

WOMAN LISTENING

When a woman sits listening
to the quiet that surrounds her,
picking out this tune and that
between gossiping trees, flutters
of bird life, a passing truck strumming
the tarmac the other side
of the valley. . . .

When a woman sits listening,
leaning forward, screwing
up her face to hear above fiddling
grasshoppers the intermittent plink
of water dripping on water, and knits
these sounds into images passing
the slipped chords over linking
colours together, counting the stitch beats,

something twists on the spool of the afternoon
and the ball of the sun unwinds its yellow wool.

When a woman sits listening
to the pattern she's following,
picking up this thread and that
from thorn bush and gossamer to weave
in her cloth of gold,
voices of underground grow towards light,
mouths in the soil open, and stilling
the click of her needles she concentrates
on each fluctuating breath, its
scent of crushed grasses, straining
to capture each murmur that floats,
scatters and falls.

If she misses one.
it could be the only one, the one
she does not know, or knows so well
she's forgotten its secret – the one
she's been waiting for all her life.

Paddy Webb