

Song Cycle – text of poems

Betrothal

One can tell a lot about a man
by the way he eats a meal.
My father was always hungry
And ate everything.

I invite a man I like
to dine with me.
I serve peas, pearl onions,
only spherical foods.
He stabs at his meal,
laughs when his round dinner
jumps away from his fork.

Very soon
I will marry him.

It Was Night

It was night.
The train rounded a curve;
stars swung away, constellations blurred
as trees flurried past, dark shapes
rooted but moving.

From a steel mill
smoke escaped the stacks, weightless,
curling low across the bowl of sky,
grey wisps coming up off the plains alone

I knelt there on the bank.
Watercress floated in a stream;
cold water pulled at the leaves
but the plants held on.

I knelt there burning a picture
of someone I loved
(in the photo he was turned away,
looking over a darkening field
as murky as deep water)

I flung the paper ash into the stream.
and it roamed over green stems

so easily it might have been laughing.

Calmer then,
as if I would never again
know anyone
who was dying.

Three Females

Being lazy doesn't bother me.
I don't do anything
that interferes
with my dreaming.

On the shore
I light a fire to burn
a mouth into the sand,
so that the beach and I
can lie together in the sun,
smoking.

We are perfectly content
until the ocean,
that idiot,
inches slowly towards us,
prattles on about our idleness.
We couldn't care less,
and let her scour seaweed at our feet,
like any bitter woman
who cannot stop washing.

Knowing You Would Find Me

Back after a long absence,
you begin outdoors,
breaking through the concrete
with which I had so carefully sealed
what lay underneath

delicate roots again released,
and dank soil sends musky odors
into the morning, an essence
refusing to bake away,
even in the sun's full heat.

Who did you intend for me to meet?
Who was it woke me, no one in the house
and that sudden gust of breath
against my cheek?

Lunch in the Rain

These herring have slept in cans so long,
they're no more salty ocean fish,
they've turned to boat fish, box of ice
fish, tin of oil in store fish,
then pan, plate, fork, and belly fish.

Bellies full of crackers and tinned fish,
full and fat we sleep. Raindrops
parachuting down in ragged rows,
their plunking tapdance on the roof
thunks dull, not hollow. Not hollow

because we're there, below deck,
filling up the belly of the boat,
floating lightly, lying close.

poems by Marcia Pelletiere
music, including vocal arrangement, by Bill Mitchell

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