

A. Mary Murphy

Songs for Disney

John Lennon never would have written songs for Disney. And the day Bob Dylan does, I burn my ticket stub. Sappy songs about love and hope are uplifting and moving I'm sure, and everyone knows if you want to win an Academy Award you should write for a Disney cartoon. But John Lennon simply was higher than that, a flawed merely human, principled man. It isn't that he would think Disney beneath him, but that Disney never would have found itself able to offer him a show he could accept. Johnny, you Moondog, I'm still lonely for you and I've been waiting for you ever since you promised *it won't be long, yeah* with that voice that to this day makes me weak. As for Bob, Disney is supposed to be for children, and I just can't see Bob singing for little kids. They couldn't understand a word that he says and anyway, I think he'd scare them. Leave animation to Elton and Sting. They're talented boys. Just different.

Electricity Hates Me

I don't actually like lightning because I'm afraid of electricity in all its forms. Afraid that it might come right through a window and then through me. I have fainted from fear in R.C.M.P. horse barns during a thunderstorm so it is difficult for me to admire the beauty of the flashes and sheets and forks. When I was little and a farm girl I was often urged to grab low-voltage fences and was jabbed in the ass more than once with a genuine cattle prod. There's a fair-to-generous charge of electricity lodged inside me as it is and sometimes I even interfere with radio and television reception. Sometimes when I walk past a radio the signal is lost in the static until I go by. My horoscope says that people born on my birthday are electric but surely this is not what the stars have in mind. I have been shocked while hanging wallpaper and also while frying eggs. And I am the only person I know who has ever had an iron burst into flames during use. Electricity hates me. It has been suggested to me with some eagerness and excitement that I am the kind of person who one day will spontaneously combust.

Prophetic Poetic Little Hands

At first he doesn't realize what's happening, he just writes poems. Sometimes they're about people he knows, moments they have, and sometimes he just thinks people up. Then there's that guy, that circus guy, Frank I think his name is, he has an initial but I can't remember, T maybe. Anyway, they find him behind some food vendor, all greasy and dead. Hot dogs I think. Atwell, that's his name. Then some really famous people, that's what makes him think about it, about how maybe his poems, you know, but he doesn't really believe in hocus pocus, at least he doesn't until that woman puts a spell on him, but anyway one day he realizes he's just written a poem about Bill Burroughs and his running shoes, and the next thing he knows there on the radio Burroughs is dead. It makes him think about Ginsberg, makes him feel a little creepy, and it's almost too much for him because he's really fond of Ginsberg and then that heart thing that happens to Dylan in Europe, remember that, and he'd know for sure if they got Rushdie. But he's warming to it now, warming up to the idea and its possibilities, you know. His prophetic poetic little hands as he puts it. Like last summer - he has a little trouble getting paid for a job he does and he's pretty good natured about it and says he understands the delay, not your fault and all that but then he says you know, Bernie, I'm gonna write a poem about you.

Patlican Tava

Nothing is a problem for Mustapha. The Turkish restaurant on 14th Street, six tables, travel posters of Istanbul, is his bastion of stability. Tell him thank you for the wine, he says *no problem*. The place was an Italian eatery before and the sign painted on the window, the red and white checked tablecloths, are still there the first time I go in but the painfully erotic music and one look at the menu tell me things are different now. He hires a belly dancer on Saturday nights but the one time I go he tells me she broke her hip the week before. Once, he notices I changed my hair and approves. Thank you I say, *no problem*. When I return after an absence of two years, I nearly clap my hands with joy when he takes my order for patlican tava *no problem*. One time, though, there is a confused racket in the kitchen and dinner arrives rather slowly. He waves his hand at it vaguely and is sorry it doesn't look so good. He looks troubled but assures me my favourite dish, eggplant fried in olive oil, baked with tomatoes and onions and green pepper, patlican tava, will taste the same. His parents are both sick with the flu and he resorts to his Anglo friends to staff the kitchen. This is a problem for Mustapha.

Lunch on Osborne Street

Because I am eating spaghetti good enough to make me want to go home and watch *Moonstruck*, the happy-birthday people only marginally annoy me with their singing. This spaghetti must have been cooked by real Italians, not the fakes who run East Side Mario's. Imagine not knowing Costello is an Irish name. And because of the perfection of my pasta, the speechless and matching father and son across from me suffering through their lunch as mirror images are nothing compared to the painfully corporate nominating types to my right. And if the girls at the very next table could complete a sentence without saying "like," I would have joy.

Circle Song

Our parents' lives are prophecies of our own, provide a thread to which we cling for the rest of our lives. Threads we use to tie ourselves together with incidents that could as easily be people as events. Prophecies only sometimes as concealed as verse from Nostradamus, but most times transparent as glass. Most of the time we take up roles in a spin-off—there are only six plots in the world after all. My grandmother taught us a circle song—about *Jon Jonson* who came *from Wisconsin* and worked *in the lumber yards there*—but I cannot remember the last line/first line that makes it all endless and endlessly promising of some other outcome. It's only then that, turning the last corner of the rhyme, we realize there's only one way to go. I have slotted in some circumstance from my mother's life and disguised it as my own. Disguises don't change anything. Singing the same thing over and over seems laughingly clever at six. Living it seems something else later on.

A. Mary Murphy is a Canadian poet. She has a PhD in English and currently teaches creative writing at the University of Winnipeg. Her poems have been placed in numerous journals in Canada and also in Australia, England, France, New Zealand, the United States, and Wales. Her first book, *Shattered Fanatics*, was published by BuschekBooks in 2007.