

His Tongue His Touch

He lost the table: but he could eat on the word.
Slowly, replacements were made,
Starting with things
That had nothing to do with him.
They were the first to go.

Glass poured into glass,
Door opened into door.
And the lamps lit as lamps do.

But they were not themselves.
There was a difference.
They were the words.

The separation began as a shadow.
Without an object to hold to,
It grew and grew until
At last it reached
The place where people were.

And he could not tell what
Was happening to them
Was happening to him.

He could only watch
As they were emptied of themselves,
Altered, exchanged for him,
Pieces of him.

The things could tell him nothing,
But the people tried.
Friends stepped close, touched him,
Trying to tell him

What he was doing. Or not doing.

At night, a girl would burst into tears:
"You don't remember. You don't know who I am."
Gradually, his friends let go, dropped their hands.
They turned. They walked away.

Now he sits in a room like this one, only not
This one, and he rehearses --
How to make things return to themselves,
Room into room, him into him.

He sees what is not there,
Wondering where they are.
He keeps watch among them,
Naming,
But he has forgotten
The word he stares at is the world.