

Kissing After Illness

Our lips are so slow. They meet cell
by cell, as though they've traveled vast
distances like pilgrims, bent under
their tin pots and blankets. Our lips
arrive, but even when they touch,
they wait. The way a midwife enters
the room of a laboring woman and says
nothing, does nothing. Just watches, joining
the river of the woman's breath.
So our lips wait. But not exactly wait.
Nor exactly rest. But press, suspended
in a stillness that is the marrow
of kissing. The stem-cell of kissing.
A laden, blood-filled lull. Our lips
are not eager, not glad. They are almost
free of intention. There is only
a brush against inquisitive
nerves. Our lips mate like I once
watched the mindless bodies
of leopard slugs slide over and under,
infinitely slow in their voluptuous entwining.
Strange. And strangely beautiful, how their long
shining translucent penises, fluted and frilled,
unfurl from their heads, swirling, knotting
around each other. Then blossom, swell
into a flower. It takes hours. And our lips
stunned into stupor, our tongues
still sleeping, hot, mute,
in no hurry to be born.