

## Metaphors for My Love

*In Silverton, CO on the narrow-gauge train  
trip from Durango. Sometime in the 1970's*

The little train, standing yellow  
by the ancient depot, with trainmen,  
firemen, stationmaster looking on,  
was older than we are,  
has always been there,  
predates the experience of our lives.  
It stands in great historical significance  
high above the sea.  
And it felt like my love for you:  
timeless, enduring, significant,  
without beginning or end,  
up near the sky,  
far above the world of things  
and ordinary man.

I wondered, "Does anyone else—  
any one of these thousand people—  
see the train this way?  
Can it mean so much to that fellow  
—the one with the Bermuda shorts  
and the camera round his neck?  
And what about Fred the Clown?  
or Steve the Silent?"  
Meredith the mother said, "My,  
isn't this interesting?"

The mountain was gigantic,  
stark and clear.  
There was no turning from it  
the way it asserted itself into the sky,  
bigger than everything around,  
the ultimate pinnacle  
on which nothing more can be built.  
And it felt like my love for you:  
magnificent for its magnitude alone,  
five thousand feet above me,  
so clear and precise as to be  
invulnerable to the words of a man,  
impossible to lose sight of  
for its size and position,  
captivating:  
impossible to ignore  
for its utter beauty.

"What about Irene the Housewife?  
she talks of recipes and diapers  
and her husband's wardrobe.  
Does she love anyone as I love you?"  
I don't think she saw the mountain.

And then I grew ill,  
Quickly, without warning  
from high health to heavy sickness  
in one hour.  
Aching, shivering, my burning throat  
could make but one sound:  
"Is there a doctor in this town?"  
Searching through restaurants,  
waiting in his hallway,  
wondering if he would come at all,  
how I hurt for that painful  
antibiotic injection only he had for me.  
And it felt like my love for you:  
totally unexpected,  
incubating unbelievably quickly,  
changing even my body  
in time for no change at all,  
stimulating feelings so strong  
as to require immediate and undivided attention,  
making you so important  
that so short a time without you  
cannot be endured.

I wondered, "What about Hank the Entrepreneur  
and Howard the Proper?"  
I wondered about Robin the Blob  
and Becky the Slim,  
Fred the Policeman and Shirley of the kindly eyes.  
"Have they ever seen a metaphor like this?  
Have they ever loved anybody  
like a shot of penicillin?"

Well, I do.  
I love you like a dying man loves health,  
like the giant mountain loves  
the foothills that hold it up,  
like the D&RGW narrow gauge loves the past.  
But metaphors are weak, aren't they?  
Try as they may to help me,  
they cannot express my mystery.  
Only you can help me:  
Every time you pass a mirror, look in,  
and you will see my love.

*Robert D. Smith*