

# Daphne Marlatt/TWO POEMS

## UNPAID WORK

cloud so low a sort of pearlgrey nothing houses across the road  
silhouette against this no-seam settling everywhere darker imper-  
ceptibly late the rain osmotic world a sort of sponge taking it  
in seeping out they sit two women in a darkening room

won't let it stop her you know doesn't trust doctors she'll go  
on dancing despite them

a surf breaking mitral up through the heart the same old ebb and  
flow thuds back down

and her baby, what of him? to sort it out, dancing her life through  
the fog on the edge of its lifting abandon abandonment o the complex  
heart with its too much blood forced up this hole in the afternoon  
after the chores after the afterwords and facing emptiness this lack  
of meaning she is dancing through their hearts a small banner waving  
ban to speak publicly of this

*... how to keep a woman from feeding a child when he's hungry. (and  
could you?)*

*it would be an incredible crime not to do it.*

*and do you think we'd have to get to the point where we wouldn't do it?*

the mother, the mothers beginning to speak of the daughter abandoned  
already, a sorter of small seeds houseworker head bound out of sorts  
(destiny) dancing her way beyond anatomy

in a sort of pearlgrey nothing houses across the road silhouette against  
this no-seam settling everywhere they sit two women in a darkening  
room

striking words and lighting them

she refuses to listen... *do we have to refuse everything?*

*... I don't know, it's a thing we've never tried.*

(quotes from Marguerite Duras & Xavière Gauthier, *Woman to Woman*, pp. 71, 75)

## COMPLIMENTS (of the camera)

what she's fishing for, wishing there outside the hairdresser's on  
an ordinary street, hair erased by her chiffon scarf old ski jacket  
flattened now or faded she faces the camera faces up to being there  
and not about to go in or out with this evasive tilt to her head  
she's standing not quite square smile reined in at the corners her  
eyebrows hope —

trailing a baited line o let me like my look like this is what you  
get, the small fish of an idea slipping the hand

this blank where fear settles in she is not quite sure she is not ordi-  
narily traversed by, the street its emblems of desire this man in the  
form of a camera does not take the hole where eyes were  
(hers, fishquick

hooked and dressed secure there in the ordinary

years of it, what comes down: the side of his hand slapping her into  
a shape she resists — stilled fish. yet the eyes blink

getting used to the taste of fear as that which squirms alive on the  
spoons o she is sure she exists in the downward slice of his hand  
unshutt(er)able up — no, not up, it's a lateral movement fish make,  
*nothing goes anywhere, but things move . . . that's not where it's*  
*dangerous; it's when you're trying to get out you see*

a lot on your plate lifted out of the so-called order of things face  
to face with the hole you've been fishing for

(quote from Marguerite Duras, *Woman to Woman*, pp. 4-5)