

## Raptor's Bill

Chill sawed through the boards.  
Coal was slack  
and we wore gloves to read. She worked rugs  
from old wool rags  
to coat the rink of lino after dark.  
But we would never warm.

Head bowed low each night,  
canvas stretched  
across her knees to see how far she'd gone,  
poking scraps  
into a cypher of her own design,  
vexed and bled with sighs.

She'd stab and pierce her loom  
with testy thrusts,  
rip at rags and tear a piece like flesh  
from raptor kill,  
knurl screwed round the neb, scavenging  
use from lifeless shreds.

Hook was varnished once,  
ground by hand  
to grey in grimy patina of wear.  
It smelt of sweat  
and had a talon lipped by snapping beak  
of steel we feared might bite.

Rugs perished in the dust.  
But festering,  
when I return to clear the residue,  
the buried bill,  
now rusted shut, clings to the memory,  
loath to release its prey.