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Coasts of a place
the drag of mercy
spilled from the Lord's house
into the dialect of day—

it has changed in me
the man says
the world I carried with me
no reason not to set down

I am all coast and no island
all sea but no rain—

no drought so awful as draught on the ocean
I don't want to carry this all the time

here, I am putting down the burden
to take a little while to slough off my hands
I wonder what will be left
of me when my burden is all gone.

28 July 2012, Cuttyhunk

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Sky of etched glass
moist air hard to drink
Solomon sat out on his terrace
counting the wives incompletely forgotten.
An orange withered in his hand
all dry and smelly before he'd done.
Solomon counted the birds in the sky—
that is a king's task,
the sport of knowing how many,
the music of telling people what to do.

2.

It was almost cold where I was.
my sensations relate to reality
in an hermeneutic way.
By how it makes me feel
I know what weather for instance
is trying to say.
Language is a shortcut to meaning
but over rough terrain and full of mistakes.

3.

Solomon grew weary of the sun and moon
and wished the stars were closer—

so he could live in their light
the varied tapestry of night he marveled
each point of light a different color
and so many. Solomon
was fond of multiplicity,
hairs of his head, wives, waves, winds
Solomon liked to look at the sea,
went down to the coast from time to time
and wished the sea were bigger,
bigger, bigger than his house, bigger than his wife's eyes.
So much wishing.
But wishing also is what kings must do.
Elsewise no cow gives milk.

4.

Solomon lived surrounded by toys,
carts that move by themselves,
tin dogs that barked Egyptian,
statues that change their places,
change their genders every hour,
balls so light they floated through his rooms,
radios tuned to the voices of the dead
speaking that weird language
it takes only one bad day to learn.
Solomon like any child is bored with what he has.
Burden is a child's natural work,
honing the knife blade of his desire,

Solomon wants something else—
poetry without poets,
a fragrance he has never smelled,
a fruit that leaps from a new tree
and peels itself wet in his hand—
now he lets the sad old orange fall.

28 July 2012, Cuttyhunk

[Casida?]

This music happened to them—
ancient chivalry replaced

by boy bands slightly annuated
every one a dear friend of someone

and when music happens to us
here she comes is the same as there she goes

pinecone torches firecracker twilight
spill the chanties back into the sea

and quiet folk provoked to wonder
why make noise around sincerity?

Is love so terrifying an emotion
we have to scare away our dread with jollity?

Grump grump. But it is envy
that we feel, so much loving outdoors in daylight

and they swear the vows usual and unusual
give each other weird and costly tokens—

signs of something that is itself pure sign
two people spliced in legal poetry

and when Christmas comes around we'll
all send them fruitcakes with downtown

hipster greeting cards we'll sign
with funny names and apologies for sugar.

28 July 2012, Cuttyhunk

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Races of the sparrow
tell me birdman
so many markings
snow fallen in dust

*sunlight through a broken
autumn leaf, grey
weather and a monk
walks a stony road.*

Do I need more science
than that, names,
their Latin handles
in the book of bio?

I see differences
but do they count?
And what does it matter to them
what I see or think?

Birdman, you at least
must know some of this
the colors of otherness
the boundaries of same.

28 July 2012, Cuttyhunk

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Far from whom
gramercy elder customs
set to sail in a bidet
hotel studia 1954
still afloat 2002—
he thought of wool
he thought that some
people are genitals on legs
he thought they could walk over buses
and loop strings of garlic from phone lines
and war would never happen.
Cacahuètes? offered the little Algerian,
as one who offered—like the old
woman of Sullivan Street—flowers
for sale to couples dining—
nothing for the man who eats alone—
the river was black, the dog barked,
Berlioz stood on the steps of the Odeon,
I looked down from our window—
but what can you say to music?
He had said it all before
and what good did it do?
Summer nights and no one
had ever made love like that

in musica—how far
we are from are.

28 July 2012, Cuttyhunk

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Asking summerly
the blue stay blue
against the pall of cloud

I contradict.
I am of the other side
the edgy genome

red face red hair
red mind
lost like angels

in their torpid time
all relativities
when we want rainbow

I would lie to thee
less personal
here is the man

for whom the ordinary
is the furthest away
I need to tell you

what I am
but neither of us
will believe a word of it.

29 July 2012, Cuttyhunk

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Who has time for a monster
the royal family waits upon the rocks
and more seals swim in.
I grew up on folklore I thought was science
I learned the names of stars I couldn't see,
have never seen, but ghosts did come and talk to me
and those too I never saw.
The sea a slate sun writes on
words too bright to read.
You can see this is all about my ignorance,
lines of poems stalk in my head
I think are mine and measure me—
meters of sunshine, island dactyls
raindrops beating on the weathered deck,
go back to Ireland and learn Chinese
a Lesbos boy in passion land—
the clouds move! My first discovery
and a white girl in Rockaway—
a few honest perceptions
—baffling, vagrant, dazzling—
enough for a whole life—
who needs books?
I am leafed through with particulars
every one a mystery,

every glimpse a grail.

29 July 2012, Cuttyhunk

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Sun coats the sea with gold
so I rest my eyes in cloud—
the world turned upside down—
which should still be our national anthem.

29.VII.2012, Cuttyhunk

ELEGY

Caustic whereabouts of else
I knew you a parfum right
an oudh she gave and one you had
or some such joust of essences—

a plug in heaven's tub yanked out
and air (unwater) swims down to us
clockwise in which hemisphere—
we live by girdling alone.

Oh winter rose
along your calyx
smeared by my hand
a most complex oil
made of seagull cries
and adolescent reveries,
steam-distilled in lingo,
oh Athenor.

 You feel me yet?
and then they walk right down the hill
conquistadors of nada with a view—
the aliens are coming close these afternoons
I see them glinting abaft the clouds over Gayhead
where God walked on the sea

Moshup his name, Wampanoag his people

—secret language—

do you feel me yet?

slippage of the oily fingers

dare to invade

—intuit—

there are two kinds of science

by penetration and by surrounding,

two kinds of knowing—

not just a stone woman

holding a lamp over a street of stoned people,

Telegraph,

and in his tweed cloak

the Fairyman spilled Greek music round our feet.

(it is clear memory holds me, which is no kind of knowing,

just a sequence of receding images

into a more and more personal past

—room for you, you feel me yet?)

so long ago and so much since learned

I am the master of arcane taxonomies,

I heard your mother's gasp as you were born

and stored it in crystal— here it is —

rub it soft as amber spells of Marrakesh

no I've never been there but it has been to me—

hear her soft whimper, that's your real name,
everything else is just English lessons,
mine too

three days her travail hot September—
no wonder it's all my fault
so let me call it an elegy
for the grief of it,
the long passages on piano

while his mind was thinking something else—
a praise of fingers
that go so far

—Rachmaninoff etudes? —
up this steep hill so many bicycles.

29 July 2012, Cuttyhunk

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and if the words
are selves
who is the rain?

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walking over stones
to visit the sea
that restless stone.

= = =

the life of mineral
haunts the dreamer.
Awake in fear.

= = =

the breeze understands
me. I do my best
to know the dirt beneath my feet.

= = =

never left to chance
the wind. Clamshells
crushed to be a road.

= = =

suppose the sages sang
suppose there never was
any other bird but sing?

29 July 2012, Cuttyhunk