The cop slumps alertly at his motorcycle, supported by one leg like a leather stork. His glance accuses me of loitering. I can see his eyes moving like a fish in the green depths of his green goggles.

His ease is fake. I can tell. My ease is fake. And he can tell. The fingers armoured by his gloves splay and clench, itching to change something. As if he were my enemy or my death, I just stand there watching.

I spit out my gum which has gone stale. I knock out my new cigarette -- which is my bravery. It is all imperceptible: The way I shift my weight, The way he creaks in the saddle.

The traffic is specific though constant. The sun surrounds me, divides the street between us. His crash helmet is whiter in the shade. It is like a bullring as they say it is just before the fighting. I cannot back down. I am there.

Everything holds me back. I am in danger of disappearing into the sunny dust, My levis bake and my T-shirt sweats.

My cigarette makes my eyes burn. But I don't dare drop it.


I am becoming sunlight. My hair is on fire. My boots run like tar. I am hung-up by the bright air.

Something breaks through all of a sudden. And he blasts off, quick as a craver, Snug in his power; watching me watch.
The Sower
Victor Hugo

Peaceful and cool, the twilight grey
Draws a dim curtain o’er the day,
While in my cottage-porch I lurk
And watch the last lone hour of work.

The fields around are bathed in dew,
And, with emotion filled, I view
An old man clothed in rags, who throws
The seed amid the channeled rows.

His shadowy form is looming now
High o’er the furrows of the plough;
Each motion of his arm betrays
A boundless faith in future days.

He stalks along the ample plain,
Comes, goes, and flings abroad the grain;
Unnoted, through the dreamy haze
With a meditative soul I gaze.

At last, the vapours of the night
Dilate to heav’n the old man’s height,
Till every gesture of his hand
Seems to my eyes sublimely grand!

To Be of Use
Marge Piercy

The people I love the best
Jump into work head first
Without dallying in the shallows
And swim off with sure strokes almost out of sight.
They seem to become natives of that element,
The black sleek heads of seals
Bouncing like half-submerged balls.

I love people who harness themselves, an ox to a heavy cart,
Who pull like water buffalo, with massive patience,
Who strain in the mud and the muck to move things forward,
Who do what has to be done, again and again.

I want to be with people who submerge
In the task, who go into the fields to harvest
And work in a row and pass the bags along,
Who are not parlor generals and field deserters
But move in a common rhythm
When the food must come in or the fire be put out.

The work of the world is common as mud.
Botched, it smears the hands, crumbles to dust.
But the thing worth doing well done
Has a shape that satisfies, clean and evident.
Greek amphoras for wine or oil,
Hopi vases that held corn, are put in museums
But you know they were made to be used.
The pitcher cries for water to carry
And a person for work that is real.