



Modern Ambivalence

by Jennifer Aikman

Do not hold the baby

An opiate

breeds in its honey-straw smell
in the folds of its apricot ears

It activates the love-longing
the nurture-needing

Body ripe

the breasts and womb cry out
in barren-angry strength

The warmth, the weight, the nuzzle in the neck
brings alive the ache
beckons with mock innocence
shames the torrid preparations for career

Do not hold the baby

Beyond the cradle
lies activity not passivity
self-hood not servitude
the world in possibilities
This wind-dancing independence
quick aborted
with new life
so utterly demanding
so completely selfish
so totally bewitching

Do not hold the baby

The modern impulse
soon is squelched
the velvet skin wants stroking
the heartbeats reach for oneness
Then to resist
an act of Will
the pain of Won't
to surrender the little life
deprives
and tears and drills the heart

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