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How We Love Now

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How We Love Now · *Stephanie Strickland*

In bed you think of her
hollow cheek and strong jaw.
How difficult to graft them
to my apple face. Easier for eyes
than fingers. But your fingers
only go one place
urge me: you are anxious
to make us disappear on these sheets.
Her silence, her secrets; her complex
attention, how difficult to graft them
to me who want you
or not, in season. When I warm
along your length, when our heads touch
some whole circuit comes complete—
you could be a tree, I rock so high
on a tree-top. You are here for the tree
as I am here for her. And she
reminds you of your mother
when young, a flirt, hardheaded.
The image that compels you
when her long body swings by, you press
to my body, hot, rushing. I am surprised.
I feel her closer to me now
than I was ever able to bring her
before. I see how we are using her,
how she has used. And it all comes back,
what that was, being an embodiment, so close a match
to my lover's dream and he streaming toward me
from the sea of mine. Silver fever
lived out for three years, and rage
at what was not dream; leaving him. You there.
I blamed myself. If only
I weren't restless, I wouldn't have resisted
being exact, the matchless
match. How did we go on then?

This hot afternoon, years later,
when you bring her to my bed,
agitated, I'm remembering him
and what in all this time has stayed unsaid:
how more than once you saved my life,
and how many years it took
to say goodbye, to know I'd left;
how I've loved you and with whom.