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Foreword Review

Intimate Kisses: The Poetry of Sexual Pleasure

Wendy Maltz, Editor
New World Library (Jan 30, 2001)
$20.00 (224pp)
978-1-57731-133-1

“No one can better teach us about sexual pleasure than poets,” writes the editor. Maltz critiques contemporary American culture for its commercialization and trivialization of sex, offering old and new poems by various authors as the antidote. As a sex therapist, she advocates inspiring, healthy sex by way of poetry appreciation.

Though her expression of this agenda is somewhat heavy-handed; more self-help than the usual stuff of literary anthologies, the poems themselves are for the most part, outstanding. Divided into five sections, the first part (Anticipation & Desire) includes this short poem by Persian poet Jelaluddin Rumi:

> *Spring paints the countryside, / Cyprus trees grow even more beautiful, / But let’s stay inside. // Lock the door. / Come to me naked. / No one’s here.*

In many cases, the selections present a side of both contemporary and ancient poets that readers aren’t often privileged to. Molly Peacock writes:

> *I love your face when we are making love, / like the living stones I was shocked to find / are plants, succulents, members of / a live species.*

More daringly, Sharon Olds writes of the upside down woman in the mirror, “her head hanging down and her / tongue long and black as an anteater’s / going toward his body, she was so clearly an / animal.”

In its construction, the book illustrates and celebrates the phases of courtship and love—perhaps even seeks to instigate these things. Contained in the volume are few poems that describe the disadvantages and disappointments of love. Instead, sheets, legs, sweat, and “coltrane’s celestial saxophone / fifties jazz running through my head” abound, while the pages are private chambers into which readers are invited. Gently, unabashedly.

This is not a book for prudes. Lovers of the flesh and lovers of poetry, however, will be seduced.

HOLLY WREN SPAULDING (January / February 2001)

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