

6-2002

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This is the first morning we've been here  
that the blade of sun is laid across the water.

Ace of Swords. *gCod.*

Dialects of knowing,  
A different alphabet  
is this, the always  
showing, the thing in front of my face.

Skull cup. Cell phone. Scare crow.  
Nature of compounds,  
nature of compromises.  
Is language as simple a chemistry as it seems?

Or are there subtler laws at work  
about how words cohere,  
electron shells of how we mean?  
We say pickpocket but cherrypicker,  
How do we know how  
the compound actually connects,  
what terrible and unseen forces are unleashed  
when words collide?

Turn off the magic. Patanjali  
was fascinated with this  
simply. The ability of words  
to adhere to each other  
portending something  
the mind could reach for touch and find.

Do the different compounds arise  
from different strata of time, mind,  
dialect, early 'substrate' languages

as if the mountains talked?  
gCod means cutting  
through all this.

1 June 2002  
Cuttyhunk

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flesh of what was beginning to be now  
suddenly bruised by what was then

I wanted to be me  
but to do that you have to be here

I mean I do  
and here has to be now

only this cool June and no remember.

1 June 2002

Cuttyhunk

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For most people getting born  
is tragedy enough.

And who is the I  
When someone speaks?

How can they answer  
Even if there was a question?

That's the pain of it,  
That there is no questioner,

Just a muffled baffled  
Silent questioner

A shadow in every door.

1 June 2002

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at least I could ask about it  
as if it were the weather  
or something people care about  
without too much rancor  
I mean I didn't make it rain  
or whatever it did  
you find so disagreeable  
you spend all day in the house  
smiling at me

we are like a boat  
from the beginning  
and have hardly an idea  
of where we are,  
the longitude of loss  
alone we understand  
the way dogs bark for a lost  
bone a while and then forget  
  
only the boat remembers.

1 June 2002

## **Kabbalistic Etude**

boat people walking their poodle  
on an island like this  
the phrase has a different meaning  
up the hill and find  
nothing but a view of the same  
sea they've hiked up from  
that and two dogs yowling  
peaceably at each other  
and the sun infinitesimally closer  
than it is on the face of the sea.

1 June 2002

## THE TRAGEDIE OF FAUST

Pouring from the inkwell  
back into the sky  
poor Faustus revoked  
his contract --

the parchment was pure beige again,  
his soul not lost  
was as much his own as it ever was.

But as he learned from a mirror  
-- philosophers need mirrors in their dens --  
he was still young again. The Demon  
had left him with a case of youth,  
a set of suits, a fresh complexion,  
the lustrous eyes.

Faust was young again and wise, and all for free.  
Down he went to mingle with the crowd  
to see who he would like to taste or know  
or have or be. And the Devil snickered,  
knowing full well here Hell is really found.

2 June 2002

Cuttyhunk

## MY INDIA

When I look at what I wrote  
in India it's like anybody else's  
full of heat and monkeys

I didn't have to go there to know that  
and I saw what everybody saw  
and groveled before the same

gorgeous idols everybody  
did or refused to do though  
they knew they should

because why else be  
in India except to praise  
and learn and tolerate

get sick and come home  
purified and somehow  
uselessly improved

pointlessly wise?  
But when I think  
of what I thought in India

there is a difference  
I might be able to tell  
but don't want to,

afraid it will tell me away  
into the utterly spoken  
and no need for more,

something about what I learned  
from an ancient sleeping car  
a broken bench

a wisp of straw and a bird  
yattering by a river  
and more than anything

I bow down before  
something I saw  
the time before

in a rice paddy in Bengal  
stuck upright in the ground  
a black umbrella

sign of someone  
who knew the place  
and is utterly gone.

2 June 2002

THERE WERE PLENTY

there were plenty  
of things

and always more to wait for  
Pepsi-Cola the evening news  
a handkerchief some knitted gloves  
the things that aunts will give

and I know you and you  
know the woman round the corner  
so well I think you are  
both the same the same  
bus takes you to work

that gorgeous tartarus  
safe outside the neighborhood

2 June 2002

WHERE THE WIND COMES IN

*for Charlotte*

the wind is the same  
and the cold quick ight now  
of this one star  
we live inside

how can it be the same  
the grace i knew  
is auburn and apple  
and long gone

the skill my hand had  
to tell you this  
is almost winter  
while the golden fragrant

scotch broom is busy  
in the same wind  
by the tennis court  
same wind same

what does a word mean  
when it can break my  
heart I don't know why  
how can the wind

be equal to another time  
another light?  
a clever wind my people  
say, in your face

both ways of the journey  
as if every breath of it  
was talking to you  
among the aural flowers

I am talking to you  
my hunchback verse  
bent over to come close  
to saying what I claim

the wind is saying  
about the actual the always  
always the same  
wonder that you are

as if there were no need  
for me to say at all.

3 June 2002

Cuttyhunk

## DRIVING UP ELEVENTH AVENUE WITH JENNIFER REEVES

You'd left your own party with me  
Where I'd been really misbehaving  
Fighting and being disagreeable  
The way I am and I was slow  
To realize what a compliment it was  
To leave your guests and come with me.  
Despite your skeptical and suspicious air  
You seemed to like me, maybe my anger  
Pleased you somehow, how could that  
Be, anyhow we walked out in this  
City of ours, why not, we all live  
In the streets of each other, there have to be  
Streets, have to be walls, we walked  
Uptown till I confessed I had never  
Been on the 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue bus, you seemed  
To think that doing it or mourning it  
Were equally silly, what did it matter,  
And why didn't I know if I ever did it,  
Were there people you slept with without  
Knowing (you being me)? But soon enough  
We were in your little car heading north  
Till in the region way north of the Park  
We came to that huge Catholic university  
Whose name still eludes me, just south  
Of City College where I went to school.  
The avenue ended in a huge long ramp  
Down into greenness and the hilly campus.  
I told you this is my favorite place in all New York  
Not the hills or grass but the ramp, the long

Smooth glissando of a street into the land  
As if Christ got reprieved and came down Calvary.  
Not a city any more but another kind of place.  
You parked easily and we walked around  
Aimlessly the endless campus, I displayed  
With some pride the immense Venetian  
Byzantine cathedral in mosaic in gold  
And the scarcely lesser schoolroom buildings  
All gilded domes and pagodas. Everything.  
You grinned at me and said I was showing you  
Around (as if that was usually your job)  
And we walked closer, bodies almost touching.

3 June 2002

## BEING SHERLOCK HOLMES

Why can't I be as famous as this man who never lived,  
is it because I lived? Why can't I be simplified  
to a few gestures, an unusual skill, calabash pipe,  
a dressing gown? Why are my edges so messy,  
isn't blur of outline the root cause of my weaknesses,  
my sin? Pleasure is what did me in. Great men  
have no private lives -- that's my trouble,  
too much going on. Living, but not much giving.  
The bark of experience grows thick on my tree.

Why can't I be a simpler, finished, famous person  
with no loose ends, no appetites, no dreams?  
The dead in their long reverie have no other dreams,  
no night to have them in. And the great  
imaginary characters have no time to dream in,  
no time at all. The mess of life begins in dream.

3 June 2002

Cuttyhunk

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Enough of such women,  
the Sarahs of dreamland  
who bear my unexpected foal

what will I do with my young horse  
any kind of child or live without one  
she punished me by taking me right in  
to serve the brute biology of the local planet

whereas I was everywhere  
whereas I have the meaning to be far.

3 June 2002

## RAINY

But not as weather is  
but as a tongue is  
glistening with wet  
about to pronounce  
an irretrievable word.

Nothing comes back  
except as rain.

Every water  
turns into it, what  
does every word become

a hard thing in the mouth  
a little silver hammer  
to build love's house  
or brain your lover with,  
we live in rubble.

3 June 2002

## READING

Reading Henry James is one of the rare pleasures -- like making love or listening to Bellini -- which are utterly absorbing and banish all thought of ever doing anything else but this.

Then suddenly they're over, almost without warning, but leaving a state of bliss behind for a while. These special absorbing pleasures are void of a sense of limit, while rich with a sense of shape -- a pure paradoxical *forming* of time so fully experienced that time itself doesn't seem to exist. Then suddenly it does. You can't read another line. You can't bear another sensation, another insight, another touch.

3 June 2002, Cuttyhunk

## I MISS YOU

The shock of color in a morning world  
In school they said the sea is blue because sky is  
Cerulean they said that special blue was called  
The sky's but here the sea's every color but that

Because the yellow of the rising sun  
Because the chemistry of light

Just because you feel it midnighr in a bar  
Doesn't mean that what you sing is *popular*  
You may be blue that doesn't change the sea's face  
Or *tu me manques* the French say, blaming it on me.

4 June 2002, Cuttyhunk

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Bars, and grilles. Or grills. Who's  
in there, thinking? There is no  
disease but loneliness, we know that now.  
Bad as a calendar, or a dead fish  
you carry around with you  
showing to people and you say  
look at this, what should I do  
about this, and they tell you nothing  
or tell you to put the thing down  
leave it alone. The thing about  
loneliness is this, it doesn't have to be  
your loneliness. Give it away  
like the famous fish, to a friend  
who'll give you her own dead animal  
and then you'll be real friends  
forever a while, you can sit beside  
each other in the grille, or bar,  
safe in the new aroma mingled from  
your now shared rotting beasts.  
Your loneliness is better than mine  
any time, here, honey, give it to me.

4 June 2002

## BIRDS SEEN

Birds seen: robin gull blackbacked gull heron egret tern bittern blackbird cardinal redtail hawk swallow cliff swallow sparrow tanager swift goose black duck cormorant and three unknown

Thoughts: zero.

It's almost like getting there at last.

4 June 2002, Cuttyhunk

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Close enough to the sea you begin to forget  
what manner of thing it is, a separation  
and a chemistry, storehouse for all we are  
and all we need and all we try to forget.  
That's why Tibet is so important, Persia,  
Upper Egypt, the arid places where we test  
the sea's resiliency in us -- to starve  
our bodies of that easy nurture and make us  
make it from inside, the other chemistry  
begins when the natural gets broken  
deliberately by ones who recognize  
the final natural gesture is to die.  
And don't want that. Live forever.  
They want the mind, the brilliant zero  
in our mathematics, to shift our reference  
point beyond the local calendar  
and live forever, at peace in its own ocean  
going anywhere and coming back  
and full of never-ending noticing, knowing  
every wave by name and where's its been.

4 June 2002

Cuttyhunk