And farms, farm animals, butterflies, mothers, fathers
Who survived in crayon until in pen and ink
They turned into guards at executions and funerals
Torturing and hanging even those stick figures.
There were drawings of barracks and latrines as well
And the only windows were the windows they drew.

The Stairwell

for Lucy McDiarmid

I have been thinking about the music for my funeral—
Liszt’s transcription of that Schumann song, for instance,
“Dedication”—inwardness meets the poetry of excess—
When you lead me out of your apartment to demonstrate
In the Halloween-decorated lobby the perfect acoustic
Of the stairwell, and stand among pumpkins, cobwebby
Skulls, dancing skeletons, and blow kisses at the ceiling,
Whistling Great War numbers—“Over There,” “It’s a Long,
Long Way,” “Keep the Home Fires Burning” (the refrain)—
As though for my father who could also whistle them,
Trench memories, your eyes closed, your head tilted back,
Your cheeks filling up with air and melody and laughter.
I hold the banister. I touch your arm. Listen, Lucy,
There are songbirds circling high up in the stairwell.

1. An American literary scholar.
2. The song by Robert Schumann is “Widmung” (“Dedication”). The Hungarian composer Franz
   Liszt (1811–1886) arranged it for solo piano.
3. I.e., World War I. The “numbers” that follow are the titles of well-known songs from the period.

MARGARET ATWOOD
b. 1939

This Is a Photograph of Me

It was taken some time ago.
At first it seems to be
a smeared
print: blurred lines and gray flecks
blended with the paper;

then, as you scan
it, you see in the left-hand corner
a thing that is like a branch: part of a tree
(balsam or spruce) emerging
and, to the right, halfway up
what ought to be a gentle
slope, a small frame house.

In the background there is a lake,
and beyond that, some low hills.
(The photograph was taken
the day after I drowned.

I am in the lake, in the center
of the picture, just under the surface.

It is difficult to say where
precisely, or to say
how large or small I am:

the effect of water
on light is a distortion

but if you look long enough,
eventually
you will be able to see me.)

At the Tourist Center in Boston

There is my country under glass,
a white relief-
map with red dots for the cities,
reduced to the size of a wall

and beside it 10 blowup snapshots
one for each province,
in purple-browns and odd reds,
the green of the trees dulled;
all blues however
of an assertive purity.

Mountains and lakes and more lakes
(though Quebec is a restaurant and Ontario the empty
interior of the parliament buildings),
with nobody climbing the trails and hauling out
the fish and splashing in the water

but arrangements of grinning tourists—
look here, Saskatchewan
is a flat lake, some convenient rocks