**Adam and Eve** --Tony Hoagland

I wanted to punch her right in the mouth and that's the truth.

After all, we had gotten from the station of the flickering glances

to the station of the hungry mouths,

from the shoreline of skirts and faded jeans

to the ocean of unencumbered skin,

from the perilous mountaintop of the apartment steps

to the sanctified valley of the bed—

the candle fluttering upon the dresser top, its little yellow blade

sending up its whiff of waxy smoke,

and I could smell her readiness

like a dank cloud above a field,

when at the crucial moment, the all-important moment,

the moment standing at attention,

she held her milk white hand agitatedly

over the entrance to her body and said No,

and my brain burst into flame.

If I couldn't sink myself in her like a dark spur

or dissolve into her like a clod thrown in a river,

can I go all the way in the saying, and say

I wanted to punch her right in the face?

Am I allowed to say that,

that I wanted to punch her right in her soft face?

Or is the saying just another instance of rapaciousness,

just another way of doing what I wanted then,

by saying it?

Is a man just an animal, and is a woman not an animal?

Is the name of the animal power?

Is it true that the man wishes to see the woman

hurt with her own pleasure

and the woman wishes to see the expression on the man's face

of someone falling from great height,

that the woman thrills with the power of her weakness

and the man is astonished by the weakness of his power?

Is the sexual chase a hunt where the animal inside

drags the human down

into a jungle made of vowels,

hormonal undergrowth of sweat and hair,

or is this an obsolete idea

lodged like a fossil

in the brain of the ape

who lives inside the man?

Can the fossil be surgically removed

or dissolved, or redesigned

so the man can be a human being, like a woman?

Does the woman see the man as a house

where she might live in safety,

and does the man see the woman as a door

through which he might escape

the hated prison of himself,

and when the door is locked,

does he hate the door instead?

Does he learn to hate all doors?

I've seen rain turn into snow then back to rain,

and I've seen making love turn into fucking

then back to making love,

and no one covered up their faces out of shame,

no one rose and walked into the lonely maw of night.

But where was there, in fact, to go?

Are some things better left unsaid?

Shall I tell you her name?

Can I say it again,

that I wanted to punch her right in the face?

Until we say the truth, there can be no tenderness.

As long as there is desire, we will not be safe.