

The Silence a Mother Leaves; or, Heather, that Heathy Flower

For Heather Tredinnick

1.

SHE LEAVES a silence decades deep, a mother, when she goes.

A mother who sang and played and taught and cared and did not stay silent when a thing needed to be said.

Heather Marks, Heather Tredinnick, my mother, your friend or aunt or sister, your wife, your conductor, your teacher, your neighbour—my mother was such a woman: a singer, a pianist, a chorister, a teacher (of music and grammar and all the good old things they used to teach), a scholar of church music, a lover of sacred sound, a stickler for the disciplines of grace, for the proprieties as she saw them (and very largely she saw them pretty true), a woman you were pleased to please, a woman it did not pay to disappoint.

And the silence she leaves is profound and long, and today we gather to dwell in the beauty of the space she made for us all in the world, and to begin to fill the silence she leaves—with what she loved and how we loved her: a little hope in all things; a few feet in ancient time; a little of God's love for us and ours for one another, in which we find the only proof of God we need; a little of what the heart of Jesus and all our hearts desire; some of the hills to which we lift up our eyes and from which our help comes; some weeping and some laughing and some mourning and some dancing; some still waters, some of the goodness and mercy that follow us in Heather's steps all the days of our life; a canticle or two of praise and gratitude and anguish; the beauty of God's peace; and that still, small voice of calm, which is the heart of the silence Mum leaves, the still small voice she found inside the music and the family that were most of her life, the calm to which she returns now that she is gone from us.

2.

You'll have recognised that my recitation of phrases, the ways in which I hope the silence Mum leaves begins today to be conserved, is a precis of the order of service—a riffing on some of the lines of most of the readings and hymns and choral works we've chosen, with Mum carefully in

mind, for this celebration of her life. There is nothing here that did not matter to her, and how she mattered to us is why we're here to sing and sit in silence and share some memories. My hope is that this will be a service from which Mum might have gone home and said—when my time comes, give me a funeral just like that.

You can imagine the pressure one feels tasked with arranging the funeral for a mother who is a veteran of burials, a student of liturgy and scholar of sacred music. On top of her expertise in what we here are all amateurs at, Heather Marks knew what she liked. And what she liked included some of the finest accomplishments of the human heart and mind. She loved Debussy as much as Bach, Brahms more than Beethoven, Hildegard von Bingen more than Elena Katz Churnin; she loved Vaughn Williams, Greig, Finzey, Tavener, Ravel, Rutter, Elgar, but not Glass or Part or Katie Noonan. Her taste did not run far or deep into the twentieth, let alone the twenty-first, century; syncopation was not her beat, nor minimalism. Certainly not metal. Hard to picture Heather hooning the streets of heaven in a lowered Subaru Forrester, *doof-doof* music leaching into the eternal light. Or even Leonard Cohen's "Hallelujah" streaming from the windows. Definitely not Bette Midler, no matter how much wind Heather might feel beneath her wings. Her church of farewell music was broad, but not completely Ecumenical.

Happily, sons (and husbands) schooled by Heather, no matter how far their literary and musical tastes and spirituality may have roamed, were unlikely to let their thoughts about funeral music stray to, say Neil Diamond or U2, Crowded House, Dusty Springfield or the Carpenters, even the Marcin Wasilewski Trio or the Piano Boys. Certainly not to Jimmy Barnes.

But was it Tavener or Rutter she had most loved? Had she liked the Samuel Barber as much as you had yourself? Bach or some Elgar to close? And which Bach and which Elgar? And was it just that one had sung the Tallis *Spem in alium* in one's misspent youth that made one think of using it to begin? Or had she loved it, too? (Turns out she had.)

In the same way I feel that my mother fashioned a life very close to the one she had imagined, so she divined her dying and helped us in our sorrow know exactly how we might shape her sending off. Two weeks ago, when we were all making plans for the last few months Mum was likely to get, I sat with her and she began to speak of her service, and I'm glad I resisted the platitudes about how it was much too early for such thoughts and took out my phone and made notes—and what you hear today is what she listed: the Tallis, Rutter, Bach, Faure, Elgar, though such was her faith, she left the order to us—"Nimrod" at the end, with the

eternal light (*lux aeterna*) it casts, was the only easy choice. But I think we sorted it. Forgive us, Mum, if we've erred.

The hymns she left to Michael and me and Russ to settle. Only two, she said. And it wasn't so hard. In my mind "Dear Lord and Father" is Mum's hymn. The solace at its end is what she sometimes fought hard to find, and what she wished most for me and for all of us she knew.

We sang Jerusalem (And Did Those Feet) because Mum loved the Hubert Parry tune, and who cannot? It affirms life and calls us to our nobler selves. We also sang the hymn because it was written by William Blake, whose words call us to think about how we might do Christ's work among whatever are the Dark Satanic Mills of our day, how we'd make Heaven Here—and because these *are* green and pleasant lands, here in Gundungurra country, where Mum and Dad lived the fourth and fifth eras of their life together.

She knew her family, and she knew that we, her sons and their partners and our children, and our extended family, sisters and cousins and their partners, bring to the party a fair range of artistry—we are pianists, and singers, and wedding-singers, and cellists, and drummers, and actors, and speakers, and poets, and organists, and event-organisers, and band members. And we are all of us ready to stand and voice our thanks for Heather Tredinnick. She knew that. But it will be too much, she said. And it will run too long, and some of you will break down trying to speak, and I've seen too much of that.

Let's see how we go.

3.

Toward the end, I noticed, Mum distilled to a fineness her being and her thinking and saying—the way you reduce a sauce in cooking, the way you pull a coffee short, the way a poem speaks only what is essential. I love you, she told us, each of us; I'm proud of you. I'm glad of you. I'll miss you. That about says it. And each of us said it in response. We said it to her on Saturday, too, when we saw her and spoke with her laid out and ready for the passage from this world to eternity. I believe she knew very deeply how well loved she was; I believe she always knows. To love and be loved upon the earth, that is what Raymond Carver said a good life was. So, when it came down to it, as witnessed by the way she lived her last week, Heather's life was

music (its wisdom—and the divinity of the good its beauty did), and her life was her family: Bruce and her four boys (their lives and families). Her mother, her father, her sister, her grandchildren, her church and musical communities. But above all, her calling and the family she had made.

4.

When I say my mother fashioned her life, I mean: First, her mother, Rachel, bless her, was determined when Heather finished school he'd be a pharmacist, and Mum tried for a little while to love that calling and please her mother, but she soon knew it was not hers, and against her parents' will took herself to Teachers' College and found her life there. No offence to the pharmacists present, but can you imagine Heather Tredinnick dispensing the RATs and Targins? And what a loss to church music—that truly would have been a tragic silence to have left.

And second. Earlier, at Parramatta High, when other girls had other dreams, Heather Marks had decided the heaven she wished to make of her time on earth was four boys. (And a husband, I think.) I didn't ever believe this story entirely until, when I was sixteen or so and touring New Zealand, a friend who'd schooled with Mum corroborated it. For if you ended up with four boys—in particular *these* four boys—you'd make up such a story, wouldn't you? But no: she conjured us, Mum, the four boys she somehow needed in order to become Heather Tredinnick to perfection. And she seemed ridiculously grateful right to the end for that conjuring trick she'd performed.

And third: it falls to few of us to find at seventeen the man or woman—the one and *only* man, I reckon, in my parents' case—who could bear one's grief and intensity, adore one's beauty tirelessly, foster's one's sometimes shy but shining talent always, comprehend one's anxieties and bear up under one's perfectionism, share one's ageing and celebrate one's achievements, always recall and love one's better self, and not stop loving one for sixty-four years. That's what Bruce, our father, did, and it was Mum's great good fortune, part of her gift for fashioning the life she was meant for, to find him so early and have him stick with her till the end.

5.

Mary Catherine Bateson, who died a little younger than Mum in January 2021, was the daughter of Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson. She writes that each of us, if we partner and live long enough, will pass through three marriages—and we will either *change* the marriage, or *change within* the marriage, or *change marriages*, to pull that off.

We change. Our politics, our beliefs, our needs, our hair, our clothes, our tastes, our church, our desires, sometimes our gender.

When we change, how can there be any guarantee our partner will change in step with us? Bateson and the one husband she kept from college negotiated the turbulence of those asynchronous metamorphoses. Her parents route—divorcing and remarrying—is the one I am more familiar with. But my parents, through the alchemy of their particular natures and of the marriage they made under God, passed through the acts, the thresholds, the rapids, and stuck fast. I think my mother needed exactly the man my father is—steady, modest, practical, tolerant, gentle, patient, kind, tone-deaf, but well-tempered as a clavier. And I have a feeling that when he met Mum back when she was sixteen, Dad knew—beyond the beauty of the girl—the mettle, the marvel, the majesty of the woman she would become. He must have known it would not always be easy, but he was sure that he wanted it. And it *wanted him*. He knew what he was in for, and he knew he was up for it, and if she wanted four boys, hell, he was up for that, too.

6.

I keep thinking about the farewell death asks of us, and how hard it is to say. For who can let a mother go? And how? A wife? A life—another's or one's own—is not a music anyone can easily bear to hear unsung. When the time comes, then, and especially when it comes, despite the terminal illness, suddenly—inside an hour—where do you put yourself, your wanting them to stay, your anger that they've been taken off before fulltime, your regret for all you left unsaid or done? What do you say? And to whom? To death. To God. To the one you've lost?

In the wake of his wife's death and staring at his own, John Donne had it out with God:

Death be not proud, though some have called thee

*Mighty and dreadfull, for thou are nor soe,
For, those whom thou think'st thour does overthrow
Die not, poor death, nor yet canst thou kill mee...*

When his beloved died—*Since she whom I lov'd hath payd her last debt/ To Nature... and my good is dead*, he says—Donne found himself trying to keep his mind sett, inspired by her virtue, on “heavenly things.” But he failed and wept and raged, as we all do, no matter how sure about the afterlife one’s faith makes one—for where our loved one was, she is not, anymore, and that baffles us. Our grief as deep as our love was long.

The language of gift helps. Thinking of the mother, the wife, the lover, the son, the daughter as a gift can help one find a graceful, thankful kind of resignation—that what was given leaves behind forever the blessing of its having been, and now is taken back.

I have often thought of the poetry I try to write, the teaching I try to do, the living I try to compose, as a way of giving back, or doing justice to, the gift one’s life is—these seventy or eighty years on this terrifying and astonishing earth. Bach wrote for the glory of God, his way of giving back and giving thanks, the best way he knew how (that and fathering children). Lewis Hyde’s book *The Gift* shaped my thinking about art as repaying of the gift that life is, a doing justice to the grace of one’s being here at all, but others speak well of it, too.

And I think Mum reached a sad and gracious resignation in the end that the gift of her life was reaching its use-by. She knew before anyone else, that it was running out fast

It's one thing, though, to come to terms with the built-in obsolescence of one’s own life, the moment when the gift stops giving; it is another to accept it for the ones we love.

Karen Blixen got it about right. I can’t remember how she says it in the book, but in the film *Out of Africa*, Blixen is given these fine, trim, noble words to say at the funeral in the Ngong Hills, and I say them now for my mother in these green and pleasant Gundungurra hills:

“Now take back the soul of Denys George Finch-Hatton, whom you have shared with us. He brought us joy, and we loved him well. He was not ours. He was not mine.”

This says two things we find it hard to accept: the lives of those we love are given to us, as our own lives are given to ourselves and to those we love, and only for a time. Ownership and possession have nothing much to do with love. Love is not a contract; it confers no title deeds. Love, too, is a gift, and its heart is gratitude, and its joy is its tragedy: to hold someone dear, knowing they are not ours and will, in the end, be taken, often before we’re ready and

before their time. As Shakespeare puts it in Sonnet 73: “This thou perceivest, which makes thy love more strong,/ To love that well which thou must leave ere long.”

The second thing I like in Blixen’s eulogy is the honour it pays to the mystery of the life of the one we love. We will never know and therefore never own the all, the whole, of the mother, the wife, the child we are blessed with. We were given in Heather a being not comprehended fully—praise the Lord—in any of the categories I have used for her here, or in any of the roles in which we got to share a little of her—mother, wife, teacher, organist, pianist, friend, sister, daughter, church musician etc. There is something irreducible in each of us, as there was in my mother, and it is good, and it seems right to me, if also a little sad, that we understand that the one we love eludes us, and is known, as it were, in her integrity and fullness and wonder, only to her God and sometimes to herself. We are given a mystery to live with and learn from and enjoy, and we ought never presume to reduce the person to the category in which we encounter her; or ask her to perform that role better for our own sake. For what we love in the one we love is the life no one else knows how to live.

And so we did, often not as well as we might have liked, with Mum. Who was as complex as the next person, as irreducible, and who lived more shades of emotion and passion than it was her habit to show off.

Near the end of *A River Runs Through It*, Norman Maclean recalls his father, a Presbyterian minister saying: “It is those we live with and love and should know who elude us.” That truth might make us sad. But there is wonder in it, too. Think what an ecosystem, what a galaxy, each of us actually is. Way more than anyone could hope ever to reach the other side of.

So Heather was not ours, not all of her, anyway; no one, not even she, got to know the all of her.

Each of us walks our whole life around inside us. So Heather, at any given moment, was all she ever was and did—a child who I suspect knew loneliness and fear and too little parenting, although she also knew love; a bright young student at one of the city’s best selective schools, who won a scholarship and went off to Sydney Teachers College, the very best days of her life; the young woman who made Bruce wait four years till she was the twenty-one year old woman in the photograph on the final page of the order of service; the school teacher, the piano teacher; the young mother who birthed four boys before she was thirty and went back to her teaching career when the youngest of us went to school; the teacher who changed lives and won

hearts at Epping an Barker and Tara; the piano teacher; the organist studying at All Saints Parramatta; the cook for us; the carer for us; our Mum on holidays at Terrigal, and North Avoca, Central Australia, Tasmania, the Hay Plain; our Mum at four twenty-firsts conductor of shoo—but that’s not who she was, and that’s not how her life—that manifestation of being unique to her—felt to her or what it meant to us.

But what a life, what a constellation of lives really, we were given to share in. If all that life is more than we can ever comprehend, it was not more than we could love.

7.

What a rare privilege to live to be sixty (62 in my brother’s case) and to still have a mother in your life. For my father, I guess, sixty-four years of his ninety, he’s lived with Heather—and for the better part of seventy, she has been his girl. That’s something to marvel at, to be grateful for, and it is a lot to say goodbye to, and hard, having had sixty years or seventy years to get used to her sitting at the heart of all one had known of the meaning of home.

8.

Heather was a woman of a serious heart (Jack Gilbert’s phrase.) Everything that mattered to her, mattered a great deal. Her moments were rarely idle. She turned up in them all. If you met Heather, you knew you’d been *met*. Listening or talking, conducting or teaching, she paid attention. She practised a fierce kind of gentleness (sometimes more gentle; sometimes more fierce). She wanted to understand, and she wanted to be understood. Her response to events on the news and in her life and in our lives was passionate. She was adamant. Many times those who knew her chose not to try to persuade her because this lady was not for turning.

But I have lived to see her change, and that is one of the wonders of my life and the great accomplishments of her own, that love has always won out over fear in her life, and let her keep on growing right until the close.

But just to say—though one wants to dwell on the life not the death—my mother’s dying had a beauty about it that all her life led to, and her divining skills participated in. Dying is such a mystery to the living, but it seems in this case the more Mum entered into its territory, the more she became “acquainted with the night” (Emily Dickinson), the more grace

and power she attained, the more she made peace with the ever after. She said to me and to most of us who saw her in her last weeks—*I'm not afraid to die; and I don't want to leave my family, but I don't want to linger in pain, losing my mind, and I don't want to be a burden to anyone, to Bruce especially.* To me she had said I always thought a heart attack would take me. Who drinks no alcohol and sings hymns all their life and dies of liver cancer?

And in the end ,it was her heart, her serious heart, that gave. That called time when the pain spiked, and called her to rest. And that seems to me, another gift, an answer to a prayer.

9.

This is not one of those eulogies where the life of the beloved is falsified and diminished by cliché and hyperbole. (Mum heard too many of those and never wanted one for herself.) Mourners mean well, but we forget the person when we canonize them. Heather was a human—much more holy to all of us in the integrity of her flawed and beautiful being than any saint. She was, as Auden wrote of Yeats, silly like us. Foolish sometimes. Intemperate, stubborn. She was hard on our father, and although she knew it, it was hard for her to stop. But let him who is without sin, as Jesus puts it in *John*, cast the first stone, hey? And, as Abe Lincoln said: “It has been my experience that folks who have no vices have very few virtues.”

Toward the end, in a rush, Mum arrived at grace. She knew herself better and caught herself out and forgave herself more and asked for forgiveness none of us felt we needed to give, but gave. She gentled. She chose and received and died in love.

Often our flaws are the flipside of our talents, of course, of our soaring selves, and so it probably was with Mum. In a poem “Late Beethoven,” Adam Zagajewski says of Beethoven: “We know that he dressed carelessly, that he was given to fits of avarice, that he wasn’t always fair to his friends.” (Mum’s short list of flaws was a little different...) “But a nameless god of beauty dwelled in him,” Zagajewski goes on, “and compelled his obedience.” Something similar could be said of Mum. She was her largest and truest self inside sacred music. And no one dwells in the sacred so long or with such devotion, no one attends to the sacred with such a work ethic and such high expectations of herself and others, and still finds a way to be patient with the shortcomings of the husband in the kitchen, the child in his marriage, the politicians and their smallness of mind and spirit.

But what are we talking about anyway? Some petulance and a tendency to be a bit judgy? Some martyr moments. She complained a bit more than was strictly necessary about the

weather. So? Only last Friday, I lost my temper with someone in the main street who wanted to insult my dogs and me—and I can't say I'm very sorry about it yet. There is in each of us two lives at least. The big life and the small, and in Heather, the big life, where she served the god of beauty and kindness, cast any smallness in the shade.

In any case, too, it is, I think, one of the purposes of literature and the arts to forgive us for being human—and to ask us to try a little harder. And that's what Mum did as a musician and a teacher. And—as if our lives were music, too—we forgive her completely, recognising in her fallings short our own, and aspiring to the grace that she achieved and the beauty that she made.

10.

Now if I say Mum was more Old Testament than New, I don't want you to get the wrong idea. I don't mean an eye for an eye. I don't mean the plagues and the pillars of salt. I mean the *Psalms* and *Proverbs* and *Ecclesiastes*, *the Song of Songs*. The lyrical, mystical books. Her faith was devotional; it was praise and gratitude and the hope of consolation and help; her faith was a beautiful, kind fatalism that ran a bit like the passage my brother will read from *Ecclesiastes* a little later.

And like this:

"I returned and saw under the sun that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all." (*Ecclesiastes 9:11*)

Mum's New Testament was all about compassion and forgiveness. Love. What counted, was not, as Lincoln put it, whether God was on *our* side, but whether we were on God's side. Which is to say her New-Testament faith was to serve, to seek justice in the world, to help, to feed the hungry, to be kind where you could—and sorry when you couldn't. Her New-Testament faith was loving one another—and making some kind of joyful noise.

Piety, sanctimony and virtue signalling, the self-satisfied and self-concerned religiosity of churches high and low: these were not Mum's idea of what Christ had in mind when he came, nor what God had in mind when he sent him; these were the ways of the Pharisees. She learned well and practised the robust social democratic ethos of the Methodist church she grew up in. Christianity was something you did, something you lived; and the relevant salvation was not your own. With Blake, she was happy to let Heaven be what it would be; this earth was

where life must be lived and heaven, like some new Jerusalem, enacted, and every dark Satanic mill, every homeless child, offended against the democracy of Christ's vision for the earth. Loving one another, not judging one another, is what her Christianity was.

That, and great music.

11.

Opportunities arrive every day, every other moment, to act either from love or from fear. Christ calls us, following his example, to choose love over fear. Generosity over judgment.

Now, I don't want to psychoanalyse my mother here, but those of us who lived with her saw her worry and anxiety and knew it had an old cause.

Her sometime anguish and fear were inherited, manifestly, from her mother Rachel Marks—whom I loved and grew up with—an intense and gorgeous, feisty kind woman, and the patron saint of worry and complaint. Inside Heather Tredinnick a girl did not always feel safe in the world. Her experience of childhood was that love and life could not always be trusted.

But music was her safe house, her happy place. Its structures held you and fashioned grace. It was love itself. It was a freedom you discovered through faithful attention to the disciplines of grace. Wilder musics were not to be trusted.

In life, my mother, could be hard when she was fearful, and it was disorder, chaos, the breaking of the rules that she had learned to trust that threw her off balance. Hers, at such times, was a disappointment not to be borne.

In truth, though, my mother's story is not how she failed love, but how love triumphed in her, kept on redeeming her, and resurrected through her life that fearful girl into this kind and forgiving woman.

I lived to see my mother change—I've lived to see her learn the art of it. A son who divorces twice will give a mother such as mine—a believer in structure and a practitioner of fidelity—two opportunities, at least, to choose to keep faith with love. At the first hurdle, way back, fear won with her for a while, and we spent a year of silence. At the end of which, she found the courage to say "I'm sorry," and I said the same, and everything changed, because she had found again the love that runs like a silence under all our selves and through hers.

I saw the same thing with her politics—one's quarrel with the world, as Yeats called it. Anyone with a Methodist heart, with a Blakean spirit, is not going to be able to hold onto the fear too long that the refugees, those stateless seekers of asylum, will overrun us, and Mum got there pretty fast and stayed. I remember lining up to vote with her the election after Tampa. It may have been the first vote she cast for Labor, but in truth it was a vote for kindness and hope, a vote against the unconscionable cruelty of the children thrown overboard by a conservative regime. Women in the ministry; gays in the ministry: by the time those issues arose, Mum was there. I'm sure, too, that she was already well beyond where Catherine Deves is at on trans kids.

The resurrection that counts is the one we work on ourselves, alive, the one that faith and love yield in a serious heart, and sometimes manufacture in the world. I saw such a resurrection happen and happen again in Heather Tredinnick, my mother, and I hope I have the courage for such ongoing metamorphosis my own life.

12.

Speaking of love and fear, I've long been struck by how closely these two words, meaning the quite different things, resemble each other: "scared" and "sacred." Change two letters, transpose the C and the A, and fear becomes holiness. That was the work, I think, my mother was here to do. In her life and in her work and in the world. And see how well she dispelled fear and made of her days a holiness that rang out like a forty-part motet.

13.

Resurrection, the most sacred moment in the Christian story, happens in these antipodes in the autumn, and my mother lived an autumn life. In her tastes in music and colour and landscape and fashion, she lived the cross-season, she rocked the tertiary tones. In Mum's heart it was always at once *a time to be (re)born* AND *a time to die*; a time to plant and a time to harvest. Mum lived an ecotone, a threshold, where summer and winter met; where hope and anguish overlapped; where love and fear, and faith and doubt, and structure and freedom lived an antiphon and made together the kind of light that shone on Mount Gibraltar on an afternoon late in April. And in the blueness of her lovely eyes. She lived the yellow and the grey and made

of them a lavender. She made of all the colours, not grey, but heather. Heather, that modest and lovely heath plant, that subdued purple she loved. She made of her days—ironically for a woman who kept faith with tradition—a season of change, a resurrection. And it seems fitting, somehow, that she died in it, too, this season she had lived. And right on threshold of Easter.

14.

I guess it would have been 1975. Having failed at the piano, I'd started on the cello. There were promising signs. This is not a family in which playing no instrument was an option. I love the cello, and I loved it then. It turns out I perform the long baritone bowings of the instrument much better in poetry; in some ways I write poems because I couldn't make them on a cello. But we didn't know that then. And I always made a nice tone. Mum and Dad reached deep into their shallow savings and had a cello made for me. Think about that. The beauty and generosity of that gift. I have it still, a lovely pale-coloured instrument, spruce and maple, growing lovelier in tone by the year and shaped like my mother's hopes for me, which have come true slantwise. Jodie has tried to get me back behind the wheel; she had the instrument reconditioned; she bought music; she had me sit and play, while she played piano. But I haven't made the time to learn again or play, and I've let it slide. Always too many notes to play on the page or in the classroom. But the time may come. I'm glad, anyway, Mum got to the instrument was loved and cared for, and that I knew the sacrifice my parents made to have the cello made for me. Perhaps I'll commission a piece for organ and cello, and ask someone who knows how to play, to play it on the instrument Heather had made for me.

15.

There have been small epiphanies, in the days since Mum passed. On Easter Sunday, we took to the river the blooms of three white roses from the bush that grows at our front door (this was Jodie's idea); in the late morning light we threw petals into the Wingecarribee at Berrima, a place Mum loved. The current was running hard, but some of the petals and one of the stems fell out of the flow and found eddies, and some of them beached and some headed back upstream. Grief, like the passage out of time, doesn't seem to want to run just one way at once. The trick seems to be, to hold on—while also letting go. And so, Heather seemed to play it among the white petals on the brown stream.

After a time, I walked the dogs downriver to where it widens, and I saw many of the white petals had pooled there, and I spoke with them a little about my mother. And then, as I watched, a platypus rose and seemed to investigate the scene and consider the petals for a bit, and then it ducked and sank with a splash. She resurfaced, and I saw her again. When she sank this time, I pulled out my phone and trained it on the circles she left, hoping to catch her rising again, but the second dive was, it seems, the letting go, the sinking into the new order of things, and I walked the dogs back to Jodie to tell her the small miracle the dogs and I had seen.

16.

Heather Tredinnick lived a life that outlives her. A life well-composed and elegantly performed. She made of her life by hand a work of art.

And in the lives that her life changed, she goes on.

Her life outlives her.

17.

So, I don't know what it's like where you are now, Mum, but in case it's all a bit new and far, I want to say, as I wrote to you once when you were worried and I was young—as Jesus also says to the disciples—: don't let your heart be troubled. *Noli timere* the great poet Seamus Heaney wrote, his final words, sent by text, to his wife. *Don't be afraid*. We'll be fine, though we won't stop missing you and losing our way. We'll look after Dad.

Down here, your life, like a happy cipher in the organ pipes, goes on. You changed, and you changed us. You made everything more beautiful by your being among us.

We knew your love, and it ran deep; and you knew ours, and it runs on.

—Mark Tredinnick