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Orinda matchpoint  
the human mortals want

Speak Dis  
our b[a][e]d Go[o]d under  
speak

And it did  
in he-voice first  
then later in the vox of birds

winsib, tell it me, tantalize.

But there was no me.

This play, this play!  
O they have seen you rise  
full-mooned from your lupanars  
and take your awe-instilling Place  
amidst the architecture of every gender  
with the sheer glisten of your gleam  
and luster of your far listening—

now can you say it in words?

I knew the director in graduate school  
we were mice together, our pale rowboat  
drifting oarless mid the shoals

of Benzedrine then Demerol,  
unctuous sleep or Galvani woke us  
then we were frogs by Bart's place

no living man you could ever know  
was he, take off your semaphores  
and put silence on

sweetpart yet to come  
as springtide red chevron'd blackbird wings  
only color in island fog so

likewise  
the god is to the religion as the church is to the world  
a hint of something better, an iffy beauty twice removed,

maybe a little bit like you, a luscious Maybe  
and you look (do it – stand toe to the chalk mark)  
the man in the eye, i.e., you drag your eyes away from this museum  
and see the man (e.g.) hanging on his cross  
and for a moment such a thing makes sense—  
who for us humans' sake  
came down from somewhere  
and his death lives longer than your life—

that one, in shadow, up there  
eyes closed now  
as if the eyes of one who has seen enough  
now needs to think about it

in the dark place where fools think thinking lives

and he leaves you the car keys and Key West.

Sky stroke. Kidneys  
compromised,

too much rain inside,  
too salt.

(Note the hand on the curve of her stroke)

For by this time they were bodies,  
risky adventures of bone  
in the meat world  
splayfooted stumbling through god grease,  
and they were flesh.

—I can't believe the script says that.

—It's not a script it's the play itself, waxy as a lily, all of skin.

—It can't be a play, it's written down,  
for play is something logical and quick  
children do it and their voices rise  
having no need for words

play is dolphin leap or bed or butterfly we guess

—Habitual is what you mean. Just speak  
the lines this paper gives you  
and trust the paper,  
papyrus never lies,  
is wiser than the common marsh from which it grows.

—What does *that* mean?

—Just speak your lines and be quiet,  
so, grease means grace, means  
bone and bad and bed and bee and blood and being

and on the other hand

a string of naughts  
stretching from your hip pocket to Damascus.

Stop by the side of the road and change your mind.

Now you've got it, now  
all you need is glory,

broken petals of a blow-dried rose.

1 June 2008  
Cuttyhunk

## **FOG, 1**

The morning fog persists  
in making me very happy.  
Deep fog says that here  
is the only here there is.

1.VI.08

## **FOG, 2.**

Where the world outside  
is just a rumor  
no one speaks.  
And hard to believe  
on this hilltop  
that there is a plain  
from which this rises  
and a sea on all sides.  
This house enoughs a world.

1.VI.08

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The sea to hear  
and dog nearby  
no light in all that sound  
crushed clamshell path  
leads white  
somewhere, down.

1 June 2008

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Irony of the other

lost at sea  
the sense of self or  
spiritum meum

a seagull after all.  
That one over there  
is me.

1 June 2008



## AN IMPERFECTION

*Mist still on the sea around the headlands  
though sun is strong over a modest raft of clouds  
dark underbodies of them obscured  
only by themselves. Their selves.*

Suppose I really did try to tell you something accurate about you, your power and beauty, without wasting our time figuring out what beauty is or power does. Just you.

How hard it would be. Suppose praise were banned, and only accurate description as such adduced to glorify? *The heavens declare the glory of God* it is written. But now it would have to detail precisely what they detail. What is glory? Of what is it made? What do the heavens say, and how do they say it? Star talk, easy metaphor? Or something tougher, something more? What are the little particulars that sing together, that make up the thing called the glory of God?

What goes to make up a man's love for his wife?

To know that is to know the man, the twisted alleys and forest rides and subway sleeps and austere dawns that led him to a place where he stands and sees before him his way clear or not so clear, the way that is not so different from, or is at least marked out by, his wife.

He stumbles ever morning onto the deck filled with a tumid gratitude, an obscure feeling of having been rescued – not from the night that's past, but

from the weight of living that came before – rescued from pastness into now, where she is waiting, asleep as like as not, deep in the house. She is his rescuer, he thinks. Or the instrument of his rescue.

Obscure, obscurely he tries to fit his mind to the erratic, knotted mesh of his life, to puzzle out the strands, the influences, the intimate catastrophes, the almost unending line of days that led to now. Maybe he will spot at last a pattern, a roadmap even, and all those lines will join to form one line, and he will follow that line with his mind's eye, and finally know where *now* is.

But it is obscure, obscure. And even if he teased this thread and that free, and spent forever at it and got the pattern straight, it would be in the end just his way, just him again, and say nothing about her, the woman he had a mind to praise.

2 June 2008  
Cuttyhunk

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A poem is never a well-wrought urn,  
an artifact, even when it is.  
A poem is a cry for help, no matter what it says.

2 June 2008  
Cuttyhunk

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Rose, original terrorist  
from Persia yet  
sent to shatter  
the single hearts  
of Christian men  
into newfangled love

Not decent lust or  
godly worship but  
this cloying thing  
we so celebrate  
and make our culture  
on, chemistry,  
alchemy, affinities,  
the images we cash.

2 June 2008

## THINGS BY AND LARGE

are better as they are.

We love birds and  
dislike snakes.

If birds lived only  
on the ground  
we'd like them still  
(penguins prove it).

And if snakes flew  
we'd really hate them then.

This is an essentialist  
argument, not  
the momentary  
environment but  
the whole historical  
identity itself.

Never mind your sad story.

We know who you are.

2 June 2008

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Apple on the windowsill  
in sun. To warm it  
from the fridge. Fruit.  
I want to say ice-box  
the way my mother did.  
An apple in trouble.  
A window in sun. Too  
many things remembered.  
All this means is let  
you know someone  
has problems like you  
of body and soul. No cure.  
But not such a bad disease.

2 June 2008

## THE FOOLISH PEOPLE OF ZINGA

“As my men lessened in numbers, stricken by famine, fighting and sickness, one by one the books were reluctantly thrown away,” Mr. Stanley wrote. Near the end of his journey, he had only a few left, including the Bible, Shakespeare and the Nautical Almanac for 1877. “Poor Shakespeare was afterward burned by demand of the foolish people of Zinga.”

from a note in the *Wall Street Journal*

Foolish Shakespeare  
to fall into the hands  
of the poor. Poor Zinga  
who needed to make  
fire from the words  
that way. What did Stanley  
tell them was in his book?  
Were they burning  
his Bible, his book of  
spells? And if poor  
Shakespeare isn't those,  
what good is he? A book  
in the clutches of the poor.

What form did their 'demand'  
take? Threats or pleading?  
Did he burn it to reassure  
he came among them  
with empty hands? Did he seek  
to balance Prospero, who  
drowned his book and could  
later have dried it back  
to life again? Poor Zinga,  
what did they want  
from Shakespeare? Did  
he burn his book just  
to keep them warm?

2 June 2008, Cuttyhunk

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*for Charlotte*

If this were any other day  
it would be easy to begin.  
But it's not. The day  
has a meaning of its own

words try to reach  
or even match, distill,  
calcine, finally turn  
into a single crystal

I would give to you.  
Crystal perfect  
as any crystal is  
yet caught inside it

thousands of tiny things,  
signifiers, blackbirds,  
crows over the tall cliff,  
fishermen, Baghdad,

men and women in-  
finitely clear and many,  
all the things that  
jewelers call imperfections

that make this crystal  
different from any other  
and worthless unless  
you take it from my hand.

3 June 2008, Cuttyhunk



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Something different  
or from the other side of it.  
It is a winter late afternoon already dark  
in a small city in Michigan or Indiana.  
Or maybe I mean Michigan City, Indiana,  
between the lake and the penitentiary somehow  
a street runs along its own trajectory  
and I think people are sad walking along it,

thinking of all the criminals executed in their town  
and of the crocuses months away sepultured under ratty snow  
my God I hate this place the virile murderers the simpering police  
the lake like a child's monologue all that beauty is just annoying  
the jewelry shop with garbage in the window and still I love thee  
makes the world spin round and all that money and all that poverty  
America gets more dreamlike every day meaningless prestiges  
demons in fancy underwear the president gives up golf  
because it looks bad and it distracts him from murdering young men  
o go back to the links and stop the war go back to the bottle  
get out of town

something quarrelsome and quotidian  
not quaint or only querulous,  
something quantified and queer  
something really smart.

But for that a brain is wanted,  
a brain and a flower of some sort,  
a rose that Iranian import will do  
a rose and a brain and a pair of green eyes  
or maybe brown or maybe grey or maybe blue

a brain and a rose and a bone—  
shouldn't those be enough?  
Nothing is enough and everything is too much—  
this is the world, amigo, amiga, whoever you are,  
it doesn't get better than this.

3 June 2008

## LOQUENDUM

Blackberries and quarrels  
strange accommodations

forgiveness like a tree  
with catkins in it

for a season.

                    A body of water  
is always about to speak.  
I grew up between a sound and a bay  
nothing special, millions did—

and now the whole  
ocean's out the other door

just to keep it personal.  
No more squishy oceanic certainties  
The Sea seems to encourage us to grok.  
Only the particular,

theory of anything at all.  
Seek it in rapt contemplation of its queerness  
will keep me sane an hour more  
despite the war I almost manage to forget

with sea hush coaxing up the rainsoaked rocks.

4 June 2008  
Cuttyhunk

## MERCHANTS

Merchants there be on the road  
whose will will  
carry them across the ridiculous distances  
this sea

no easy way out—  
Pound in his day could still conceive  
of a solution, giving  
value, given right-minded leaders.

Give more and more for the same barrel of oil  
the molecules whereof change not  
nor do they inure  
value au contraire they perdure  
and the coin falters, the dollar  
'weakens' they say in the media,

o grief when the only god we believe in  
weakens. No one now alive  
not caught in money. How shall we give  
the god back its strength? Or choose  
out of the night sky another god?

4 June 2008

## IN THIS DEPENDENCY

we wake to cull roses  
with rusty secateurs  
weeping all day long  
on our expensive lawns

expensive dirt.

                    Only  
one by one can you slip  
out of the system  
little by little and be gone  
into the wasteland of the uninsured,  
the credit-less believers in a desert self.

Not sure that's me. I believe  
in a comfy anarchy  
of peaceful men  
with no one to keep the peace.  
Peace will keep itself if we let it.

No police, no politics, no president.  
Money's roadshow – just don't go.

4 June 2008

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On a quiet island  
wet shingles in the rain.  
A house little by little  
becomes the color of the sky.

4 June 2008  
Cuttyhunk