

Anna Crowe

Aran Stitches

You'd think it barren, this lavender-grey rock.
But then up close, deep in mossy pockets,
you find cowslips, fragrant

orchids, bloody cranesbill,
blue-eyed gentians, thyme
and roseroot, maidenhair fern.

Rock become works of art,
labour of the back-broken centuries;
enclosing their cloak-of-patches fields,

these dry-stone walls are slabs
laid slantwise, tilted left then right;
set like fishernet, or herringbone;

patterns a fisherman's wife
would work for her man's gansey—
love's fingerprint in yarn—*fishtail*

and *lantern* for Pádraic; *twisted cable*
and *hourglass* for Colm. Against the day
the sea might return a body;

so there might be no doubt: the face
gone, a man's shell could drift home
with *waves*, and *hearts*, and *scallops*;

home to *moss*, and *bramble*, and *fern*,
making landfall in the arms
of *tree-of-life*; of *honeycomb*.