invincible summer. (Camus)**  
Hold fast to the summer within me  
As slow death enters me  
Holds me in its grip  
Not to resistance anymore  
Ready almost ready  
To be dead no longer here  
Not anymore anywhere - NB

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LIFE IS A TALE  
TOLD BY AN  
IDIOT —  
FULL OF  
SOUND & FURY,  
SIGNIFYING  
NOTHING teacup

**Autumn is a second spring when every leaf is a flower.**

***Nobody realizes that some people expend tremendous energy merely to be normal.***

***You cannot create experience. You must undergo it.***

***And do you really live with the thought that when you die, you die and nothing remains?  
Yes, I said...Camus, The Stranger***

***In the depth of winter, I finally learned that within me there lay an invincible summer.***

***I know of only one duty and that is to love.***

***Life is the sum of all of your choices.***

***But in the end one needs more courage to live than to kill himself.***

Albert Camus

***All real living is meeting. Martin Buber. "I and Thou"***

***I was only looking at the situation from one side. Now I'm looking at it from both.  
Shifa Al-Qudsi, A "A Would-Be Bomber Becomes a Fighter for Peace.***

***In many places I've been, you're given your enemy when you're born. You grow up with  
this 'other' always out there. The best we can hope is that the 'other' will now be able to  
come into the same room with you for a while, where you can listen to him, and see him  
face to face. Ben Khalifa, Photogernalist***

***Leaves scream their final cries in color before dropping to the ground. The fall  
of a leaf in autumn is an orchestrated death, complex and brilliant. And often,  
very red.***

***Joanna Klein, "Autumn Leaves, in Bright Colors and With a Purpose,"  
NY Times, 11/1/16***



**My Motor is Running Low**

My will near to extinguished

Descant to descent

Dive slide

Inevitability here

Time to open

Gauzy eyes

Take one last

If glazed look around

And outside

Time for goodbyes

Death advances

Too late to reverse

Its course

It pulses with advance

Still much alive

Still time to decide

Whose hand

Its or mine

Betwixt and between

Limp lipids

Gels quell

No rhyme or reason

No treasonous decision  
It has come to this  
My right leg  
Seized stricken with pain  
Limping walking stick  
Leg crumbles folds  
Pain reaches into my throat  
No calming it down  
It is a sign  
Got to have a talk  
Firm talk with myself  
Straight no curlicues  
No circumlocution  
Just this  
Death is just there  
Nose to nose  
Pressed against  
Sunrises and sunsets  
The big question  
Time to ask  
My hand while  
It can still lift a spoon  
To mouth  
Or thine  
The dark amorphous  
Ridiculous ending  
The answer my friend  
Is blowing in the wind  
Grab a twig  
A falling blazing red leaf  
And say hosanna  
And goodbye  
To the broad rude  
Autumnal sky  
Its hand or mine...NB

## Food

Luca and Chloe in residence  
On Deep Canyon Road  
For a few weeks or so  
Turmoil  
That seems to follow them  
Like weather patterns  
Persists  
Without a home  
If for hours  
Rescued by big brother  
Jeremy

Luca and Chloe in residence  
On Deep Canyon Road  
Spike with two pup siblings  
Chasing chastened  
Bonding around sniffs and piss  
Luca frail from recent surgery  
Finds a way to order Postmates  
Feels funny he tells me  
The kids gather around me  
Dogs at a bowl  
Their mother has strict  
Food rules restrictions  
They can't eat whatever  
She can pull rank  
Keep the forbidden  
Away from drooling  
Little mouths  
A form of control  
As arbitrary  
As a stray dogs gamboling  
No rhyme or reason  
Not this but that  
Not that but this  
They walk around starving  
Craving to eat almost anything  
Yet she hides forbidden sweets  
Just within reach  
She has a lifelong food disorder  
Now she disorders their appetites  
School wrote home  
Oldest son starving  
Not getting enough to eat

Their mother  
The mad hatter nutritionist  
The very basic sustenance  
Of life restricted  
New items taken on and off list  
Daily even hourly momentarily  
Whatever is near to sniff  
That's off can't eat  
Limits their intake  
Form of cruelty sadism  
Hard to fathom  
Jewish momma's saying  
Eat eat eat you look thin pale  
Even when robust  
Bustin' out of clothes

Oh the price my son  
Has paid to get kids  
The tariff food censoring  
Quandary for Luca  
Postmates or bust  
Elicit meals  
Taken on the fly  
When no kids nearby  
Tongues hanging out beggin'

Luca and Chloe in residence  
If for just awhile on Deep Canyon Road  
I feel so badly for Jeremy  
He has got so much on his plate  
Jeremy is the best  
He as so much to deal with  
You are a buffer necessary  
To blunt the reality  
Of his predicament  
As it blows off fog from the sea  
Oh God how Oh God how?

No food in fridge  
Chloe sneaks in milk orange juice  
Want to tell her Daisy drinks Lactaid  
But that would be a dead giveaway  
We seem to have a bent a penchant  
For sadists and crazy people  
Jeremy Rebecca and I

Withering dreams turning blind eyes  
Sun crisp clarity burnt off  
Vision blurred heart stirred  
We became dumb and blind  
Resigned now perforce  
A mother who uses food  
As a force of control  
Drooling children  
Gather around the Postmates  
Styron foam delivery container  
Luca can feed the dogs whatever  
The children look on  
The food as forbidden  
As the seduction  
In the Garden of Eden  
Quandary dilemma confounding  
A mother keeps her kids from eating  
Claiming judicious nutritional demands  
Beyond madness specious cruelty  
Trying to break out a smile a laugh  
Luca contends with ordering food  
Behind his niece and nephews backs  
Mickey in the Night Kitchen  
Find those three unruly chefs  
Backing breads after midnight  
Have the kids tumble free fall  
Into delicious delicacies delights  
Sustenance strained stressed on the back  
Of a woman who knew no bounds to harm  
As she stuffs entire cakes into her mouth  
Quickly upchucking throwing them out  
Toilet waters splashing  
Nauseating fumes escape beneath the door  
House of horrors  
Son almost fully awakened  
Deliver her to a house of sweets  
Where she is forced to eat  
Cookies candies cakes  
Stuffed like a turkey to near bustin' out  
Like in Charlie and the Chocolate Factory  
Or some story read once  
Where a woman was left  
To fulfill her fantasy of eating endless cakes  
Bringing her to sonambulance coma-like state  
Saturated bloated unable to throw up or shit  
That is what I will for her my son's wife



Luca order Postmates for the whole house  
No forks no spoons just fist fulls of food  
Stuffin' up mouths  
Luca and Chloe are in residence  
On Deep Canyon if just momentarily  
Have a real look at the horror  
A home with a mother  
Who uses food to keep her children  
Near to starvin'  
Nutrition the golden rule  
One thing for sure  
Not a Jewish bone within her  
They have other ways  
To torment and trouble their kids  
11<sup>th</sup> Commandment feed your children well  
Mother banished to Dunkin' Donuts factory  
Order to taste each donut  
Before sealed in a box  
Wish only that she has lost the ability to throw up  
Mad hatter nutritionist finally goes rightfully berserk  
NB

**“Every year I have the same hope: to die early. I hope that can happen this year.”**





*Life is really one  
Precious gift  
But sometimes I feel that  
It has been given to the wrong person – Ren Hang, artist*

*Mr. Ren had jumped off the 285h floor of a building. Friends said he had suffered from cyclical depression. **Ren Hang, Chinese Artist dead at 29, NY Times**3/6/17*

*jer, jeanne was my prize heifer but you were and are the apple of my eye - and luca my found son -brought me up straight - he is my heart - his first concern is always for my well-being -he gave me the opportunity to see into the center of what it means to be alive - sograteful for that - thanks for being his much admired and loved big brother - xomom*

.....

***Looking at her grandmother's hands now, it was almost impossible to distinguish scarred from wrinkled skin. The whole landscape of the woman's body had transformed into a ruin; the young woman had been toppled, leaving this.***

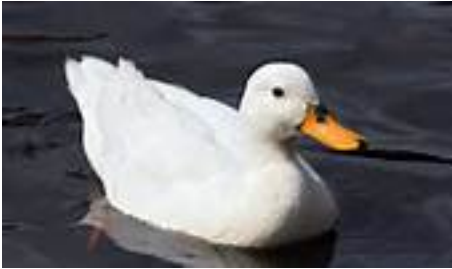


***But what had they called his father or his father before him? What of the mothers? They had been products of their time, and walking in Birmingham now, Marcus was an accumulation of these times. That was the point***

**Yaa Gyasi, Homegoing**



***MA I SAW THE THREE GIRLS!***



The three girls  
Were three white ducks  
Floating about at their leisure  
On the Harlem Meer  
Not native not returning  
From migrating flight  
From warmer waters  
Someone just put the girls  
In the Meer to swim about  
Remnant breadcrumbs  
Scattered the Meer's edge  
Some caretaker neighbor  
Made sure the girls were well fed  
Walking Petsie as we called him  
Our rescued scarred neck  
Chocolate Lab would search  
Scour the shore line  
To ensure the girls were still there  
Never barking nearly mute  
Respectful as they floated by

The girls disappeared one day  
Still see their reflection on the Meer  
Still rush out to see if they had returned  
Petsie, full name Pete Sampras  
Named after tennis player  
Luca too an early tennis champ  
Petsie met a gentle vet induced death  
Luca and I by his side  
My hand gently rubbing on his head  
Luca holding a paw in both hands  
As if sacred as if the tissue of his hand  
Would hold the scent the large paw imprint  
Luca moved to LA lives near LA creek  
And there they were the three girls

*hi luca, getty sounds amazing - don't know if i have been there - maybe just tonya  
quick - can't believe you saw my three girls - they must have followed you tto LA - a  
sense of connection and protection - talk later still bitter bitter here ox*

*Ma when you come  
We have to go to the Getty  
We had to go up in a tram  
The grounds are amazing  
We walked around and around  
Distracting a father  
Fascinated by fastened on pathology  
The Getty distracted  
The Getty became another  
Point of entry in his iCloud of memory  
His body keeps trying to die on him  
Not yet he tells it valiantly holding on  
Not yet – not yet to give up  
We fight on mother and found child  
He too would bound for the Meer  
To find the three girls while walking Petsie  
Imprinted on our memory  
Three white ducks we named the three girls  
Found him again or he found them  
We connect on most fundamental level  
With the three ducks the three girls  
Troubadours rejoicing life  
Sight signifiers holding us in awe  
Bold resonant redolent with Bach Cantata 198*

Note: Bach composed the cantata at the request of the [University of Leipzig](#) as a funeral ode for [Christiane Eberhardine](#), wife of [August II the Strong](#), the [Elector of Saxony](#). The cantata was first performed on 17 October 1727 in the [University Church](#) in Leipzig. Bach himself directed from the harpsichord. The text was written by [Johann Christoph Gottsched](#), professor of philosophy and poetry. The text is purely secular, proclaiming how the kingdom is in shock over the princess' death, how magnificent she was, and how sadly she will be missed. Sacred elements pertaining to salvation and the afterlife are absent. Bach, however, as was his custom, included a cryptic reference to salvation in the music. *Der führet mich nach meinen Plagen zu Gott, in das gelobte Land* ("which leads me to God in the promised land after all my tribulation").



Christiane Eberhardine, Electress of Saxony, for whose funeral the cantata was written

We hold onto symbols touchstones signs  
Why keep holding on staying alive

Whether you're a brother or whether you're a mother  
You're stayin' alive, stayin' alive  
Feel the city breakin' and everybody shakin'  
And we're stayin' alive, stayin' alive (BeeGees)

Today Luca found or refound the three girls  
The white ducks drifting easily now on an LA creek  
Life's implicit essence meaning revealed  
Looking seeing knowing living - NB

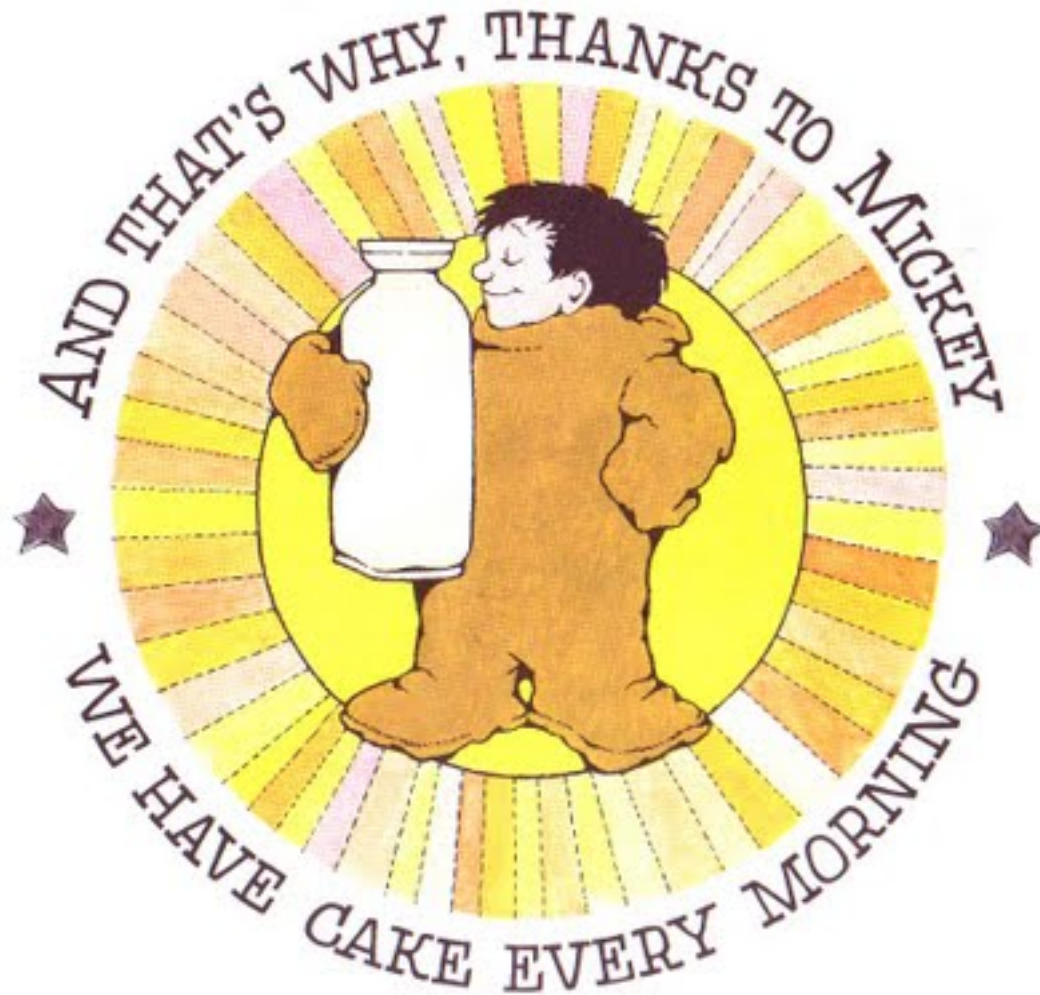
**Eat Cake**, a play about a woman violated in her home by ever-accumulating quantities of cake. The play was written by Jean-Claude van Itallie.



Daisy's Birthday Cake - 2016

*If I knew you were comin' I'd've baked a cake  
Hired a band, goodness sake  
If I knew you were comin' I'd've baked a cake  
Howd-ya do, howd-ya do, howd-ya do (Hoffman, Merrill Watts)*





Maurice Sendak Mickey in the Night Kitchen

**Reductio ad absurdum (Logically fallacious)**

Bulimia Anorexia Nervosa

Mamma it 's not my birthday yet

*Mommie Dearest*

(**Mommie Dearest** - American biographical drama film about Joan Crawford and the abusive relationship she had with her adopted daughter Christina Crawford)

Mommie dearest

It's not for a couple of weeks

Did you need a cake fix

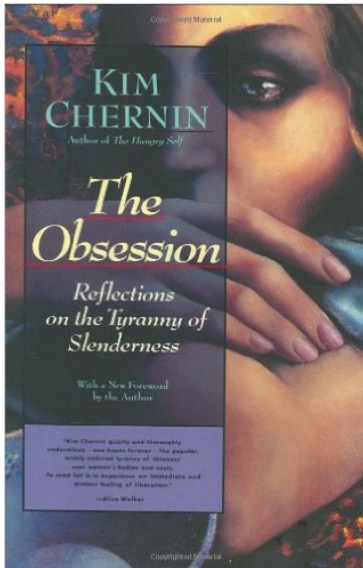
Filling the kitchen with towering cakes

Three layer cakes vanilla icing chocolate icing

Cakes to fill a bakery window

Midnight forays, fingers full of cake

Smear froth with icing  
Your mouth watering famished exile  
Your body craves drives you  
Eat cake settle your mind calm your heart  
Your body in constant rebellion upheaval  
Upchuck dive down and throw up  
Stuff stomach like a hollow turkey  
And then dig it out a famished voyager  
Not waiting for it to savor and cook  
Last year you had the kids bake their own cakes  
For Daisy's birthday as well having that lavish  
Gourmet magazine worthy birthday cake  
***No sugar too much sugar no mini-blueberry muffins***  
Nearly firing a nanny who bought those as a treat for the kids  
Too much sugar defiant and threatening menacing  
*Who wants cake for breakfast*  
Nervously regarding me her mother-in-law  
As she served huge slices of cake to the kids  
This to cover up the gauged cakes  
From last evenings binging foray  
Fingerprints evidence on icing  
Mauled and mutilated cakes  
Piled high spoonfuls of cake  
Drop clump into stomachs weighing down the school day  
Note home from school one year saying Hudson was starving  
Not getting enough to eat  
Upton falling off chair as he clamors climbs  
To secret hiding place to get some Oreos under his belt  
Mommie dearest warning Daisy not to overeat not to get fat  
She has yet to reach 10 – she already is flustered nervous  
Faux restraint meal times  
Father rants descants of warnings about eating disorders  
To the penultimate disordered mother the queen of sneak and eat



Prescient sent this book to Jeremy and Rebecca  
Anticipating another cake debacle  
Totemic ominous warning ordering warfare cake  
How can you lambast a mother who presents  
Such an ornate artfully decorated lavish  
No expense spared over the top cake  
Reductio ad absurdum (Logically fallacious)  
Gestures like this can make a kid crazy  
Willful harmful crazy lunacy freaky  
Just have an extra large slice today  
Weeks away from actual birthday  
Build up tough exterior to tolerate  
This obscene motherly gesture  
Duplicitous fairies queen mother of smoke and mirrors  
Indigestible degustable offering up motherly loved  
Birthdays a way to fill the night kitchen  
With cakes lots of cakes  
Midnight tryst twist to obfuscate evidence  
Midnight forays into madness  
Quell rapacious appetites to let go insanity take hold  
To stay balanced cake fills cavernous emptiness  
As it gnaws away fragments fixates  
Crazy momma scary momma frantic momma  
Once sun is up resist the tormenting temptation  
To drag a finger along an icing ledge  
Evidence of a midnight anguishing wolf howl  
Psychotic producing pain reaches pain decibel level  
Cake eat cake mommie dearest slices overly gregarious generous portions

*WOMAN: Hello? Hello. This Nancy Garrison, 35 Alpine. 35. I need three large birthday cakes for tonight. I mean as possible. What do you mean you can't? I need them now...*

*(She is getting into it. He smiles at her encouragingly.)*

*The largest you have. Nancy. Happy Birthday, Nancy...*

*(He whispers to her. Her eyes open wide in amazement... She speaks into the phone.)*

*In fact I want to place a standing order for one birthday cake in the morning, one at noon and one*

*in the evening every day this week...*

A Jewish mother-in-laws vengeance  
I will inhabit your body fuck with your mind  
I will have you transported to a place  
Where you will eat cake morning noon and night  
Having your body receive and heave  
Until your are abject prostrate blubbering bawling scating  
Cake cake cake forbidden to me but on the cusp of midnight  
Bipolar madness bulimic anorexic nervosa  
She the mother of my grandchildren my son's wife  
I blame it on the *Holocaust* the savaging starving of Jews  
I blame it on my mother  
Who grit her teeth refusing food  
I blame it on myself  
Never having purged the appetite for self-hating  
Lacerating punishment I blame it on the *Holocaust*  
I blame it on the *Night Kitchen*  
Off to the bakery I go to purchase a sweet thickly iced cake  
A toast to lunacy insanity breeding ground for torqued  
Twisted up crazy craven sweet toothed mad mothers  
Batter up – knife to slice – better than skin cuttings  
A lavishly adorned birthday cake  
To soothe the murderous flagrantly disregarding  
Maternal heart fastened to eating cake  
In the mad midnight moons illuminating shadow  
Scatological swallow gulp shove cake  
Frothy frosted becalmed nb

*jer, wanting to share some thoughts that can be discounted disregarded or left unread -of course daisy has as a gender role model her mom - just as the boys have you -*

*tonya has a very complicated relationship with food - early on she shared with me that she suffered from bulimia during her dancing and modeling years*

*now she would rather exist on half a boiled egg - italian bread dunked in olive oil - wine and after midnight - forays into the kitchen for cookies hidden away or the birthday cakes lining the counter -*

*she gets quite angry if one gives the kids sugar but then gets towering high birthday cakes many often - and offers the kids a generous slice at breakfast as she did when i was most recently there -*

*hudson used to not sure if he does now - but upton risking hurting himself climbed into the hidden place where cookies were stored while i was there - falling off the chair*

*but back to daisy - it must be so confusing for her - to hear about how it is necessary to stay thin and not to eat sweets or junk and to watch her weight particularly as weight builds naturally until puberty and then evens out - it is in the nature of growth - and your counter voice could sound as if you are criticizing her mother -*

*perhaps some expert counseling her for you to know how best to address this -*

*rebecca as well has body image problems and is fixated on weight and diet - but so far has found restraint in dealing with this with sophie and willa -*

*daisy is just beautiful inside and out - and as with everything else needs to have a healthy respect for health body and truly enjoying the foods she eats -*

*if this causes you anger at me i am sorry - i know you know all of this already and are trying to find ways to contend with it -*

*the book **obsession**: etc - holds an interesting perspective -*

*as always appreciate being able to share my unsolicited thoughts with you - oxmom*

*more emails for jeremy.....*

*Visit with kids to the Galapagos along with Live Schrieber and his kids - perhaps more tortoise than hare - evolutionary wonder - tracing the path of darwin and his ship the beagle -full sails aloft -took me back to our sailing trips with captain mike crew-mate jeremy - the symbolism of this intrigues - the spirit of it just right - dads and their kids retracing the course of darwin - affirming that we inhabit the world with the tortoise - never to violate always to revere - happy symbolism of a couple of dads with their kids having adventure and fun - xomom*

*Mom*

*Thank you for the very well imagined gifts and nice words. x*

*Jeremy*

*Sent from my iPhone*

*On Jan 11, 2017, at 5:32 AM, > wrote:*

*jer, in anticipation of your birthday, my gift represents what i call spirit whisperers for the man who became son 51 years ago, january 15 to the quiet hymn of "glory be" -*

*- portable walt whitman - "Span of you! Ever-pushed elasticity! Manhood balanced and florid and full!" -*

*bob dylan, "The Free Wheelin'" -singing the song to hudson that patti smith sang at Nobel Laureate award for bob dylan - " A Hard Rain's Gonna Fall" - not to doom but to uplift and reassure -*

*Kings Choir for the Cambridge graduate who once spoke of being a member or the steward of a Peterhouse Cambridge eating club and who knew how to carve swan! -*

*and the "Hidden Life of Trees" (in sept) for a man who deeply reveres nature and does in the most extraordinary ways see the interconnectedness of all things and persons and animals living -*

*when I named you Jeremy my favorite friend and a philosopher minister from Churwalden said he will be the prince who will see and know and speak of world sorrow*

*but to reassure that always exists alongside the possibility for joy -*

*i honor you i love you and am so proud to be your mom-xoxo*

***In fact:*** *humans spend less time monkeying around as they get older – and according to a new study, so do monkeys. Both species tend to become less social with age.*

Researchers in Europe tracked more than 100 macaques living in an enclosed 50 acre park in southern France. By the time they were around 20, the monkeys had fewer social contacts and approached others less frequently.

Social scientists theorize that humans become more choosy about companions with age in order to maximize their time as death nears. But there is no evidence that monkeys are aware of their mortality.

This theory may just be a way of rationalizing a natural behavior with biological roots, the researchers said. Joanna Klein, NY Times

My children will not inherit the Europe I hoped for. I look at my hands and see my father's emerging, the veins now more pronounced. Life feels diminished. Some things are unavoidable. This was not. Roger Cohen, "Leaving Europe for a Lie" NY Times – (Brexit Vote)

**"then gently light unfading on the unheeded neither" Samuel Beckett**

## **Jelly Roll Blues**

My breast tumbles to my stomach  
Must move over rolls of flesh  
Pushing up from my stomach  
Which hangs over my pubic bone  
Again thrust up trussed  
But yet another skin fold  
Unruly body  
Gravity no contest  
For the folds my body holds

Go the Jelly roll blues  
Looking down at my body  
Repulsed  
Body a rhapsody of satire  
Can't die fast enough  
The assault on eyes  
The encroaching  
As aesthetic assault  
One of those weirdoes  
In a Diane Arbus photograph  
Come take a snap shot of me  
Then you will release me  
From any desire  
To have me around  
Keep me awhile longer

Jelly roll blues  
Eyes hurt looking down  
On my lopsided body  
Head to toe  
No more Venus de Milo  
Sagging tits tummy folds  
Ruthless gilding of death  
Final insult  
Creepy body on the descent.

NB



### **She's gone missing**

Went to see the queen  
Went down to the end of town  
Without consulting me  
She just disappeared  
Looking in the mirror  
Can't find traces of her anywhere

Her nails keep growing  
Clipping and growing  
Her toe nails too  
Inch forward over toes  
Soon won't be able to bend  
To cut them  
What then  
What after that  
Diapers and drool  
Talking gibberish like a fool

She's just gone  
Watched a movie  
*Good morning Vietnam*  
Found tears sliding down my cheek  
Did Robin Williams know  
He would tight a belt around his neck  
And kill himself  
In such an uncompromising way  
Did he know death lurked  
Just waiting  
They say timing is everything

My world tights  
Gets smaller and smaller  
Read in the living room  
Walk in the Park  
Talk to the security guards  
Flowers still in spite of myself delight  
Hearing acute to chirping birds  
Mimic with trill and whistle  
Trees in unimaginable contortion  
Martha Graham's dancers bodies  
Derived perhaps from knots of trees  
Bough and branch in outrageous symmetry

My home my sanctuary my mausoleum

The final place  
Such a grand reflection of me  
Of what I loved  
Everywhere my eyes settle  
There I am my finest self  
Cannot bear going too far  
Will miss out on the sun  
Gliding about the house  
The moon's tintured glare  
On neighboring windows  
Rush to find it tucked into the sky

I am gone I am no longer here  
I am no longer anywhere  
As it should be  
Regret holds the smallest imagery  
Recollections of reject  
The debased and scared me

But one reconciliation yet to happen  
I never let myself  
Or no one ever wanted to  
Place a passionate kiss  
Across my lips  
Never experienced that wild tide  
That unleashed my body  
Releasing it to boundless infinite passion

But ecstasy did sweep me off my feet  
Music the cello poems sunsets  
Swooned and yielded  
To sweeps of unguarded emotion  
And then when I held each child  
Infants my heart just tumbled open  
Wide unburden unhidden  
Bursting open morning flowers  
That can't refuse the sunrise

I am gone  
I am finding myself nowhere  
But on the walls  
In the titles of the books  
In the array of CD's  
I am there  
Literal concrete fully present  
Becoming increasingly aware

Enlightened about who I was  
The walls like Paleolithic cave paintings  
Tell the story of me of who I was

But in the mirror no one familiar  
An elderly woman looks back  
With laughter and grace  
Tolerant of the time it takes  
To bring her inside of me  
Becoming whole if very old  
Time to let go  
No leather belt around neck  
Some pills perhaps eating less  
Slipping off to final sleep  
Lulled into losing a day time  
Perhaps even with a modicum  
With a little piece of mind

NB

Son your wife has sausage fingers  
Medically known as psoriatic arthritis  
Have you noticed  
Or are you no longer looking  
Thinking how pretty  
Her hands give her away  
Punishing woman  
Unsightly hands  
Body breaking down  
She tried but she couldn't  
Take you or the family down  
Unnerved perhaps  
But those are no boxing gloves  
They are hideous sausage fingers  
Condition on Google  
Unsightly unseemly  
Worthy signatory of the unruly  
Savaging wife  
Sociopath alcoholic  
Could almost arouse sympathy  
Beyond repulsion the hands  
Dangle from a person  
Who gave birth to my three grandchildren

NB

## **She's Done!**

Put him in an assisted facility for six months  
Never for him or for me  
She put the hounds on us  
Represented by her lawyer  
Chloe can stay here  
Wait a minute  
Fucking or in collusion  
Wounded man  
Seductress  
Pouring her heart out  
Witless helpless

Tidbits of discontent  
Dribbled out slowly  
Over days  
Luca likes packages  
I like travelling  
You know taking trains  
Around Europe

The balabusta mother  
Is blistering with agitation  
Resentment  
The house is filled  
Steaming with simmering  
Bustin' out all over rage

Think Jeremy likes Chloe  
Shooting baskets  
Floating her wares  
Her necessariness  
Wife seethes he breathes but barely

Disengage restore relax regenerate

Nine year old girls don't wear leather jackets  
Nine year old girls don't wear bras and lipstick to camp  
He better get used to the fact  
That he has a beautiful daughter  
Who wants to be in the theater  
And he talks about Natalie Portman's makeup and wardrobe

Weaponize deputies Daisy  
To set up Jeremy  
Bond with mommy  
And become a manipulative vixen  
Have vagina burn -  
Washed with wet rag  
Don't have on underpants  
Don't eat pork  
Want to be Jewish like you  
She had a trying time at sleepover  
Needs to be alone  
Hi toots - don't call me that  
And no more tralalalalal  
I see you want to be exclusively  
With your mother -  
You are reading my mind

She sees triple  
She is getting breasts  
Nipples are swelling  
Thus begins the onslaught  
The campaign  
Creating her own domain

Witness to a grand piece  
Of performance art  
Mother of the year or week  
Pretend show must be on a meter  
Fund raising

What is a producer  
What does a producer do  
You are looking at one  
Executive producers get the money  
Producers control shape the entire event or film

Don't want Arthur anywhere near here  
Or Luca working at that place -

Upton eats a pancake offered by Luca  
He tells his mother  
Are there any healthy pancakes she asks  
You have strict dietary restrictions  
I offer  
No just want to watch sugar intake

Learned more about that  
From Jeremy's Cambridge friend  
Romney a doctor

Have a nice summer mom  
Have a nice life  
I am in the exit lane  
I tell her  
Oh you have lots to go  
Maybe but at exists

The ugly yawl  
I am watching the collapse of my family  
The madness

Hard knot or rage  
Chloe and Tonia

Frank calls surgeon to get name of psychiatrist  
For Luca who is suffering from kidney stone pains  
Jeremy talks about how crazy he was  
She's had it mom

Time for me to dwindle  
Disappear  
Don't want to know

Warn Chloe about being weeping shoulder for Jer  
He is using her – he is weak and needy  
I tell her extend him well  
But watch what you are doing  
She resists  
Think about Woody Allen I tell her  
Running off with his step daughter  
Underneath it all she is flattered  
She has transferred being necessary  
From Luca to Jeremy  
He has more to offer her –  
She is quickly become surrogate wife and step mother

Didn't want to see this know this  
I will have him live with me in Santa Monica  
Bring him home  
Relieve you

Tired wounded stricken sad –

Overwhelmed overcome  
Luca the thorn in their side  
Involved with something deeply personal  
You anchor Frank –  
Take myself out of action NB

## Epilogue Endings

To: barberj <barberj@unitedtalent.com>  
Sent: Mon, Jul 18, 2016 7:31 am  
Subject: mon

jer, think i can imagine the very difficult and complicated situation you find yourself in - balancing the kids needing to feel a sense of security, as you try to ease their mother out of the house and at least limit her often very harmful actions for the family, for you, and for the kids. think that as things close in and the house she brought to the edge collapses around her - the structure breaks down and she feels she is losing power over the situation - she will panic and act in more erratic ways - hard to believe that what you know and have come to see about her appears to be true - courts favor mothers but not mothers who are harmful and dangerous and mentally unsettled - sadly i believe that tonia suffers from an array of mental distresses -and needs to relieve the inner pain by lashing out - believing that the outside world, you in particular, bring her to harm -

have to handle this and work where you are loved and respected - but which must be central for all good reasons - when the kids see you balanced and not cowering they will feel more secure - it is hard not to respond and become bent over by a person with such inner turmoil as tonia -

don't know what i can do - but i believe you will find a way to respectfully constrain her - protecting the kids - and having her believe she is valued as the mother of the kids if totally inadequate and not up to fulfilling the promise in any way -particularly now -

she feels money will anchor her - she needs to go out to the world as a producer of a far reaching dance and religious film - but as i have witnessed that will collapse around her as well -

hope you have a terrific lawyer and therapist and advisors who have dealt with divorce particularly when one of the partners, the mother in this case, is as mentally challenged as tonia - she can be scary - she has felt scary to me at times -

while there she shared lots of what she was doing with the film and dance camera west - and put in place a performance piece - "best mother of the year" -

scared and unravelling i did not own up to the divorce and daddy as i should have to best protect rebecca and you - it is all very clear to me now - and where the trip wires were - and how i let myself become so weakened - just some judicious looking back -

there is absolutely nothing that you ask of me that i will not respond to -just know that if i am off base i see it all through my own past and lens -

what i know now that i am 76 is that you and rebecca and luca have given me more joy that can be adequately expressed – xomom

...76 "entering that awkward phase of life when bodies degenerate unevenly...."NY times Magazine, Wil S. Hylton, Chuck Close's self-imposed exile."

## The End The Exit Ramp

This is the way the end ends  
Body draining of life essence life force  
Time dwindling compressing  
Body flared with pains  
Quality of life  
Can't walk cough can't sleep  
Time tells time comes  
To get rid of me shed itself of me  
Jeremy knows his wife needs to be in mental institution  
Luca rallies body verges on collapse  
Difference he fights back  
I submit like a virgin bride  
Shed some tears some blood  
Some blood letting cleansing the wound  
Old age crept into me  
I thought I was prepared wasn't  
Dying is not so easy mother use to say  
Getting rid of oneself an exacting science  
How much can you tolerate of sharp pains in legs  
Life takes itself away a matter of subtraction  
Feel the need to stay close to myself  
Not inclined to see friends venture forth

What courage what temerity  
To take ones' life before it takes me  
Anticipate when the steep incline  
Body takes nose dive  
Dribble piss helpless  
Uselessness like a lifeless limb  
Time to begin time to begin  
This is the beginning of the end  
Still in hand courage falters and flares up  
It is time the time has come the time has arrived  
To die no longer be remain alive it is come

NB



*Illness is the nightside of life, a more onerous citizenship. Everything is kind of tucked up inside you...And one thing you do not have is the little muscle that allows you to control yourself. Susan Sontag*

*I fly the flight of the fluid and swallowing soul,  
No course runs below the soundings of plummets.*

*I help myself to material and immaterial,  
No guard can shut me off, no law can prevent me.*

*I anchor my ship for a little while only,  
My messengers continually cruise away or bring their returns to me.*

*Through the clear atmosphere I stretch around on the wonderful beauty.  
Walt Whitman, "Leaves of Grass"*

### **Aleatory Random Chance Oops**

Jackal hide big surprise  
Grasp shadow life  
Death is so very sad  
Small craft being tossed  
Urgent sea untow  
Sharp elbow of wind  
I become undone  
Skiff on the torrent  
Of utter disbelief  
It really does end  
Life does  
Now when I think of them  
I rush to the nearest mirror  
Still horrified repulsed  
That person looking back  
Chose this and that  
Can't seem to get over  
Getting anywhere near Frank  
The very name sends me reeling

What would be the loss  
That would make my desire  
To live terminal  
Turns out my right leg  
Spinal stenosis slithered into her  
Sharp pain held her in its iconic spell  
Tortured tormented

And now guess what  
I have sharp snake-like pain  
Slithering up and down my leg  
I am calling it sciatica  
Fell in the same way  
The same anarchic spell  
Just can't walk anymore  
Can't get to the park  
To the flowers  
To the lily pods  
Chickens come home to roost  
Crepe paper crinkle skin  
Lobs off around my thigh  
My upper arm  
Still that description is not apt

Startled mornings to still find rainbows  
My chandelier tier still twists  
Transfixes with bold animated color  
Happiness comes from within  
I tell my granddaughter  
The morning rainbows  
Ducking and diving about the kitchen  
Arouse a smile a bit of optimism  
Then I lurch almost topple over  
The leg kicking me into reality  
Must make a contingency plan  
Who will call the creator  
To come and get me  
Don't want to rot  
Into stupefaction dying hard  
Without someone to summon  
Someone to come and get me  
To be sure death is calling me  
In earnest it is time  
Still smile still am amazed  
As I walk around my home  
Admiring what I find  
More and more evidence  
That someone familiar  
Has lived here  
Someone I like  
Someone who has placed  
Little treasures scenes  
It is a joseph cornell box  
Retelling episodically

About the woman the person  
Who lived here  
Interiority inside myself  
I am at home  
Still trying to imagine  
Craft an ending worthy  
A day must no longer bother me  
With events that still pinch nip at my heart  
Must find the song to fill me  
With pride that self-defeat nipping at my feet  
Did not get me -  
Forgiving my last need my last act  
Before reclaiming virtue  
But who do I forgive him or myself  
Where to find the compassion  
To give up sorrow and regret  
Not that I did the best that I could  
But that as contemptuous as some of my choices were  
I climbed out of the clutter of my unworthiness  
Clear -eyed contemplative ready to die  
NB

***The Old Fools***

*Philip Larkin*



*What do they think has happened, the old fools,  
To make them like this? Do they somehow suppose  
It's more grown-up when your mouth hangs open and drools,  
And you keep on pissing yourself, and can't remember  
Who called this morning? Or that, if they only chose,  
They could alter things back to when they danced all night,  
Or went to their wedding, or sloped arms some September?  
Or do they fancy there's really been no change,  
And they've always behaved as if they were crippled or tight,  
Or sat through days of thin continuous dreaming  
Watching the light move? If they don't (and they can't), it's strange;  
Why aren't they screaming?  
At death you break up: the bits that were you  
Start speeding away from each other for ever*

*With no one to see. It's only oblivion, true:  
We had it before, but then it was going to end,  
And was all the time merging with a unique endeavour  
To bring to bloom the million-petalled flower  
Of being here. Next time you can't pretend  
There'll be anything else. And these are the first signs:  
Not knowing how, not hearing who, the power  
Of choosing gone. Their looks show that they're for it:  
Ash hair, toad hands, prune face dried into lines -  
How can they ignore it?*

*Perhaps being old is having lighted rooms  
Inside you head, and people in them, acting  
People you know, yet can't quite name; each looms  
Like a deep loss restored, from known doors turning,  
Setting down a lamp, smiling from a stair, extracting  
A known book from the shelves; or sometimes only  
The rooms themselves, chairs and a fire burning,  
The blown bush at the window, or the sun's  
Faint friendliness on the wall some lonely  
Rain-ceased midsummer evening. That is where they live:  
Not here and now, but where all happened once.  
This is why they give  
An air of baffled absence, trying to be there  
Yet being here. For the rooms grow farther, leaving  
Incompetent cold, the constant wear and tear  
Of taken breath, and them crouching below  
Extinction's alp, the old fools, never perceiving  
How near it is. This must be what keeps them quiet:  
The peak that stays in view wherever we go  
For them is rising ground. Can they never tell  
What is dragging them back, and how it will end? Not at night?  
Not when the strangers come? Never, throughout  
The whole hideous inverted childhood? Well,  
We shall find out. Philip Larkin*

*One's life shapes itself, regardless of one's efforts to curve it one way or another. It would still be gratifying to think the shape of my life might emerge out of the future mist, and that it might still be a surprise. Ian Brown "Sixty - Diary of my Sixty-First Year"*

*The Spa is a potent metaphor for the converging social currents and generational tensions in a culture for whom material success trumps any hopes of self-fulfillment. The alternative is a life of loneliness and shame. Stephen Holden, movie review "Spa Night" (Korean film) NY Times 8/19/16*

## **Life's Crooked Ways**

Life moves along in its crooked way  
How much to tolerate  
How much to know  
How big a peek  
At the underbelly  
And below  
Body breaking down  
In predictable old age ways  
Leg cramps  
Leaving me stranded  
Leg extended  
Back on heating pad  
I stuff over the counter  
Pain medicine  
Like so many M&M's  
My stomach urges  
Like mixed tapes  
Gefilte fish spaghetti and meatballs  
Peperoni beef stake tomatoes  
With fresh mozzarella  
My past calls to me  
Through yens and appetites  
Bananas restricted for years  
Become a staple  
My granddaughter  
Does not spare me  
With her nomadic ways  
Finding different homes  
To stay out on  
Her father's night  
Imagine different nights  
For different parents  
The cost of divorce  
She pees too often  
She has not revealed  
If she has begun menstruating  
My daughter her mother  
Doesn't ask or thinks  
She has found pads  
In bathroom litter bags  
Like her mother  
She sneaks almost obsessively  
Peeks at her father's phone

Reading the text messages  
To his current girlfriend  
And other woman  
Among them Luke's  
Nearly ex-wife  
Luke my daughters  
Current beau  
And her estranged husband's  
Ex best friend  
How violated has my granddaughter  
Been subjected to by her father  
Whom I refer to as a predator  
When it comes to her  
Is it fantasy or fact  
They are tethered  
In so many unnatural ways  
Her fear to sleep at his house  
Her incessant insatiable appetite  
To search his private emails  
Perhaps no period yet  
How much to share  
Of my anxieties  
My daughter her mother  
My granddaughter  
Was born with a reluctance  
To fall asleep and alone  
How much to a peer  
In the great global beneath  
I shudder a Satrean nausea  
Rises within me  
When to collapse and how fast  
And how soon  
To Bring this all to a close  
How much do I want to know  
Unable to turn away  
My mind as if a sniffing beagle  
Searching the war grounds  
Of intra family turmoil  
When will I take my final breath  
With a dangling question mark  
Just about to venture forth  
Into more darkness  
More subterranean  
More unfathomable  
What do I want to be thinking  
What wreckage do I leave behind

The past numbing murky  
Enclosed in doubt and fear  
Reaching for the truth  
Farther from reach  
Futile to grasp get it all  
But which ones  
Most directly bare my finger marks  
Each self-discovery  
A futile odyssey  
No way to get to the bottom  
Past must relinquish its grip  
What do I say out loud  
What to I keep to myself  
As last breathe seeps out  
NB

And what is left is mostly echo fading...Richard O. Moore,  
The Familiar Has Taken Leave

**GOOD-BYE MY FANCY!**

*GOOD-BYE my Fancy!  
Farewell dear mate, dear love!  
I'm going away, I know not where,  
Or to what fortune, or whether I may ever see you again,  
So Good-bye my Fancy.*

*Now for my last—let me look back a moment;  
The slower fainter ticking of the clock is in me,  
Exit, nightfall, and soon the heart-thud stopping.*

*Long have we lived, joy'd, caress'd together;  
Delightful!—now separation—Good-bye my Fancy.*

*Yet let me not be too hasty,  
Long indeed have we lived, slept, filter'd, become really blended  
into one;  
Then if we die we die together, (yes, we'll remain one,)  
If we go anywhere we'll go together to meet what happens,  
May-be we'll be better off and blither, and learn something,  
May-be it is yourself now really ushering me to the true songs,  
(who knows?)  
May-be it is you the mortal knob really undoing, turning—so  
now finally,  
Good-bye—and hail! my Fancy. Walt Whitman*

**Radiation in New Jersey, Convalescence in New York**

***I come from a place where the water***

*is so barren that when you drink it  
the fish of the throat die,  
causing malignant thirst.  
What's a dazzler like you  
Doing in a dump like my bed?*

*Max Ritvo (Died at 25 of Cancer)*

**Poem to My Litter**

***My doctors split my tumors up and scattered them***

*into the bones of twelve mice. We give  
the mice poisons I might, in the future, want  
for myself. We watch each mouse like a crystal ball  
The hoped-for therapies did not emerge. He wrote:  
And since I do absolutely nothing (my pride, like my fur, all gone)  
Nothing happens to me. And if a whole lot  
of nothing happens to you, Maxes, that's peace.*

*Max Ritvo \*Died at 25 of Cancer)*

**Every written word is a victory over death. Michel Butor, Experimental French Novelist**

***I'm an ordinary athlete living an ordinary life. I just happen to be doing it in a body***

*many people might misunderstand, a body that is a source of pride and of shame, and  
sometimes, like all of our bodies on a good day, extraordinary. Emily Rapp Black.. The  
Paralympic Blues*

***My novel, The Sympathizer, is a war story and I am not an immigrant. I am a refugee who,  
like many others, has never ceased being a refugee in some corner of my mind.***

*...refugees are the zombies of the world, the undead who rise from dying states to march or  
swim toward our borders in endless waves.*

*...It is more glamorous to be an exile, more comprehensible to be an immigrant, more desirable  
to be an expatriate. The need to belong can change refugees themselves both consciously and  
unconsciously, as has happened to me and others.*

*Perhaps this is how history becomes imprinted in the body, how fear becomes a reflex, how  
memory becomes a reflex how memory a matter of taste and feeling.*

*...journey from refugee to bourgeoisie...Viet Thanh Nguyen, The Hidden Scars All Refugees  
Carry – NY Times 9/3/2016n*



## Post Visit to LA end of September 2016

dear jer, first thank you for all of the kindnesses and support shown to chloe and to luca - it has and continue to keep them both buoyant -

some reflections totally subjective and not shared beyond this email: to keep myself upright i adopted the nickname "high priestess of smoke and mirrors for tonia" - elusive and untrustworthy erratic and inconsistent with a vengeance -

believe she is totally committed unleashing her fury - as she plans and leverages everything in the world she built with you -and it pains me to say this - home, kids, you, flowers, cars this so she can maximize the funds she gets from you - squeezing that life - so that she can live the life that she feels entitled to -ala robert - she has never forgiven you for not being providing for her as robert did - cameras etc meant nothing -find a way to squeeze her financially and to limit time with kids and if possible always with nanny - she will have to gravitate to a new source of revenue -

she wants to be accountable to no one - not you not the kids - only to herself - her mantra as she shared is "be kind to herself/yourself " informed by robin - we believe that we should be kind to others and that is being kind to ourselves -

on a very bright and optimistic note - hudson and daisy and upton are fully bona fide barbers' - all of the - to great sisyphisean struggle and effort on your part, lessons, activities, books - steadiness and continuity - have helped to make them feel secure in who they are and know what they love doing and feeling connected to - whatever structures constructs context scaffolding you have put in place against great opposition - have brought them securely into the fold - i witness this always in the first person personal from each - upton still a little turn coat still grabbing at mommy's apron strings to report that he didn't want to be thrown into the water like hudson was - when he told me he was unsure maybe he did - wagging his tush and taunting - and she as predictable brought it down to a scold and death -

daisy is remarkable - she has a sense of herself and presence a feeling of settledness and strength from deep within - she asked that she wanted to be back in the ballet class with aryundini - less competitive - also she shared with me that the instructor in that class spoke to the kids like that awful woman in dance moms - although tonia had offered dinner last night hours before and then forgot about it - she said to her mom that she needed to eat - rushing tonia into the kitchen to make food for all three - and then she said i need you to help me with my homework - a fact she has stated the night before when tonia was rushing off and said we will do it - if with a little makeup and desire for tween bra - she is a very secure and smart little girl becoming ten very soon -

upton finally as let himself come close to me - never before - and is enjoying all of the parts of himself that are highlighted and enjoyed by you - he has moved

much much closer to your corner - not in competitive way but in an affirming one  
-

hudson is the dearest most kind and loving soul -carrying a dish into the kitchen for me as i was limping away - he has an exuberance along with a soulfulness - and he is steadier and stronger than ever - and he is absolutely secure in your connection with him and your love for him - that is what has steadied him - a true and genuine beautiful child -

so i think whatever you are considering and planning - all of which i support without condition or question - will only bring health and strength into the lives of hudson, daisy, and upton all so remarkably resilient - and if there may be turbulence - she cannot do real damage - that moment has passed - whatever she is planning and she is planning something and cannot in any way be trusted - you and whatever you are structuring will prevail -i believe this -

i love you and cannot believe i am the mother to such a truly remarkable man and dad - mom

*More in my own words: - e-utterances*

*Thank you. Think that's a helpful thought. I don't have reservation about windward. I have compassion for Owen facing this situation and working through it and want to hear his feelings but I don't mean to express ambivalence to him. And will make sure I stay aware of how I support him and communicate to him. He is right where he needs to be and like physical therapy the hard is just apart of it. And he needs me to be confident in him. We had already adopted the go have fun song walking home in the park.*

*On Sunday, October 16, 2016, <nbarber2001@aol.com> wrote:*

*june, if you have ambivalent feelings about the school than it will not work - owen has missed two days that i know of - one stomach ache one panic attack - take him out unless you can feel and express complete confidence in the fact that this is precisely the right place for owen - you need to ride the wave during this transition time - if he were in physical therapy it is difficult but every day leads to the next - think we spoke about how things move forward in a carefully thought out progression - can't miss a step - unless you can support this with your whole heart than find another school for owen - his success rests squarely in your hands - your steadfast hands - you know very well how to conduct yourself as a mother when you want the kids to feel success if with a struggle in the beginning - you don't have too many more days to come to grips with all of this - xomom*

*june, think it is more than a song but a song is good - need to have many simple conversations about how hard this is for both of you but you believe in your heart this school is the right one for this time - that they are asking a great deal of owen but in the end it will pay off - he loves listening to stories and someday not only will he read them but he will write them for other children - go to the heroics and heroes of all of this - his imagination is rich with them - find the metaphor that connects with him - have him see this as a feat that one of his favorite characters takes on and wins - he has to believe this is the right place as you truly do and he has to envision it in his own terms - it has to make sense to him - and seem like a very good thing to commit himself to - this is like the yarn for sophie - you have it in you - you and he have to bond over this as a challenge within the true grasp of success - to read without frightening him is to run and sing and laugh etc...showing up is everything - without showing up through thick and through thin it will not work -oxmom*

*june, can't access on my computer - i believe in my heart that owen will when he is ready leave windward - a strong reader and go on to wherever the master of his universe - and think that when alicia speaks about not having money it is threatening to all who listen and manipulative on her part - enough for her - and it is true you have to learn a whole new language to understand the inner workings of windward - that is not how you come in and live in the universe - as a very successful professional - friend - and terrific mother - i am on your team - **and then willa needs time to move beyond the trauma of her academic shaming experiences at cathedral - she will become a talented student** - and enjoy her creative and smart self - and blue blue - catch her before she goes off into the wild blue yonder - she is your girl - oxmom*

*honestly jer - haven't spoken to rebecca or anyone about my experience in the hospital with luca - about luca and how it tapped into his deep and fraught connection to all that is medical - although we are having fun here - he is relaxed - going with frank or his girlfriend to a nutritionist - really wanting to help himself - also wanting to get back to LA soon - talks to chloe regularly - and believe spike will be at friend's house saving us the expense of the if very fine trainer's house - think he takes care of elon muks dog when he is in LA - think they are planning on moving - but good to see him with old friends who do indeed love him - this is how life happens isn't it - eyes wide open - we go on as beckett suggests - thanks for asking -*

*love to have a tape of daisy singing over the rainbow but no urgency there - when is performance? and happy hudson playing with a team and upton reading up a storm - all three lovely individuals - hope you are well most of all xomom*

-----Original Message-----

From: Jeremy Barber <

Thanks mom. How are you? How is Luca?

Sent from my iPhone

*This fear is what is the ruin of us all. And some dominate us; they take advantage of our fear and frighten us still more. Mark this: as long as people are afraid, they will rot like the birches in the marsh. We must grow bold; it is time!" Maxim Gorky, Mother*

*honestly jer - haven't spoken to rebecca or anyone about my experience in the hospital with luca - about luca and how it tapped into his deep and fraught connection to all that is medical - although we are having fun here - he is relaxed - going with frank or his girlfriend to a nutritionist - really wanting to help himself - also wanting to get back to LA soon - talks to chloe regularly - and believe spike will be at friend's house saving us the expense of the if very fine trainer's house - think he takes care of elon muks dog when he is in LA - think they are planning on moving - but good to see him with old friends who do indeed love him - this is how life happens isn't it - eyes wide open - we go on as beckett suggests - thanks for asking -*

*love to have a tape of daisy singing over the rainbow but no urgency there - when is performance? and happy hudson playing with a team and upton reading up a storm - all three lovely individuals - hope you are well most of all xomom*

Luca,

*as you prepare to return to LA - want to share some thoughts - only my thoughts and not greater truths*

*you have had a very rough year in LA - medically and physically - and then Arthur and then being displaced and having to stay with jeremy - benefits to jeremy and the kids - in a small room with an uncomfortable bed and the very unfortunate incident with spike - who was totally in the right -*

*do not let anyone make you feel small inadequate or very needy - with demons in your head darkness inside and very difficult and challenging to be with - you have a rebellious body - and to my death will never understand why - but you are as clear thinking and mentally healthy and wise and giving and loving as anyone i have ever known - no bull shit with you*

*don't let anyone mentally shame you or take the upper hand - making you feel small and that you owe them anything or everything - you do not need a nanny or a maid or a nurse - a partner yes - and all relationships are complicated and can at times be rather messy - believe me i know*

*you should live fear free - not thrown into a panic or kept on edge that the other person is going to abandon you or cut you off emotionally or threaten to walk out if you don't do the following: see a nutritionist a psychiatrist a personal trainer etc - anyone who imposes conditions on a relationship is just setting traps for failure for the other person*

*lying and half-truths are manipulative -*

*just - i want it to work in LA - want you back with spike if you separate from chlo believe she is going to challenge you about who should have the dog - you can get your own studio apt and build a life and gather friendships - people love you and want you in their lives want to be your friend -and you can find your own way financially -*

*living with someone else is a two-way street - two equals - i support whatever you want and what you believe is good for you-*

*knowing you will be back in contact with dr. ha - and start some kind of medical treatment - believe it will start healing you - do not take on giving yourself follow-up shots she has offered always to do them in her office -*

*i believe in you with my whole heart - and it pains me that not everyone lives in the world as you do and jeremy and sis - honorable loving - kind and truly extraordinary - filled with empathy and love of being alive and understanding what a gift it is - i love you so very much, xomom*

***...when I am fifty, my heart will ache in this exact same way it does today.***

*Children remain dead in ways adults do not, and on bad mornings, in the wrong light, everything from here on out feels like ashes.*

*Child died at 2 when a piece of building mason fell on her head as she was sitting next to her grandma on a bench on the Upper West Side, NYC.*

***...to admit that life had any wills but my own. For six days it was enough, as Beauvoir put it, to think of nothing but "flowers and beasts and stony tracks and wide horizons, the pleasurable sensation of possessing legs and lungs and a stomach. Simone de Beauvoir, "The Second Sex"***

***You can't wipe away the past. You have to use it. Change it, make peace with it  
Nata Janberidze, interior designer, grew up in Georgia, country on  
the Black Sea***

***Keep your mind open. Always keep a door open to the unexpected.***

***Massimo Bottura, Chef***

*jer, probe grapple feel stuck feel fear feel frustration - come to conclusion and then disregard - and then one day clear as crystal the answer comes - always tinged with doubt - never anything absolutely free of doubt -never a yes without if small a no - those were our adages as we grew up together -you are not stuck but probing grappling - you are not up in the air but circling - i think never less the love and respect in my heart for you - oxoxmom*



**Kerry James Marshall, artist**

***Apt aperture opening and closing***

*During this election*

*Two weeks before, before...*

*My old hands can't wont*

*Clamp onto an American flag*

*Waving waning waxing waning*

*What is America to me?*

*What is America to me  
A name, a map, or a flag I see  
A certain word, democracy  
What is America to me Neil Diamond, the House I Live In*

*A shambles a rambling  
Shattering shambles  
Shambhala jambalaya  
And so it goes 2016...  
I am 76  
And in 1776 the American Revolution  
Devolution evolution  
Curdling coyly milk knotting  
Lumping putrifying petrifying  
Mother's milk democracy  
Abortion king  
Rip that baby o  
Riggers rigging  
Bloating floating  
Blabbering blathering  
Mortifying disappearing  
Flag oh flag in mourning -NB*

***Acknowledge that you're the center of the universe then radiate.  
Richard Greenberg, "Rules for Others to Live By – Comments and  
Self-Contradictions"***

***The lucid and lordly aigrette of vertigo***  
*On the invisible brow*  
Scintillates  
*then shadows*  
*a delicate dark form*  
upright  
*in its sea siren's sinuosity*  
time enough  
to slap  
with impatient terminal scurf forked  
*a rock. Mallarme, "One Toss of the Dice*

*He is not a part of my life anymore. Forgiveness has freed me of that, of him completely. I'm not going to make him a lifetime partner. Rev. Anthony B. Thompson, whose wife, Myra, was killed in the shooting at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, Charleston, South Carolina*

**Note: If only if only I could forgive his lesser crimes** – crimes just tailored for me. Such a small small insignificant man with such a very very mean mouth. Is it god that I am lacking. The necessary element of forgiveness. NB

*Today Maman died. Or perhaps yesterday, I don't know. I received a telegram from the home: Mother deceased. Funeral tomorrow. Our best regards. That means nothing. It might have been yesterday. Camus, The Stranger*

### **No Friendship Here**

Her husband has put his foot down  
The wall is up  
Don't trust me  
Can't entrust me  
With family secrets  
Too late too late  
And yet to know  
I have not and will not ever tell. NB

### **Nose pressed against the window**

Little match cover girl



Why not me  
Filled with the sorrow and the pity – Marcel Ophüls  
Why was there never a man  
Who savored me who loved me  
Without condition

**I am what I am** – *Je suis ce que je suis*  
I complained to my second husband  
Who when I had my most high profile job  
Insisted I put braces on my teeth  
I complied for maybe just maybe  
He would find me attractive



In a sexually arousing provocative way  
Like the untamable curls on my now balding head  
Who was I kidding submitting once again  
As I did when I was twelve to having braces  
Reminding me incessantly of how old I was  
Seven and three-quarters of a year older than he  
And how I was on the way down  
He up as he sucked the nectar  
From my evergreen giving tree



Shel Silverstein

He collected tithe and torment  
Taxing my connections  
His just desert for those  
Nose holding infrequent fucks  
Never could say he loved me  
As if papal in his ministry  
I was to be grateful he entered my life  
Claimed me rescued me  
And in my heart of hearts if deadening  
In the end just another notch on his codpiece



And then there was husband number one  
Who reminded me daily  
That I ought be grateful  
That he stilled desired me  
Found me attractive  
Wanted to fuck me  
Persistently consistently lecturing me  
On the importance of sex  
He was after all a professor  
If of the dark of the intimidating  
He surveyed scanned the night sky  
The windows within sightlines  
Of our 11<sup>th</sup> floor Upper West side apartment  
Like an airport controller  
Playfully when feeling brave  
Referred to him as Mr. Peepers  
And that to his face  
He was indeed a peeping tom  
Other lives his to take in  
Gather him up in a frenzy of lust  
Masturbation linens carefully tucked here and there  
He recorded our every sexual encounter  
In his daily journal "n org"  
Therapist said we practiced  
Adolescent immature sex  
And she didn't know the half of it  
He had an annotated and catalogued  
Pornography collection hidden out of sight  
This before the days of Internet  
But porn on television available at any time  
He controlled me he scared me  
I stayed to schedule one night off  
Two nights on never wavering  
Reprieves when he travelled  
Gratefully and frequently

Women were waiting for him  
At each academic port of call  
Calculatingly cultivating faculty appointments  
In London, Paris and Berlin  
Fluent in language a veritable Marquis de Sade  
A masterly overlord waiting women opening doors  
In multiple languages wine cheese grapes and ardor

As a young family brought us to Essex England  
To join him invited to be a guest lecturer  
The University of Essex in Colchester England  
Our small cottage on the grounds of a stately English estate  
Boots and rain slickers had us exploring  
Every little eddy inlet salt marsh and cove  
This was Turner country and we as a small collective  
Captivated and in awe our sloshing boots  
Held us in good stead on our daily explorations  
Learning from towns people  
How little it had changed from the time of Turner



Joseph Mallord William Turner 1825

Our bliss or mine rather was short lived  
The children in bed with nanny nearby  
Joined my husband as a guest for dinner  
Girding myself as I entered the grand dining hall  
Found my husband ensnarled in a royal cat fight  
Stunned shrinking slinking backing my way out  
There he was with two true princesses  
Claiming him as dinner partner and bedmate  
My professor husband transformed  
Before my eyes my gasp caught hand on mouth  
Grand Poohbah consort to royalty



*Rutland Barrington, the original Pooh-Bah in the Mikado Gilbert and Sullivan*

***Some Cupid kills with arrows, some with traps.***

*"William Shakespeare, Much Ado About Nothing,*

What is the converse inverse of being cuckolded  
Rumors about predilections are different  
Than coming face to face with two princesses  
Duking it out over my husband  
The children asleep under a thatched roof nearby



Sexually transmitted identity conversion  
Armor lined walls setting for my final unsettling  
Never learned which fairy princess won  
Heaving and moaning under  
The heft of his professorial body  
Our visit abruptly shortened we moved  
Without fanfare or adieus  
To a friend's house abutting Hampstead heath  
There my husband came and went  
To perform his professorial ministrations  
Appointed to lecture at the London School of Economics  
I the non the wiser I the benumbed and silenced wife

Of a bona fide gadfly and reckless adulterer

Even a young wife swept off my feet  
And off to the Swiss Alps in the first year of marriage  
Having just suffered a late term miscarriage  
The repercussion hard to pre-determine and life long  
Within days of arriving at this one year international institute  
Dedicated to the works of Albert Schweitzer's *Reverence for Life*  
He took a nineteen-year-old Swedish student Eva of course  
To his bed in the other bedroom he had requested for studying  
He was appointed as lecturer at Albert Schweitzer College  
Which he had attended for a first year of college  
Transposed translated to mean  
He was filled with reverence and desire  
Heated overheated with lust  
Taking one by one of the international  
Female students to his bed  
It was as if each of the girls had a number waiting patiently  
Or not in line at Zabars prepared food counter  
He was there to ski and write his Ph.D. thesis  
On democracy in Graubünden farmers raise swords to vote  
Like any homing pigeon it was necessary for him to touch down  
In the familiar his interiority  
The complexion of his psyche  
So entangled and disjointed  
He was not only a amoroso  
But a man verging  
On the combustible and explosive  
Combustible and explosive  
Thus tucked into the Alps  
I was left mostly to my own devices  
But for an occasional *my night on*  
Sipping kirshwasser and playing the cello  
For hours each day in front of French doors  
Watching the shifting sun  
As it moved through and around  
This village's closed-in mountain range  
Also yes typing the same letter  
More than a thousand times  
For the director a promotional letter  
For which I was paid a dollar a sheet  
And repeat and repeat and repeat

Husband number one he slugged me  
He held a loaded gun to my head  
He demanded his nights an infant to suckle

Wooring me telling me how attractive I was  
How lucky I was to still be desired by my husband  
Who moved out when the kids were 3 and 6  
To live with an actress who was an actress  
In his off off off bdwy play  
Held in the basement on the Upper West Side  
Scout wife found and rented for him  
But love what love  
This was an overlord and I his wifely concubine  
This was the hostage wife who could breathe free  
On her nights off and when he would so often be travelling

But something happened last night to woe is me  
Watching dabbing constant stream of tears  
As President Obama gave his farewell speech  
He then he looked squarely at me eyes welling  
This as he looked at his wife with a naked ardor  
Almost too overwhelming to be held in a TV screen  
And he looked directly at me with that some deep love  
My heart melted my heart flip flopped  
Like an orca whale at Sea World  
When he looked at me his eyes laced with tear  
My heart said yes and yes and yes  
I felt genuinely for a first time swept off me feet  
Just swept off me feet - NB

### **See Above**

Ever read such hogwash  
Such gobbledygook  
Such balderdash hoey  
Grabbing for straws  
Dredging digging for  
Authenticity  
While the world  
The whirl of the world  
Gets smaller and smaller for me  
Curl up for frequent naps  
Energy comes and goes  
Ideas of how to spend my day  
Exhaust ambition at low ebb  
Is this just the natural  
Sputter to life's ending  
Agonizing steps  
Thigh tightens with pain

Lean dependent on walking stick  
Floral pattern fades handle chips  
See in the grand design  
Legs go first  
Standing upright a struggle  
I am one of the multitude  
Of women struggling  
To climb the steps of a bus  
The crosstown 68 and 72  
Have too many steps to mount  
Can't stoop low enough  
To clamor up  
And cabs taking more and more  
Need to wave on  
The ones with sliding doors  
Into which I can't climb  
My right leg doesn't go high enough  
Got to sort of tumble in  
Limbering up pulling body in  
Stay inside more and more  
Appreciate my home  
So deeply personal  
Each place I look  
So gratifying I took the time  
To create a sort of final resting place  
Reading on the leather couch  
Listening to WQXR  
Life is abandoning me  
Got to make adjustments  
See others less and less  
And want to grudgingly  
Can't think of why  
I need those connections  
Can't rationalize  
About either my need for them  
Or the depth or extent of relationship  
Now measured by true give and takes  
Not persistent cultivation  
One way streets  
No longer charmed by certain friendships  
Time to retreat reckon with my own life  
My past pops up in disjointed recollections  
So clear how some of those friends  
Impacted my life reached out to me  
Imprints deep and consoling  
Above such folderol such gobbledygook

Like *The Man Who Mistook his Wife for a Hat* *Oliver Sacks* (stories of individuals afflicted with fantastic perceptual and intellectual aberrations:)



Remembering friendships goes something like that  
Context pretext no longer counting up  
As if rolling worry beads in hand  
Time to lay fallow and let bubble up  
Streams of uncensored unconsciousness  
Entitlements to last thoughts and memories  
Life happened this way for me or not  
It is my fiction my story my endings  
In which I can wallow or glory  
In the end what phantasmagoric tales to tell



What gobbledygook what folderol  
What anthropomorphizing why mythologizing  
Moribidity or enlightenment  
At the dawning of my death  
Perhaps just nonsense versification  
Validation *reductio ad absurdum*



*Is a form of argument which attempts either to disprove a statement by showing it inevitably leads to a ridiculous, absurd, or impractical conclusion, or to prove one by showing that if it were not true, the result would be absurd or impossible*

What to validate what to discard

What to rid my body of

What to savor what to laugh about

Tears if just to wash my eyes

What to see clearly

What to doubt or disdain

Of what of life remains

Give free reign

like uncaged free range chickens



Not to deny not to regret

Truth only that my life will soon end

Beyond that this is my story to make retake remake

All in the just gobbledygook

Just gibberish

Think I'll go find myself

A cozy corner tucking inglenook - nb





*Yet no one had retired, except the children and "old Feyther Taft," who being too deaf to catch many words, had some time ago gone back to his **inglenook**.* Adam Bede George Eliot

### **Questions-More Than Four**

*Why is this night different from other nights? (First of four Passover questions)*

How do you pathologize

Someone dying

Not ultimately

A natural condition of life

But an other worldly aberration

Your own kid just 28

Whose unwieldy body has been

Quitting on him

For more than a decade

*He doesn't sleep well*

You the father inform me

After returning from a visit

In his newly adopted city of LA

*Found a sleep-disorder clinic*

*At UCLA in the network*

*He has to stay in network*

Went from platinum to bronze

Father covers medical insurance

In his character to compromise

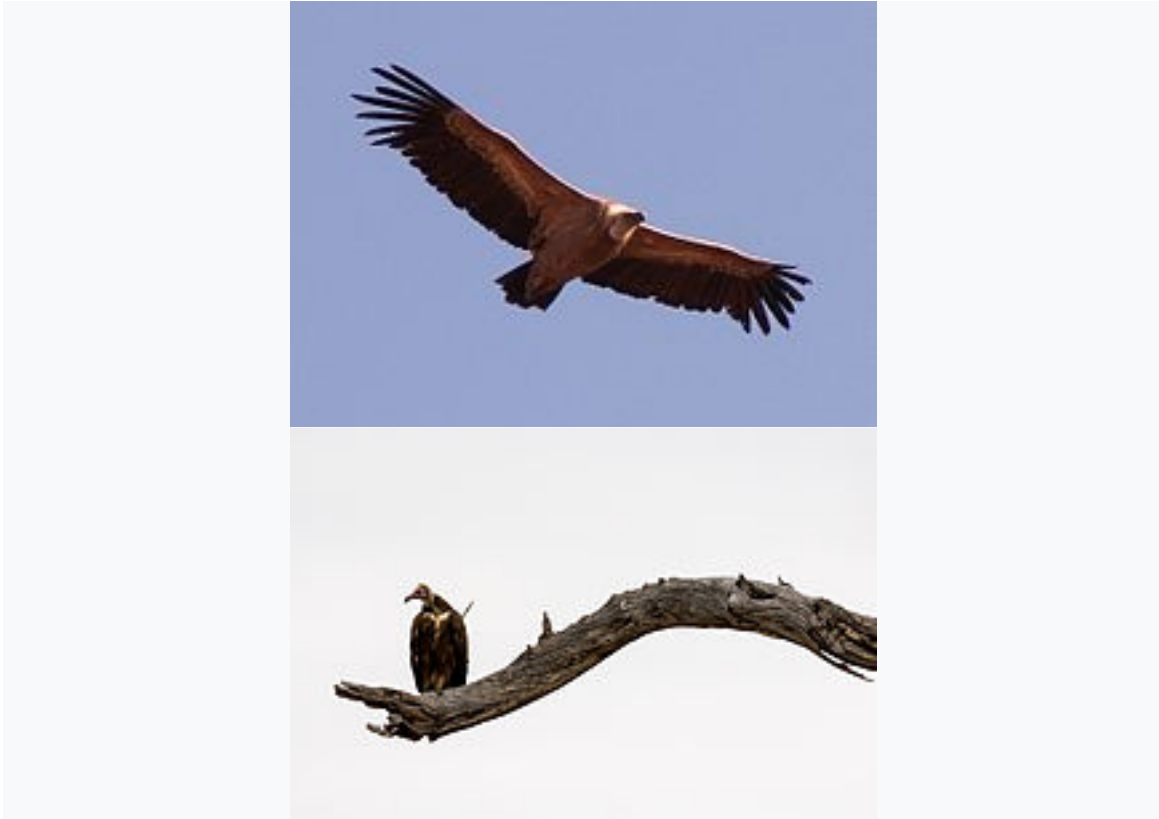
How much should one sleep

When days waking hours

A hedged bet at best

Death hovering

A vulture at a near carcass



What pill what clinic  
Can help me  
Or my boy remain awake  
Body weakens body ages  
Points of no return encircle  
Why should we sleep  
Grasping for what is to come  
The future oblique  
Destiny death's dominion  
What we will be missing out on  
No way to bring youth back  
Women post-menopause  
Simply just wither and dry out  
Millennial without large intestine  
And whose small food gathering organ  
Seizes gathering fibroids blocking off food  
From any hope of being digested  
It is he who needs to go to a sleep-disorder clinic  
Rather than rally rage  
At the too soon premature dying day  
To paraphrase cautionary note

*And you, my young son, there on the sad height  
Curse, bless me now with your fierce tears  
Do not go gentle into that good night  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light Dylan thomas  
Your herculean fight without rival*



*Hercules fighting the Nemean lion*

by [Peter Paul Rubens](#)

A woman almost 77  
Lives within months days hours maybe weeks  
Where the restorative the spa  
To prop us up to keep us awake  
Hospice just to relieve the urgent pains of death  
Dims consciousness awareness  
Benumbs the body bromide occasional madness  
Exorcist flailing other worldly sounds  
Dark volcanic lifting from dormancy  
Revival of gothic and unrelenting sound  
Aroused by chemicals that soften  
The fatal blow discharge of death

Bluff our way skirting reality  
Lifting off trauma fear

We know we are dying  
One of us at life's natural end  
The other without rhyme or reason  
Dying a body snatched stealth warrior  
Displaced person called by to the thicket  
Of rain forest tropical canopy  
We die are dying off together  
He and I mother and found son  
Overrun by grief sadness  
Have seen the horror perpetrated on his life  
The torment the agony he has suffered  
Body fighting to stay extant beyond disease  
I cannot be an old woman sobbing over the grave  
Of my young son leaning against a walking stick  
That sinks deep into the hollows  
Of the ground toppling me  
Can't know his fate more than I already do  
Take me first death take my breath away  
I fear not life's ending but attending  
The funeral of a son I never could save  
From such an enduring and awful fate – NB

### **Again a Question**

As if a geographer  
Mapping out the extant world  
As if a climatologist  
Tracing weather patterns  
To a single dirt road at the tip of Costa Rica  
To a rocky bluff in Maine  
To a resort with cottages in Massachusetts  
To a cliff in Truro  
Never to the Chelsea Hotel  
Too predictable ordinary  
To B%B on Block Island  
To the oceans tide lying down sundown  
To a hammock in Key West  
Before the refugee crisis  
A cottage on the Isle of Lesbos  
Certain can't be my own bed  
And not the leather couch  
Who will want to be here  
The crush weight of death hovering  
Where to die  
Know to stop eating and drinking

And let it just come  
Occasional sips not cheating  
And who will testify  
Who will call the mortuary  
Where is the nearest one  
Decisions choices decisions anon  
Better pick a spot a time  
While I still have agency time  
Is there a travel book at Barnes and Noble  
Listing the 10 best places to die? nb

### **Questioning Self How Could I?**

Take my father out of his home  
So he could safely die  
And not at the hands  
Of his itchy fingered wife  
She was trying to kill him  
While she could still drive  
He only wanted to be at home  
Surrounded by everything he loved  
Everything that brought his life into rich focus  
I took him by the hand  
The end is near he told me  
As we drove away in waiting car  
She shrieking held down by my brother  
Why didn't we let her kill him  
And take her out in handcuffs  
She would have just been placed  
In a sanatorium for the old age insane  
I brought my father to a stranger's house  
If a friend and settling in with defiance  
Got himself well out of diapers rid of walker  
All medicine discarded and walked about  
If slowly repeating himself while asking  
Did I already say that  
Don't let this happen to me he wrote pleadingly  
When she made he face his Alzheimer's  
Showing him a documentary made for medical personnel  
Showing the bitter decline when losing a mind  
He died well on his own terms surrounded  
Not by his family but by angels escorts  
Not end of life professionals rather Irish balladeers  
Filled with folk lore and folderol  
I was there as he closed his eyes  
But not at his last growly sputtering breath

How did I make the decision to remove my father  
To take him away from the familiar  
Comforting as his memory sputtered  
Ceased to remember the familiar  
A final comfort as death eased into him  
How did I dare take him  
Don't have an answer – humane or cruel  
Leaning on my walking stick  
More and more will not be answered  
If remembered recalled  
Actions taken cannot be  
Turned around retaken or restored  
Always the road not taken  
And that has made all the difference –NB

*I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I,  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference. Robert Frost, The Road Not Taken*

**Preparation for Solitude to be Solitary  
Trekking wilderness outside of me  
Fearing no longer the fearfulness within me**

Meaning translated being alone  
Transliterate elucidate  
Not easy external  
To the walls the sanctuaries  
Estuaries of self-imposed silence  
To take a vow of vacancy  
To foresee and to know  
One would always be alone  
An eleven-year-old girl  
Walking to and from school  
Had the revelation  
An apocalyptic moment  
A jolt a bolt of reality  
Slicing cutting into her being  
From that moment she knew  
She would always be alone  
Foredoomed or prophecy  
Sheltered in her dominion  
Isolated never connected  
She became an interminable  
And if at times forced smile  
Promulgating promises of civility

Conversation connectedness  
Regardless of age or station  
On bus on a street corner  
A gaggle of kids in the hallways  
Classes changing at Weequahic  
Receiving the most popular votes  
First for student council  
And then for Vice president  
Jew predominating population  
Voted her in but the black students  
Without exception overwhelmingly  
I was the people's council officer  
She had three A List best friends  
Wore club jackets the fashion at the time  
For two discrete and competing groups  
Hung out more clung to friends  
Whose mothers loved just hanging out  
Playing solitaire or scrabble never probing  
One mommy suckled a budding teenager  
Effortlessly unselfconsciously unstintingly  
She knew read my loneliness my misery  
Though she never unraveled the mystery  
Solitariness came at a price  
Unspeakable my mother's behavior  
Incidents of heightened mental cruelty  
Locked me into myself  
Got me cultivating an unrevealing openness  
No one connects so deeply so unabashedly  
If not driven to smiles to conceal hide  
Withering pain driving me to sobs  
Crashing down bedtimes  
Sleeping with eyes half opened  
Waiting for the rampage  
The whirligig of my parents' foreplay  
**You disgust me** an open door greeting  
And we go on from there  
Boot camp training lifelong  
To stay isolated alone solitary  
While appearing joyful  
All encompassing embrace of life  
Extend unconditional connection to others  
Original sin transubstantiation  
Fostered in otherworldly emissary ambassador  
Of good will without portfolio

Executing successful solitariness



Requires an exacting training  
Embedded in fear of others  
Of finding love in tatters  
Tart graffiti inscribed  
In solicitous goodbye episodes  
Discrete scenes imagined  
I was in lifelong lifesaving training  
Walkabout ventures taxing acuity  
Persevering saving rescuing myself  
In me the origin essence of resilience  
Trained on tricky ominous threatening terrain  
Friendships entertained heart disdained  
Reimagining recreating right of passage  
Building interiority strength to carry out  
A life of solitude no matter who or what  
Tried to claim seduce befriend me  
Breaking through  
This trained self-retrained heart  
The one exception motherhood  
Not just of biological children  
Children born of my body  
But a found son who seemed  
To climb out of me extend me  
In ways unforeseen unknowable  
For which I am daily grateful  
Standard bearer  
Strangulation entanglement  
Vouchsafed forsaken  
Weaponized friendship  
The tax the toll the enslavement  
Putting away dishes from dryer  
Wonder if they would approve of the dishes  
Waiting for a lunch date  
Sweeping the room so personally  
And lovingly and intentionally put together  
Always holding it up to the light of their approval  
I have bought her pottery  
Help her pack up as she left her pottery space  
Drove her home  
Read his books and commented  
Called upon with each crisis with their daughter  
Helped and then silenced never to remind of  
Got their granddaughters  
Into the most sought after high school  
Was on the other end of the phone

For each drug crisis with their daughter  
Supported her through an early abortion  
When they were on one  
Of their many extended trips to Paris and France  
She always sent me postcards from the edge  
Sub texted she missed me I was a friend  
We both had hard time mothers hers a step  
Mother dying in snow avalanche  
Skiing in the Austrian Alps  
She married a Jew her father a Nazi  
Banishing her when asked about  
An event in her early twenties  
Normalizing wrongly our co-joint experiences  
She practically snapped back she was nomadic  
Had no country no home was a nanny in France  
Rallied her while she was in college and graduate school  
Came to dinner parties until no longer invited  
Her husband covetous of her need for me  
To be if minimally a lunch time friend  
She shares family secrets  
And then tells me not to mention speak of  
Of all the friends I have had  
My heart opened grudgingly to her  
Trying to force it closed is a problem  
Dishes from dryer should not  
Dredge up her or their approbation  
Was all that boot camp for naught  
As I sit on the reviewing stand  
Of my last weeks months days  
I find there were generous  
Give and takes I can chart  
What each friend held out to me  
But from here none  
She is the last to discard  
Move to the dead letter file  
I was the keeper of my own fate  
I chose to be alone always  
Or it chose me in either case  
I was solitary living primarily alone  
Practiced eating by myself in restaurants  
Go to movies and museums  
Without the encumbrances of friendship or conversation  
I will always be alone and so it came to be  
I was I am I will to be until exhaling  
The final breath is freed from within me - NB

*For we walk by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7*

***Native American Indian Boy to Manhood Ritual...***

*(The legend of the Indian youth's rite of passage:)*

*His father takes him into the forest, blindfolds him and leaves him alone.*

*He is required to sit on a stump the whole night and not remove the blindfold until the rays of the morning sun shine through it.*

*He cannot cry out for help to anyone. Once he survives the night, he is a MAN.*

*He cannot tell the other boys of this experience because each lad must come into manhood on his own.*

*The boy is naturally terrified. He can hear all kinds of noises. Wild beasts must surely be all around him. Maybe even some human might do him harm.*

*The wind blew the grass and earth, and shook his stump, but he sat stoically, never removing the blindfold.*

*It would be the only way he could become a man!*

*Finally, after a horrific night, the sun appeared and he removed his blindfold.*

*It was then that he discovered his father sitting on the stump next to him.*

*He had been at watch the entire night, protecting his son from harm.*



*We, too, are never alone.*

*Even when we don't know it, our Heavenly Father is watching over us, sitting on the stump beside us.*

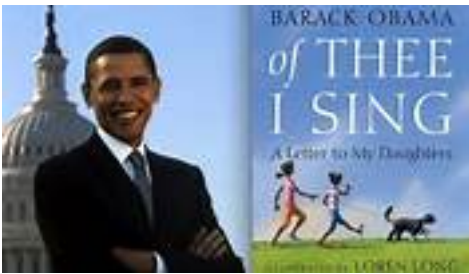
*When trouble comes, all we have to do is reach out to Him.*

*Symbols Cymbals*  
*Cantilevered diatribe*  
*Mirror Image*  
*Please dear G...*  
*Save the USA*





*Of Thee I Sing... George and Ira Gershwin*





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USAUSAUSAUSAUSAUSAUSAUSA - NB

***No to racists***

*No to fascists*

*No to taxes funding racists and fascists*

*No mercy for rapists*

*No pity for bigots*

*No forgiveness for nativists*

*No to all those*

*No hope without rage*

*No rage without teeth*

*No separate peace*

*No easy feat*

*No to bounds by genders*

*No to clickbait as culture*

*No to news as truths*

*No to art as untruths*

*No anti-Semitic anything*

*No Islamophobic anything*

*No progress without others*

*No meaning without meaning*

*No means no*

*No means no*

*No means no*

*No means no*

*Paul Chan, Badlands Unlimited, New No's*

***I am your own forever. Othello, Shakespeare***

***Isn't that what's scariest about psychopaths, that we can't fit them into our frame of reference? Review of Othello Ben Brantley***

— A friend once told me about going to see her father shortly before he died. He had advanced Alzheimer's and peered at her blankly. Then he said, "You are home."

"Yes, Dad," she said. "I'm your daughter."

He said, "I had you too much under my thumb."

**Home, and what constitutes it, is the most potent of memories. It's not excess of love we regret at death's door, it's excess of severity.**

**If we lived every day as the last day of our lives, the only quandary would be how to find the time to shower love on enough people. We live distracted and die with too much knowledge to bear.**

December has come, the last month of an awful year, and I am sure that I am not alone in saying good riddance to 2016. It has been the worst of years, one of those periodic reminders that the raging beast in humankind always lurks.

For me, the menacing political storms of the United States and Europe have been accompanied by family illness, and I've found myself in recent days cocooned in thoughts of those I love, the fragility of life and life's delicate beauty.

I listened this week to an inventor, a brilliant man convinced of the proximity of human immortality, which he believes to be just a couple of medical bridges away. He's taking dozens of pills to ensure that he reaches the first of those bridges, perhaps around 2030. I confess that immortality, whose attainment is a hot theme in Silicon Valley, does not interest me.

When I think of it, the image that comes to my mind is of a blazingly hot day with the noonday sun beating down in perpetuity. The light is blinding. There is no escape from it, no perspective, no release.

**The most beautiful times of day are dawn and dusk, when shadows are long, offering contrast, refuge and form. Death is the shadow that gives shape to existence, urgency to love, brilliance to life. Limitless life would turn into tedium without resolution.**

**As Ecclesiastes has it, there is "a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted." I find it hard to imagine what inner peace can exist without acceptance of this cycle — the bright green of the first spring leaf, the brittle brown leaves of fall skittering down an alley in a gust of wind.**

The point of this is not to urge mere acquiescence to death, whether physical or political, in a season when death merchants are on the march. On the contrary, this is a time to rage, a time to heed Dylan Thomas: "Rage, rage against the dying of the light."

Another friend, who has battled and vanquished cancer, told me the other day of going to lunch with his 98-year-old father a couple of months before his father's death.



*My friend fought back tears as he recalled how his father leaned over to him toward the end of the meal and said, "You know, I did not want to die before I knew you were well."*

*It is for sons to bury their fathers, not fathers their sons.*

*Ah, fathers. They wait so long before they let down their guard with their sons. When they do, the power and poignancy of it is overwhelming.*

***My father, now 95 and withdrawn, wrote to me on the death 17 years ago of my manic-depressive mother: "I know that my spirit will not soon be released from those cruel demons that tore so relentlessly at the entwining fabric of love between Mom and me. I did strive within the feeble limits of my human fallibility to preserve and cherish and sustain her. But alas — for Mama ultimately, death was the only angel that could shield her from despair."***

*The most vulnerable parts of our nature are often those closest to our greatest gifts. I will always be grateful for the moments I was able to see my gifted father unguarded.*

*That goes as well for his brother, my Uncle Bert, who died three years ago at 95. He fought for this suddenly fragile free world, battling across Italy in the 6th South African Armored Division, 19th Field Ambulance. He would have been disgusted by 2016.*

*Except for one thing: the World Series victory of the Chicago Cubs.*

*After World War II, my uncle studied dentistry at Northwestern University, and he retained a passion for the city's baseball for the rest of his life. He was at the opening game of the White Sox's (losing) 1959 World Series, and he would recall to me the bedlam created by Ted Kluszewski's first home run as it crashed into the bleachers at what was then the team's home, Comiskey Park. He felt that the crescendo "would lift us off our feet."*

*I've been having imaginary conversations with Bert about the Cubs and Chicago. I hear his voice.*

***The dead whisper to us, they console us, they admonish us. Love more, love better. Do not — Dylan Thomas again — go gentle into that good night. — The New York Times***

***Roger Cohen, Do Not Go Gentle, NY Times 12/3/16***

**Black garbage bag filled with Hanes**

Hanes wife beaters tee shirts briefs long leg  
And sports socks in gray black and white  
Twelve to a plastic sealed wrap  
Sink my teeth into this, what teeth  
Whip my eyes into a teary frenzy  
Plumb the depths the bowels  
This garbage symbolizes  
Heaven and hell  
Life's circumstances  
Keeping a body covered  
While poop pours from ostomy bag  
Butt, without rectum leaks  
And open surgical hole a year later  
Oozes, gauze holds back the flow

*I have known the inexorable sadness of pencils, Neat in their boxes, dolor of pad and paper-weight, All the misery of manila folders and mucilage, Desolation in immaculate public places, Lonely reception room, lavatory, switchboard, The unalterable pathos of basin and pitcher, Ritual of multigraph, paper-clip, comma, Endless duplication of lives and objects. And I have seen dust from the walls of institutions, Finer than flour, alive, more dangerous than silica, Sift, almost invisible, through long afternoons of tedium, Dropping a fine film on nails and delicate eyebrows, Glazing the pale hair, the duplicate grey standard faces.*

*Theodore Roethke - Dolor*

Fecund feted wetted sobs no more  
What is beyond sadness  
What is beyond grief  
Unremitting unsalvageable  
Life with a still life of fruit and flowers  
Where the salve the recompense  
Boy with broken body  
Buys Hanes underwear to bring back  
To Los Angeles where he is smushed squashed  
Into a small back room with Chloe  
His nemesis or his girlfriend  
Mom it's in my head  
My head is all screwed up  
You have demons in your head  
Assisted living life trainer nutritionist psychiatrist  
The terms before I drop off your universe your life  
He paces the tennis court in Beverly Hills my son  
The younger one the found one  
She turned his broken body into a metaphor for insanity

Mom mom mom mom I don't know what to do  
And then he moves back into a private room at UCLA medical center  
For a week of tests to find out why he can sit why his wound leaks  
What the genesis of the pain  
Why his body won't heal  
The demons the demons you are making me crazy she tells him  
I can't take it much longer she tells my older son with whom they live  
Mom don't come to the hospital he warns me  
I come get there as he does  
He cries I told you not to come  
His tears those of relief to have his mommy with him  
A wedge between the girl friend who has had it  
She spins a tale of lady bountiful our very own Clara Barton  
The tithe for her care constant threats to walk out  
If he doesn't do something about his darkness dark moods demons  
This is an old trick  
Transposing ambivalence or hatred  
Into the other person's malevolence  
She is fleeing right through him  
As if through a wall and she was a ghost  
Invisible riding out the tide  
His madness like the red sea driving her off  
**She ma** Still the experience in the hospital has yet to find words  
We flew back to NYC business class  
He stayed almost a month  
You are not an invalid  
I am not going to run around getting you food and drinks  
But will buy you boxes of Dutch  
For you to transform into blunts and puff and puff  
Dangling off your lips while you play PlayStation  
You are 28 you have spend more than a decade  
Battling death manifest in your stomach area  
Food taking in and eliminating nothing easy here for you  
These the terms for being alive  
You unabashedly turn like a flower or plant to the sun  
Your soul knows you need to turn this way and that to live  
Phototropism embed in your heart your body your head

Saw the garbage bag with packages of Hanes underwear  
And I felt *Theodore Roethke* surge within me  
The sadness of pencils of wife beaters tee shirts and long leg briefs  
My grief founders tenders latches attaches on the totems of survival  
Holding back the damn of a body out of which poop pours  
Wounds ooze and a butt without a rectum is no more a place to sit on  
I feel the sadness of black garbage bags....NB

***She made a vow to stay vigilant to keep*** the meat between one's ribs from being torn, to keep the hard marble of the cranium covered with its own skin.  
Each doses of hopelessness is met with some kind of call for singing.  
I don't battle M.S. I relent to its humiliations.  
I've already fallen. This is the voice from the swamp.

Lucia Pefillo, Poet Who Faced Illness with Humor and Poignancy  
NY times Obit., 10/26/16

The trick is  
Relent repent consent  
Trickster death  
Swarthy swollen dominant  
Relent repent consent  
But not to death...NB

***VSED pronounced Veased*** – for voluntarily stopping eating and drinking. It causes death by dehydration, usually within seven to 14 days.

*Small group of individuals find VSED a reasonable exit strategy.*

*It's for strong-willed, independent people with very supportive families.*  
Paula Span, *To Hasten the End, Some Patients Don't Eat or Drink*  
NY Times 10/25,16

### **Sniffing Around Graveyard Dog**

Insulting to anyone lingering  
Beyond 75 or more  
Time to turn the tide  
Turn the world over  
Time to stop taking up space  
My wisdom worn thin  
Jealously guarding a will to live  
Dying is too hard mother would say  
Giving up life another day a sunrise  
What the day will yield anticipation  
Surprises conversations meeting another  
Smiling eyes locked for if a second  
A tree getting trimmed by a man on a hoist  
The tempo of the water on the Meer  
Centerpiece trees floating mirroring starlight  
Glittering shamelessly boldly celebratory  
Christmas tides and tithes yes witness  
Thus another moment of life  
Gravity pulls on every part of my body  
My tits are shamelessly falling flattening  
I am shortening by inches month-to-month  
Standing on tiptoe looking over shoulders  
Grave beyond gravity's pull and yield  
To death's graceless tug and pull  
Gravy icing on the cake to live beyond 75  
I have gone am going well beyond  
My legs wobble pain seers  
I carry a stylish if comedic walking stick  
Too prideful to brace myself with walker  
The aisle of the local buses obstacle course  
Walkers sticking out daring one to pass by  
I am on the verge I have promised myself  
To yield to die in a solitary graceful way  
Before diapers before slobbering  
Before tearful children and grandchildren  
Saying goodbye wondering when they  
Could move beyond my bedside  
Remembering me  
And not watching the wither  
The ultimate indignity of death  
No white light no fluttering angels  
Am I coward do I not keep  
That mordant promise to myself  
To fall cinder and ash  
To the hardened winter ground

Or onto the soggy muddy terrain  
After a sodden spring rain  
Gravy gravity graveyard  
Ground swell for my demise  
Is this the day is this the one  
We cannot truly fathom an end  
I am still looking for my long dead father  
We live within memory and heart and soul  
I told my granddaughter  
Not to edit not to write not to ignite  
Not an expurgated version of self  
To die right not righteous not punitively  
To give up the space to yield  
No voice on the other end of the phone  
No email not another word thought shared  
Not to despair as the real end closes in  
Daring me to finish what I started long ago  
To write my own death to create the end  
With will dexterity finality - NB



## **Piebald Weather-beaten**

Age spots

Dot-dot-dot

My hands my wrists

A dead giveaway

I am old

Getting moldy

Spotted piebald

Age spots

Dot-dot-dot

Hands wrists

Peeking out

From necessary long sleeves

Always a dead giveaway - nb



*age spots*



baby piebald deer

## **I Have...or Immaculate Conception**

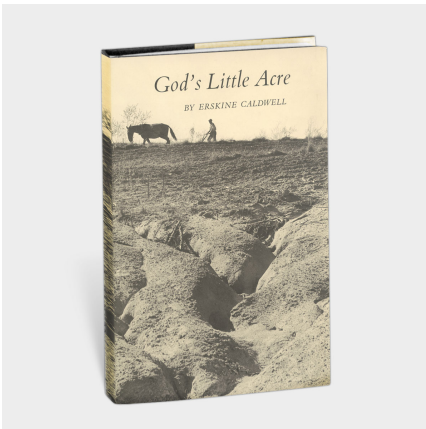
I am sunk deep  
In the unthinkable  
I am sunk  
In the muck  
The debris  
The scattershot history  
Of all who came  
Before me  
Swept up in a  
Hereditary pile up  
The past asteroid  
Of cumulative history  
Smacks into me  
Darkened clouds amass  
Funneling toward me  
Embattled secrets  
Long hidden  
Smashing into to me  
They come  
With the force of  
Undeniable revelation  
Restoration restitution  
Come clean mean  
As past truth can be  
Yearning to turn away  
Wrenching scream escapes  
Did not want to know  
What there was to know  
Groaning grinding anguish  
As truth engulfs  
Fights its way to me  
As I sit bedside  
Vigilante prayerful  
Watching a son  
Not born of my body  
Reincarnate Christ  
Death embodied  
I have crested  
Sorrow pounds  
Diminishes absorbs  
Reached my limit  
Can endure no more  
Witness to taunting  
Tantalizing seducing death



I am he my son  
Tyranny agony  
Seizes vise like hold



Begging pleading  
With whom, God?  
Time to quit  
Get on with it  
End it!  
He and I  
Mother and son  
Confront death  
Confounding  
Wish to die  
Vanish disappear  
Give up our  
*God's little acre*



Wanting death  
To be on our terms  
Me old as *Methuselah*



He young as  
A spring yearling



Time flows away  
Lose grip  
Of personal  
Singular deaths  
Time eviscerates  
Chance evaporates  
Morning dew  
Closing up at noon



Our fates conjoined  
We are one body  
We are one mind  
He is the kin  
Universe of soul  
Commingled combined  
He came colliding  
Whimsy to wish  
Into my arms  
Found and foundering  
We are a plural pronoun

Mother and found son  
Lurking in the shadow  
Of his hospital bed  
I saw the shadow of death  
Grim reaper



Fractured beyond repair  
Impetus to live be alive  
We have reached  
Rock bottom  
Death inevitable  
Indelibly write  
In actuarial charts  
By all measurements  
I have lived  
A good long life  
But he that son  
Not born of me  
A hieroglyph  
Of suffering  
What next  
Doctors contemplate



Rodin

Is there a new medical trial  
For him to embark upon  
Or has he had enough  
This boy of mine  
Twenty-eight nearly twenty-nine  
Trickster fate we have had our fill

Skies opening brightest  
Blinding light shining  
We are on our way  
Heavens gate opening - NB



.....

***Home is a secret world that closes its door in your absence and never lets you find it again.*** Stephanie Bishop, *The Other Side of the World*

***I saved lives because I can't deal with unnecessary deaths – I just can't. All humans are equal, whatever their origins, their beliefs, their skin color. There are no superiors, no inferiors. That is not acceptable for me. Adolfo Kaminsky, forged papers created false papers to get primarily Jews and children into hiding. Having the right papers can cost you your life. That's why he became a forger and continued on throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Adolfo Kaminsky***

**Why Be Alive?  
Here is why...NB**

***A primitive forest, druidical, solitary and savage – not ten visitors a year – broken rocks everywhere –shade overhead, thick underfoot with leaves – a just palpable wild and delicate aroma. Walt Whitman, An Ulster County Waterfall***

## **Down the Extant Metaphoric Rabbit Hole**

Inches from death  
Knee deep  
Swollen with the reap and dung  
The past sweltering in me  
Blending melding melting me  
Into new shapes new forms  
Metamorphosis at mid-night  
Reincarnation as a bat  
Buttressing those who live beyond  
With the mythic the righteous  
Their story need not  
Be pitied and sordid  
Overflowing with old remorse  
Tangential incidental  
Chance choice containment  
Did I go beyond the unknowable  
Spinning sepulcher  
Of chance and choice  
On head of needle



Never strayed  
Far from the staid  
Risk-averse imperative  
Premise of my life  
Stay pristine and unfound  
Desire squashed quashed  
Dying fish gasping for air  
Deepening thickening  
Exponentially imposed  
Pressed upon suppression  
Inner voices harbinger voices  
Aching to live more - so much more  
Deadening jolts of light  
Dreams remote unremembered  
Swaddled in fear as an infant  
Never cut tore through the wrapping



Mythic magical believed  
My birth triggered  
Lunacy madness in my mother  
Never laid that to rest  
Arrested development  
Evil spell webbed  
Mother lathered mouth  
Beat her self fists to head  
Happy hour tantrum  
Just prior to dinnertime  
No wonder stayed conjoined  
I was her reason raison d'être  
I was her life raft  
Tempestuousness the staple  
Reflecting quietly  
At life's terminating point  
See greatest challenge  
Greatest success  
I did not kill myself  
My torch song my liberty  
My harvest yield bounty  
My fruited flouted trees



Ticker tape backward glance  
Survived suicide  
At twenty-one  
Wanted life to be done  
Urgent fate undone  
Born 1940  
Destiny old age  
Promises lost promises kept  
Time to complete the very end -NB

## HOSPITAL STAYS HOSPITAL SENTINEL HOSPITAL WATCH

A son kicks me out of hospital room  
I leave return later  
I panicked was all he said  
When I made the inevitable  
Turnstile return

My grandson owen can't read  
He knows the difference  
Between a medal and an honor  
Silver and gold Caldecott awardees  
Springing from his fingers  
Structures made with magnet tiles  
That would thrill amaze  
Frank Lloyd Wright Frank Gehry  
He can't read  
Letters jigsaw his mind  
One thousand pieces  
Don't work  
Play with his mind  
Ensemble pieces  
Solitary unknowable  
Mysterious jigs jags and squiggles  
Jiggle toggle the mind  
He sees vistas beyond horizons  
But not letters on a page  
Incidental shapes  
And yet his vocabulary  
Builds on the sermons  
Of great men big thinkers  
An anomaly  
Words lost in a morass  
In a reverie  
Clogged smudged  
Blotted out by rainbows  
And pots of gold  
He can reach into another life  
With a rapturous kindness  
An empathy rarely felt by sages  
And he can't read  
Frederick Douglass spoke of reading  
***Once you learn to read you will be forever free***  
I think he couldn't read  
To protect his mind with a certain shield

So that his imagination could extend  
Beyond the girth of an eagle's wings  
And sweep up in such flight  
With gusto resilience  
Before the compression of words  
He needed to range free  
Free of constraints  
Vocabulary words meanings  
Juxtapositions of sounds  
Decipher what the real world  
Has you to knowing  
He needed to stray far afield  
Where words are yet to form  
Upon the land of the written word  
Until he waited to be born  
And burdened with and constrained  
His freedom came before  
Letting the writing word  
Clutter take up space and rhyme  
By design he waited until  
He had the courage instilled  
Not to be pinned to definition  
Language frees but language harbors  
Sunk in the muck and mundane  
The ordinary fixation  
On the literal  
He needed to escape this  
Plunking down into formation  
They call it dyslexia  
I call it pushing time  
And rote expectation aside  
By design  
Owen is the embodiment  
Of our most evolved selves  
He has taken my fathers  
Grand and true righteousness  
And brought it down to earth  
Made it human  
In him we have moved  
Beyond the apologies  
The pathetic guilt  
Of the *Holocaust*  
Broken marriages  
Half lives lies  
He is our truth and beauty  
We are free finally



Tenderly thoroughly human  
And humane  
Bubbling rambling  
Letting it just spill out  
Who knows what meaning  
What contrivance  
What indulgence  
I am aloud  
I am a crowd of fiction  
Wading in the pernicious  
Precarious prefabricated waters  
Of the river of death  
She is the grand illusionist  
A fiction  
She is the absolute archetype  
Of good mother and wife  
As depicted by a Normal Rockwell  
Life Magazine cover  
She has images of perfection  
And stages her moments  
As carefully to form  
Replicas projections  
Of an apple pie mother and wife  
She gobbles apple pie  
Moves a tiny corner of hamburger  
Around on a plate  
Making scribbles gobbledygook  
Over and around the catsup  
She bites into a boiled egg  
As if char pit of barbecued meat  
Stuffs half back into a baggy  
She will toss into the garbage  
She is the absolute  
Embodiment of Napoleon  
In the insane asylum  
Dare you say she is not  
She will have to kill you  
She is safe airtight inside  
Her Napoleonic machinations  
Do we keep or sane  
Or break her  
My son her husband  
The father  
Of their shared three children  
Must decide whether  
He will push humpty dumpty

Off the ledge  
Break her into a million pieces  
Never to be put back together again  
Oh how we choose our mates  
Our partners  
Those we cohabit with  
To bare the offspring  
Or brutal legacy  
Loveless marriages  
Birth comes with or without love  
It needs to push on  
The future demands it  
We are stuck  
In tribal morass  
Fearing love  
Settling for much less = NB

*...Banishing punishing thoughts. Agnes Martin, artist*

*The movie is not really deciding whether you're gay or straight – those terms are never spoken. It's about the chemistry of two people at a moment in time.  
Stephen Holden, film review – "Being 17"*

**He kicked me out of his room**

Nurse can I tell her, pointing to me  
To leave – yes she says in gothic whispery  
I left dragging luggage and backpack  
I am his mother  
Having travelled some three thousand miles  
To be with him in the hospital  
He had told me not to come  
He sobbed when I walked in  
I made the right decision  
The furious onslaught informed me

I left I just left walked out  
Expelled kicked out  
"patients have rights"  
The mantra of the hospital staff  
In case patient interferes with assigned task

Later he said to his girlfriend  
His nurse his alta-mother  
That he wanted me to return

Of course gathered up my luggage  
And got a ride back

Sorry mom, just panicked  
Was all he said  
I said nothing  
I am struck dumb  
Words are not within reach  
Only guttural sounds tears  
We are in that dark space  
Where words are defied  
Where experience floats free  
Dangerous unfathomable too real

NB

Dear Naomi,  
*I am horrified to think  
that I might be loosing my mind.  
So sorry to have failed you.  
Forgive me,  
(A frightened, Nancy)  
The card featured a cover that said:  
*Home is where the heart is...**



I had asked her to get my mail  
While I was in LA  
We often exchanged these favors  
Gave her my mail and door keys  
Upon returning  
She looked blankly at me  
Couldn't find keys  
Hadn't gotten the mail.  
Nancy is nine years older than I am  
I am 76 –  
Nancy stands upright  
Dresses each day  
As if to please the ducks and walkers  
In the Park

Her window faces directly on the Park  
When the big question  
When to pull the plug  
When to take those damn pills  
As my mother used to threaten  
When is the time  
Before being a frightened Nancy  
Worrying that she might be  
Losing her mind  
When to say a real and final goodbye  
When the hand guided by the eye  
Toward a freely opened mouth  
Parched from days of little food and water  
And swallow the pills  
The pills that will put you gently to sleep  
The sleep from which you never awaken  
When the time... NB

### **Predatory prayerful**

Preys on me  
Wishing for my death  
Wanting me to take  
Matters into my own hands  
Urgent laying on of hands



Death whisperers urge me on  
Alice's mythic rabbit hole  
Finds me wandering lost  
Dark dank foreboding  
Where are the words  
Caught in the gulch  
Of my epiglottis  
Scream out for help  
The words stuck  
In the glut muck  
Too many words

Piled on smashed crushed  
Shmushed together  
How many times  
Are you allowed  
This contrivance  
Planning on a death  
Urging one on  
A triptych of trip faults



That never happens  
My greatest triumph  
For which I claim  
The highest ultimate  
Commendation  
I never did myself in  
Didn't do it  
Commit suicide  
Prideful in a death  
That didn't never did  
Take place  
Such a legacy  
Keeping the evil eye  
At bay arms distance  
Distinction travesty  
Of an early death  
Unfathomable the reason  
Didn't happen  
Held myself at a minimum  
Never all the stops  
Of the organ pulled out  
Never the harkening  
Of a full sunset or sunrise  
Never a complete unraveling  
Not in life not in love  
Not at work  
Kept some back  
Waiting waiting

For the smoldering  
Slithering lurking death  
Just behind the wings  
Waiting patiently  
For me to grab for it  
To take it  
To own it  
Now old and decrepit  
Limping and lurching  
About the house  
Pains shooting up  
And down my leg  
Hobbled held upright  
By dandyish walking stick  
Who am I fooling  
Next cane walker wheelchair  
I have lived a half-life  
A half-lie  
Now it is truly  
Time to die  
It happened  
I lasted this long  
For death  
To be a natural event  
A natural culmination  
Of a life well  
Or not well-lived  
This flirt with death  
Kept me sanguine safe  
Now with a cynical smirk  
He or she holds out an open hand  
Waiting waiting still hands me a chance  
To have it my way  
The ending mine to craft and create

NB

*SAMPLES OF MY COMMON-PLACE BOOK*

*I carried in my pocket for three summers, and absorb'd over and over again, when the mood invited. I find so much in having a poem or fine suggestion sink into (a little then goes a great ways) prepar'd by these vacant-sane and natural influences.*

*Walt Whitman, Specimen Days*

Taken from Whitman's Common-Place Book

*The whole wide ether is the eagle's way:*

*The whole earth is a brave man's fatherland. Euripides*

## Women Appropriate Power Red



## Women see red



## Cock of the walk

Stalk squawk bushwhack  
Women's lives life gob smacked



## Men's put on red ties

Power heft  
Gives a little zest  
Triangular dangle  
Of red



**Emerge from man cave**

Entitled  
Dash of warring  
Warning red

Rosie the riveter  
Red bandana



**Gets men**  
Going bananas





**Red dread not dead**

Red inflames  
Gets bulls insane



It was bullied blood red  
Tormented punched about  
Threatened gun cocked  
Until I put on my red bandana  
Flexing my muscles  
And walked the hell out - NB

## **Autodidact Delights**

Whitman too drew inspiration  
From the words of others  
He would be agog  
At our Google span of sky  
Word picture  
Composite  
Internet collage  
Scraps of memory  
Fractured fragments  
Shrapnel shattered  
Shoved off  
Edge of memory  
Leapfrog from bed  
Grab pen  
Write down  
Random inner dialogue  
Word comes to mind  
Must write it down  
Or it is gone  
Disappeared  
Stealth jokester  
Moments later  
Present tense  
Alive live  
In the moment  
Lost gone  
Emptied  
Vagrant mind  
Theft of outcropping  
Oasis of reminiscence  
Streams of thought  
Summer breeze  
Capture the fire fly  
While it alights  
In these the dormant days  
Images come to me  
And if not held seized  
Vanish – not a trace  
Not a nomadic mnemonic  
To remember  
Caste into memory  
Keep mind agile alert  
In these the disappearing days  
Scraps fragments  
Fractured memory

As if a catalogue  
An enormous resource library  
Lives within my head  
And there blert  
It something comes to me  
I am a refugee  
Of soul and solace  
As long as sugar plum fairies  
Dance into my head  
I remain undeniably not dead  
Click the red sequined shoes twice  
No place like home  
Home is where the heart is  
Home is where the art is  
Home is where I wander  
Admiring bits and pieces  
The collection of who I was  
Gathering taking it all in  
Word fragment call dazzle  
Feel the pulse  
Of it all bursting free  
Through me  
And then fleet-footed gone  
Without pen a scrap of paper  
I am nothing more  
Than thwarted vagrant  
All is lost memory - NB

**I can't draw my face away**  
From the anguish the agony  
The rock raw emotion  
Of my son  
Enduring yet again  
Full body examinations  
By fascinated  
Tongue clicking  
Hospital staff  
He's so young  
He has suffered so much  
I watched  
Rocked speechless  
The deepest sorrow  
The deepest fear  
An individual can bear  
I was there  
Mother and witness  
Confronting with him  
The rock bottom truth  
Of where we are  
Where we live with this  
An object of fascination  
Of ambition and medical research  
Of a body still quivering  
With a will to live  
In spite of despite  
Where do we get the courage  
To go beyond this moment  
I have him back home with me  
Light hearted  
Buying him boxes of Dutch  
He can turn into marijuana blunts  
I am beyond forlorn  
Beyond being able to speak of this  
Before I die  
I have to help him my son  
Make sense of his life  
His shivery will shimmers  
But that is not enough  
Will he collapse  
Tumble trembling into himself  
Before I go  
Vowing to die first  
But before I do  
Need to find a purpose

A reason for all this suffering  
Why?  
To find craft an answer  
Reason to illuminate  
Biodegradable life  
Tormenting life  
Dying life  
Why live be alive  
Before I die  
Need to know  
Need for him  
To find the reason  
Beyond the rebellion  
Ongoing of his body  
To go on...NB

*"You must go on. I can't go on. I'll go on." Samuel Beckett, "The Unamable"*



Francisco Clemente Self Portrait

**I see you I see you  
Yes...NB**

**Chrysalis Aeschlis**  
Pupa larva deep dive  
Then butterfly



*Aeschylus*  
*It is an easy thing for one*  
*whose foot is on the*  
*outside of calamity to give*  
*advice and to rebuke the sufferer.*

Don't tell me how to live!

*Don't tell me not to live, just sit and putter*  
*Life's candy and the sun's a ball of butter*  
*Don't bring around a cloud to rain on my parade*  
*Don't tell me not to fly, I simply got to*  
*If someone takes a spill, it's me and not you*  
*Who told you you're allowed to rain on my parade*  
*I'll march my band out, I'll beat my drum*  
*And if I'm fanned out, your turn at bat, sir*  
*At least I didn't fake it, hat, sir*  
*I guess I didn't make it*

*But whether I'm the rose of sheer perfection  
A freckle on the nose of life's complexion  
The cinder or the shiny apple of its eye*

*I gotta fly once, I gotta try once  
Only can die once, right, sir (Merrill and Styne)*

Cross hairs of memory  
Past Venus flytrap



Popping uninvited  
Unrequited love  
Splat fly sensors off guard  
Smack into my mind  
Imprisoned in pity  
Never found  
Or if did stick  
With true love  
Remembering  
Present prescient  
Whiplash past  
Projectile ascent  
Stampede  
Unremembered dreams  
Witches brew of wishes



Recollections assault badger



I don't want to remember you  
Foisted haphazardly  
Memories of men  
Picked harried married  
Who didn't or couldn't love me  
Purge them get them  
Get them out sight out of mind  
Too harsh squandered  
Beauty years  
On men who sullied  
Graffiti telemarked



Their lack of for love  
Or even distaste of me  
Basquat felt it  
My screaming  
WHY WHY WHY WHY  
Slugging scotch  
Mother's ugh milk  
Never tasted licked  
Engorged blimp tits  
Let milk dry up  
Held me at arms length  
This not having me howl  
WHY WHY WHY WHY  
I am screaming out  
Not because  
The men I picked  
Couldn't didn't



Holding nose love me  
Not because  
Mother shoved me  
Off her breast  
With revulsion disgust  
I am screaming  
WHY WHY WHY WHY  
And when and how  
Do we both  
Mother and found son  
Find a way  
To live or to die  
Hari kiri together  
Holding hands  
Life gets snuffed out  
Grafitti eulogy  
Scrambling  
Unreadable  
But by  
Navajo decoders  
Our pact  
Fight or quit  
WHY WHY WHY  
Time is it  
To quit or fight on  
Chrysalis Aeschylus  
Pupa larva butterfly  
Not to rebuke us  
The sufferers  
Wise words  
Dear Aeschylus  
Wrote our story out  
Dear Basquiat  
Got the symbolism right





Wizardly dastardly  
I picked men  
Who wouldn't couldn't  
Love me so what  
I have a son  
A found one  
Who lives  
With a broken body  
Moment to moment  
Living and dying  
WHYWHYWhy  
Go on why live  
Turn to sun  
Flowering hear  
Boy found

Dangling off  
Tropic tree  
A boy  
Without past  
Without history  
Butterfly or parrot  
Yield reincarnate  
Life precarious  
At the tippy toppy edge  
Ruthless merciless  
Give us the grace  
The wisdom  
To fly off  
Parrot or butterfly  
Caught in the ecstasy  
Of transformation  
Let death come  
Easily finally  
Unequivocally irrevocably – NB



## Struck Dumb

Silenced  
An aphasic abandoned by words  
Can't describe  
What I saw witnessed  
Sitting in a hospital room  
A just before room  
Preparing patient for surgery  
It was never just in my mind  
I was not wallowing  
In dollops of Holocaust  
Jib jab jabberwocky prittle prattle  
How is Luca drawl Southern style out  
And I would rush words  
Colliding asteroids of explanation  
Eyes widening ears perked  
Sadness puffy gray black rain clouds  
Befall facial expressions  
At times a hand shoots out  
To clasp and comfort me  
Only mothers of dying children  
Of cancer infested infiltrated babies  
Don't cloud their faces over  
With nachgemacht manufactured grief  
Words I have lost my words  
They are blown apart atomized  
Particles of subjects and predicates  
Jumbled heaped collision course  
Dangling tortuous participles  
Pronouns deflate implode  
No more I and thou you and me  
We have come to the end  
Of the tigers path

*Tiger, tiger, burning bright  
In the forests of the nights,  
What immortal hand or eye  
Could frame they fearful symmetry? "The Tiger" William Blake*

Its highways and byways  
Lickety-split curds and whey

Little Miss Moffat  
Sat on a tuffet,  
Eating her curds and whey;

Along came a spider  
Who sat down beside her



Backed into fairy tales  
Glossary of spider webs  
Configurations beyond the imaginable  
Tufted fluted knotted crisscrossing  
And at the center  
I am the threaded finger  
At the other end of the web  
We are at a fragile juncture  
Waiting for words  
Vocabulary to say what it is  
We know we witness  
The spoken word gone soft on me  
Stiletto silenced  
I am in forbidding ground  
I am at scorched earth motherhood  
A child of mine  
If not born of my body  
Suffers jaw bone deep  
Psychic anthropomorphic  
We are in troubled waters  
Not to trifle not to break out  
In gospel Hosannas  
No more time for prayer  
I see bone deep  
Despair a flimsy keepsake emotion  
How harmed or hurt  
To what length do we yield

When does no more no more  
Reach beyond pitched to a dog's inner ear  
We have cleared the underbrush  
Of pretend of happy days are here again  
No turning back  
I have seen the mortal  
Brought to his knees  
By predatory harm  
A disease lurked latched on  
And rubber gloved witch doctors  
Dug in and performed  
Magical thinking universe  
Rescue us take us in  
We are beyond words  
Beyond kin  
Beyond mother and son  
Mary's eyes water and sting  
Her son slung trapped  
Hammered to a cross  
I am she she is me  
Birthing brought harm  
Reckless moment  
Brought a devilish devious pain  
Jabbing jarring beyond repair  
Beyond recognizing beyond words

NB

*This fear is what is the ruin of us all. And some dominate us; they take advantage of our fear and frighten us still more. Mark this: as long as people are afraid, they will rot like the birches in the marsh. We must grow bold; it is time!" Maxim Gorky, Mother*

*june, further roommate wore ten gallon hat was queen of the rodeo in little rock and all of arkansas and had a photo signed by orville faubus wishing her luck at college - and me with a cello and my emmett till tears still being shed - we drove around in her new white thunderbird while she swigged from a bottle of fine bourbon we grew to love and admire each other - she had a love affair with our black intern minister from yale and then tried to kill herself too many worlds to bridge - xo nb*

*jeanne and jer, when a freshman at antioch - in a suite of rooms some twelve girls altogether - bob dylan was a regular resident in our suite - antioch very liberal visitation policy we could vote to let men stay overnight in our rooms - bob dylan lived most of the time with ellie baker - his girlfriend at the time - saw him some years later in cafe 47 with ben - he was singing and a friend said he will be the greatest singer of our time when everyone doubted that - went up to him and he said, oh hi nibs - ox nb*

***Dutch Law Would Let Healthy Older People Choose Death – NY Times 9/14/16***  
***Dan Bilefsky and Christopher E. Schuetze***

**And I am not crazy to want to die finish it all up**

While I can still stand upright if with a gimpy leg  
I can still remember names and faces  
I can remember for the most part what happened today  
As well as what happened in all the yesterdays  
I am not crazy to say “my mile is done”  
Only who is my guardian angel my Gordian knot  
The arm the hand that will still my trembling hand  
As it puts a compact of pills to mouth  
Body limp and weak having been starved for nearly a week  
Who will be there guide and friend  
As I take my life and let it with grace and purpose end.

*...in the Netherlands a proposed law that would allow people who are not suffering from a medical condition to seek assisted suicide if they feel they have “completed life.”  
...further people have the right to end their lives with dignity, and when they so choose.*

And I am not crazy...

Is there something more strange and lovely than a hummingbird?



In the courtyard bordered by flowers plumes and petals of deep probing color fluttering in and about a multitude of hummingbirds. I sat there in a swirl of Spanish words not one did I know or understand holding my new infant son as he each day became a bloom awakening like mums in the early fall. Transcendent space and time and I with a new infant who would call me mom lounging kept safe and invisible from the bandit dictator’s law. Mother and son flowers and hummingbirds...this could be no invention no mustering culling up of imagination. It was beyond anything the unconscious mind could dream up but the hummingbirds and the flowers kept me safely tucked into reality as a swirl of truth and moment became each day more revealed. nb



Historical painting of chrysanthemums from the *New International Encyclopedia*, 1902



The mums come  
Peeking through pushing out  
Hints tinges of yellow orange purple and pinks  
Sprouting as we watch slow motion  
The sun reveals their destiny  
To bloom for a few weeks  
And then fall crushed bruised and brown  
Each day I sit in the conservatory garden  
And watch as the mums come to life  
My heart hurts my mouth suppresses a scream  
I am at a dead end moment of dread  
Words yet to form to grace enlighten



What did my son and I experience  
In that hospital room at the UCLA medical center  
It cut across any vocabulary words  
Deep and dark savage a body a boy  
Under ravishing tormenting assault  
Drumming up every dark moment  
An upheaval of reckoning  
Time boomeranged  
Contend with moments yet memories  
Who were they to stir up the pot  
Awakening what is yet to be brought to mind  
Wearing us down to fine nub  
Rubbed down rock silt salt hardening  
Tendrils tendons held in reserve  
Tried to break the spell  
The ominous atmosphere  
Worse than any deadly plague advancing  
He my son kicked me out  
Had a nurse affirm he could get rid of me  
I left only to be called back  
I had panicked was all he could say  
We are beyond panic we are beyond fear  
We are beyond dread we live in the nether world  
Of the inevitable for which we will give no words  
The mums bring some solace a poultice pack  
To soothe what my heart festers and oozes  
What is beyond fear what is beyond bloom  
Beauty in extremis the flowers break through  
The sun draws seduces them to come out and bloom  
The incubation period the green stalks of stem  
Wave and bend in gentle winds  
The colors spring to life  
I hold on fasten to the blast aura of beauty  
I am in the rare place that cannot repeat  
Or even let myself know  
For what I already grieve

NB

## **Terminal Garden**

Into its habit of late fall dying  
Brown crisp  
A bunch of wild flowers  
Left to wilt color drained out  
Commemorate the comings and goings  
Of time of seasons  
All by some radical  
Ultimately unfathomable design  
Dissected bisected science interstices  
Between knowable and mystery



I sit quietly in the chill  
Marveling as the cycles  
Move imperceptibly through time  
I too on the cusp of the extraordinary  
Body withering and browning  
Bones crisp as cindered firewood  
My outstretched leg pulls with pain  
I call it writer's leg  
It origins sitting upright at the computer  
Straight as an early summer sunflower stalk  
Limerence tango distill obsessed  
A life to digest regress deflect reflect  
Titillate obviate love came and went  
I never grabbed the golden ring  
The circus van waited and waited  
And then just passed me by  
And now find shedding tears  
A mad eyewash  
Remembering how hard mother tried  
And how I turned my back  
If cleaning her glasses at the very end  
When she could no longer see  
See me see me  
Who was the me she was to see  
Sun cups me in the chill  
Astride a marble bench

In front of the Met  
How sad when mother realized  
She would never again  
Mount a seniors' bus  
And visit old friends in galleries  
At MOMA the Met  
Her New York art forays  
Had come to an end  
My days of walking the Highline  
Weaving in and out of gallery streets  
Just beneath ultimately going to  
The Swiss restaurant  
Trestle for bundnerfleisch  
Telling the indulgent waiter  
I used to live in Switzerland  
Didn't mention above a drying out plant  
Mother you tried so hard  
Mother I feel the urgency of your quests  
To have us love you  
No matter how crazy how mean-mouthed  
Mother funny you are the one who stays  
You outlived my youth my possibility for love  
Now too old days upended for my museum tours  
And you are the one I find I can't live without  
**Savage ravishing art brute**  
The winnowing withering  
Of summer into fall  
I sit just behind the crisp and browning decline  
Leg throbbing walking stick in hand  
My imagination fills not with sugar plum fairies  
But being the sultan earth beneath  
This very perennial garden  
Coming and going glorious  
And then sodden soil tilled  
Want to be part of regeneration  
Earth reimaging itself with great expectation  
When winter frost yields to spring flower and fruit  
And at their root just some animated version of me  
Reincarnate reborn  
In the most brilliant and festive colors  
A season to live and a season to die  
And a season to seed new life -nb

*Ecclesiastes 3*

*To every thing there is a season—Whatever God does, it will be forever—God will judge the righteous and the wicked.*

*1 To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:*

*2 A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;*



.co



com/736x/38/13/d1/3813d11dfa23e88f369d0cde6cef6823.jpg

*There are moments that the words don't reach  
There is suffering too terrible to name  
You hold your child as tight as you can  
And push away the unimaginable  
The moments when you're in so deep  
It feels easier to just swim down.*

*Lin-Manuel Miranda, Hamilton, song, It's Quiet Uptown*

*I want more life. Tony Kushner, Angels in America*

*It's feeling like I want to be alive. Oskar Eustis, director Public Theater  
(son Jack committed suicide at age 16)*

*Time falls upon them like an ox.*

*What need is there for me to tell you about the dry anguish in the evenings.*

**— SANDRA LIM *Later in the Garden***

**NEW THINGS**

*I can't touch it  
because it burns or  
is too cold*

*Sunlight falls through the new things like milk through a baby*

*Through fingers*

*I cut them off  
so I can palm the rest  
This is only a test*

*The new things sit on the table  
and breathe*

*I am not alone I am not alone I am not alone I am not alone I am no longer alone*

*I meant to say            and bleed*

*The leaves on the trees even*

*Turn to gold*

**— MICHAEL DICKMAN**

### **MARRIAGE NESTS**

*In the tree in the yard is a bird's nest.  
Remnants of paper, grass, tangled bloodroots;  
a courtship; an elaborate masterpiece  
of brutal entanglement. For some species,  
a shallow depression made in sand.  
Years ago when nothing much was at stake  
we held hands in the park. The solid un-  
swerving way the world newly divided  
opened a field of possibility.  
The birds are skittish or in harmony.  
They draw sustenance from close comfort.  
One cannot exist without the other.  
I hear him get up, the sound of heavy footsteps.  
Birds call. A cry deeper than hurt or love. Jill Bialosky*

### **Onerous Burdensome**

When where is the great day of reckoning  
Waiting on tender-hooks breath baited  
When is the collapse  
The moment from which there is no returning from  
Where is the break in the day  
For solace for calm  
My body withers but it is old  
I have carried the antecedent  
Not the boy as a baby  
I have carried the when will it?  
I have nervously waited the day out  
For the boom to drop  
What is more suffering than this  
Nothing makes sense  
But the budding of Mums in the Garden  
Sun moving a slow reverie  
Casting predictable shadows  
At the days wane  
Where the words the sob  
The denial is gone with the summer  
The expectation the hope  
Nothing will get better  
How can it be worse  
I want to live I want to be alive  
Not me no long my child  
But I hold on to your wish  
For more life  
As mine is hourly diminished...nb

### **Winding up for the wind-down**

Pivoting a popular political word  
Replenish refresh restore bring back  
No more restoration  
No more restorative  
No more rehabilitating  
No more renovating  
No more recovering  
Age prances like a wild dancer  
Choreography programming  
Tossed aside  
Death's bride dances  
As she pleases  
No other eyes to tease her  
Radioactive redactive  
Proclivity prancing  
On the edge of the cliff  
On the open mouth of abyss  
Whippoorwill wind  
Whispers to brush aside  
The brutality of the past  
Sweep away regrets  
Like old cobwebs  
Vacated long ago by spider  
Spider veins what are they  
They sound repugnant  
Whispering breathy wind  
Knocks this lithe  
Near dead person me  
Swift wind brusque wind  
Tormenting wind  
Trifling wind  
Jonathan Swift wind  
As love without esteem is capricious and volatile;  
Esteem without love is languid and cold. Jonathan Swift  
Wind up toy  
At the whim and swoosh  
Of death's emissary  
Soon my arms will lift  
My feet push off  
The ultimate intimidating  
Force of gravity  
And ruminating as I dive  
Into the open mouth  
Of my time past  
How I...How I... nb



My boy  
Has become a man  
Disemboweled  
Ravished savagely  
But rambunctious  
Adventuresome ambitious  
Surgical hands  
First pluck from the rain forest  
The his body as if  
Pecked upon by a vulture too soon  
My boy is a man  
There go my troubling  
Boiling over feelings  
Complicated daunting  
Men scare me  
Intimidate me  
My son is a man  
I am rattling around  
In those old fears  
How they get stirred up  
Thought they were dormant  
Dead to me  
My boy is a man  
And I am still afraid  
Of him becoming one  
Men scare me  
Perhaps that is why  
My oldest son  
Holds the gentlest of touches  
As his modus operandi  
To comfort me  
Or to protect himself  
Invisible shield  
Stricken sodden  
Stealth hold  
Men have on me  
Getting hard once again  
For me to breathe NB

## **Old Friends Book Ends**

*Old friends, old friends sat on their park bench like bookends  
A newspaper blowing through the grass  
Falls on the round toes of the high shoes of the old friends  
Old friends, winter companions, the old men  
Lost in their overcoats, waiting for the sun  
The sounds of the city sifting through trees  
Settles like dust on the shoulders of the old friends  
Can you imagine us years from today, sharing a park bench quietly  
How terribly strange to be seventy  
Old friends, narrowly brushes the same years  
Silently sharing the same fear*

*Simon and Garfunkel Bookends*

*email sent to betsy spiro after meal at michaels late in October 2016*

*When I young professor's wife with an infant son the woman showed up on our doorstep with a welcome basket filled with fruit jams and biscuits – her professor husband had made it possible for mine to join the faculty at U of P. – That was fifty years ago – as the email attests we have remained friends these years – ‘four score and nearly seven” (Gettysburg Address) – long time long lives – she is nearer to eighty by a few years than I am. She was the daughter of a Republican Undersecretary of the Navy and the Chair of the biggest bank in Philadelphia grew up on an estate on the mainland with a horse or two. I am the daughter of two once removed immigrant Jews who grew up in Newark New Jersey in the world and whirl of Philip Roth really – What we shared were very destructive difficult mothers. What shadow they cast on our lives we have tried to unravel for nearly fifty years – at Michaels we never mentioned our mothers now each dead by a number of years.*

*betsy, i just love you - so much of my life, the highlights have been filled with you - philadelphia visits with kids letting us stay in your house when we moved - baby rebecca with whom you were always so enamored with a bad fever - singing and talking and commiserating and sharing hard times and moments in our childhoods -and watching you off to your first big job with the state department - and on - your door always open to me - you picking me up from the doctor with my face all banged up stained by ben's fists - and talking about our kids through the ages and stages - and you do look beautiful and you sure are feisty and filled with the strong strong will to live more do more and enlighten us with your keen astute political insights - sitting by herb's bed with your boys as he breathed his last breathe - betsy you are remarkable - and i always feel in my heart from yours how absolutely true and unguarded our friendship - so we move on through time up for any challenge - dinner with you at michaels has prepared me for whatever it is that comes next - your boys and grandkids are truly as remarkable as you are - so we carry on we go on - as beckett says we do - or need to do - to a friendship that has meant the world and continues to and for me - love, naomi*

***The Obsession Quotes - The Obsession: Reflections on the Tyranny of Slenderness***

*The Obsession Quotes (note: sent paperback to Jeremy and Rebecca – (mother and father of daughters -)*

*“What unites the women who seek to reduce their weight is the fact that they look for an answer to life's problems in the control of their bodies and appetites. A woman who walks through the doors of a weight watching organization and enters the women's reduction movement has allowed her culture to persuade her that significant relief from personal and cultural dilemma is to be found in the reduction of her body, thus, her decision, although she may not be aware of it, enters the domain of the body politik and becomes symbolically a political act.”*

*“Women practice their obsession with the body in private. Alone, with despair, we glance into the mirror and down at the scale, hopeful and anguished in our quest for the body's reduction.”*

*“It is re-enactment of the ritual feast, in which the eating of an animal's flesh, or a piece of cake shaped like a breast, signifies the coming together of human and divine, individual with collective, tribal ancestor with member of the tribe, human community with nature, or a woman with her own body and feelings.”*

*Whatever chance the woman might have had to grow and to express herself will now have vanished. For her obsession with her body is, fundamentally, an expression of violence towards her soul.”*

### **Prohibition -Hard for Jews to keep still tongue**

For some things there are no words  
Spoken ones In indelible ink  
Secret codes  
On a secret website  
I can spill the beans  
Spill my guts out  
Here comes the scream  
Silent  
But for those animals  
That hear soundless fever pitched  
Decibel sounds  
Words eclipsed  
By a stunned soul  
A clamored hammered heart  
The whisper campaign  
Of my mind  
My sightless eyes  
The mother who has watched  
Watches  
A son's disappearance  
Gobbling him up  
He sits in a wreath of pain  
He can't sit  
He has to lean  
Like at the seder table  
Not sitting upright  
But here the angel of mercy  
Slaying my son  
I a Jewish mother  
If not born of my body  
Slaughtering him  
For what sacrifice  
What have I don't  
To deserve this  
Freed from constraint  
I ran to imprisonment  
I ran to be held  
I ran toward a man  
To wrap me tether me  
In whipping leather strips  
A sadist  
I ran to him  
And then chose him  
To be the father

Of a son stolen taken  
From the limbs  
Of rainforest trees  
I did this to me  
Now lashes sinful decisions  
Ballast weigh me down  
Greater force than gravity  
The gravity of my decision  
I watch my eyes  
Stuffed with cataracts  
As he can't say it  
The suffering intense  
His will to live  
Yet more intense  
My eyes my heart my mouth  
Can't quite grasp what I see  
What I know  
A mother's hold on reality  
Steady deceptive unreal

nb



### **Back on baby colt legs collapsing**

Rock and reel when standing up  
Tilt jolt of pain surges right leg  
Return to diapers and drools old age  
Back on haunches  
Back on wobbly legs  
Taking first and then last steps...NB

Anemia Anorexia  
Saw the high priestess of smoke and mirrors  
Wolf down half a hard-boiled egg  
Crumbly yolk falling like crumbs from her lips  
Stuffs the uneaten back  
In traditional teflon lunch box  
Who's crazy now  
Long legacy of stealth eaters  
My mother refused to swallow food  
When anyone was looking  
Consume and barf  
Capitalism at fevered pitch  
Vogue with a vengeance  
Prepubescent body image  
Antidote starvation  
Tilt of mirror  
Back to front  
The other side of fearful  
The other side  
Privileged girls starve  
*Do you know anyone who is not bulimic or anorexic*  
Overheard on crosstown nyc bus  
Girls in private school uniforms  
Skirts hoisted to just above  
"It's a girl" the doctor said  
To Botero's image of a woman  
Stop eating to die  
In "completed life" essays

On self-inflicted death in old age  
Stop eating to lie  
Presentation portrait  
Of a girl self-imposed thin  
And so where do we begin  
And then end? NB



Fernando Botero – Woman With Flowers

***Over the years, Bob and Harvey have never let me talk, although I would have done better than them. After all, I am a Jewish mother.***

***Miriam Weinstein mother of Harvey and Bob Weinstein nytimes 11/4/16***

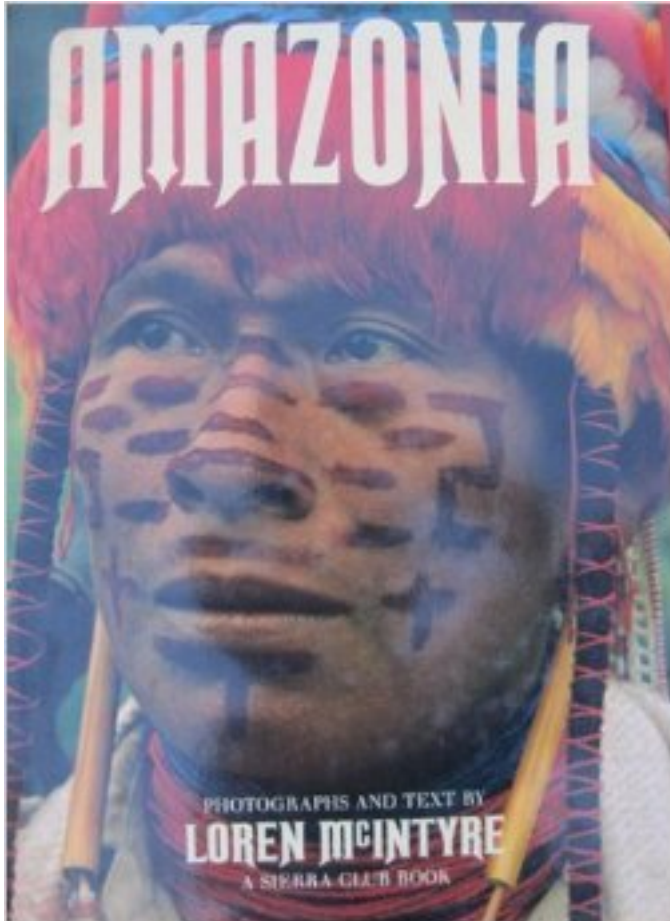
*And after that, things took a turn for the strange. Whenever he sat near Barnacle, McIntyre could 'hear' the man talking to him telepathically.*

*In this way, he learned that the Mayoruna were doing all that decluttering so as to return to the beginning of time when life was simpler and the world less scary. (The Amazonian equivalent, I would suggest, of the hippies' desire at Woodstock to get back to the Garden of Eden.) Stranger still, when McIntyre finally met a Mayoruna who could speak Portuguese, the man confirmed everything that he'd 'heard' from Barnacle about 'the return to the beginning'. The same man also explained that telepathic communication - the 'beaming' of the book's subtitle - was something that all self-respecting Mayoruna elders could do.*

*By this time, not surprisingly, McIntyre was having trouble holding on to his own beliefs - and even his own identity. The Mayoruna couldn't understand, let alone accept, the ability of white people to behave so differently from those around them, as if they had no common goal.*

*Didn't they realise there's no room for individuality when all that matters is the survival of the tribe? Petru Popescu, The Encounter: Amazon Beaming*





### **Food Pyramids Egyptian Pyramids Let my people go pyramids**

*When Israel was in Egypt's land:*

*Let my people go,*

*Oppress'd so hard they could not stand,*

*Let my People go.*

*Refrain:*

*Go down, Moses,*

*Way down in Egypt's land,*

*Tell old Pharaoh,*

*Let my people go.*

*"Go Down Moses" is an American Negro spiritual. It describes events in the Old Testament of the Bible specifically Exodus 8:1: "And the LORD spake unto Moses, Go unto Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Let my people go, that they may serve me", in which God commands Moses to demand the release of the Israelites from bondage in Egypt. The opening verse as published by the Jubilee Singers in 1872:*



Food Pyramid 2016

### Tyranny of stomach

One son the found one has none  
 Surgically cut/ excised from him  
 A slippery slosh of sepsis/disease  
 In the unchartered aftermath  
 His brain sends him foraging  
 On mad forays hunting for food  
 Intense and spicy goat curry extra hot  
 His body urging him on  
 To find the salve the Holy Grail  
 To sustain and quiet a missing limb  
 Begging to be reclaimed for restoration  
 His diverticulitis twisted bowel gone  
 Like an amputees feeling the pulsing  
 Of their severed leg brain remembering  
 Phantom pain phantom hungers  
 Reverberating yens ying yang  
 Foraging for foods lodged deep  
 In some past racial unconsciousness  
 Perhaps from the marauding Jesuits  
 Tumultuous hungers torment  
 Now in my old and aging body  
 My stomach yearning for the uncanny  
 Bedeviled driven by ancient inborn forces  
 Tao of appetites hunger's desires  
 Urgent go get something Jewish to eat  
 Secular Jew hunts down  
 Jewish food smelt schmaltz schmear



Gefilta Fish with Horse Radish

Oliver Sachs life long secular whisper Jew  
Took up love, gay, over 70  
Said in last gasping gulping  
Mordant final days  
I must eat a diet of gefilte fish  
Life's cycle circle brought him back  
To childhood nose holding bites of gefilte  
Cravings craven limping back eons ago

*But for Sacks, the traditional Eastern European dish represented the taste and smells of his Orthodox Jewish childhood in northwest London, and the full circle of life.*

*Though Sacks was not religiously observant as an adult, this food, it seemed, served as an unbroken tie to his Jewish identity throughout his life.*

*He recounted in The New Yorker essay, titled "Filter Fish," the successful efforts of his late housekeeper, Helen Jones, an African-American Baptist woman, to fashion a homemade gefilte fish that rivaled his mother's.*

*He also found himself craving the food in his last days: "Deliveries now arrive daily from one shop or another," he wrote, naming a number of well-known New York delis.*



*Photograph by Bill Hayes*

*Gefilte fish is not an everyday dish; it is to be eaten mainly on the Jewish Sabbath in Orthodox households, when cooking is not allowed. When I was growing up, my mother would take off from her surgical duties early on Friday afternoon and devote her time, before the coming of Shabbat, to preparing gefilte fish and other Sabbath dishes.*

*But now, in what are (barring a miracle) my last weeks of life—so queasy that I am averse to almost every food, with difficulty swallowing anything except liquids or jellylike solids—I have rediscovered the joys of gefilte fish. I cannot eat more than two or three ounces at a time, but an aliquot of gefilte fish every waking hour nourishes me with much needed protein. (Gefilte-fish jelly, like calf's-foot jelly, was always valued as an invalid's food.)*

*Deliveries now arrive daily from one shop or another: Murray's on Broadway, Russ & Daughters, Sable's, Zabar's, Barney Greengrass, the 2nd Ave Deli—they all make their own gefilte fish, and I like it all (though none compares to my mother's or Helen's).*

*While I have conscious memories of gefilte fish from about the age of four, I suspect that I acquired my taste for it even earlier, for, with its abundant, nutritious jelly, it was often given to infants in Orthodox households as they moved from baby foods to solid food. Gefilte fish will usher me out of this life, as it ushered me into it, eighty-two years ago. ♦ Filter Fish by Oliver Sacks, *The New Yorker* 9/14/15*

*Oliver Sacks, a professor of neurology at the N.Y.U. School of Medicine, is the author of "Awakenings," "Musicophilia," and many other books. His memoir, "On the Move," was published in April.*

Death knoll trolls I desire I crave Gefilte fish

Does that mean my days are numbered

Returning to ancestral roots

Foods to forage to stuff up to the gills

To fill up the emptiness

As I inch toward perishing

Parish of refrigeration

Look at expiration date eat before

Body in upheaval

Driven to Zabar's temple of all things Jewish

Delicacies in and among treif

The refrigerated shelves stocked with

Two gefilte fish awash in gel

Stealth swift grab for some herring

Drenched in sour cream with onion slices

And then cheese and cherry blintzes

And some more sour cream

And then kasha varnishka

And knishes potato and kasha

And then stuffed derma

Cart topped off with Jewish stuffed cabbage

Destiny to end up anticipating death

Overstuffed satiate Jewish foods

A Jewish soul a Jewish child

Nostalgia neuralgia remembering grandma's kitchen

The scent of her Sabbath kitchen

The soul carried off burnt like incense

The ashes filter the air

In the end to appease despair

A trembling nosh a last bite taste

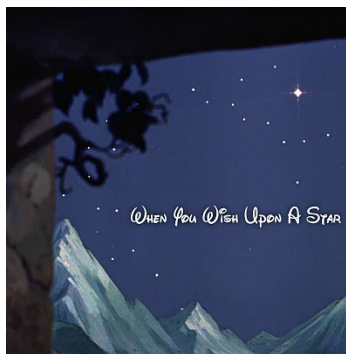
Of Jewish food heavy in a stomach

A counter weight against transcendence death ...nb

## Epic of Gilgamesh

Quivering premonitions  
Quiver bow and arrow  
Gilgamesh gilgamush  
Gilgamensch given  
A Yiddish challah twist  
Relent spent bent cant  
Cantilevered juxtaposed  
More dead than here  
Wishing upon a star

*When you wish upon a star  
Makes no difference who you are  
Anything your heart desires  
Will come to you  
If your heart is in your dream  
No request is too extreme  
When you wish upon a star  
As dreamers do  
Fate is kind  
She brings to those to love  
The sweet fulfillment of  
Their secret longing  
Like a bolt out of the blue  
Fate steps in and sees you through  
When you wish upon a star  
Your dreams come true (Leigh Harline – Ned Washington)*



Do I have the courage  
To take myself out  
A flibbertigibbet  
Cast to the wind  
Sparkly ashy motes  
Carting off my heave  
Heavenward  
Residue finger deep  
On tree limb and leaf

*Life is a sum of all your choices. So, what are you doing today? (Albert Camus)*

Have to decide  
Deride mock provide  
Promising day after day  
To put myself away  
Take myself out  
Puncture a hole in space  
Throwing tossing myself  
To the mercy of other's  
Flickering recollections and memories  
A final no turning back escape  
Relent descant of descent  
Time to decide  
Time for god-less grace  
Take myself at my word  
Disturbing the universe  
No more with testy ambivalence  
Warning and not doing  
Analogue errata disputed dialogue  
End life quietly urgently  
Without *sorrow and pity*  
Memories memorabilia  
Of me hotly contested  
Promises promises

*Promises are the uniquely human way of ordering  
the future, making it predictable and reliable  
to the extent that this is humanly possible. (Hannah Arendt)*

Trying to take hold  
Seize the moment  
Frieze on cycles  
Of myth and memory  
Talking myself into and out of  
When how why

Why is this the right time to die  
Left to my own devises  
I cry over what was left undone  
Unlived on the fringe  
Of truth and honesty  
Myth fantasy reality  
A ball of yarn  
Spun to disconcert  
To please appease  
Both process of wither  
Old age leg pain surging  
Drag around  
Indeterminable weight  
Unremitting pain force  
Within increasingly creping flesh  
Relent spent time to keep my word  
Time to find goodbyes  
Disquiet refrain begging for more  
Time to relent spent time  
Wisely or badly  
Foolishness absurdity  
Startling life with early  
Grandiose dreams of love  
Found barren frightening  
Cursing the light the night  
The blighted mind  
That turned the other cheek  
When love was in the offing  
Time to relent spent  
Death always on my mind  
In my hand like a baby bird  
Time is come  
To abandon the vagrant nest  
To fly off – leave – move on  
Mount the back of the swan  
Brazenly assuredly  
Into the eternal great beyond - nb





*Leda and the Swan*, a 16th-century copy by Peter Paul Rubens, after a lost painting by Michelangelo

### Freedom

In solitude I dream tonight And watch a moth in fevered flight.  
It's drawn toward my quaint porch light And flies consumed with all its might.  
Through open window I can see  
Its desperation shared with me;  
How freedom in this world is light— And we as souls are drawn to fight.  
Though freedom's light may cause our death,  
It's worth the risk with every breath. I understand the moth's sad plight  
When drawn to the glorious light.  
Though it knows not of human trust,  
It buzzes on because it must! Connie Marcum Wong

**I can't rid myself of the leaden weight**  
**The pain held tight within**  
Flickering embers hot coals  
A decade or more at the bedside  
Of a child struggling to stay alive  
Takes its toll now old  
I feel it more acutely resoundingly  
I spent my life with a patchwork of choices  
Most of which made no sense  
Even to me when made  
And then it happened  
The briar patch of thorn and thistle  
Pain riddles me  
Sling shot of arbitrary decisions  
A mother loyal and valiant  
Sat bedside honoring decision  
Unfathomable unconscionable  
Live in the aftermath of the whatever  
I became my choice  
I became at watch  
at a near dying over and over  
At a found son's bedside -nb

***Andrew Sullivan cut the cord, went to a silent retreat center and promptly collapsed. Issues from his traumatic childhood flooded back. "It was as if, I was suddenly faced with what I had been distracting myself from. Resting for a moment against the trunk of a tree, I stopped, and suddenly found myself bent over, convulsed with the newly present pain, sobbing.***

***This time I pardon you. Seneca, philosopher NY Times, David Brooks, 12/30/16***



***Hickory Dickory Dock,  
The mouse ran up the clock.  
The clock struck one,  
The mouse ran down!  
Hickory Dickory Dock. (Nursery Rhyme)***

***Hickory dickory dock, hickory dickory dock  
I wanna turn back, I wanna turn back  
I wanna turn back the clock (Mandolph)***

I am living at the edge of the second hand  
Dangling to and fro as hour upon hour goes  
Time is not relative for me  
It is an hourglass running out  
It is the dimming of the lights  
It is a midnight less minus one  
Of what is to come

*"Mirrors should think longer before they reflect." Jean Cocteau*

*There are only two ways to live your life.  
One is as though nothing is a miracle.  
The other is as though everything is a miracle." Albert Einstein*

Girth depth I am out of my element  
Slaphappy autodidact  
Hidden tidily mightily in fears  
I was as sheathed as an armadillo  
In a swarthy dark-hued shell  
Armor plated non-pliant pliable  
Fiercely guarded by outer shell  
Fear sadly brokenly  
Of ever being fully alive  
What did I dread  
Someone breaching  
Breaking to my dreams  
Dread being revealed

As ordinary desiring  
To be real really in love  
And I have stayed stuck  
Stopped up afraid fearful  
Hidden enshrouded  
Into prehensile grasping  
What is human most precious  
Splintered into multiple selves  
Each a stranger to the other  
Now in last gasping gaping moments  
Trembling like a slight stealth virgin  
A soft feathery eaglet  
Breaking through its shell  
I long to soar and fly  
Death presses prescient  
Came too late as longing  
To be alive  
Death rivaled love  
As I way to part die off young

Ridicule is too sparse a word  
For what I feel  
Ordinary mundane  
To let have death  
Be the unbroken window pane  
Foolhardy to call it suicide  
When one short-circuits  
Natural endings steps from orbits  
Clouds severing arteries of goodbyes  
Suicide is not suicide at the end  
Of a completed life

Is anyone ever really ready to die  
Does anyone ever really grasp  
They will no longer exist  
Except as figments of other's  
Minds and imaginations

Death by one's own hand  
At a pre-determined time  
Strikes a discordant note

Contrapuntal at odds  
Gravitational pull to the absurd  
You can't kill yourself  
Viewed as a crime  
When you are about to die  
When you have finished  
A completed life  
Torment brewing  
Self-annihilation  
Can't help myself  
Imaging an end  
As I hobble  
Leg weakened  
Body bent to quiet pain  
I cobble together a way of life  
A way of death a way out  
Which holiday will I not be at  
How to cause the less harm  
How to be celebrated  
And not berated  
As cowardly dastardly  
Selfish and ignoble  
Inevitable it comes  
My mind can't stop orbiting  
The terminal point  
The last mile charted  
Just the time and place  
The how and how come  
Thumb tucked into fist  
I am at the terminal point  
I am an infant holding a thumb  
I am soaring free  
I am gathering air to breathe  
I am stopping worrying  
About who and why  
To pleas appease  
Hickory dickory dock  
A mouse indeed does skitter  
About my house  
Elusive avoiding traps  
Making a mockery of my home

My place my heart my soul  
Death be not proud (John Donne)  
Take my hand release me  
I a willing supplicant  
Mustering up the courage  
To die quietly urgently to letting go nb

**You made me feel**

Clunky invisible  
Stuffing me  
In the back corner  
Of the restaurant  
Hidden even from servers  
It is not that they put  
An old lady with awkward gait  
In the back  
It is the fact that they wanted  
To tuck me away  
From the tourists  
The passerby's  
Looking at menus  
At one of the tables  
Near the window  
And but why  
Did I stay remain  
I felt the words asking  
Can I sit in the front  
But they wouldn't budge  
From the back of my tongue  
I felt humiliated pixelated  
Broken into discordant fragments  
But I stayed and ate and gagged and ate  
And back at home after throwing up  
I couldn't sleep  
The image of me of myself  
On already wobbly legs  
Submitting to being  
Hidden tucked away  
Stays stomach emptied  
The troublesome image it stays - nb

**Daily Clunk Through my Constitutional Necessary Deliberate Walk in the Park  
In beauty I walk**

*With beauty before me I walk  
With beauty behind me I walk  
With beauty above me I walk  
With beauty around me I walk  
It has become beauty again  
It has become beauty again  
It has become beauty again  
It has become beauty again*

*Hózhóogo naasháa doo  
Shitsiji' hózhóogo naasháa doo  
Shikéédéé hózhóogo naasháa doo  
Shideigi hózhóogo naasháa doo  
T'áá altso shinaagóó hózhóogo naasháa doo  
Hózhó náhásdlí'  
Hózhó náhásdlí'  
Hózhó náhásdlí'  
Hózhó náhásdlí'*

*Walking In Beauty (Blessing)*

*Today I will walk out, today everything unnecessary 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.*

*'Navajo Way' Blessing Ceremony*



### **I am in the Conservatory Garden**

Sitting on *Noonie's* bench

Facing the sloping walkway before me

It is early December leaves mostly gone

But the whispery willow shimmers golden with sunlight

There is no more beautiful place on earth

Than this my Conservatory Garden

Even if with hobble and pain

I can walk the few blocks to the Garden

I can walk along Broadway until 106<sup>th</sup>

Or on the path from 110<sup>th</sup> street to the Garden

Stopping along the way yield to pain rest my leg

The floating Christmas tree arc fastened to rock

Moves in tempo to the wind the gust

Its erratic spurts of untamed force

Suddenly blinkered off as if willed it

Cataracts parting like deep crimson theater curtain

My eyes pierce fiercely clearly

The multi-dimension of trees



Palate of transformation  
Nearing the end of shedding leaves  
Parafin skimmed rupturing shamelessly  
Delight exalt in new found infant sight  
Stunned by the reckless arbitrary beauty  
Of fall in all of its permutations  
I am here for this beauty before me  
Clarity stuns sun glare blinds  
Cataracts don't protect eyes  
From sun's blazing rays  
Scrutinize take in memorialize in mind  
Feeling harmony oneness  
As if I alone behold this rapturous moment  
I am not ready I have not said to myself out loud  
*The end is near* as my father declared  
As we rode up to Catskill away from his home  
The sanctuary in which feeling displaced  
He would succumb die by choice  
After he gathered up residual strength  
Compendium of honor and pride  
He stopped eating and drinking  
And upped and died  
*No more Bach it is too beautiful*  
*Time for me to die* he said this to me  
I cannot part with beauty just yet  
Lugging my leg through the park  
My walking stick keeping a drum beat  
A chant a Navajo ceremonious prayer  
Beauty all around me abounds  
Not ready to put it behind me just yet  
Even as I marvel at the beauty  
I put together prepare the theater of my death  
To die in my own bed  
Would send host ghosts and echoes  
No one would want to be taken seized  
By the past gloating subliminal moans  
Echoing my death throughout the house  
Restorative the walks in the park  
*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.*

Not ready not time yet  
When cataracts distract cloud over beauty  
In all of the ramifications and depth  
Then only then will retreat recoil  
Move deep into myself find the courage  
To conclude and bring to an end  
A death worthy of all the years  
Of my probing planning promising -  
Doomed to damnation destined for peace  
Handmaiden of own demise this time be wise - NB

### **Knock Right Behind the Knees**

Knocking the wind out of me  
My gait as faltering  
As a victim of muscular dystrophy  
Dystopic myopic  
Focus on little else  
But death death death  
Knock right behind my knees  
Getting me to lurch  
Find a ledge to hold onto  
Grab the walking stick  
As if life and death  
No broken hip for me  
No siree!  
Want more dignity  
Broken hip so prosaic  
So ordinary  
No I want an exceptional death  
Of my own making  
Will and composition  
Not an awkward fall tumble  
Consternation stoically met  
Roll up sleeves yield  
Mystery gone enslaved chained  
To final moments departure  
Children and their children  
Turn her relieve bedsores  
Prop her up change diaper  
Wipe drool smile reassuringly  
Using the common we  
When we reduce  
Otherness in human beings  
Pain subdued with offerings  
Painkillers like M&M's  
In the last round concubine  
Of critical care hospice style  
Death knocks me behind my knees  
I buckle I bend but won't yield  
Stubborn to a fault  
Defiant nighttime  
Drives me to the edge  
Sleep always just beyond reach  
Day for night night for day (Truffaut)  
Irrelevant irreverent exchange  
There is no rest for the weary  
Fig on fist thrust on star light sky

Reprise relief respite  
Final sleep not yet  
But soon very soon  
All this compulsive  
Propulsive thinking  
Can't get death out of my mind  
My heart falters dizzy head  
Grabs for one more baby aspirin  
One more propranolol  
One more minute or two more  
But in truth not heresy  
For me now for me now  
There is no turning back  
Death occupies this house  
I live in a mausoleum  
One last review gallery walk about  
Internment interred these bones  
Death for me has come home - NB

### **The Story is in the Body**

It tells you a chronicler  
A town crier  
What is breaking down  
What is yet to come  
This in the spirit of demise  
On the way to dying  
The body tells it all

I have a young son  
Circuits got crossed  
His crossbow  
Boomeranged  
Age doubled back  
Deaths fist  
Struck out  
Reckless defiant  
Putative daring  
Assaulting his young body  
To scare to warn  
Life's urgency  
Feeling of omnipotence  
Life's eternity  
Just a mirage  
A fool's errand  
To believe

That life somehow  
If for me  
Will never end  
Watch the comings and goings  
Of death in a young child  
Menace forewarn foredoom  
A tantalizing daring preview  
Of what is to come  
Comedic if tawdry  
Depiction of dying  
Most often a fight  
Not to be won

Repair knees hips  
Transplant organs  
Sip serums promises  
Fountains of youth  
Bluffing you into thinking  
Believing that you alone  
Will be forever  
Weren't we warned  
By the existentialists  
To revere death  
To know death  
To disparage God  
To kill him/her off  
Fools errand fools wafer  
Redemption three Hail Mary's  
Then what?

My body is loud  
Can't turn the volume down  
Leg pulses with pain  
I walk awkwardly  
On a tilt  
Can find the pity  
In other's eyes  
The aversion the averting  
*It's old age arthritis*  
*I'm old I say*  
But dear leg  
You kick up a storm  
Betraying the stars the moon  
Casting away sleep  
Pain sears prayers won't subdue

I have come to a hobbling end  
When does enough happen  
To bear to subdue to live with  
What is the extent of tolerance  
What the depth of curiosity  
Imagining another day  
Cloudy foreboding  
Grandmas and infants  
And the chronically sick  
Warned to stay inside  
When did my ears perk up  
For such weather warnings  
My leg the dipstick  
The litmus of forbearance  
Don't want repairs  
Overrun with the damage done  
By ibuprofen taken like M&Ms  
I am being undone  
*Our Christmas gift*  
*Tickets to Hamilton in June*  
My eyes cloud over  
Disappear deeper into  
Their cataract shield  
She sense the blind eye  
*No I think I will get*  
*You something else she says*  
She is my fifteen-year-old granddaughter

How to make them glad at my end  
How not to throttle  
Throw trauma like a wrench  
Into their lives  
How I am dying  
Already on full display  
Before their eyes  
I am on the way out  
The light extinguished  
The leg no longer throbbing  
In deep repose  
Slipping off into  
If self-imposed final sleep  
It is coming  
The day I reap - NB

## **Death and Death and more Death**

I want to die well  
Follow the lead  
My father stopped eating and drinking liquids  
When he got as fit as fit as a fiddle  
Flu pneumonia found friends of life's end  
Not for me I want to die  
When even at 76 nearing 77  
I close my eyes knowing  
How much more my eyes crave to see  
Littlest things  
Can throw me into a tizzy  
Get me dizzy  
Look for tooth wobbling  
Dental implant meant to appear  
As the real thing  
Who are they kidding  
It just doesn't life and out  
Like my bottom bridge does  
Just don't bite on it or bite hard  
Where to chew so I don't incur  
The disjuncting mockery  
Of a loose tooth man-made tooth  
Dry eyed wall eyed  
De Kooning derivative self-portrait  
My leg pierces with pain  
Hold on to walking stick  
Can't fold like a new-born yew or lamb  
Falling on hip that is it  
Soon after death seizes  
The prattle prattle brittle shatter  
Saw movie Things to Come  
Transformation as time closing in  
First the bloody monthly flow stops  
Then the brittle bones rattle  
Osteoporosis threatening  
Deadening glimpses of future  
Vagina drying out intercourse painful  
For those who still have lovers who crave us  
Craven to stick up creams and salves  
To moisten up what is dead-ended dried up flesh  
Old age sets you free  
No longer worry about job  
About tattering fraying this and that  
Freedom then to contemplate  
One's own end and it is there

It comes as eyes curb sight  
It is fixed and brutal cosmic ray  
Not to turn away or fake  
Things get better as we age  
We get freer and freer  
To what "break a leg"  
As they say in the theater  
Or break a hip  
And go down faster  
Than a water logged sinking ship  
Hull and happenstance  
Dragged back into the indifferent sea  
Begin again laying eggs on the beachhead  
Lugging heavy shell a tortoise  
Reimagined reincarnate  
Well that would be swell - nb



## The Women Who Showed Their Breast Cancer Scars

By RONI CARYN RABINNOV. 4, 2016

*Times Insider delivers behind-the-scenes insights into how news, features and opinion come together at The New York Times. In this article, Well reporter Roni Caryn Rabin reflects on why the women whom she and photographer Béatrice de Géa featured in a [recent story](#) about “going flat” after mastectomies were surprisingly eager to reveal themselves to the world.*



*Clockwise from top left: Charlie Scheel, 48; Marianne Duquette Cuozzo, 51; Rebecca Pine, 40; Paulette Leaphart, 50. Credit Béatrice de Géa for The New York Times*

### Courage Defiance Redefining Beauty

Disparaging stick tongue out  
At if necessary mutilation  
Could elect to leave breasts alone  
Let cancer grow wild like hemlock  
Or larkspur toxic and poisonous  
And ravishing  
To reimagine oneself as a flower  
Or as a woman without will tied up in knots

Or with a rose blooming  
Angelina had her breasts removed  
Rebuilt chemically bound round and firm  
She left Brad because he didn't resist  
He didn't hate her refuse to touch her  
Had she tattooed a rose to her breast  
To be plucked and attended to  
A garden growing with each swell of breath  
Do we become less and make ourselves  
By root intention something other  
Or do we hold on cling to what has been lost  
And that is the question  
Death do not be proud  
Challenge rattle respond how ...nb



## **Needing No One**

Pressed like flowers  
Sewn deep in my connective tissue  
Totemic pledge  
To need no one never ever  
So maybe that is why  
I don't feel so lonely now  
Loneliness can cause premature death  
Disease of disconnection  
I won the day  
Pledge never ever to need no one anyone  
    ...loneliness can be contagious...  
    Human connection lies at the heart of human well-being  
***Loneliness Is Health Hazard, but There are Remedies***  
***Dhruv Khullar, MD \ 12/22/16 NY Times***

Anticipating this dread disease – isolation  
I shaped a reality in which I stopped my heart  
From connecting too deeply too completely  
My heart seasonal abrupt changes in weather  
Drove me in many different directions  
But always away away from the temptation  
To love beyond my capacity  
To keep the love within reach  
Remembering even before puberty's dawn  
Telling our sitter I will always be alone  
Entanglements fierce intense to ever sustain  
Was it that the umbilical cord to my mother  
Never got severed  
We were Siamese mother and daughter  
Or was it I knew that failed severed  
I from another would kill me  
Cause me to perish in a wilt of defeat  
Who knows why I created myself  
To be alone always  
But now I come to no harm  
Abandoned by most  
A seasonal friend to some  
Kids feel free to be in contact  
Not obligated  
Some art there sewn into this reality  
Raw feelings impinge ping bring up  
Myriad words didn't know I had inside  
Maybe thinking of myself outside myself  
Was the solace I would need not to need  
There was a time

In the heat of my late thirties  
When I flew over the place  
Grabbing onto any man  
A veritable life raft  
The sizzle within needed relief  
Just seized on anything  
Anyone within reach  
Those desperate moments  
I work hard to blot out  
To bright a lens  
To shine on my past  
Came dangerously close  
To needing a particular friend  
The wall shot up  
When she responded  
The vagaries of her husband  
Possessing the all of her  
Their worldly good of privacy  
She knows too much about us  
She shirked me shrank away from me  
Little inkling of what it felt  
To need another someone  
I was never there  
As I should have been  
For Margot died  
Bringing me back into her inner circle  
No old virtually an elderly  
As the bus sign reads –  
Give your seat to the...  
Solace in solitude  
Not worry who to call  
Who didn't call me  
Not dying from this dread disease  
Loneliness will not be  
The cause of my death  
Life has been as it was meant to be  
Don't want to overstay my stay  
Obsessed by where to die  
Seaside or mountain glen  
Hotel or Inn or rented room  
Never in B&B  
They notice not showing up  
For warm biscuits brewing coffee  
Where plagued by a place to die  
Dying in my own bed at home  
No antiseptic no cleanser

Could wipe rid the place of me  
By the sea maybe in Long Branch  
In one of those nondescript condominiums  
Connective tissue umbilical stretches out deep  
In wave and tide it is here  
That we placed mother's ashes to reside  
Ride the wave they say  
The day it comes  
The place anonymous discrete  
But there must be some beauty nearby  
Want to close my eyes  
Knowing aware of what I am leaving behind - nb

*When anxious, uneasy and bad thoughts come, I go to the sea, and the sea drowns  
them out with its great wide sounds, cleanses me with its noise, and imposes a rhythm  
upon everything in me that is bewildered and confused.* Rainer Maria Rilke

### **I'm Watching the Dying Going on**

Depleting deepening in me  
Life fizzling out bit by bit  
Limp by limp walk falters  
Name it arthritis  
Its real name is death  
No matter what existentialists advise  
We don't really believe we will die  
No matter how we deny the existence of God  
The end does come yet we keep searching for  
The people who went before us  
Where indeed is my dad  
Is my mom really floating with the Atlantic tide  
I feel them as strong as my heart beat inside  
No matter how I turn the page  
Refuse this day to entertain my death  
It won't leave me alone  
Not a myth not a fairytale not pretend  
I feel it rocking and ravishing my bonds  
I feel the pain as my right foot steps forward  
Time for baby steps  
Time to reckon with regret  
Time to sit back and watch as life ebbs  
No turning back

No fountain of youth  
Death smells stinks is uncouth  
The stench of the relic body after soul has left  
How to get from death to the incinerator  
How to get me cremated  
Before the dismal regrettable falls  
Before love for me draws on unnatural strengths  
How to web a message  
Come collect the ashes we are at  
How to get myself there and dead  
Logistics daunting  
Who the archangel to help me  
Only the ocean's ebb and rise  
Courage to lie near the tide  
Tumble into wave and brim  
And have let a salty dog death begin  
I need to feel the decline  
The dying settling in –  
Where the choice the decision  
And when does the time  
The final date come - NB

### **You Make Feel Lonely Alone**

My marriage made me feel lonely  
I need to get rid of you  
Banish you from my mind  
Web expectation to default  
Can't afford to wait  
Breathless chatty  
Covering up  
Don't really know  
What you think of me  
But I need to get away from you  
Shed you shut you out  
You make me feel lonely alone  
Drag death's breath even closer to me  
I need to shed you get rid of you  
You are not a friend  
Not sure why  
You need to stay away from me  
But doesn't really matter  
You said friends were necessary  
At this point in our lives  
I've courted you  
Tried to curry favor

Close to be a groupie  
As I have come  
Intermittent rain  
Refrain from saying my name  
Calling out to me  
Always extracting a promise  
Not to share what you shared with me  
You make me feel lonely  
I can't afford to look for emails  
Dates for drink or lunch  
I no longer can come your way  
You make me feel too lonely  
Death harbors loneliness like an opiate  
I've overdosed on waiting for you  
No more no more expecting  
To hear from you  
Finding myself too busy  
For lunch or a glass of wine  
Busy keeping from feeling lonely - NB

### **Paralleling Sidestepping**

Live outside self  
Separating pulling apart  
Elements essentials  
Moving outside  
Sidestepping  
Ourselves our choices  
Our decisions  
Time mocks  
Can't take back  
Moved crookedly  
Stepped away  
Weren't there  
When you said yes  
When you said no  
When you said goodbye  
My father lived  
Beside outside himself  
Incarcerated by  
A wildly mad abusive wife  
He a lap dog  
Baying and mewling  
Begging tugging  
To be brought

Inside of her  
Virtually  
And yet he played  
Slapped that bass  
Said he invented  
Slapped bassing  
Plucking hard decisively  
On those strings  
Gut and tongue  
The little pet to my mother  
Banished pushed aside  
His second finger  
Pressed against the strings  
My father became another man  
When he played the bass  
When he taught music  
When he conducted  
Bands and orchestras  
When he played viola in quartets  
When conducted summer band concerts  
In a white jacket in Branch Brook Park  
The war sizzling abroad  
Families folding  
Finding in his music solace  
When he played fiddle  
With his love Marian  
Accompanying on piano  
Sneaking off to Syds with her  
After their music workout  
Much deeper more throbbing  
More penetrating  
Than any all consuming intimacy  
Forlorn bay dog at home  
Epitome of grace  
His body exuded pleasure  
His extremities akin to an instrument  
When he smiled at an orchestra  
I sitting next to the bassoon  
Watching his eyes his smile  
His finger to lips  
His hand quieting the brass  
He was my Leonard Bernstein  
Who had a wife had some kids  
Found love entwined with other men  
Replenishing restoring him  
My father state track star



Ice cream scooper  
Son of a philandering mother  
My father caught captivated  
By our mother  
Who thought he  
Of meager circumstance  
Could be brought into her home  
Of which she was deeply ashamed  
Her the baker father gruff  
Soil from the other side  
Beneath his finger nails along with flour  
She married my father  
She incarcerated him  
She didn't know his grandness  
She didn't know or care  
That she married a musician  
A man from who she could flee  
At lovemaking time  
Her skin could not be touched  
Too dangerous  
She dazzled him  
She kept him baying begging  
Dragging her from furnace mouth  
As she screamed yelled  
Lifting heavens with her wailing  
*I wish I were dead*  
Strangely she always made these attempts  
When we were about her  
When we were home  
We never came back  
To find her lifeless  
Head limp inside  
Lip of furnace or stove  
My father was a musician  
He still cuts deep into me  
I remember his playing the recorder  
When the bass or fiddle  
Were too cumbersome burdensome  
Never very good at the piano  
Which he try to drown out  
Her coy demands Bill Bill Bill  
The volume intensifying  
He loved his kids  
My father did  
His kids estranged and afraid  
Of his wife our mother

Inevitably he chose her his wife  
To calm her rants  
She kept him away from us  
As I told my younger by 7 years brother  
Where were strapped to a chair  
Eyes held open with toothpicks  
Audience to battering and feuding  
He clinging to her  
Begging her to calm down  
We saw we knew  
He had his music  
He lost us  
Perhaps his greatest wish  
To be a good father  
Once too often caste aside  
*How did you do this to me*  
My brother asked at 21  
How did you do this to yourself  
Bass player slapping that bass  
Donated ultimately  
To Manhattan School of Music  
You lost us we were tossed aside  
So you could rescue your mad bride  
Dad you paralleled your own life  
Sidestepped who you were  
When you held an instrument  
Or a conductor's baton  
Dad yet what sticks with me  
As I stand just at the edge  
Of my own death demise  
That you were a bass player  
When I watch a group of musicians  
Wherever they are  
Marching in a band on a football field  
Or in a jazz club  
Or performing on TV  
I begin to believe  
That the life I lived  
Was privileged  
I had a father  
Who was a musician  
For whom music was transporting  
Double lives double bass  
Doomed to be incomplete  
Yet so deep into me  
My musician father still does reach - NB

**Rigor of beauty** is the quest. But how will you find beauty when it is locked in the mind past all remonstrance?...to make a start out of particulars and make them general.

For the beginning is assuredly  
the end – once we know nothing, pure  
and simple, beyond  
our own complexities.

It is the ignorant sun  
rising in the slot of  
hollow suns risen, so that never in this  
world will a man live well in his body...William Carlos Williams, Paterson

#### **When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd**

*When lilacs last in the dooryard bloom'd,  
And the great star early droop'd in the western sky in the night,  
I mourn'd, and yet shall mourn with ever-returning spring.*

*Ever-returning spring, trinity sure to me you bring,  
Lilac blooming perennial and drooping star in the west,*

*Lilac and star and bird twined with the chant of my soul,  
There in the fragrant pines and the cedars dusk and dim.*

*Come lovely and soothing death,  
Undulate round the world, serenely arriving, arriving,  
In the day, in the night, to all, to each,  
Sooner or later delicate death.*

*Prais'd be the fathomless universe,  
For life and joy, and for objects and knowledge curious,  
And for love, sweet love—but praise! praise! praise!  
For the sure-enwinding arms of cool-enfolding death. Walt Whitman*

### **I don't believe in god**

I believe in Walt Whitman  
And not Jesus splayed  
And nailed to a cross  
That image leaves me cold  
When I see a man  
Holding a bass close  
Strong fingers  
Strumming strings  
The rhythm rising  
From some deep place  
Combining and connecting  
In fierce rhythmic ways  
As in lovemaking  
I see my father  
Whether black man or boy  
Hat cocked or hair in ponytail  
I see an image of everlastingness  
I see my father

Daily I read Walt Whitman  
Psalms songs to the world  
As it unfolds before his eyes  
Comes into his heart  
I don't believe in god  
I believe in Walt Whitman  
I try to see the world  
As he writes it  
It speaks to me  
Deeply soulfully  
I want to know  
The universe  
As he saw it  
He wrote it

I want to be transfixed  
Transported by every man  
Playing the bass fiddle  
There he is standing  
Before my eyes my father  
Live die flower bloom life  
Trying not to hide  
Emotions move my feet  
The beauty of the world  
Holds me in close  
I want to know

To see to read  
The world  
With Whitman's eyes  
Perhaps in his words  
Is the reverent mystery  
What he finds sees sings of  
So rhapsodically  
Is God is faith is spirit is love  
I want to know  
The world as Whitman knew it  
I want the bass to thrum  
Intermingled with  
The beating of my heart  
I want my eyes to shut finally  
Fiercely wanting to never  
Become blind to  
The rapture beyond  
And outside of me  
And feel sad  
If dying means  
Not beholding a world  
Of flower and fragrance  
Taking it all in  
While I am alive  
Breathe in with last breath  
The flowers at first spring bloom  
The lilacs full in bough and brim  
And the strumming of a bass  
Beating out a funeral dirge and din - nb

***Hospice is a medical term that means "Here, you do it."***

***Ever cry so hard and so thoroughly that when you finish like jazz? Laurie Kilmartin, comic***

***Mother was in a better place now. And by that, I mean she wasn't all dead and drooling in a hospital bed in my living room while I was trying to watch football. Doug Stanhope, comic***

***Hello, dear, this is your mother, Debbie. (As opposed to my mother Vladimir or Jean-Jacques)***

***I heard someone once say we're only as sick as our secrets. Carrie Fisher***

### **Brink of 2017 New Years Eve**

Never got to eat my caviar on blini with crème fraiche  
Did eat a substantial piece of mocha cake  
Zabars treats on refrigerator shelves  
Annual tradition for the recent solitary years  
Ping went the zing of my heartbeat

*Never could carry a tune  
Never knew where to start  
You came along, when everything was wrong  
And put a song in my heart*

*Dear when you smiled at me  
I heard a melody  
It haunted me from the start  
Something inside of me, started a symphony  
Zing! Went the strings of my heart Zign! Went the Strings of My Hear James F. Hanley*

### **Unraveling time travelling backward in time**

Dad is here in LA in Sherman Oaks in the new apartment  
He brought over bagels  
Later lili and her daughter and her boyfriend will come over  
Maybe even Jeremy and lots of other people

Collapsing fragile composition of body politic  
Body decomposing I observe my own demise  
Wanting not to ring in another new year  
Bitter pill his father fit as a fiddle  
And I dissolving limping bronchial tubes hacking gasping  
Inhalator pressed desperately to catch the cough before it becomes triggered  
Zoom in past New Years Eves when we were together  
God help me god forgive me his father and I  
And as the clock tick-tocked to even tide  
As the day ebbed to night time  
This same man would crawl into bed fetal pretend dying  
Making it impossible to attend well established plans with friends  
Old time friends that had seem me through a brutal unseemly divorce  
And now welcoming this cute pup husband as my divorce lawyer called him  
god help me now as I stumble falter with a pain  
That sears rips into me knocks behind my knees shortens my breath  
Gets me racing to swallow a baby aspirin and propranolol  
Want to die on my own terms  
Not be stricken down dead pitiful resenting pained

That this very man who took to his bed annually on New Years Eve  
Was fit as a fiddle sleeping once again naked next to another woman  
Bringing bagels to our found son how did that partnering happen  
Emailing how very nice the new apartment was  
Near stores in a quiet neighborhood

***Wonderful space. Quiet neighborhood close to shopping***

Where is my good will my forgive and forget  
Why how did my heart ping why the bitter pill  
Why the resentment as fresh as cut flowers  
Why can't I stop hating him  
Why do I still feel so fresh with harm  
Imbalm'd by my own disgrace  
Choosing him if just for a minute  
To share even an hour of my life  
It was never a real marriage  
It was never anything more  
Than a man who center stage was all ambition  
And when I hear he is flourishing thriving  
Recently retired mediocre as a teacher  
Holding a Ph.D. my erstwhile legacy  
His professor my friend  
Referring to him as a feral student  
Never forgiving herself for passing him on  
So compromising her integrity  
Am I doomed to hold a bitterness as part of my blood and guts  
Can I never find a way to forgive myself  
What was it that made his hurt so harmful so lasting  
His mouth was mean his heart was small  
I was the stalk he climbed  
I was never wife if he dutifully fucked nose held'  
To keep his favors coming  
Drawing down time  
Resigned to weave regret with last breathes  
It is only him only he  
That I can't forgive give up to time and space  
Ping went the strings of my heart beat  
He ruined love for me he made me feel dirty weak  
Still with disbelief that an hour a minute  
To say nothing of 17 years I was in his keep - NB

**Body drains of its life force**

It seeps out  
At first in small droplets  
As if beads of sweat  
And then the mounting deluge  
Being exiting toward its nothingness

At first try to word out  
I am dying I am old  
I am in the exit lane  
Believing none of it  
Life comes to an end  
A certain finality  
When did I know  
Become aware  
The ending had begun  
When did I get swept over  
By such exhaustive weariness  
Such deep discursive  
Sleepiness fatigue

Dystopian nether place  
To which I escape  
If for moments each day  
Apoplectic apocalyptic  
Prophetic pathetic  
Life force breaking  
Free of me  
Wild feral child  
Dreams unraveling  
Promises forsaken  
Keepsake of youth  
Escapes to flower bird tree  
Bedraggled disheveled  
Child unkempt unfulfilled  
Flees out and away from me

Get a grip  
Tripwire death  
No escape  
No running away  
No pretext no pretend  
It is indeed come  
The very most end  
Time to relent



Give in not shirk  
Obligation to die with grace  
God knows no longer young  
Time to get on with it  
Drag on life this incipient  
Crazy willful unrelenting  
Creep of death  
Nascent embryonic  
This dawning of the end  
Of things to come  
Little corners of body  
Closing down  
Capillaries arteries veins  
Constricting natural flow  
Joints stiffen inflexible  
Carnal knowledge  
No longer entices  
Body didn't like  
Being touched much  
Now recoils blots out  
Behind a darkened scrim  
Sex human touching connecting  
Lascivious rapturous ridiculous

Coroner ensconced in my mind  
Diagrams diagraph long a flow chart  
The utter ultimate collapse  
When life ceases stops  
Dialogic of time and place  
Daily print outs in invisible ink  
Click clocking a stopwatch  
Each step fitbit registers



One step more or less  
Departure in hand  
Got worn out tired  
Transfixed Figuring out  
Extent of energy extant  
Dear imagination will  
Does this fitbit measure  
My desire to live  
To continue  
Ebbing and fading  
Each day slipping off further  
Into naps mouth agape  
Breathing labored  
Grudgingly drudge  
Lift hoist the hulk  
Of my withering  
Dispirited trunk  
No more no more  
When do I catch  
Cauterize the moan  
Hostage now  
Of my own ending  
No reprieve  
It is indeed  
A death sentence  
I do reside  
On death row  
Vanishing before  
My own eyes  
Soon to be  
But a fleck a speck  
Negligible crumb  
A bird swoops down pecks  
Scrum of selves head butting  
Making the ultimate plan play  
Heaped collapsed dead-ended NB



*January 1, 2017 Central Park be the Meer  
Entranced By The Crazy Outrageous Coot*

**Web 1**

On a bench winter chill  
Sitting just inside the park  
Full view of the Meer  
Walking stick between legs  
Water bottle at my side  
Leg arthritic impaired had it all could  
Getting to this bench  
Surrounded by no one speaking English  
Watching families with babies  
Held tight in arms on backs strapped against chests  
High up on shoulders  
No one seemed stressed and unsmiling  
I am like my grandpa grateful  
To have a park just across the street  
Except for a movie or a stumble around a museum  
My life revolves around writing  
Going food shopping planning for coming meals  
Grudgingly taking taxis everywhere  
Reading afternoon's leg extended full out on my leather couch  
Watching in the picture window the sky birds flitting dipping diving  
In choreographed circles in between among the buildings  
The grayning light capturing the tempo of their swirl and dance

Blaring afternoon sun often streams the living room  
As if pitched in by high intensity spotlight  
Forced to turn away blot out  
Cataract eyes brought to sharp pain by glare of sun  
Ophthalmologist shared when I informed him  
How hard it was to walk toward the sun  
Cataracts it seems make eyes highly sensitive  
Brought to tear and pain in glare of drenching sunlight  
Plants some bequeathed to me by recently succumbed neighbors  
Parenthetically I am near next in the line of the elderly  
Dropping dead dying off in this building  
The plants immortalizing those lives succulent needing pruning  
Afraid untutored I will snip the lifeblood the sap from them

Musing as I sit in the park or on the couch book opened on chest  
How I settled for so little asked so little of myself of life  
How could I have thought so little attached leased myself  
To such an unworthy and grudging husband and lovemaking partner  
Tethered formidably forever to a man by a found adopted child  
Squandered opportunity for love if it would have come  
On so little so slight a man a man  
As negligible as insignificant as Reince Priebus

## Web 2

Losing vitality grip still my eye wanders off to find a lone coot  
Wondering if this is the same one who comes each year  
His bobbing thrusting head his deep dives  
Finding him a distance from his first dip  
Holds seizes my attention as I try to recall his name - oh Coot  
Intermittent random recollections of topple in and out  
My head throbbing my imagination digging in  
Unwanted images and memory filter in  
There is no forgive and forget in the years leading to death  
Who knows what is real what is made up all self-serving  
Meant to punish or honor my self  
Fill me with shame diminished embarrassed  
Pleased to have spotted recognized the Coot  
Marveling at the elongated branches of trees  
Spare of leaves bent contortions yielding  
To their little bit of necessary sunshine  
*The Hidden Life of Trees* a book bought for Jeremy (Peter Wohlleben)  
*A paradigm-smashing chronicle of joyous entanglement that will make you acknowledge your own entanglement in the ancient and ever-new web of being – Charles Foster, Being a Beast*  
Telling the tale of the formidable interdependence of jag and root

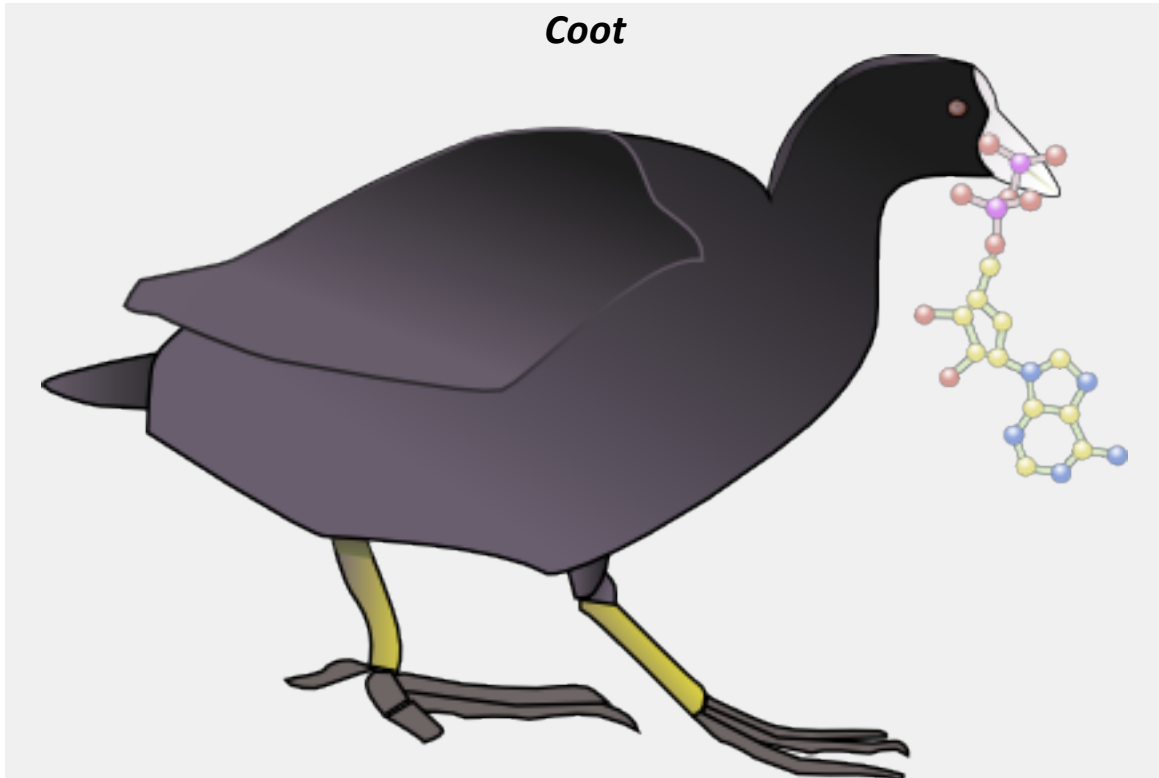
Burls bulge tree roots dig deep into the crust of the earth  
Near volcanic streams and petrified ancient forest  
Giving each enough sufficient room to let  
The sucking tree trunk and branch live and breathe

Web 3

*Nothing worse than being a bright normal*

My hall advisor now see was gay said to me warningly  
I had introduced myself as *Nibs from Newark*  
At the very first hall meeting at Antioch College  
Perpetuating the story line that *Here Lies Nibs –She functioned well!*  
Meaning she took no chances stayed just within the lines of acceptability  
Showing up if with hands half full life half lived  
Written now in the wind – no tombstone – just ash and remnant bone  
She took in pain she did not back away from struggle  
She put herself in shackles and got out of shackles  
Never stepped into the realm of the remarkable  
Except to care for a found chronically ill son  
There we scrapped the depths of hell together hand-in-hand  
Both returning trauma victims  
Being with a son suffering led me into the *lower depths of suffering* , Maxim Gorky,  
This is when I met the challenge stepping out beyond the *she functioned well*  
Girl left behind – I watched and found a depth of suffering  
Hellish words bash each other finding no meaning no definition  
This bit of death, menacing corrosive – brief interregnum dark bleak intrusion  
Etched carved deep carnal into a soul never to be breached released  
Flooding into my soul knotting and twisting up my gut  
I watch the coot on a bench on a chilly day by the Harlem Meer  
I am not in a hospital room watching the shadows of death move through the day  
Mutinous feelings creep up on me pushing me upright  
In the shallows of the Meer the shadow of the ordinary the this and that  
The swap and chat of triviality and so called civility  
Penultimate human suffering floods back to me  
Harrowing find myself witness to a battle a hand wrestle with death  
On the trestle between being alive and not there  
I cannot return to the place where words mimicked the nostalgic  
The soft pedal of recollection  
I am in the muck and mire living extant in the lower depths of Gorky's hell  
Hell bent and fire conspire to throttle each day keeping me from a soft landing  
Dear coot staying just always within my sight my purview  
Not lead the swan but on your small craft of your ridiculous bobbing head  
I am carried out and away from myself finding simplicity and beauty  
Your heading never stopping its palsied lurching and bobbing  
Delight on a Park bench relief if for moments of the foreboding  
And my own terminality my own life bending down to its natural end  
Hoping I can end it myself without witness without regret

Leaving at just the right time before being crippled on a walker in a wheelchair  
Ashamed and embarrassed when I had it in hand  
To be a small black coot I ran out on myself once again disappointing  
Just when I - just as I - came so very close to everlasting love  
Love your death – come small craft let me ride the back of imagined coot  
Off into not the desolate but rippled landscape of Meer and leafless winter tree. - nb



Envision: My final reincarnation – forever afloat annual swirl twirl and bob on the Harlem Meer

*All art is a kind of confession, more or less oblique. All artists, if they are to survive, are forced, at last, to tell the whole story, to vomit the anguish up.*

*Barry Jenkins, Director of Film, Moonlight*

**Mom took Joan's hand and held it tightly.** "This is me getting old," she said. It is neither easy nor pleasant. But if I can get through this, so can you. Please know that I love you. And brace yourself, because this is who I am now.

Refreshing a Mother's Memory With Love and Stories by Jenny Mcphee, NY Times, 1/8/16

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I think again of something the poet George Oppen said to Paul Auster about getting old: "What a strange thing to happen to a little boy."

*The Old Man*

The old man  
In the mirror  
Startles  
Me  
But the young man  
In the photograph  
Is stranger  
Still

George Oppen

*Psalm*

*Veritas sequitur . . .*

*In the small beauty of the forest  
The wild deer bedding down --  
That they are there!*

*Their eyes  
Effortless, the soft lips  
Nuzzle and the alien small teeth  
Tear at the grass*

*The roots of it  
Dangle from their mouths  
Scattering earth in the strange woods.  
They who are there.*

*Their paths  
Nibbled thru the fields, the leaves that shade them  
Hang in the distances  
Of sun*

*The small nouns  
Crying faith  
In this in which the wild deer  
Startle, and stare out.*

*George Oppen*

*If It All Went Up in Smoke – George Oppen*

*that smoke  
would remain*

*the forever  
savage country poem's light borrowed*

*light of the landscape and one's footprints praise*

*from distance  
in the close  
crowd all*

*that is strange the sources*

*the wells the poem begins*

*neither in word  
nor meaning but the small  
selves haunting*

*us in the stones and is less*

*always than that help me I am  
of that people the grass*

*blades touch*

*and touch in their small*

*distances the poem  
begins*



***Maybe he seems sad because to gaze into the camera is to look into the future.  
He knows I'll be dead soon.***

***A Family snapshot, through its conjuring of childhood and place, reminds us that the  
found photo can have all the magic – and the mystery - of an artful one. Geoff Dyer,  
NY Times Magazine, 1/8/16***

**My daughter, my daughter, what can I say?**

Of living

I cannot judge it.

We seem caught  
In reality together my lovely  
Daughter,

I have a daughter  
But no child

And it was not precisely  
Happiness we promised  
Ourselves;

We say happiness, happiness and are not  
Satisfied.

Tho the house on the low land  
Of the city

Catches the dawn light

I can tell myself, and I tell myself  
Only what we all believe  
True

And in the sudden vacuum  
Of time ...

... is it not  
In fear the roots grip

Downward  
And beget

The baffling hierarchies  
Of father and child

As of leaves on their high  
Thin twigs to shield us

From time, from open  
Time

George Oppen, "Of Being Numerous"

***I do not see the act of writing*** about faith as deeply radical in the current intellectual climate. In some ways it's literary suicide. But that's the whole point of what I do ---to be free you need to be willing to sacrifice everything, to be unafraid. Nicola Barker, "The Cauliflower"

***...times winged chariot hurrying near...***

*But at my back I always hear  
Time's winged chariot hurrying near;  
And yonder all before us lie  
Deserts of vast eternity.  
Thy beauty shall no more be found,  
Andrew Marvell, To His Coy Mistress*

*The question isn't "if" but "how much"; not the existence of impact but the degree to which that impact was dispositive. Charles Blow "Trump and the Tainted Presidency"*

## **It Happened in Real Life in Real Time**

**From: Constantine Andreadis** Subject: Happy New Year's Day 2017

Wishing you and your family the best in the coming year!

"Live Long and Prosper"

**dear gus**, lovely to hear from you - by now imagine zach is a senior at binghamton - that you are still living with sue and her son is serving in the military somewhere in the world - know you mourned leonard cohen's death and david bowie's -

during christmas sophie age 15 rebecca's daughter asked me "what happened to gus?" imagine her mom speaks warmly about you - "he walked out on me" i answered. further "imagine we would still be together had he stayed and the third child would have been his as well - no luca" and then she wandered off to open more questions -you always made christmas quite wonderful for each of us -

surrounded here as i am by so much of your art, you are indeed a meaningful part of my everyday life -

going to be 77 sometime this year - walk with an arthritic gait and a walking stick and have indeed as i should aged -

you are more than welcome to come and find your art and me - set a time a date - and bring some greek delicacies and greek wine -

**Thank you so much for your reply to my email.** I am hoping we can end our lives on good terms and **I know we both had our share of blunders in the past.** I was hoping we could communicate again and I would like to come visit you, of course.

Zachary graduated from Binghamton and is now working in Beijing for EF teaching English after school to youngsters. He has a small apartment and is in a relationship with a very sweet Chinese (English speaking) girlfriend who helped him a great deal. He is currently visiting Hong Kong for a few days.

And yes, Justin is a first lieutenant station at the Canadian border. I am still in Sue's house living as separate an existence as I can, trying to figure out what to do as I don't want to die here.

Been reviving my photography and still recall the little darkroom you generously encouraged me to build in the hall closer!

I would like to visit and have a chance to talk and share stories. Thank you.

### Could Have Been Was...

Delusional mythic alter ego  
Metaphoric disjointed  
Sunday Times listing jobs  
College president foundation head  
I only applied for the top jobs  
Like Jews wanting top doctor  
Believing I was qualified born to lead  
Cropped up retrieving images  
Of the girl who wore a crown  
Campaigning as *Her Nibs* (nickname)  
For high school student council  
Posters reading Her Nibs Because..  
Discrete delicate beyond repute  
*Modess because...*(you know what)



Appropriately modest yet assertive  
Within me some extraordinary power  
Incumbent upon me to release  
Combustible crave visibility  
Thus to stay well hidden  
Mundane ordinary pomposity  
To shield massive insecurity  
Girl within holder of secrets  
Steely warning finger on lips  
From father never to reveal release  
Visionary stalked uncomfortably within me  
Girl summoned to distract deceive  
The nether world imploding within her home

Warring she/Gideon to stave off keep away  
Misery unleashed rampant  
Dug deep into family marrow



Spine taut mouth in forced smile  
Fierce gaze piercing connecting  
Within the probity of another  
Nibs because just because...

Wild menacing terrifying  
Following her daily bouts of madness  
Mother went out to the world  
Having disgorged her fury her frenzy  
Daughter mortified silenced  
Daughter controlled temperate  
Not a whiff of the terror behind the door

Mother stepped out into the world  
Hell-bent on making her mark  
*Given the chance I could be  
The head of Bamberger's*  
But wait I am the daughter  
Of the mother who held  
The leadership of said store  
Spellbound as she told them  
How she alone could make store better  
Breathe new life into sales and leadership  
Never even one business course taken  
She was an undisclosed registered nurse  
Safe harbor for girls with no money  
More than 60 years before  
She who had yes a *brown shirt*  
*(also known as early Nazi's)*  
As part of a reading club  
Life long voracious reader  
Parenthetically would only discuss  
*God is Not Great* by Christopher Hitchens  
With rabbi in waning days of Hospice care

While in waning days of hospice care  
In nursing school mother found  
A place to sleep have three meals  
And learn a profession caring for others  
Of which she was deeply ashamed  
For entire life –although once  
Did dress in full starched nurse’s whites  
Navy cape red satin lining white cap with strip  
Anachronistically dressed to participate  
In the nursing station at the Washington march  
When students stormed the Pentagon  
*1967 March on the Pentagon National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam*

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Vietnam War protestors at the 1967 March on the Pentagon.

Mad hatter mother was there poised starched open heart  
Something called out to her to step back in time  
Don her nursing whites so unspoken of for so long

While in nurse’s training one patient  
She seized stalked mother’s imagination  
Fastening a barnacle to a coral

A female patient kept in sealed room  
In which the walls were canvas  
For her incessant scrawling fecal graffiti  
Girl abandoning all forms of civility  
Living mad unrelenting unrepentant

Summoning gathering up the past conscious  
For final review for ultimate personal disclosure  
Reflecting on mother's hyperbolic aspirations  
Were mine just as grand just as delusional  
Sunday after Sunday applying for positions  
To lead Sarah Lawrence the Ford Foundation  
No limit to my ambition confidence  
My certitude that given the chance  
I could hold a multitude of positions  
Of great responsibility and stature  
Never a doubt that power to lead  
Lived waiting to be called upon within me  
And then there were the poems sent out  
To chap book editors of poetry  
To Poetry publications  
To the full gambit of women's magazines  
Glamour Ms. Vogue etc cetera and so forth  
Furious at *The New Yorker*  
For the many form rejection letters  
Rationalized closed off exclusive club  
Remember sending manuscript to compete  
For *Yale Younger Poets* award  
Couldn't abide Sharon Olds Louise Gluck  
Finding their work egregiously lacking  
Rather identifying totally completely  
With the female suicide poets  
Ann Sexton and Sylvia Plath  
Wondered often was I married  
To a facsimile Ted Hughes  
Who drove a wife and mistress to suicide  
Both poets deaths six years apart  
Assia Wevlil actually killed her daughter  
In these exacting deaths life's hollow promise  
Poem by Ted Hughes, *Hawk Roosting*  
Metaphor for instinctual murder killing -NB

*Hawk Roosting*

*I sit in the top of the wood, my eyes closed.  
Inaction, no falsifying dream  
Between my hooked head and hooked feet:  
Or in sleep rehearse perfect kills and eat.*

*The convenience of the high trees!  
The air's buoyancy and the sun's ray  
Are of advantage to me;  
And the earth's face upward for my inspection.*

*My feet are locked upon the rough bark.  
It took the whole of Creation  
To produce my foot, my each feather:  
Now I hold Creation in my foot*

*Or fly up, and revolve it all slowly -  
I kill where I please because it is all mine.  
There is no sophistry in my body:  
My manners are tearing off heads -*

*The allotment of death.  
For the one path of my flight is direct  
Through the bones of the living.  
No arguments assert my right:*

*The sun is behind me.  
Nothing has changed since I began.  
My eye has permitted no change.  
I am going to keep things like this. Ted Hughes*



### **From where did this fixation**

This aspiration to the lofty come from  
At my job in a Bronx School District  
Staff with wide portfolio from ex-addicts  
To school leaders spanning to wider community  
At home wife of professor mother of small children  
Who withered like a wall flower  
A girl who cat had her tongue  
And then to span out so extraordinarily  
Reading poems to initiate the many talks given  
I spoke as a prophet believed I had that oratorical gift  
From where how did this wellspring of confidence come  
From where derived genetically based implanted  
Crazy and insane mother putting Macy executives to the test  
I could have been a contender I could have been  
Necessary to conflate ambition with a life force  
Struggling to keep alive keep a young mother alive  
But no I lived in a swirl of confidence  
Like Loretta Young swinging through the door  
Twirling skirt flipping hair taking on the audience  
I lived in a nether land of doubt squelching ambition  
Blind ambition like blind justice I believed somehow  
Weirdly defiantly in me the worldly me  
And I quote: *My interview with Bam's top executives lasted six hours. It was wild! They tore me to shreds or tried to, but I held up well. Top level executives are very conservative and are petrified of new ideas. Over and over again they kept repeating how frightened they were they were of the diversity of my ideas. They wanted to know If I could be contained! It was great fun. It is customary to have a meeting on a new senior executives previous to their appointments, so I am waiting impatiently for the verdict. The fact that they gave me so much time is encouraging, however one of them did say that I positively ahd gall to apply having had no formal training or experience! And you know he is right it was brazen but nothing ventured, nothing gained.*

As for Bams, I have another interview with a still higher up. (All this because of a paper I presented on recommendations and full of original ideas. They problem at this point seems to be that they agree I could be very valuable but with their phoney paper titles they have no money to pay me what I am worth! I mean to start at the top. It seems that the power for the kid of job and implementation of my ideas can only come from the Board of Trustees! At any rate it is fun and ego building to know that I can command the ear respect and attention from seasoned business executives. I make to make money if possible!

Is this a contagious disease is it passed on through the genes?I  
Interminable indefatigable unbridled ambition  
Believing belonging to any place but home  
Uncomfortable in our station in the world

Conflate value and skill and place  
Golda Meier Angela Merkel ...Ghandi  
Gloria Steinem Bella Abzug Et cetera, et cetera, et cetera! King and I

*Meanwhile myself et cetera lay quietly in the deep mud et cetera (dreaming, et cetera, of your  
smile eyes knees and of your Etcetera.) e.e. cummings*

Prose, narratives, etcetera, can carry healing. Poetry does it more intensely. Ted Hughes

*King: Et cetera, et cetera, et cetera! King and I (Rogers and Hammerstein )*

Some thwart some genetic imbalance  
Got me thinking that I could have  
Could have what?  
Did not kill myself at 21  
Did get to live to 76  
Foreboding time to eliminate myself  
Without pomp and invincibility  
Time to curb heightened unformed self  
Time to make peace  
Salty ambition took me by force  
Perforce to die perforce to dream –take liberty with Shakespeare

Thou detestable maw, thou womb of death, gorged with the dearest morsel of the earth, Thus I  
enforce the rotten jaws to open  
And, in despite, I'll cram thee with more food. Tybalt Shakespeare Romeo and Juliet

Ted Hughes poet had two wives who cut out on him  
Poets both killed themselves  
I was the third wife extant  
Doomed to live a long life  
Words mock words force themselves on me  
I lived a tattered shell  
Ambition squealched parched earth life  
Strife no more contest with  
Peaceable kingdom of my own making lies in rest nb

### **Bugle blunder stumble render**

Unraveling the fact is – You walked out!  
Stunning stun-gun departure  
At one time years later  
When we were back in touch  
You said you couldn't remember  
The circumstance –  
Still within me it oozes it festers  
It is unyielding unforgiving  
Overloading my unconscious mind  
Of festering troubling sores and pain  
Reckoning as I get close to the time of departure  
Bleak winter day pacing Amsterdam Avenue  
Heart pounding battering  
Battering ram storming me  
Eyes bleak blinded ice flecking wind  
Each step trying to regain equipoise  
Some semblance of equilibrium  
How dare you tell me  
We both had our share of blunders  
I protest I resist I shout uncontrollably  
Rough tongued edgy flabbergasting me  
I was at thirty-nine  
But a virginal vagabond recently released  
From a torment infested marriage  
Degraded daily punched around  
Held hostage with a loaded gun  
But my heart did flutter open  
A foolish hummingbird at the ooze of honey  
My kids did everything but call you father  
Following you as if  
*"A little shadow that goes everywhere..." (Robert Louis Stevenson)*  
I can't fuck you share early on  
No problem we will find a way and did  
You lathered me with honey  
My own honeybee to siphon off draw from me  
I got up on a bike again  
And rode through Central Park on Sundays  
I bought a farm in Vermont with you  
My money your *Mother Jones'* knowhow  
Which turned out to be disastrous  
But nevertheless –  
You pouted when I went to visit  
My friend Mike in Pawling  
Always invited to ride along

And when Mike asked us to go bare boating with him  
To rent a sailboat and explore the Caribbean  
You resisted you threatened that if we went  
You would leave simply walk out  
These trips were our restoratives  
To get us to believe again  
That the day after tomorrow was possible  
To help us move beyond  
The scourge from our captivity of being held hostage  
Sailing was the tonic the freedom  
To think beyond imagine more breathe  
Wind and sun would guide us  
Out of past circumstance  
Mike was the captain of our rebirth our renascence  
And ironically nonsensically you could have come  
You say you don't like water you can't swim  
Mike cherishes the fact the act of sailing  
But he too cannot swim  
Two men two dog paddlers  
Mike didn't want us family  
Mike loved us too much to ask that of us  
He was in no position to offer that  
Reasons compounded and unsayable  
But dear Gus  
We both did not make blunders along the way  
You just upped and left  
And still I feel the jarring being jilted  
In the stillness of harsh January chill  
Walking along Amsterdam trying to make sense  
Stalwart not to be threatened by any one again  
Have regretted more than I can tally  
But going sailing with Mike with Rebecca and Jeremy  
Was a high light a peak response experience  
Stepping onto the sailboat we found  
That life was not finished with me  
We had waterways to travel  
Wind shifts and water drifts to grapple with  
Along with us on our medium size sailing craft  
Francoise French son  
Of a wealthy friend of Mike's wife's cousin  
And Jeremy's girlfriend Lee Ann  
Mike and I decided to let the tender adolescent loves  
Akin to Romeo and Juliet have the master suite  
While we all swayed and sashayed on hammocks  
And narrow beds just below deck  
Gus it turns out that you are just another

One of the men I have chosen and *a dime or dozen*  
Confirmed in that brief passage  
We both made many blunders along the way  
I certainly set my sights so low  
In the harsh light of old age  
Again finding myself in the chill of January  
It says so much hard to swallow about me  
Blunder stumble flee hide  
The sorrow I feel for myself abides no mercy  
Disgorged humiliated blunder bugle  
Never to keep the promise of a life  
Rapturous for love now the gravity pull  
Of that foolish cavernous gut wrenching hold  
Never as bold as the dream  
Clamoring to think better  
Of the myriad blunders I now reap NB

*At their backs are the concentration camps of Poland; in front of them, Israel's endless series of conflicts and the occupation.*

*How, in such a short time, did he manage to turn the audience, even me to some extent, into household members of his soul? And into its hostages?*

*He is uniting with his abuser, the judge thinks. Beating himself with another man's hands.*

*...odd little woman, a self-appointed warrior battling for the soul of a boy she knew decades ago and of whom almost no trace remains.*

*Have I earned enough laughs, the comic wonders, to say I'm this close to killing myself?*

*Why are you like this? You were a good boy!*  
*David Grossman, A Horse Walks Into A Bar*

## 8000-Year-Old Female Figurine Uncovered in Central Turkey



**My Bashert - Yiddish for destiny -meant to be...**

I am she. She is me. Replica transfiguring transmuting time and place. Perfect embodiment. Naomi Weiss Barber