

a cento for contact sub rosa

The SOUND of bodies touching, the beginning of things,
then...

...another sound rising -- from afar -- the SOUND of waves
crashing, rushing onto shore.



B

{ Sub rosa : Latin—"under the rose."

i.e. I

will *sub rosa* afford you my best
assistance : that is I

will privately / secretly / in confidence : below
the rose

watch : your eyes
brighten as you eat
the lingering tingle of unlanguage. }

R

Easily thrown I want to be
thumbed and wished upon
I sink in—a single dream

the pebble
before enveloping the lake

containing the content of my soul spilling

throughout your sleep.

Where are you now? Who lies
beneath your spell tonight? Whom else
from rapture's road will you expel tonight?

My hand remembers treading your watery
room just behind the rose-veiled eyes
of memory—where everything I long for

I long for
using my mouth.

These are my arms, your shaking lungs.

I

Some fires kindle freedom.
In order to touch there first
after the city is destroyed
You can't stay a fantasy
skin I will take you / in my mouth

: open : my little animal

cage

touch me

Some consolidate your bondage.
must be space to do so
I will touch you on the surface of everything.
/ more flesh than plum lips breaking a plum
as you steam into speech
: say : ocean with the paddle
of your tongue fire in the dark

where my grin shines brightest
in a noxious guilt. I would make for you
the barest of sounds wing against wing

—there at the point of articulation : cold wood turned to coal in the fine fine flame.

M

If you would only walk
into this room again and touch me anywhere I swear

I would make a burnishing
of you—the naked salt of your
far gone hips breaking the skeleton within
us. All above us is the touching lips
of yes -now beholden to heat

like dawn.

No more doubting

the active space between :

my hands at your high tide
dare me to be untruthful

—our bodies light -harnessed
light -thrashed
bruising : bilirubin bloom.



Color
other countries
die Books LLC.

Sometimes I write to you as you
hold me. But words are just words and
I'd rather revel in your breath with my tongue.

*** *in order of emergence:*

Black & Kevin in *Moonlight* under moonlight at the end, a beginning
a blue blue sea

B

definition of “sub rosa” - unknown

“The Peaches” - Jericho Brown

In the Dream House - Carmen Maria Machado

R

“alleyway” - Aziza Barnes

“So Many Dreams” - Essex Hemphill

“Tonight” - Agha Shahid Ali

“The Aureole” - Nikky Finney

“Between the Meat World and the Real World” - Angie Sijun Lou

Dub - Alexis Pauline Gumbs

I

“The Undressing” - Li-Young Lee

“tongues³” of *The Lonely Letters* - Ashon T. Crawley quoting Jean-Luc Nancy

“The Yellow House” - Chiwan Choi

“What Lovers Do” - Alex Isley

“By Tuesday, I Am Fading” - andie millares

“Water, I want you” - Lo Kwa Mei-en

“ars pasifika” - Craig Santos Perez

“Little Red Plum” - Safiya Sinclair

“Between the Plumage We Were Everything” - Muriel Leung

“Love Poem: Centaur” - Donika Kelly

“The Tree of Fire” - Ada Limón

M

“A Poem for Haruko 10/29” - June Jordan

“Love Poem: Centaur” again

“Untitled” (Last Love) - Rachel McKibbens

“The Yellow House” once more

“Elegy” - Aracelis Girmay

“love life, with stitches” - Evie Shockley

“Object Permanence” - Nicole Sealey

“Active Space” - River Spirit

“On a Night of the Full Moon” - Audre Lorde

“For Audre” - Pat Parker

“Skin-Light” - Natalie Diaz

flowers at the park on a day with Nikki Giovanni* after a new moon

ink in the morning before I wrote a good omelet* and ate a hot poem, after loving you