

Ronald J. Pelias

Gathering

I'm putting things in their place,
organized by a logic of years,
of memories I rather not forget
of histories misplaced, stuffed
in dusty closets that will be tossed
as soon as I'm gone. I'm holding
it all together with an old body
trying its best to recall the names
of college friends in a faded photo,
of the women who I met with love,
those I did and did not treat well,
of the students I taught and advised
believing in what was possible.
I'm cleaning out files of lectures
I'll never need again, of articles
I never had time to read, of writing
I published but can't remember.
I'm keeping what will steer me
to the very end, a shovel for digging
the garden, a blanket to cover
my cold bones, a pen for writing
love poems to my wife. I'm doing
an accounting, measuring what counts,
laboring to find the equation
that explains a life. I'm gathering
what I'd like to carry to my grave.

Ronald J. Pelias spent most of his career writing books, e.g., *If the Truth Be Told* (Sense/Brill Publications), *The Creative Qualitative Researcher* (Routledge), and *Lessons on Aging and Dying* (Routledge), that call upon the literary as a research strategy. Now he just writes for the pleasures of lingering in bafflement.