

From "AT LAST THE SUN"

For Bert Allen, in memoriam

*At last the sun on my skin
& the air pulling across
feet pumping wheels
& thinking, well,
blah di blah blah & the light
along my legs diving the curves
through apartment complexes
under cottonwoods & poplars
on Wonderland Creek Greenway,
humping it up to Manor Care
across Palo Parkway on Paseo del Prado,
down suddenly shoulder dipped
then paralleling the stream bed a
dry mud squiggle in October leafage
heading with my head leaned—*

*

into the room where my mother's dying though
I don't know it yet, tubes down throat up nostrils in
wrists & thigh, urethra & anus maybe
in her spine like a porcupine, circulating
wires & numerals sliding across screens
in red or yellow scrolls a tree of tubes a life tree
pulsing with modernity holding her 78 years
in place I
 come to sit there hold her hand her
blue eyes recognize me
 a plastic contraption wedged in her mouth
 to breathe for her
so she cannot speak

& a moment of gleam
rises up from deep down in the drink
her features
lift up through the surface
a recognizable face
that knows me a moment,
then fades back down the shaft,
back into that place held in place
by tubing & humming & tests

*

“She loved being a mother,” the Seer
–who’d never seen her–
told me.

“But when she came on this planet,
it was like she arrived without a map.”

Aunt Rita, 92, sent me a letter:

“I am writing this note to tell you a little
of my memories of [your mother] as a little girl.
In my eyes she was always the sweetest & cutest
one of all 5 of us girls. She was gentle & quiet &
everyone liked her. She was popular in school
& very smart. She loved pretty clothes but
we had very few in our childhood & most
were handme downs or handmade by old Grandma
as we called Grandma Gallagher who had been
a dressmaker during those days.

I will say I was to blame for some of her
early griefs & trouble. I have asked forgiveness
& hope I will be forgiven for I am a sinner.”

*

When the world smacks you around
it's
trying
It's trying
to

*

Every morning
they circled Intensive Care
9 or 10 specialists
to reconnoiter 9 or 10 special
distressed areas
how the areas
might add up to someone rising
from bed
& walking away
Or maybe
leaving their physical remains
interpenetrated with tubing
finding their wings
after 8 decades of habitual gravity
unfolding their wings
using them best they can

*

*Up the walk edging East Palo Park
a spacious swath of green & sky,
foliage turning crimson, blasting gold,
Dad & boy heaving a softball; shooting Corriente
to a path through backyards—
coiffed bushes & wedges of blossoms,
rock gardens & patios,
angled decks & hedges--down onto Kingston,*

*New Haven, Nassau, another quick
jaunt between backyards, thoughts pulling across
the mind a melange of torn, jumbled clouds
in no need of resolution—*

*

Singing mantras in the silence to the hum,
the being, the mother pulling
 slowly from the shore of her body
a spirit
 somewhere well down below
where the body's unraveling fabric lays
 on its fancy motorized palate

 in the dimness, in momentary oneiric spheres
bubbles in consciousness
 of memory, fear, nerv-
 ous sys tem
twitching
the who you are or were or will be
 un-sorting itself

I sing to Tara
 to that dark space where thoughts
dock & depart like boats
 to that space
 if it's listening

*

Finally Lella & I go to her
on either side of her pillow
 & tell her that if she were to survive
she'd live in a nursing home the rest of her life
 crippled, maybe in bed

but
we can take her off the machines,
& likely she'd die,
but we don't really know,
the doctors
–she saw so many, many doctors in her life–
the doctors don't know what will happen
the doctors have tried,
but the doctors don't know

& her eyes get wide, real wide
for the first time in weeks
& then her head lolls
& their light draws away
as she slips down unconsciousness

& we know the answer

*

I carried her ashes in a box on my back
cross-country
through bomb detectors
placed them in the soil
in northern New York
next to my father's
(& grandfather's & grandmother's,
Uncle Charles' & Aunt Gerry's,
& branching, multiplying graves of relatedness)
mid-October
before the ground froze
a troubled or troubling person in life
now (no kidding!) at the corner of Cemetery & Bardo Rd
the ash of years gone too
Geese heading south