

Conjunction

After sunset the valley fills with light
so soft you can almost feel it on your skin.
Imagine the mountain ridges east and west
bathed in a blushing luminosity,
the songbirds listening to the sudden hush,
even the doves and quail dumbstruck
at their vespers. Whoever first called this
evening got it right — a long exhalation,
a peacefulness on the verge of reverence,
a thankfulness for the quiet afterglow.

Moonlight calms the wind that spun the mill
all day. The few leaves left in the orchard
since last fall stop trembling. The grass unbends.
Wisps of cloud fine as a dancer's veil
suffice to keep the promise of lingering warmth:
there won't be a freeze tonight. The owls start early
with their weird calls upsetting the rabbits.
A coyote yips in the distance. To the west
above the radiant silhouette of the mountains
the only stars visible in this light
are Venus and Jupiter, just past their first
conjunction in nine years, father and daughter
forming a straight line under the blue moon.

Your grandmother used to say *Blood tells*.
When I hold you it tells me a million things
about the earth and sky and love and death,
instinct, innocence, age and redemption,
generations forever being born
out of the foam and wrack of restlessness.

Alone at home here in the desert night
feeling the first tentative touch of spring
start the sweet liquid flowing again
under the inner bark of the orchard trees,
I think of our last time we were together,
knowing ourselves as individuals
who share the same genes and I remember
waking one midnight when the dogs stopped barking
just a day or two before you were born,
while the sun was still in the Lion's mouth,
to watch myself being offered up to some dark

cosmic Matrix I still don't know how to name
— wolf-jawed, black hair hissing past
the bare bone left half of her face,
celestial objects for eyes, pendants of blue
flesh clinging leech-like to her lip,
dressed for the hunt: vest and heels of leather,
one breast exposed the other gone to the white
growth inside her, dancing with her sisters,
passing my seed from lip to laughing lip
around their circle in the flickering light —
and thank your mother for honoring me with you,
thank you for reminding me to touch the sky.