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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

=====

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

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

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 11th 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

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

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

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