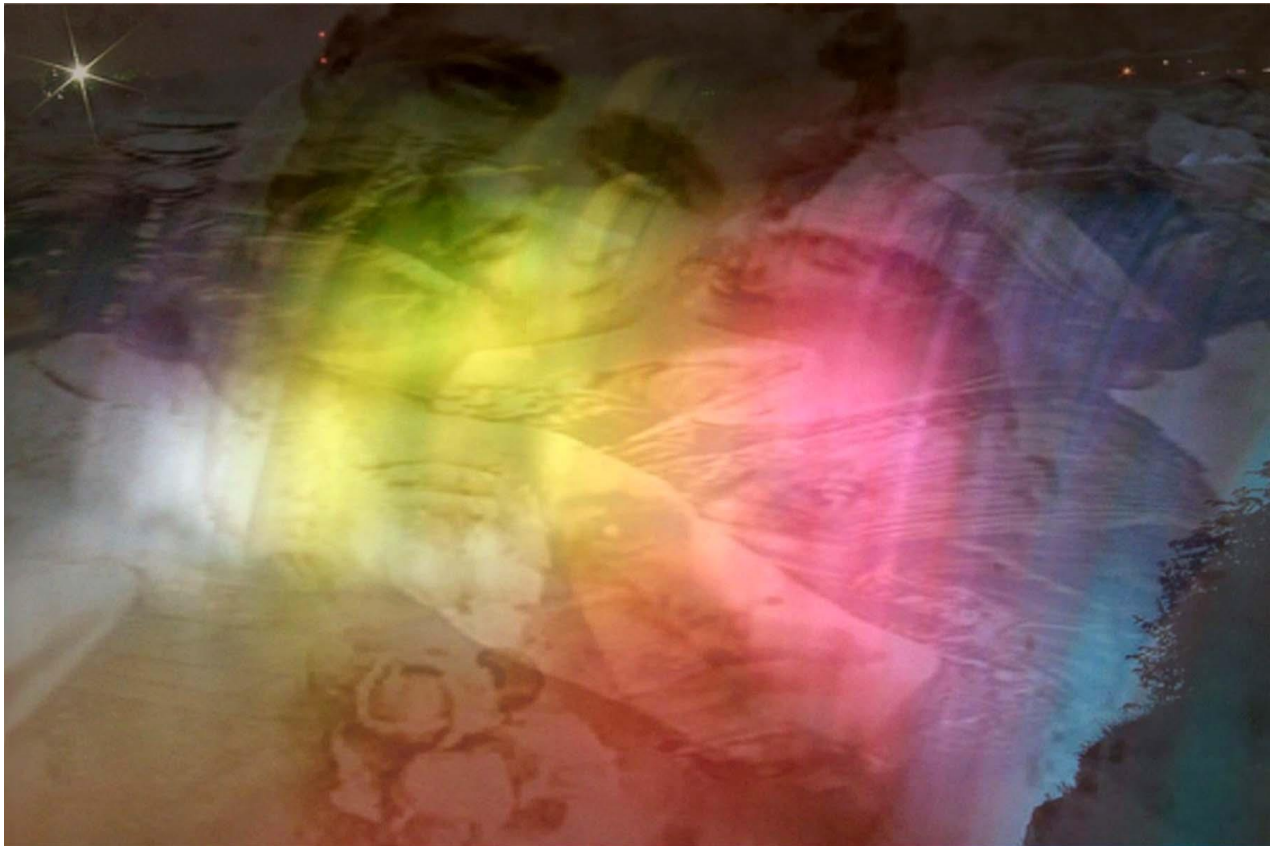


Revisiting Love Poems

By Stephen Mead



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Loving

To know another's pain & plunge
further, to explore, to hold it, a pistil
flowering within...

To know consolation as desire &
find the boomerang of it returning
the same on passion's Catherine Wheel,
that rack too of roses suddenly thorn-less
once fear's disclosure becomes the surprise
of acceptance yet, of tender mutuality...

Oh darling, turn me over. Go up.
For all the time it has taken
now is the right time.

Lowering the Lights

Grey eyes, wolf's, cold steel
in the glint with fire behind, steel
of a new street grid, a warmth
in that whiteness
glowing gold through the black
of its own holocaust....

Tender yet, it is animal fragrant,
mortal through the mist where
in absence, presence, absence,
we, hunted, touch through
tenements, the graffiti of city woods.

I draw close my curtains
as though inside the vestments
of your flesh robes, the fur & grey
gazes you pierce the lowered lamp
lights with,

& also my beating heart.

Penetration

First there's hurt,
then the going glows golden,
ruby in center, blue nimbus at tip.

All of this whiteness
motion melts
sensuous, scientific, earth solid
spirituous,

Clay of your clay, of mine,
blood beating,

every nerve endings
font,

Each chemistry more chemical
hovers rhythmic essence, a transposition,
a rearrangement, navigation

riveting in, the assemblage
a pilgrimage:

Lead us or lose us
through this intimate montage.

Let Me Be Weak

A half hour, an hour.
No one has to know.
You can fold your hands
about my wrists
as though they were stems.
You can hold your arm
about my back,
the shoulders,
the hips,
and lean me right over.
I'll be malleable satin.
I'll be soft water showering.
I'll surrender, submit,
passive but for passion
and a will that,
for awhile, just
needs to yield.

Feel.
These are my edges,
and with them I've buffed days.
I've reflected the hard facts.
Yet I trust you will not snap
what time itself
has yet to.

Andes

Of your ankles,
mouth's view down here where
a country of cats chasing crickets &
drop cloth impressions for paintings
are the horizons our tenderness contours...

This floor, this studio,
Autumn time
with not a thing as sunset clear
but the light's white tang
suffused with the whole range
of yellow's spectrum
against knees sloping up &
the plateaus of calves &
ribs as a boat
my probing nose nudges
as life itself is nudging us:

Live this. Live this now.

I Scrutinize

Everything which
may make
moving hard.
Hard to move really
scrutinizing this much.
Balance struck
is enough forget,
enough not looking,
Is trust being blind.
Valuing your face,
the faith it gives,
requires a wide gaze.
I drink & drink.
Here, drink back.
I lower lids, put
the lid on
& yes, yes, yes
is what Molly Bloom cried

Stars on Our Ceiling

Tulips unfold,
tulips, an occasion of Kaleidoscope
fireworks, that quiet collision
of the inner blue, the penumbra
white, & their core of yellow flame...

I shut my eyes & on our ceiling
comes the same pattern.

We are dreaming of accordions
& Paris by night in 1920.

We are dreaming the ceiling &
the ceiling dreams of us
as two tulips nude on some cloth
surrounded by candles

fathoms fathoms down.

You Must Remember This

Go left, then south-----
Shoulder blades, the curved flats
perfect for hands folding over
collar bones, that small hollow
in the middle before
heading down...

Before, heading, lips, a pair
of monarchs landing, brushing
a bit, here, now there, spools
of warm light, soft energy between
suddenly sigh vibrant
to flow, deposit one million
fingers with mouths, hearts,
while eyes, closed, grow full.

Cavalcade

Faces swim back to me,
the fluid screen's billboards,
films of such intimacy
where the sensuous had grace...

Also, this waterfall coursing
brings limbs, settings, charms-----
Here the vistas of a breeze blown curtain,
how light fell upon gossamer, & how the rays
felt with another or you, a cat on my chest...
Various cats, various chests, & scenery is
a terminus
where the prayer of being let be
is enlarged quite simply.

So I promise the allotments of tenderness
sparkling like tickertape to spiral us on.

Immaculate Black
(for Langston)

This has texture, warmth:
Rain bark, river silk, tender
intensity held
nose-mouthed,
mole fingers, manna eyes,
willow flesh slipping over
touching first lips,
Dahlia prints,
panther breath
soft on down the back.

Hours Of

Mouths,
their pleasures stretching,
navigable, into eternal spools,
into lifetimes of telephone lines
where kisses are taxis
in cinematic synapses lighting
faces, angelic with experience
travelling, translucent through
eyes of wonder,
through fingers of innocence
learning intimacy is
always
here

here where
senses sing clear

after the agony.

Losing Geography

Fog comes on, fog, as any novice knows,
being its own truth
over time &
over time
we move, gaining geography only
in our marrow, the residue of this flat,
that house with
the avenues, even water bodies between,
no matter how labeled or how often traveled,
belonging to most any time/place
when faces fill hearts, feed dreams, faces

being the real sign posts, guides
as in touchstone/lodestar,
guides despite the seldom, guides
despite frequency, as you are someone's
landscape of cartwheels, somebody's chosen
breath-lit ocean, & me, me too
perhaps I am your country.

Hips

They fit good as silverware,
together a remarkable symmetry:
angles alive
& it feels just right how
fingers may play a part in the pattern:
small rivers branching, clasped by banks,
clasped always as roots
strongest at the central point
where lifting, a kind of flight comes in,
angel angles of loins,
limbs, faces so close
gravity can hardly sustain the embrace
pulling souls upward
into the deep, the hold.

Almost All

Wings I see
in dawn's blue light threading me
through tapestries of the green aqueous,
the light of our limbs weight,
the radiant fringe, skin's edge,
a peacock's aura, those haloes
of great shine, richest coloring
in the reach between what I take in
& give back full, sensuous, spirituous
as oriental erotica in its silk scrim link
to that larger space of divine Prussian blue,
golden topaz, stained glass emerald
bright ruby in the caressing clutch-rhythm,
the life seed of seas whether we climax
as one or dissipate in other arms, different
states, for I am still placed down your spine
as an arc, & your system, in constellations,
still correlates its star sparks
all down the neurons
of my own nerves,
my own vertebrae.

Kiss Me

It might be sordid, the bed spins and fingers
of impossibly gentle depravity You know
that of course, my prose-puckered lips
presently languishing silence except
for these brief exclamations,
these emissions of air.

How strange really
the way faces fit together,
a Jigsaw of angles scarcely aware
of the hazards of noses poking out
eyes. One must be anthropological,
objective, when studying the erogenous.
Either that, or Groucho Marx, in order
to keep perspective from flowing off
lost in a fluid of feeling which pays
therapist's phone bills and lets
ghosts leak from mirrors.

Who are you? What a question
and what wants stampede to tear
asunder or reaffirm! Tongues of lust,
tender angel fire, the carnal mind
and loins of cannibals rationalizing
survival's need with a virgin's
merciful sensitivity spreading
fear, sacred tenderness, pure
as complications on this altar.

No. No. It's quite simple.

I know how and the reasons why
cats purr. Their wisdom ripens,
mistletoe-right. It's above us, close
as smoke. Am I looking too deeply?

Wait a minute. Don't. Ok.

Come here.

Desperation (II)

Who
would do-----
bring the progression on
with a look, with not trying
to look though
body language can't silence
secrecy.
Really,
the feeling's obvious, that
picked up undercurrent
sensibilities may put down.
Don't.
Even if you're exhausted, spent
your last buck, have one cigarette
left & this planet's pace
seems out of synch.

These
passing people are
Mickey Mouse doing helium, these
others, under molasses &
even the buildings, the trees
are silly

putty until the second you stop
swirling in this funhouse & breathe
things as they are.

Scared?
How bad can it be? Awfully,
I know, sometimes, as if there aren't
angels, & baby, you're an adult
with a child's unsheltered outlook
looking out (look out, look out)
& somewhere else

my gaze knows our
clothes could fall away
with a little of the absurd,
with a whole heap

of need.

Patches

I remember them especially
on knees just beginning to come
loose the flannel the striped & above
this were other seams split with
room enough for a mouth seeking
the skin's quilt it was it is all
so flashlight lit a sort of dream the
fabric the touch the tap-
estried a face fingers traveled lace
satin cotton the curves of fringe
scalawag's hirsute with the tones that
resilience of trust given giving
way that night inside your jacket
zipped up under stars beneath
cloud streams as if we fit like threads
were really a part mosai ced your but
tons & arms & eyes gleaming from the white
so clear so dark on mine

Beard Burns

The soft, the sought scratches,
a hundred stiff bristles
learning to yield.
A cheek will accept them,
lips, & other places too.
Certainly the flesh will say
the rough has a place here, come
on then, pores spread, melt
like magma & shine a little
from what rubs.
Funny, not to feel scorched,
the wondrous contact hardly
leaving a mark
but for the knowledge,
good, good, his face was
that close &
over, all
over right
here
&
here.

The Men

slept with
& little sleep there
really & love there
somewhere for the wrong
the right reasons & reasons the voices
of many different spirits...

you've given
the earth my body back to me says this one
given the country rooftop high in my veins
the veins in excelsis sky landscape roots
to remember to remember...

christ says another whose arms are these
now in somebody's some body's not mine

not so pure says a third you mustn't be
have a drink little bird bird here
a little blue pretty quiet quiet baby let
yourself be be ready self for gospel strains
night trains a wilderness city fill up

fill up empty out empty in in
innocence cynicism sin sin
religion in in time passing
passing time time up in up
in hurry slow oh
shut up & come

come kiss me
come kiss me

Equine Revelry

A fascination with stallions, such passionate gallops,
my face, chest against necks, clutching shoulders, all
stirrups & flying, turning over the surf to welcome flesh
like the wind...

Could that breeze be a tempest?
My, I feel sky, how it moves through & about you.
The serenity of textures rolls with what's weathered.
Unfolding, I climax. You mount, re-enter
the long mouth of this tunnel, this cavern of intimacy.

I know it sounds sexual, but here it's simply the spirit
merging further along boundaries where breath
senses the exploration...

Oh let me be drawn into your firm reins, the true peak
of this steed, a tenderness unmeasured.
I've been acquainted with mavericks & kingpins,
yet never dreamt wildest of this most generous breed.

Are you mythic, a Pegasus, or can these mere wings
be instinct?

Let's define a new feeling while probing that answer.

The Alms of Passion

Around your eyes
you have such tattoos:
Peacock-hued phoenix wings
hinting of resurrection,
& your torso, angel Lazarus,
is shaved perfectly bare.
Each nipple is a fruit
where another needle
has etched wild ponies
head to head
in a heart shape.
I can put a tongue
or a hand out,
taste & pet
that sweet suede
your very flanks mirror
with hooves & a gentle
breadth soft as unfurled
Fires.

Wings come from your back
also, to go with the dove
you present, magical
madrigal, wolf-eyed, unblinking
as I lean to encircle
the great trunk,
the banyan you are.

Wearing Red

The various shades:
a neck of bright cherry,
scarlet for the heart,
cedar feet, burgundy legs...

No one is bleeding, nor
is it sweet rose, nor is it valentine.
Yes, the cheeks could be Snow
White's apple. Yes, fire, yes,
war paint...

Yet all clots break & flow
without being a wound.
Yet all is safe & sane as the flame
that is just a match used briefly...

Heat: but the warmth is no inferno.
Shine: but not of gasoline.
Friend, see crystal.
Here is the clear flesh.
Not a puzzle to figure.
Here is touch feeling touch &
the blood of love thick as any groin.

Still: more expressive.
Still: not mere loins,
& if you cut your thumb
& if I cut mine

brothers could not be more open.

Ruby

In your ear, *Somebody's* Mother's
favorite relic worn on days of
celebration: ours'.

Later, when the evenings began
turning the color of jade
I asked you to remove it
like a wedding band &
we lay on sheets Roussea
would be proud of.

There were also blinds,
soft fuchsia, made from Chinese
paper, & a battered window fan,
circa WW II, which, when first
turned on, rattled like a helicopter,
& then, just when sleep neared, became
more a train. God, it was hot,
the humidity wilting walls, curling
posters while I was damp musk
under your dry wood until you dipped
me, ivory, into shades cool, deep, &
like magi frankincense, myrrh, I gave
myself streaming to your jungle
jungle line.

Sad Backs

Denoting no sex really,
only slopes
set a certain way,
weary angles to measure
by consoling hands
that vanish
when touch is sensed
by this xylophone
of flesh
in *Thinker* pose
of blood, cells, muscles,
this vessel ebbing
life's tides
between shoulders,

wings unseen.

Egg

Nog of nogs, the creamy yolks
in a globule
with straws, the pinprick holes
in shells, the insides, an elixir
for mural mediums, the suspensions,
the great oracles of paint...

Such is the ritual of what you do
on my flesh.

Here we drink, breathe fire tinctures,
the ageless grog of the primitive,
Viking-furred, glistening holiday lit.

Now

how warm:
Two toasts we are proposed to each other,
sipping time, all time love makes, like us
open & nude.

His Touch

Has come
over long distances
as no rocket could.
This is a second focus:
Fingers bringing docks,
bringing harbor fog &
I can't get enough of
such stretching, such
heights, a trapeze between
oceans for secret cartwheels,
for the flame flowering out
of a cut open palm...

It flickers, its tongue a heart &
what space to traverse with no
other bestowal but faith wounded
then refueled by time?

The blood has that anthem
baring landscapes as veils
of dreams peeling off.
God, how the layers sigh:
Onion skins, transparencies
intimacy defines even more clearly.

Come close, hush my mumbling,
you whose letters have been whispers
fine as hair softly curling on arms.
I sleep with my head there against
the pages, their many hues
& days lengthen
& long nights...

Love, our mouths are scribbling pens
'til we can dispense with them &

be more than ink.

I Know Your Toes

Two, thick as people
at the tips, but long, sensitive,
afraid to grumble.

The smallest are sort of pawns,
pulpit-less Jacks, curving
as if from bondage.

All ten together are a motley
loveliness, wriggling little but
given grass, a room of water,
they'd sing like seals, such
flips & thumps from being worn
rather flat on the bottom...

Still, miracles, each sole
bends, rounds up, the silk
that knows bones, that cloth
of duration which purrs,
sometimes moans, softly,
if given to fingers of instant
expertise. So much
grows from here, extends,
a cathedral & it's to worship,
forget the world for this world
that connection's centered
& thumbs circle out.

Your Scent

Arms, the sparse
thickening dark in that field
at a slope you exposed
the chest of once
just to check
what faint moment I prolonged
the tenderness of by not
letting on., by deciding
to sleepwalk, longing, a thread
strung along, unable to cut,
its humming, gleam-clean
which found the heat,
stirred the bitch &
the further shelter within
tattooed to a foreign alphabet,
your accent, its rhythms
of date tress...
How not to breathe that
make a port there
as if your world
could ever be?

Kissing

Not flames, these,
no, too wet,
though they flicker,
dance,
that smooth here
& there, a texture,
breath can hardly hold,
breath has to catch
& we, twins
of such difference
alike as lips
are fingers
just starting
to live

Love Handles

More the entire mug really-----
Warm, brimming, firm,
the way certain pillows are
just right for a hand or nose
nuzzling close so lips
learn to circle, live
fixed on that language
of a body that is not
Anybody's but the one
who's earned giving,
Whose generosity returns
full from the urn of comfort
where we nourish
each other's cornucopia
as it runneth over & over-----
Yes

You Had a Shirt

With Escher prints blocked on
front, on back.
So many coveted them, those cotton
grids of reversible birds,
hands drawing themselves &
backward stairs, stairs upside down.

Some tried travelling & fell.
Some you picked up.
Some were just glimpses lost in
the black & white patterns
that ended with flesh.

In a way your insides were quite out then,
a cosmos beginning altogether with the cut
off sleeves, & next the quite translucent veins
in ribbon arms which could be so strong,
even stark, when not knotted, or busy,
or forgetting they had to hide.

When the shirt went over like water,
squiggled scribbles flung instantly infinite,
how many died, which is to say,
lived,
& intensely
in that dimension,

naked, naked & of the moon?

The Red Divan

Is the color of fresh blood, of cut roses.
It is plush crushed velvet.
It is woven from saffron.
Across it spread dragons & eagles of gold,
their wings a peacock's rainbow.
Their eyes are emerald, amethyst,
their talons, & around necks of girder
veins, around ankles as strong,
are adornments of turquoise.

Here we sit, Asian & ceremonious,
decked in turbans & kimono robed.
Veils drape our faces but for the eyes.
They are Scheherazade stories.
We do jigsaws & play Chinese checkers.
We lay tarot & map globes.
We are the Victorians learned in karma sutra.
We are the ancients incense rich as the mystics,
with the whole old sofa now a gondola
travelling down the Seine, the Thames & the Tigris
by way of the Mississippi.

What a melting pot in our charms.
What an agelessness with a view, Sicilian,
the Sistene wrought by an impressionist
in the frescoes of our eyes...

Love, my mosaic, the last light before
disrobement, I stretch my tresses for & flesh
wide open as cushions, let me take your lips,
take your chin, hold still for moments, feel
every part of you quivering into & through
centuries of breath

secure here in the frame of our palms.

Sighs

To covet, sighs,
a covenant between spirit & flesh.
Eyes come
eternally mortal to that rhythm:
Pelvic, pubic, the moan emissions
between your eyes above mine
as sex & sensuality meld us to one fluid,
bone marrow, the extremis....

You know that knowledge is terrible,
Death's phantom a phoenix to the fusion
of our shadows & the winged brilliance
where, life to life, pulses feed sickness or DNA..

Love, feed the thirst, the hunger desire
decides on. Choose passion as breath & we
waves in the ebb, the flow of that domain...

Here, first eddy, flushed then waxen
tallow, flame to wick.
Come, come again, I'll hide no sighs,
being charcoal to paper

rubbing an imprint.

Getting Clean

The tub's big enough &
if not we can
stand face
to face back
to shoulders or
lower curl
round
round as a
shell of nothing
so much as flesh
what's this?
and these?
they stiffen but
move two bubbles with
small noses circle lick &
grooves of the ribs a harp
of warmth sense search
the tenderness wash steer
the rub dub-a-dub love
the pole grows in
our midst an ocean
& I, entering
the current
the whirlpool
the bullring of
suds, should
surf surge or present
water lilies in praise
a coronation You
peninsula I lie on
the shores of or
deck the ship christened
to voyage so voyage or
rest in the depths calm
here here is your mouth
your eyes my hands
not asleep but full with
the gentle gales
on the foam-lipped mast.

the dark of his back, the light of his arms

push ups, I do not imagine such,
that these skin doors are not original
nor my own, humble.

Tear the arrogance.

I would summon you to do so
if the summoning could be shown:
a breaking under, & hope for that:
a shrew who is willing to be tamed.

Love, I never knew you at all
& that becomes clearer
with every word I put down.

Now my only knowledge
is this one good stranger
whose back could be shadow,
whose arms could be radium
blazing on either side,
blotting the lie of my deluded truth,
that betrayer of experience.

Come, take me under,
take me wisely,
spare not a thing,
you of the make,
you of the triple threat
to whose occasion

I'd rise

Safe

a rocking a stillness a quiet a whisper
strange, these muscles,
hard a chisel's grace

& care for what's
raised---

soft, the smooth,
slopes down now
up are these

stairs the back blades
bones knobs

of flats arcs for a mouth
& two hands (just two?) do

the dark the dark plays light like a blindfold or
close eyes lips
here also lips open
breathe taste feel
feel what happens
bring arms bring fingers
brush an almost touch
touch again arch of the arrow
the spiral rolls from

into up
think of honey want some jam or
help want to be told or
to be told not though
hold offer I You offer
kiss hair back of ears knees
and the chest spreads with life
and the nipples sing and
home throbbing we are

slip this on
home full proof tongues center
wine to water holy water
don't you miss it (miss the skin?)
the skin is yes everywhere wide
as eyes now now as hearts
our hearts are not elsewhere that is the good risk

There is Nothing Wrong with the Way You Feel

Lie, lie back.
Stretch if you like.
Be easy as you do.
Now it's a slow recession...
Now...a galloping off...
light leaving for another,
the lake bringing on stars
tenderness seduces:
a clarity that could be hard.

"What is hard?"
ask the waves of touch
drifting over with safecracker
fingertips, the sanded down
prints——
Yours, however, are quite
here, feelings transferred,
breaths apart.

Trust, trust this body.
Bless bless this flesh
for we have no degrees in what
we're at, are, in fact,
considered workers, unskilled.
Still, there is nothing wrong
with the way you touch,
outside and in,
and there is nothing,
no job, no weapon,
our world needs to feel more.

Awhile

Later the same day
Time is of no consequence, none, none except
that's where we belong, where everything comes,
leaves, visits...

Tonight we are a part of this.
I am a tunnel you go in & about.
What treasures are mined?

Anything unearthed would seem common to most:
Birds & cats in the morning, strung dandelions
on chains. But they wind round our throats &
we say: *exceptional*, achieving heartbeats,
sensuality infused & breathed...

Envision intimacy, the pulse
of candle-set eyes.
When older our skin will be connected
by what is felt, groped in whispers...

In between
The range of infinity is a clock without hands.
It doesn't even have numerals, & our faces too,
though ticking seconds, may be wound back watches
looking at, looking past every wrinkle, the traits
traced & erased by love. Here Time

is recognized, told by gazes. They glow.
They are excited, held by a future, now 'n then,
Present...

Awhile is retrospect, what will come later
after our sweet now has stopped.

Time Past

Love made
by melding cuts, a near
seizure only subsiding as if to prolong,
prolong the rise again...

Who was the statue
that became wax, then skin, an ocean
open in arms, in arms?

At first it wasn't like that,
more caution before directness:
Time, taking time, a simmering,
a slow cooling & each temperature right
to bring in intimacy...

In. In. On. On-----
A stereo, a bed spread, a garden of limbs,
limbs given to what came between
crazy talk, sanity, quiet entrances
& lots & lots of laughs completely
unmasked...

It is better now, being no idol
but someone who will listen over potato salad.
It is better knowing the cuts deeply, the healing
marks & the never scarred:
A map bringing rains on soft winds,
bringing warmth & suggestions of both
dark & light.

They play over features the way time does,
time & love made,
a creation so the earth
should survive.

Twilight

Flames lowering to blue
eyes
out of misty gray
cast back from walls, robes
all petal strewn,
density revealing thighs,
ribs caressed in flickers
shadows wash sea shaded
until flesh is water & water
air
ladling presences
through this shivering shimmer
of tides sighing dusk still.

After Touch

Things happen, fading fireworks,
absence flourishing:
musk-thick reserved fuel...

Hold, scratch, spark graphite.
Gas, malleable attractions surface
brilliantly in the very air's din.

Touch, touch, what is-----?
The relevancy of a gesture,
the laugh, the shrug,
developing wings, a capacity
to again send passion

through the still thrilling aftermath.

What We Meant To Say

Light a candle
beneath the ribcage,
a little blue moth,
now a tiger lily's gash
except the wound heals,
gives heat, works two ways,
amazing in its want,
a mouth, a sun burst pulsing
under closed eyes
for pony noses,
the wandering tongues
of streams probed
to standing water
& such trust
tidal curving
in the embrace
of loins.

