



### Beams of Cedar and Rafters of Fir

Do not remember  
the form of the tale  
your flesh in supporting  
Forget  
my brave one  
my harvest  
Your grandfather's lands  
hard, rich and empty

The world is a green thorn tree  
costly  
but never so soft as  
late rain on violets

Hard  
And your father's dream  
fastened to you like a  
shadow  
A shadow of empty hands

The beams of our house are cedar  
And our rafters of fir  
my brave one  
my harvest  
my hard one  
my eyes

### December Carol

The lord of the snows is a lover of horses,  
And collects burnished manes on a cord by the gate,  
Where with velvet-warm hides fresh from chase in the stone-way,  
They pursue flashing sparks from their hoofs on the bridge.

The lord of the snows is a lover of horses,  
With saddles embroidered with scenes from the hunt  
I covered brown back with a cloth made of oak-leaf,  
And with grey-threaded reins drew my wealth to his door.

The lord of the snows is a master of fancy,  
A lover of horses and a keeper of gates,  
A master of dreams which the bold horses carry,  
And a guardian of those brought on grey trembling sides.

## POEMS

### Canticle

A poet can tie up the night about the trees'  
bodies in silver braid. I cannot. And the words  
know why.

The trees have heavy arms, marbled with  
frost, but my words have taken the strength from  
them in their sleep.

What shall we say to the mother of the  
swallow as her nest becomes straw? That we are  
all straw at daybreak?

The snow is come, and is drawn into the nest  
of the grass with a ribbon of spring. I am no  
poet. I have only a shawl made of dreams of straw.

## BY

### That Ruined Palace

I hear your hasty footsteps to  
The shattered turret of my waste.  
Unhealthy gloom witholds its armour  
Before the pennant of your race.

At court where many jesters tempt me,  
Where every courtier wears a crown,  
I scratched on broken tiles a story,  
Unwilling prisoner of a clown.

These noble thoughts for one in bondage  
Had fallen in the tower's dark,  
When still I heard your spirit enter  
That ruined palace of my heart.

### The Ghost Ship of Chaleur Bay

The snake curled about the rock at noon  
Holds no fear. It is when his wooden eyes  
Turn to evening ice that  
The trembling water tells its tale.

Flames, frozen into the past.  
Fire and water and the stormclad  
Figure of a woman  
Ravaging the waves.

And the silence of dawn  
Reveals the pine tree mast  
And the anguish of its branches.

### Premature Spring

Two seasons from wonder, pretender sun  
Scatters the floods, who dance like sullen children  
And harbour in night-fogs the skeleton of sultry winter.  
Fat, snow-fed usurper, he lacks the breath  
To raise a summer court upon the throne,  
But builds a mudwalled castle in the park.  
He holds the people's crown, a parliament of southern ministers,  
Waiting for a tax to purchase jewelled sceptres,  
Then revolt.

# SHEELAGH RUSSELL

