

Poems

Pam Clements, Siena College

Cream Tea, Canterbury

She'd had a singularly rough week,
the awkward, wheezing, lumpen girl
ditched by her blonder so-called friends
who plied their only obvious advantage –
that they could walk away from her
so quickly, in a foreign country.

I was going down to Canterbury
one free afternoon
hoping for time alone with Becket's ghost,
but asked her along, simply
to even the odds
with the able-bodied.

We slowly walked along the city wall,
limped through the chapel of the Martyrdom,
circled nave and dome, window and sculpture,
keeping pace with each other, halt and lame.

Afterwards, we shared a high cream tea
above the Liberty shop
outside Cathedral grounds
before returning to Victoria Station,
the obtuse other chaperone
and her cruel friends.

Earlier, in the catacomb
I sat alone, my student gone for souvenirs,
where Becket's body lay and cripples once were cured
among the capitals and columns,
bare empty slab before me,
felt the air shimmer,
nearly levitated.

Virgin in the Manuscript

The yellow-tailed hawk
is a sign of the Virgin
addressing the lower right corner
of the manuscript.

A tiny illumination, really,
delicate in brownish ink;
the tail curves upward fetchingly.

This hawk looks as if it would harm none,
at best, an insect-catcher, vermin-sweeper,
but that tiny curved beak
tells otherwise.

She's a predator
waiting to swallow
the text that consigns her
to a tight spot in the border.