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## **BY HOUSE LIGHT**

to read how  
we family it

fumble tell  
and ragged touch  
but nonetheless.

See how  
a venture is  
the boat at evening  
sails the ceiling

shadows  
ate what the light  
actually says

shadows are the truth.

1 May 2009

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Not a kind of country a mirror.

Half of what is said is seen

half of what is seen is touched

half of what is touched is you,

I have left the room

my wrist tied up with an old sock,

you will be born again

but what about me?

All I do all day is recognize and bleed.

1 May 2009

## TABLE TALK

Is this the point of it, how  
you sit at the table  
impatiently meek  
wanting always something else,  
something that is not far?

Intimate ant  
in sugar fallen  
nothing alien  
to its need  
leaves a trail  
we dare not follow

no home for this kind of us  
our gender does not work on wood  
our language does not work below the stars

nothing alien to a sign  
except design—  
start thinking about crosses  
and Jesus vanishes.

She's trying to contain  
“my violences, my violences”

tied her to the door  
then walked through the wall

tied her to the chair  
and told her:  
you will be my window

sat down facing her  
hours passed  
thick as the Messiah  
on the radio  
in the next room  
where somebody thinks Easter

faced her, seeing  
not watching,  
look through the window  
her body was

and while she slept the clouds away  
saw the sun rise out of her  
screaming but in whose voice  
she smiled as she was sleeping

and all the rest is as it is  
no commentator  
the democratic light fell down

and worshipped her

hours later she

had somehow freed herself and gone.

2.

But what did you want of the table

the food didn't give?

And what was the chair

trying to tell you?

You rocked on it, made

it wobble, made it creak.

Had you asked the wood something?

People were talking all around the table

you loved them, you love them,

but it so happened that black birds—

not all that small— were flying

in and out of their mouths—

did you know your friends had birds?

You watched the flurry of their wings

the cute hard little beaks translucent

when they passed by the candle flame.

You don't recall a single thing you ate,

you know that there was cake  
but there is no taste in your mouth  
but mouth, not even a bird.

3.

Many a man hath sickened from love  
and few have died of it, he said,  
sort of quoting, you could tell by the hath,  
you listened respectfully, warily,  
the way you'd listen to an old kitchen chair  
creak as you squirm around on it  
trying to get comfortable, not wanting  
to eat breakfast. Food comes too early.

You stare through vines out the window and think:  
in the forest of the beginning  
we lived without eating.  
Eating was the first sin  
because we have to kill to do it,  
kill or maim or cut things down.

Here in the archaic morning of each day  
we live in Eden before we eat,  
we are peaceful to everything around,  
we drink the kindly mineral  
that springs out of the ground for us  
or falls into the old rainbarrel out of heaven

I think that's what the chair was saying—  
you are animal and I am vegetable  
and the shining mineral feeds us both.

But the table was still silent,  
stretched out in front of you  
with friends stationed at all the horizons  
hemming that desert in,  
the friendly empty place you wanted so.

Why didn't you taste the cake  
or remember it if you did?  
Even now there is a cup in your hands.

1 May 2009

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Mockingbird flew across the lawn – she’s me  
voice not my own, a cracked shellac recording  
of Chaucer parodying Milton, faint outside you hear  
street sounds of heaven’s ghetto where poetry  
is taught to prisoners by randy nuns – some  
sound like that is who I am. Each heart  
wants to be another heart and have it  
stridulate and hump inside their personal  
bone bag. Inside is never lonely.

2 May 2009

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How much of light  
lets who hold?  
Corn has rough hands  
kind as after-winter  
before it has a name.  
Ambulances pass—  
this is worry, your milk.  
How white the black is  
on a crow's back  
suddenly sun. How  
much do you live?  
I have tried to fill  
the cup and get  
you drunk on water.  
The plain thing  
that sings your ear.

2 May 2009

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Under the brown paper bag  
of personal identity  
the primeval face of Apollo  
grins out at your mistakes.

2 May 2009

ΜΟΥΣΑΙΣ ΙΕΡΑΙΣ

I have been given so many poems—  
what have I done with them,  
have I kept any of them  
clear as they came?

Done what I could, gave  
what I'd been given, shaped  
or shorn, spoiled or rightly said.  
I hope it lights your way.

2 May 2009

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Quantity is debt  
the paper said.

Relationships  
are sour like a peach,

when you're done  
it's wrinkled and hard.

I saw you  
playing with the weather,

what goes on inside  
you is Lascaux.

2 May 2009

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Always impatient never begin  
your tongue makes promises  
without saying a word. Fun  
turns out to be the only sin.

2 May 2009

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If there were an answer  
there would be a question—  
obvious as that, as hymns  
make Gods appear

and noises in the forest  
wood and water wood and wind  
bring animals to life.  
You think? Is there hope

where we saw only grammar,  
law, arithmetic and sin.  
Can we begin, again, simple,  
knowing no more than the wind?

2 May 2009

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I'm still looking for the thing I found—  
will you help me when you go to town?  
Pick up some bread and one small hen  
bring it home if I can find my house.

2 May 2009

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We sometimes know who we're talking to  
we never know who hears.

(This is the root problem of human poetry.)

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Robins work a long day  
I meet them soon after light  
and hear them still when dark's  
on the land and one of them  
just flew across the stream  
confirming my suspicions.  
All that work, eat and fly and  
sing and god knows what else  
and he's just one of them, and they  
are just one of all the kinds  
of kinds. I am baffled by desire.  
Everything is here—it's left  
for me to turn away.

3 May 2009

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I asked my heart  
What are you doing with my blood?

To being with, it's my blood  
my heart replied, mine to play with

capture and let go—  
you're just the game-board of my play

my playing field, years and years  
I play, each pulse a word

and all of them you keep trying to repeat  
try to learn how to speak for yourself,

I laugh at you, my love, you have no self,  
you just have me, and yes I love you

this love is what I'm doing with our blood,  
trying to wake up your silent bones.

3 May 2009

## SAYING GOOD-BYE TO JOHN MICHELL

We need a good rain, a carwash rain,  
the moneysaver, a day to stay home  
bundling reeds together to slather mud on later  
to build our dwellings on the marshland, we  
need to build our own mountains, nature  
gives us only mysteries but we love them, we  
build our house like they sing in *Candide*  
we tear down churches to find the hidden god  
wise old toad or amorous dragon in the cellar  
we follow guess-lines from one peak to another,  
we heap up gentle piles of stones and cry  
an ancient mighty hero's buried here, embedded  
like a clue in Sherlock Holmes, the way  
she holds her thumbs together and moves,  
what does twiddle really mean, o we read books,  
we follow from synagogue to mason's lodge  
deciphering the line of sight, the way  
her tongue moves when she doesn't speak,  
the way her frantic eyes are so peaceful  
if you stop the film, I think your film  
has stopped now for a while, we need a rain  
to swell the dry young husks again and wake

the chicken in the egg the basilisk the *Rights*  
*of Man* sailing up the Vineyard Sound  
en route to Prospero, stop motion, Atlantis  
sounds its flutes and drums for you,  
you have drifted off to play another night  
cat's cradle with the northern lights.

4 May 2009