

Conception

Who said the happiest lives are those conceived while the mother orgasms?

Words fall like peaches ripe or rotten to be found or forgotten.

La petite mort.

I thought the happiest lives are those where happiness isn't unexpected.

peaches, peaches, peaches
in that garden they grew
they were loved by the sun and the dew
peaches, peaches, peaches *

Hocus-pocus!

“When the gift within you slips clear
Of the sticky web of the personal
With its hurt and its hauntings,”¹

“A morning when you become a pure vessel
For what wants to ascend from silence,”¹

...my life as much a falling...
a falling in and out

“You wouldn't have known her, you'd have seen her everywhere at once, in a hotel, in a street, in a train, in a bar, in a book, in a film, in yourself, your inmost self, when your sex grew erect in the night, seeking somewhere to put itself, somewhere to shed its load of tears.”²

...might as well be the
moon on a cloudy night...

resolute and lonely

delicious to sink into
wet, sensual soil
spreading toes, oozing...
Bury longing in...
Enjoy, give to...
Become one with
the thing you must grow away from

while you're forever buried by it

EARTH

“...These wet rocks where the tide went down
Will show again when the tide is high,
Faint and perilous, far from shore,
No place to dream, but a place to die:
The bottom of the sea once more.”³

Sinking into red puddles
that fell from the sky
Making Black Belt mud pies dry
...in the sun
on the front steps
My five year old pride

Alabama Fall Line -- a topographic feature that traverses the entire midsection of the state and marks the boundary between ancient rocky strata of Northern Alabama and the younger, softer sediments to the South.

We were always softer and happier when we drove further south
to grandmother's house on the Gulf of Mexico,
away from the sperm of us,
battling, wriggling to find his way

self-determination

We were passing time that would have passed anyway,
passing it back and forth

I moved far away but my shadow remained,
would not let me go

“This is the day
Of the expanding man
That shape is my shade
There where I used to stand”⁴

Experience:
the long flow which never stops,

didn't lose itself
it just got diluted....
with something, someone, itself

Something fluid swept everything along
while we paddled upstream
I gratefully disappeared...dissolved...
washed away from solitude, the arms of live oaks and salty bays

often the sun went behind clouds,
a singular egg

self-conception

Peaches, honey, somebody's gone
and seduced you, swept you out to sea,
picked your innocent heart right off the ripening tree

A falling or a calling?

“Where the bee sucks, there suck I.”⁵

Happiness

egg and sperm
strike a pose,
circling, circling,
oh, ohhh!

* Childhood rhyme learned from my cousins

¹ “For the Artist at the Start of the Day” by John O'Donohue

² The Malady of Death by Marguerite Duras

³ “Low-Tide” by Edna St. Vincent Millay

⁴ “Deacon Blues” by Walter Becker & Donald Fagen

⁵ Edna St. Vincent Millay as quoted by Norma Millay to Nancy Milford,
Savage Beauty, The Life of Edna St. Vincent Millay, page 193

Crossing Over
For Simeon

rising and falling.
 rising and falling.
rising and falling.

sea.
 inhalation.
exhalation.

ebb and flow

The gulf between us widens as you lie dying.
 I will stay behind.

Dance of Becoming.
Dance of Demise.
Shiva, Shiva, Shiva!

Midwife to dying, I have learned the rhythms of its labor as I too learned the beats to giving birth.

Death: can sweep in and surprise, as briefly as a step backwards into a bustling street to admire one's handiwork. The unseen bus bears down. You are no more. A beat, a sudden blow. Or a fall from a great height.

But Death: no cure exists.
One's time might gradually tiptoe in.
Anticipate.
Jaws of demise open wide and wider.

The infinite swallows back into its belly that which was made manifest.

Conducted, orchestrated.

BREATH

Every animal possesses the ability to die.

 The hiss and release of waves reaching the shore.

While in the ICU – The average human takes twelve to sixteen breaths a minute. You're doing twice that, stabilized for your condition. I watch the waveform monitor as it reflects the rise and fall of your life-giving breaths.

recall us sailing.
unconscious of selves.
breaths unconscious.
subsumed in the rising and falling of sea.

When the sedative settles, your labored breaths cease.
The monitor waves become even, beautiful.
Smooth sailing on a picture-perfect day.

You,
whose use of waveform generators, oscillators, to create music,
you are now monitored by.

breaths like waves.
waves like breaths.
music of your breathing.

“Oscillations, oscillations,
Electronic evocations
Of sound's reality
Spinning magnetic fluctuations
Waves of wave configurations
That dance between the poles of sound
And bind my world to soul.”¹

Across the entrance hall to the ICU is a walled-off patio with windows on the opposite side that let in light to the rooms where healthy newborns float in the splendor of their newfound, independent breaths; tiny, vital lungs, blissfully ignorant of hope.

“All praise be yours, my Lord, through Sister Bodily Death, from whose embrace no mortal can escape.”²

On the wall behind the nursing station, a quote:
“We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit.”³

Oh, Excellence! The habit of breathing without thought.

Repetitious. Autonomic.

Life inhalation, exhalation.

Life the act and the habit.

Life most excellent.

Life birth and destruction eternal.

Life Containing Death.

Death Containing Life.

Death and Birth and Death and Birth and Death and Birth

Shiva, Shiva, Shiva!

The wrinkled face, the red hair gone grey,
the irrelevance of appearance that nevertheless gets in the way.

Who is she who stares back at me?

When will she too become dust?

Death: unique, singular, infamous.

Gulp.

“Know conditions of nonbeing,
the endless ground of your vibration down
in you: one day you'll be fully fulfilled.”⁴

Comes the morning your final breath is taken.

taken from you.

Exhalation. Final.

You hoist the sail

Take the helm

Catch the wind, you're free

A lifeless shell of what you used to be

Yet,

jubilant of release.

birth.

your spirit hovers for hours, days.

Loneliness begins.
The months of many tears.
Loss unconsolable.

A new skin must be grown.

“Waves: Neptune's metronome
Relentless heartbeat of the sea
One dream is over, another one begins
Lingering on the edge of wonder”⁵

Glassy-eyed bay,
 waveless
Your ashes, milky,
 sink

¹ *Oscillations*, Stanley Warren for the band Silver Apples

² *The Canticle of the Sun*, Saint Francis of Assisi

³ Will Durant via Aristotle

⁴ *Sonnets to Orpheus, Part II, XIII*, Rainer Maria Rilke

⁵ *The Edge of Wonder*, Simeon O. Coxe for the band Silver Apples