

Ella reaches a certain age

It's time to reminisce
about the jobs she never had,
the unread books,
for she has grown old,
and she needs a break from growing even older,
but too many things are finishing up
before they had a chance to begin,
and she can no longer complete crosswords—

she is weary of her life's turning points,
her lack of interest in what she once embraced,
all the condolence messages
she writes and sends to the families of her friends,
and even then, she's thwarted by misspellings.
while she wonders when similar notes
will find their way to her children

she's already the wife of a dead man,
and it's been years since she felt anything of his
spirit
and the ones she gave birth to have given birth ten
times over
and there's a lifetime between her and the youngest

the evenings are too quiet,
choices are few,
everything's familiar,
musing has replaced doing,
photos in her albums grow younger by the day
she will never leave this city,
never again take step outside her neighborhood

once she stood atop the years she's lived,
now they drive her into the ground.

—John Grey



Illustration by Steve Derrick