GRETCHEN STENGEL
Nowhere but where

On our borders her thumbs whir round and
round in a lap as wide as a wraparound porch

Hunker down in it

I can feel you, Grandma, jerry-rig a past from the flowers on your dress

Do rag rugs constitute a region?
Knick-knacks?
Are photos of the dead a dialect?

I rest my head on your continental shelf

You say, My land!

Not a daughter but a boarder
you cobbled together a country out of nothing at all

Then you had to live in it

Thumbs like paddywhacks propel us back
No place like place
Sour flower dresses are stiff at the neck
head is dirt-encrusted
body a field of clover  mustard  vetch
with concealments

This field smells of the manure pile
as it moves in the breeze of her chuffings

I love the way she deteriorates
the way her furniture migrates
from room to room
across time

Her undergarments and enema bag snake
in the shower stall  in the back hall
beyond the kitchen door

We send her to the brain salon
to have her neurons rearranged

Angora shawls fold and stack

on the high-backed
rush-bottomed chair
In rooms strung out behind the kitchen door
where the laundry chute disgorges—

where milkman produce man trash tin can man
deriver and remove

where incinerators smudge and stop

heaters flare up snuff out

Way back in there lives a minotaur:

captive

orphaned

beast of burdens

Crowd roars as she rummages in her drawer

The family intact

upstairs

distances itself from her machinations