

Why old people talk about their operations

Because the body is vocal as it nears the end
with its querulous list of aches and pains
that makes relatives squeamish.

Because the body doesn't care;
everything grumbles and complains.
The ground has become perilous.

Because our bowels are slow, the bladder stings
and the body is a mulish obstinate thing,
whose hipbones jut out beneath flaps of skin.

Because our log-jammed senses no longer grasp
the complexity of things; sharp, subtle-edged.
Birdsong is a smudge on soft-torn wings.

Because sentences meander and lose their way
though we circle well-trod, familial terrain.
Visitors get restless — we forget their names.

Because the heart anticipates that vital day
when it can at last take rest and refrain
from its incessant loyal pumping.

Because the roof has long begun to leak
the pointing crumbles as soon as it's fixed
and nothing else prevails but this.

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