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## A WHIFF OF NAKEDNESS

What can it mean  
the moon's last night on earth  
a sparrow waiting for the bell

come watch me feed on thee  
for I am Portugal beneath thy flank  
mother's here and bets are off

mink is meant for browsing in  
now shape your lips to say the oo in you  
but say the ee in seed instead

the sauce should hide the glistering fat  
tomorrow's weather neatly prophesied  
a paper, a paper, hold to your lips!

Let your spittle mix with its ink  
so understand the craft of angels  
those hectic personages who pour

the essence of one thing into another  
forever till we catch on—  
a brother, say? Never had one,

a target for the infant archers I was  
night and day it wore me out  
being invariable a butt for's darts

sunshine and no weekend's worse  
any song will tell the truth  
if you hear it hard enough.

Art these days hath certainly become  
designer jeans without the jeans,  
teach me better o Berenson

to touch I Tatti where the skin  
flakes off, sheer gift it is to see  
I mean seeing anything at all.

When I was a kid they called it razzmatazz  
but they didn't know what it was either  
though you always think you know what it means

when the word slips through your lips on its way to a wife  
a hard zee twice, like a tongue trying  
to shove your front teeth out, a fierce buzz

like Portugal deciding to split from Spain over the English question  
a forlorn ATV snarling up a red clay hill in the Chablais  
o soft sweet esses like a dream come true

or usefully remembered afterward in time to nap on it  
and brood in wind great aspiration from sleep's vague hatchery.  
stand up and squawk, muchacha, do you think I could forget you?

Here Siegfried cuts the karmic chain and solves  
the riddle of all-lives-long affinity – our eyes  
belonged to each other instantly we met

and no more happened in this life or needed to,  
were we foretelling or remembering each other.  
only my broken sword will explain it

when the pommel finds again the point of all this rapture.

3.  
Black sand like the Algarve I meant  
or you spelling a German word out loud  
or the sea sparkle after three days of cloud

it's all a hymn you know just find the tune  
samdhi variations off the Rann of Cutch  
how do you like my hair today

tied back in a mauve bandana pale  
o the tall blue sunsets of the world  
a hilltop is a god for looking from

cut the overhanging branches pine'll sting you  
vocalized ell like what's in the bottle  
I have to spell it our so you don't mistake

the sometimes shimmer of a mainland city  
far away across the evening water  
for an actual word an actual person

actually said to you one day it's only angels  
those persons without masks you breathe your breath  
and they think with it and let you listen

ah Beethoven again you think but no it's you  
under yet another guide disporting self  
shallow in the homelands of this wetless sea.

15 June 2007  
Cuttyhunk

## OBJECTIVE

Don't keep worrying about the binoculars,  
he assured me they focus perfectly with a little patience—  
the knurled knob in the middle after the right eye ring  
maybe—then he told me that touching anecdote  
about King Zog and his mother, remember I told you.  
So if you can't see a sail on the horizon it means  
there's no boat there. The Albanian code of honor  
is very strict—he walked with her every day  
in the cool of evening in the public park right  
across from the palace and nobody killed him,  
you can't assassinate any man, even a king, walking  
beside a woman. Such respect for Holy Wisdom!  
Blackbirds ate crumbs safely all round them too.  
Do they have squirrels in Tirane? God knows,  
stop fiddling with the focus, the sea is empty.  
The sea is empty. Do you understand?

15 June 2007  
Cuttyhunk

= = = = =

They live in fire  
like men lingering in taverns

when we are children  
we're sent to coax them out

tugging on their coat tails  
begging daddy to come home.

dreamt:  
16 June 2007, ca. 8:20 AM  
Cuttyhunk

## TOO MANY SIEGES

Ottoman pirates invest the bay,  
prune trees and raisin vines  
cover the flanks of the conical  
base of the heretics' stronghold—  
see them on the battlements  
chanting obscene hymns down  
onto the sweltering attackers below,  
The Moon is a Young Man!  
The Politics of Heaven Rains  
Shit on Earth! Every Lime Leaf  
is a Letter Learn to Read!  
Disgusted marines clamber up  
the ravelin, cutlasses in their teeth  
they howl orthodox rejoinders  
but when they cry out any one  
of the names of God they remember  
the blades fall out of their mouths  
and clatter down the slopes, a hazard  
to their comrades climbing.  
For years they keep up the assault.  
This particular day the heretics win,  
the pirates go home under tattered sails,  
no *Iliad* gets written, but safe in ladies'  
chambers the heretics share out  
intensities of criminal delight—  
some reaching 'Seraph' on the bliss scale  
before they sink back comatose and glad.  
Tomorrow another theology, and so to bed.

16 June 2007  
Cuttyhunk

= = = = =

See the beauty of something seen  
not dragooned by daylight  
just witnessed o so casual  
from the eyes' slant corners  
a thing asleep in its own nature  
out there in a world of things  
and know this sleep to be the highest waking.

16 June 2007  
Cuttyhunk



## ARS POETICA

There should be something to look at in every line,  
something to taste in every third.  
That way the reader never wearies  
or if she does, it is to fall into pleasant reverie  
or outright sleep. And those also she will blame on you.

16 June 2007  
Cuttyhunk

= = = = =

Custom counts  
behavior costs

I woke another voice  
pyramided in me

a shaft in honeystone  
a surly emperor aroused

by nothing harsher than sunshine  
quivering now and then in island mist

and yet he saw.

This seeing is what men call dream  
or could call so in the days before.

Before what? Before  
what we had done taught us what men do,

taught we who we are.  
After that, nothing is right again

except try hard.  
Or not try at all.

Hope no longer works and every faith's misplaced.  
Only one thing left, and that works only one [       ] at a time.

2.

What fills the brackets, I asked the voice.  
Ask the stone or your fond mist, it said.

One situation at a time, it meant  
but there's no word for that, never a word,

street comes close, or heart, or flesh  
or casual encounter or aged relative

all of those have to find room in the word  
to speak the sphere of operation of this verb 'love'

so many people shove into their brackets  
it said. Compassion has to be in it

and fierce determination, and some intelligence.  
Plus the two rabbits chasing each other on the lawn,

now let me sleep.

17 June 2007  
Cuttyhunk

## SEA RAPTORS ALREADY

A polter of philosophy cumpers your head.  
Agree. David's not a very  
Italian name. It's Welsh. The Welsh  
is very Jew. Can't hear? My blood  
runs true. That's not what you said!  
Who? Too many mishearings.  
Missionaries? Their little cardboard boxes  
candle-yellow to put our greasy  
pennies in for foreign parts,  
heathens and lepers and such, angels  
were the accountants of what we gave.  
That's just childishness, can't measure  
religion by what a child remembers  
later. What else is there to go by?  
Which one of you hath measured God?  
Sure, coma or dream or rush we spot Him  
sometimes deep in the mind's eye  
flashing all the prism's colors, the robes  
by which we know Her, yet strange  
we lick the milk from His teats  
before we even see the naked sky She is.  
You've been peeking, not listening,  
that's vision, not religion unreformed,  
don't change the subject to stuff  
we actually can see, material pearl,  
thin locket of a world around whose neck,  
eh? And round whose breath what  
sculpture's wound? Wave readers,  
all of them, parsers of bird paths,  
smug as dragons in their algorithms,  
doctor's on the way to mind your hallux  
*hallux sinister in mentulam portavit vinum*  
is that what vision comes from, a drafty  
window, a vein up your front end, a star's  
blink caught in your windowpane  
between the sash and the Venetian blinds?  
Keeps you up all night? What window,  
warbler? What was that one, caught  
in yellow moult on yonder twig repining  
lifting its little head to tweet like Lord's  
own chorister, who's that? Look it up,

the book is right behind you, breathing  
down your neck like Rasselas, who's that?  
trespassing in a philosophic kingdom  
where reason rules and wit's the only weather,  
who? who? Dumb enough to ask questions  
not dumb enough to answer them.

2.

But this was hearing we were meaning,  
a new word not an old one, shiny  
like licked leather, right? Night  
he meant, when rubadub's hullabaloo  
welcomes homeward nurses. Hallux?  
Leave your toes alone. She moans  
like a seashell, recall your eyes  
from a former life but when was she?  
Were we married then? Did anything at all  
come before the world we know? No?  
Echo is invidious. Us? Stop it.  
The boat comes in midmorning, go down  
and see who's on board this time,  
arrogant energy of the believers, ah,  
you wouldn't believe it, storm for breakfast  
Calvary for tea, we ate our spinach  
all day long. No, that was a woman  
she bore a bird on her left shoulder,  
not a parrot as you'd expect, a common one,  
dove or such, trained to do uncommon stuff  
just sit there and say nothing, like a man,  
sometimes they just like it, what they do,  
then the doctors think up a name for it.  
Liking anything at all is the first perversion.

3.

The amber seal  
is in her grip  
her alternate identity  
on the other hand  
in her nude lap  
a rising sun  
runnel of light shows

where the child will lie  
after the ceremony  
of roses and Sufi angels  
there is a simpler  
clamor in her bones.  
You're sure of that now,  
you really hear it?  
I'd hate to be wrong  
where no means no  
when high above  
the greedy dove  
whistles down the light.

4.  
Amazing what you can listen  
when you let yourself hear.  
White alabaster churchy places  
luminous along lagoons,  
that's all for me. All yours?  
In a manner of speaking,  
a fetch of Scottish magic  
brings me my old slippers  
a burnt barn up in Maine  
my Pantheon – see roof hole,  
that's God up there  
in any weather, all I care  
is what's above. O your  
poor wife in such abstraction!  
Distraction, Men get thinner  
near the sea, you notice?  
Sunlight on clear wood's  
wife enough for me.

18 June 2007  
Cuttyhunk

= = = = =

There is an arrow in the air  
still flying. Market Bosworth  
or Little Big Horn. Soon  
it will find its mark  
and I will fall. I will not fall.

18 VI 07 Cuttyhunk

## EPINIKIAN

The riddle of persistent identity  
is like a peach. It is sweet,  
every kiss drips down your chin,  
needs a sink to catch the juice, this  
sink is history. Your arm  
is tense to write the easiest word.  
There are no easy words.  
Speech is terrible. Its sign  
in ancient art is the acanthus leaf,  
grows in dry places, bitter,  
murderously sharp. My hand,  
trembles. I think I'm saying  
something but nothing gets said.  
We are all victims of this trickery.  
Victory ode: Himeros in his brazen  
chariot's a whole week faster than  
his nearest love still loses.

18 June 2007  
Cuttyhunk



= = = = =

That this mind is prism  
to be its own colors  
to an ownless light

or speak a semaphore  
to shore, a spoke  
of light now from no

ship furrowing hereward  
and this! be mainland  
you thought an island

it is Atlantis new arising  
in every in between  
crosswise up:

between a thought and its  
thinker or between  
each thinking and the next

from such wave  
wallowing it comes it comes  
natural to mind

and no never to do it in.

19 June 2007  
Cuttyhunk

= = = = =

Stones, bones, driftwood,  
old plastic bottles, wave  
smoothed glass: the sea  
makes everything its own,  
its own color if it can.

19 VI 07

= = = = =

Old shirt  
color of time  
that fugitive

dear cloth  
a love ago  
you knew

or someone  
like you or  
someone else ago.

19 VI 07 Cuttyhunk

= = = = =

One thing to say  
and no me  
to say it.

I need you now,  
come out  
and let the morning

Speak for itself.

19 VI 07, Cuttyhunk