

Echoes

Listening from the hall
as the remains of your family
barter the lot of your fifty years here
Framed faces still hang
on the rose papered walls
You in a Strauss pose
Your bureau was emptied
in the search for the unworthy paper,
witnessed and signed by strangers
My father settles on the table you sat around
with four children and a husband
After the Great War he paid cash
for this porch and sunlit rooms
Upstairs,
your mattress lies stripped,
linens going to your eldest girl
I am the child of the child of your favorite son
That willful child who broke your heart
then died a broken man before you
When did you take his photograph,
first Christmas 1918,
from the mantle shelf?
As he faded did you dream of the boy he'd been?
We've never met
You are dead and I am six
I roam your house
I run down the hall
My shoes loud on the floor
where they have already taken up the rugs
I play while adults argue over china pieces and chairs
Your remaining children have all grown bitter
All your love spent on the youngest of these
with none left over
At the end they had none left for you
You sat alone in the chair
where you'd rocked them years ago
I am the child of the child of your child
and you have taught me plenty
I need some one to blame
so I reach through our history
You died blind and alone
in a house quiet bone for bone

— Ami Cressy