**CRIVELLI’S FLY**

* the trompe-l’oeil fly in Crivelli’s *Madonna and Child with Goldfinch*

I am here to deceive your eye,

*in* and *out of* the picture.

Touch me and touch me not.

You cannot brush me away,

nor my ambivalent shadow on the ledge.

I raise myself on skimpy legs

and sniff the rot in gourd and apple

even before the first blemish,

hear the infidel chat of spies in the garden,

taste blood though nothing bleeds,

find at the centre

the goldfinch’s fluttering heart.

Madonna hooks her fingerbones

more tightly in the elbow-nook of the child

as her gaze engages with mine.

I speed ahead through the centuries,

to epidemics and mustard-gas wars

in which you drop like … – you know the phrase –

settling on Dalí’s liquescent watch,

my broods flinging themselves on decay

in Hirst’s vitrine, innocents to slaughter.

To you I am a prying pest

but Crivelli loves me for my test of his skill,

busy Beelzebub, translucent angel,

winged messenger. I flit from muck to art,

buzzing of death and blasphemy.

Say with fear, say with awe:

*O Madonna.*

*O Child.*

*O Fly.*