

***Catharine Savage Brosman***

**Woman with Mop and Bucket**

She's smocked in blue, like peasants by Millet  
at work, a crook or pail in hand, or bent,  
perhaps, for sewing, nursing, sheaving hay,  
their faces worn by pity and consent.

The airport crowds have atomized by now;  
the loos are nearly empty. There, alone,  
she traces arcs, a model showing how  
it's done — left, right, ahead — as if to hone

her gestures as a dance routine. She sings,  
a thread that rises, falls, and floats.  
The words are muffled. Might her voice give wings  
to home thoughts, in its melancholy notes?

I speak to her in English; no reply,  
no recognition. I use Spanish then;  
she's pensive, unaware. So should I try  
my Creole French? But no; to speak again

would seem interrogation. Does she see  
me, even, leaning as she swirls her mop?  
She is the body of the melody,  
its mute existence when the song must stop.

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**For Jane, on Her Ninetieth**

It may be we're not meant for such great age,  
enduring past the full "three score and ten."  
But there's a time for all things, said a sage,  
who, were he here, would see that modern men

call sixty "middle-aged," and ninety, still  
in competition. Fifteen years or more  
than we, perhaps, is "old"; yet, chance and will  
can change horizons outward. With your store

of practice, prudence, your profound belief,  
rejoice, sail well the channels that remain,  
and let things resonate, the love, the grief.  
Congratulations and best wishes, Jane.

## Kale

What's this? New foodstuffs fans can rave about,  
all green: chips, flatbread, pasta, rich with kale!  
Perhaps old Popeye's spinach is worn out;  
shiitake mushrooms, toney, are too pale

for folic acid; portobellos, tough  
and brown, do not, I think, have chlorophyll.  
And what of dandelions? Poor man's stuff,  
suspect thereby, a garden weed, like dill.

And collard greens? A type of kale, in fact,  
but southern, overcooked, with ham bone, salt —  
ill-famed. Folk cooking's good, in the abstract;  
but Dixie food partakes of Dixie's fault.

A salad made for the Thanksgiving feast  
of cabbage, nuts, chopped kale, and who-knows-what  
becomes the rage. The turkey, at the least,  
deserves sincere appreciation — but

it looks and tastes as always. Novelty  
and mania are key ingredients  
in fashions; kimchi, fungi, bitter tea  
can, oddly, turn into a preference.

A cheer for strange and rotten foods! Blue cheese  
and tempeh, miso, sauerkraut — extremes  
of tolerance, with tongue, radicchio; these,  
with kale, prove sense cannot be what it seems.