



Brendacrostic Exercise

As we get into the final section, the title section, of *In a Few Minutes Before Later* by Brenda Hillman, we get the sense of how important her marriage to Bob Hass is, as she wrote it during the weeks he had a brush with death. There are several tender moments in this section and some universal themes, although done in the style she herself describes as a: “bouquet of weedlike brendas ripped up from the ground by one of the brendas who is walking by.” (Her self-described characterization of her work.) The *handling* of these themes is anything but predictable in the Hillman poetry cosmos where surprise mind is everywhere.

Two subjects are laid out for us very directly in the poem “Love & Myth:”

fluted

Love & Myth

Many love poems are yearning.
Some are funny like beards on trees.
Your time on earth is brief, so speak
 your love without delay.
In some the names are changed. Through
time your angel passes by, & dust fills up
 the back of your eye,,,
you pray to a god of nothingness
to release you from the contract. Maybe
 rethink that. You were sustained
by color, your love was not the longing type
not fluted shame, not post anything.



Some could love through change, they
breathed the evil
down. Oblivious

love might be renounced . . . *Get it right,*

Get it right, sang the vowels
& live with your love in time,
& thus they lived among
breathtaking forces,,
near the righteous oak,
dispersal & contour, near
the prickly skin of the gourd—

In a method that is similar to the “Phrase Acrostic” I played around with many years ago, why not write a poem about love and myth, or love *OR* myth, and use the first words in each line of Brenda’s poem? You could even start your own love & myth poem with the first three words of Brenda’s poem:

Many love poems...

Some

Your

your

In

time

the

you



to
rethink
by
not

Some
breathed
down
love
Get
&
&
breathtaking
near
dispersal
the

I'd compose it projectively and deal with the lineation after you fill out all the lines, making sure to do something more interesting than "lawnmower poetry" but still tied to the notion of poem on the page as a score for the voice. Extra points for a lineation tied to your own breath and physiology. I am convinced that the poem on the page can be the materialization of your own mind's movement in time and the more you can connect with this concept and see it on the page, the more you can internalize and refine & deepen your own poetic ear. After all, the heart has 100 times the energy of the brain, so why settle for something purely academic?

Note how some of the words above start with capital letters, and so should be the first word of sentences. Also, the urgency felt by a loved one going through a literal life & death experience is what we're after in this exercise. Maybe you can relate. If not, try to get into a mental state of grief similar to the trance state we attempted recently. One need only read the

news to find some horrific thing that one could take in for a few moments to enact the right tone for this exercise.



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Casa del Colibrí
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Work Cited:

<https://www.mcsweeneys.net/articles/brenda-hillman>

<https://paulnelson.com/workshops/phrase-acrostic-workshop-handout/>