

11-2005

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face able

interference

in the object world

we begin to remember

so much is lost, too much kept

hiding where the elderberry tree once was

an osier now

red with living.

21 November 2005

## MORNING PRAYER

Intercede  
with the One enemy –  
you see her  
in the mirror

(This is true for all beholders.)

Try to test the mirror  
try to begin again,  
her face in there  
trying to be mine.

21 November 2005

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Learn certainty  
by following Blake home

learn strength by  
watching how his fingers  
guide the burin

and so engrave  
something in you.

Time enough later  
to be a crown of  
lilacs waiting for May.

21 November 2005

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Catch me with that old trick?

A possum in the sky

pretending to give

warmth and sight.

21 November 2005

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Still waiting for blue opportunity  
the rose blossoms red—  
one more tragedy  
still waiting for its Sophocles.

21 November 2005

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Playing with the instrument  
music is a species of mistake

the way science is a way  
of not thinking about the world

until you do. You have it  
in your hands. Your mind's

hands: number. Then  
something fits in, something

falls away. The pangolin  
rustles as it moves

or clanks you'd think  
until you actually listen.

21 November 2005

## HERE

The light has sides  
I never knew that till now  
sides and angles  
that know how to touch

the edge of light  
scrapes along your skin  
I see this plainly  
the way my own skin tries to hide

and what is there to hide from  
but the light itself  
deciding this is here and that not here  
I do not see you in this schoolroom

one more heartbreak  
among so many many trees  
south southeast in cold autumn  
the light is bare

all around me are intelligences  
busily writing down  
what the light tells them  
all that I try to hide.

21 November 2005



## A SPOON

*for Charlotte*

A horn spoon's best for honey, olive wood for olive oil. I've often joked that I would give you a spoon for your birthday. A silver spoon is best for scraping meat off hanging sides of beef for steak tartare. A gold spoon is best for a Greek priest to dip into the chalice where the sopped cubes of bread swell quietly with a wine that is not just wine but the blood of memory, or memory of blood, a Jewish man who walked away into the sky. What such a spoon lifts out, lifts towards the lips of a devout mouth. We all are waiting. In the dark. But a stainless steel spoon is best for stirring Darjeeling tea, though even its resistant sheen grows tarnished after a while by the powerful tannic acid in that lean piquant cup we both tasted, I for the first time, though not together, you and I, traveling in our different years, at the canteen in the airport at Badogra, Place of the Tiger, in the quiet woods of Assam. I looked out that first time and thought: jungle. It was the monsoon. I held a spoon. The tea was in a stainless pot, and the spoon was awkwardly small in my fingers. A spoon is a strange thing, a thing that doesn't cut or pierce, a thing that stirs or lifts. A tiny cup it is, on a handle. Why would anyone give anyone a spoon? Why do I so want to give you a spoon? Because you are my wonderful wife, and it feels always to me as if we are just now married, as if I had just stepped in from my not altogether satisfactory life and come into a parlor where you were standing, not waiting, not patient, not impatient, just where you were. You are always so much where you are. And you let me be with you. I think the people of the north give wooden spoons for marriage, soft pinewood easily carved, or birch. A pale wooden Swedish spoon is best for marriage, it is given to the bride, a gift she'll use to measure the length and breadth of her marriage, by watching the wood darken over the years, until the wheat-white wood to begin with is dark as amber from stirring this or that,

from pushing things around in the skillet, from oil, from water, from her tongue covertly licking to taste how things are developing in the thickening sauce. A spoon to stand in the saucepan, leaning on the rim, the perfect angle things form when left to their own devices. Things help marriages. We rely on the fundamental decency of objects. They are clean. They mostly stay inside themselves and stand or lie, seeming in every way content just to be there and let us dance around them in our strange human way of coming and going and not being at rest. You have taught me all I know about being at rest, but also about going out meaningfully, to walk along the path where we always expect to meet wolves but seldom do, to buy tea or eggs or a sweater – buy a sweater, keep off cold weather – or just to look at the sky. At night we sometimes see the Milky Way though it isn't as bright as it was when I was a child, and we still don't see the spoon from which such milk is spilled, gently, for so many years, stirring something into the world, something that only looks like light but is something else. Something I need you for. Something I hope you need me for too. When starlight is very old and you are very young, when we sit calmly at the table and we have spoons, spoons for chocolate mousse and trifle, spoons for the froth on cappuccino, spoons for the raspberry syrup that fashionable chefs dribble over the pastry on the plate and over the whole plate too in some quick intricate pattern it makes no sense to read but only eat, scrape up the evidence and lick the spoon, the world is waiting. You have given me everything and I say Here, at least I am trying to give you a spoon.

22 November 2005

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But will there be  
something left for me  
*fließigkeit* a fluidity  
running through my name  
so you can say it too  
calling me to the place  
where such rivers go?

22 November 2005

## **A PROBLEM**

Calling something out. It could be a tree, the oaks in the high meadow holding their leaves still where sunset catches them. It could be that way. Or it could be a china porringer with pewter base, a little screw top spout on its side to let the hot water in to keep a child's Pablum hot while he waves his arms over the highchair tray imitating music.

22 November 2005

=====

Another asks another:  
how tell me from you?

22 XI 05

## IN PRAISE OF OLD INK

Does the pen  
remember the man?

\*

Does the charcoal black  
in the Chinese ink  
used to write the character  
for 'vine' remember  
the twigs of the vine  
from which it's made?

\*

What *does* ink know?

Sometimes I think it knows  
more than the hand  
that wields the pen.  
Saint Ink. Sage Ink.  
Sybil with your liquid curves.

Full Moon in November

(transcribed 22 November 2005)

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But was I near enough to tell  
if the arrow landed in the core  
or just a year-ring of the thought  
and the idea still not there?  
Are we red yet  
as once we planned to be  
spreading love  
like grains of wheat across the steppes?

22 November 2005

## IN SOME OPERA

she is singing to me.

She's confusing me

the way a voice does

when you're not sure

is she really talking

and talking to you?

Or talking at all

not just some noise

in the loudspeaker

and all the rest of it

just interpretation.

That is your work,

dear reluctant scholar,

to hear everything

that happens as a word.

22 November 2005



=====

Be thirsty, paper,  
soak up my blood  
letter by letter.  
It's raining still  
and cold. The light  
is leaving. All  
we have left is  
listening.

22 November 2005

## QUESTION MARX

1.

Altitudes of Prussian economic indexes  
brown forest mulch of so many Caesars  
never here for legions lost in Osnabrück  
a flyweight broker and a horse on fire—  
never sure about the translation  
sounds like poetry to me – or geese  
announcing strangers at the Roman gate—  
it takes a woman to make a woman dance.

2.

But where did where come from?  
Isn't the question itself the oddest  
invention? Any question at all.  
Not just in discourse but  
in even the quietest thinking –  
that one would know that one does not know  
something and find words to ask that information—  
to find a form of asking.

3.

How brave the first woman was  
who wondered. And the first man  
who dared to ask her What are you thinking?

=====

As much as these small towers  
iron bridges and a ball  
rolls across the living room  
how else could a child imagine God?

*A forest with no trees,  
a name with no man.*

Is this the fruit that falters on that branch,  
is this soup in the pot and the salmon got away?  
Is this the only dream that will not let you wake?

23 November 2005

=====

*for Jackson*

We need an alarm clock.

We need salt. We have put  
the obvious together  
till they make no sense

just music and mosaic  
on the wall, all  
that's left is scarlet and gold,  
the picture fallen away.

23 November 2005

## LAC LEMAN

Steel spells a tall door  
in a dark wall – who  
can read the top of it  
lost as it is in the stone.

After some time  
material goes back to matter.  
And old glass flows.

2.

Nor was I Pontius  
but sometimes when in reverie  
by this lakeside  
I hear a voice—  
it could be, so often is,  
my mother's voice  
saying my name  
short of breath  
as I am now,  
years after her death—  
I know it really is  
his voice, the man  
I wanted to listen to  
but how can any of us  
really listen?

If only we had consented  
to talk to me.  
But he used language  
in a different way,  
the way water uses the sky.

3.

A lake is all about voices.

23 November 2005