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Golf cart singing on the rocky strand the Dublin
people with their tight black pants you see the sea
you like the light you cut the gas off at the main
because the tank towers over neighborhoods
following you up past Maeve and Molly to the crack
between one wave and another goodbye goodbye
with you, you witch you, I study the few

I adore the rare entitlements where you come open
cracked glass alas a mirror is a crack between two worlds
ambassadors — anamorphs — no one knows the true story
comedy and horror share a taste for the implausible —
Abbot and Costello Meet Frankenstein — I don't believe a thing
because water is full of coming and going purifies
itself every so many feet but where does sin come from
an elderberry or an animal too dry to taste beneath the wind
hurry through Connecticut drinking too much to disinhibit
the weird inspissate folderol of going out on dates I love you
is simple as a headline in Chinese everything's the same as me.

8 June 2001
Cuttyhunk

Following Cabeza de Vaca into
the Spanish paranoia of the conquerors
I find myself remembering bus depots
in Midwestern citylets
under the Neo-Ottoman regime
of Eisenhower the Adequate
when I first met the FBI in action
a slewfoot man as slug as I
who walked me home every day
forty feet behind me, like a Greek priest's wife,
as close as I ever got to the altar.

And now I wear a red shirt with tight collar
and you wear Trotsky round your neck
Mexico is never different, is it, and all too close,
la vida de los muertos is a crazy life
but very long, unbounded,
blue eyes like me, a yellow raincoat like you
my cornfield my last sky

these virtual pronouns let a young man loose.

8 June 2001
Cuttyhunk

FROM GOSNOLD'S ISLAND

Reading old records is the same as dreaming.
We still suffer from exactitude, four-inch fat
snakes black and white no living being saw
past Judith Archer who came back trembling
from the Nashawena shore, we dream
all the bitter circumstance of time.

Correction: those ignorant of history
are doomed to dream it all night long. Life long.
They experience that dream as waking.
She shudders still, will not set foot on the island,
got up from the table and walked away
when we amateur herpetologists got to work,
bullshit, Freudian symbol, no such snake.

Because the dream is true. Take that
as all you need to know. We are ignorant
and it is so. Everybody knows everything.
I know for instance you need me at this moment
But I can't get my body out of the book.

2.
ignorance locked in the fatal embrace of knowledge.
Praying mantis and her mate.
Move over, maneuver, forget.
Everything I know except how to think.

Every knowing makes the words go wrong —
the only thing that makes sense is what I didn't mean to say —
the rest is what everybody knows already,
Gnostic taradiddle and a dying god.

So *Lapsus* is our magazine
In all senses of all words always your R.

9 June 2001
Cuttyhunk

The seven cups you made me drink
because I wanted to
the least of them was full of sunlight and they all
made me new
among the sodality of desire
("desire is always a question" Lacan said)
I learned to interrogate the world

Want me Want more Take control

know the thought before the word. Walk unseen.
Fly there speaking all languages
because language is sea, words waves, will carry,
where doesn't matter, you know (you showed me)

how to be wet

Can you teach me to play the piano?
Can you teach me to feel?

I am in love only with what you want me to do.

9 June 2001
Cuttyhunk

According to the Catholic Worker calendar on the wall
today is the feast day of Ephrem the Syrian
first poet I know who wrote free verse
long before Karl Marx and Whitman and Nietzsche
and like them already was writing praises of an unknown God.

9 June 2001
Cuttyhunk

SLEEPING IN THE OTHER SENSE

Let bed face east the head
west that is the east of feet
that is the dream will come
à rebours across the current of the nice

and you'll be sorry so and so we alter
what we have no skill to change
and turn the bed around to rinse our dreams.
And still they come,

winter warfare of the counterfactuals,
Wittgenstein is captured by Ungaretti, Freud
never leaves Vienna and faces down the Nazis
maybe, all the imaginaries

that empty the city of its precious differences,
the fragile actual. Rocks left from a glacier
visions of women in satin gowns old movies
bra strap slipping down the smoothest arm

old women talking to their bees.
Confront the Nazis. Martha's Vineyard
dozing in Saturday sun, time for drinks in Menemsha,
we are rich and turn against the other.

Never blame the body, blame the soul.

9 June 2001
Cuttyhunk

THE ARK

But that was dust.
A thing accumulates, the leaf
in its hour unquills a tongue
to taste the light
(the one thing the world will not stint)

and there are seamen under bird cliffs
white dinged with opportunity, a priest
flies over the house, his crossy shadow
spills down the roof, shower of recall
sinners in the hands of an angry void

all the birds you see are monks who broke their vows
and all the stars are those who kept them
and there is room for everyone

10 June 2001
Cuttyhunk

The measurement of voices in the street
an anthology for Joan Retallack
without benefit of pronouns
grape arbor stretched in charcoal

making motherwit into pale theology
dust abounding, sinner's Latin

own excellent patois — 'my blue heaven'
built out of desire when desire

juke specifies nightfall summer congeries
a goat by streetlight loping

10 June 2001
Cuttyhunk

As if an island were for sunset
only and watching weather come and go
was all the work an islander can do

therefore is like the mind
a summons and a forgetting
a red dog running over the hill

10 June 2001
Cuttyhunk

The things I worry about are simple things
pirates slipping up the shore after the moon has set
and birds carrying new diseases perch
shabbyfeathered on the roof tree now
and all this food I love to eat
is cherry leaf and loco weed and poison,

sugar of lead, old alchemist . . .

10 June 2001
Cuttyhunk

Halfway between sleep and waking there is a place
I never used to know. Now it seems to hold me
longer and longer, my attention spun thin along
the delicate framework of waking, window, space
becoming this space, and all these things to live
all the way to their end. They have no end.

Halfway between waking and the day there is a country
where someone lies watching hardly reacting to
whatever sluggish argosy skims by on its way where
nowhere, leaving someone behind. Someone
who will any moment now be me but no one yet
staring vaguely at the sea. Not sea, but with
the goneness of sea, the uneasy glamorous
desolation of the sea alone at early morning

what has he lost, what may he yet be becoming.
In chemistry, the sea is the ashes of the sky
always sifting here and there, seeking every hollow
always anxious to be restored on high.
“It is death for the soul to be wet,” and the sky
died into the water by which we live. And sometimes wake.

The stir of memory, tender mix desire and anxiety,
sloshes past, someone is almost ready to be
an individual again. Why has this between-land
opened for me in recent years, I who used to
(when I was I) spring out of bed as soon as I was me.

Maybe I still do. maybe it's just the longer hillside
of being no one till I reach the crest and see my life
stretch out like a valley in a war torn country.
All this stuff plays out in me, civil war, angry
Mexican ballcourt, those seamy characters,
those uncreated entrepreneurs who flog their merchandise
just past the heavily wooded border of my sleep.

11 June 2001, Cuttyhunk

the cruelty of names

Jack is a jingle of coins in the pocket
Frank is the bark of a frightened man with a knife

yet John and Francis are noble astute and reserved

Nick-names surely are from Old Nick
and mean to empty names, empty us, of their glory and sweetness.

11 June 2001
Cuttyhunk

And even this may have been enough for you
A word out of the mailbox that says
I am a woman too, there are no men
Really, only failed women.
But whatever they are, they all need you.
Only you, among all the interminable analysis, the city.

11 June 2001
Cuttyhunk

PARTY

You arrive somewhere as representative of yourself
or be an ambassador from your dreamland
into this honest baffled world of other people
welcoming you with glasses of sherry you refuse
sushi you nibble wondering what they want of you
something you and only you can tell them, you smile
and feel as sordid as Kissinger selling one more war
and tell them the latest truth you think you think.

11 June 2001
Cuttyhunk

ESOTERIC CITIES

to know them by touch alone
embarrassing salutes in the public square
that haunts by its universal pertinence
we all walk we all sit down
watching the attitudes slink past
the intelligent café.

11 June 2001
Cuttyhunk

DESPERATE MAN IN RAIN

Beyond Canapitsit channel the twin headlands of
Nashawena what a mouthful rise out of fresh mist
Two dolphins surging southward, the further
Ahead of the closer by a head. You can tell
The distance by the pale of grey. It will be three days
Before we see that mile-off island again
And this too is something I have to be bringing to you.

11 June 2001
Cuttyhunk

I wear a black country
where others wear islands

atolls in their air the lungs but jungle me
stifling with fertility

12 July 2001

LE PEIGNOIR DE BALZAC

Rodin showed Balzac in his bathrobe to
Signify that he wrote at ease and
Fresh from his sleep, empowered by dream,
Compelled to recount the night he had,
Visions, crazes, to tell the dream we are.

He stands there as a statue
Several tons of him in bronze en
Deshabille, he is a proof of our own
existence, our right to count, to be
bad and get away with it, good and survive,

to do what we want,
discover our original desire and drive it
as far as it goes. Then walk the rest of the way.
Jouis! He murmurs, Enjoy! half-awake
from the novel we are to become.

12 June 2001

I want to be another person
the one i just am here
as if i have no other life
I have no world but where I am —
but this ‘am’ is a funny word
half **om** and half agony

a word acute with something smug about it
a small child cherishing her pain

being is the pain that makes me me.

2.
but am in other languages is a fruit or
a mother, or in Latin a sign that though
I am not yet I will be. and will do
the thing I’m built to do,

function of a man. Function of an am.

12 June 2001
Cuttyhunk

AS WE ARE SHAPED

Nothing to hear but the sea roar
waves coming in high and fast under a low sky
still blue and the wind in the east then
women laughing in the twilight
downhill. We live at the core of a compass
and everything is wind.

the best word
I can't see to write

Only the white wave crests
curving their incessant C's
against the moving page

and why does this all make me think of old Tiberius
on Capri, looking up from the torments of satisfied desire
out onto the insatiable sea?

There is a reef out there and the wind knows it.
And I know not even that,

but an honest eraser in a delirious schoolroom.

12 June 2001
Cuttyhunk

island midnight
it seems the only business forward
to give myself airs
the waves are loud the deer are sleeping in the West End groves
and I want all this to be something
when I am just a pen with pale ink
and no skill but spilling.

12 June 2001
Cuttyhunk

I make white paper tattletale with ink

R:K: son épitaphe

A stainer a dyer with an alphabet to spare

12 June 2001
Cuttyhunk

PUNIC CUSTOMS

To inscribe

What I see

Dancing

When you move

12 June 2001

Cuttyhunk