they tell me that you’re dying;
slowly your wrinkles form your heart’s tributaries,
and your brow proclaims Wiglaf’s long awaited wisdom.
now—i wonder—
what is behind those ball-bearing eyes?

You never were prone to sit in silence or shed a tear.
You never were one for giving in,
and now raising a foot is an effort.
[don’t sigh too hard—they’ll hear you
don’t smile too wide—they’ll think you fine
don’t cry too hard—they’ll already miss you
and, God knows, it’s not that time]
maybe someday there will be time for you and i again—
to “climb Washington monument” while humming Hungarian tunes—
or walk along the river gathering “junk.”
we’ll sing together and count the grains of Dover.
[how placidly you stay
yes, i know,
you’re not asleep and i’ll not go away]

never did i think i would pray for one moment—
a moment when you’d have strength again to speak of the homeland,
and i, the patience to listen.