

## The Angel of Death

*(for Daniel del Solar )*

by Nina Serrano

*Do not go gentle into that good night,  
Old age should burn and rage at close of day;  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.*  
— Dylan Thomas

The angel of death last night was with us  
who sat vigil at Daniel's house in his long hours  
struggling to let go of life  
Daniel—so devoted  
to sucking its sweetness from moments and seconds  
Discovering people antiquities rocks shells papers vistas sunsets  
blown-glass and art of every description  
in his hour by hour adventures —  
I had played his poem on the air that afternoon  
and a listener called saying  
he had met that man reciting the poem  
in front of a glassed display of Jadeite  
at the Olmeca exhibit at the de Young Museum  
and the man gave him his card which he lost  
and now hearing the poem  
and the voice he was sure it was Daniel  
who had admired the stone out loud  
and in response the caller  
pulled one just like it from his pocket  
and Daniel had marveled.  
Now the listener said, he was sitting in his garden in the sunlight listening to the radio  
working on such a piece of Jadeite  
when he heard the poem he wanted to give Daniel this work  
I said sardonically (to hide my pain) "Too late he is dying"  
He said, "I can finish today. I will bring it."  
So even in Daniel's dying  
these adventurous encounters go on  
The poem the stone carving and me  
witness of this marvel of flesh and bone  
that shrunken and bloated with fluid and bruised

with the battle scars of the wrestling with the angel of death  
who licked at his heels for these last six years  
as he jumped on and off planes as fast  
as his electronic cameras could click  
and I would pick him up at the airport —  
Now the eternal angel spreads those mighty wings  
We the caring giving sisters can hear the invisible swish of air in our vigil  
The Hospice brings its death by morphine  
but it is nothing compared to this greater force  
“Do not go gentle into that good night...”  
Daniel would quote and I would think  
“Gentle. Gentle is the way to go. Why rage rage rage?”  
Now I watch him weakened and sedated  
and Yes! He is raging raging raging  
I and my vigilant loving sisters and his glorious mother  
the queen of art will bathe him in light  
to go gentle gentle gentle  
onto the next journey

*Nina Serrano: This poem was written on January 6, 2012 as 3 Kings passed following a star  
in Oakland CA.*