

## my mother's mother's maiden name

The name *Likeness*  
is perfectly  
congruent with the accidents  
of poetry  
thought ahead  
or not but started  
like a poem  
in faith  
justified by imagined  
outcome  
or not but hopeful  
this time comes  
better than  
the last  
and grateful  
all the time grateful from  
this waiting  
for that fortunate  
comparison  
to occur  
which when it comes  
at last  
it comes  
as if  
out of  
nowhere

*my mother's mother's maiden name & others*

hopeful

unexpected and

if necessary waiting

generations

## The Genius Monkey

How again does that old idea work?  
A million monkeys for a billion years  
sit chained to tables typing ...  
It's all a gibberish mosaic  
of random keystrokes committed still  
somehow to paper down  
through the millennia. Indecipherable,  
until that day when suddenly it's Shakespeare  
read straight through, by way  
of patience and statistics.

Today we prefer computers get our  
million-billion-chimp-year jobs  
like making art—  
only now without the artist.  
The machine's mind so magnificent  
at sifting through all the possibilities;  
effortless, if you will, at pumping out  
the product but whose algorithmic heart  
is flat and has no feel in any way  
for the misery of monkeys.

Ask the thing itself to describe  
its own intelligence the way my human  
weak and wanting brain might choose  
to. And if it replicates my words  
it will always miss my meaning  
when I say: Bravo you genius monkey!  
You're a credit to your species and a marvel  
of technology with your branching, looping  
thoughts deep as a dictionary and lovely  
like the lottery.

## Nice it would to be

Nice it would to be  
among a community of artists,  
even poets,  
like-thinking persons who  
appreciate—  
what I am trying to say is—  
understand;  
I guess the word is  
friends.

Nice it would to be—among—a community.  
Nice it would to be among a community  
of artists, even.  
Artists, even poets, like thinking.  
Even poets like thinking persons who  
appreciate what I am trying to say.

What I am trying to say is: understand.  
Understand, I guess, the word.  
Guess the word.  
The word is:  
Friends.  
Nice it would to be.

## Not talking but without speaking

We decide it would be a good  
thing to walk around  
the neighborhood—to step  
back, look up, take a breath.

Outside though I keep  
my feet forward, my head down,  
and my mouth mostly shut.  
Not for the first time

like this do I notice  
my ratty canvas sneakers.  
And because it is quiet  
and because they are close

at hand and falling apart,  
I feel I need to say something.  
“Look at these shoes ...”  
is what I manage. She follows

the tone of my voice down.  
“They’ve seen better days,”  
she agrees. Instinctively  
we understand the subject

is too small to be sustained.  
Still, I want her to see  
how the toe is cracked  
and the fabric frayed

and the arches are collapsed.  
I wish to tell her that I love these  
shoes but look at how the heel flaps  
open and allows in all kinds of crap.

It is a difficult thing to tell  
your shoes they’ve let you  
down—that they no longer  
provide the support you need

on your daily walks, to point  
out how this constant friction  
is peeling away at the sole.  
We walk the rest of the way

in silence.  
The slapping of my shoe  
is like a pebble in your shoe—  
a steady irritant and reminder  
of what is left to be considered.

By the time we get back  
home, the wind's picked up  
and helped clear the air, I think.  
“Well, what should I do?”

I ask, standing at our gate.  
“About what?”  
“About my shoes, of course.”  
“Throw them in the trash,”

she says and goes inside.  
For a second I am stunned.  
What does she mean  
*throw them in the trash?*

But I do! I do! and that is  
the difference with shoes.  
It turns out the subject  
was larger than we thought.