

Susan Johnston / THREE POEMS

*UNABLE TO MAKE A POEM
I DEFY LANGUAGE*

Language is insufficient.
It is half-true, half male,
 fragmented.

It is the approach
 the airstrip, the steel rail, the bridge
 which promises other sides.

The flamenco.

Inadequate to describe
it suggests
 the flavour of skin
 the temperature of blue
eyes closed, I see
 shadows on rock.

FROM SOMEWHERE TO THE LEFT OF YOU

for Jeff, who believes me weak

It is a slow process.

Overcoming the curious propensity to
twitch a hand and bring down
rocket launchers, bullets, cold steel
the colour of shadows
on those who persist in misunderstanding.

Such ferocity is women's magic.

I am freer than you, I admit to feeling
as well as to desire, I run towards
the professors rather than away.
With frivolous laughter in one hand, a rose
between my teeth, a dagger
clenched behind my back.

I am older, too.

I left my myths drenched in blood and
scraped over quarry rock like
fingernails on a blackboard.

Were you relieved I made no scene?

If I lied and said I do not love you
only wish the weight of a fighter's body
on my soft underbelly, open wound,
would you lie with me again?

I am freer than you, I admit defeat,
I do not expect happiness

I am the eye of the storm

and I am, outside your arms,
free to take up my own.

THE RAIN GODDESS

I have always frightened the sun away,
although small children make demands.
There is winter in children too; behind the sunlight
and something small and desperate in the tininess of their hands.

I am the rain goddess,
though you who scoff at myth would disagree.
As surely as I move through every season pale as fungus
as bereft as beached cod
the rain follows me.

So does the hail.

Mud salutes me; not for the strange sisterhood of bikinis and
white sands this ungainly body wrapped in London Fog.

This year, my first, the temperature in Montreal's June is record
low. You will note that my home town, the last, is having a heat
wave, the first. You will note this with something short of
belief and long of astonishment. You will make an appointment at
a tanning parlour and note this as well.

Eventually I will leave.