

DEFINITELY

Birthdays keep me changing
day by day into my final self-
but simplified.

No longer
occupied with titles, job
descriptions, honors, meetings
to attend, awards or trips
abroad, I'm back to who
I am.

I answer to my name
with or without the Mister.

Nothing's unimportant now.

When faraway friends or former
students write me, I return
the courtesy by thanking them
by pen.

Knowing my wife's
in pain, depressed, or wronged
lets nothing matter more
until she smiles.

Love makes
whatever's threatening or risky
unignorable because finality
is always possible.

That leaves me
thoughtfully mortal.

For those
who have such thoughts, the fear
of loss exceeds the fear
of death itself.

Boasters

who say their love's the sum
of numbered anniversaries have much
to learn.

For me it's one
long, short day when sudden
jeopardies are lived with or through.
If we survive, we're thankful
we were spared the worst.

Later

we seek assurance in religion
and philosophy but find no more
than ritual and contradiction.
And for the arts?

Even

the finest fail to go where
art returns us to ourselves.
Since novelty outsells perfection,
painters seem content to stipple,
splash, and spray.

Poems

appear as trick typography
or messages from pen-pals
to pen-pals or surface sociology
without imagination.

Dancing

is aerobics with an attitude....
Finding little that redeems
I live a life without
adornment with my chosen one
whose daily presence is a gift

a son, a daughter-in-law-
and-love and three grandchildren
growing up into themselves
so quickly that I'm always
in arrears on birthday counts.

The children smile and correct me.

I stand corrected.

And grateful.