

Thinking of Nancy

As children we would ask,
"Teacher, do we HAVE to
Do this or do that task? "

And, prescient, she
Inevitably would reply
"The only thing you
HAVE TO do is die."

And yet
A lifetime since
I have come to see
Before you do that one
Ineluctable necessity,
There is another task,
That compels us equally.

What I have learned is--
Before you die,
Some how, some way,
For some time--
You HAVE TO live.

And more than that,
The difference is--
Death is not a choice
But living is.

And you, Nancy, have seen
It fit to boldly pluck
Your apple from the Tree of Life
And your choice has been
Not to pare and slice
But to bite in, crunching hard
To let the juices run -- even
If nibbling might delay
How soon you reach the core.
You'd rather have it this way:
Doing the first thing you HAVE TO --
With intensity--
Doing it before you
Yield to that
Ultimate necessity.

Mary Hynes-Berry