



On the Trail

I learned from a CD jacket
George Gershwin died
At thirty-eight, in '37
From a symptomatic glioma;
suspected but undetected.

Gave a concert before noon.
Was decerebrate by night,
He departed at full gallop.

I learned from the *Times* this year
That Oliver Sacks, nearly 80,
Wants death in the saddle too;
But in old age, after
A time of leisure and freedom
To wrap it up.

How death has changed,
From random, rapid, unexpected,
To predictable, slow, anticipated
Withering, weakening
Autoconsumption.
There is time for contemplation, but
Survival is the preoccupation.

Death has been displaced
By erosion of self,
And wishing for day's end
to be trail's end.

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