

Silences

Louise Desjardins

Translated by Brian Campbell

Silence is a warm croissant
eaten at breakfast
while listening to the weather report
with three sugarless
cups of coffee

Silence takes its shower
the door wide open
walks stark naked in the kitchen
places its dirty dishes delicately
in the dishwasher

Silence takes the subway
to observe the other silences
going to the office
every day nine to five
to drown the regrets
of their unfulfilled desires

Silence crosses in canoe
over solitary lakes
hears black flies buzz
among sun-hot blueberries
under bell jar skies

Silence is a clandestine affair
in a suburban motel
a night slashed in two
a garter belt
deep inside an attaché case

Silence has red eyes
behind black sunglasses
a brother in prison
a mother who drinks too much
an absent father
Silence is a gambling debt
a tax fraud
a little, incontinent
old man
a body buried alive
a death by slow degrees

Silence has patchy, purple hair
lulls itself to sleep
through a shelterless night
wears a gold necklace
old shoes

Silence chews away
the great epics from eternity
leaving fairy tales writ large
on the columns of oblivion

Silence doesn't say anything anymore
plumps down at noontime
before a ham sandwich
chokes on headlines
and blaring ads

Silence suddenly breaks up
over wild strawberry drapes
sings something a cappella
resounding to the rafters
of sunken cathedrals

Silence plays slow waltzes
on the piano
and sonatas carried off
by winds
that lift the heart
with longing

Silence reads its horoscope
every Saturday in
La Presse
does the crosswords
takes in the classifieds
and syndicated serials
translated from American

Silence is the underside of destiny
the silk lining
of a great love
that boldly unfurls
over years over days

Silence is at Daddy's house
for the weekend
it will be back Sunday evening
after the movies
luggage under its arm

Silence is a camera eye
an encyclopedia left on a shelf
a deaf-mute
a sub-zero cold

Silence doesn't have a word to say
has but one word to give
doesn't mouth that word
silence consents—