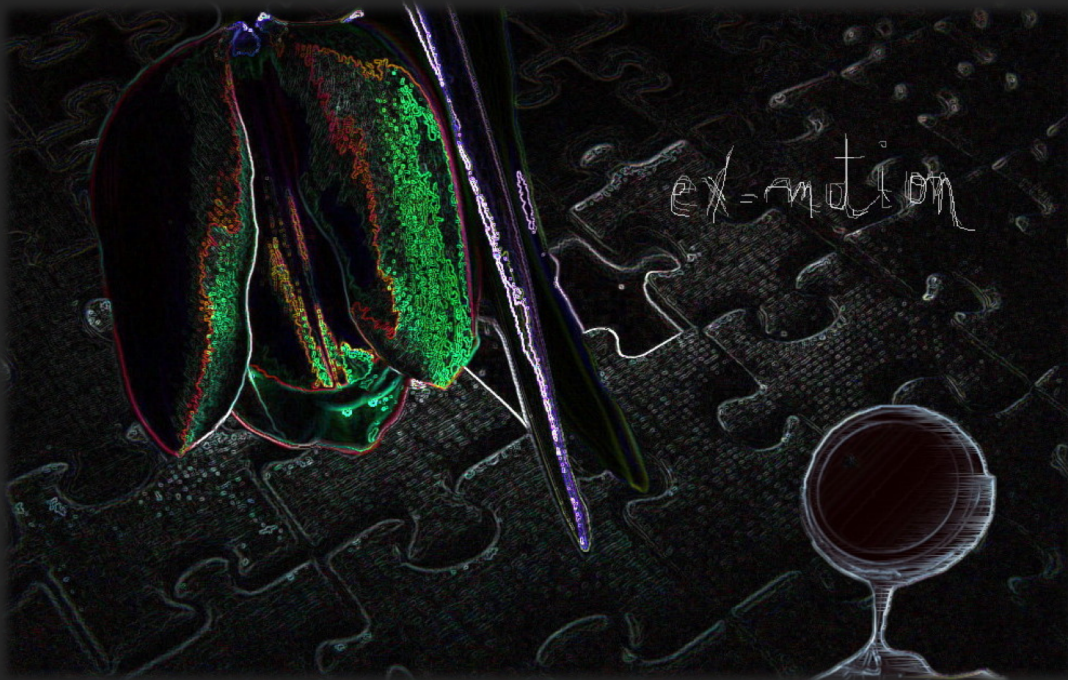


# COUPLING

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ROSMARIE WALDROP

I often feel I am a different person depending on whom I am with. As a word in a sentence may be felt to belong first with one word and then with another, and will be different.

At a party I get scattered into so many selves I can't invent enough pseudonyms.

I liked the Rosmarie I was with Keith Waldrop. Therefore I became Rosmarie Waldrop and now stick to one name.

This, I hoped, would help me get hold of myself, hands, feet, hair and all. So I could close my eyes in pleasure at having an identity.

But to be contracted into a single being by another person—how strange. Sure enough, the other selves still hover behind my eyes and mock the flimsy construction.

They abuse their resemblance to words as a lure for your feelings. When I try to dive deep into our moments and forage for love I get caught in a puzzle of which me is speaking. And to which you.

Then I gasp for air, shadowy, a mere residue of echoes. The way words grow dim when there is no meaning coupled to the vocal cords.

Instead of the encounter of two persons along one shared edge, or a play of reflection and opposition of two not quite mirroring halves, we are dealing in multitudes.

Should we not enable them? Every tulip wants an open field. The hills all different shapes, the sky so up and out, why should all our selves be cramped into one single nakedness?

As if, undressed down to our contradictions, we need to scatter them into orbit to go on. To curve outward toward distant stars and other pants.

But though the play of many perspectives is enlarging the boundaries, it is hard to breathe among many smelly bodies.

It seems that two selves can't be put snugly next to one another. As in a drawing of an arrow through two hearts. Neither, it seems, can more than two.

A gap remains. And is its own emotion. And a little sweaty.