

DAVID JAFFIN

# AS ONE











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as always     for Rosemarie,  
Raphael and Andreas



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AS ONE





AS ONE

The sound of  
these words

the image and  
sense are one

if the reflec-  
tion of I

in the waters  
in the late

afternoon  
is the same.

## TOUCH

When I touch this lamp  
I pull the stars down

it closes light  
simply the touch my fingers

tell its thoughts  
your face imprinted to

this sound  
for the lines break a

night of separate stars  
you think what I touch

and the dark  
glimmers its light through

us.

## THE ROSE

The rose is  
that rose to  
me: stilled

petals, soft  
repose (but  
complete)

to the fic-  
tions of  
touch, primed

(considered),  
refined—  
the mind

wanders as  
the hand,  
delicate

breaks.

## QUIET NOTE

Autumn has  
a quiet note  
as well

the way the  
birds turn to  
the wind

that their co-  
lor is known.

## SHELL

I touched at its wings  
when the tides were  
in

and I was sad before  
the waves rose to  
their height

and I could not hear  
my sadness.

BUT THE ONE

You told me  
two truths

but the one  
(your eyes)

transitional.

## BALLERINA

The world was balanced on a  
single toe.

The dance was over,  
we'd all applauded

the curtain fell  
but she didn't move.

We shuffled from our place  
the lights went on

that curtain fell again  
but she didn't move.

Her eyes, her thoughts  
and all she ever was

suspended from a sin-  
gle toe.

VERMEER

She wouldn't look  
to where we wanted her face  
to be  
didn't quite come to  
focus

but kept turning away,  
touching aside  
to the tangible objects of  
that place

shy in a way  
but we knew her then  
as he turned that light  
in

that she touched, as  
of herself  
each feature with those self-  
enclosed fingers.



## ANNUNCIATION

Its shadow  
(was it taken  
as light)

broken and still  
for a moment  
defined the wind—

It was spring  
(its coming)

That afternoon  
clear and known;

She saw the sta-  
tues touched,  
a sun grazed

their heart,  
distinct now.

## THE CUP

The cup was  
shared and  
clean, de-

cipherable  
(too) for  
the present

want; as it  
touched his  
lips the

lights suc-  
cessively di-  
minished as

a flame put  
out with co-  
vered hands;

he drank,  
but his thirst  
was dry.

## CHESS PIECES

Time's exact,  
the clean  
spaces be-

tween, po-  
lished to the  
phrase, carved

and rarified—  
Touch would  
gleam as

touch, the  
eye confined  
as glass

refine its  
chosen pre-  
sence.

TO DAPHNE

My mind's cold  
the leaves are conscious  
formed

your face refrains  
from thought;

My mind's the cold and  
conscious act  
the leaves are glistened,  
gold

your face withholds the  
outline of its  
form.

## PRISONER

His loneliness  
pained him but

once

when he passed by a  
mirrored wall

regrettable (in-  
deed)

his face reflec-  
ted

scarcely there.

MANNEQUIN

Her dress specially fit,

tailored to fine  
phrases,

the scent attributable

(if spurious)  
as of fingers on

cloth curled and  
consumed these

strictures of  
fact.

## BIRDS IN A CAGE

One doesn't like being closed  
in like that  
to such a shortness of space  
and with wings that couldn't  
fly,  
provided they were taught  
to flutter harmlessly  
by,  
looking pretty, perhaps,  
but performing less;

And one tires of gold, too  
tarnished at that  
that need be cleaned from  
time to time  
and of looking at oneself  
(two faces)  
in the mirror re-  
volving  
or looking out at what's  
looking in.

FRÄULEIN T.

A bird flew in her room  
one day,

She wouldn't believe it  
though

ran for her colored bird  
book  
found the proper wings

as she was looking  
the bird flew away

She wouldn't believe it  
though

sat long with her book by  
the window.



A BELIEF  
(of Nathaniel Pink)

My life is predicated  
on the belief

that birds fly westwards  
in the afternoon,  
in the late afternoon

and leave shadows behind,  
gather silences  
stretched out their wings

I feel a purpose in that,  
something for me to

believe I at the centre  
of things (as they  
pass overhead)

Unobserved I stand  
anticipate the start the  
flourish of wings,

feel the expanse of  
sky (I at the centre  
of things)

marking out that place  
at angles to myself,  
leaving shadows

behind, gathering si-  
lences there.

CLARA

She was made  
of the things  
she took with

her fingers  
according to season  
and want,

berry and branch,  
the bloodless  
thorn that ran

straight to her  
veins.

IN LIGHT

A bird uncovered sound,  
prepared its wing

shadows kept close to the  
leaves  
the sun slate

its heart written straight  
across the claws  
signed them all,

in light.

SUNDAY: HIND LEGS

Sunday:  
birds sprint among the  
branches

upsetting the winter  
stillness

a dog sits in  
snow,  
hind legs the pillars of  
his house

times are made that  
way:

permanent scene  
sudden thought  
the arch of sound

constructing a position to  
watch from.

## PASTURES

He was like a horse  
in a meadow without a fence.

Someone had put him there  
he couldn't remember anymore  
about those workings  
the early romplings the  
seasoned markings pressed to  
his side, ingrained for  
more than enough years

He was like a horse  
in a meadow without a fence  
looking for water  
and a hand that could close  
him in

He reared fast to the side,  
saddle and stirrups a-  
libied  
domestic stillness

He wouldn't come,  
the years had passed  
the pasture cropped with his  
takings and I wouldn't  
build a fence there  
even if he told me to.

AND AT THE END

And at the end you'll  
ask,  
as you've always done,  
but then I won't  
answer—

Will you remember, that?

I'll simply stare,  
set still as a face of  
stone,

And if you ask again,  
a little louder  
your face concealing  
concern

I won't answer ei-  
ther—  
please, don't expect  
that of me.

## AT THE RIGHT MOMENT

He came at the right moment  
for the room was empty.

He closed it quickly behind  
concealing himself there.

He turned the key,  
he covered the windows with  
shadow.

He took his shoes  
and the sounds of his thoughts,  
off.

He removed himself from that moment  
softly aside

He stood where nothing could  
have been.

## SYMBOLS

You always agreed  
(either to what I  
said or the ar-

guments opposed),  
Assumed, accepted  
satisfactions be-

tween us  
Time stayed still,  
a cat curled with-

out will of its  
own;

but I've grown into that  
symbol of his-self,

at my feet  
(long since asleep)

the cat.



## TIME PIECE

And the day after yester  
day

When you put this apple  
in my hand

and compared it  
(metaphorically speaking)

to the rose

All the world's round  
after all

William Tell couldn't have cared  
less

and Eve hadn't been named to  
the board of directors

yet

Sin has its price too  
I suppose

all the leaves come down  
whether you like it or

not

I found this apple  
on the road

just rotting away by it  
self.

AMERICANA

*(Southern, 1880s) for my nephews*

On a long summer  
day when shadows leaned their  
width full length against

some other to be  
described, inopportune  
structure inappro-

priately referred to as

a fence,

when birds scrawny  
eyed looked like straw hats  
tipped too far afront

and one wore bluejeans  
brass buttons/  
comic cobbled pipe

between one's molared lips

proud of it all,  
increasingly aware of

that aforementioned.

## SIMILAR CONCLUSIONS

A radio isn't  
                    a room  
  
even if we've gathered about  
    the same thing  
  
and windows could look the  
    other way out  
  
    not back  
stairs don't lead to  
  
    similar conclusions  
  
unless we've taken the wrong  
    way out com  
                    pared  
  
to that assumption  
a chimney with  
                    out smoke's  
  
a radio with  
                    out a room  
  
to listen in.

## A HOUSE OF WINDOWS

That house was simply windows

it looked out at me  
as persons without names.

It was stone and I thought  
it so

it had a gate and I couldn't  
enter.

Birds sang, however bright, there  
through shadow

one passed it by  
even when the lights were  
on

and one could feel one's  
steps, withdraw.

It was a house of windows  
simply windows

looking out.

OF THE SAME THINGS

And you didn't look when I  
came in the room

It was raining outside

the door closed behind  
and we sat at the same table,

the room itself was shadow,  
sound and object

with a light in the middle  
and windows at the sides.

You didn't look when I came  
in the room,

when I took my hat  
in my hands

when I closed my coat on  
the chair

when I sat as any other object  
in that room

It was raining outside

and we could hear the sounds  
of the same things.

## HOUSE OF DEATH

She was cold when  
we came

Hands stiffened ex-  
tended upwards

wouldn't remain in  
their place,

Face swollen still  
that room alive  
and active

wanting silence with-  
out her.

OF HER, NOW

And what do we have of  
her, now:

Those pieces we can't seem  
to place, just right as  
they were;

Smiles of that livened face  
that yellow at the  
sides;

A house that's provided for  
others,  
long since repainted

A memory, a meaning here  
or there  
as the touch of free-  
flowing hair

and a stone they've carved  
out since,  
quite clearly.

## DISTINCT

The clock was turning sound

leaves stood in the late af-  
ternoon

by the window  
your flesh muted in  
light

I saw your face  
looking through itself

(the circles of sound)

A silence that could  
be touched

in this room  
a shadow crossed

birds held in flight

as your hands thought,  
felt the edge of cloth

The clock ticked a  
sound

that the darkness was  
distinct.



## LATE MARCH

Late in March  
there was a windstill on  
the lake

the sky mirrored itself  
and we walked the winds  
our way

Three boys stood at the bridge  
trying the water with their  
line

though the land was want  
of growth  
and their fingers kept

with cold  
the touch of the dead,  
this last of winter

They gazed within the  
water  
searching for light

Swans moved along the  
surface  
floating on sound

the clouds closed with-  
in themselves

Late in March,  
This windstill on the  
lake.

## ACCEPTED

He grew old in the afternoon,  
shadows became of him.

He could have sat with a book  
in his hand,  
closing the corners be-  
tween them.

He could have talked outloud  
if he wanted  
as one talks to a child  
thinking oneself increa-  
singly smaller

or he could have cleaned  
and cleared away  
all that unevenness others referred  
to as himself

but instead he grew old in the  
afternoon,  
shadows became of him.



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