

The Channel Not Taken

solid
strong
wifemother
oilrag palm
laid light
upon the tiller

*I could have been a lady
And dined off silver plates
To spend a life of leisure
Behind tall mansion gates.*

elemental
weathers all
rain and wind and snow and sleet
levelling eye
set
upon the coming curve

*I would have had a handmaid
To knot and tie my hair
From a hundred shoes, she'd help me choose
The pair that I should wear.*

symphonic chug
of barge
and words:
rough-hewn
air-borne
smoky
few

*I would have enjoyed music
Or needlework or art
To sit and talk with female friends
On matters of the heart.*

custodian
of the story
guardian
of the ghosts
collector
of echoes
and keeper
of words

unwritten

*I could have been a lady
And dined off silver plates
To spend a life of leisure
Behind tall mansion gates.*

<https://www.iwm.org.uk/search/global?query=bargees>