

Eyes of an Eagle, Ears of an Owl

She was born too soon, or too late from her perspective.
Problems at birth, a damaged brain they said.
But hardly true since she excels with words and ideas.
A symptom of the damage? Or maybe it's a gift.
She sees and hears with uncanny clarity.
She has the Eyes of an Eagle, the Ears of an Owl.

I named her Rachel, lamb of God,
after she who wept for her dead children.
Her name fulfilled a legacy of three generations.
It was a gift from a grandfather she never knew.
Her other name, Eyes of an Eagle, Ears of an Owl, suits her best.
It came with her, floating in the air.

It was clear early she had many gifts.
She knew things. She saw things.
Did she inherit a connection with another world?
Something from a distant past, Cherokee or Blackfoot from her father's line,
Chickasaw or Croatan from mine?
Science could check her DNA but what would that reveal?

She has the genes of Old Believers, wafting incense,
of paleo women, migrating across the plains of Ukraine,
of Romani, fleeing for their lives from place to place,
surviving on instinct and insight other peoples lacked.
Her genes are from the far North, raiding parties or traders.
And from those already here, watching for the boats, ready to trade.

She is from people waiting for the contact they had foretold in dreams.
And from people with a vision of a far off place to practice their beliefs.
People ready to merge blue eyes and brown to make green,
ancestors of the Lumbees. It makes her different.
She is old beyond her years. She sees things and hears things others don't.
She has the Eyes of an Eagle, the Ears of an Owl.

Melancholy

I have a penchant for melancholy
it runs in my genes
In my love for Tennyson, Blake, Rossetti and Millay.
Even Seeger makes me cry.
War makes me cry as does most of history,
the death, the sacrifice, the suffering,
the lonely abandonment that follows tragedy.

It isn't just the horrendous and global
that makes me cry.
The small and mundane wreck my composure.
That's why I love those poets.
"But O for the touch of a vanish'd hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still!"¹

It's a devastating, lonely feeling I get,
insurmountable, overpowering.
The green and white pills help,
but they don't bring back the dead.
They can't roll back time.
They can't prove there is more after death.

With each year my life gets lonelier.
I don't feel closer to paradise,
just closer to darkness,
closer to someone missing me
the way I miss others.
Almost everyone I have ever loved is dead.
The number grows each year.

Is it a trick of memory that the best times
are short and infrequent, and we remember
vividly the long years of grief?
Or does sad time move more slowly,
tormenting us, making the sweet and
beautiful time into a short, solitary
burst of light that reminds
us of the continuous darkness.

I have a penchant for melancholy.
It's both genetic and contagious.
I didn't stand a chance of escape.
It surrounded me at birth
and surrounds me still.

¹ From *Break, Break, Break* by Alfred, Lord Tennyson

Summers Then and Summers Now

Summers then and summers now
are different and somehow
sad, hot, long and lonely.

Summer's magic gone,
no more promises at dawn.
no cool morning's song
coming through the windows.

No sound of a woodpecker
hammering on the gutter.
No other birds getting fatter,
full of worms that venture
onto the morning's damp grass.

There is concrete outside my door.
It's too hot there anymore
for sitting, laughing or conversation.
No more fresh vegetables growing
and no one left to eat them.
I sit there anyway, alone.

The faces and the voices from the past.
swirl around my head.
I pretend there is a garden near
and lots of birds I try to hear.
The smell of clean sheets flapping in the breeze,
those simple memories sustain me,
I close my eyes, I smell and see.

Oscar Thirteen Ways

Oscar, the noble gander,
large, strong, white, loud and fast,
protector of the geese.

Oscar, a temperamental soul,
jealous of the ganders,
possessive of the geese.

Oscar, productive gander,
favorite of the geese,
father of the goslings.

Oscar, roamed the yard by day,
proud and stern, in command
of all things around him.

Oscar, the bully, attacked
the dogs in his territory.
They ran and hid and whined.

Oscar, ate his grain and more,
apples and plums that dropped.
He was a real gourmet.

Oscar, the mother's follower,
devoted, attentive,
affectionate. She fed him.

Oscar, the warrior. attacked
the little girl. He ran
up behind her. He jumped
and knocked her down.

Oscar, the molester pecked
her neck and flogged her head,
chased away by a sheet
flapped by a screaming neighbor.

Oscar, the doomed.
The mother came running
carrying a broom. The
father would be told.

Oscar, gift to the neighbor,
killed, cleaned and delivered
when the father came home.

Oscar, a tasty dinner.
Served with bread stuffing and
cold cranberry sauce.

Oscar, a memory now,
a funny story to tell.
A woman with nightmares
of something pecking her neck.