

## *the things: a response*

... that time horizon was not ocean, was not motorway stretching to red oblivion—it was interiors.

Clean-painted walls.  
The frame of the door.  
The running of a tap.  
The rustle of the newspaper, the face hidden.  
Arms tucked up behind heads.  
Heads resting on the heels of the hands.  
The picture frame, straightened.  
Beds. Chairs. Desks.  
The two bottom steps of the stairs.

I come with gladness into this room.

I am gone, you know. Looking, but not seeing. What does it mean to look, and not to see?  
Your eyes on me. No eyes on me. See me. Waiting on the stairs. Up on.

Children's feet rumbling across the ceiling.  
Which is also the floor.  
Which were also my feet.  
The floor of the bedroom. The dust of youth.  
The grit and the summer curb.

The things, they move around. Time passes. The soil is empty now in the pot. Nurturing only itself. It is its own container. Time has passed in the detail.

The ticking of the clock, of course.  
The picture hangs crooked now.  
The plant is gone.  
The running of a tap.  
All bent at the elbows, always, forever.

There's a framework almost visible within it all. Within the image, a gargantuan social structure. But no, it's other images within it (the image being the central concern). Eye contact. You were nonchalant, lazy, confident. "They're the image of each other!" All those long looks. Not the manic eyes of the cat. Not the easy eyes of the cat.

The bed. Place of most comfort. Turtle was gone a long time.

I come with sadness into this room.

The chair, your chair. Where you sat, reading the paper. Your space. Your own personal space. "Come on to the couch, you gowl, so I can have a snuggle!" But no, the chair. The newspaper. The eyes. Where are your eyes?

Here is a different chair and you are within it. All at sea, one way or the other.

This is all static, but there was earnestness too. Don't forget it. *Ghosts* is too easy, too attractive. But everything does seep and melt and leak and fade. The image fades. The image is its own thing.

The look lingers. You blend into the chair into the bed. Now you are part-chair, part-bed. And all I wanted was your eyes, your looking. "Look at me!" Grabbing your face and turning it to

me. You face, poised for the longest time. Were you (or had you been) about to say something?  
The eyes, the face. Hello, eyebrows.  
The rustle of the newspaper.  
The radio from the other room.

A drawer should remain closed, unless you need a particular thing, a particular object.  
The eyes.  
The summer curb.

The fog was must inverted. Must was *need*. What was it he needed? What was it he had opened the drawer for? He forgot forever and closed it again. That was the year I grew. Nobody noticed me, but in their gestures, in their movements—the way they leaned across or ducked away or bent to the drawer—they knew me grown. They felt me changed. Their eyes fell idly on me in their own moments. Moments. What were these except images? Except selfish instances of time?

Clean painted wall.  
Voices through the wall, coming to conclusions.  
Socks on feet. “Shoes and socks!”  
The second step.

He was hiding, but immersive himself in the moment of the newspaper, the stories. But the eyes are gone now. I only wanted you to look at me then.

I've been going through a phase of not being able to cry. Twenty-two years passed.

The comfort again of the chair. Okay. Okay, Worzel Gummidge. Were you free then? Or idle?

Not on me. Not on me. My son turned my face to him, so I looked. To see. “If you want to see the world anew, sit on the floor and not on the chair.” The grey world beyond. The face. The breathing of the child is slow and easy and clear now. Where do I go? To the summer curb, I think. To the second step from bottom, on the stairs. To bamboo-ness.

The contours of the pillow.  
Heads resting on hands.

I'm the shadow, the interference in the signal. I'm the echo that resounds in your wake. I'm the moment. All lean, all lean.

I come with something to show you into this room. A wonderful thing. A miracle.

The child awakens. Sees.

I see you / You see me.

At last. You're here, at last. And the migration of birds across the sky that evening was not to other lands but to their nests in trees along the darkening coast. We watched them together from the window. We sat on the top of the couch, looking out the window, your eyes flitting from one thing to the other...