

Still Warm

Audrey Molloy

I don't see you, just those huge dark eyes
in the gap of your niqab,
those beautiful eyes.

You peck at your phone, just your fingertip visible,
glance at me, my tight skin, my weary gait,
my long-haul clothes, chosen for comfort.

I see myself through those eyes—
another Westerner in long boots and a sweater
just covering her ass,

not a mother of three small children,
freshening up, in transit
after fourteen hours in economy class.

I think I see you—a woman oppressed,
unable to show her face in public.
From the hard plastic seat in the spotless cubicle

the photons of your body heat remind me
we are both simply women,
more similar than we are different.

I see you without the veil, the robe,
texting your lover or your husband, yes!
The one you are on your way back to see,

the one who is singing to your child, smiling
at her tiny kitten-yawns as she falls asleep
in the bowl of his arms.

I see you are a writer too, a poet, a novelist,
a doctor at a busy labour ward, your expert hands
bringing life into the world.

We pray the same prayer, for our children to be safe;
we are both moved by the colours of clouds
and the unfurling of a green shoot.

I see you now.