

Signs and Portents, Read from the Margin

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"The family will receive friends at home this evening from 7 to 9," Oglethorpe Echo

Wading hip-deep in the snarl and sputter
of my mower –
The tom grass behind me limp in its green blood –
I glance across at the familiar house.
Still now, though unsettled family dogs bark
alarm from the back yard,
Protesting my intrusion mid-week and days
from any sensible Sunday.
I tidy my lawn for the pending occasion,
a neighborly gesture.

A local curious car slows, its driver craning,
Awed by the front porch light shining mid-morning.
The white wreath seems a sudden blossom,
Or perhaps a hollow sun ablaze on the closed
front door, a warning.
A certainty of sign more current and personal
Than CNN blaring Balkan eruptions.

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At the back door a strange kinsman shakes
The old mop over the porch rail,
Scolding the dogs into silence in a
cadence with the flailing,
A ritual erasing the past, though the
enduring sun
Catches a sparld of the settling dust.

By first dusk there will be the children's voices:
Through the house, out into the secret corners
of an unfamiliar yard.
Or indulged to catch random fireflies
in dangerous glass jars from the kitchen.
That sly courting under glass will be sensed,
But not yet understood.

The old house, in full light now,
A shuffle of feet stutters apology for the
mystery of darkness,
With the children at play in not quite innocent blood.
A strange kinsman leans over the porch rail,
Cautions to silence with impatient words drifting
the gathering dark.

Old memories recovered, old portents in
ambiguous signs,
Where my spewn grass writhes into brown innocence,
Lies indifferent to fireflies or the sounds of
brash children,
Refutation of the ambiguous and thickening darkness.