

Random Reflections 2012-2013

Naomi Barber

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Eight
Nine...
Ten...
An afternoon of...
Reducto malady...
The Swan
Holy Ghost

I'm playing possum
Playing being dead
Going to The End of the Land (David Grossman)
Don't want to know
Don't want them
To want to be in touch
This is a Ouija Board
Earth to mother
Mother no more
Playing possum
Playing dead
Trying it all on
This time this time
Maybe
NB

We work in the dark, we do what we can, we give what we have, our doubt is our passion, and passion is our task – the rest is the madness of art. (Henry James)
You're fighting for your life right from the moment of your birth. Hands on a Hardbody songs by, Trey Anastasio (Phish) and Amanda Green
Tell me when did you consent to your own life? Schroder by Amity Gaige
What preoccupies us today? How can we today stage ourselves? What are the collective myths of our present and future? Slavoj Zizek, Philosopher, Three Questions

When I spoke to God he didn't answer me He just listened I said I am not afraid to die Just don't take me one slice at a time

My father is Jewish. My mother is Jewish. I am Jewish.

Daniel Pearl Journalist beheaded by al Qaeda in Pakistan, Died on the same day as Mayor Koch.

My father is Jewish. My mother is Jewish. I am Jewish. Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God. The Lord is One. Now inscribed on Mayor Koch's headstone. He wants people to visit. Near subway stop. Died on February 1, 2013 at age 88. Buried in Trinity Church Cemetery Mayor Ed. Koch



Madonna del Parto Frescoes in San Francesco, Arezzo Pietro Della Francesca

Even a very young woman can achieve old-ladyhood, become the mainstay of someone else's self-destructive genius.

"Minor Characters", Joyce Johnson, Jack Kerouac's onetime girlfriend.

No more Bach It is too beautiful July 28, 1913-June 16, 1998

My Dad, Bill Weiss
Told me
The End is near
When the end was near
With grace and aplomb
With no water or food
Brought his life
To an end
It was his end
It was the right ending

He said No more Bach It is too beautiful
Chilling
A truth
Can't leave behind easily
Anything you love
Want to love more
Have more of it
A little more time
To listen to
To know more of...

Got to leave life Before it leaves me Left Antioch before... Left John before... Left my marriage before... Got to leave Got to plan Before my mind and My hands lose Their agility Their capacity The wherewithal Before drool Before my brain Scuttles plans Can't interpret Will or desire Can't carry out Placing poisons Beneath my tongue Got to plan Think clearly Quicksilver Bail out **Before** Death warrant Read aloud In pre-ordained Medical consents Got to die *In the first person* Need a defiant Time defying I

An old self

Knew

Running away

Never to stay

Long enough

For the final word

Before an ending

Was perhaps

Co-authored fixed

I dwelled

At door stops

Exits

Too late

To change habits

Got to pick

The manner the time

Fix the date

Of my death

Resolute

Stars to chart a route

Constellations to follow

Karma Lee's suicide

And my father

For whom Bach

Was the why and for whom

My body in earnest

In deep decay

Dying is well underway

Who what

Is my Bach

To refuse

To turn away from

The fates the future

Of my children

My grandchildren

Not to be present

For another

Birthday candle's flicker

A face a year older

Making a wish

Hopeful evanescent

Stepping into

An unknowable future

NB

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"It just reminds you that none of us are going to get out if here alive, and we don't know how much time we have," she said

"I said this to my daughter, whether it's changing the world or having a good time, that we should do what we want to do. I drink the expensive wine now."

Dr Love - Cancer patient and cancer docto

More and More of Me

More and more of me
Has fled from me
Broken off disappeared
Gone somewhere else
Where the spirits
We contrive roam
Planetary dead
Memories
I remember you
My way
More of me has left
For greener pastures
Afraid of my mouth
My teeth

Falling into my soup
Disappearing in a bread crust
My hair the wisps of an infant's
Harder and harder
To conceal the shine
The bald eagle scalp
Death vulture
Pulling my hair
Like worms out
Hair just gone
And not to fuss

But lungs clogged as well As with bronchial tubes The open and close Like a fire bellow Oh well what the hell I am leaving me behind I am resigned Now to balance To know When to go When life is more worry *About what is gone* When too weary To make a day's plan When no longer Curious about What will happen to? Who will win The next election? What movies will I miss What art shows? Where will the grandkids Go to college Who will they marry? Won't ever know

My body has just run off No need to replace Or shine up Diminished parts Contrive death notes Final wishes to grandkids Still thinking this out While still thinking works While in my hands
My fate my final breate
Death death death
Dreary death
Inescapable death
My death my own
To shape

NB

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Nothing More to Remember

Nothing more to remember
Nothing more want to remember
Nothing more to regret
Or recoup
Gone possibility hope
Hours days minutes
Clocks calendars
Some date somewhere
Sometime soon
April 16
The day my father died
The day I got my second divorce
April 16
Starting date

For the great descent Date of death A mystery still But not the nerve the will A date certain for death Yet to decide But the small craft *Is in harbor* The water rippling The wind in our sails Byzantium whatever Wherever it is *My desired destination* Autodidact takes off *For a place* Where great poets Went to die off *It is in those ruins* I want to be in and among

NB

Email sent following shooting of children in Newtown, Conn.

rebecca and jeremy,

we have had guns in our own personal history - guns shaped much of what happened to us and how things got worked out - to me very badly - we had a handgun without a safety latch readily available for all of your lives and later a rifle (knives are the weapons women used) I was told when questioning -but for the grace or god or some higher bigger force we are all here including dad -not to feel better or self-righteous - but humbled and fortunate - even blessed -who feels the need for a gun to protect oneself or ones family - hurt and damaged people or who???

no answers here but a touch of reality - we are victims our family at least were held captive by a weapon - i was too timid or too weak to remove it immediately upon jeremy's birth - perhaps life would have been different without this as a constant threat if

not in our ready daily consciousness -
time to reflect about a mother a son and classrooms of first graders –xo mom
Looking at birds really takes away sadness in a lot of us. Looking at birds takes you out of yourself into the real world. Starr Saphir self-appointed Central Park Bird Watching Guide for forty years. Overheard her talking about Veronica Lake's love life and marriages as everyone was craning necks looking for some kind of Warbler - Star Saphir died recently featured in a documentary about bird watching in Central Park. NB
Leonard Bernstein's favorite recording: Beethoven's C-sharp Minor Quartet, op 131 – "You should hear the opening fugue. One more glass of wine, Jonathan, and we'll listen to the fugue and then it's a night." Dinner with Lenny: The Last Long Interview with Leonard Bernstein, Jonathan Cott
Author J.G Ballard speaking of living in the suburbs as he did: "Their very blandness forces the imagination into new areas. I mean, one's got to get up in the morning thinking of a deviant act, merely to make certain of one's freedom. It needn't be much; kicking the dog will do."

Saying Goodbye Little by Little

Saying goodbye little by little
Having the chance
The time
Separating parting
Saying goodbye
Taking the time
Weepy
Goodbyes are hard
Final ones
Interminable
Soon
It is in my hand
It is in hand
Parting
Point of no return

Holding fast
No turning the tide
Saying goodbye
We have the time
Some time
I am resigned
I am gone
Gone from me
Me
Now to die with grace
Without sentimentality

Naomi Barber

Always said to the children particularly as they moved from house to house on a court house docket divorce decree - I believed in big hellos and little goodbyes –NB



Richard the Third, Richard III, found in a graveyard five hundred years after his death his teeth in check. Now I ask you how did a nice Jewish girl who went to the "best dentists" regularly even had braces lose most of hers way before she was even fifty – NB

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Mastering a world

Leaving a world behind
So much of me is gone
Grace courage
And a plausible end
Still has not come to me
Got to leave
Before life leaves me
Got to do it
Just how
Just when
Just how....

Naomi Barber

.....

Dear Jeremy and Rebecca,

Although we have spoken of this just want to say once again: Luca was a complex little organism from the start - never drank milk, never seemed to like food except for sweets - couldn't tolerate baby innoculation shots particularly for whooping cough - had raw energy surging always resulting in brilliant pre-school painting, brilliant block creations, and astute strategic skill at sports and at toddler playgrounds, could scamper up trees and took exhilarating tumbles down dunes and jumping waves - school walls too cramping but MSC did find a place for him mostly that gave him the opportunity to feel comfortable without intruding on fellow students -

He was stuffed unfortunately with drugs - always repulsed by me - but favored by a father who like too many parents wanted to please the school and make his child be more normal - Luca and I went to therapy and ultimately got rid of those drugs but sure they hurt his insides and perhaps his intestines -

When he found tennis he came together he came home and so thoughtfully and carefully prepared for each match and was never late for practice early mornings although did cheat on food log - love of sweets greater than his need for honesty - though coach always knew sugar makes you short of breath - he cried whether he won or lost -learn more when lose coach would say

But sadly horrifyingly the illness and medical miscalculations broke him - not just by having to take his full lower stomach and twice missing the boat in reversals - but with the interminable gothic ghoulish medical practice applied to him steadily for a three year period - imagine keeping a football player in the NFL who never failed to fumble the ball or miss a kick -

So for the truth - Luca spends weeks often folding into himself closing himself off and staying in his room but for multiple showers during the day – suffers from clinical

depression but labels as we know only dehumanize - and for many other weeks Luca is hyper over the top perhaps making decisions that could lead to unlawful behavior getting in with the wrong people he is at base innocent and vulnerable and can be used - clinically bipolar behavior -again not willing to name and label - he can also have fierce rage and anger not so much anymore but capable of putting a fist through a door all this to say that Luca is a gift - you can define the ways - but a gift a very special gift to me -

When he feels judged or feels he has failed others or has to meet a standard simply not available to him he balks - can become hurt and enraged becoming unresponsive and going into hiding -

Ultimately he may or may not show up for either of you - but he will know you are there and love him and he desperately and devotedly loves both of you if his form of attachment is rare - and to his friends lavishly brags about each of you.

Enough said - just thanks, Mom xo

We will find our kind in Andromeda,

we will become our true selves.
I will be the mother who

never hurt you, and you will have your childhood back in full blossom, whole hog. We might not know

who we are at first, there, without our terrible pain.

You'd pass me on the street as well, a normal

Someone who traded in her essentials for

A look of haunted
responsibility

NB



Andromeda (1869) Edward Poynter

What Shaughnessy offers her son is a corrective world to our flawed, cruel earth. There he will "get the chance to walk/without pain, as if such a thing/were a matter of choosing a song/over a book. In this other better world there is still illness (the risk of death remains), but it is sickness without medical posturing and heartlessness, where "the patient's ills course/ through the doctor's body as information/reliable at last"

Brenda Shaughnessy, "Our Andromeda"

In Greek mythology, Andromeda was the daughter of Cepheus and Cassiopeia, king and queen of the kingdom Aethiopia.

Where is?

Where is my other swan
My other hawk
My other other
No worry
He will longer find me
I no longer
Look
Like myself
NB

......



Time and its Essence

Waking up to know The long slog Through time Gets shorter ever shorter –

NB

It will be harder

It will be hard Much harder To leave love behind Than life To say goodbye To possibility for love Leaving life Leaving life **Emptied** Whose fault and why No love no love ever It will be harder Not to think believe That love No not this time And the trouble is, was Marlon Brando didn't marry me NB

It is Too Damn Hard to Die

It is too damn hard to die So hard to die Gladiator Taking on death Seizing life Wouldn't relent Hard to die So hard Perhaps like garlic around the neck An amulet a slaughtered chicken dripping blood Perhaps death was hard to come by Day in day out you begged to die Sword darting Olympic fencer So hard too hard You did it anyway it came Just ninety-three years of begging Kept it at bay NB

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Ode to Bragaw and Weequahic our Schools

Serenity is the keynote of this class
Cat sat on desk
It's name Serenity
What a lovely word
Serenity
The day started with a poem
I created a poem for each day
As class poet
Poetry a denied hunger
A subliminal force
Informing
All the days of my life (Psalm 23:6)



The House I Live In (Abel Meeropol and Earl Robinson)

Mrs. Schwartz bowlegged
Stout intrepid
What Does American Mean to Me? (Frank Sinatra)
Joe McCarthy territory
We sang our hearts out
We were yet to reach 8th grade
Your two fingers lifted
Wands to summon
Our young hearts to song
Mrs. Schwartz
Did you know
You set us humming singing
Song-filled lifelong?

You are my Rara Avis
Ms Robinson 2nd grade
Always birds and bird songs
On loan from the Newark Museum
To this day
Scour trees
Searching the birds
Lifted on tree branches
Against the windowpane
Heads down on desks
Imagining



Our Weequahic High School

History teacher

An object

Of sublime fascination

We all slept with him

At least in our minds

Stalked his building

Curious fantasizing

Enflamed by history

Indexing desire

Recitations

On European history

Bodies emboldened

Minds feverish blistering

Striding the aisles

As we read silently

Or wrote essays

Stalking the fires

Complicit lover

Warp and woof

Of our fantasizing selves

You engaged our appetites

Analogues of bodies

Heat and shapes

Charting time lines

Of European history

Became our keepsake

Philip Roth

Went to Weequahic High School

They are celebrating him

With tours through Newark

The old neighborhood

We shared

A corner on Keer Avenue

Philip Roth vowed

To stopped writing

When he became eighty

The struggle with writing is over, this on a post-it note. I look at that note every morning, he said, and it gives me such strength.

We were first or second generation Jews. Our teachers had passion to bring us from the dragon breath of *Holocaust*. More than a tattoo schooling in the Weequahic and Clinton Hill section of Newark, New Jersey infused and informed lifelong.

Naomi Barber

At a Certain Point One Ought

At a certain point one ought Fall off the face of the earth Glint blip gone blur Obituary blurb At certain point Before before The great topple Into mumbo jumbo Garble gibberish Drool slop poop pee Thighs gutters gullies Collecting sewage Soot sludge drudge Dredge dread dead Before before The gore The chance for glory gone Memory of putrefaction Of the putrid untenable Remains remain

And no one cares if you write

Chutzpah narcissism
No one cares
If you write or not
But the word
You said
Lives beyond
Beyond a life

Lost to decrepitude Immortality solipsism Greed gobbling Up the unreserved Unrestricted word No one cares If you write The muse A fiction An ornament An excuse No one cares No one waits The written word Unless unless Self-ordained Couldn't Help myself

Without Leaving A single word Behind Death dying Messy reckless Repugnant How to Disappear From view Dying without Witness Or a final Forgive And goodbye Dying alone One's body's juices

Drained on grassy down

To die

Dignified alone So few Get it Death right

NB

Friendship with You

Blood droplet by droplet
On a timer
Thought we were family friends
OMG you forgot me
But you certainly should have been there
Confessionals keep you entertained
Reminding myself
When I reach out to you
How many droplets to let
To keep you friend
Wondering always
Exhausted
How much of expended time
To lend

NB

New Vocabulary for Death Dying

There is a medical term
For last breaths
For parting gasps
For that gurgling
That death rattle

It is called *air hunger*

Defies defining understand grasping

Grabbing for

Air hunger and that is exactly What I do not want witnessed

Which is why

I have to find my tuft my hillock

My leafy knoll

To lie in

Swallowing pills

To get my heart to stop

I want no one to hear

That gurgle that gasp

I want solitude privacy

To be alone

When the *air hunger* comes

In a sweet spot

Of nature

Not too beautiful Out of range Of anyone To witness To overhear

Naomi Barber

You'd pass me on the street

As well, normal
Having raffled off
The desire for truth
And beauty
Anguish
And the promise
Of Camus
Traded off
For a wedding band
Expression fixed resigned
Mistakes are made
Or so they say

Naomi Barber

Looking at Life With a Hawk or Otherworldly Eye

How often she told me **About Eskimos** Wandering off Into deep tufted snow Going off somewhere Away from igloo From family chewing On whale blubber Teeth gone Hair thinned out Going off Into the deep Permanent impervious wild For a noble self-enacted death Did she want To become an Eskimo Going off to a wilderness To die off Exposed to the elements And not having to read our faces She died in a hospice bed Drugged by hospice medication

Her final hobbled breath An infant's cry for her mother

A hard question

I who have harbored

Walking off into mist

Benadryl

And other pills in hand

Never thought about

The aftermath

Of the last gasp

That I would be

Munched a delicacy

For maggots

And other's of

Nature's undertakers

Giving back finally

Authentically really

Or would I like

A sky burial

Leave body

To the ravens

Recycled to have

Body provide

Food for other creatures

Life everlasting

Enticing this recycling

Swallow hard swallow many

Lie down in downy

Mildew pearly grass blades

Tickling nose and tongue

Last breath comes

Eyes flutter shut

Ravens flutter above

Mice ready to pounce

And munch

Maggots among the bunch

Is a *sky burial* for me (Tibetan Death Ritual)

Another dimension

To consider

As I meter pill

And ponder

Where to wander off

When to savor last meal

Last night

Struggling with sleep

When to leave One of death's creatures

Thinking of a hospice bed Rails up
A child holding each hand Eyes wells of tears
My youngest at the foot
Of the bed hands on feet
They dry up go cold first
When I think
That they will witness
A final gasping
Hunger for air
Last gurgling breaths

Find a travel agent Go on Internet Find a resort An exhilarating And beautiful place Make a reservation Move on Maggots still to dread But what the alternative Lying on a hospice bed Drugs to ease the way In sealed meted out Refrigerated packets Pee slipping down Already wetted thigh Words spool from drool Urgent to deny My children This last and final goodbye Their look of horror Eyes evasive Hands stiffly placating Psychotic morphine Induced ranting unleashed This the prelude To dying off Controlled palliative Hospice style Timing is everything Timing is everything

It can happen too fast
Or a little too late (Trace Adkins, Timing is Everything, Lyrics)

It is an art
It forms a fate
Time to pick a place
Remote and beautiful
Solitary and quiet
Everything still
If with motion
Needing to die alone
Lie in a grassy

Extravagantly beautiful

Yet unfamiliar place

Somewhere between

The sky above

And the mud below ("The Sky Above and the Mud Below" Academy Award Documentary 1962)

Still a figment of my imagination

Fearful determined recalcitrant

Naomi Barber

*Life Everlasting: The Animal Way of Death by Bernd Heinrich Human death is becoming more and more divorced from nature. We pump our dead with polluting chemicals." NY Times January 15, 2012

And now to do my part for enlightened and recycled environmentally sane death

Naomi Barber

The Land of Unlikeness by Jim Harrison

(NY Times Review "The River Swimmer" 1/16/13)

These trips keep the body from deliquescing at a faster rate than already was.

*Take your meals seriously – eat high and low – drink wines that have sorrow in them. Savor childhood cherished odors –dishes – not necessarily Proust's Madeleine but he was scarcely Proust.

*Keep your libido stoked. If not what is beyond further desuetude.

^{*}Get outside as often as possible, ideally right now.

*Have a sense of humor about yourself. Pratfalls not only keep you human; but they also provide the best stories. ...looked straight up at a raucous blackbird scolding him.

*Read good books - You want the best thoughts in your head.

*Scorn snobs and greed-heads – Never wore neckties under private conviction that the political and financial mischief to the nation was created by men who wore neckties.

*Live the examined life. – profound the distances at which we keep each other – lingers on how our memories exist "as if they were waiting in the landscape, waiting to attack."

*Once you reach 60 you had to kill your ego so that you wouldn't become desperately unhappy about disappearing in your old age.

*About life's joys as well as its steep miseries:	"No one gets over anything."

How delightful

Tickling my whatever
"Mouth writing"
When he is not actually
Writing his is preparing
By "mouth writing"
Can happen in the shower as well –

Resonates – from a	mouth writer big time -	Naomi Barber

IMAGINATION IS MEMORY – James Joyce

For cud to chew on – sounds right still not fully or halfway understood – nb

The Disappeared

Ben Wheeler one of the 20 children slaughtered at Sandyhook Elementary School said at an interview

My father always said Ben is going to do something incredible in the world but I didn't know it was going to be his death –(six years old)

Question: how does one go beyond that?

The dead children at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Northport Connecticut I promised him I would be the best mother I could be and I will still be the best mother I can be to him – now dead – Ben Wheeler's Mother

.....

PENDING DOOM LOWERING THE BOOM LOWERING THE BOOM PENDING DOOM RESUME RESUME RESUME

Context: Explication: Explanation: Justification

My Son Disappeared Not Dead Gone but Gone As Blown Asunder As the Darling Babies At Sandy Hook Elementary School

My son disappeared
Through a series
Of near deadly transformations
He became someone else
Or did he?
His body mangled
Modified beyond recognition
He endured three years
Taken over by torture
Medically induced torture
His body assaulted
Betrayed him
Or yielded giving way

Deep in ancestral bones
Arrhythmic disease
Exacerbated
By medical practice
Implicated proffering
Greedy for information
Research destiny's at stake
Plundering disturbing
Dormant disease
Imperialism surfaced
Found son
Not a wit of medical history
Genetic assembly
Tethered to medical ambition
And microscopic slides

What existed before?
What emblematic corrosive
Lived within him?
Who was he?
Now ghost and substance
Unfathomable inscrutable
Inextricable
Twisted mother twisted feelings
Aghast traumatized
A son a found son
So radically transformed
Betrayal gnaws
Ravishment of body
The indigenous wild child

Couldn't adapt

Shouldn't have been taken

My arms welcomed

An emaciated

Abandoned infant

Loved him to vitality

Ultimately putting him

When he became ill

In the hands

Of assaulting practitioners

Without regard for place

For history for birth right

A blank plank to course

Of skin and skeleton

Every infectious disease

Annotated explored

Categorized and labeled

Proprietors of search and scandal

Marauders of scientific firsts

Shuck him stuck him

And viewed him

Searching

For the inexplicable

The indefinable

The un-findable

Quips sucking breath

Pushing my child aside

Stepping over motherly qualm

A mother's protests defied

In the clutches

Of a hospital's visor

I witnessed

A child deteriorate

While medical appetites

For scientific firsts accelerated

Ten years on not sure

How to regard my son

How to think about

What happened to him

What happened to us

The story struggles

Garbled still

Phone rings I recoil

He appears a forced smile

Filled with the shame

At again being sick

Of disappointing

I give an overly gregarious greeting

Riddled with premonitions

Electric with doom and fear

Shattered illusion of well-being

Permeating pending disaster

Hour by hour rented

Waiting for the inevitable

Here in the aftermath Of one catastrophic illness If physically modified survived Now a man of twenty-five Whose mangled body Once again is capsized Into ravishment and disease His small intestine Fibrous fulminating ulcerating Where else can food go If no stomach To grind and digest Already a bag captures What is refused The horror The inexplicable terror Of a body so unhinged So destroyed Overtakes

My son with new friend Neighbor just above On the 12th floor Has taken him in Or he ineluctably Invited himself He lives in and around And near me I gasp as the door opens Multiple times He enters to bathe I am thrown back To the time When only a hot bath Relieved the suffering Now he soothes and cleanses Enters saying In the shadow of doorways Hi Mom and upon leaving See you later Rarely close enough For a look Pushing away close scrutiny And a motherly hugs or kisses I am ripping up inside Tears that have held back Race cheeks As the door closes And he exits

It has been a decade
When diseased intestines
Were virtually ripped
Pulled from his body
A surgeon's plunging hands
Sepsis crawling his body

Premonitions of death
A hole cut into his stomach
Out of which poop would run
Thirty days in intensive care
What word beyond despair?
Officious nurses guard
A mother and son reckon
Something beyond contemplation

I lost my son The one I dreamt up The one I found In one impromptu moment Received him under oath His birth mother quickly returning To a house on stilts In the thick of parrot circling Paraguayan rain forest Now that son has disappeared The tennis player The wild child The long distant learner The one with hilarious laughter The one with multi-best friendships The one of ritual and custom The one who was Christened Catholic to honor his birth mother A ceremony he entered On his own reconnaissance And his own initiative at eight The one so fine and refined The one who now adorns His body with tattoos Who loves shoes And jackets and shirts All high-living finery Tattoos Hip Hop bling Has his own jeweler Adornments keep hidden From the unknowing eye The ostemy bag unrelenting Collecting capturing Filling up with his poop

This child my child
Who calls me Mom
Who threatens me
I COULD FUCK YOU
I KNOW HOW TO MESS YOU UP
This one that one
The keepsake one
The dream
Of a loving family
Vanquished
This child
The same one

I pledged under oath

To love to cherish

Without qualification

The mother who

Picks over her decision

A vulture over a death

The child my child

Who calls me Mom

Ripped through

A pretext for love

A force for truth

Broke apart

A marriage

Vows as faithless

As sex

With an nameless stranger

Here a son

Held to the heavens

As Jesus was

Entrusted to a man and a woman

Who swore under oath

To be loyal

Indomitable with their loving

It was in the stars

This juxtaposition of truth and deceit

It a prophecy of misguided choice

A contrived nuclear family

Could not and did not survive

The sacrilege of a choice

Beyond reckoning reconciliation

The found son

Twisted savaged body

In free fall deterioration

Medical panacea slight

If in the offing

Exponentially

Physically diminished

Spirit that intangible

Beams forth surrealistic

Hi Mom

See you later

His father texts left unanswered

Each day my son

Decides in earnest

To stay alive or die

His body so onerous

So troubling so difficult

So unwieldy

Life raw and pulsating

My son

Decides daily

To stay alive

Or kill himself

His spirit yet defiant

A mother holds on

The palate of observation
Noxious frightening
A mom left
Respectfully
Watching waiting
As her son
Contemplates living or dying

Naomi Barber

.....

Soldiers seeing experiencing the unseemly morally abrogated morally abridged Good god of what against all of your teachings do we ask soldiers to do commit And of the others we don't ask an inner voice drives them to slaughter the slaughter of the innocents – Northport – children babies

Afflictions of the Soul – Nakashima Brock

i will wade out

till my thighs are steeped in burning flowers I will take the sun in my mouth and leap into the ripe air

Alive

with closed eyes

to dash against darkness

in the sleeping curves of my body

Shall enter fingers of smooth mastery

with chasteness of sea-girls

Will i complete the mystery of my flesh

I will rise

After a thousand years

lipping flowers

And set my teeth in the silver of the moon

E. E. Cummings

.....

Diminishment - Son First Born

Ouch hell
Death snatch me from this
From these thoughts
Each time
She opened her mouth
His wife
To me
She diminished him

She minuses him

She subtracts him

Takes away

No more no more

I screamed out

Fuck you she said

Slammed the door

In my face

Knock knock

No one home

He says

He shouts out

No one home

Take one away

From this nasty equation

It must be me

Stricken from the registry

Emails phone calls

Made so small

Blind spot

On the universe's face

And memory

Gauzy memory

Like sleet sheets of wind

Gone the last crispy leaf

Mulched pulped

Extract to fertilize

Sodden next spring's earth

Naomi Barber

.....

Diminishment - Daughter Second Born

Scabs scalds censors

Yabba Yabba

Critical chronicles

Of everything wrong

This uptight

Half born half-baked wasp

Impotent chronicler

Of what she did

That was not right

Mocking sneering

When not yelling

Threatening

Now is he

A proper guy

For my girl

My daughter

Cowering no more

In corners

Waiting for next outburst

Walking on egg shells

This half formed wasp

Good pedigree

Outlandish impotent

Diminishment

Will work no more

Not look the other way

Staring him down

No threats no insinuations

No intimidation

Just fed up

Have had enough

Has this love soured?

If ever there at all

Tangled turmoil

Of feelings yet to sort

She molds him into an object

And will keep him there

As the *raven quoth

Forevermore (*The Raven Edgar Allen Poe)

Naomi Barber

.....

Moral Brokenness

Repair

Death snickers

No time white rabbit tells us

In Alice in Wonderland

Moral decrepitude

Apologies remorse

Won't work

The ground broke

The atom bomb dropped

Napalm

You slapped my face

Bruised it black and blue

No time to grouse to pause

Time marches on

We die more and more

Each day

Moral breakdowns

Smart when mine rise within

Tidal wave of guilt

Push away I push away

No time today or any day

Moral decline

Demise of mind

Body disintegrates

Truths grate

Can't escape

I go on Beckett

But I determine the end

Moral rectitude

Continuity of self

Death at my own hand

I expect from myself

Nothing less

.....

Alternating realities

Sharpening knives

Nothing could be worse

Than our daily deeds

Our daily bread

Caustic and recriminating

Blur it paint over it

Make it go away

Lessen the blunt of it

Nothing is worse

Than what is outside our window

Even our imaginations

Register shock

Dreams shy away

No claims on any real life

This comes from us

The heinous the evil

But not the tragic

Expect on any day

Rain predicted will stay away

Naomi Barber

.....

Anatomy of Dying

It happens

One tooth at a time

One clump of hair

First steely gray brittle

Then breaks off

Spiral tufts cover

Monk's bald spot

Skin so thin so transparent

Brush hard edge of toweling

Pop-up bloody spot

Spread Rorschach on knuckles

Back of hands spidery

Veins road maps to decline

Onionskin thin sheaves of cover

What? What did you say anyway?

Volume decibels screeching owl

Howling cats in heat

Please repeat and repeat

Voice wobbles grating gravelly

Fades dims comes back hobbled

Sight now sight dims and dims

Scrim diaphanous curtain

Everything blurred distant

Focus fix lens

Thick dark glasses closing in on face

Dead giveaway

Cataract surgery yesterdays

Flapjack breasts Think that is how My granddaughter said they looked Horrified and taking back Did I hurt your feelings? You will always remember me saying that No I won't Forgetting the moment before Childhood looks like Seems like only the day before Flat footed shoes enemies to entrap Sagging tummy bloats and deflates Sheets on lines wind usurped days Sleep gets away begging getting nowhere *Gimme some shut-eye* moment's sputter to hours Restless sheet kicking legs cramping Feelings full of pain orbit The body searching For a lair or a comfortable habitat

I get old When to pull the plug Swallow the pills Find a concealed hillock Not to be discovered Until Last breath spent Yet to decompose Ready for cremation Funeral pyre Ashes to toss like daisy petals She liked me she liked me not No pathway to heaven No god to retrieve me Stories planted like seeds To outlive enliven me Not to engineering manipulate Can't control anyway Stories to be told The aftermath after time of death They last that is what lasts

Naomi Barber

.....

I move on

Maggots still to dread But what the alternative Death on a bed Urine spills spit drools Poop slops Forgive me forgive me not

I will not

He locked his daughter out Built a wall around She came from flesh and blood From offspring to intruder In movie *Amour...*

They cannot be my handlers
Diaper changers
Poop wipers
Bed changers
Bed sore cleaners
They cannot cup my throw up
They cannot

Eskimo woman dares
Walk off
To a grand desolate place
Not to be discovered
Until the ground
Has taken me in
As one of its own

I will not slobber On their hands Will not Have end of life psychosis Furies head turning eyes spitting I will not

They will not see my disappear Die I will do that As I have lived Alone My prerogative My choices Leave my no other way

Eskimo lady
Vanishes
Jewish girl
From Weequahic section of Newark
She walked softly off to her death
Pills in a linen hanky in her hand
Found a place
A place so extravagantly beautiful
A setting to worship and to love
No more remembering no more regrets
No more of more
Gulp final breath
Eyes staring out blindly drifting off
Destination forming date 2013

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DESIGNER APPEARANCE

WITH AN EFFORT

BY HARRY WEISS - Father's Brother, Age 98

WHEN MEMORIES FILL THE RECESSES OF YOUR SKULL AND PANGS THE QUARTERS OF YOUR HEART? DO YOU MULL THE PLUS AND MINUSES OF THE PARTS, THE GOOD THE BAD OF THE MANY ADVENTURES YOU HAVE HAD?

LIFE MELDS EXPERIENCES AND FORMS THE YOU THE WHOLE OF WHAT YOU ARE IN OTHER'S VIEW THE MIX DETERMINES HOW YOU'RE SEEN PLEASANT, ARGUMENTATIVE, HAPPY OR MEAN.

CAN YOU DESIGN THE PUBLIC ASPECT?
FRIENDLY, HOSTLE, WARM OR SUSPECT?
YES! BY PRACTICING SMILING. SMILING, SMILING.
IT IS WORTH THE TRYING. IT'S BEGUILING
SECONDS, MINUTES, BY THE HOURS TWENTY-FOUR
AWAKE, ASLEEP, A -DOZE, MOUTH UPLIPTED, LITTLE MORE
DAILY, WEEKLY, MONTHLY, AND ANNUAL
TRUST ME. IT WORKS. IT SAYS SO IN MY MANUAL!

.....



Quotes cross-stitched samplers

So much pain Professor M	laxine Greene on the eve of her 95 th birthday
If we deny our happiness,	resist our satisfaction,
We lessen the importance o	f their deprivations.
	Jack Gilbert (from obit, died this week)

november 11, 1962 - naomi married ben fifty years later...divorced november 11, 2012 - naomi is 72 and ben 73

It begins quietly

in certain female children: the fear of death, taking as its form dedication to hunger, because a woman's body is a grave; it will accept anything.

Louise Gluck

Forgive me if I say I love you: the powerful are always lied to since the weak are always driven by panic.

Louise Gluck

Why love what you will lose?
There is nothing else to love.
Louise Gluck

Neoteny: a delayed state of adolescence

"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

Coup de Foudre: a thunderbolt; a sudden, intense feeling of love.

...readers will be turned off by the author's unrestrained fire. (Denial, by Jessica Stern, reviewer, Megan Buskey, October 2, 2010)

...I'd had life too easy, conditioned by an upbringing where fear of change was disguised as caution. (Ingrid Betancourt, Even, Silence Has an End, Ingrid Betancourt)

Minor incidents were poisoning our life. Deprived of everything –our lives, our pleasures, our loved ones – we had the misguided reflex, to cling to what little was left: a tiny amount of space a piece of cookie, an extra minute in the sun." Ingrid Betancourt

...a world prize for ungratefulness, (Francisco Santos of Ingrid Betancourt)

Words

Words crashing thrashing about me Heating up Do they get the ritual sacrifice To they sizzle to tell the tale Of the way the mighty oak The tender willow Toppled and fell Never ever became more than a shoot Words collide crash Atom smasher life Let me climb Above my actual height To tell the tale So that you skin will curl and fire Your heart not breathe The sorrow of my life Eating up your insides Blinding your eyes

my incomplete body depletes by the hour no teeth kidneys disintegrate fingers knob spots abound wrists and hands scrawny and tawny eyes cloud but it's the teeth the teeth no more will grow no fortune will be spent bare gums bare ass longing for the touch that will never ever come

NB

tamper defy death – retribution

braces on teeth now look

retuxon to kill the kidney disease now look

symbicort - and now eyes more cloudy -

now, you are legally blind in one eye, he says

NB

John Lewis Bob Dylan and Me

All babies born in 1940 A grand year Fade as we will I live in your ivy hall Memories transfixed

The mad descent has started The mad descent has begun Shot off the starting gun

NB

.....

Don't run to your death – Navy Seals

.....

Dying Day by Day

I am easing from life
Pulling off it
I can feel
My removing self
More into death
Than to being alive
Each day a marker
A dividing line
Divining when
When I will
Put an end
And lie down
Slowly
At my own hand
Dead

Never to collect memories Of me dead Must not die In my own home in my own bed

Naomi Barber (November 2012)

.....

Thanksgiving Day

Thanksgiving day Day of torment Day of disappearances Day of rebellion Day of not showing up Day of showing them Who has the upper hand Stayed away She bawled and bayed Thanksgiving day Day of torment Day of rebellion Day of disappearance Day of forgiveness Day of not yet Thanksgiving To stay buoyant Had to stay diminished Day of disappearance Day of dislocation Day of immigrant sorrow To the third generation

Naomi Barber

.....

Mediocrity

Mediocre
In a heart
That beat for beauty
Excellence perfection
Hellish desire
Reigned tight
Brought in
By such ungainly attempts
Beyond passion
For excellence

Pending doom I walk City streets Not to be there Riddled with fear Phone rings Send shivers up spine Apply tourniquet
To life force
Cut off access
Can't know
Don't want to know
Nothing more of bad
I can't handle anymore of that

ND

Complicity's sister

Mother we are siblings Symbiotic Connected by a brutal history We had our own internment camp If with chicken soup No antidote It was not Jewish penicillin Yiddish expressions Tell it best I am farbisine (bitter) And farblondzhet (all mixed up) Older now these faulty steps Are *ongepatsht* – (a little too much) And fill me with *shpilkes*)(nervous energy) Crazy filled with Yiddishkeit But not that confounding religion My god it comes to this My relatives wandered in Poland They got broken Into bare elemental parts In Poland in Poland Dreary landscape to get murdered in

Our pathology our ashamedness
Complicity's sister mother and daughter
We completed each other
We fell back into Polish soil
And stayed stuck in a mud pot
How thick and putrid
The cow dung and chicken poop
We lived under the same roof
Still do even if
You are already dead
We are connected beyond time

We never got the poisoned soil Of Poland off our feet And the fetid air Purged from our lungs

We are where we begun
Hoisting me onto a bone dry tit
Holding me in dyspeptic riddled arms
Derisive mother and child
Honor honor honor
Shema Yisrael forget about it
No holy land to retrieve
This misery this union
Without Jesus without Madonna

My Four Questions (Die Fier Kashas) Why wasn't I? Why couldn't I have? Why why why? That's why?

We work in the dark, we do what we can, we give what we have, our doubt is our passion, and passion is our task – the rest is the madness of art. (Henry James)

Naomi Barber

Charlotte

Charlotte your legacy Vouchsafed was safe with us Judaism deep in our being our bones We the two children You disparaged You didn't trust Entrust With your religion Iudaism The Judaism of the *Holocaust* The religion You disparaged Ran from Denied lied about Judaism your identity Your personhood

Charlotte our mother The idiomatic Jew The Jew of the *Holocaust* The remnant Jew The Diaspora Jew The head-beating shrieking Jew A woman displaced within herself She belonged nowhere She belonged everywhere Charlotte our dear Tormented mother You were the wound The ache the pain The everyman/woman You were wild and crazed Filled with the distemper Of eight million Jews Who wept rebelled called out To be remembered in you You their living embodiment Their hometown Queen Jew Twisted branch clawed up trunk Tree convoluted stalked by nature And the sun's errant rays

Bluma Charlotte our Mother We were never your children The right ones As were your sibling's offspring It was good to give them succor They were your collective your group Your rightful family We just never fit in Predictably life has its Not so subtle ironies Its topsy-turvy ways It is Rachel who now honors you It is Rachel my brother's first born It is Rachel you often regarded Mounting comparisons With your critical perfectionist eye *Jewish Luftwaffe Aryan* Amorphous free floating the definition Now Rachel and her husband Mike Observant Mike and Rachel Have had twins within three days

Of you and your twin brother's 95th birthday A girl and a boy One named Charlotte your name And one named Nathan a brother Who did not live beyond his sixth birthday Sibling symmetry brought you to nursing school With brother Morris's death from leukemia Leaving behind an infant and widow At nursing school free room and board If not stocked with books Reading kept you in tact There you found your body double A mad woman your age To whom you pushed food Through her cage-like room Walls smeared with her fecal matter God you told me that so often Did she know of your fascination? Your fear of her The merging of identities Inseparable agonies

Nathan and Charlotte
Will have the best mother
Almost makes me weep
They will have the mom
My brother and I never did
The mother you had
Eva long braid warm smile
Never afraid to hold you close
Kneading warm dough into Challah
She pulled you in
And loved you as she feared you
And was afraid for you

Charlotte and Nathan
Have Rachel for a mom
Almost makes one believe in God
Mother it is all too much
I am overcome overwhelmed
I scour the heavens
I see something celestial cyclical
We longed for your wisdom
Your unequivocal love
Life does go on
All that was good

Pure of heart is again This the actuarial legacy The spirit and essence of Judaism

In the end Mom we heard you
If you couldn't see or hear us
All of the cousins
Who took such good care of you
Showed such deference
We honor them today as well
This is Jerusalem and Poland and Galicia and Silesia and...
This is Millburn New Jersey you loved it so
They should put you on a stamp
Today a baby girl Charlotte folds into her mother's body
And she will become
The girl of your best and finest dreams
And Nathan will live a long life this time around
Embodying Joe your twin with his wisdom
Without the agony of his own troubled personal life

We are onto something here
Life's interminable cycles have come full circle
Vibrant strong viable wonderful magical
Charlotte and Nathan
All of us rolled up into one
In the end the Plessers
No matter the challenges
Just wouldn't come undone

Mother you best expressed Your sanguine and sane love of life It was in your art Retrieved in foundries of marble Marvelous representations depictions Of mother and child Of Rabbi's dancing Right off the paintings of Chagall And there Einstein a kindred spirit The advent of these births Almost bring me to my knees Your sculptures of mother and child Have come to life in Charlotte and Nathan We see we feel it we hear it we believe it Inside the stone two little dear hearts pulse and beat Charlotte and Nathan, Nathan and Charlotte

Bluma your demonic temptation preoccupation - death The ending at the mercy of your own agony Had you held together a little longer A witness to this day of the miraculous An arc of rebirth of timelessness History nearly torching life's continuity Yiddish lullabies can be heard Waves lapping the jetty In Long Branch New Jersey Charlotte and Nathan Bluma sings to you If she can't hold you in her own arms Her signatory songs are in the air The ones she sang to each new baby Oyfn Pripetshok about the Jewish alphabet - alef bet Saving "the history of the Jews is written in tears" I refuse not to believe not today, not anymore Our family history is written in song and prayer Of promise of possibility of hope Of hymns and *Hosannas* Charlotte and Nathan bringing this to us once more Reminding of an estimable and powerful legacy "The last of life for which the first was made" (Robert Browning) Mother you never did die after all We are witness today and always we are reborn.

> Naomi Barber October 12, 2012

Charlotte and Nathan born three days after October 9 Which would have been the 95 birthday of Charlotte And Joe – twins born to Eva and Saul Plesser

.....

Embarking Digging Excavating

Studying myself
Digging deep down
Remembering remembering
Artifacts
Figments
Imagination
Wishful thinking

Telling them
What to think
How to remember me
How do I remember myself
Heavy chest heavy heart
Sweeping away denial
Cobwebs gobs of dust
Don't know what to think
How to find again dreams

Never remembered

In the first place

NF

.....

Displaced in Life and Confused

(The same displaced out-of-season effect -Lake Water by David Ferry)

Made it to nearly

Spring 2011

My dad

Has been dead

Thirteen years

April 16 I saw

The snowy egret

Swooping over

The Harlem Meer

Grand wingspan

It was on the anniversary

He died

Thirteen years ago

The egret a marker

No headstone

Just breezy

Memory

Trying

To lift off

Its heaviness

Still broken hearted

Almost not knowing

About what

About whom

Dad what role

Of love of lover

Did you play

In my displacement

In my being relegated

To the other side Of romance

Incest of soul and mind

Of not of touch

Virtual capture

Of a budding

Girl's heart

Now my face

Around the mouth

Resembles a puppy

According to Willa

Your namesake

Who is six

Really more boxer

Or some other like-breed

Of heart break

I wear the outsized

Creases of pain

Around my mouth

To never

Let the scream out

Too late for love

But I am alive

To find again

The egret on my Meer

Don't think

I don't appreciate that

Didn't know

If spring

Would come again

To my life

Never underestimate

The wonder

That seizes and feeds me

Harsh pink magnolia petals

Against a blue sky

Contrite perhaps

But seen

With my own marveling eyes

And the cherry blossoms

Fanning out near the reservoir

Here another year

Or day or two

Their pinkness short lived

Mine as well

This is the love I have Egrets cherry blossoms

A day or two more

The lore

The gore

The sorrow

Moving beyond

Loneliness

Beyond dread

Will spring

Come to me again

Doubt more real

Than fear

So much affection

So much passion

So stifled and cut off

I do not dread being dead

Don't know

How much more I can take

Of the mistakes

Misgivings made

If love is all

My heart died

As a child

Left with wonder

But never

The opulent appreciative words

Almost outsized

I will fall in love

Before it is all over

I will have romance I will have a man

Hold me and relish me

I will

But he will be imaginary

I will make him up

A fantasy man

Like fantasy football

Like imaginary friends

For kids

I will have love

Before I die

I will have romance

Just no one real

Only in my mind My quickly forgetting Spongy mind

It ends with babbling
It ends with a sob
It ends with a blob
It ends it ends
It really does

Already careers over

Already dawns surprising

Already darkness frightening

Question: will it lift

Will my eyes open

Will I be breathing

You are saccharine yellow

You are liver failure yellow

I don't regret

Divorcing you

Only should have done it

Sooner earlier

And however did I marry you

Knowing you for three weeks

Complete from first handshake

How did that take place

Yet you look sallow callow

Your liver is dripping into your veins

Your skin is the hue of dying

Your energy punctured

What happened to your howl

You curl in a chair

Your cancerous arm

Can't move well

Tumors crawling your bones

Is this just the beginning

Of the end and of

What is to come

I don't regret you

This is the end of our run

How could I

Two children came

Hard to imagine

That our love making

Like two adolescents

And never changing

Produced such grand

Children – and now
Last gasps last looks
Last chances
To look at truth
Straight in the eye
As eyes close
Sight clouds over
And the sun disappears
This for a final time
One thing for sure
That is one thing
We will never know

Naomi Barber

.....

Certain Death

It is there
Certain death
Time winnows wriggles
Squeezes
Moves out of me
I can feel it leave
Blow through

My heart frightened
Love beyond sight lines
Can't hack into the past
Can't take back time
Same me old now
Still blind scared
Love inanimate
Plants flowers trees birds
And babies yes babies
No sadness no regrets
Soon but not yet
Death

NB			

60 Pianos

Every day I didn't die Something wonderful

Yesterday the next 16th second was given me (anonymous)

Everyone knows
I am 70 years old
Old, older woman
Offer seats
You sure?
Let me know if you change your mind
On the subway
These the penultimate years
Of my decline
Adjusted resigned
NB - June 23, 2000

Squeak squeal sequel

Pinched lambent
Words splat
Mouse piss on piano keys
Eviscerate eliminate
Tears fears
Preoccupation
Demise die
Quietly
On road side

There is a scream
Widening
Wending
Up through my body
Upending
Pounding
Begging

A well of tears streams Bursting Coming apart Unlatch Unleashing Soon so soon A cry
A yelp
The pain
Un-lodged
Pouring forth
Kept too long inside

Purge Come forth Collapsing Emptied To die So I can die

No longer to deny A modified son Modified too My life This mother son A weird brew

NB

.....

When did they go

From sexual organs To body parts Desexualized Cauterized neutered Body parts Lumbering disintegrating Bumbling along Slowing down De-sexed declawed Destroyed Dying death Disintegration Too late I am there On the way to nowhere You didn't belong In my life Not for a minute of it Drawing last breaths The truth of it killing me

First Son

Family man

Trying for dignity

Art collecting

Board member

Children's school

Enlightened school

Turmoil

Just beneath

The surface

Wild tormented

Harsh frightening

Yet placid

Go smooth go-slow

Children disintegrate

Starve lie steal

At seven

Future not too bright

Cover-ups

Don't work

Blow it apart

Come out

From under

Go crazy

Toss her out

Let life get messy

Ugly

You are too good

Too very good

To whisper

Lunacy insanity

Personal danger

As normalcy

Go crazy

She is unfit

As mother wife

Move beyond

The pulled curtain

Let in the light

Let in life

My part

What seed sown

To have you

Pick an enemy

Instead of love

I am disappearing

Right before my own eyes Feigning invisibility Vaporizing myself Preparing for death Sooner than even I think I am trying to walk away Be away from the main stream Out of the way Behave mute Disinterested Dying dead So that by the time I am gone It will seem As if it happened Awhile ago

From the moment You met me You tried to change me From the moment Slicing discussions In a plastic surgeons office Sculpting my face To fit your Sense of yourself As a man Not a trophy wife To feed you A future Look as if You had gotten Captured the golden ring You tried to change me Now it is just an ache A grimace Averting my eyes I died As an individual soul When I walked Into your sculpting arms And flinching stare Final truths Get to bear bottom

Of it all

What happened

What did I wish had happened

What did I think had happened

Stripped down

Time is running out

Final truths

The real live truths

Of things

Down to bare bones

Shifting sands

Truth elusive

The damn trouble with it

Moments before

Eyes close down

For real forever

What will be

What I know understand

Happened to me

Happened to my life

What is the truth of it all

Last thought final thought

Final truth time out

But there would have been more

Unraveling as my constitution

Gained veracity

I learned more

Held in less

Sunlight blessing

Night times impossible

Sleep irrelevant

More and more

Truths revealed

With my consent

Never a breakaway

Never a run away

Never left

Did I try?

I would have bent the grip

Released the hold

I would have said *get lost*

But there I stayed

Loyal and unspent

Life as I fade to black

Can I give back

What was unlived

Can I bequeath
The love unused
My body and organs
Nothing to give back donate
So I stayed and brayed
And really never ever disobeyed
A daughter for all ages
That will be the sickness
The disease that was fatal
Stayed put just stayed put
Soulful daughter dutiful daughter
Disenfranchised daughter
Loyal to a fault
Too late too sad too bad

N

.....

My Mom

She gave me the oppositional grit Hate to admit it She was the most important Relationship in my life Aside from the children Deeper than marriage vows I was married to her Fused spine mind spirit She was she was I was I was Perfect symmetry Oppositional force Steel girders She was my foundation My herb root My all and everything Until she died at 93 I couldn't see I couldn't see What fully she meant to me She was my everything

Love incidental music Clashing symbols sounds Allotropic asymmetric We were atonal hormonal We were our everything Every fiber of my being Incubated housed Pre-determined
She mined me like gold
Gilt guilt gilded rose
I died when she died
I screamed I am alive
And promptly died

Get off the sucking tit of life
Start dying right
Happening right before my eyes
I die dying dying
Body betraying
Stand tall
Exhale
Figure this out
Inspired
Time running out
Get off this damn tit of life

I'm weaning off
The tit of life
Trying to die off
Trying just to die
Not to live longer
But to die well
Not as easy
As you might think
Death plunk
Comes on troopers boots
Dysfunction piss on body
Slobbering lips
I'll have none of this
How to die well
Sucking off my last life breast

I am not trying to live longer I am trying to die better I am fighting to die better A better death Less a longer life

I now see the freaky fissures They are ugly I am drowning I am dying The past is clawing

Ripping at me A wounded lion **Gnashing teeth** I am all open wound I see the children I see the past I see how is has seeped in They are drowning I am dying Freaky fucking fissures How to step in Why to why not Biblically explicit **Expurgated** Describe us Our status our lives I am dying They are drowning What's left of me Should do About what rises Clear and clean Another day Another day of sunlight Another reason to avert eyes

He still rules With a fist and a claw He didn't go to jail I couldn't Weak kneed On my knees Supplicant Shivering In his exhale How dare he How dare you Two impotent Moose lock horns Laughable Hunter come on Shoot them dead They already Have lived beyond Humanness Animals are even better Behaved have rules
Errant winds
Bad food
Turned lives inside out
Rancid disgraceful disfigured
My weakness
Bred this
I caused the unruly
The ugly the intemperate
To flame up flare up
Appear

Ugly my weakness
My frailty
My submitting
Brought hot breathing
Dragon flames
Two gladiators
Of the ridiculous batter
Children look on
Mr. Rogers in their heads
Wishing doesn't make
Bad things come true
They broke
My two husbands
Every golden rule
NB

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Extricating myself from the future

Bit by bit
Pulling a nail off
Not caring if
Which next president wins
Or the aftermath
I will not be there
Or anywhere
Giving up on the future
Takes discipline
Not planning
Not thinking ahead
Not wondering what if
Goodbye tomorrows
For today
No more thinking ahead

Hemlock

What to munch

Leaves or bud

For me the future

Will not come

No more planning

No more wondering

No more more is coming

Extricate move off move on

What is beyond beyond

Nothing blank

No more spring

No more buds

No more love

Never was

But for fleeting fluttery moments

Death be not proud

Death I am preparing for you

The future the future

Dying without regret hatred rage

Disappointment sorrow

Dying it was what it was

Not she did what she had to do

She did her best

No I didn't

Gangly I moved through day after day

No more future no more

What to leave those others remembering

Really no power to shape any of that

Already fast and secure

What they know what they think

What they feel

Already they have encapsulated

Like a caterpillar sac

So little

Iust another life

Who squandered time

Made half-assed decisions

And walked around

Scared most of the time

Prelude to a death

What's left

Not much to pick over

Vulture hours

To consume

Crinkly bones near crumbling Skin hanging like emptied sausage skeins

Where to begin Thin skinned Hours on wane Who gets My body to clean

Got to get out first
Bail out
Skydiver run
Before song garbled
Tongue deadened weight
Eyes glazed
Sunrise won't penetrate
Words slobber
Gait slants

Got to figure out how
How to go
Children can brag about exit
Brought me to death well
Got to figure this out
Hours running out
Imagination withers in heat of day
What to plan what to say today

Death death death
Got to leave
Before time officially out
My own hand
Can lift poison potion to mouth
How best to calculate that?

Upper arms flab
Gone incisors as well
New second teeth coming in
Or thirds
My gums bare as an infant's ass
We come back together
We do it's true
Incontinence in the brew

Eyes blurry Pink powdery veil Smog fog Never lifts Eyes grow dim When did this begin

When did my hands become claws? How much more to tolerate Of all of this Before agreeing Consenting Ceasing to exist

NB

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1.

In other languages

Other words Other harmonies Still falling short

NB

2.

After, After Birth After July 1999 After I Turn Fifty-nine

Work over
Love dreams done
What was possible
And necessary
Is no longer possible
Or necessary
Time moved on

NB

3.

The decade

That held no shadows no lies Solitude not solemnity The songs the songs Oh but I've got the blues My notes my tunes my truths

NB

4.

Leaving Before I Left

I was in basic training Practicing to be alone live alone Fully married I sat in restaurants at bars in movies Always alone Trying not to look Desperate and despairing It was freedom I was trying on Preparing for I was extricating myself Well before leaving Practicing the steps out And when the day came My legs were less wobbly My smile less quivery This leaving started First as premonition And random fear

At the exit door
Looking back
Leaving required
Backward steps
I am better at exits
Anticipating good-byes
No longer
Attracted more to abandonment than love (NB)
Sipping wine or Campari at bars
I found my solitude
I found my courage
I found my truths
I stepped out from under his Nazi foot

5.

Telling, Maude

I told Maude Edwards She our surrogate mother I will always be alone I am afraid I will always be alone I cried Heaves and torrents Well beyond my twelve years There, there Maude Edwards said As she held me in her arms There, there Forty-eight years later I still feel myself In Maude Edward's arms Rocking and sobbing Precocious and prophetic tears

NB

6.

Out of Spite

Spiteful I walk out
Creating a horrible void
Where there was tympani
There is silence
Necessary
Like dreams, like air
I drift off
Barely shutting the door
Gone
That'll show them grin
On my leaving face

I go in
Enter to leave
Leave them
Craning their necks
To see me
Find me
Leaving them

With an empty space
The one that I created
I build this nest
This space
To leave it
To vacate it

Quicksilverish, she called me
Never able to stay
I call myself
Becoming necessary
Fostering dependency
Warring poisoned dart
Flung just when
Life without me
Just can't be imagined
Stung stunned by my swift
Silent sudden departure

But they all went on As if all along I had been Diaphanous inconsequential They all went on My going incidental Leaving not living Course untenable Worthless hapless Avenging what Displacing whom Stealth Not a fingerprint left The door closed Shadow self moves on As if and in truth I was never there NB

7. The paper upon which our promise was sworn

Ink bled into a salt marsh Words just words Nonsensical Calling after him But you promised, you promised!
NB
Bound and gagged I watched Agog Your deceit Drove Medea mad NB
Riverdale the bleak years The squandered years Hard pill to swallow For a non-determinist NB

8.

Eating Crow

I'm at Dad's
I'm in my own room
And in my own bed
And Daddy and Monique
Are in the bedroom in their bed
At 11, he is reporting what he sees
My knees got weak
In bed, his father and Monique.
Prey to my own innocence
Unlike Medea I saved my children
But sacrificed, murdered myself.

We are tiptoeing around
So we don't disturb Luca's sleep
Monique and I
Frank recounts
Normalizing
His poker card
Of intentionality
De-sensitizing me
Fucking bastard
Adulterous ways
Your best suit
And I'm finding it
Hard to breathe.

NB

9.

Bitterness and rage will not yield -it is, I find no way to forgive -pathetic grasping unthinking slow deaths I chose, coward...

Monique Monique

Wild mouth

Did she give you ass?

Did she suck your neck out?

Did she give you hickeys?

Did she give you ass?

Answer yes or no

Petulant mouth

Obdurate pouty teenager

Tongue, a serpent's

Slipping in and out

Forked, yes forked

What wildness what tempers?

What furies drove me?

My own words lethal to me

When were they formed?

What decade kept me?

Held me hostage

Where I remained

A frieze against

Days years hours to come

How deep the hurt, the rage

The claws like tongues

Forking out words like heaping dung

What has become of me?

As my child lay dying

I acted saintly

The kindness deep in my veins

The strength, the capability to endure

Deep within me, the hymns and songs

From my righteous father's limbs

Righteous, his word,

And then the prickly, unbridled

Heinous profanity rushing

Bile from my mouth

Did she give you ass?

I the face in the mirror

The words from deep inside

I am guilty

Hatred rage hurt

The rant the cant mine

Defiling violating

A moon indifferent

Boomerang boom bang

I cannot harm the night

Stuck in time

The moon always moves on

Death always in the wings

Encroaches
I am calm
This the last year of my life
Restlessness begins
Death comes
Nudging reminding
Breath dwindles
Sky lightens
Time not relevant
My body succumbs
This the last year
Months left
Still indeterminate
Yet to circle a month
A day on the calendar

NB

11.

Frankly Speaking of Snake Oil

I walked or staggered or sauntered Dropped into Dante's hell I gave my body to the devil Watching over me while I sleep Fuck me until my face is rosy and firm My body succulent Like new born summer fruit

Shed him years later
Am seventy now
My face
Relaxes into its age
I bled out my life
For a faulty promise
I sold my soul for SEX
That it would be the tonic
To keep one young

Moral: Don't read woman's magazines in supermarket lines

Naomi Barber

An Afternoon of Truth Telling

A rich woman fell in love with me
A very rich woman
Not in love as with a man but maybe
It is too close to her death to fathom
When we met
She asked me to lunch a philanthropist
After having observed me at work
You are an artist she said offhandedly
Come work with me

After lunch We went to her apartment Filled with art The edgiest craziest Sound-barrier shattering art I was stunned Women in Burgas pointing rifles A Shirin Neshat she informed me Feeling an affinity She opened a bottle of chilled white wine She told me Now I collect art Artists new coming into their own *Now let us do something together* she urged As we drank through the bottle I told her I would be leaving my job very soon *Good* she said *we will become business partners* A little tipsy or light headed I got on the express bus Back to Riverdale where I lived A place exponentially deadening my soul

I left my job and showed up at her door
With a big embrace we moved beyond
The heavy wood sculpted swinging doors
They were The Garden of Earthly Delights, Hieronymus Bosch
They were the Karma Sutra and Freud
Every position and disposition of debauchery and lust
She gave me a quick tour of her latest acquisitions
We left for a lunch at a local but very elegant restaurant
My life in a one hundred eighty degree tilt
I in gauzy disbelief
In record time her family lawyer
Established a tax exempt not-for-profit

We decided to name it Fourteen Angels From Evening Prayer, Hansel and Gretel

When at night I go to sleep,
Fourteen angels watch do keep:
Two my head are guarding,
Two my feet are guiding,
Two are on my right hand,
Two are on my left hand,
Two who warmly cover,
Two who o'er me hover,
Two to whom 'tis given
To guide my steps to heaven.

Engelbert Humperdinck

Somehow this struck us as just right
We were still to define a task or project
When introducing me to friends
She would say this is my business partner
No one probed
If the ecstatic happens I was walking in it
Bleak breaking upon me
My husband enshrouding closing in
Decisions encroached already moved beyond
My imagination awakened

Well into our partnership On a drawing board three or four projects Always and only in planning evolving Three days a week I worked in her apartment She nearby on the phone Making and cancelling appointments Midmornings set off to be rejuvenated Or to haute couture designers faun Stayed at the apartment developing projects Afternoons spent in visits to artists studios Most had been in a biennial somewhere She listened a suckling mother As they described their work Leaving behind a check in the many thousands Off to galleries where owners suddenly materialized The car and driver waiting Predisposed to particular artists Purchases just short of hundred thousand Her walls holding images verging On the edges of the unconscious New an antique muslin white communion dress Delicately smocked with male pubic hair Acquisitions arrived daily exhibits changed

Doris Salcedo's farm table woven with women's hair Send *this to the New Museum* she told her secretary The office for *14 Angels* the spare bedroom

The world whirred spun around me
The more daring the art the more I gravitated
She a soul mate an inconceivable friendship forming
Nothing Id driven scared her I opening up
Unable to resist the art her seductiveness
On a day after a simple lunch at a local Greek diner
We returned she opened a bottle of fine French wine
Usually waited until I left and her husband arrived home
She started moving primitive orbiting
Combustion building within me
Music voluminous Tropicalia
The art pushing her from behind
She chanting over and over
You will have to leave him you will leave him

A whirling dervish wine dripping off her lips Her nostrils flaring bursting with edginess A super sonic deafening sound The omniscience the foredooming of her words She was crafting my life with brew and witchery Her prophecy wine drenched no tealeaves The Brazilian music deafening She became a blur Babbling dulcet sweet Then hilarious then raucous She was taking me on I sat motionless struck dumb You will leave him my dear in the very, very near future And I will leave my husband never He does not love you enough Finally saying *next time go top shelf* The dancing grew wilder The bottles clanked together Dropped on the floor one two three The afternoon reached its peak My heart lurching speeding This was not a dream This was a fortune telling I was drenched and bloody

She was staggering sputtering, falling Her eyes closed as if stuck shut She fell onto her white hand embroidered duvet Newly purchased Kikki Smith Reindeer Series Propped against the wall staring back She fell into a deep grandly soporific sleep I knee-deep near paralysis stood by her bed I listened to her heavy breathing She was alive just sleeping deeply The six life size pencil drawings Of steadily gazing deer facing her Soon her husband would arrive Twice in my life women asked me To lie down with them Twice I couldn't didn't When I was twenty and now fifty-seven Two women who in truth Stole my heart blurred my vision Mining my unconscious of its desires Relieving me of self-deceit and self-doubt

I walked through the thick hand-carved saloon doors
Babies sucking breasts, babies sucking penises
Babies somersaulting over and around
Mothers and fathers upside down, inside out
Bosch and Freud linked gone contemporary
Her art now riveted to my consciousness
The day was still bright a spring chill
I will not be married next time it is spring
A prophecy a fortune foretold
Her obsessive oracle within
Before the buds broke into spring
Before the crocus blossomed
I will not be wearing wedding band

She never asked me to lie down again
She never left her husband
She died mangled steadfastly at his side
What was in her mind?
As the car hurled through the air
Off the Albanian mountain cliff
No chance to survive the ravine below
The fall more than five thousand feet
She and her husband embarking on a mission
To bring satellite materials to the refugees
In Sarajevo with *Refugees International*

Beneficiaries of their great largesse

Just before her death
Although in daily communication
She created greater distance between us
Warning me as she pulled away
You reek of sadness
The stench repulsive
Your heaviness weightiness
Lightness gone
Not good for me
To be around you anymore
You stayed with him too long
His lying cheating ways seeped in

Now I am happy unbearably light I left him as the spring flowered Fragrant with freedom sweet as wisteria She died before I could tell her Yes oh ves and thank vou Our trip to Israel and trips to Brazil And our pressing into and against The birthing of art artists still ripening It is more than a decade since she died Watching Marina Abramovic staring people down At the Museum of Modern Art multiple times Remembering that my friend had paid for Her installation at a Biennale in Venice Remembering how we looked At her art books together Reading responsively her writings

Dear friend you would
No longer be repulsed by me
And if asked again
I would lie down next to you
Stroking your hair as you slept
Looking over at Kikki Smith's deer
Smiling to myself
The swagger and tumble
Of the images on the swinging doors
Longing to walk through once more
Feeling the surprise and wonder
Of the art and her delighted smile

Naomi Barber

Reducto Malady

Assemblage of maladies
Bouquet fragrant with the bloom
Of doom
Quilt tapestry
Of misery
Life choking up
Body parts
On assault
Which to go first

On a death watch
How to end it
Before it strangles me
Leaves me
Mute dumb
Sum of all closing down
Clogging dumbing down
Oh god

This little kidney disease of mine
Gave me that extra nudge
To face and face down
Death here I come
Without drama without mess without conceit

They don't sell rat poison on the open market What else is available for purchase For a handmaiden to death?

NB

Imagining death

Pastiche bas-relief Wooing me To die be dead Breaking spirit will Puppeteer master Cruelty is your métier I am a subject I am what's dangled Up and down Wrist flick You got the trick I am the whim At the end of your trick I sever the strings I will be the master Do or die Of my own demise

NB

The Swan

I want to play the cello
I had just heard
The Swan by Saint-Saens
Cellist runner up Miss New Jersey
Never played well
The cello's reverberations
Never failed
To stir my heart
Most passionate moments
After playing Beethoven's Eighth
In the Antioch orchestra
Fell prone in a field astride cello
At one with stars and universe

Swan, the Meer isn't the same
Now that you have flown off
Swan you held a neighborhood together
We ran to find you each day
Taking bread from our hands
Performing deep dives
Plucking and pruning
We loved you

Just a young swan Landing here the park ranger said

Have you gone off
To find love
To mate
Does it happen
Like coupling ducks
Terrifying compelling
Envy making traumatizing

Swan gone
Sad days to follow
Bring your love
And swim again
On our Meer
Have your babies
We will thrill trill

Swan gone
Sad Meer so empty
You mastered its scope
And ripple and wave
We called you friend
You glided royalty
We were in your hold
The Meer just isn't the same
Without you
I wait
For swoop and wing span
To carry me off waiting
Leda for a Swan

NB

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Holy Ghost

I am the only one here, a giant, asleep on the damp floor.
I am on the floor of my invention, my forest of dark sayings—the Lord shall hiss.
My forest is always the same.
I am asleep on the damp floor.
My lids are down. Your face is secret.
Hiss, hiss.

Larissa Szporluk, Holy Ghost





Cornelis Bos 1630-1555

Leda and the Swan

by W. B. Yeats

A sudden blow: the great wings beating still Above the staggering girl, her thighs caressed By the dark webs, her nape caught in his bill, He holds her helpless breast upon his breast.

How can those terrified vague fingers push The feathered glory from her loosening thighs? And how can body, laid in that white rush, But feel the strange heart beating where it lies?

A shudder in the loins engenders there The broken wall, the burning roof and tower And Agamemnon dead.

Being so caught up, So mastered by the brute blood of the air, Did she put on his knowledge with his power Before the indifferent beak could let her drop?

> THE END Naomi Barber