

Blizzard

My mother sleeping.
Curled up like a spring fern
although she's almost a century.

I speak into her topmost ear,
the one thrust up like a wrinkled stone
above the hills of the pillows:

Hello! Hello!
But she shows a clenched resistance
to waking up.

She's down too deep, a diver
plunged into dangerous caverns:
it's blank in there.

She's dreaming, however.
I can tell by the way she's frowning,
and her strong breathing.

Maybe she's making her way
down one more white river,
or walking across the ice.

There are no more adventures for her
in the upper air, in this room
with her bed and the family pictures.

Let's go out and fight the storm,
she used to say. So maybe
she's fighting it.

Meanwhile I watch a spider
laying a trail across the ceiling,
little dust messenger.

The clock ticks and the day shrivels.
Dusk sifts down on us.
How long should I stay?

I put my hand on her forehead,
stroke her wispy hair:
How tall she used to be,

How we've all dwindled.
It's time for her to go deeper;
into the blizzard ahead of her;

both dark and light, like snow.
Why can't I let go of her?
Why can't I let her go?

Late Poems

These are the late poems
Most poems are late
of course: too late,
like a letter sent by a sailor
that arrives after he's drowned.

Too late to be of help, such letters,
and late poems are similar.
They arrive as if through water.

Whatever it was has happened:
the battle, the sunny day, the moonlit
slipping into lust, the farewell kiss. The poem
washes ashore like flotsam.

Or late, as in late for supper:
all the words seem cold or eaten.
Scoundrel, plight, and vanquished,
or linger, bide, awhile,
forsaken, wept, forlorn,
Love and joy, even: thrice-gnawed songs.
Rusted spells. Worn choruses.

It's late, it's very late;
too late for dancing.
Still, sing what you can.
Turn up the light: sing on,
sing: On.