

SONGS FOR MARGARET LAURENCE

Selected by Edith Fowke

That Margaret Laurence had a lively interest in folklore is proved by the way she uses songs, tales, superstitions, and children's rhymes in her novels. This is most notable in *The Diviners* which includes cowboy songs, children's taunts, old Scottish songs, and some Métis songs that she wrote herself, using a folk pattern.

She was particularly fond of labour songs: she knew many of the ones in my book *Songs of Work and Freedom*, and told me she used to sing them when she worked in Winnipeg back in the forties. "Bread and Roses," inspired by a textile workers' strike in 1912, serves to illustrate this aspect of her interest.

As her major characters were all women struggling to maintain their freedom and individuality, I think she would have enjoyed Peggy Seeger's "I'm Gonna Be an Engineer."

Her Scottish background and love of ancient Scottish tales and songs are represented by "Young Munro," remembered by Mrs. Fraser in Ontario's Glengarry county, whose ancestors brought it from Scotland several generations earlier.

Bread and Roses

As we come marching, marching, in the beauty of the day,
A million darkened kitchens, a thousand mill lofts gray,
Are touched with all the radiance that a sudden sun discloses,
For the people hear us singing: "Bread and roses! Bread and roses!"

As we come marching, marching, we battle too for men,
For they are women's children and we mother them again.
Our lives shall not be sweated from birth until life closes;
Hearts starve as well as bodies; give us bread, but give us roses!

As we come marching, marching, unnumbered women dead
Go crying through our singing their ancient cry for bread.
Small art and love and beauty their drudging spirits knew.
Yes, it is bread we fight for — but we fight for roses, too!

As we come marching, marching, we bring the greater days.
The rising of the women means the rising of the race.
No more the drudge and idler — ten that toil where one
reposes,
But a sharing of life's glories: Bread and roses! Bread and roses!

I'm Gonna Be An Engineer

When I was a little girl I wished I was a boy.
I tagged along behind the gang and wore my corduroys.
Everybody said I only did it to annoy,
But I was gonna be an engineer.
Momma told me, "Can't you be a lady?
Your duty is to make me the mother of a pearl.
Wait until you're older, dear,
And maybe you'll be glad that you're a girl."

When I went to school I learned to write and how to read,
Some history, geography and home economy,
And typing is a skill that every girl is sure to need
To while away the extra time until the time to breed,
And then they had the nerve to say, "What would you like
to be?"
I said, "I'm gonna be an engineer!"

So I became a typist and I study on the sly,
Working out the day and night so I can qualify,
And every time the boss came in he pinched me on the thigh,
Saying, "I've never had an engineer!
You owe it to the job to be a lady;
It's the duty of the staff for to give the boss a whirl.
The wages that you get are crummy, maybe,
But it's all you get, 'cause you're a girl."

Then Jimmy come along and we set up a conjugation;
We were busy every night with loving recreation.
I spent my days at work so he could get his education,
And now he's an engineer.
He says, "I know you'll always be a lady.
It's the duty of my darling to love me all her life.
Could an engineer look after or obey me?
Remember, dear, that you're my wife!"

As soon as Jimmy got a job I studied hard again,
Then busy at me turret-lathe a year or so, and then
The morning that the twins were born, Jimmy says to them:
"Kids, your mother was an engineer!
You owe it to the kids to be a lady,
(Dainty as a dish-rag, faithful as a chow)
Stay at home, you got to mind the baby;
Remember you're a mother now."

Every time I turn around there's something else to do.
Cook a meal or mend a sock or sweep a floor or two.
Listen to the morning show — it makes me want to spew.
I was gonna be an engineer!
I really wish that I could be a lady;
I could do the lovely things that a lady's s'posed to do.
I wouldn't even mind if only they would pay me
And I could be a person too.

But now that times are harder, and my Jimmy's got the sack,
I went down to Vickers, they were glad to have me back.
I'm a third-class citizen, my wages tell me that,
But I'm a first-class engineer!
The boss he says, "I pay you as a lady.
You only got the job 'cause I can't afford a man.
With you I keep the profits high as may be.
You're just a cheaper pair of hands!"

Well, I listened to my mother and I joined a typing pool.
I listened to my lover and I sent him through his school.
If I listen to the boss, I'm just a bloody fool
And an underpaid engineer!
I been a sucker ever since I was a baby,
As a daughter and a wife, as a mother and a dear.
But I'll fight them as a woman, not a lady.
I'll fight them as an engineer!

Young Munro

It was on a Tuesday evening
Just at twelve o'clock at night,
I espied a handsome fair maid
Sitting by the candle light.

CHORUS:

*Young Munro be Charlie agans,
Young Munro, I do love you!
Young Munro be Charlie agans,
Handsome Charlie, young Munro.*

With the candle on the table
And the basin on the stand,
With a towel around her elbow
Like an angel she did stand.

Listen, listen, I will tell you
The first time I saw Munro,
Walking o'er the plains of Italy
Viewing of his Highland Co.

His shoes were made of Turkish leather
And his stockings made of silk,
Everything so neat about him,
And his skin as white as milk.

If you see that handsome fellow
With his red coat trimmed with blue,
Tell him if he loves another
My poor heart shall break in two.

If I had an Indian treasure,
Forty million in great store,
I would give to the Forty-Second
For the sake of young Munro.
(*VERBATIM*)

GEORGE JOHNSTON

**Margaret Laurence
1926-1987**

Tell no longer
stories of our women,
how they make with their men
their young, their selves.

Lived in them,
spoke through them
and for them

as she spoke for us.
Our sister, Margaret,
spared herself nothing.
Was spared old age.

CALL FOR PAPERS

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Theory, empirical research, reviews of literature, methods, and position papers are sought in the areas of: Consumer Studies and Family Management, Family Studies and Human Development, Human Nutrition and Foods, Clothing and Textiles, Design and Housing, and Home Economics Education/Studies. Abstracts (300-500 words) must be postmarked by 30 January 1988.

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