

Manuscript

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Take 1

PREFACE: “Mein Camp”

Mapplethorpe rhymes with *May Pole*. *Thorpe* means town.
“Our aim is...to reveal the cultural context...and to
transform an individual story into a cultural narrative, and so to understand more fully
what happened in the past.”
—*Ronald Grele*

1

DANGEROUS LIAISONS

This is a memoir, not a biography, of photographer Robert Mapplethorpe. It’s a detective story told in a confessional. For nearly twenty years, I have kept notes, letters, photographs, reviews, and journal entries about this most determined of artists. Robert and I lived parallel lives before we met. I helped him create himself. I first wrote about Robert in 1977, before the Art Reich could pronounce “Mapplethorpe” correctly.

Early on, in 1977, we collaborated on a cover for a magazine (his first), which I edited. In fact, I sketched for him the exact leathersex concept I wanted and selected the model to shoot. Robert brought his fresh eye to the assignment. After much objection from the publisher, the Map-plethorpe cover finally made it out on the Fall 1978 *Drummer*, number 24.¹

We had once planned in 1978 to publish a book together. When he died, he left my name on his list of people who knew him in the 1970s. On that particular list, I believe, I am the last

¹ The publisher, John Embry, hated the new rugged style of masculinity I was chronicling in *Drummer*, which I had dubbed on the masthead “The American Review of Gay Popular Culture.” He was caught in a 1950s idea of leather and not very progressive: “It’s the worst-selling issue we ever had.”

Robert was angry with Embry’s attitude, especially when Embry became obsessed with trying to recreate Robert’s photograph of the cock and balls tied down on the bloody bondage board. Robert accused Embry of outright plagiarism.

The Mapplethorpe cover turned out to be, in fact, a classic. It was the first demimonde magazine ever to devote a complete issue to men into a cigar fetish.

Two subsequent cigar-themed issues have appeared, but none featured models with the same hypermasculine style as Mapplethorpe’s.

Robert went on to do much work with the model, Elliot Siegal.

one alive. I was the first editor to publish his controversial leather photographs.²

Our work together matched our mutual interests and companionship.

Play “Moon River” or not, the fact is we were sweethearts. We were lovers. We were in love. Then we were close friends.

I found him models, dealers, and sex partners.

Robert made everyone an accomplice to his adventures.

He was a voyeur with a streak of exhibitionism.

He begged me point-blank to write about him.

“I want to be a story told around the world,” he said.

At least, I knew, with him, what I was for.

I think Robert enlisted all his friends who were writers to play Boswell to his Johnson.

Robert never wrote. He gave interviews. Interviews were his forte.

Through the years, Robert’s personal life, public career, and particularly his expression of civilized human values through photography have kept my interest.

My 1990 novel, *Some Dance to Remember*, which Robert read in draft, and to whom it is dedicated, is about the sex, drugs, and rock ‘n’ roll of the seventies and early eighties before AIDS. Within the story, a fictionalized defraction of Robert moves from our private relationship to world-class artist, with all the attendant joys and problems that happen to a friendship when one of the friends becomes a media sensation.

The demands of his professional work, his prolific output, his traveling to international shows, took a toll: the more famous he became, the lonelier his life.

His letters and late-night, long-distance telephone calls were confessionals of anxiety. On the other side of celebrity, he felt isolated. He was always sure of himself aesthetically and professionally, but personally he felt invisible. That’s why his series of self-portraits is important.

His autoshots show him revealing himself as a work in progress.

For all the art of his photography, Robert Mapplethorpe was his own best creation. He was, in Tom Wolfe’s term in *Bonfire of the Vanities*, a social X ray of his times.

Mapplethorpe’s best decade was 1975-1985.

He pursued art for art’s sake. The fame and the money made up in quantity what his life lacked in longevity.

His AIDS was diagnosed in 1986 and he died in 1989.

Robert’s work mirrored American society undergoing profound change in a tempestuous time in a specific place: the 1970s and 1980s in Manhattan.

To the degree that his art serves as a litmus test of the continuing American *fin de mille* debate between the just-say-no national character of denial and the individual right to choice, Robert, as a person and as an artist, has been misrepresented in the sound and fury.

Robert Mapplethorpe, the person, was swept away by political controversy about the arts, by critical articles about photographic technique, and by the epidemic of the millennium.

² “Movement without Aim- Methodological and Theoretical Problems in Oral History,” in *Envelopes of Sound: Six Practitioners Discuss the Method, Theory, and Practice of Oral History and Oral Testimony*, ed. Ronald J. Grele (Chicago: Precedent Publishing, 1975), 142.

2

FAMOUS FOR 15 INCHES

This memoir intends to present some evidence that once there was a living, ambitious, sensually playful, scared, intelligent human being who, one day, finding a camera in his hand, looked through the viewfinder, like a gypsy with a first crystal ball, and saw the chance to focus his instamatic visions.

Robert was a sharpshooter.

He had an artist's eye.

Plus a contemporary pop culture concept of photographic art as immediate gratification in a society living in the fast lane. Sculpture, his major at Pratt, or painting, took too long.

With the camera, Robert mastered time itself in an art form not rooted in prehistoric ritual but invented by technology.

We both knew he would lead a fast, brief life.

Long before AIDS, I told him so in 1979, personally, and in print in the 1981 short story "Caro Ricardo." The plague had nothing to do with the romantic brevity in Robert's eyes. If AIDS hadn't got him, something else would have.

He was as fated as Byron, Shelley, and Keats to die prematurely, the same as James Byron Dean, Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, and his famous look-alike, the poet-singer of the perverse, Jim Morrison of The Doors.

Death did not frighten him. He said so the way only the young can say so.

Death was an inevitability leading to suspected immortality.

"You can't cheat death," he said outside an antique shop on Greenwich Avenue in the Village, "but you can cheat life."

"How?" I asked.

"By not living."

Malcolm Forbes's epitaph fits Robert equally: "When alive, he lived."

Robert's posthumous notoriety typifies the "spin" he put on his life. Nothing was what it seemed to be. Robert was not a literal person.

Everything he saw was an ambiguous shade of something else.

He was a metaphorical person. The irony was he took photography, which is a literal person's perfect way to show life in snapshots, and raised the single frame to a metaphor.

A Mapplethorpe lily is not a lily is not a lily.

This is trick photography shot by a trickster.

Now you see it.

Now you don't.

Now, if you're lucky, you do.

Senator Jesse Helms never got it.

Helms probably thought that Robert's drop-dead flowers, always actually more explicit than his human nudes, were, uh, flowers.

And not the sex organs of plants or, omigod, phallic and vaginal symbols!

Metaphor is a problem for fundamentalists clamming up on the hard shell.

Robert captured the essence of flowers, figures, faces, and fetishes so resonantly on the literal level that the very perfection of the moment frozen in the single frame caused the very being of the object to suggest its own becoming...other.

That capturing of the suggestive instant of becoming ambiguous was his existential magic.

Elegant flowers become sexual organs.

The shadow of a flower becomes the horned god.

Sexuality becomes theology.

Face becomes mask.

The mirror becomes window.

Life becomes death.

The cross becomes the crown.

Light becomes dark.

The looking glass makes the way out become the way in: the anal insertions.

This spinning ambiguity causes fear in the literal-minded who look at his single-shot metaphors.

He intended his stills to be “moving” pictures, photographs that “moved” the viewer, through assault if necessary, for the viewer’s own good, the way one slaps someone who is hysterical.

Every Mapplethorpe photograph is a single frame in a movie, which, if it existed, would be a series of dissolves:

the lily dissolves to the genitalia,
the face to the skull,
the skull to the lily.

Although versed in film and video, Robert consciously kept with the discipline of the single-frame still camera.

Robert was a Platonist: he saw the real and he saw the ideal.

He saw the finite world in a classically time-bound way, and he wanted to show that way, that way of ambiguity that lies in all things, to those who thought what they saw was what they saw, what they believed was what they believed, and what they felt was what human feeling was.

The insistence on the “ambiguity of the human condition” was Robert’s only social comment as he followed an almost pure aestheticism.

This means trouble in River City.

Robert’s presentation of ambiguity, of course, is what slaps the authoritarian face.

Ambiguity pulls the prayer rug out from under orthodoxy, political, social, religious, and sexual.

Ambiguity, by its very presence, suggests that the observer may observe the surface but may never read the essence; the way some people know the price of everything and the value of very little.

My brother, a career military sergeant, once, in desperation, said to Robert and me, when we had been verbally playing loop-the-loop around him, “I can’t keep up with what you’re

saying. You both always say one thing and mean something else. I don't like being made fun of."

He said it precisely: in the presence of ambiguity, the uninitiated thinks maybe he might be the butt of a joke everyone but him gets.

American education hardly teaches literary interpretation or art appreciation.

Private interpretation of the Bible is perhaps the worst example of bad literary interpretation ever put into self-serving hands. The more a passage is stared at, the more it twists. From biblical "scholarship," it's an easy jump to righteous exegesis of art. The main criterion of judgment in America is a kind of moral theology that instantly jumps to classify something as sexual, and, therefore, threatening, sinful, venial, or mortal.

This mind-set comes perhaps from the only instance where most Americans can see something meaning two things: the dirty joke, wherein one thing is said and another meaning is meant.

Robert's ambiguity is sometimes sexual, but not always, and nowhere near the degree that his censors declare. His ambiguities lie more along the spine of chilling visions that humans refuse to acknowledge. The biggest denial, of course, is the denial of death. Robert worked thanatos the way he worked eros in ticks of clicked frames. He addressed the *vanitas* of fame and cash in the *morituri* portraits of Katherine Cebrian (1980), William Burroughs (1980), Louise Bourgeois (1982), Alice Neel (1984), Willem de Kooning (1986), Louise Nevelson (1986), and, finally, himself: *Self-Portrait with Death's Head Cane* (1988).

His politics embraces only the ambiguity that comes with change. Change is what conservative authoritarians cannot abide.

After avoiding the draft in the sixties, Robert, in the seventies' age of activism, made no public statements about the Vietnam War, about civil rights for minorities, about feminism, about sexual liberation, about the homeless. AIDS and his art, however, made him as eloquent as he could be. When sick with full-blown AIDS, he offered himself up for, or at least accepted as a pioneer volunteer, any treatment that might help. By establishing the Mapplethorpe Foundation, he achieved direction of his art and his estate to protect his photography while funding the arts, and set his fortune on a course of endowing AIDS research and treatment facilities.^{3*}

Not particularly political while living, Robert postmortem has become symbol of the *garde assautif* whom religionists fear. Or at least his work has.

Robert was no free-thinking free spirit. Personally, he was rather direct about people liking what he liked. Or else.

He cared little really about sexual politics, racial equality, established religion, or government grants.

He would have liked the publicity the National Endowment for the Arts got him, but he had expressed to me as early as the summer of 1982 his contempt for any censor who got in his way. Robert was never government-dependent in his life. He never demanded grants or aid as his entitlement.

He received, instead, in the tradition of artists, the support of patrons; but he always gave

³ After his death, the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation endowed an AIDS-care unit at Boston's New England Deaconess Hospital, where he died at 6 A.M. on March 9, 1989.

his patrons, especially the beneficent Sam Wagstaff, as good as they gave.

He was a good arts hustler.

He recognized art as another form of business, the way that Hollywood talks not of the art of the motion picture but of the industry.

Robert was in business to make art and in art to make money. He could have been quite well off in his very successful career as a commercial fashion photographer. His first fine art exhibitions with Holly Solomon in 1977 received enthusiastic reviews and public acceptance.

Patronage may have opened doors, but once he walked through, he always had the talent to deliver the work.

He saw nothing wrong with making money while he made art.

He had no intention of living a bohemian life and dying young, poor, and uncelebrated in a Greenwich Village garret.

From the start, he ardently courted recognition and projected success ratios.

When he first mentioned his relationship with the poet-singer Patti Smith, he said, “Patti deserves to be a legend.”

Deciphering Robert, I found that what he said of Patti, whom he regarded and photographed as his alter ego, he said about himself.

Robert prided himself on his intelligence.

He was not deluded.

He knew how to take care of himself.

Never did he think that the government has an obligation to support art. Never did he think that government has the right to censor art.

He believed in the separation of art and state.

He believed in free enterprise, so much so that he ensured the only kind of worldly immortality one can be sure of before his death, he created the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation, Inc.

Robert was more realistic about money than venal.

In America, cash is the main way people keep score.

Living well is the best revenge.

3

SEX, LIES, AND HASSELBLAD

Robert’s cynical edge led him safely through three decades of American denial and deceit. He was a visionary, a seer who was a sayer of what he saw, coming up in the flower child sixties of the New York underground counterculture presided over by Warhol, who turned the Campbell soup can into proletarian pop art. He became a photographer of note in the seventies, the Decade of Liars, when lies about Vietnam turned to lies about Watergate and led to the lies of the eighties’ Iran-Contra and savings-and-loan scandals.

Lying, the denial of truth, became the political art form with Nixon as its model at a formative point in Robert’s life.

The cover-up of truth became the new fig leaf.

The *Esquire* cover of May 1968 showed Nixon in profile with four disembodied hands applying hair spray, blusher, powder, and lipstick to the mask of his face. The cover copy read, “Nixon’s last chance. (This time he’d better look right!)”

Joe McGinniss, in *The Selling of the President 1968*, wrote, “Television seems particularly useful to the politician who can be charming but lacks ideas.”

Nixon opened the masquerade that persisted through the media-manipulating Reagan regency that closed Robert’s life.

The value of lying and the value of truth intrigued Robert, particularly as he moved through the *vanitas* of fashion advertising and the *bal masque* of society and personality portraits.

Face, the most intricate surface of the human body, became Robert’s crucible of search.

In the end, he found every face a mask.

It was no accident that at the end of his life, Robert shot the face of Fawn Hall, Oliver North’s complicative secretary, as well as U.S. surgeon general Koop, who, on the side of truth, tried to break a nation’s denial and lies about AIDS.

Dealing with denial and lies, affirmation and truth, in the faces of others, Robert used his camera as a method of exploration.

Dealing with his own face, he used his photography as means of self-expression in a series of self-portraits that dramatizes the life-movie he led.

Toward others, he fixed his camera as a gun, focusing his sitters in the crosshairs of his site, shooting at that precise moment when the face and the mask of the face are either in harmony or at greatest conflict.

What is false and what is true are left to the jury of viewers.

Robert, ever the formalist, rarely pronounced judgment in photographs of others. In fact, women as well as men who sat for portraits recount his kindness.

In his portrait of infamous government secretary Fawn Hall, in fact, in any of his portraits of women, Robert explores the masks, the feminine mystique of personal, societal, moral, political, and gender otherness and leaves the conclusion to the viewer.

When Robert shot his mentor Holly Solomon in a portrait, Holly was grieving the loss of a friend and begged Robert not to shoot her. Robert, in a heat to shoot his 1978 book about dealers and art, insisted that he shoot Holly, who had been the first dealer to exhibit his work.

“So I went over to his studio at Bond Street,” Holly Solomon said. “I could barely stop crying. I said to Robert, ‘You know looking at me that it is not possible to take my photograph.’ He said, ‘Don’t worry, Holly. I’ll touch it up.’ When he showed me the proof, I said, ‘You can’t print this.’ I was overwrought with grief. So Robert retook my photograph. He understood that the photograph was too private; it never will be a public photograph.”

The imprint of this nonverbal Mapplethorpe exists in an American tradition of artists who are writers. Their verbal images enrich the literature of the visual. Henry James in *The Portrait of a Lady* gets verbally behind the Mapplethorpe presentation of face with some explication of how a portrait of a face, masked or not, operates as a social X ray.

“By the shell,” James wrote, “I mean the whole envelope of circumstances...we’re each of us made up of some cluster of appurtenances. What shall we call our ‘self’? Where does it begin? Where does it end? It overflows into everything that belongs to us—and then it flows back again.

I know a large part of myself is the clothes I choose to wear. I've a great respect for *things!* One's self for other people—is one's expression of one's self; and one's house, one's furniture, one's garments, the books one reads, the company one keeps—these things are all expressive.”

Robert's intellectual and aesthetic line of descent can be calculated historically from the Puritan and transcendentalist ethic of New England, from the first photographer depicted in American fiction, Hawthorne's Holgrave in the 1851 novel *House of Seven Gables*, through Emerson and Thoreau and Whitman, all of them impressed with Daguerre's all-seeing eye, which was no longer the Old Testament Eye of God as seen framed in the triangle on the dollar bill, but was the new eye, the technological eye of the camera.

So impressed was Emerson by the technology invented simultaneously and separately by both the British aristocrat William Talbot and the French stage designer Louis Daguerre (who filed his 1839 patent two weeks before Talbot) that Emerson added to his essays the metaphor that humankind's evolution would one day turn people into one organ, the eye.

*The only real autobiography
Mapplethorpe created
to organize the world around himself
is his series of self-portraits.*

Thoreau went to Walden to see the macrocosm the way Mapplethorpe left Queens to see Manhattan. Whitman, based in Camden, New Jersey, roamed American streets, and had filmmaking been available would have shot a composite montage of America. *Leaves of Grass* is a treatment of one photographic image after another.

Robert's progress can be calculated from the history of painting, which, even more than the sculpture he studied at New York's Pratt Institute (1963-1970), led him to a crisp style of perception and presentation. Robert, by the end of his life, when photography celebrated its 150th year, made the camera seem new again. He was a mirror to the world of the seventies and eighties. To some, he was a liberating window of insight. He provoked viewers to reevaluate the essence and form of what they saw.

Robert's impact can be calculated theologically on Catholicism's changing role as institutionalized keeper. Catholicism is the nuclear fusion of a broader Christianity. Often the two institutions are very much alike. Robert's personal exposure to Catholic ritual and icons gave him a classically confused approach to beauty, truth, sexuality, humanity, and spirituality. His art was one answer to the confusion.

Robert Mapplethorpe is not a Catholic photographer or an erotic photographer any more than he is a homosexual photographer. He is none and all of those. American religionists make comedy of themselves seeing sex in Mapplethorpe's photographs. Sex, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder. The person reading Rorschach blots of light and shadow is the one who sees sex in ink stains.

Both art and morality change and evolve, especially in relation to one another. America has moved from a society that photographs its babies nude to a society that freaks out over simple nudity of children, males, and, in its latest twist, of women. The history of morality playing Pin the Fig Leaf on Art is a party game of some humor as the fig leaf seems to grow to a complete set of the emperor's new clothes.

4

IN THE HELIX BETWEEN ROBERT AND ME, NEARLY EVERYONE IS DEAD

If I dance to remember on Robert's grave, at least I dance by his invitation.

This memoir is a personal and collective journal of Robert Mapplethorpe remembered by some of those who knew him. The remembrance is factual and impressionistic. This is not a clinical biography of a famous photographer. The words, feelings, and memories are not the style of art critics talking of his technique and his place in the history of art.

My “take” on Robert is very personal, stylized, and as idiosyncratic as he was and we were together at a time when all the world was at play.

My collection of journal notes, tapes, letters, calendars, conversations, photographs, interviews, files, and phone bills recreate Robert in our shared *mise en scene*.

These recollections reflect the person who was Robert Mapplethorpe when he was abroad in the world. This is not a “take” of his childhood or of family relationships. Many of the memories and anecdotes are of famous people who in their own right have celebrity recall of their days and nights with Robert.

The dead Mapplethorpe was, unlike the living Mapplethorpe, a mass media sensation.

The personal Mapplethorpe had a Coca-Cola in one hand, a telephone tucked between his shoulder and his pale cheek, a Kool cigarette in his mouth smoking up at his squinted camera eye, while he chopped up MDA (a variation of speed) on a mirror to snort before heading out to plow the pertinent.

The private Mapplethorpe who played and laughed and learned and shared life was a man whose diversity of acquaintances was so broad that many of us were unaware of each other's separate bonds with Robert.

After all, he was just one of us: another artist.

I knew him intimately from 1977 to 1982, and then by telephone after 1982, when AIDS quickly emptied the jetliners of gay travelers tripping the Great Gay Bermuda Triangle from JFK to SFO to LAX.

This biomemoir is a survivor's document.

Nearly everyone hanging in the helix between Robert and me is prematurely dead. In my writer's conscience, I write nothing they would contradict were they alive.

None of them, Robert included, have any more memory than the remembrance we give them.

I bring my professional credentials, years of writing, teaching, working with artists, and persona to this pentimento the same way I gave them to Robert when he sought me out for help, friendship, love, and sex.

This outlaw reminiscence, beholden to no one, sponsored by no one, censored by no one, is a personally aesthetic, political, theological, and moral documentary.

This Mapplethorpe dossier is a detective story of people tracing Robert, the pop culture phantom, lost in controversy, technique, bequests, and franchise rights.

The person he was became a symbol.

His face was projected on the outside walls of the Corcoran Gallery, a block from the White House, during a rally by the Coalition of Washington Artists, the night before his canceled show “The Perfect Moment” was to have opened inside the Corcoran’s walls.

His name became a sound bite, a buzzword: “MAPPLETHORPE!”

His name became an almost Mephistophelian adjective denoting both content and style: “Mapplethorpean!”

Ah! The complexity of Being Mapplethorpe!

Add the word *darling* to the next four lines.

How Mapplethorpe!

Hardly Mapplethorpe!

Too Mapplethorpe!

Very Mapplethorpe!

The Robert Mapplethorpe in these pages is many Roberts.

Everyone has his or her own Mapplethorpe.

As I have mine.

None detracts from the other. Relatively, Robert depends on all his survivors to complete his “portrait” in the manner of their own gifts.

Robert was living proof that moments may be perfect, but people are not.

Robert cut a romantic figure of an artist who lived fast and died young.

Of course, his photographs are all about terribly existential convergences of life, death, sexuality, beauty, and evil.

Of course, his art is a lightning rod for free speech, sexual politics, and academic papers.

As Ezra Pound said, “all artists are antennae of the human race.”

I’m happy that once I sat at tables with him, slept in bed with him, fucked his face, published him, attended shows with him, rehung his photographs, buffed his nipples, argued and fought and made up with him, because on his rocket ride to his deliberate celebrity, he needed each and everyone he met.

He was brilliant.

He burned bright.

He was always so much alone.

Truth lies here.

In these pages lies the relative truth of memory.

It is unlike what anyone else can do.

And I’m writing it because Robert asked me to.

He more than once said, “I want to be a story told around the world.”

In my novel, *Some Dance to Remember*, several scenes, discussions, and themes actually reflect what really happened to the relationship Robert and I shared. Robert had read, as early as 1979 and 1980, draft sections of the novel that was dedicated to him. We saw what was happening to us. We were very bright together in love in the downward vortex of his relentless ambition. We saw what was happening to him.

The demands of ambition and fame took him away from many intimate friends.

That hurt him.
That hurt me.
Fame hurt us all.

I took solace in Patti Smith's parallel-seeming entrances and exits. She had her career. I had mine. Robert had his. We all goddamn had careers.

One rarely loses a friend to anything but drugs, AIDS, or celebrity.

In 1979, Robert asked me to write a text for an avant-garde coffee-table book of his leathersex photographs. The title, a photoscatological pun, was *Rimshots: Inside the Fetish Factor*. I have the fifty-four copies of the photographs he sent me. He had my words in complete manuscript.

Then his fifteen minutes of fame suddenly began. . . .

Ciao, Roberto!

The rest is personal and public history.

And *Rimshots* awaits photographic authorization from the Mapplethorpe Foundation to be published.

Ironically, *Some Dance to Remember* was fiction, yet many readers think that novel is autobiography. On the other hand, this biomemoir, which is as true as the remembrance of anything past, may read like fiction to anyone in denial; but anyone who actually experienced the Golden Age of Liberation in the 1970s knows that even the far reaches of excess are true.

This is verbal photography. This is a portrait of the Mapplethorpe as a young artist.

"All photographs are true," Avedon wrote, "but none is accurate."⁴

Ultimately, I can remember what everyone said or did only according to my own lights that were turned on when I was there. If what is remembered is a spiritual confession, then it's a whisper through a grille on a wet afternoon about an accomplice in the High Crime of Art.

If I have misrepresented anyone in any way, forgive me stumbling like Geoffrey Chaucer telling tales on the way to Canterbury:

*But natheless, whil I have tyme and space,
Er that I ferther in this tale pace,
Me thynketh it accordant to resoun
To telle yow al the conicioun
Of ech of hem, so as it semed me
And whiche they weren, and of what degree,
And eek in what array that they were inne.*

To the dead, I have tried to be true.

I am long past tears; so many are dead so young.

As for the living, I cannot begin to fathom how they remember the past imperfect of their changing minds.

For that reason, this which I write—all of which was somehow said or done—so as it

⁴ Richard Avedon, *In the American West (Photographic Portraits 1979-1984)* (New York: Abrams, 1985.)

seemed to me, I write ALLEGEDLY.

I may be dancing to remember.

I may be dancing in the dark.

I may be dancing on Robert's grave.

I'm dancing at his request.