

Printed from Literature Online, <http://lion.chadwyck.com>

Thursday, August 26, 2010 **The Gift**

*Literary Review*, Madison; Winter 1997; Kevin Clark

**Volume:** 40  
**Issue:** 2  
**Start Page:** 280-281  
**ISSN:** 00244589  
**Subject Terms:** Poetry

**Abstract:**

*A poem is presented.*

**Full Text:**

*Copyright Fairleigh Dickinson University Winter 1997*

For months he has been reinventing the room, the burnished oils, the pipe bowl of dark pot, the infinity quilt, her two birthday presents silk-wrapped and staged next to the port on the antique table. He's impassioned: Long ago, after a weekend gritted with slant jibes and too much silence in the car, when the snare of doubt caught her breath like a mute future, they pulled hard off the road for dinner and a cheap room. That night, wordless in the stale dark, without a kiss, they let memory roll its hands over their bodies. The day's pain fell behind their gathering breath. A new heat pushed her legs to the bed's reach, and he followed its path down and down to its source. He couldn't know that in a few moments his life would change forever, the room transformed, another world. And now, in preparation for her fortieth birthday, even as he tastes the last signals of her readiness, he tries to lead her into the same lengthening secret of that night.

His thumbs work deep ovals into the raised strands of her thighs. She is about to come, and he pauses, breathes lightly out over her stomach, which begins to lower, her back settling from its arch. His own desire was to know her rising as she had years ago into the motel air and then stayed and stayed there as he kept giving the lubricous gift to her, how way off, beyond her stomach and breasts, her call began, no, not a call, but a high thin weeping, which over the longest time lowered into a sad, sung cadence of ecstatic breathing, and continued, her arms limp, her palms turned up and lax, her face leaned aside, a tear-trace streaming to the pillow, and still he tendered the same, slow tidal pace, the room atomized around them, for new life pouring on and on into him. And so, finally, here in this long-reserved, perfected room, he bends down to her again and she lifts into the altitudes of the rural afternoon light, a percussive tremor pressing out the windows-and soon another-and quick again-until laughing and able to bear no more she pulls him up into her, her fingers spread in his hair, and stares into his eyes as her breath returns. At first he swims in a slight sadness, past the failed inventions, until he closes his eyes to take the light coming up from below. He knows he should be grateful they're without the old catalyzing pain. And he recalls the fifth or eighth minute of her song in that worn room when, apart and untouched, he came in a sudden, single wave as indeliberate as her weeping. Now he hears his name breathing in her voice like a gift, and, quietly, he lets go.

---

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction or distribution is prohibited without permission.

ABELL records are copyright and are reproduced under licence from the Modern Humanities Research Association.

Copyright © 1996-2010 ProQuest LLC. All rights reserved.