

20190717_theslowdown_20190717_128

Wed, 9/30 7:29PM 5:00

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

shoes, heels, worn, pair, loafers, revived, repairman, mended, straps, man, feet, kitten heels, american public, barefooted, scrubbed, taciturn, stapled, soul, brooklyn heights, splashing

00:06

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

00:22

When I packed up for college back in 1990, I took sneakers and loafers. I probably also brought some nerdy deck shoes, and maybe even a pair of heels. But by the time my sophomore year rolled around, nearly all of those shoes had been replaced by a pair of black cowboy boots. I wore them every day even in snow. By the time I came home for the holidays, they were worn down at the heel, and a coin sized hole had been worn through each soul. I was afraid I'd have to let them go. But my mother took them to the shoe repairman who resoled them, built the heels back up and polished them to a high shine, reviving them to their former glory. I used to have a great shoe repairman in Brooklyn Heights. He brought a pair of kitten heels back to life. Many a time you need someone you can rely on in a city with abundant cobblestones. But once in haste, I surrendered a pair of agonizing heels to a different shop, a watch repair shop with a shoe repair sign in the window. A young man took an inch off the heels. But when I put the shoes back on, the angles were all off. I slipped and tripped. Even my back was out of whack. The shoes had been ruined. These are the stories revived in my mind by today's poem. This is test gallaghers What does it say? That the only shoe repairman in town has retired. He who mended suitcases and purse straps, who loved to chat but could turn taciturn how he laughed over my fondness for shoes that were clearly worn out. fair weather shoes he pronounced like a benediction, trying with seasons to extend the life of my loafers. A tall man with a nimble fingers on an oversized hand. The gaze surgeon like how I admired your Lazarus revivals for its feet in failing shoes that rule the world. barefooted. We had the way of birds equipped from the womb, splashing in puddles running after dark, burying our troubles and joys place to place. addiction to shoes came later. Whether quietly falling apart, coming unglued or scrubbed down at the heels. They'd still find a

dance floor once in a while and shake the body around to remind it how in or out of shoes. Everything depends on the feet. In your imagination toward repair, you gave hope and salvage to those without money for new shoes, or who, like me, had to eke out their days with unmanageable feet, depending on a makeshift tangle of sandals, a few cloth straps stapled to a cork soul, thereby asking you to take up the world of miracles, shoes that had worn themselves two feet until pain, took off its hat and stood on the curb. You seemed to connect with us through time cheating it day after day with small momentous restorations. And what after all, is a world that walks around only in new shoes. That stops asking for a guy like you a man true to this gradually falling apart era alive to our need to be treated mercifully. Our wish to be mended and recommended someone to companion our fragile hopes in the form of these empty doubt. unsalvageable steps the slowdown is a production of American public media in partnership with the Poetry Foundation.