

A Dove In Her Hair

Have you seen the birds fleeing
from her eyes, a grey string
that looped around the hills, threading
through the shafts of light in olive
trees that had mourned too long
and too thoroughly. The last, tiniest
bird died by my open door.
I buried him in the shallow ground
with three stones to honour his flight.

I have seen him again, a beautiful
grown dove sitting in her black hair
pecking the white threads out. She had a
knife in her hand, slicing open the bellies
of fish, then blessing
each of their fins with three
of her right-hand fingers, she threw
them back into the water.

An old woman crouches at her feet,
stirring in the crystals of salt
clattering down her cheeks, her own
boney finger getting longer,
longer.

I offered the old woman
a round stone to sit upon, hugging
her black shoulders. She made room
for me to sit beside her.

— *lala heine-koehn*