**Mrs. Lazarus**

I had grieved. I had wept for a night and a day

over my loss, ripped the cloth I was married in

from my breasts, howled, shrieked, clawed

at the burial stones until my hands bled, retched

his name over and over again, dead, dead.

Gone home. Gutted the place. Slept in a single cot,

widow, one empty glove, white femur

in the dust, half. Stuffed dark suits

into black bags, shuffled in a dead man's shoes,

noosed the double knot of a tie around my bare neck,

gaunt nun in the mirror, touching herself. I learnt

the Stations of Bereavement, the icon of my face

in each bleak frame; but all those months

he was going away from me, dwindling

to the shrunk size of a snapshot, going,

going. Till his name was no longer a certain spell

for his face. The last hair on his head

floated out from a book. His scent went from the house.

The will was read. See, he was vanishing

to the small zero held by the gold of my ring.

Then he was gone. Then he was legend, language;

my arm on the arm of the schoolteacher-the shock

of a man's strength under the sleeve of his coat-

along the hedgerows. But I was faithful

for as long as it took. Until he was memory.

So I could stand that evening in the field

in a shawl of fine air, healed, able

to watch the edge of the moon occur to the sky

and a hare thump from a hedge; then notice

the village men running towards me, shouting,

behind them the women and children, barking dogs,

and I knew. I knew by the sly light

on the blacksmith's face, the shrill eyes

of the barmaid, the sudden hands bearing me

into the hot tang of the crowd parting before me.

He lived. I saw the horror on his face.

I heard his mother's crazy song. I breathed

his stench; my bridegroom in his rotting shroud,

moist and dishevelled from the grave's slack chew,

croaking his cuckold name, disinherited, out of his time.