

Contents

Preface	xxiii
A Note on the Poems	xxvii

How do I love thee? . . .

Suddenly

Christina G. Rossetti: 'I wish I could remember that first day'	4
Elizabeth Jennings: Light	4
Simon Barraclough: Los Alamos Mon Amour	5
John Gower: Pygmaleon, from <i>Confessio Amantis</i>	6
Sylvia Plath: Love Letter	8
Sir Arthur Gorges: 'Her face Her tongue Her wit'	10
Emily Dickinson: 'It was a quiet way -'	11
John Milton: 'That day I oft remember, when from sleep/ I first awaked', from <i>Paradise Lost</i> , Book IV	12
Hart Crane: Episode of Hands	14
William Shakespeare: 'When she first met Mark Antony, she pursed up his heart', from <i>Antony and Cleopatra</i> , II, ii	15
Christopher Marlowe: 'And in the midst a silver altar stood', from <i>Hero and Leander</i> , Sestiad I	17
Elizabeth Barrett Browning: 'First time he kissed me, he but only kissed', from <i>Sonnets from the Portuguese: XXXVIII</i>	18

William Barnes: 'With you first shown to me'	19
May Theilgaard Watts: Vision	20
John Donne: The Good Morrow	21
Jenny Joseph: The sun has burst the sky	22

Secretly

John Clare: 'I hid my love when young till I'	24
Robert Browning: 'Eyes, calm beside thee (Lady, could'st thou know!)	25
William Shakespeare: 'Say that some lady, as perhaps there is', from <i>Twelfth Night</i> , II, iv	26
Carol Ann Duffy: Warming Her Pearls	28
William Blake: The Sick Rose	29
Wallace Stevens: Gray Room	30
Wilfred Owen: Maundy Thursday	31
Sarah Fyge Egerton: A Song: 'How pleasant is love'	32

Nearly

Jean 'Binta' Breeze: Dubwise	34
John Dryden: 'Calm was the Even, and clear was the sky', Song, from <i>An Evening's Love</i>	36
Thomas Hardy: A Thunderstorm in Town	37
Connie Bensley: A Friendship	38

Tentatively

Arthur Hugh Clough: 'I am in love, meantime, you think; no doubt you would think so', from <i>Amours de Voyage</i> , Canto II: X	40
Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton: 'I do not love thee! – no! I do not love thee!'	41
Brian Patten: Forgetmeknot	42

Sir Philip Sidney: 'Loving in truth, and fain in verse my love to show', from <i>Astrophil and Stella</i> : I	43
Bernard O'Donoghue: Stealing Up	44
William Shakespeare: 'But soft! what light through yonder window breaks?', from <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> , II, ii	45
Thom Gunn: Jamesian	47
Jacob Sam-La Rose: Things That Could Happen	48
George Herbert: Love	51
Olivia McCannon: Timing	52
Walt Whitman: Are You the New Person Drawn toward Me?	52
W. B. Yeats: He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven	53
Alice Oswald: Sonnet	53
Galway Kinnell: Kissing the Toad	54

Haplessly

Amy Lowell: The Bungler	56
Edmund Spenser: 'My love is like to ice, and I to fire', from <i>Amoretti</i> : XXX	56
W. B. Yeats: The Song of Wandering Aengus	57
Thomas Campion: 'Thrice toss these oaken ashes in the air'	58
Thomas Hardy: A Broken Appointment	59
John Crowe Ransom: Piazza Piece	60
Stevie Smith: Infelice	61
Ephelia: To One That Asked Me Why I Loved J. G.	62
Sir John Suckling: Against Fruition	63
Robert Browning: Life in a Love	64

Incurably

Dorothy Parker: Symptom Recital	66
Samuel Daniel: 'Love is a sickness full of woes'	67
Anonymous: Dunt Dunt Dunt Pittie Pattie	68
John Keats: La Belle Dame sans Merci. A Ballad	69
Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey: 'Alas, so all things now do hold their peace'	71
William Shakespeare: 'My love is as a fever, longing still', Sonnet 147	72
D. H. Lawrence: Bei Hennef	73
Emily Grosholz: On Spadina Avenue	74
Elizabeth Thomas: Remedia Amoris	76
Walter Savage Landor: Hearts-Ease	76

Impatiently

Edmund Waller: Song: 'Go, lovely Rose'	78
Emily Dickinson: 'If you were coming in the Fall'	79
Alfred, Lord Tennyson: Mariana	80
Christina G. Rossetti: Twilight Night, II	83
Anne Michaels: Three Weeks	84
Robert Browning: In Three Days	85
Robert Graves: Not to Sleep	86
Elizabeth Bishop: Invitation to Miss Marianne Moore	87
Moniza Alvi: A Bowl of Warm Air	89
John Montague: All Legendary Obstacles	90

Superlatively

William Shakespeare: 'My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun', Sonnet 130	92
Ian Duhig: From the Irish	93

Ben Jonson: Her Triumph, from <i>A Celebration of Charis, in Ten Lyric Pieces</i>	94
The King James Bible: 'My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand', from <i>The Song of Solomon</i>	95
George Gordon, Lord Byron: She Walks in Beauty	96
Austin Clarke: The Planter's Daughter	97
E. E. Cummings: 'somewhere i have never travelled, gladly beyond'	98
William Shakespeare: 'The moon shines bright. In such a night as this', from <i>The Merchant of Venice</i> , V, i	99
Ogden Nash: Reprise	100

Persuasively

Maya Angelou: Come. And Be My Baby	102
John Keats: To Fanny: 'I cry your mercy, pity, love – ay love!'	103
Anonymous: Against Platonic Love	104
Robin Robertson: Trysts	106
Thomas Carew: 'I will enjoy thee now, my Celia, come', from <i>A Rapture</i>	107
Barnabe Barnes: Would I Were Changed	110
Robert Herrick: Upon Julia's Clothes	111
Anne Stevenson: Sous-entendu	111
John Donne: Elegy: To His Mistress Going to Bed	112
Edward Thomas: Will you come?	114

Passionately

Robert Jones: 'And is it night? are they thine eyes that shine?'	116
Robert Browning: Now	117
Jackie Kay: High Land	118

George Gordon, Lord Byron: 'A long, long kiss, a kiss of youth, and love', from <i>Don Juan</i> , Canto II: CLXXXVI-IX	119
Emily Dickinson: 'Come slowly - Eden!'	120
Hugo Williams: Rhetorical Questions	121
Jo Shapcott: Muse	122
Percy Bysshe Shelley: 'Our breath shall intermix, our bosoms bound', from <i>Epipsychidion</i>	123
Thom Gunn: The Bed	124
Elizabeth Jennings: Passion	124
Michael Donaghy: Pentecost	125
W. H. Auden: Lullaby: 'Lay your sleeping head, my love'	126
Simon Armitage: 'Let me put it this way'	127
Gavin Ewart: Creation Myth Haiku	128

The morning after

Lesleá Newman: Possibly	130
John Donne: The Sun Rising	131
Louis MacNeice: 'And love hung still as crystal over the bed', from <i>Trilogy for X:II</i>	132
William Shakespeare: 'Wilt thou be gone? It is not yet near day', from <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> , III, v	133
Philip Larkin: Talking in Bed	134
Liz Lochhead: Morning After	135
Tennessee Williams: Life Story	136
William Shakespeare: 'The expense of spirit in a waste of shame', Sonnet 129	137
Elizabeth Bishop: Breakfast Song	138
D. H. Lawrence: Gloire de Dijon	139
Olivia McCannon: Ironing	140
John Heath-Stubbs: The Unpredicted	140

Greeditly

- William Shakespeare: 'So are you to my thoughts
as food to life', Sonnet 75 142
- Edmund Spenser: 'Was it a dream, or did I see it
plain', from *Amoretti*: LXXVII 143
- Robert Herrick: Fresh Cheese and Cream 143
- Edwin Morgan: Strawberries 144
- Helen Dunmore: Wild Strawberries 145
- Christina G. Rossetti: 'Morning and evening/ Maids
heard the goblins cry', from *Goblin Market* 147
- John Davies of Hereford: The Author loving these
homely meats specially, viz.: Cream, Pancakes,
Buttered Pippin-pies (laugh, good people) and
Tobacco; writ to that worthy and virtuous
gentlewoman, whom he calleth Mistress, as
followeth 150
- Gertrude Stein: 'Kiss my lips. She did', from *Lifting
Belly (II)* 151
- John Berryman: 'Filling her compact & delicious
body', from *Dream Songs*: 4 152
- Paul Durcan: My Belovèd Compares Herself to a
Pint of Stout 153

Truly, madly, deeply

- Aphra Behn: Song: 'O Love! that stronger art
than wine' 156
- John Skelton: "'Behold," she sayd, "and se", from
The Tunnyng of Elynour Rummyng 157
- Hugo Williams: Nothing On 158
- Elizabeth Barrett Browning: 'I think of thee! – my
thoughts do twine and bud', from *Sonnets
from the Portuguese*: XXIX 159
- Dante Gabriel Rossetti: Silent Noon 160

John Fuller: Valentine	161
Frank O'Hara: Having a Coke with You	164
John Milton: 'With thee conversing I forget all time', from <i>Paradise Lost</i> , Book IV	165
Thomas Campion: 'O sweet delight, O more than human bliss'	166
Adrian Mitchell: Celia Celia	166
Walt Whitman: When I Heard at the Close of the Day	167
Wilfred Owen: From My Diary, July 1914	168
Thomas Hood: 'It was not in the winter'	169
Roger McGough: 'they say the sun shone now and again', from <i>Summer with Monika: I</i>	170
Sir Philip Sidney: 'When to my deadly pleasure'	173
A. D. Hope: A Blason	175
William Shakespeare: ''Tis strange, my Theseus, that these lovers speak of', from <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> , V, i	177
Thomas Middleton: 'Love is like a lamb, and love is like a lion'	178
Piet Hein: What Love Is Like	178

From a distance

Robert Burns: A Red, Red Rose	180
E. B. White: Natural History	181
Edwin Morgan: One Cigarette	182
John Clare: To Mary	183
Anonymous: 'My love is faren in a land'	184
Anonymous: 'Westron wind, when will thou blow'	184
Edmund Spenser: 'Lacking my love I go from place to place', from <i>Amoretti</i> : LXXVIII	185
Matthew Arnold: To Marguerite – Continued	186
Andrew Marvell: The Definition of Love	187
Micheal O'Siadhail: Between	188

John Donne: Air and Angels	189
Louis MacNeice: Coda	190
Carol Ann Duffy: Words, Wide Night	190
Philip Larkin: Broadcast	191
Amy Lowell: The Letter	192
Chinua Achebe: Love Song (for Anna)	193
George MacDonald: The Shortest and Sweetest of Songs	194
Frances Cornford: The Avenue	194

With a vow

Elizabeth Garrett: Epithalamium	196
Sir Edwin Arnold: Destiny	197
Brian Patten: January Gladsong	198
W. H. Auden: 'Carry her over the water'	199
Francis Quarles: 'Even like two little bank-dividing brooks'	200
Alice Oswald: Wedding	201
Anonymous: 'I will give my love an apple without e'er a core'	202
Lemn Sissay: Invisible Kisses	203
James Fenton: Hinterhof	205
Joshua Sylvester: 'Were I as base as is the lowly plain'	206
E. E. Cummings: 'i carry your heart with me(i carry it in'	207
George Chapman: Bridal Song, from <i>The Masque of the Middle Temple and Lincoln's Inn</i>	208
Michael Donaghy: The Present	209
Kate Clanchy: Patagonia	210

Happily ever after

C. K. Williams: Love: Beginnings	212
Muriel Rukeyser: Looking at Each Other	213
Ted Hughes: Bride and Groom Lie Hidden for Three Days	214
William Blake: 'When a Man has Married a Wife'	215
John Milton: 'Thus Eve with count'nance blithe her story told', from <i>Paradise Lost</i> , Book IX	216
Alden Nowlan: Parlour Game	217
William Barnes: Jeäne	218
Seamus Heaney: Scaffolding	219
U. A. Fanthorpe: Atlas	220
Phyllis McGinley: The 5:32	221
Sharon Olds: True Love	222
Richard Wilbur: For C.	223
John Keats: 'Bright star! would I were steadfast as thou art -'	224

Treacherously

Thomas Moore: On Taking a Wife	226
E. E. Cummings: 'may i feel said he'	227
Isobel Dixon: You, Me and the Orang-utan	228
George Gordon, Lord Byron: '"Twas midnight - Donna Julia was in bed', from <i>Don Juan</i> , Canto I: CXXXVI-XLIV	229
Mary Coleridge: Jealousy	232
Edward Arlington Robinson: Firelight	233
Adam O'Riordan: Cheat	234
Lavinia Greenlaw: Tryst	235
Julia Copus: In Defence of Adultery	236

Brutally

- Emily Dickinson: 'He fumbles at your Soul' 238
- George Meredith: 'He felt the wild beast in him
betweenwhiles', from *Modern Love*: IX 239
- Amy Lowell: Carrefour 239
- William Shakespeare: 'The honey fee of parting
tendered is', from *Venus and Adonis* 240
- Alexander Pope: 'But when to mischief mortals
bend their will', from *The Rape of the Lock*,
Canto III 242
- W. B. Yeats: Leda and the Swan 244
- D. H. Lawrence: Love on the Farm 245
- Ted Hughes: Lovesong 247
- Isobel Dixon: Truce 248

Bitterly

- Thomas Moore: To —— 250
- Gavin Ewart: Ending 250
- Rosemary Tonks: Orpheus in Soho 251
- Babette Deutsch: Solitude 252
- Percy Bysshe Shelley: 'When the lamp is shattered' 253
- Thomas Hardy: Neutral Tones 254
- Charlotte Mew: Rooms 255
- Sylvia Plath: The Other Two 256
- George Meredith: 'By this he knew she wept with
waking eyes', from *Modern Love*: I 258
- Don Paterson: The Wreck 259
- Stephen Crane: 'In the desert' 260

Finally

Emily Dickinson: 'My life closed twice before its close -'	262
Thomas Hardy: In the Vaulted Way	262
Katherine Mansfield: The Meeting	263
Jenny Joseph: Dawn walkers	264
Henry King: The Surrender	265
John Donne: The Expiration	266
Elizabeth Bishop: One Art	267
James Merrill: A Renewal	268
Alice Meynell: Renouncement	269
Brian Patten: I Have Changed the Numbers on My Watch	270
Tim Liardet: Needle on Zero	271
Edward Thomas: 'Go now'	272
Judith Rodriguez: In-flight Note	273
Sophie Hannah: The End of Love	274

Forsaken

Matthew Sweeney: The Bridal Suite	276
Lady Augusta Gregory: Donal Og (translated from the Irish, anonymous)	277
Sir Walter Raleigh: 'As you came from the holy land'	279
William Soutar: The Tryst	281
Fleur Adcock: Incident	282
Anonymous: The Water is Wide	283
A. E. Housman: 'He would not stay for me; and who can wonder?'	284
Jackie Kay: Her	284

Regretfully

Edna St Vincent Millay: 'When I too long have looked upon your face'	286
Matthew Sweeney: Cacti	287
Dora Sigerson Shorter: 'I want to talk to thee of many things'	288
John Clare: How Can I Forget	289
Linton Kwesi Johnson: Hurricane Blues	290
T. S. Eliot: La Figlia Che Piange	292
William Empson: Villanelle	293
Thomas Hardy: At Castle Boterel	294
Vikram Seth: Progress Report	295
Gwen Harwood: Anniversary	296
Duncan Forbes: Recension Day	297

Fatally

Sir Henry Wotton: Upon the Death of Sir Albert Morton's Wife	300
Oscar Wilde: 'Yet each man kills the thing he loves', from <i>The Ballad of Reading Gaol</i>	300
William Shakespeare: 'It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul', from <i>Othello</i> , V, ii	301
Robert Browning: Porphyria's Lover	302
Alfred Noyes: The Highwayman	304
Oliver Goldsmith: 'When lovely woman stoops to folly', from <i>The Vicar of Wakefield</i>	308
Alfred, Lord Tennyson: The Lady of Shalott	309
Vicki Feaver: Lily pond	315
Anne Finch, Countess of Winchilsea: La Passion Vaincue	316

Indifferently

Wendy Cope: Loss	318
Sir Thomas Wyatt: 'Farewell Love, and all thy laws for ever!'	318
Edith Nesbit: Villeggiature	319
Henry King: The Double Rock	320
A. E. Housman: 'Oh, when I was in love with you', from <i>A Shropshire Lad</i> : XVIII	321
Geoffrey Chaucer: 'Sin I fro Love escaped am so fat', from <i>Merciles Beaute</i> , III: Escape	322
Stephen Dunn: Each from Different Heights	323
Charlotte Mew: I So Liked Spring	324
Derek Walcott: Love after Love	325

After death

Elaine Feinstein: Hands	328
R. S. Thomas: A Marriage	329
Percy Bysshe Shelley: 'Music, when soft voices die'	330
William Morris: Summer Dawn	330
Thomas Hardy: The Voice	331
Douglas Dunn: Reincarnations	332
John Milton: 'Methought I saw my late espousèd saint'	333
William Shakespeare: 'I dreamt there was an emperor Antony', from <i>Antony and Cleopatra</i> , V, ii	334
William Barnes: The Wife A-Lost	335
Edgar Allan Poe: Annabel Lee	337
Henry King: 'So close the ground, and 'bout her shade', from <i>The Exequy</i>	339

Eternally

Margaret Atwood: <i>Sunset II</i>	342
Edmund Spenser: 'One day I wrote her name upon the strand', from <i>Amoretti: LXXV</i>	343
Elizabeth Barrett Browning: 'If thou must love me, let it be for nought', from <i>Sonnets from the Portuguese: XIV</i>	344
Alfred, Lord Tennyson: 'If I were loved, as I desire to be'	345
Emily Dickinson: 'I have no Life but this -'	345
Leonard Cohen: <i>Dance Me to the End of Love</i>	346
Acknowledgements	349
Index of Poets	357