

A LOVE-LETTER

*from the mariner Ulysses
to his beloved lady-physician*

ES

That you're still, in a sense, a virgin,
Drink like *George Best* and speak like *Charles*
Spurgeon
Are all the grounds for love a soul
Like mine can bear and still stay whole.
Two wretched things have kept me up of late,
Which bruise an honest seaman's trust in fate:
The young & winsome aged, or killed by traffic;
A girl like you beguiled by all things sapphic.

Alas, I'm more like *Mars* than *Venus*,
But does that have to come between us?
I'm told I'm gifted with my fingers,
And, though I've not tried cunnalingus,
You're welcome to compare my lips
To any temptress' tastebud-tips,
And summon cries of joy, not laughter.
(I'd even like to cuddle after.)

Although I cannot make my chest hair
Go, and put a plump round breast there,
Nor bid my size 10 feet farewell,
The same goes for my love as well.
Salt-laced hearts do not find in rejection
Grounds for loss of ardour or dejection.
Time will only say, I told you so;
And yet it suits me more than you know
To play *Tiresias* to your virago.

Auden, "If I
Could Tell You"