

Death on a Monday Afternoon

She is suffused in northern light,
watches the lace of trees,
as tall as lighthouses swallowing the night,
so close she can touch their glow.

Starlings murmurate, make patterns,
impatient for southern sun.
In the next room I fold wash-day clothes,
lay them out.

I pass her open door, hardly glance in,
reach the line, unpeg more laundry.
The fragrance of fresh sheets,
a cloud of doves hugging my breast.

I am grateful the sick-room is silent;
that I cease for a while to be carer,
to be fetcher, carrier, dresser, feeder,
adopter of the rights of medication.

From somewhere far-off I hear my name
like a low moan on the Solway Firth.
As fragile as glass, it breaks my
concentration, a siren calling me home.

The hairs on my arms rise like
fallen angels waiting for lift-off.

Through the wall, a wailing,
and I hear a branch cracking,
an inner self accepting
the heartland of its death throes.

The echo of its rattle drowns
in the surge of sudden departure,
in the tide of whirling birds
flying into the metal of their own darkness.