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How Strange the Words Sound after She’s Gone

*Jim Gauer*

To be perfectly honest I awoke this morning thinking
About cows, about the word *cows*, a thought that it seems
Was already hungry, though at the same time content
To follow itself around in a neat little pasture
For most of the morning, contemplating the grass
On a non-existent hill.
Or maybe I awoke with a new way of thinking
About *elm trees*, that’s what it was, I remember the thought
Seemed to think it could feel its own shadow
Growing thinner, it already seemed to feel it was
The shadow of what it was.
I awoke this morning beyond a doubt in the shadow
Of what was, and to be candid about it began to consider
How narrow the road is, my fast-moving thought about prepositions
That stands watching its own path curve away
going over a hilltop, leaving me
Where we were, in a strange rolling countryside
That has lost all capacity to think
Its way out.

Frankly, until this morning, I had not seen
Cows and *elm trees* get lost here, wandering stupidly
In my words for them until they wound up
In my words for them, with no way out.
Until this morning, when she left me, I had never seen
How empty our *house* looks as the words for a thought
That left me, a thought that left behind it
Only the perfect words for it, as empty as these rooms.
This morning, in fact, I awoke empty, with just the words
She left me, with just those words, and a thought
About vacant houses that seemed to see
Only its own reflection as it stood in the yard
With the last of the *elm trees*, hoping for one last look
Through the window of its words.

What I am trying to say is that I awoke this morning
Trying as strange as it sounds to say
How strange the words sound as I try
To say them, as I try to say
How strange the words sound and that’s just
What I say. So many empty words!
This morning I woke up in one room of a house filled
With words, filled with the word words, my small vocabulary
In a strange new language, a language that is itself
A large empty house to which, in all honesty,
I am slowly adding rooms.