Songs for an Old Woman

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SONGS FOR AN OLD WOMAN

1
She sits by the window
knitting her fingers
into wrinkles
while another sun
rolls its crazy eye
over the trees.

2
From the next farmhouse
she hears someone
chopping wood,
the thud of an ax
ripping between her ears.

3
In the fields
a horse and plow
steer like a car
without the right
front tire.
Smoke tunnels from
the pickle factory
in Croswell. A man
yells and swings
a whip at the
horse.

4
All day
the old woman imagines
her husband is alive:
carrying in pails of milk
from the barn. She sees her many children running and playing with the rusted two bottom plow, old slats of wood, the bones of a raccoon.

5
Before dusk, it starts to rain; the distant crumbling of thunder. The rotted wood beams of the cabin squeak as if they were hollow and infested with bats.

6
She sits in a chair, staring into the yellowed glass window and listens: this cutting, this plowing, that puts her to sleep, that wakes her up.