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Pioneers—The Lace-Maker

Sally T. Taylor

Hands which had made the lace now pushed the plow
 Across cracking fields of reclaimed wasteland.
 The hot smell of summer pushed the past to
 A kalidescope of half-lost fragments:

The acrid odor of wool coats drying
 By the hearth as English storms sang outdoors;
 The promised magic of new thread, spider-
 Fine and smoothly waiting for careful form;

The close quietness of old artisans
 Forming familiar patterns, net-like with
 The fragile flourish and curve for a trim,
 So different from this straight, hard, dry furrow.

The lace-maker stopped his horse and slapped at
 A lean horsefly buzzing his steaming neck.
 These eyes burned by the base dust and stung by
 The sun would never again see that life.

Dirt-gloved hands would not form the silky threads
 In fine designs of royal-ranked stature.
 He had lost that past to the channeled task-
 Master of time and life-revolving faith.

Faith! His hands felt for the wood smooth handles.
 Gee Hah! The worn horse huffed away the flies
 And stepped slowly on, pulling a new type
 Of pattern in the solid soil of now.

Sally T. Taylor is an assistant professor in the English Department, Brigham Young University.

"Pioneers—The Lace-Maker" was the 1978 First Place poem in the Ann W. Hafen category of the Utah State Poetry Society Contest.