Fall 1975

Piano Piece for Bar Exercises

Nance Van Winckel
PIANO PIECE FOR BAR EXERCISES

For my sister, Sarah

The blood you left on the piano keys had dried.
Webs and dust lay heavy on the dull flat strings.
Winter beats closer than death at my temples,
pounding its same black note to the walls again.
And this morning I could feel once more the sharp
jerk of the room, watched as the pedals jumped,
and with one hand resting on the chair's straight back
my fingers twisted around the cool black bar,
the arc of my foot holds tight against my knee.

In the grey light I watch now as a shadow
bends itself backward, the arm’s thin stretch
leading it down, then the quick crash of your feet
on the pedals and somewhere women begin
moaning and the window shakes and I see
the shadow unfurl itself across the walls,
the easy split and crack of such unsure bones
and the sounds of the women are screams now
and the screams and the music are one smooth chord
until the final fall of the shadow,
until the white keys drip red to your feet;
the music fading to its own liquid stillness.
But the women with their constant screams are strong,
are pulling open our faces and moving in.