

Evergreen

Long ago discharged,
I revisit the tree at the mental health centre,
lover-tender touch the keloids of its burls.

Higher, its leaves are smooth-edged.
I once presumed two species -
one, with its spikes and clinginess,
the well-established other.

Since, I've learned a holly grows sharp
lower to the ground for self-protection -
it can leaf from one body a spectrum.

In this garden, thin platitudes are screwed
to a backless bench -
seek and you shall find,
hasty climbers have sudden falls.
The tree remains
as mute and patient as an elephant's knee,
its branches an easy ladder.

Here, small Picassos, are the bark eyes I remember
that have borne untellable witness
to the ones who pause to lock/unlock
their quick-getaway bikes, search
for fresh tissues, call
mum.

Amongst sap-bright lichen
a V between two eyes invokes an owl
who I imagine circling sadly the crossed boxing up
of a single swerved gaze, a patient's mismatched socks.

Darling, the owl (allowing me to stroke her wings) might say -
here are berries for the darkest days.
What's clipped for the taking
grows back.