

The Work Song

Maria Muldaur

Back before the blues were blue
When the good old songs were new
Songs that may no longer please us
'Bout the darkies, about Jesus
Mississippi Minstrels, the color of molasses
Strummin' on their banjos to entertain their massas
Some said garbage, some said art
You couldn't call it soul
You had to call it heart

Backs broke, bending, digging holes to plant the seeds
The owners ate the cane, and the workers ate the weeds
Put wood in the stove and water in the cup
You worked so hard that you died standing up

When I was a little thing
My papa tried to make me sing
Home Sweet Home and Aura Lee
These are songs that my daddy taught me
Camptown Races, and Susanna Don't You Cry
Gentle Annie still brings a tear to my eye

Label it garbage, label it art
You couldn't call it soul
You had to call it heart

Backs broke, bending, digging holes to plant the seeds
The owners ate the cane, and the workers ate the weeds
Put wood in the stove and water in the cup
You worked so hard that you died standing up

Sing me songs 'bout days gone by
Make me laugh, make me cry
Break my female heart in two
Sings me songs that say "I love you"
Lower your eyes and raise your hand up to your breast
Sing me one about the sun settin' in the west

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Put wood in the stove and water in the cup
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