

Life after deaf

Startled by Saint Ambrose's ancient chimes.
She watches as the swallows take flight.
No longer perched happily on its old bell tower.

When she was a hearer,
she never noticed how they soared together.

Learning to sign she found easy.

Classmates rotating a pointed finger at temples.
Tongue pushed down deep under bottom lip.
Limp wrist while back of hand is slapped.
Crazy, dumb, spastic.
After all, some signs are innate, aren't they ?

Learning to lose her voice she found difficult
It was still there.
Just encouraged to be forgotten
by hearers irritated or ashamed now by its noise.
Hearers who could not listen.

Out of reach,
In the sandbanks and salt marshes.
she finds a choir of marsh orchids
Their vivid purples and violets circling stems,
Sing to her as she passes
She places soft petals to her lips
So as she may taste their sweet song.

Filling her lungs she smells the fear of the falcons prey
Male peregrines soar high.
Then swoop.
Slate blue feather akin to the roof tiles of the old mill
To which they return to their brooding wives,
who nest there with their young

A trinity of Oaks, Pines and Hawthorns caress her kindly
Touched by the gentleness of their open branches she passes

Coaxed on, she sits among celestines.
Nodding their sunburst in acceptance.
Variants of vibrancy and shape
Some petals irregular some with crooked stems.
They show her their differences
Swaying together in sense of pride
For they are all the same,
all celestines

Stifled and choked by hearers
The voice that has been caged in her throat for so long
Swells and escapes.

It carries her name loud and clear and echoes for all to hear

Startled by the sound she watches as the swallows take flight
No longer perched happily on the old bell tower.