

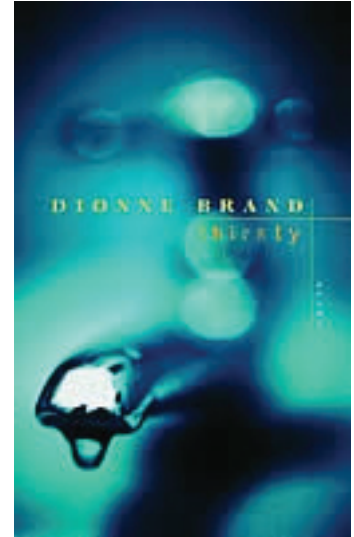
Voices
from the
Gaps *Thirsty*
Dionne Brand

It might be said that a modern city is a mass of humanity but also a mass of inhumanity. A place of people and things, seemingly in harmony yet oblivious to each other and to their surroundings. A place where Thoreau noted “the masses of men lead lives of quiet desperation.” It is in this city that Dionne Brand stages a collection of poems in a book titled *Thirsty*.

Dionne Brand is a Caribbean woman writer, born in Trinidad in 1953. She attended the University of Toronto, where she received a B.A. in English and Philosophy, and then an M.A. in the Philosophy of Education. Currently she still resides in Toronto, Canada, where she is not only a renowned poet and author, but she also has taught literature and creative writing at Guelph University, Toronto University, and York University. Brand has received the Governor General’s Award for Poetry and the Trillium Award as well.

In *Thirsty*, Brand creates a portrait in words of a city where there is beauty. She uses description as well as an interweaving of city dwellers’ daily routines, and the loveliness they meet. Yet Brand portrays in a dreadfully articulate way the horrific side of a city as well. She writes of the brutality and violence which inflicts upon the citizens in the city, as well as the ugliness of an “urban barracon” (p 11) face, or front, of the city. Almost instantaneously the poems flow between this perceived goodness and darkness, in the way perhaps one might feel wandering through city streets.

There is a continuing theme of thirstiness in the book as well, which the reader is aware of as soon as the title is read. It relates wholly with the idea of the city, how one can yearn so agonizingly for a simple comfort to sustain life, ironically in the middle a bustling center where one may assume that comfort could abound. Brand repeatedly describes a man dying, with his parting word being “thirsty.” Throughout the text the reader searches for what could be a relief to the thirst. Human contact is a possibility, understanding and a comforting connection, is another. It is a text which one must internalize and search for the truth. In this way the theme of thirstiness demands participation of the audience.



Publisher: McClelland & Stewart, Toronto, 2002.



Thirsty Dionne Brand

Thus it is a greatly interactive book of poems, which is hypnotizing and possible haunting, for a reader. It is a collection recommended to those who search for the connection and reasoning behind the musty concrete cities of society in modern day, with the sincerity and heart that Brand so artfully crafted.

Works Cited

Brand, Dionne. *Thirsty*. Toronto: McClland & Stewart, 2002.
Canadian Poets: Dionne Brand, Biography. U of Toronto. 4 Oct. 2004.

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