

In Memoriam

In seventh grade, Ms. Erzsé Szabó, or Liz Taylor in English,
Shared an article with us. It was a survey of sexual practices.
It came out that I was a tiger.

Literature class in Hungary, 1987.

With the Soviet army kicking its last in isolated barracks throughout the land,
With slender, seductive glass bottles of Coca Cola playing hide and seek
 at the last overnight class trip, our seventh-grader bodies curling under a large blanket,
With a pipe-puffing writer of right leaning articles in her bed right next door,
With oblique speeches full of word flowers against world powers, and the brutal refrain
 “Only one thing is missing: a shovel full of dirt...that will make everything all right”),
With her lessons on grammar and spelling forming legs for Literature,
With a smile that could only live on a face kissed by two ex-husbands,
 (her last name changed three times in five years like Hungary’s borders)
With pop oral quizzes--me analyzing the epic poem, Miklós Toldi, for twenty minutes,
With her thank you note in pearly letters in my drawer next to Allen Ginsberg's,
 (she liked the tape I’d recorded for her with my new keyboard so much she even cried),
With that slender figure, careful makeup, clear voice, and still smoldering ashes of passion,
With that voice of concerned and tearful apologetics poured out to my parents one afternoon,
 (she felt awful that I broke my wrist in a duel with the son of the said right-wing writer hero),
With the mist of time suddenly lifted by an unexpected email that she died,
With everyone around me unaware and unaffected while the Earth revolves just the same
with her heart
 stilled,
With her body in a fresh grave and spirit in my mind shining more brightly for a few moments
 through the veil of romanticized darkness,
I am forced to think of a time when I will be recalled for a few seconds thirty years from now.
 I fear to know just how. I question just how.
I hope anyhow.

David Mandler
10/26/16