

SUSAN MAURER

## To Paul Claudel Before I Found Out He Was an Anti-Semite and Turned in the Plane Ticket

Claudel, Claudel, Paul, Paul,  
cent phrases pour l'éventails.  
You have cured me of the sea  
but fanned from a cinder to a torrid blaze  
my love for you.

I'm saying  
this book is S  
O beau ti  
ful, I'm afraid it  
might fly away.

And you, Paul, I love you for your poetry.  
But I hope your teeth aren't bad.

I'm in love with a dead man.  
I suppose it was inevitable.  
Difficult but not insurmountable.  
not like my last relationship.  
This time will be different.  
I think from your phrases you would have loved me.  
Catholicism is an impediment and did you like women?

I'm good at logistics.  
I'll elude the gravekeeper somehow.  
Hope it won't take long.

Hope the mound is not littered with wet leaves.  
Love in November is like that at times.

I'll lie upon your grave until your fingers reach me.  
Consider me the loam around your roots.

I'll show you the man in rollerblades and purple at Dean and Deluca,  
the man who always comes alone  
wearing a dressy leather belt on Saturdays.  
He has died his hair, but not his moustache.  
He has all the mannerisms of the charismatic, but no charisma.  
He acts like a writer but I know he teaches school.  
These men are not for me.  
They do not see me,  
nor if they saw my words would understand.

We'll have coffee and little breads with chocolate  
like France so you won't be homesick.  
Paul, you would understand this.

(Bitter tears will not wake him up.  
It's evocations of the quotidian, the droll  
which make us want to live.)

A man's love is understanding.  
And you have walked in springs of understanding.  
And walked with me in words those last read pages.

After all I've done  
you don't object to  
living in America, do you?  
My French is not bad.  
We can travel.