**‘Nuns fret not at their Convent’s narrow room’**

Nuns fret not at their Convent’s narrow room;

And Hermits are contented with their Cells;

And Students with their pensive Citadels;

Maids at the Wheel, the Weaver at his Loom,

Sit blithe and happy; Bees that soar for bloom,

High as the highest Peak of Furness Fells,

Will murmur by the hour in Foxglove bells:

In truth, the prison, into which we doom

Ourselves, no prison is: and hence to me,

In sundry moods, ’twas pastime to be bound

Within the Sonnet’s scanty plot of ground:

Pleased if some Souls (for such there needs must be)

Who have felt the weight of too much liberty,

Should find short solace there, as I have found.

—William Wordsworth

**Love in a Life**

I

Room after room,

I hunt the house through

We inhabit together.

Heart, fear nothing, for, heart, thou shalt find her—

Next time, herself!—not the trouble behind her

Left in the curtain, the couch’s perfume!

As she brushed it, the cornice-wreath blossomed anew:

Yon looking-glass gleamed at the wave of her feather.

II

Yet the day wears,

And door succeeds door;

I try the fresh fortune—

Range the wide house from the wing to the centre.

Still the same chance! she goes out as I enter.

Spend my whole day in the quest,—who cares?

But ’tis twilight, you see,—with such suites to explore,

Such closets to search, such alcoves to importune!

—Robert Browning

**An Old Man’s Winter Night**

All out-of-doors looked darkly in at him

Through the thin frost, almost in separate stars,

That gathers on the pane in empty rooms.

What kept his eyes from giving back the gaze

Was the lamp tilted near them in his hand.

What kept him from remembering what it was

That brought him to that creaking room was age.

He stood with barrels round him—at a loss.

And having scared the cellar under him

In clomping there, he scared it once again

In clomping off;—and scared the outer night,

Which has its sounds, familiar, like the roar

Of trees and crack of branches, common things,

But nothing so like beating on a box.

A light he was to no one but himself

Where now he sat, concerned with he knew what,

A quiet light, and then not even that.

He consigned to the moon, such as she was,

So late-arising, to the broken moon

As better than the sun in any case

For such a charge, his snow upon the roof,

His icicles along the wall to keep;

And slept. The log that shifted with a jolt

Once in the stove, disturbed him and he shifted,

And eased his heavy breathing, but still slept.

One aged man—one man—can’t keep a house,

A farm, a countryside, or if he can,

It’s thus he does it of a winter night.

—Robert Frost

**Father’s Bedroom**

In my Father’s bedroom:

blue threads as thin

as pen-writing on the bedspread,

blue dots on the curtains,

a blue kimono,

Chinese sandals with blue plush straps.

The broad-planked floor

had a sandpapered neatness.

The clear glass bed-lamp

with a white doily shade

was still raised a few

inches by resting on volume two

of Lafcadio Hearn’s

*Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan*.

Its warped olive cover

was punished like a rhinoceros hide.

In the flyleaf:

“Robbie from Mother.”

Years later in the same hand:

“This book has had hard usage

On the Yangtze River, China.

It was left under an open

porthole in a storm.”

—Robert Lowell

**The Afternoon Sun**

This room, how well I know it. Now

they’re renting it, it and the one next door,

as offices. The whole house has been taken

over by agents, businessmen, concerns.

Ah but this one room, how familiar.

Here by the door was the couch. In front of that,

a Turkish carpet on the floor.

The shelf then, with two yellow vases. On the right—

no, opposite—a wardrobe with a mirror.

At the center the table where he wrote,

and the three big wicker chairs.

There by the window stood the bed

where we made love so many times.

Poor things, they must be somewhere to this day.

There by the window stood the bed: across it

the afternoon sun used to reach halfway.

…We’d said goodbye one afternoon at four,

for a week only. But alas,

that week was to go on forevermore.

—C. P. Cavafy (trans. James Merrill)