

## Resuscitations

arm leg kindling gather where water blankets sound take her down  
again again quiet crown

was strong singing heart you swimming practicing breathing strip-  
mining the superfluous

to anything recalled ever to everything ever summoned the former  
a project of the former

sea fence Sea Gate said promise of plenty said gather greens of  
tomorrow mainland winds mountain up once every 4,200 seconds

from lucid sea like none ever witnessed abbreviation the situation  
engineered a couldn't say (or far worse

and so tending to every and none seeing not saying bluntly a  
management preoccupation in familiar waters

carefully considered beginning rests with the rest turning away  
turns the turned

what is the meaning of the word lagoon what a tribute that you're all  
still here sweet nothings

warm in flannel under the ground "here's what we'll do -- when  
you sleep I'll sleep, when you wake up I'll wake up"

a long way to Tipperary to the place by the ocean its fishermen  
and fine sand see the crypt correcting herself

land owners want land boat owners want bones boats want  
shortwave sound wants bait land lies in wait

someone was behind her also a man was near pointing "You're still there" unable to name or swim panting

between finger and singer machine's refrain between teeth the difference

crosshairs correcting the spiral of wandering attention's gunscope once I arrived landscape's low status slow statues

of noise no promise longer than sea's sleep that never rests short of words over over sent

stick figure swaddled in chain mail escape hatch unlocks picture postcards finger's touch

by sea's preface before the world was faceless now her face take  
swallows silence soon down

the word regret the word repent whiplash on halved horizon  
beheaded by halves the almost left holds hope behind right's back

belies the way face belies fact an act to cover the desire for never  
achieved or relation to idea as act

wound or sunken awoken profile proximity's imposition face on  
face of

and at our last parting last words I promised enfolded routing in the  
gulf offing

written in caterpillar scar constellation written in rain star launch  
reserves literally last week's facsimilie face used up

plenaria aria axis belief voids all attempts sent to preliminary  
galaxy beyond belief's chair

--For Clio  
--For Helen

When the phone rings and no one is there I say to my Grandmother, "next time wait a little longer and we can speak." Absence of breath at the receiver. Because it conveys voice the phone is an instrument of breath. But the poem is not an instrument, it's an incident. It occurs at the moment of picking up the silent phone. The moment when the dead have just ceased to speak. And just begun to speak. And the newly born have not yet resorted to the inadequacy of words -- having just come from worlds of far more subtle articulation. "For this moment, this death-in-life when our breath is taken away, yet turns and re-turns, Celan coins the word Atemwende." (Waldrop, viii) The breath is clock. The breath makes reading hearing. What time is it? Time to listen for your life, that is, to write. "Sometimes we write. . . so as to name an age, the one that comes to us from our mother, sometimes to celebrate the natal event, and the author of the event, the mother." (Cixous, 64) Sometimes all authors fall away and writing writes the collision of events. Our breath is taken away.

It is true that Clio was born on April 6, 1997. And also true that my ninety-one year old Grandmother died three weeks later. This three weeks was a 'turning of breath' - a *lathe* - in which an encounter occurred, a shape was presented.

My Grandmother never met Clio but she saw pictures. I spoke to her on the phone a few hours after Clio was born. I called her often in the first weeks of Clio's life. In those weeks she was shuttling between many worlds but whenever I called she immediately and clearly said, "How is she?!"

The poem (as always) is About about. Which means that events were an environment of conversation, but the poem is not about events. The poem is about the impossibility of writing about events. In disguise as convays for about, but actually serving only as decoys, since about is never actually possible, are the conventions of telling, of grammar, of reading from left to right, of story, etc... After the necessary abolishment of these decoys from the land of the poem, after about falls away, only about about is left (only the decoys of the decoys are left).

At the same time that my Grandmother was going and coming, Clio was trying to stay. As with many babies, her breathing was erratic. She was kept an extra day in the hospital for observation as she had apnea -- uneven breathing with alarmingly long pauses between breaths. I had sat at my Grandmother's bedside for ten days in January when she seemed to be dying. Her breath was also ragged. Sometimes she sounded like someone running, then the parched lips and rasp of great thirst, then nothing, next a half-smothered inhale, a sudden deep breath and back again to an uneven rhythm.

The sound of the story, the shadow of the story on the ground, displaces it's small body, high up in a sky, getting smaller and farther away each time the phone rings.

One evening durring that January bedside vigil when I was seven months pregnant, my Grandmother said she heard a baby crying. I was not in the room. My sister told me to come in. I had recently read that at this stage of fetal development babies can cry inutero. I found this disturbing -- how can you hear the crying? How can you comfort a baby who is crying inside? When I arrived in my Grandmother's room my Grandmother said, "Come here." She put one hand on my stomach and closed her eyes. Then she added the other hand. "Oh, she's crying, but she will be okay," she said, her eyes still closed. Then she said, "Sweet baby..." and began to hum, then "You will be lucky, you will have a wonderful life, you will be healthy, all will be well..." humming to the baby, patting my stomach.

Are you there? Either of you? "I see my invisible.... The thing that will come from us to us so as to escape us." (Cixous, 65)

After she died I dreamed of my Grandmother wrapped in a black shroud laid out on a low table on a stage. I walked through the rooms of a house and found her there though I was looking for Clio. When I saw my Grandmother instead I said "swaddle shroud" -- I nursed Clio as my Grandmother was lowered into the ground.

Each couplet in the poem requires a full breath and ends when the breath would run out.

## Cites

Paul Celan, Collected Prose, Translated from the German by Rosmarie Waldrop, The Sheep Meadow Press, Riverdale-on-Hudson, New York, 1986.

Helene Cixous, STIGMATA, Escaping Texts, Routledge, London and New York, 1998.

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