

Sunday, September 20, 2009

[Jim Carroll on Reading Raymond Chandler: Issa's Sunday Service, #21](#)

Sadly, today's edition of *Issa's Sunday Service* caps off a week of tribute posts for [Jim Carroll](#). Happily, we still have his work, as long as *we're* alive, to turn to for solace, instruction, and enjoyment. This week's LitRock song is by the Jim Carroll Band: "Three Sisters:"

But she just wants to lay in bed all night
Reading Raymond Chandler.

I've been thinking about another of the song's [featured on the blog this week, "It's Too Late."](#) I remember Jim and the band appearing live on one of the nationally syndicated late night television shows, possibly *Saturday Night Live*, and performing it. He performed an alternative version of these opening lines:

It's too late
To fall in love with Sharon Tate
But it's too soon
To ask me for the words I want carved on my tomb

It's probably hard to imagine today that the reference to Sharon Tate, one the victims slaughtered by the Manson family, was powerful and shocking, but, indeed, it was, particularly in a "pop" song, one being performed before millions of people on television. Here is the alternate opening as I remember it:

It's too late
To fall in love with Sharon Tate
But it's too soon
To trace the path of the bullet in the brain of Reverend Moon

I say "as I remember it" because I can't find any reference to it anywhere. There are some [live performance videos](#) of the song from a show called Fridays, but it doesn't have the alternate reading. I wonder if anybody out there remembers that performance because those alternate lines about Reverend Moon dealt in poetic prophecy, not realized, and were every bit as shocking, if not more so, in the context of the place and time than the Tate lines.

This week's featured poem is from [Lilliput Review](#) #29, February 1992. As elegy's go, it's a fit way to close:

last will and testament

make a wind chime
from my bones,

hang it
where the poets speak.

let me be a part
of the conversation,
life.

Charlie Mehrhoff