

# ***The Mirabelles*** **by Annie Freud**



Annie Freud's pamphlet *A Voids Officer Achieves The Tree Pose* (Donut Press, 2006) swiftly followed by her first full collection *The Best Man That Ever Was* (Picador, 2007) announced the arrival of a fully formed, fifty-something poet; readers enjoying the friction between debut excitement and a maturity of voice. Her poems are funny, sly, unapologetic, rich in subject, texture and experience. Her first book's title poem is a risky dramatic monologue imagining in the interior life of a woman we think – though we are never wholly sure – is Hitler's lover.

## **The Mirabelles**

A young poet visits an older poet  
who has enjoyed fame and success.

In the street, a plum tree has scattered  
its golden fruit all over the pavement.

When it's over, she'll come back and fill  
her pockets with these Mirabelles.

She leaves the older poet's house;  
night has fallen; she has forgotten

the plums. But the thought of them,  
lying so sweet all over the pavement,

comes back to her and she remembers  
them every day for the rest of her life.

## **The Carvery Experience**

She wore a low-backed silken sweater  
slung with many golden chains  
that slid together when she laughed  
and parted when she pulled a cracker;

and when the cracker's spark had flashed  
a whistle fell into his plate;

he blew three notes into her ear  
and crowned her with his paper hat.

The walls were hung with tapestries  
of ladies in their courtly busks.  
A boar's head was the centrepiece  
with silver apples on its tusks.

*I think that stag is watching us,*  
she said. *My tarte Tatin's gone cold.*  
*If we don't leave right now, I'll die.*  
They paid and went without a word.

Was the sweater *Dry Clean Only*?  
Were the golden chains detachable?  
Did the cashier say, *we've sold*  
*an awful lot of those this Christmas?*

### **Maidenhair**

They landed on the beach just before noon  
and immediately he found a spray of maidenhair,  
fossilized on slate, lying in a rock pool.  
Out of habit, he looked around for more  
but found nothing, at least nothing for him.  
There were pebbles of a most sensuous white  
and pieces of green glass roughened by the tides  
that, as a younger man, he would have kept;  
but he no longer had a desire for such things.

The skipper and his mate were scraping the scales  
off the fish they'd caught, and began frying them  
over a fire of tangled roots and grass.  
The shingle was splitting and singing in the embers  
and a delicious smell rose from the pan.  
Saliva filled his mouth in an unwonted gush.  
They sat and ate the hot sticky flakes and crisped skin  
and the beer bottle passed from hand to hand.

The sun was hotter now and his trousers felt tight  
and while the men busied themselves with the boat  
he went and stretched out in a sandy hollow  
between the tamarisks that grew close to the shore,  
mobbed with hundreds of chirruping finches.  
He pulled the slate from the pocket of his jacket  
and lay in the posture of a girl in a painting  
he'd seen the day before, naked on a bed,  
staring in a mirror, encircled with pearls.

### **Discussion Ideas**

- What does the young poet remember about her visit to the older poet in 'The Mirabelles' – the conversation or the plums? Why might that be significant? What do you think happened during the visit? What's more important – poetry, plums, or poetry about plums?

- This is the most famous plum poem of them all <http://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/just-say> Is Annie Freud's poem in conversation with William Carlos Williams' poem?
- Who is observing the experience in "The Carvery Experience"? Another diner? A waiter? A waitress? What conclusions are they drawing?
- 'Maidenhair' begins with a 'they' but ends with a 'he'. Who is the other person that combines with the 'he' to make 'they'? What sort of experience do you think that other person is having on the beach?
- 'as a younger man, he would have kept' [the pebbles and glass]. How old do you think the man is? Is this a mid-life crisis poem? Whatever your answer, why do you think that?

Annie Freud was born in London in 1948. Her father is the painter, Lucian Freud. Her maternal grandfather was the sculptor, Sir Jacob Epstein, and her great-grandfather was Sigmund Freud. Her first publication was *A Voids Officer Achieves the Tree Pose* (Donut Press). Her first full collection, *The Best Man That Ever Was* (Picador, 2007), was a Poetry Book Society recommendation and won the Dimplex Prize for New Writing (Poetry) in the same year. *The Mirabelles* was a PBS Choice and shortlisted for the T S Eliot Prize in 2010. She is currently teaching at the Poetry School.

#### **If you liked Annie Freud, try**

- [Michael Donaghy](#)
- [Catherine Smith](#)
- [Lorraine Mariner](#)

#### **Other books by Annie Freud**

- [The Best Man That Ever Was](#) (Picador, 2007)