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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?