

Audrey Molloy

THE BLUE COCKTAIL



Gallery Books

The Blue Cocktail
is first published
simultaneously in paperback
and in a clothbound edition
on 1 October 2023.

The Gallery Press
Loughcrew
Oldcastle
County Meath
Ireland

www.gallerypress.com

*All rights reserved. For permission
to reprint or broadcast these poems,
write to The Gallery Press:
books@gallerypress.com*

© Audrey Molloy 2023

The right of Audrey Molloy to be identified as Author of this
Work has been asserted in accordance with Section 77 of the
Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

ISBN 978 1 91133 847 5 *paperback*
978 1 91133 848 2 *clothbound*

A CIP catalogue record for this book
is available from the British Library.

The Blue Cocktail receives financial assistance
from the Arts Council of Ireland.



Contents

Emergency Cocktail	page 11
A Schoolgirl Dreams of Pools	13
Origin	15
The Gate	16
The Sheen	17
An Old Man Then Is an Old Man Now	19
What the Arborist Saw	20
Skin and Blister	21
Mock Heroic	22
Catching On	24
Ten Thousand Hours	25
Ideas of Home	26
The Entrance Fee	28
Smoke, Mirrors, Narcissist	29
Rare Bird	30
A Photo of My Friend Reminds Me	32
Night Diving, Koh Tao	33
City in a Blue Dress	34
At Bottle and Glass Point	35
Betrothal	36
Transplantations	
CAMELLIA JAPONICA	38
BLACKBERRY	39
ENGLISH BLUEBELL	40
That Spring, You Plant a Lemon Tree	41
Whiteout	42
Diaspora Blues	44
String Theory	45
Twilight, Rushcutters Bay	47
Sea Clicks	49
Learning to Swim	
NO SHOW PONIES	50
FREESTYLE ONLY, SEE THE SIGN	50
IN MY ELEMENT	51

Things a Streetlamp Knows About Love	52
To Die For	53
Audrey, at the Age of Forty, When She Thought She Was a Girl	54
What I Love	56
Long Haul	57
A Legacy to Seven Men I've Loved	58
The Rule of Twelfths	59
Postcards to Delphine	60
Mackerel Panic	62
The Figure-Eight Pools	64
Girl in the Shell Midden	65
Once, I Was Claudia	66
Notes on Naming	68
Mirror in the Mirror	69
Years Later We Call It Happiness	70
Stick Woman	71
How to Love a Scribbly Gum	72
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	74
<i>Notes</i>	75

for my father, Tom

What the Arborist Saw

A cat, among the finches, the sparrows and the wrens.
A cat, stuck, in the highest fork of a sycamore
the afternoon he scooped her in one fluid
movement into his jacket and kept searching,
calling down to the upturned faces of the boys,
No sign of the rascal, must have done a runner.

He feeds her fingertips of milk all winter
and cabochons of mackerel from his plate.
She dreams of fork-tailed swifts like origami
folded from the sky, their spittle nests
as hard and round as teacups.

They go to work each morning, arborist and cat.
He snips and saws; she walks the boughs
in zero gravity and, when he's rubbed the sawdust
from his eyes with the paddles of his thumbs,
he sees her carry every blue or speckled egg
in her ribbed mouth to his open palm,
and place each one, glass on velvet.

Skin and Blister

Dad would make me halve the éclair
and you got to choose —
perhaps it started there.

At school Miss Sinclair said,
She's not doing as well as her sister.
Mam said, *What's she got to do with it?*

Rathmines roommates,
failing to graduate in common ground,
we mastered how-not-to cohabitate.

Since then we've gone round for round,
blows landing on rawness so often
our skin has hardened to a carapace.

But remember when, on our way to Sofala,
You've Lost That Lovin' Feelin'
came on the radio?

While the children slept in the back
we belted it out, filling the car
with rare harmony.

Learning to Swim

North Sydney Olympic Pool

NO SHOW PONIES

Fruit-shaped women of all ages parade
the changing room, breasts more pert
or sagging than mine, bottoms
more or less dimpled; swimming costumes
in safe hues chosen for colour-fastness,
not fashion; rubber swim caps
with tennis-ball seams
and latex bubbles I'd like to pop.
They banter and strip, nonchalant.
Under crêpe skin muscles are taut —
everyone is here to swim,
but this is not a poem about swimming.

FREESTYLE ONLY, SEE THE SIGN

Only the sky hears my splash.
Cornflower air fills art-deco arches.
Beyond — the harbour, dotted with goose-
wing boats I no longer sail.
My mind flips over with every tumble;
odd laps counsel *stay*, and Luna Park
is an over-embellished wedding cake.
Even laps urge *leave*; the North Pylon
of the Harbour Bridge pulls me, anchors
the whole tableau, the coat hanger
seen from beneath, private rivets
and secret workings revealed.

IN MY ELEMENT

Arms scissor the blue edge
of sky and pool and I'm unsure
of my element. Air snatched
from one, the other breathing
life into me, leaching fear.
Emerging lightheaded, amphibious,
I reacquaint myself with gravity.