

In a foreign country – somehow I know it's Wales –  
I am in a room above a circle of women  
Who are knitting.  
I see them from above.  
The room smells of honey and wax and wool.  
They are intent on their work,  
As I am intent on watching them work.

They wear the simple clothes of the devout:  
dark woolen dresses, white aprons, white headscarves.  
The wool they work is also dark and simple:  
Now thick, now thin, some strands shaped, some unshaped.

And the women sit and knit and whisper to themselves.  
The women sit and knit and whisper.  
But I cannot hear them.  
I watch them as they sit and knit and whisper  
We end as we begin.

When I was a boy,  
And my parents had company,  
We'd be sent to bed.  
My brother and I would sneak out  
On the landing of the stairs.  
From there we'd peer down to the den,  
Where all of them were gathered.

We see everything from above.  
The room is full of grownup talk and perfume and cigarette smoke;  
My parents sit and laugh and whisper to their friends  
And we, under a spell,  
Say nothing, peer down  
Listen to the soft, intoxicating clicks of conversation,  
Looking for our future in the room below;  
As if our fate was being made in the room below.  
And maybe it was.  
Maybe our fate was knitted in the room below.

The women stir a little.  
I notice now the wool they work,  
Which had seemed merely dark  
Is brown and grey, mingled, like a living thing.

Out of the needle tips,  
it begins to fuse and take on shape.  
The form becomes distinct.  
Out of the knitting – breast and mantle,

Head and eyes and wings twitch to life.  
A small, graybrown goose emerges  
Roan, compact, unspectacular,  
It gently pulls from the yarn and flies away.

Another goose is born in sequence,  
And then another,  
And another  
From every woman's needle-tips  
They rise and circle above me,  
And fly out through clerestory windows  
I know to be there.

The knitters take no notice.  
Birds emerge from the knitting and fly away,  
Again and again.  
But the knitters take no notice.  
They simply sit and knit and whisper to themselves.  
This is their work.