

## A Portrait of My Mother (1927 – 2016) as a Bifurcation Diagram

Launched into life  
from the Great Depression  
the initial soar  
as your universe expands

Shy and introverted  
you were not the daughter  
with the flirty eyes  
(your mother's favourite)  
and your birthday too far from  
payday for spoiling

Education was your consolation  
an equilibrium made stable by  
universal praise on papers and essays  
A dutiful valedictory address  
full of God, King and Country  
penned to a world  
hobbling through Depression and War

Jostling for attention and limited resources  
you wait in hope  
behind five more important brothers  
the air is redolent with potential

It's decided that a year of secretarial training will do

The decay of knowledge acquisition is increasingly marked as  $r \rightarrow b_1^-$

✂

With marriage  
the loving wife persona  
splits from the private essence of you

She executes a courtly dance  
leading her hidden self  
through repeating patterns of afternoon teas and bridge games  
a backdrop of daily drudgery  
is punctuated by five pregnancies

Convergence to a stable 2-cycle for  $b_1 \leq r < b_2$

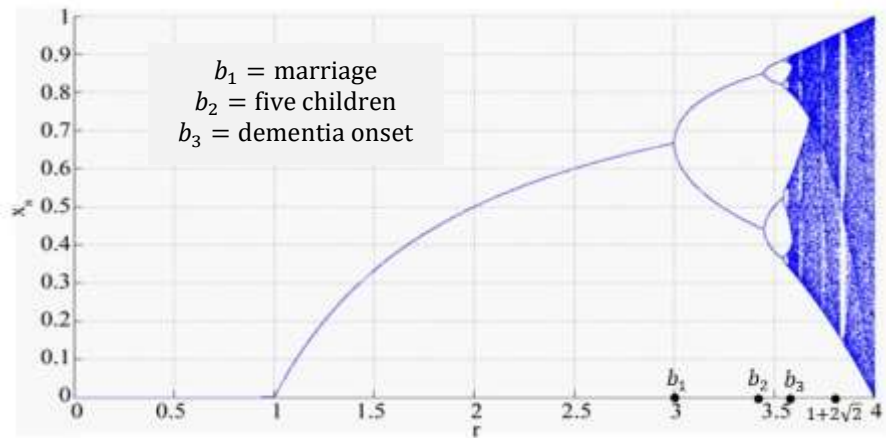


Diagram from  
[http://file.scirp.org/Html/3-9302151\\_62507.htm](http://file.scirp.org/Html/3-9302151_62507.htm)  
(permissive CC license) modified by addition of the  
points at  $b_1$ ,  $b_2$  and  $b_3$  and at  $1+2\sqrt{2}$



Pledged to another's dream  
his many fine qualities as husband and father  
notwithstanding  
you traded a suburban home  
and all the comfort that entails  
for a hobby farm  
made shabby by the hippie commune  
that had dwelt there

No kitchen and a family to feed  
LSD-infused drawings on the wall  
plastic milk jug, cut and jiggled to plumbing pipe

Renos inch forward in stolen hours  
the hostess waits lonely years to once more  
usher her guests  
across a plush rug to a smart couch  
you always cared what other people thought

I remember you  
explaining to me why you earned less than  
full-fleshed men  
who didn't mark time by the school bus clock  
who didn't rush home to potatoes  
to peel and boil, the dog to feed  
it seemed to make sense, besides  
I would never throw skepticism in your face  
when you spoke about a number that said  
all there was to say about ambitions  
harboured long ago by a girl  
from a family with nothing

Stunted gifts echoed across a modest life  
sharp number-sense kept tidy finances  
intuition divined when children were lying  
and whether or not it mattered

In an unruly family  
you hummed below radar  
though our craziness could  
seize you in a fit of hilarity  
red in the face and gasping  
and suddenly  
we'd notice

But none of us noticed time  
expiring  
for exploring who you might have been

I like to think I glimpsed you in a distant past  
on long afternoons  
in the quiet space between us

Period doubling and increased complexity for  $b_2 \leq r < b_3$

✧

And the last decade  
childlike  
demanding  
sorting through garbage  
clutching possessions of no value  
the legacy of the Great Depression  
when all else was gone

Rude to friends who'd become strangers  
and other odd behaviours  
too intimate to mention  
spilling from unchecked impulses  
I lost you in stages  
never certain how to grieve  
as tiers of elegance and good grace fell away

Clarity might make a brief and wondrous appearance  
(see  $r = 1 + 2\sqrt{2}$ )  
*It's hard on your father, I've become quite forgetful*  
before the imp of chaos  
returned

Pointing to a passing stranger  
*Is that your mother?*  
as you puzzled over how we fit  
the next moment gripping my hand

Only chaos conveys your personality's disintegration for  $b_3 \leq r$

✧

Perhaps I never saw you clearly  
maybe I'm taking you for granted one last time  
seeing only my reflection in you  
maybe it was everything you wanted

I suppose I could have asked  
Instead  
I'm left spinning half-truths  
and sad tales  
with pat phrases and clichés

When I heard of your demise  
I sobbed and sobbed  
Maybe it was the echo of a door  
closing between us