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In the Fullness of Early Aging

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In the Fullness of Early Aging

Nearly midnight—when Phil Ochs
will sing about all the things
he won't be able to do when he's gone
so, he guesses, he'll have to do them while he's here.

But he's no longer here
so irony buzzes, a winter housefly,
through the pith of his lyric.
We cherish these untangled days

when loving well is all that's required.
This evening, fresh from storefront theatre,
we are fired up by theatrical innovation--
babies raining from the sky,

a wordy, impertinent fetus
curious about the world he will enter.
Still discussing the play,
we heat up the clam chowder

sit at the butcher-block table
as if at a seaside crab-shack
and turn on the radio for the last hour
of the Midnight Special—

our Saturday night folk ritual.
We talk casually of when one of us
will stride ahead into Unknowing
and which of us is best equipped

to cope with loneliness,
as though we might stave off mortality
by naming it, by weekly references
to its caprice as we blend our voices

with the long-dead folk singer
celebrating the tenuous blessings
of a fragile hold on his guitar
and rhythms of breath and pulse.

Maureen Tolman Flannery