

THE SENSUAL LABORATORY ASSISTANT

The carrot-
haired student
came and said: My acid
is 2 hotter than my base, so
how can I do my heat of neutralization
experiment. But then I watched her technique:
the acid bottle's ground glass
stopper stuck, she held it
close to her breast
to work it free.

What I try
for in my own work
is to remove the human element
from analysis. It's the automated lab,
tubes clicking around in programmed sequences.
Their round bottoms have no spikes, so they fall smoothly
into place for sampling, a leak-free fit.
Even specimens contained in the most
aggressive of solvents
can be handled.

My physicist
friend, who's building
the electronics for the new storage
ring, she says there is an old tradition
in the accelerator community, that in the night
before the ring is turned on, a couple must make love
at its center. Or it won't work.
It must have been cramped,
I bet, in those old
cyclotrons.

Aaron Klug
lectures on the way
proteins have with nucleic
acids, how they turn on transcription
of genes. It's the zinc fingers that do it:
Zn bound to S and N of a special
amino acid sequence shaping
a loop that is the finger
of a hand that touches
DNA the way you

touch me.