

Weather Vane Maureen Boyle 2007

Your love, Lord reaches to heaven
your truth to the skies.

Psalmody

I am on the roof this breezy day,
in the sixth month of my pregnancy,
picking off the moss and lichen and tossing them
in soft bouquets to the ground.

Above me are the chimneys –
their stacks the colour of sand
and round the tops, circles of hearts
opening... to the sky.

I am a billowing blown crow
in my dark work clothes
and this is punishment for vanity.
For finding my face in a bucket of blue

Sister brought me up the back stairs.
The slates I clean are greens and shell-greys
that turn dark ink-blue in rain.
Today is a weather-breeder

the nuns say, presaging a storm,
so I am here to clean the way
and the rain will wash the loosened moss
in green runnels when it comes.

I am as high as the monkey puzzle,
Its open branches wide smiles
at the level of my eye, arms outstretched -
as if they'd catch me.

Down below is the road I will walk
my baby across to give him away
he, in a big dicky-up pram,
me, all dressed. Every Monday

the nuns take me to the parlour
to write a card telling everyone
who needs to know: that I am well,
that the sea is wild, that I am working hard,

that I miss them, when all the while:
I'm sitting at an oak table -
the smell of polish heavy in the air,
the grandmother clock ticking nearby,

dry spider plants on the windowsills
and a sad-eyed Mary hanging her head
in the corner. They take a lot of trouble
with the cards. The gardener runs them

up to Portrush and posts them there
so that the stamp's right, so that the postman
can tell everyone I'm grand
and it's not just my parents' word on it.

I talk to my baby up here.
We're not supposed to but the wind
takes the words away.
They say Our Lady had no pain

in either the making or getting of God
and she was allowed to keep him.
I'd have liked mine to have an angel for a father –
he'd have been light on me.

I mind my Granny saying
that when the midwife helping Mary
put her hand in to touch
it withered away.

Who'll help me when the time comes?
It'll be one of them and I think I'd love
to have that power to wither their hands.
My hands are cold; the first raindrops splashing

on the slate. The red bricks of the walls burn
in the dying sun's colour and the birds have gone,
taking the little offerings of moss and lichen.
They'll line their nests with them.