

Elegy for the Old Thinking

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When the theoretical physicist explains
that he's found the same self-correcting codes
in nature that run a browser,

I imagine the forsythia at my window
administers a program for when to bloom
or drop its leaves. Gravity's the odd man out,

which is to say that the apple will fall to ground
as long as moon orbits earth. I tell my baby
that the stars in the sky are not just lights

but places to go. The theoretical physicist says
he was only trying to solve some problems
that no one thought there were answers for.

He says learning supersymmetry is a bit
like having babies: you focus on the benefits,
not the pain. I think about the loss

of my childless life, and then, all of the times
I thought I was essential before.
Maybe that's the real loss. Outside my window,

the branches and roots cancel out each other,
so all I see are electric yellow blossoms
framed in green frond. When you ask a physicist

a question he'll give you a number and the range
of uncertainty. If you ask me how old
my daughter is, I'll say 12 weeks, two days,

but if I count back to conception, she's a full year,
maybe 384 days, a range of uncertainty implied
by my use of maybe. Somehow—perhaps

it's the same invisible pattern of zeros and ones
pulsing in leaf vein—even when I sleep,
my ears tune to hear her call, and since she's

so small, I know that when she cries,
it's out of need. When she's older, it still
will be need, though I'll miss holding her length

in the cradle of my arms, how my heartbeat
is enough to sooth her to sleep. Make me the tree
or the apple, let her be gravity or light.