

MUSIC FOR AN EROTIC

Sarah Lang

PROEM

Needing this skin I sing an apology:
Love's exquisite fallen ecstasies lie
common in the shaded grass; Summer,
drink in hand, tired, does not even raise
her head for my song; there are no fire
eaters, lemonade stands, snow cones —
I cannot give you a fan, your deserved
drink — consorts, comrades, companions,
I stand humble, hair hung limp, with Spring's
tired dress ashamed; I stand holding one
stileto, Summer's spoiled last margarita, and for you —
those once traveled — an invite half lost
to the heat of my hands. Come! Old Lovers
and those who still steal kisses, rub Summer's
heat from your eyes — your flesh still breathes
the tales my lungs cannot. Rise! Come! Hear
my poor song sung with an afterthought
invocation to the Beautiful-Voiced woman
(who smiles politely, smoothing her skirt) — friends —
this heat will soon end and only old tales be retold:
as quick as this heat will allow, I entreat you, come!

LAST NIGHT I DREAMT

OF SAILING SHIPS

OF AEROPLANES

In this heat, the sunflowers hang their
heads; you recall too late in the season
my yellow rain jacket, my gift of
flowers: by the blue waters, by the streets
of stores of glass, I loved you early. Yet,
I cannot tell you, here the cicadas wake
me; I have wanted too much. Foolishly,
in silence I love as a sustained secret.

IF THIS IS TO BE A LOVE SONG:

with Summer I stand trepidatory: this
dress is no comparison for a childhood
housed within walls of modern artifact; my
hands smooth a wrinkle this young heat
will not. I loved too early. Perhaps Spring
parts sorrowfully, perhaps she will demand
rain! wind! perhaps the ship will never arrive,
perhaps, in this dim early light, this dress will
clothe proudly, perhaps, even a foreign monoglot
can receive a matrimonious blessing, perhaps,
if silent, I will not be looked upon too much.

WITH MY HEAD HUNG SILENT I AM AWARE,
with painful, sympathetic embarrassment,
bored you whisper the possible avoidance
of this dull dependence. In quiet defense,
in hands opened humble, only this do I offer:
having felt this before, in succession
I am terrified of falsehoods. Wait
uttered without voice and under breath,
I am uncertain of this tired repetition:
in this promise of joy I am caught,
for a moment, tired, my eyes closed.

SWANS PASS AS I SIT SILENT: UNCERTAIN

I laugh at the wrong times. The children
swim in the Donau, the sun sets, I am
not looked upon too much. Here
I will be passed over; here I will be deceived
as we sit across from each other: your hand
not on my leg. There are no touristen
in this village, here I am deaf
and dumb. Dependent on this kiss
I have recognized my folly too late.

BOUND

I can only sing
songs to an Italian sun asleep
in the forum, the walls so far
far fallen, and the flesh that was sold here
— you cringe, and so I am pleading: save me from this
banality: alone I lie on this fallen rock,
having been numbered important, having been
bound across the Atlantic, encased in aeroplanes
and not sailing ships, for this kiss. In open shame,
in plain embarrassment: for you I hang my head. Crossing
the ocean bound for this erotic banality, and now
in this heat, I will give it all up for one map. In this
heat, I can only crawl, deaf and dumb, through
these streets. In this heat, rationality has so far fallen
toward an impossible luxury. In this late heat, I laugh:
these shoes are not made for cobblestone; I loved foolishly.

EPILOGUE

In an aureole of embarrassed shame
I sing an apology. Bound,
languishing by the loud ropes
of erotic folly, I, this apology,
fall under the weight of a kiss;
only in this heat I could return suppliant,
laughing: the nights will be cool; we will cross
the country during an eclipse; I will not be looked upon
too much. In my forced silence, unnoticed,
as the sun sets and dawn breaks ubiquitous, here,
I still remember love.