

## THE POEM IS SHOWING

Slowly, without embarrassment,  
the poem composes the candles on the sideboard  
to show how mortal our hands are,  
putting down or picking up a glass,  
fingering among the hors d'oeuvres,  
or touching a friend's shoulder.

In the twilight of table lamps  
and floor lamps which the poem invents  
for the next room, how sadly  
our skeletons show through  
as we stand or sit, conversing  
with a certain animation.

## THE POEM DRESSES UP LIKE LOVE

The poem contrives to look as old  
as love itself, Sappho in Merlin's white beard.  
It questions the glum lover: So how did  
your story end? I told her I was leaving her.  
I couldn't tell her I knew she was leaving  
me for her new lover. Your pride, was it?  
(Stroking the beard.) My pride, yes. And besides  
I didn't want her to hurt, even a little.

You ungrateful egotist, mutters the venerable  
poem, you could have left her a small gift  
of her guilt. What if she wants to remember you?