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= = = = =

Who knows when who was

–always on retreat

isola

her lips at my ear

reciting–

from island to island

being noble and vague

seeking through nobility alone

a silence that would speak to me

the way her breath did

ever after, no matter what words

an ear is not for hearing

them, it is to feel

the birdsong of the other

breath

near, near

an island is the ocean's ear

to wind as many possible roads

out of sight of one another

into the smallest longest labyrinth.

21 June 2005,

Cuttyhunk

LINGUIÇA

Eat sausage by the sea the special kind
that way the empire (all of you) is soon lost
the government dissolves in sea foam

we are who we are and that's the end
rebels came here and calmed down
pregnancy popular on the island and clamming

after a while we will all speak
another language a certain number
of gardens a hidden clock buried in my ear.

21 June 2005

Cuttyhunk

= = = = =

East inaugurates the sea gods
always more than one

when we come to speak
of deity only we

can think no higher number.

21 VI 05, Cuttyhunk

= = = = =

To be one near to the other
side of or run down hill
a face is a mother only
isn't envelope old fashioned
archaic idea of thing inside
other thing as if the world
made sense and all you had to do

*

is fit the pieces together
are you create to solve?
mentioning superior cameras
suck the light out of things
a sea is not the same
a sea is not the same
northern harrier common
Euxine to ward off storms
o names you patent medicines.

21 June 2005, Cuttyhunk

= = = = =

What miracle do you believe
in weather as an oracle? the sun
of crime the moon of esperance
cocktail waitress tenderfoot galoot
mind us old tropes and tropics
these 29 palms these Vague Losses?

Sun on pen nib the dazzle
is pure gold whate'er the metal be
I'm speaking the old language now
the *fortitude* chapel and coven
brick and rowan, and in the thicket
one hare looks out – see,
these plenitudes are people
strutting around the place like trees
in a wilderness, they leave shadows
half permanent on the paper
of their passage, a beast like me

can read the ground. Follow
you around. The world's a cock-tease
when you look at her, a fallen
bell beneath its tower
when you look away, still hear
the bong of her fall all through the dell

“Resound.” Be spiritual,
let the wind up in, bindweed,
samphire, orient vetiver
all smell and no cigar.

Then smoking seats used to be
the balcony where lovers tangled,
the emperor used to raise thick eels.

The patriarchs sacrificed kids and lambs,
the first poets quarreled with the breeze.

And you still think math explains things?
It can't even explain itself, no more
than music can. We are mute to its clamor
the way it wants us to be.
So much for history. The argument
from design finds no design.
If you tell me thinking is just
molecules misbehaving in a thunderstorm
I'll say I don't know French,
or just enough to smile at the waiter
and trick him into serving me some tripe.
Girls don't like it. Why. It reminds them
too much of their father's hands
gluey with abstinence and yearning and laws.
So I have to eat alone tonight
the world propped up in front of me

like the daily paper a few days late.

Hurry tomorrow. Join me, be my dessert.

Later we'll walk by the water

where the harbor is full of pirate tankers,

green ruffians trying to put the oil back in the ground.

22 June 2005

Cuttyhunk

One keeps turning into two.

What can you do
rebuke the counting numbers
turn them into amber
chrysoprase jadeite mercury
always trying to keep
their hands on everything.
Leaves on the trees, how many?
Chestnut flowers over Zurich.
Getting close to Frobenius,
the altar of diffusion
from which all culture spread –
bend of the Niger, grasslands,
heartlands, number by number
imagining the world.

For numbers are the flowers in desert countries.
What are you carrying?
Why do I love thee?
Is it taxes? Plaintiffs,
hearts at work
beneath the mousseline de soie?

And what is that anyway?
How can a woman wear so many words?

22 June 2005 Cuttyhunk

= = = = =

Whale road they cried
the pale hair of her
they had come so far
to see the wind blow

sand seawrack a blue
mussel in kelp clutched
does the house hold its man
or the ship make us go?

who could resist the road
herself at the end of it
every object it attracts
the magnet means

then they were here
with their tune and their town
and we were owned by
what we had brought to us.

22 June 2005

Cuttyhunk

= = = = =

If I let this happen it will always happen
take away the shadow from the tower
let the traveler forget all he has seen—
the dogs barking, the women fainting,

then where do the famous roses grow,
named ones, Gloire de Dijon, for instance,
of Emma Goldman – and the hortensia
waiting for its baron's silk lapel,

how the sky imitates that flower,
everything imitates something else
as if no one could bear the discomfort of being.
Rang, a self, perhaps one's own.

23 June 2005

Cuttyhunk

TORCH OF MORNING

fishermen stuck in sun glare
backs to it of course
and these are the sportsmen
who borrow the sea for the weekend

and carry a few lives home—
it is these men we see stand tall
in the skinny motor skiffs
prowling for *the place*

-- the right look of water,
the reputation of a reef,
ancient rumor of deaths galore
nearby in the not harmless

mouths deep down there
preying on the predators.
Most of what they contrive to catch
goes to the gulls.

23 June 2005

Cuttyhunk

= = = = =

Introduce alien life forms.

Call this one 'dog' and this one 'man'
then let them loose at the edge of the woods.

Where is everything? they'll think
and move about in different ways to find.

Ardor. Telescope of time,
a reek of chlorine along the beach.
I myself fell among the rocks and lay.
Something other than this. Something other than this.

23 June 2005

Cuttyhunk

= = = = =

I become a word
a word gets said
the sound of it fades

*

A word I am
made up of letters
any child can draw,
tear me into stars.

23 June 2005
Massachusetts

= = = = =

Being in the place of the place
and time's own time
and a crow

a crow right over me
hello hello
(no crows on the island)

a crow now
why be a place
there are no crows

The crows of time
make me home
home = here

the place speaks.

*

This has been my speaking place for forty years.

Rostrum forest,

Sibyl's maple's leaves and oak's

in season dry to spell my alphabets

this was a good place to listen to

and a girl.

24 June 2005

Lindenwood

CSARDAS

or like it, a hop
among havers

while the mere look in
through shut window
to see such

prances their
whole lives never
the like of this

We are the sand
they think
& they are the hourglass,

our secret is Again.

24 June 2005

THE SERVER

the alternate ultimate:

a pirate ship

full of blondes *tu sais*

a movie screen for a mainsail

and the genoa is an intimate remark

the wind fills

track ocean tragedy-less

past – they still have thighs

cutlasses slim cheroots

they puff like Delhi merchants

and they don't eat much.

Sail up my salt creek, girls,

viking my poor parish free.

24 June 2005

= = = = =

Coming the day before

call me at work
that is my work
waiting for you
to call

spirit certainties
sound as a ship
no? a boat

the *Mary Magdalene* out of New Bedford
black and much in need of pedicure
but how she looms
above the silly names at quayside!

24 June 2005

= = = = =

For all the falterings
this was someone.
There was a leaf
he left lying. There was a man
he answered.
Left the sky
to its own business,
Torah of the accidental
as it seemed,
growling his
science of sweet maybe.

25 June 2005

IMPROVISING

Coming home to our lovely familiar house, making coffee in the kitchen I had to remember everything consciously. After a month in another kind of light, another kitchen, I felt I was improvising now, the way you have to do with you wind up cooking unexpectedly in somebody else's house. Here I am I what has been 'my own' for so many years – and realize that it all is improvising, all of it, every day and everywhere we improvise. When we go upstairs to our own bed, it is a lodging for the night in some weird hostel, winds from nowhere howling in the muffled fireplace. And by the time we wake in the morning, it will be another country, everything has to be learned again. Where are the spoons? Who is my sister?

25 June 2005