



Barbara Bates

Love Sections a Grapefruit

The knife circles the inside edge along the lip
until the little triangles loosen
and the fruit opens

to more than its mirror image,
an interior pattern, so perfectly hewn
that following it ensures each bite exquisite.

But those in a hurry to taste the pulp
will quarter the whole and eagerly fold
spoke, membrane and zest into their mouths.

They never notice the divine pattern,
the discreet placement of flesh in the mold,
juice just runs down their chins and on to the floor.

Orchids

Why do women love
flowers so
that men give them to see our eyes light up
as if a long-lost friend or youth
had once again returned
by means of something unending
and fragile as these orchids

you have brought to celebrate my birthday?
Three petals in shades of lavender and pink
hold the night at bay
as we two
on either side
hesitate
to quench the spark
and thus
erase the day.

Love: In Parts of Speech

As an adjective, the danger is hyperbole.
Being dependent and needy, lovers tend to
exaggerate
and nouns, to shy.

In the possessive, held together by an apostrophe,
lovers amalgamate—two muffled souls
lost in one alloy. If a child arrives,

drinks from their brimming cup,
lovers will hyphenate, annul the sacrifice.
Lov—ers, now lured

by their own bloody off-print
will scatter their vampire love as blood meal over
new plantings
wards off poachers. Love may prevail

in adverbial form, as a door ajar
is neither open nor closed, the how makes a space
for the when and where

and love may enter unbidden, windborne
to warm those inured from possessive slight. Lovers
forever alert to a cry in the night.

Tiger Lilies

Orange lilies on my desk rival the morning sun.
Six stamens encircle one as if
in a dance frozen. Yet,
hour by hour their petals curl,
and color rushes toward space and light.

Even so, the sun—
blazing toward earth and dark—is first

to cross the finish line.

Barbara Bates has published work in *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, *Red Rock Review*, and elsewhere. Her first book, *Littoral Zone* (John Daniel Press), appeared in 2004. She lives in Santa Barbara, California.