

Footnotes

The last time I met my feet
They reminded me how rarely
We got to meet at all
So nakedly and barely.

The nails were hardly human
The toes were animal.
My contact with my soles
Was minimal.

It was a little like
Being an amnesiac,
I couldn't remember my face
Or recognize my back.

Somewhere in a morgue,
Raising a plastic sheet,
A lost-property clerk
Points out a pair of feet.

The feet are bare as life
And dead as a distant moon.
Dear feet, while you're my own
Let's meet again, and soon.

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I remember my mother painting her toenails scarlet.
So little understood of the nature of becoming
While all the time becoming.

And later the tickling and the gripping of toes,
The shedding of the shoes.

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From white sandals to sturdy shoes
The smack of the ball in the playground.
I grew slovenly and loutish as a boy,
All I could do was pound.

It was later the dancing came,
She taught me the steps and I trod
Lightly with precision,
Delicately shod.

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He had a cupboard full of shoes
That had belonged to his late wife.
Since it was raining heavily
He offered you a pair,
Which you politely declined.

Was it superstition or genuine dread,
Not wanting to tread
The path of the dead,
My darling, or just preferring to choose
Your own shoes?

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It is the dancing we most love,
The shoes airborne as if we weighed less
Then we do, as if we might skip and soar
In everything we wore,
In our heavy human dress,
In that animal-skin glove,
In a phrase so perfectly put
That shoe becomes the foot.

George Szirtes