

Sharon Thesen / FOUR POEMS

SONG WITHOUT WORDS

A sheepskin hung on every
cold moment that had the shape
of shoulders tired from teaching
Creative Writing. After dinner
at a friend's whose father's
wandered away again from the hospital
with a photo of his dead wife with whom
he dines, her picture propped on a water glass
across from him while the waitress
shakes her head and rips a busy page
off her order pad. Heavy rain warnings
fall on Stanley Park and on the wanderers and on
those who stay home in their suites & such,
dark gardens planted with clever
bonsai shrubbery bending like art-deco divers &
posers on crags over whom the moon reclines
dangling a star like a silver sandal.
Among floating candle flames
reflected in thick winter darkness coming down
from Whitehorse we all agreed
it was getting really cold as we sat
with our backs to the sheepskin
wringing sense from our plans in this
animal heat and dumbness.

PEDESTRIAN, ANONYMOUS

A drowsy numbness at the coffee shop,
clink of utensils on plates littered with
pale green delicate sprouts, traffic outside —

Dipping into Dante's *Inferno*
with one eye closed
burning with an irritation
of too many busy signals, being
bawled out by the pure in spirit,
made meaningless by cars going by,
pedestrian, anonymous —

After the torture chamber
of the leg-waxing salon, faint stench
of hot metal and burnt hair, a white room,
purification and preparation for paradise —

Or an outworn poetics of beards
full of butterflies. Though his kindness,
Walt Whitman's I mean, remains. It was so
personal even on the television set
we watched before we went to bed,
the voice of the commentator reading
"every part and portion of me,"
"miracles," "enjoyments" —
your fingers on the redeemed
smoothness of my thigh.

GALIANO BABY GRAND

Heron pauses in his formal wear
flattered by the moist unstable air
coming in from Pacific's
eternal rhyming with itself

while the space heater shoves dampness
around my ankles encased in sheepskin
slippers, a blue woolen scarf
around my neck like Dickens'
chilly work-house accountants
precise pennings of indebtedness
and lack — that gives them pleasure
we presume; they smile showing the
snaggled yellow teeth of sadists
left too long alone when young
watching the moonshine still
while Pappy fucked the pigs —

Okay! let's have some music now.
The maestro adjusts his tail-coat
and his monocle, puts out
a pathetic rendition of "The Moonlight Sonata"
or as they say in German "Moonshine"
despite the immense tragedy of which
abominations in the rhythm
can too easily arise...

So take care piano players. The best rest
is when the heron stops my heart.

THE WATERMELON

The clock said 10 to 3.

I went upstairs, wrote lines, crossed them out.

I felt the weight of one of those gas masks on my spirit.

"My spirit." My size 7½ shoe.
My insurance policy with Canada Life.

I suppose this comes from the pain of living, which is
like being stabbed.

Everywhere I look,
books.

I suppose Sharon Olds has just finished another
fabulous poem about her child's scalp.

Poetry: I couldn't care less.

Long lines, short lines,
two ways of suffocation.

Head down, knitting a black garment.

It won't yield. The current stops.
Thought loops back on itself, knots
tight as a tourniquet.

Stories laugh at me.

I picked up the phone.

I wrote the alphabet. Then I printed it.

Last night's dream drifts around
like colored smoke.

I've always loved rivers. Music.

Thoughts, sayings, about what goes on.
What I hear and think I know. It's saying
"That's the demon that nearly jumps out at you."

Poetry makes me feel like getting drunk. I wish
I was a man.

If I was someone else, would I prefer
their troubles to my own?

Peter swiftly washes his face, runs through his hair, brushes
his teeth, spits, towels off, reaches for briefcase on floor,
open at the top with some xeroxing sticking out.

There's nothing Southern about me.