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## WHAT THE HOUSE SAID THIS MORNING

Sun rays  
through white duck  
curtains maybe

say it clearest.  
the part even I understand,  
half-deaf,

listen to the light tell  
this story about you  
it's been telling

since I moved into this house  
the year you were born – there,  
that's a precision

of the sort a place remembers,  
creak of the wood on the old  
stairs in those days

the cry  
of you newborn, still far?  
No, you would not cry,

your nature I think holds  
everything complete, intact, known,  
best understood by stillness.

And into that certainty  
I still come home,  
but what a dull thing love is

when it's just about the lover  
and all the things he feels,  
can barely express

the accurate beauty  
of the actual you.  
God, I wish my love were pure

as this sunlight is  
or at least the soft pale curtains,  
being themselves but still

letting the real light through.

*a Valentine for Charlotte*  
14 February 2009

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a centaur on parole,  
a freeman on a morning  
unspoiled by breakfast)

14 February 2009

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Art is not about anything.

Art is about everything.

Art is about everything all at once.

That is why art is confusing, has to be confusing, has to be *hard*.

Because it is about everything all at once the way the world is everything all at once,

confusing and multiple and no way to get a handle on it

except art is the handle.

Art is confusing the way the world is confusing, only the confusion is small, focused, hard-edged, you can pick it up often and hold it, size of a poem, or hang it over your bed, size of a painting, or walk around it in the street and pee on the plinth of it, a statue, god knows what,

a focused confusion.

A confusion you can pick apart and reassemble.

A confusion you can endure: you can stand under it, and that is almost as good as understanding.

Maybe better. It is better. Art is better

the way the world is better.

Art is standing under the world.

14 February 2009

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I have forgotten how to come down the stairs  
I have forgotten how to put on a sweater  
I have forgotten how to tie my necktie  
if it weren't for my body I would have forgotten everything.

14 February 2009

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The morning celebrant  
rests on high wind up there  
and down here only  
light falls to remind

the Aither over—  
a heart with a hat on it  
as a trueblood love-leaver  
smites the ocean that divides

him from the place  
where he would be only himself  
wave by wave  
the flat of his hand says goodbye

14 February 2009

## INNER EAR

Trying to be sure  
rehearses wheat.  
Earbuzz a private  
winter jungle hum  
and who can listen  
to what I hear?

In ear is no us,  
is the private place  
the ampersand between  
the world and me  
but not you.

What can I know  
of what you hear?  
Even saying so says  
almost nothing.  
A ring with no finger.  
or a whole hand  
reaching out and no  
skin out there  
anywhere to touch,  
we can say Listen!  
but we can't say Hear!

14 February 2009



## SEAFOAM, GULLS

dragging at fish skeletons  
some meat left, sea bass,  
the meat as our own meat  
in the salt scum, red  
as anything. Gulls.  
Go gulls. Bleak  
wave-curvy man-hungry sky  
reaches down, pulls  
them high. And gulls  
around on moorings perched.

Are any of us here for long?  
Is there a language even gulls know  
I fail? Cathedrals  
all round us made of light and air,  
  
nothing more needed ever,  
shape is not substance  
and shape is all, shape is enough.

The shape of hunger. A gull  
too long in the sky. A tree  
is not wood.

So it turns out at last

that a word is made of glass.  
When you look at it close up  
you see your own curious face  
staring out as you stare in.

Any word. And when you use it  
the gulls fly up, the word  
breaks, scatters all over the page  
with all the other jagged slivers.  
It hurts when you read.

14 February 2009

[GAP]

Gender abolishes passion.

That is the problem, a hum  
where there should be silence,  
silence where there should be word.

Girltalk all day long  
among signs of sense,  
glad armchair philosophers  
happy to descry or to despise.

Don't always hold back honey  
though shyness is your most  
luminous asset, don't spend  
too long fondling the possibles  
too little with the actual  
between your molars if I may.

A thing remembered sometimes  
equals any other thing, that  
is the pain of memory, it's trivial,  
like people having dogs  
in the same apartment house  
and you don't have a dog and you  
don't especially like dogs but  
you like the people who have them  
and the building your own home  
after all that dogs are being had in.  
So it's not all bad, the world,

even if it smells like dogs sometimes.  
Ghost of a dog. Trivial memories!  
Erase and leave behind a gap  
that smells like a yawn, that's not good,  
keep the memories, doesn't matter,  
the unremembered is always bigger still,  
don't let them take the world away  
they'll let us keep it just as long as we  
make joyous use of it, lewdness,  
sanctity, tenderness, appetite and such.  
If not, they'll take the sum away  
and leave the naught. The gap  
our ancestors could still remember  
(those black-skinned Gauloises)  
way behind them in Ginnunga-gap,  
the *Yawning Gap* between or after  
or before or anyhow not now.  
Hardly anything is now. Greek *chaos*  
also meant a yawn. The yawn  
to begin with. A gap in something,  
sudden vacancy in the middle of a face,  
a nothing where there had been something.  
Then we get over it and start again,  
our lips barely open in the tiny gaps called speech.

15 February 2009

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How I become a different one when I am you,  
how you don't like it much then—  
just because you wear a yellow dress  
and live in the sky doesn't give me the right  
to fondle the light. Sinister synaesthesias  
I demand. But you insist on normal things.  
And you get your way. Until the night.

15 February 2009

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But was there a different animal  
our wars of religion our small  
languages fighting against empire  
my Latvian friend in a wooden house  
with grapevines all over the door

and I knew how to walk in its body  
and bite with its teeth all times  
breaking apart beneath me, a raft  
I rode that soon my body was  
until the eveningland was gone

and we were underlings of the stars?  
Anywhere there is a door  
there is a house. Anywhere there is a breath  
it turns sooner or later into language.  
And that is all the animal we are.

15 February 2009

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Times to be late  
and a lover heading home  
like any other river  
greedy for the sea

but a river mouth is all  
anxiety, the coming  
together is not easy—  
far out at sea

the drift of Mississippi silt  
is still to be seen  
they tell me but they  
are likely lying like all lovers.

16 February 2009

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Just because a thing  
is automatic doesn't  
mean it's easy to do.  
Death for instance.

No, death is not a thing,  
that's your mistake.  
Death is just a rehearsal  
for something even harder

when you sleep like the sun in the sky.

16 February 2009



## **A STOLE**

around your neck  
satin, purple, claiming  
to be a priest, to ease  
the sins off dying folk  
with this sad ribbon—

we are all mere agents  
of our costumes  
and we hate it that we know it  
they way everyone hates clowns.

16 February 2009

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What time does to music  
is weird. Almost as strange  
as the other way round.

16.II.09

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So long to think  
this thought  
the music helps.

16.II.09

## **ARS POETICA**

So the thing is you live fast  
and pretty thick  
and write quick.

It doesn't take  
long to set the words down  
it takes a long time to get the words,

just standing around,  
seeing too much, eating,  
sleeping in the cold desert.

16 February 2009