

Lilies

On top the coffin in black
and white, a young Margery
with long hair laughing. I should
have guessed she'd been
a beauty—she'd never
have mentioned it. My fingers
itch to steal this new
woman in her dark
frame as her grown
children greet me, her presence
portioned out among them:
the kind face of her son, the open
manner and spotless white shirt
of her daughter. I take their hands
into both of mine, wanting
their warmth to fill
the emptiness. A hundred friends
gab their way to the kneeler
before the closed warm oak.
Sheepish, aware that she
would be happy that her guests
chatted, I close my lips
to button a complaint
against the crowd. I crane
my neck, rummaging through every
version of Margery in the family
picture parade, wanting
to lie down beside her box
among the silent
lilies. Jack, adrift
on his Alzheimer
sea, thanks everyone. We barely
recognize one another in black.

Connie Donovan