



Romeo and Juliet

The dataset may have sped up the mating game but it has made it no less complex. One need surf the Internet only momentarily before a matchmaking site appears. The quest for human contact, for love, has always been undertaken through the wiles of the imagination in employing whatever artifice might enhance the courting ritual. The development of technology and its metaphors may have been as much a result of the need to spread romance as that of commerce, from the hand-delivered love letter, or the flirtation of the chat room. We pursue that more base drive, sex, through everything from phone sex to the creation of digital surrogates. It is remarkable that after the so-called “dot-bomb,” the crash of technology stocks at the turn of the third millennium, that pornography was the most (and nearly the only) profitable endeavor on the Internet.

True love, whatever it may be, remains the elusive quest of the poet. We continue “looking for love in all the wrong places,” as the popular song says. There is such a thing as unrequited love, but the best kind is interactive.

It is not our task here to define love, but what would love be without metafora, and what would metafora be without love? Cultivation roots itself in the innate biological need to procreate, to create a personal bond between mate, family, colleague, friends, and community. We constantly seek the other, to bring him or her into the realm of our knowledge and familiarity, and even control as an object, as the ancient Greeks would have it, of our fulfillment. We have evolved our most elaborate jesters’ rituals, dances, dramas, words, and images about the subject. It is the story we most love to hear. The ancient Hindus even equated cultivation of love and lovemaking to that of a science; today few would doubt it is an art, yet one that is never complete and always in process.

The civilizing forces of most societies are centered in the notion that the creator is love, and that we are required to love all as we love the greater deity and ourselves. Such love is of the most enlightened form. Herein lies the great dilemma—are we really capable or have we created enough understanding to be able to accomplish such a feat? It is always easier to love that which is familiar and more like one’s self, whereas anything foreign—the other—often disrupts our complacency and provokes opposite reactions, those of aggression and hatred.

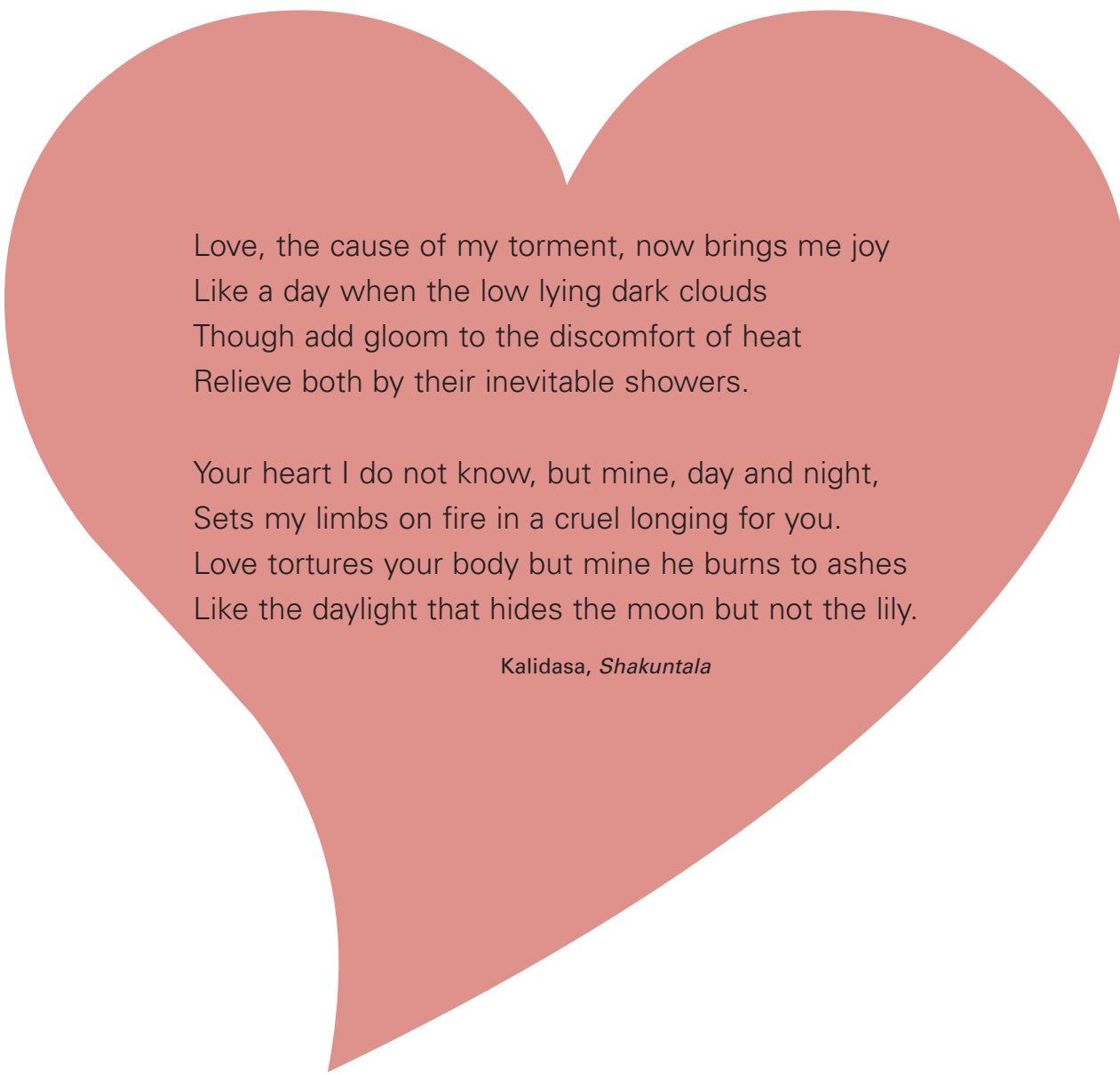
Humanity has made great steps in the development of technology to serve these negative reactions in the development of war machines. It is a sad irony that many of our greatest leaps in technology were fostered by the engines of conflict. All nations need to be watchful over their military-industrial machines whose preoccupation with weaponry may drain resources from the direct development of humane technology. Hopefully, we are driven to create as a means of fulfilling our desires: the quest for love in all of its guises, and the promise of technology may be that it can narrow the gaps of our alienation, our inability to connect.

Love . . . interrupts at every hour the most serious occupations, and sometimes perplexes for a while even the greatest minds. It does not hesitate . . . to interfere with the negotiations of statesmen and the investigations of the learned. It knows how to slip its love-notes and ringlets even into ministerial portfolios and philosophical manuscripts. . . . It sometimes demands the sacrifice of . . . health, sometimes of wealth, position and happiness.

Arthur Schopenhauer,
The World as Will and Idea



Mexican calacas figurines from the Day of the Dead festival



Love, the cause of my torment, now brings me joy
Like a day when the low lying dark clouds
Though add gloom to the discomfort of heat
Relieve both by their inevitable showers.

Your heart I do not know, but mine, day and night,
Sets my limbs on fire in a cruel longing for you.
Love tortures your body but mine he burns to ashes
Like the daylight that hides the moon but not the lily.

Kalidasa, *Shakuntala*

In the shorthand of text messaging through cell phones and beepers, by which the small keypad forces an economy of characters, 143 means I love you. Each number represents the number of letters in each word of the declaration.



Prisoner of Love



Romeo brand chewing tobacco



Padua, Italy

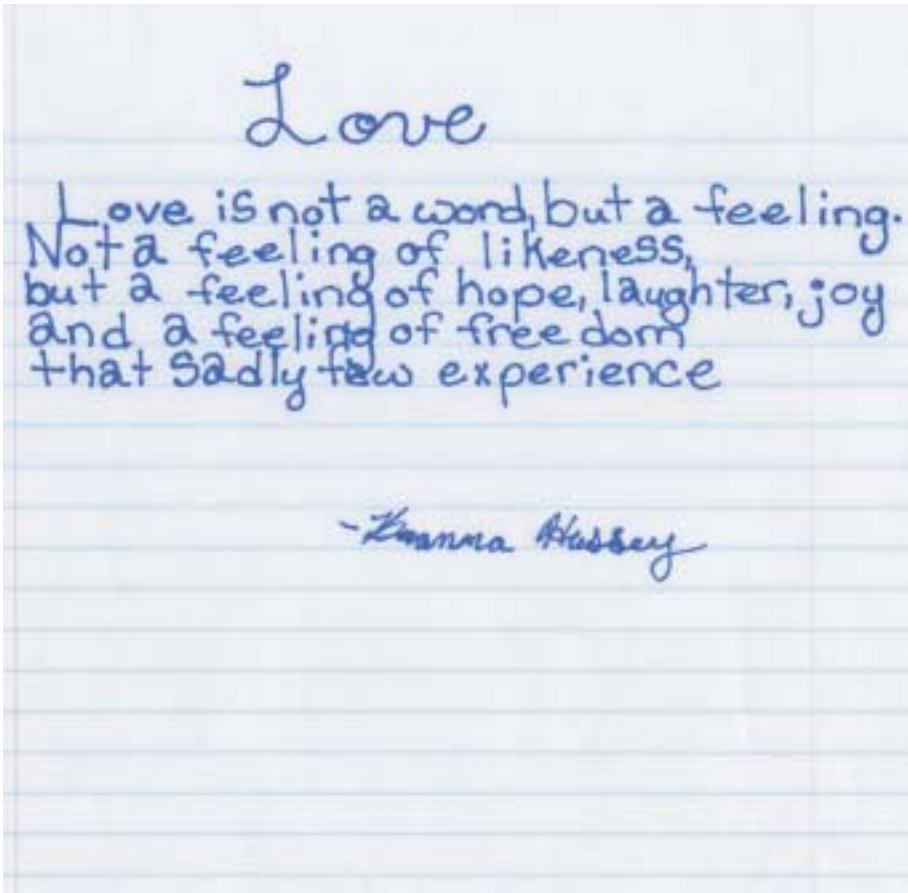
*Then raising from their lacquered gloom
Old keepsakes, tokens of undying love,
A golden hair-pin, an enamel brooch,
She bids him bear them to her lord. One-half
The hair-pin still she keeps, one-half the brooch,
Breaking with her dim hands the yellow gold,*

*Sundering the enamel. "Tell my lord,"
She murmured, "to be firm of heart as this
Gold and enamel; then, in heaven or earth,
Below, we twain may meet once more." At parting
She gave a thousand messages of love,
Among the rest recalled a mutual pledge,
How on the seventh day of the seventh moon,
Within the Hall of Immortality
At midnight, whispering, when none were near,
Low in her ear, he breathed, "I swear that we,
Like to the one-winged birds, will ever fly,
Or grow united as the tree whose boughs
Are interwoven. Heaven and earth shall fall,
Long lasting as they are. But this great wrong
Shall stretch from end to end the universe,
And shine beyond the ruin of the stars."*

Po Chu-i, *A Lute of Jade*

& Love is an evil word.
Turn it backwards/see, see what I mean?
An evil word. & besides
who understands it?
I certainly wouldn't like to go out on that kind of limb.

Amiri Baraka, *Eulogies*



It is very easy
to love alone.

Gertrude Stein