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The Television Era

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The Television Era

I.

Newborns are much in demand
for prime time. They make a spectacle
of the idea of birth. Life becomes an act.
Women scream their pain as mothers
hear the jingle of coins. Directors
cut cords and interns cuddle.
Sweeps week is born.

II.

On the hardwood of the ballroom
of the DAR house, the marriage party
grooves. They celebrate youth
with electric slide YMCA flair.
The old man watches between naps.
They roll him to the corner, and leave
him to hawk the potato chips

III.

and pretzels, which he gums
with pleasure. He sneaks wine,
but the marriage party pays
no attention. The old man's hat
has fallen off, his jaws slack.
The party roars on, and the old man
in the corner shuts his blue eyes.

IV.

Old man Karamazov, no longer a sensualist,
has discarded his brown scratchy robe
in favor of terry. His skull cap leaves
his hair scrooge-ish. He falls often.
On the floor, he keeps his vow of silence.
Too pained to get up, too old to remember
the phone number for help.

V.

His most prominent features
are his sharpened bones trying
to reach out. He is too thin
to sweat. The wires of his pacemaker
are visible through his skin.
The television remains silent.
The picture has gone gray and fuzzy.

—Trish Klei