

Andrew Sclater

A Jailbird

At Carstairs prison pigeons sit
on fences round the yard. A man who slit
his lover's throat, and set her house on fire
twitches in a cell and eyeballs razor wire,
tits and spuggies. He remembers still
his talons swooping in to kill
his laughing hen through morning mist,
because she flew the nest, and kissed
a human man—her peck's soft heart, a tongue.
So Maggoty-Pie had made her bleed, unstrung
her shining beads and lined them out across
her darkwood bedroom floor—their gloss:
a lure, a lode by which to navigate the sky.

Is this why magpies hoard, or why
he hung each necklace round his throat
and sewed crow's feathers on his coat
and at the window stood and cawed
at polis dogs that strained and pawed
the ground, growling in the housefire light?
His had been a life of faultless flight
but on that night his trophies added weight
and down he plunged into that great
round net where he was caught.
We too thrill and soar and kill and fall
like Maggoty did, and beat about,
some bedtimes, like a fucking animal.