

JOHN WHEATCROFT

## Tussling with my Mother over a Sweater

And does it now come back to you,  
dear little old one,  
over whom I grieve?  
—the burrowing of your arm  
inside the tunnel of cloth,  
jamming, twisting, wriggling  
while the cuff was being tugged  
because your fingers snagged  
and sleeve ensnared your hand.

Sometimes wool was pulled  
over your helpless head,  
and then it would go night,  
not the velvet black of sleep  
but a dark that scratched,  
taking breath and bringing panic.

The memory of the mother  
who assaulted you with cloth  
all those years ago  
has faded into blank,  
and the son now wrestling you  
into a sweater,  
as so many times you wrestled him,  
is only hands.

And should your nerves and muscles sense  
they've struggled like this before,  
can such an intimation  
be called remembering?

Although it's just your hand  
and arm that are engaged  
this autumn afternoon,  
somewhere in your brain might cells  
relive a time when eyes  
couldn't see what chafed you  
and the world, become obscure,  
filled you with the dreads?