

Leavings

Christopher Cuninghame

Here is a picture of her leaving home
Neat-as-ever, by the front door.
She'd be careful about the house keys,
Would have looked them out in good time;
In her mind first, then into her organised bag
And then, to hand, ready, like a small pistol.

She's paused in the sunlit porchway so that the tall detail
Of meconopsis flowers – who'd not be happy with them? –
Is set against her look of sorry determination (going through
The wars again?) with the bubbling hydrangeas giving,
Always giving, a softness to the small yellows and golds
Mixing californian poppies and japanese anemones.

There's no actual picture. She may have jotted down
A few imagined lines, at some time, in her open script.
In the spiral-bound notepad she might have used
To scribble a shopping list or, in Pitman's shorthand,
The flowing dictums of the wise professors
That came after the wise auto-parts' customers.

What she would have said, if asked, is a good question:
About the bed you'd made and the ship you'd sailed in,
If well-worn formulas are cousin to well-managed families.
You're closer to a picture now; the miraculous windows
Gleaming with light, as if she'd hardly stopped scrunching up
Last week's broadsheet rags into old-fashioned elbow grease.

And, in doing that, leaving word and picture all blurry;
Reducing the windows to a net that ought to be safe,
Or smaller, to a cocoon that keeps you, mind and body -
Whichever way it goes. It goes. It can go like this now:
The door you've walked through, in or out, no matters,
Is all matter - unframed, undone, spick or span - of you.

Poetry

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