

TRACI BRIMHALL

The Book of Sleep

Tonight calls for the chapter without music.

Tonight asks for the sleep of Alice before
the tumble into Wonderland, of Snow White

after her teeth score the apple. Tonight, let's skip

the prologue of mechanical stars and knitted blankets
and skip to the denouement of murmur and snore.

Your father waits unkissed on the couch. Let me

satisfy him with ardor and just enough tongue.
Surrender to the slumber descending in Hypnos' arms.

Let my mother, ecstatic accident of the limbic system,

come at my summoning, stumbling out of a paradise
that said yes too soon. I beg you—bow to the bough

that rocks you. Sweet owlet, let the shadow ease

your eyelids, let it please your lengthening bones.
Rock, rock past the startle. Tonight, the gifts

of Morpheus. Come Dorothy with her golden road.

Accept the witch and the palm-prick of spindles.
Down, down will fall fable, cradle, all, all, all.