

Neural Tones

by Bill Yarrow

"A rose is a rose is a rose," wrote Gertrude Stein. I prefer Wanda LaFronde's version: "Eròs is eròs is eròs," she said, sitting next to me in the dark *patisserie* where we were listening to a torch singer light the gloom of our recent divorces. My divorce was two months older than hers, but we were both still in the infancy of our dissolutions, the infected flecks of sour love still visible on both of our chins. "Who's your favorite poet?" I ask her during the lull. *I'm into the vegan poet To Fu*, she says. *What about you?* I reply, "I'm heavily invested in Tao Jones, the Wall Street poet." She tries to smile. *What do you most regret?* "Regret? About Hora? Not being kinder to her, I guess." She quotes Dr. Johnson to me: *Kindness is in our power; fondness is not.* "That pretty much sums it up," I moan. She puts her hidden arms around me and I reciprocate, afraid of appearing rude. *Look at us*, she murmurs. *Tristan and Isolde without the adultery.* "Well, you can't have everything." *No?* she replies. *I heard otherwise.* Then frozen dawn waltzed into the bakery, and, against all good sense, I arose and arose and arose.

