

Fidelia Monzon

4-8-72

Also,
there is this number- 050040872
in the roll book
It is suppose to mean
Fidelia Monzon

she says "call me Fidel
All my friends do"

-but I am your teacher

In Regular Math
I have never had a regular student.
For just a fraction of one moment
I thought they had the wrong girl and I could see her
Whole.

No one will ever kiss you again, Fidel.

At fifteen,
we all waited preciously, dangerously
for that single kiss that would change
every landscape
waiting for that beautiful young man
on the motorcycle to ask
us on liquid wind
fragilely to ride

For one moment in Time
I was confused by Death.
The English-As-A-Second-Language Office
found me at lunch:
Did you hear about the girl?
What?
The girl-Fidelia-who
over the holidays
in a motorcycle accident
died.

For one moment I got her face in my head
Not bronzed but a flesh peach
ancestral gods called commanding—shoulders back
but also easy
in her mind at fifteen.

Composed against the crash of
5th period Regular Class I stopped seeing her
except for moments of clarity, her clarity I suppose.

This all means nearly nothing.
Are there no words to claim our dead?
...are there no symbols
beyond numbers, grades in roll books,
no secret signs
that easily evade these math texts?

I never had a regular student
in my class, Fidel.

And Fidel,
Peter in the last row is tracing your name
onto the last sheet of his notebook.
It has taken him today all through fractions to write

just FID so delicately.
Just last week
it caught this ear
that he fancied you: Teased, there was
pain and hope in his face.

Today he had trouble following
the lesson and I do not nag.
He is learning his fractions
internally.

Fidel,
no one new will ever miss you.

Like sculpture— the motorcycle— the young man— the glide—
folds into Death so ugly
but I need to image
the last moment crystalline
as some young man—charmed—asked you to ride—
and saying “Yes, yes I will ride” it was
the best damn ride of your life.
I have to believe in this—
overlay death with the romance colors—peach, bronze and wind
because Death stays here with us, Fidel.
Weak, mortal we need all the overlay we can
just to ease past Death
the most regular of all students
who sits at the back of my class
with a shotgun.

Fidel Monzon

1-1-88