

I

thats not your face
it was mine for awhile
give it back
you stole it

youll regret it
because you stole an already stolen face
I took it from somebody else
and when he demanded it back I laughed in his
and told him he had stolen the face I had taken from him

somebody will steal your stolen face from you

look at it this way
somebodys got to be the first one to give the face back
no I dont know how far its going to have to go back before it reaches
its rightful owner
for all I know he might not recognize it
and even if he did he might not want it if he had learned how to get

along without it

which is why it mightve been stolen in the first place
because the owner mightve wanted to learn how to get along without
a face

but hes got to be given the chance of seeing he could have it back
he wanted to

so he can really know he doesnt need it
youve got to give a faceless man the choice of regaining a face or
living without it for

because he might take his face back because he wouldnt want to
deprive you of your chance for facelessness

you see theres really only one face to go around
when its maker saw what he had done he realized his error and never
made a second face at all
and trying to right his error he made the rest of men a mass of thi
since he knew by this way each man would have the passing experienc
of a face

but somewhere the man whom the face fits perfectly
and although he might take it back if it were offered to him
he might turn around and hand his face to its maker
and this possible event is something we shouldnt take the chance of
missing

because then we should all have the chance of forgiving the maker
his error

but our very forgiveness might be revenge
and in his fury the maker might dash the face down and break it
into a thousand pieces
and you never know what form our vanity would take then
we might be condemned to searching for the pieces so as to be able to
fit the face together again
and nobody would be able to tell us from the other four-footed animals
thats why the man I stole the face from finally stopped asking for
it back
and it wont be long before I stop asking you
I wouldnt feel right if I became an animal again
its better to be a faceless human than an animal with a face
for facelessness is your perfect reflection of another humans
imperfect reflection

II

have you ever seen a man break a face across his knee like a slat
and then walk along his neighbors street swinging each half of the
broken face in either hand so itll dry faster

if you watch him youll see him finally go up to a beggar and say
listen youll make a lot more money if you hold half of this face
in one hand and half in the other
that way the passerby will feel twice as sorry for you
you can also tell them youre trying to raise money enough to mend a
broken face
notice Ive hollowed out the backs of these halves so theyll each hold
plenty of coins or bills
and the empty eyesocket is convenient for stable grasping
like a lot of people I know you have no face so this ought to come
in handy
but make sure you keep it in your hands for begging
it wont do you any good if you put it on your head
Id give it back to the man I stole it from but I obviously wouldnt
recognize him now

III

don't worry about your face
it's not yours anyhow

what about the baby's face you ask
well you say the baby looks like you or her or the grandparents or
whatever
or it looks like nobody you know at all

obviously the baby is a master thief
it goes around stealing all kinds of faces

I know I said there's really only one face
that's true

because that one face gets twisted this way and that
so what the baby really does is steal a face from somebody
and then when somebody else comes along and steals the baby's face
the baby manages to steal it again after it's been snatched
from several other heads

IV

the actor as you can probably already tell is a baby
the actor more than anybody else would like to make his stolen
face a success

something permanent

he guards his theft ceaselessly

he plays with his stolen face

he croons to it

he experiments making it black or yellow or white

he lectures it

he makes love to it

he makes hate to it

he tries to amuse it with games

all because if someone manages to steal it from him then the face
will remember where it had such a wonderful time and will
get rid of its new captor and make its way back to the actor

but face has no memory

V

all of us one time or another think were just face for awhile
just as we are now

I know theres a head behind me
but the head itself has no face
I have only face
the head behind is faces shadow

and then suddenly theres a longing for gods sake wont somebody come
along and steal face
so that its shadowhead will come into its own again in all its
featureless splendor

to be brave as the man who broke face across his knee into two halves
but not pieces
we dare not face the wrath of faces maker

VI

even the dead mans face is stolen

VII

stealing face is the only theft not punished by law

VIII

god you know is faceless

the maker of face mustve been jealous of god and decided to make
something you could hide behind by weeping on it and
laughing on it and cruelling on it and pitying on it and
hating on it and begging on it
you could put all these things out there on face and hide behind
and everybody never would know who you really were because they
would want to steal your face but the facemaker didnt know
about that till after he had made the error of face
perfectly for one man

the facemaker knew he had made an error because he instantly felt
that the man with face was hiding from the facemaker behind it
because in that instant facemaker knew he had been jealous of
himself
knew in fact he was god who had become jealous of himself because
he could no longer bear knowing everything so that he had to
make face on a man so that god wouldnt be able to see everythin
and that at least man could hide from
but god knew he had made an error by having one man appear not to
need god because the man needed expression
and god shrank in all dimensions before the expression of no need
for gods on the mans face
but god could not in his mercy after refusing to make another face
destroy the face he ha
made

because then the rest of men seeing the face wanted the hidden feel
the no need for god feeling
and god could not deprive them

gods mercy will cease only if we forgive him by the act of the man
whom face fits returning face to god
an event we want to see and dont want to see

so that man lives in the tension of having face and having no face
lives tense between the desire to forgive god and have face broken
into immumerable fragments so that in enormous vanity he will
become an animal altogether gods again in his search to fit all
the pieces of face together which he will never be able to do
and the desire to keep stealing face so that at intervals he can at
least show no need for god

IX

one man whom face does not fit will one day hold on to face and no
let it be stolen from him
and this will be his psalm

I am altogether hidden before the lord
I am courageous in knowing the lord cannot know me for I have by
the lords hand grown beyond the lord
I am more than the son and more than the father because I disown
featureless splendor

I am finally man because I will make face for each man like unto no
other
we will hide forever from the almighty
god will not know we have moved into him
and god shall be the face outside looking into our window
and he will wonder where we have gone

-- Gil Orlovitz

New York, New York

Lyric

for L. O.

Wake me, before you go,
with the hand of your heart
that the moment at my throat
be swallowed by mine eye

in the deepest pit of pulse
that, as I give back your hand,
I know your heart sleeps full
of me undemanding.

Love holds most, then, at the slip
of parting when, open-handed,
I cry out in your sleeping heart --
knowing I must wake you before
you come again to my sleep.

-- Gil Orlovitz