

...(agnes – age 101)...
...january 26, 1992...

*a crucifix above your head
and on the wall above your bed
a picture framed in brassy gold
holds the pope in smiling blue –
a bible sits the tabletop
a sewing basket near the wall –
inside the wardrobe near the door
your coats and dresses – beige and brown –
a dresser with three drawers conceals
the rest of everything
inside this space that is your room
inside the coppice nursing home –*

*just room enough to turn around
between the chair and bed and door
while glasses and your walking cane
accompany your morning prayers –
four years distancing the world
like the nun you never were
retreating from the streets and news
to benedictions of survival –*

*newspaper skin and fading eyes –
ears half-linked to whispered sound –
with memories and memories
that trace the century –
the queen has sent a telegram
to rest beside your sleeplessness
while you reach your hands to skies
beyond the winter window sill
asking time and time again
why the deafness of a god
who will not hear your endless prayers –
what dark deeds you must have done
to hold you praying day by day –
asking endlessly aloud
why he is not listening
and will not let you die.*