

May 16, 2022

Dear FUSW Congregants,

On the following pages are the two Grace Paley poems I read in my talk, "Conversations With Our Mothers," on May 8, 2022, along with a short list of other suggested sources of her work you might be interested in.

Michael Carman

A Letter

My mother because I don't write many poems
for you doesn't mean I haven't thought about you
every single day of these last fifty years what
an avalanche of time I can't begin to tell you
it's true though in one or two busy decades when
the children were young and noisy when the war
and intense sexual love interfered it's possible
I thought of you my mother less often even then
suddenly in the evening I might see you for
a moment standing beside my father under
the Norway maple your hair is at last cut short
and is becoming to your broad Slavic face
your hands are clasped lightly over the belly of
a summer dress your arms nearly hide the fact
that you have only one breast I watch my sister
snap that picture my mother I have not needed to
hold it in my hand

--Grace Paley

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Paley, Grace. *Begin Again: The Collected Poems of Grace Paley*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1985, New York, New York.

In the Bus

Somewhere between Greenfield and Holyoke
snow became rain
and a child passed through me
as a person moves through mist
as the moon moves through
a dense cloud at night
as though I were cloud or mist
a child passed through me

On the highway that lies
across miles of stubble
and tobacco barns our bus speeding
speeding disordered the slanty rain
and a girl with no name naked
wearing the last nakedness of
childhood breathed in me
 once no
 two breaths
a sigh she whispered Hey you
begin again
 Again?
again again you'll see
it's easy begin again long ago

---Grace Paley

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Paley, Grace. *Begin Again: The Collected Poems of Grace Paley*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1985, New York, New York.

Suggested Reading, works by Grace Paley

POETRY

1. Paley, Grace. *Begin Again: Collected Poems*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1985.
2. Paley, Grace. *Fidelity*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008.

ESSAYS

Most of these are from her journals as an activist, riding the buses for civil rights in the 1960s, protesting the Vietnam War in the 1970s, discussing abortion, feminism, children's rights, and more. They're very short, and very powerful.

1. Paley, Grace. *Just As I Thought*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999.

SHORT STORIES

1. Paley, Grace. *The Collected Stories* (FSG Classics), 2007.

I believe this collection contains selections from *Enormous Changes at the Last Minute*, *Later the Same Day*, and *The Little Disturbances of Man*. I have the individual books, but this collection should be good.

A GRACE PALEY READER

1. Paley, Grace. *A Grace Paley Reader: Stories, Essays, and Poetry*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, reprint edition, 2018.

All these books should be available in paperback either new or used. They were all published by FS&G, so as long as you get an edition published by them, your copy should have the content integrity of the original.