

ROSEMARY CLEWES

Maureen Forrester

stands apart. warm eyes
invite me quick with affection
when I tell her she is my favourite contralto

lost within herself
as if some essential part eludes her
she fingers her lapel
to complain how the Order of Canada
button keeps falling out

she must order more
they must improve the design
a tiny obsession to ground her
when her concentration fails
so appreciative of Richard
her debonair companion who merits the sobriquet
“My Darling,”
who serves her divinely with wine
then beer when she changes her mind
and back again willing to play
second fiddle to her falling star but

talk to her about singing
and she puts her feet down
for a moment the sand no longer runs out between her toes
she tells me why she only hummed
for six months about the “solar plexus triangle”
places her hand on my arm
and hisses into my ear to show

the proper intake of breath quick
to remember the story her muscles tell
so deep the memory of song
lies in her body

I taste the fire of the language of notes
her power to exact excellence
oh how I would sing for her