

# 20190624\_theslowdown\_20190624\_128

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

poet, poems, shakespeare, meekly, slow, fitting, vincent, knelt, gestures, dressed, arm, lifted, snip, attributing, gouged, vonda, stood, understanding, depicts, malaise

00:06

I'm Tracy k Smith, and this is the slow down.

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I was 21 and a senior in college. When I first became brave enough to tell people I was a poet. It makes me smile now, thinking how often I explained myself using that term. I even remember doing so once in a Shakespeare class I was taking, we had zeroed in on one remarkable line to which a fellow student was attributing a kind of superhuman understanding of the human condition. I too believed Shakespeare was a genius. But I also needed to believe that he was a person, a poet sitting at a desk, listening to words and asking them to guide him toward understanding. My comment, which attempted to argue down my classmate just a bit from her theory of Shakespeare's divinity began. As a poet,

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I cringe at the pretension of it.

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But I also know how much I needed for the great poet to be human. So that I, an ordinary human, could also dream of becoming a great poet. That year, referring to myself again and again as a poet, usually with adults who inquired about what I was planning to do. After graduation. I was asked by several people if I knew the work of Edna St. Vincent Millay. And when I admitted that I didn't, they launch into a spiel about how I must read her, especially being a poet. She's absolutely brilliant, her readers would explain. Once or twice, I stood there feeling like a fraud, while people

recited lines from her poems or poems in their entirety. Once I read Millay, I understood her appeal. Her poems possess a beautiful meticulous attention to language, and a powerful emotional intelligence. They offer terms for thinking about love, heartache in the world beyond the self. Millay was wildly famous in her lifetime, and then her fame became a source of resentment for other poets. She fell out of fashion during the Age of modernism. Though her poems remain remarkable. Today's poem, *Malaise*, the fitting depicts a woman at the same stress, you've lost weight, the seamstress says again and again in French, and in subtle gestures, it becomes clear that the reason for this sudden change is the end of love. The fitting by Edna St. Vincent Millay. The fitter said Madame was Ave meekly and pinch together a handful of skirt at my hip to my, I said, and looked away slowly, and took my under lip softly between my teeth. Rip, rip, out came the scene and was pinned together in another place. she knelt before me, a hard working woman, with a familiar and unknown face, dressed in lumpy. Black, very tight in the arms eye, and smelling of sweat. She rose, lifting my arm, and set her cold shears against me. Snip snip, her knuckles gouged my breast. My droopy eyes lifted to my garden, eyes in the glass, and glanced away. As from someone they had never met. Kuma dama meekly cried, the vonda's coming in with dresses over her arm. C'est la shala, I said, looking out into the sunny tops of the horse chestnuts, and indeed it was very warm. I stood for a long time. So looking out into the afternoon, thinking of the evening, and do you.

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