

Mollice

Mollicle

Claire Crowther

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Nine
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for my daughters

The Fête of Mystics

Stop digging that rhyme – come on.
You shift's done – did you hear them
carrying booths down peat paths
at dawn? Each one is in her hide
watching Low Reservoir
and does she imagine Utopia
between the saplings and the sedge?

Their faces blur like feathers
spreading on black caps or red
shanks that plump in dead tree forks
or dunlins or godwits
or birds you've never seen that shunt us
out of this vegetation
with their singular calls.

Captured Women

'Why stond we? Why go we noght?' Robert Mannyng

And in that house there was a room
That was hung with many drawings
Of women with their mouths tight
Shut, lips making a point:
'Why do you stand in front of us?
Why stand there? Why not go?'

One dipped her curls forward
Thoughtfully: 'Why don't you hang?
When will you go?' Their hair, serious
Expansion of each, upwards, sideways,
A boundary against the questions:
'Why are we on the brink of you?'

The pencil asked what hair weighs
And drew it to cover the tucked-away
Technology of ear. Listen.
The captured women ask: 'Why
Do we hang in front of you?
Why hang here? Why don't we go?'

The jib of them, their hissing sound
Like woodpeckers or worried finches
Considering a swing at the seeds
Before flight from the sparrowhawk:
'Why do we hang here while you stand?
Why don't we go? Why don't we go?'

Self Portrait as Windscreen

Do you think I'm clear on every issue
just because I'm glass?
Have you heard yourself calling 'Claire,

Claire, Claire, Claire' when you're confused?
A name is lulling
when you aren't clear on every issue.

So your favourite phrase 'Let's be clear
on this one thing'
is the public face of 'Claire, Claire'.

I see you everywhere, using my nature,
hardened from soft,
imagining you're clear. Fired, made

to soften, harden again. We're laminated.
The crack that comes
won't shatter us or your calling.

Blue Dog

Inside the Tat2 Parlour –
 No Drink – a half-nude
 turns his navy shoulder
 towards a pregnant woman
 who books a bloodhound, blue
 sexy, muddy colours.
Outside, an old woman
hands her a business leaflet:
 ‘If you dread explaining
 a grandmother’s life is up
 to you and named already,
 call us: *Blood Surprises*.’
All winter, the women thought
of babies – their clear skin
even if bruised or bloodied.

Birthday

at last when I stepped out a wind
blew its throaty whistle behind
over me dead leaves butt-
ends the out-lived mess of ribbon
road gutter flew
into my hair brightly-coloured flies –
I tried to keep my feet running
on the ball of ground
vacant blocked with broken crystal
a bit of mirror myself I crossed
the smallest lungs could have blown
me about as they wished hurled
into a brick niche presents
chewed off in my arms stuck
with scraps of *Best* and *Wishes*

Mollicle

'I'll take the baby
when it's born.'
The strange god landed
in my bed,
naked. His offer
frightened me.
I must keep
my mollicle.

daughter

I said: 'Give up
the other. Better,
I'll love you
unconditionally.'
A skin of need
agrees conditions
when you have
a mollicle

but appeasement
never ends.
How I hated
his winged ankles.
To save my only
mollicle
I found a bar
of steel to ram