

OCTOGENARIAN ON FIRE, 2018

- *Vilma Ginzberg*

Watching the world from here... as a psychologist:

SUICIDE: ELEGY FOR THE RED-BREASTED BIRD

for Robin Williams

red-breasted bird
crimson song as wide as his heart
gifts of joy flying off every feather
bringer of light and promise
that dark and cold are not forever

to exorcise his pain
he has taken his all from us

to end the despair
he has bled his wounds to silence

hearing again the mourning-shrouded message
that something was at its end
its time was up
he thought it meant his life entire

all too common a mistake

the hand of death abides
holds the hand of life itself
they walk together yin and yang through all our days
our battles our celebrations our silent hours

we who tire of the unwelcome darkness
we who cannot imagine
coming through the next endless night

we who hear the roaring siren call of surcease
and lie in the shadows of forgetting
are easy prey for the lurking error

the knife is always at the ready
it can kill or it can pare

behold how often do we prune the vine so it will flower
dead-head the rose to urge its blossom
run one more lap to tone the tired muscle

it is too late for him
red-breast will not serenade again

but the call to die will rise in us again
the call to death is real its urgency intense
demanding response it will not disappear

but let us listen again
it is a gift a priceless tune
and we must remember how to hear it

we must harken we must seek
we must embark on the dark treasure hunt

until the hidden culprit is known
until what must be heard behind the siren-song is heard
until what has become burden is left behind
until that which is at its end is allowed to die
until what keeps us fettered is released

so that all that can still live and laugh and love in us
does remain