

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.