

Unguent

by Philip F. Clark

Spilled milk it is --
lactate of common desire;
water under the bridge, slow-
moving, white. So this
is what we feed on: the past
and present here for the licking.

Sweat is water too,
for the hungry, and any
past will do.
Parched mouths kiss just as well as wet.
Teeth bared for telling,
instead, they lap, linger, swell.

I weep at the well,
dry now with misunderstanding;
this milk, this water -- a surfeit
of memory -- where what is remembered
will not tell. I knew thirst was not
food, but once, my lips knew hunger.

