

Poetry Porch: Poetry

Your Lips

By Richard Fein

Toward the end of the meal your lipstick
half faded from your lips to reappear
smirched on your teeth and you seemed
transformed by that smear of transfer
from your lips to your teeth, some daubs
reaching to the shine of your gums.

The absorptions of your lips turned them pale—
food-dampened—leading to nibbling, chewing,
swallowing, the fork resting in your hand,
the tines poised for another lift, you
a different you right there in front of me,
there, yet beyond me, lips newly greased.

As we sat alone at the Sears table & desk
we had assembled in the hallway off your kitchen
I lost you, lost as I looked—mystified, induced.
The lips became yet further pale, pinker,
those teeth smirched unevenly with streaks,
your mouth a deposit of color, gnawing—speech.

How you changed right before my eyes,
transformed by asparagus, spaghetti, sauce
suctioned into you, I eating the very same food,

you just two feet away from me, our napkins stained.
I furtively gazed, stunned watching you,
your body informing me I never knew you, or had
won you, you a mystery I never talked to you about,
or me, for even while reading Yeats in grad school
I had posited exemption for myself, losing that
while eating with you—you just two feet away—
that hue of lipstick on the half-moony edges
of your gums gripping the teeth, that moist fade
on your lips, those varied smirches on enamel.