ROBERT BROWNING’S LAST NARCISSUS

That’s my last narcissus planted in the ground, keeping my hope of spring alive. I found the single bulb a marvel to behold, a dry, shriveled up button in a cold corner of the gardener’s shed, now buried in the flower bed. It can’t be hurried, nor forced to sprout at any given time but its own. Its depth and passion confined for now to this uncertain patch of earth. None may know how I really judge its worth. Nor will they see it, for who dare enter and trace my labyrinth to its center without myself as guide? I do not want to hear the chance remarks, like from an aunt, who’d twist each sentiment a different way. Never mind what others may think or say, for calling my blossom of joy a more disparaging name. I have shut my door to all of that. I want to know the gladness reflected in its bloom and not the sadness that I currently feel. Compelled to repeat: my last narcissus likes beneath my feet.
THE GOLDEN HOUR

after the painting Reading Girl by Jean-Honoré Fragonard

The way she curls her fingers
to cradle the book in one
hand is just that delicate:
long, sensuous, she could play
the harpsichord or mandolin
and look just as elegant.

The words range across the page
and how she re-envisions
them only she can say. She
gives very little away,
eyes half-closed and lips compressed
into a half-developed

thought. Dressed in gold and encased
in white cushions, ruffles, lace,
dark bows at bodice, neck,
in her hair, her small voice grows
smaller still. Her breath barely
rises above a whisper.