

Tree

All year I have coveted this raw thing
(In wind wave distracting,
In green froth disguising)
Trying to trap it in the mind's eye long enough
To bookkeep size, shapes, quantity -
Preparing; pre-ordering.

All year there has been a hunger in me
To shape this wild thing
To my own ends.
It is almost time:
I sharpen my tools
Like a cat licking the saucer clean.

This tree -
Pre-dissected -
Is bookended by the end of the year.

Wood

These green wood blanks
Stacked like bodies in the morgue
Await attention.
I slide one out, pale and cool to touch.

It has a backstory:
Age, health, shape and size
Traced forensically in grain.
A blueprint for its future too..

Whittling time backwards,
It is my job to cut free
A new chapter;
A new lease of life.

Axe

I do not need a long grey beard
To wield this axe.
It is not a man axe -
No heft or heave.

(I can see myself reflected in the blade.)

It is not a felling axe
Spitting out great chips of living (dying) wood

Like punchdrunk teeth.
It is not a battle axe.

What it is though is sharp:
Sharp like lemon juice on cracked skin;
Sharp like salt souring the eye;
Sharp like a wife's honest tongue;
Sharp like being left for someone better (or manlier).

I will use it pedantically to pick out the spoon:
It is a bonsai axe; a domesticated axe;
A kitchen axe; a Derringer
With all the secret steel and strength of home.

With it I can shave the soft down from my arm,
Split paper/hairs.

I will use it like a surgeon to cleanly split
Those unseen arteries (phloem? xylem?)
That once ferried atoms from the deep earth
To the overarching canopy above.

Knife

I pick up this knife to make a spoon
(Much like God)
Carving out the feminine
From a man's bones.

Surely though the spoon came first?
Each whisper of wood's a clean shave,
Disclosing what was always there:
Smooth contours; ovoid outlines.

Yes: had I been the first man
(Or his God)
I would certainly have bet on the spoon -
Re-modelling over (and ova)
That shining woman in the moon.

In my mind's eye:
A race of salvaged daughters
(All in one basket)
Spared from a king's jealous blade.

I finish and wipe my knife clean.
A sharpening pause - pot of tea, one sugar -
I start again to shape another.
After all it seems

We make each other.
This new spoon clatters on to the pile
With the hollow sound of drying wood -
One of Adam's ribs.

Spoon

Here it is at last:

This timeless lunatic mystery - food becoming flesh
(flesh becoming food).

This nestled union - spoonerism of sexes
(confusion of bodies).

This moon shadow - gravid bowled carrying curve
(breast of wood).

This first soft pap - sugared deathbed medicine drop
(concentric rings in water).

Here it is at last:

This small homely gift - with this spoon I feed you