The Faithful

By Jane Cooper

Once you said joking slyly, If I’m killed
I’ll come to haunt your solemn bed,
I’ll stand and glower at the head
And see if my place is empty still, or filled.

What was it woke me in the early darkness
Before the first bird’s twittering?
—A shape dissolving and flittering
Unsteady as a flame in a drafty house.

It seemed a concentration of the dark burning
By the bedpost at my right hand
While to my left that no man’s land
Of sheet stretched palely as a false morning....

All day I have been sick and restless. This evening
Curtained, with all the lights on,
I start up—only to sit down.
Why should I grieve after ten years of grieving?

What if last night I was the one who lay dead
While the dead burned beside me
Trembling with passionate pity
At my blameless life and shaking its flamelike head?
