

Poem

In the family

There is sickness in the family:
in the martyred mother's cervical hump
the droop of the harried father's eye
the retreat of the big sister into bed —
(the whispers are that it's all in her head).

That the soft young nurse couldn't
stand to hold another dying hand
that the father's face is a Dali clock
palsied behind a pirate patch
that the little girl won't come out
to play because mother's head is bad today
and that she died three times giving birth to you
and her blinded spirit only just withdrew ...

So be quiet, still, and very good
this world must not be tested;
else sister's cells will harm themselves
father's face will elongate
mother's fragile heart will break —
and all because of you.

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doi: 10.5694/mja15.00520