

I walked upon the restored prairie
and knew no names
lonely, yellow

at home in a towel
two missionary girls knock--
and admonish me

stroll before a summer storm
baled hay, wilting corn,
muskrat, woodchuck, hawk

mimosa pudica--
"if you touch it, it dies,"
said my student once
another called it
shy-old-lady
from her Jamaican grandma
in Sierra Leone the Mende called it
shut-thighs
this timid plant is a tenacious invader
throughout the tropics
and is very human in Latin--
where it is named for
imitation and shame

in the dance at the end of the world
she opened her hand
flowerlike

birds singing
little personalities
"Aint Cathie, I shot a duv"

forest spirits, magicians, and story tellers
dance above your smile
your firstborn is restless before his birth

in full modesty
you taste the rancid butter
you and the market lady
under a camel-hair tent

the sun burst in
white light from white mountains
we are awake and alive

scent on a balcony
darkness made palpable
in your quickened breath

remember our walks
since you are in every rock, flower, and tree
the images are but faint landmarks
of the diverse dimensions of your beauty
they are icons of delight and longing
of a delicious and wonderful year with you

dangling invitation
waiting each day
for spring kisses

when you wear purple
I weaken
at your unabashed desire

redbud
betrayal tree in turmoil
color blooms on a lover's lips

serious spring flower
in the warm white sunlight
a black fly tickles

hedge apple nibbled
in winter's eden
you return with tropical eyes

decorative decay
dense purity
rest stop on a birthday hike

azaleas in march
the mountainside
paints small towns in the lowlands

pink slices across deep green
subtle appetite
in forests and gardens

the lawn portrays a forest floor
your bed
a blanket brought to the woods

look at the waterside trees on my birthday
you disbelieved the names
we gave the flowers
but kissed me where the river bends

"waterside stone no de fraid rain"
at one month our firstborn was washed in this river
today he climbs out on an island boulder
a young man

two colors
cool and crystalline
washed over
warmed today by sunlight

the geography of moss and lichen jungles
turns my gaze in wonder
the deep and mysterious texture of your soul

little heads clamoring for winter's notice
your former students
asking if you remember

which is more alluring
soft windblown seeds
who tease in far-off places
or delicious and addictive fruits
who command we taste

the sculpted granite
is warm and soft
where you touched
the bed of moss

prayerlike through the winter
it looks to reach
and waits for a spring conflagration

**which way do stars point when they fall
you will jump into a pile of leaves
even in autumn
and collect them
as if they can purchase
a riotous holiday**