

# *Song for his Left Ear*

for Harlow Soderborg Clark, surgically deaf

DENNIS CLARK

By sheer nerve you've gone Van Gogh one better:  
cut your ear off from your brain, but  
left it blooming in your hair.  
You'd auditioned city living just so long—  
till thickened by the screech, slam, purr and shove of traffic  
one nerve sent early warning,  
spun the world past your eyes,  
milking your fear of falling and scalding the Fall with fear;  
then that diagnosis came round with Thanksgiving.

Now there's twice as much to hear with one ear shot.  
Your surgeon only cut the old line out  
in his New Year's resolution of your lost tangle with balance;  
his mining of the flesh against your skull from ear to brainstem  
for Christmas gave you full control of what you choose to hear . . .  
as well as what you hear because it's there.

You can listen to the fog that muffles headlights,  
hear the current singe and surge on filament,  
throwing the world's shadow on the fabric of your mind;  
you can hear Beethoven as he heard himself—  
with the advantage of one ear for what musicians hear.  
In the basement cool of your bed at night  
you'll rehearse the creak and shuffle of the stages of your life  
till you hear the tears that start at the recall  
and the flushing of the blood at the re-remembering  
of the feats, humiliations, joys, defeats, applause . . . .

when familiar with the motions and emotions of a life  
you have ears for the inaudible  
whispering you to act.

