

# Lindsay J. Cropper Creative Writing Contest

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## Three Poems

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## The Women of the Valley

The women of the valley have  
    strong weathered hands  
        brown weathered hands  
            callused weathered hands.

The train rolls through the valley.  
    Or it chugs.  
        No. It heaves under its own weight.

The crops wait in  
    meticulous rows  
        calculated rows.

They make way for  
    window seats  
        reclining chairs  
            more legroom than ever  
            crossword puzzles  
    coffee.

They call this the live/work dichotomy.

(What are bodies supposed to do anyway?)

The women of the hills are soft to touch.  
They are plush and sometimes mistaken for fine upholstery.  
Hospitality's body-double.  
    They, too, have weathered hands.  
        Round weathered hands.  
            Curled, weathered hands.  
                Tear-stained, weathered hands.  
                    Weathered. Hands.

Women speak the language of hands.

The language of tugging  
    and weaving  
        of threading together  
            and of feeding.  
They speak the language trains speak  
    of pulling apart  
        and bringing together.  
    The language of movement.  
The language of weight.

When you paint your walls with the eyes of women  
do not forget their hands.  
Do not forget to be touched,  
to let the lines of their palms  
press into the lines of your face,  
one line  
one harvest.

### **The Season of Sleep**

I am old  
and the winds of my days blow slow.

I remember my youth  
and the woman with hands like tree bark-  
one ring for every year of hammer and bone.

In those days I was blind.

Now I see  
that the soil in the cracks of her palms  
was not rot,  
but gold.

Time buried in crevices of flesh:  
Love-Stain.

Here I lie at the end of my days  
and my hands, too, feel of bark,  
my body, too, smells of dirt, and my hair,  
a silver mass, a thinning stream.

I think back to when the wind was wild  
and my body round-  
round body and miles of flesh,  
the bowl at the foot of my bed  
brimming with ripened fruit.

Now the land where I am from is thirsty.  
It is no longer the season of harvest,  
but the season of sleep.

**From Somewhere in the Middle**

The fast thumping  
wheel-turning-star-night  
lulled me to sleep  
after dusk fell like a stone,  
and in the new morning  
salty water rolled the sand from my lids. Bitter  
because  
Carole King,  
the balmy air of way over yonder,  
and the exact contradiction  
that is your palms  
plus my back.

And three thousand or so miles later  
my eyes are dry  
and a bit more wide  
and my main gripe  
is how inconsiderate time is for moving so fast -  
    for looking past all the bodies  
    slipping into shadows  
    cast by tall men  
    with green-eyed intentions.

(Numbers don't lie.)

If I have two hands, which I do,  
then together we have four.  
Yet I still manage to draw a blank

when asked the question:  
With so many hands, how is it that  
flesh is allowed to sink?