

Evening Prayer

As I lay me down to sleep,
unfold the covers in an amber
circle of bedside light,
the wrinkled hand with ridged nails
that lifts the sheet hardly seems my own,
but my mother's, when she was
already old, straightening the sheets
around me, stroking my back
in the apple-green room that was mine.

Back turned from the light and
face half to pillow, you sleep
chest rising in small sighs
for something just out of reach—
like the plaintive mews we heard
in the children's room, when by
nightlight we watched the
dreams flicker on their faces,
as I watch yours now

and notice your hair more gray,
like my father's, when he was
already old. I consider this
and use my roughened hand
to stroke your back, write on it
with a ridge-nailed finger through
the cotton across your back,
what I want you to know
if I should die before I wake.

Watching My Daughter Skate: In Training

Here is what I must do
in the space between heartbeats
when her body is an
upthrust of wings;
release her. In the spinning moment, fragile as my bones
and hers, when everything
I love is mortal
and gleaming,
let her go;
let the thin ice of my
heart crack from
the weight of watching;
I am in training to sleep
beneath a sky that changes
night by night of
its own accord,
let the white stars stay
up or fall without me.