



almanac's "little moons fall down like tears. . . into the flower bed the child / has carefully placed in the front of the house."

Like Bishop's child in "Sestina," Matthews is most prone to turn to the haziness of dreams when reality is most painful. In "A Study of Gratitude," the speaker's response to the ongoing fighting between her brother and father is to announce that she has "lived remote, / a cloud or a piece of gauze, / something so pale it gives up its form."

Nowhere is this need for a dream-retreat more poignant than in the book's first section, in which Matthews circles the fact of her mother's death. Through a Bergsonian fluidity of time as graceful as that of a Marguerite Duras novel, this cluster of poems blends the details of her present life with dreams of a life in which her mother still lives:

Sometimes I dream the back field of our house goes  
all the way to the river and my mother is still alive,  
standing by her desk, arranging her day.  
(“The Feel of Water”)

Whenever I close my eyes,  
the house is exactly the way  
we left it. And the world outside  
is quiet, waiting for us.  
(“Two Childhoods”)

In *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge announces his intention to give his fantasies such a "semblance of truth" that his readers will believe in them through a willing leap of poetic faith. Like Coleridge, Matthews often insists that her dreams are real. In "Maybe That's Who I'll Be," the persona recounts her dream of a field ploughed into "geometric clods the size of your fist" and then declares, "this dream really happened, and not so long ago." When she goes on to announce that "Everything I say here is true," Matthews seems to be calling on childlike faith to suspend her own disbelief as well as the reader's.

In *Green Stars*, Matthews is not only a dream-maker but also a conjurer who knows how shapes can shift, how a scarf can transform into a dove. In "Metamorphosis," the speaker describes making rubbings of leaves and cinder blocks, while the science teacher down the hall explains the shape-shifting of insects:

words from the  
science class came up to us odd  
and startling as their teacher explained  
eggs, larvae, pupa, adult.  
How unlike what we are doing,  
as we press firmly with  
crayon, how strange to first  
be one thing and then another.

In “Magic Show,” a child “nimble holds a sparkler of light, / share of brightness, like a parcel of land, / so that what matters most becomes effortless” and proclaims that she “can change a person’s life / by saying just one thing, just once.”

While the world’s malleability fascinates Matthews, her persona also confesses, “I am bewildered / by the shape of things around me” (“What I Wanted to Tell You”). In “Blowing Glass” she seems saddened that the inevitable metamorphosis of the world is beyond the control of her magician’s powers:

To shape even  
the simplest  
form in glass  
is a constant fight  
against the will  
of gravity.  
Look at an old window:  
how it sags,  
how glass is the thickest  
at the bottom.

Perhaps the greatest heartbreak of the collection comes when the speaker admits that

I want my mother to draw me a tall  
house on a hill, or a kitchen  
table, something solid  
that can bear its own weight.  
(“Bottom of the Ocean”)

“Kubla Khan” opens with Coleridge’s recollection of his Xanadu dream already interrupted and the poet ostensibly scrambling to recover what he can. When *Green Stars* begins, the mother’s death, like a stranger’s knock, has already scattered the dreams of a world where mothers keep living and childhood houses never change. Matthew has been quick to capture these imaginings, knowing, as Coleridge does, that such visions will not stay.

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