

# Definitions

## Susan Sherman

1  
I think its coming close to death  
that does it

both others  
& your own  
that magnifies the values  
begins the definitions

This morning  
mild at last  
after weeks of chill  
Streets heavy with water  
People stepping  
cautiously  
hardly knowing where  
to place their feet  
so accustomed to barriers  
of salt & ice

My mind resembles those winter streets  
grey  
with sludge  
The snow cover melted  
The sidewalks washed of unfamiliar  
glare

2  
After all she said  
What difference does it make  
That's the reason I never write  
hardly speak of what is me

I begin to answer glibly stop  
Held myself in identical fear  
My own touch tentative  
almost an excuse  
like making love to someone  
for the first time  
or the third (which is always harder)  
once you begin to know experience  
another  
the tension of your hair brown  
streaked with grey  
the lines of  
your face like wires rushing through  
my hands the pressures of your past  
your forehead your knees

3  
Warm outside the steam  
continues forced by habit  
I open the window throw the  
oracle trace the heat  
The heart thinks constantly it says  
One constant then the heart Another  
the drawing back  
Four o'clock  
two hours till dawn Nightmare

image your face  
surrounded by strangers  
Beloved you turn  
away  
Sweat mixes with blue flowered sheets  
The constant fear  
To push out  
finally cautiously tentatively  
and find  
an empty place

4  
Death brings us close to it  
Death itself  
forgetting  
And we the living  
wanting to remember  
not wishing to be forgotten  
separated  
from what we hold most near  
I hold you for a moment lose you  
watch you disappear  
I hold you  
for a lifetime lose you

the next year the next morning  
the next minute the next breath

5  
You tell me  
What can I say to that  
young woman 18 years  
of age

That I at 38 must once more lay aside  
all sense of definition order  
Must once more carefully measure  
the accumulation of my years  
Or should I say  
her question can be answered  
in specific needs others  
and her own  
But she's asking  
more than that We both know  
what she means

The only real difference being death  
The one who stops the heart

*Susan Sherman's two books of poetry, With Anger/With Love and Women Poems Love Poems, are available through Out and Out Books. She is currently working on a prose book about creativity and social change.*