

BARBARA GILES

TO BE

To be an old crone and unkind
talk back to cops take taxis
and not pay for them like Bea
Miles and that one
who sold withered apples in
the Town Hall's shade when
she died there were
all those bank accounts

To walk to the city
each day in boots
and op shop coat to
prowl sucking life to
be done with
respectability the
garden let wild the eye
fed lively the body
maintained on market scraps

I see her walking
every day
strong-bodied bird's -
nest hair the
worn tweeds hear
the whispers a brilliant
woman she
lifts a dumb beast's
face to a life
she's denied
that's denied her