

from *You Kiss by th' Book*

Gary Soto

MACBETH 4.1.44

By the pricking of my thumb,
By the weather report in my bones,
By my hair that went before I was thirty,
By my five children and my two dead wives,
By my life, I do declare innocence.
Neither the pig I did steal nor the cow.
They arrived in my yard because of lightning.
They feared for their dumb lives.

By the rivers in my palm,
By my tongue that relishes honey,
By the scent of burning leaves (the lightning!),
By my belly that is always present, for I'm fat as a barrel,
By the angels that visit, by the devil that frets,
By, again, my five children and two dead wives,
By my life, I do declare innocence
And do fear death more than I fear that pig or cow.

Henry IV 2.2.5

Doth it not show vilely in me to desire small beer?
I have no ambition but home,
And within these walls my wife and darling girl.
I drink my share, and I eat my bread.
Cheese does stick to me.
The potato softens me,
And peppered meat makes me devilishly merry.

I hammer the fiery irons for the cooper.
My hands are thick, my beard red as fire.
I begin work in the dark and head home in the dark,
Soot in all my creases.

On Sundays I visit the graves of my two sons,
Who bravely sailed early from life.
I have tears for them, and for their goodbyes.
They have traveled farther than I wish to go.

Timon of Athens 3.1.29-30

Every man has his fault, and honesty is his,
As when the youthful cadet reported to the captain,
“Sir, the coins are gone.” He spoke of a purse
Taken off a drowned laborer pulled from the Thames.

The captain looked upon the honest youth,
And absorbed every bit of his nature—
Let me not trust this youth, let me not forget him.
The captain walked away. Coins jingled in his pocket
When he departed the morgue, stairs worn
From dead men’s heels slapping against the stone.

Two Gentleman of Verona 5.2.7

Love will not be spurred to what it loathes.
Young husband brighten your complexion

And consider the country lovers in a tangle
And repeat the sweet favors at home.

Julius Caesar, 1.2.79-80

But for mine own part, it was Greek to me.
His hands spoke clearer than his words.
They flew about like gesturing birds
Until I understood that he had sardines
For sale or barter. The fisherman pointed
To the basket and turned back the cloth:
The frisky sardines were leaping about,
All alive, fresh from sea,
With mouths gasping.

I pouched five sardines,
Each with a single eye on me,
And brought them home.
The cat spoke up
And he I understood—
Dancing on his hind legs,
The little rascal got a head,
Two slippery fins,
And from my boot
A nudge out the door.

Richard II 5.5.49

I wasted time, and now time doth waste me.
My legs are weak as withering vines.
My teeth fall like coins from my baggy mouth.
My eyes leak, my heart does not measure up,
My toe sparks from gout.
I'm old, unlearned. The letter R
Is the same as letter P,
Just with a crutch. I wasted myself
In one pub called The Eel & the River.
I drowned myself there,
Lost my best teeth not over a woman
But a dog—a dog for Christ sakes!
I could have been a sailor, or a chimney-sweep—
Ay, the dirt I might have swallowed!

O dear, I lay my head on tables,
Drunk was I. I did love once
And fathered children that sallied
Among the chickens.

What claim do I have to be buried in earth?
I never worked there, not once.
If you see a log floating the Thames,
It is I lying prone,
My lips sipping all they can drink.

Sonnet 18, 1

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
You are light-skinned and graceful,
And you are like the fields in your sway.
Almond-eyed, pouty and naked by a river . . .
I close my eyes and see you!
You are the second sister among four,
And more beautiful than all three on their best days.
Your left cheek is a peach,
And the right cheek yet another.

Darling, I beseech you, allow me your hand.
Or if not your hand then your pinkie,
Delicate little hook that reels me in.

Sonnet 110, 5

Most true it is that I have looked on truth
And found no wealth in it,
No prospect of acquiring fields
And the very beasts of the field.
Truth keeps you poor as a mouse
And colored the same—
Gray, with only whiskers to nibble.

Truth is God, a distant friend I admit.
But for me I prefer a hussy who'll unbutton
My breeches in the field, lay down willingly,
And point her lusty legs to the sky,
Most true, most true.