

The Fen Woman's Redress

On days you harvest corn from boats
the ears an inch above lapping waves,
days of the musk rat and the coypou,
I'll rest on a mattress of willow,
my mind adrift and pleasantly fed
somewhere over the mollusc bed.
My moleskin hat may be wasted
and my otterskin skirt long gone,
but I asked for none of your measures
or weights – quarters, firkins, tuns –
my faceaches and earaches slight
against the way my heart grew sore,
I, squeezed out by the speculative,
ankle-deep and webfooted, you said,
from the body's oil I refused to sluice
not caring if my feet looked stained,
and wearing garters of dried eelskins
above the knees to ease my pains.
You promised me an open prison
of dykes and drains, a world to be
scoured, one forced to unlearn its
true course, a place made dessicate
in the scab of a sucked-out mere
on your 'uncontestable' ground,
your 'struggle' with ultimate outfall
dissolved in a great swallowing
of registers and stout reports,
conveyancing of schemes, crown
and regalia of tawdry chains
strutting privileges of a palatine,
with all the secret entrances betrayed –
a quaking world once known and loved
by this slodger stalking on stilts
feathers and mole's foot in my pocket,
marshmeadowing with the leaping pole,
rowing and wading among the fowl,
deepest of the undrowned, woman
falling holding a dead man's hand,
an old word-ending to spirit me forth,
a sudden breach in your works.