

TRICKS  
*for J & B*

Who can sleep with so much pain around? I wave goodbye  
to the loveless, asleep and waking, dreaming of me.  
From the insomniac sadist who prowls an empty room  
I steal his whip to tease him. I pinch his fanny and leave.  
In the subway I toss a kiss to the exhibitionist  
and close my eyes, for who can change character?

Who but the devious priest will bruise his knees  
for those whose lives are limited by pain  
and will not learn? The amateur whore  
and the lonely clerk who refuses the joys of flirtation  
sit separately in the park and brood—  
I send anonymous lovenotes; I offer desire  
with vaseline and roses with thorns  
for who will play tricks with love in his heart?

Today I marry a widow, and tomorrow a man,  
and tonight in a tavern I meet a reluctant poet  
whose penis is smaller than mine—  
I refuse to measure, for that is his lot.  
In another mood, I might tell the right lie  
and guide their worst fears to the edge of madness  
and push and wait at the bottom with my net.

There is something at the same time pursues  
and leans inside me. It is my other half.  
When I weep the bitter tears, it laps them up and laughs  
and lies down tired and refreshed. Each night  
I plunge to the limits of heart's desire and stroke  
its belly and count the stars circling my head.  
On off-nights, it digs a hole in my right hand  
and says, "Love thyself, who else has the time?"