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PEI

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Cancion de Amor

Joan Canby

Stocky heavy-limbed men in brown-soiled jeans,
with their sweat-stained white straw hats lean over,
then reach up on ladders, perched high to the August
sun, for the yellow fruit. They measure with rings
the golden lemons, and with their voices from
Guadalajara, Quintana Roo, and Vera Cruz
they begin to sing La Paloma.

I walk down our hill listening with my English
bulldog, his wet jowls swinging, beside me. I walk
with my white lace bonnet, its pink satin strap tied
in a bow under my chin. I walk, a blue-eyed blond
amongst their ladders, with their voices like gardenias
floating in a pool.

The lemon pickers turn from their high rungs smile
at me, they whistle and click their tongues. Others
huddle around hesitant fires and gesture with open
hands offering me a toasted tortilla, a heated can
of frijoles or a piece of chocolate cake and I start
to join them.

Until, with a shake of his head, my father grabs
my hand, to end the cancion, to claim my difference.

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