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Towards evening,

sun.

The cliffs of Gay Head

luminously clear

after days of haze.

A light: red, then white.

A big sea bird not a gull

flaps slowly in from the sea.

Osprey. Still springtime.

Maybe. The sky itself

is still on its way home.

10 June 2004, Cuttyhunk

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Things come in ordered pairs --
the eagle and the serpent
the elm tree and the old philosopher.
The street and the young girl.
The blackbird all alone.

10 June 2004

Cuttyhunk

End of Notebook 264

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Back from the long walk to the Far Pillboxes
No Man's Land so clear on the horizon, close
On the horizon, a mirage,
A ship could sail underneath it

And the sun sets over the mainland---
Lean stripes of color
Where all day the sky had been all cloud
And all the clouds inscribed with writing
I felt guided and companioned by
But could not understand.

10 June 2004, Cuttyhunk
Start of NB 265

LOTTERY

the risk
of weather waiting us,
a jewel in distance
horizon found.
The distance touched.
This island either.
And then we saw them
rafting on the bay waves of
far overhead, flapping
only once in two minutes
another, so it soared
an unknown predator
guarding our step.
Wheeling.
Accommodate the eagle,
osprey, Pound's fish hawk
(*bid, bid* it saith
and all things hide)
I want the words to hold,
poise, hover that way
at the summit of the mind
letting their slow shadows fall
into the uneasy silence
in which all speech speaks,
crow somber, tongue taught.

No crows on this island,
wait. The blackbirds and grackles
will learn to do it, the jaegers
and gyrfalcons, and the puffins
we one year saw
in early spring off the west end cliffs
hurtling past
north into the moment
on their way past any America.

10 June 2004

Cuttyhunk

If the sea could purify, fish would be gods

The fish are gods

salmon *chrestos*

Christus anointed

ιχθους the Jesus

sketched on catacombs

godfish the slim

continuator

through every water

what are fish?

fish are invisible living

around and under us

and fish are eaten

as the god is

for He is the only god His lovers eat

though not the only god that's torn apart

ιχθους the sanctuary lamp

lantern-fish in church dark

this glow came towards me

it was red so I believed

religion is the space of fear

inside us made to resonate

and this space is given to us
to use: *timor domini initium sapientiae*
they say,
the godfear puts the dark to work
and makes it talk

what you do not know you know
when it comes out of your mouth,
that's wisdom

for a little while,
the learn-to-listen
to itself and others also in
hear and inhear and spill what you spell,

binah speaking from the dark
church crumbling apse inside your head
because *you* are the mother of God

god swims inside you
both ways in the dark
and ocean is your only mirror.

2.

But that's not why Proust summered at the sea
except indirectly. Boys there,
girls there, behaved as the sea

instructs them, הַיָּם the sea
of wisdom is not always bitter
it giggles it struts in wet tee-shirts
it leaps over old men, it nibbles
barbe-à-papa, pink sugar
cornucopiating the blue gold air,
volley ball, towel snuggle, each
according to the sea's instruction,

inscription. We come to the sea
to have our programming renewed.

The code we are
the sea understands.

What else is philosophy
but the seaside hotel
managed by a Greek or Jew or Levantine
who puts us in the room that's ours
however little it may resemble
the world we think we occupy,
and then they feed us, tell us
the little bit we need to know?

11 June 2004, Cuttyhunk

AVERROES

We had lunch with him in Paris,
we ate bread and cheese on the corner
of the rue des Saints-Pères
he looked down on our table,
taking a physician's interest
in the cantal on baguette
and how it went down
with that strong black coffee.
And a philosopher's interest
in what we presumed to discuss
right across from the medical school
when bodies still are where the mind
goes for its vacation, we still sit
on green steel chairs at little tables
with ancient teachers
whose faces peer down in relief
from those busy modern walls.

11 June 2004, Cuttyhunk

<late> =====

Because of the machine

The air was clean

Because of the wife

The stone was alive

Everything happens for the best

He understood

Because there is no way

The machine can be wrong

Once it is working

It goes on and on

Genesis is a piece of it

And Apocalypse another

But those are little gears

And tiny golden screws

Because all the rest

That is and was and will

All rattles and shivers

While it runs

And nothing ever is left out

Because she always has

A spare part in her pocket
A cloud or rabbit or
A light year to lay out in space
In case a flea needs elbow room.

11 June 2004

Cuttyhunk

THE DEAD CAT

your cat died
when you were away
the parts of us
that stay
when the cat is gone

the parts of us
that go with it
wherever it has gone
someday suddenly
come back

you see another cat
another man
standing in the shadows
by the azaleas
cats are always after azaleas

you call out
but the part of you
that is always coming back
from the cat from the shadow
has no voice yet

you have to wait
for that voice of yours
also to speak
the western mouth
they call it
in my dreams

the one that is always speaking
has no words yet
you have to give it words
a little blank book
to write in little squares

the days are words
you have to give it words
the part of you
that is always with the cat
comes back and tells you
where you have been

and what you did there
come home to me
and be me
you say

you call out
to the shadows

the woman answers
the man comes back
the cat explains
the long slow history of things

you stand by the azaleas
on the quiet street
every moment knowing
a little more of what you know.

12 June 2004

Cuttyhunk

UNCOIL THAT RAPTURE

easy

book of prophecies counting code

if they had anything to tell us

why would they tell us in numbers?

Technocrats talking to technocrats

across the ages. Geek lore.

But what did the others says, what

did the others know, the alien poets

and psychiatrists, the extraterrestrial

painters and arrogant composers,

what did they know that the scientists

were clueless about hence could never

encode then in their obelisks or scrolls

their Bible code? What did the alien

Plotinus, alien Francis, alien Shams

ud-Din at-Tabrizi know?

That's what I want to smell

and handle somehow

beyond all the chaff of their Megiddo.

12 June 2004

ISLAND THEOLOGY

the natural question on any island
is how long are you going to be here

even Australians ask it of each other
because the sea is always on our backs

pressing in and all that pressure makes us
like any woman want to resist

and in this world the only resistance is to be gone.

13 June 2004, Cuttyhunk

MATRIOTISM

I am a patriot a lover
of Mother America possessed
of who she is behind the veil
of mindless men handling her

could those voices be the world
already? Isn't the silent sun enough?
Birds eat fallen things
springboard of the heart just watch?

Undecided and unclear, a miracle.

13 June 2004, Cuttyhunk

OPEN THEORY

channel.

The information arrives --
that is what it does
by nature. You yield to it.
A grackle flies by.

The conversation is always beginning.
Flower, say in Oahu,
or say you haven't reached
even an island then
mid-ocean flower

name its parts
its parentage
how from Thessaly
with one blue eye and one amber
and wanting to be a girl

or from the middle ocean wall
cast this flower down
to whomsoever these tidings come
and delicately open it
sepal by sepal of course each
soft petal a hard alphabet

decipher this.

Or fallen tree whose heartwood's hale
still the morning by what lightning felled?

a Latin inquisition
among the ads
all they sell is sex and medicine
when I will be beautiful again
and meet with one amber eye and one
blue as this sound I'm looking at
tearing the flower him from him

but in the Cave the sibyl's sister
spreads oak leaves on the moss
to give her bed a prickly ease
beneath her lover's tumbling caress

sea-poppy, rugose rose
the smell of them stands out to sea
if once you find the island

the isles I know they have such lovely eyes
in theory sequences crystal contradictions

it was the way she looked at me
so few know how to stare
for eyes are hands and lay themselves upon

the dubious witnesses of skin
their blue hands their amber hands

to see one thing and think another
is a different color
in her sea-cave dreaming of her father

the whole city was built above a lake
no one saw but she heard moving
lapping underneath her in the night
and sometimes she'd wake wet from it
tall ships sailing furtive white in dawnlight

leaving for the much-marketed orient
to renew her by their absences alone
ample-witted information so many children
kayak all the way to the sun
our brother common laborer aloft

I picked me out a different god
a nightly rondure and a hip with heart
or where does information flow?

hand on her belly he fell asleep
and spent his dreamland counting colors
always the same chemicals copper sulfur
charity, always the same disorder

of the eyes the keen observation turned
scorpion-wise to sting its Dante

for we propagate by looking on us
and we ecstasy by smile
leaving Hawaii on the morning side
for a place where it is always evening
harbingers haggle in the public trees

this does not issue in the amative
this is not about desire or the whim
by which an island's penetrated
or fish chosen for the evening meal
no, it is a boat alone
on an ocean of mere imputation
and you can see it clearly in the sun glare
but not see who's in it
even till it's too close to shore
for you to turn away
if even then you can discern
the algebra of these long last visitors
your conquistadors your amateurs

let the little gods you pray to smash the boat
before their foot steps land on virgin shingle
but here they are, unrecognized, in triumph
taking to themselves all the colors of your eyes

smell of sunrise, seaweed,
a complicated synthesis they tried to make you dream
so they could grasp it when you wake
one day and tell them
the true story of what no one knows.

13 June 2004

Cuttyhunk