Standing inside the door (the river . . .) how shadow lies just inside the cannery floor, sun, pouring down outside, the river streaming slow, slow, by. Now she feels old enough, now she is wearing her long print dress & leaning into the threshold, waiting for work, the wheel that time is, Whose hands are standing still, hers, empty, Whose friends also surround her, waiting, waiting all morning for the fish to come. Nothing moves but occasional strands of long hair the subtle wind is lifting, up off the river, the Fraser, mouth of the Fraser here where it debouches, into marsh, delta, swirling around & past those pilings of the cannery wharf they are standing on, muddy & pale grey teeming, invisible fish . . .

Now she is old enough to be her mother inside, working, with the smallest one standing by her skirt in grubby dress, & the blood streams down the wooden cutting board as the “iron chink” (that’s what they call it) beheads each fish . . .

Now she is old enough for the wheel’s turn, she is feeling her body in its light dress wind blows thru, as past the faces of her friends, likewise silent, impassive. Wind blows thru those open doors (two) because, in the dark where machines are, & the cans, & the steam, & a cavern of men with rolled up sleeves & straw hats, & men in oilcloth slickers spattered with fish gut, beyond & across the corner of that dark stands another door, & the sail of a boat crossing the river, wind, wind . . . An open door, where men unload their hauls of fish, the collector’s boat, float, sliding one, a hundred, on top of another, their own scale grease that keeps them alive in sea they’re taken from to dry, in open sun on an open dock.
But she is in her element, dreaming of sails, her father’s, or a friend’s son, at the Imperial which owns their boat, their net, their debt. But the Fraser gives of itself, incessantly, rich (so the dream goes), & wooden houses jammed on pilings close together, leaning, with wooden walks & muddy alleys, laundry, & the dry marsh grass that stutters out of silt the dykes retain, from a flowing ever eroding & running river . . .
dreaming, of fabric she saw at Walker’s Emporium, & the ribbon. A woman of means she dreams, barefoot on the dock in the wind, leaning into her threshold of work, machines, the wheel that keeps turning turning, out of its wooden sleeve, the blade with teeth marked: for marriage, for birth, for death.