

DANIEL NEWMAN

*Puccinia monoica*

My love why would I call you,  
you wonder, why call you parasite?  
Come to the yard. See the mustard plant

looking ill, but lovelier than mustards  
look naturally? How its single bloom  
is gold and more substantial?

According to Barbara Roy in *Nature*,  
it's an endoparasitic fungus,  
which lives by fooling mustards

into making buttercups—  
instead of their ordinary dandruff  
constellations. And butterflies,

fooled also, misconstrue a symptom  
as the more attractive option.  
I bring this up to veil a simple answer:

to show how well we each exploit the other.  
Love is very much the psyche fluttering,  
high-jacked and also high-jacking.

There I said it: love: the parasite  
whose genes encode for subtle talents.

A fitting counterfeit still counts  
as proof of love. Buttercups.  
And love looks like a garden path;  
all logic has its flaws, but flaws

all falling short of dispiriting.  
Follow me into the yard to wonder,

are we more like the butterflies,  
or more like Dr Roy? Cleverer

than fungi? I think not,  
but perceptive enough at least

to be so much impressed  
by the extraordinary case.

