From An Alphabet of Women

Yvette

i

Thirty years after your hands
rippling allegro, shaping
flowers or stillness, I wake
stricken and grateful: the night
has been your hands, unbidden—
sonatas you fired, that peace
you guarded and spoke as grace,
every unsummoned shape, tone,
gesture lives, reaches—I wake
to thirty years, their unknown
reaching, a touch unbroken.

ii

Letters from ghosts are absurd:
from thirty years of silence
not a word sounds right, not one—
intricate hands, eyes, voice, step
all delicacy, all fire,
these have had their words . . . Only
this, Yvette: Nothing we make
our own by our surrender,
innocent of time, is lost:
we reach always, not knowing
we reach, not knowing we touch.

— Robert Beum