

Miriam Waddington

SONGS OF OLD AGE

1

There are leaves
all over the house,
red ones and green ones
of spring;
who is trailing them
into the house anyway?

2

If it isn't me
if it isn't you
it must be the wind
the wild wild wind
blowing through
cracks in the door
into my tame house
into my wild unruly
wild old age.

3

The love I bore you
in my youth
lies
like a dead child
in my heart.

4 *Miriam Waddington*

I never buried it
with either word
or song
and am condemned
to mourn it
still.

4

Now that I'm old
my pleasures
have become pale –
lacey webs
like lady shawls,
and sparse
like old men's
beards.

5

Since I am
an old woman alone
people ask me
don't you ever get
lonely
and I answer, no,
how can I be lonely
when I have
outside my kitchen door
a great company
of snails and slugs
beetles and bugs
and four square feet
of summer earth
full of birth
that blooms and death
that grows?

6

When I died
in April I dissolved
in clouds and returned
as rain
in the tear of a primula
who mourned my passing
who mourned my care.

7

Now spring
lights her candles
in the willow trees
for the anniversary
of my death
and the wind
with lips of fire
sings me a tribal
prayer.