

Kari Bremnes, Montreal

I saw that she was rather young.
She was standing at the counter of a dusty old arcade.
She must have weighed at least 200 pounds,
But everything she sold was slim and finely made.
I'd seen nothing so enchanting for so long.
This was Montreal, I was hiding from the rain.
She wore black fingernails and went right into a song,
As she slowly came to me with this refrain:

I'm selling all my mother's clothes:
Her lingerie, her skirts and coats.
Her beauty was as pure as this affair is sordid.
I'm selling all my mother's clothes,
And, yes, I find it morbid.

She chain-smoked as she handled dark velour.
These hand-made things she showed me in her dramatic fashion.
She saw for me these clothes held an allure,
The moir and silk seemed to stir my passion.
It was Dior, it was Chanel, a certain cut, a seamless seam.
The black-nailed girl could clearly see my weakness.
A weakness fed by a strange and sensuous dream.
With a joyless laugh she said those lines again:

I'm selling all my mother's clothes:
Her lingerie, her skirts and coats.
Her beauty was as pure as this affair is sordid.
I'm selling all my mother's clothes,
And, yes, I find it morbid.

She showed me last a handbag made of velvet.
In it were expensive stones like amethyst and jade.
Black sapphires had been shaped just like a rose.
For the funeral of a lover her mother had them made.
It probably was Paris where he died, is what she said,
As this big forgotten daughter glanced towards the window.
I'll sell the sapphires cheap, the man's long dead!
With a vacant laugh she gave those lines again:

I'm selling all my mother's clothes:
Her lingerie, her skirts and coats.
Her beauty was as pure as this affair is sordid.
I'm selling all my mother's clothes,
And, yes, I find it morbid.