

This poem was written very spontaneously one morning sixteen and a half years after my mother's death on December 8, 1964. Half awake, I saw my bright orange sweater standing out in my closet through my sleep-blurred vision. I recalled watching my mother knitting this and other sweaters for me through my teenage eyes. Remarkably, she took up knitting only shortly before her death. I realized that this was the only sweater I had left. Out came this poem on 5/23/81.

I wound up choreographing it and performing it, with my sweater as a prop, before many people as part of a feminist dance/theater company called "Moving Voices." It was very healing to hear and feel so many people crying along with me. 5/15/95

My Last Piece of Her: My Bright Orange Sweater
by Adele Brookman, 5/23/81

I watch my mother,
Minna,
only 41,
as she sits
and she knits
while she's dying.

As she sits
and she knits,
I watch a garment
growing like the egg
forming through the side of her head
(where her skull was chopped away
to make room)
impregnating her
like I was once
inside her womb.
Such protrusions
intruding Minna
take her life.

Now nearly grown,
I watch Minna
as she sits
and she knits
while she's dying
to give herself life
in a garment nearly grown.
It will be for me
of yarn more goldenfire
than my hair
that falls from her basket
in swirls upon her knee.
Like the varicose veins

on her legs, shapely still,
dancer's legs,
had she not birthed
daughters dinners garments.

I watch Minna
as she sits
and she knits
while she's dying

as she sits

and she knits

as she sits
and knits
and sits
and knits
sits and knits sits and knits!

The words churn out and over
as her fingers churn yarn out and over the needles
as prolifically
as cells churn out and through
her once-was-a-brain
yet still-is-a-brain
'cause look how she sits
and she knits
while she's dying.