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Spill, as an aster
in September will
get around to blue
and you know that summer
has another meaning now
and the frogs are silent
almost and the owl knows,

spill, as if we still
lived in such a world
with animals and friends
and the waves coming in
could still remind us
of an order out there
to which we are radically
foreign, foreigners,
exiles, not nomads,
of if nomads then lost
in the desert of prophecy
where no grass is

to feed our silly lambs.
And there they are again,
the breathing metaphors
who live nearby, the snake
at your foot yesterday

I was lucky not to see,
the tent caterpillars who
infest the high moors this week
slim pagans at their spoils

and the lady across the street
is doing laundry, toddles
about in her pink muu muu
in the cold wind, haven't seen
one of those in years, sheets,
pillows out to air, how busy
we all are in this strange
Portugal, even me, fussily
hurrying to say this,

spill, as the light does and despairs
of ever getting all that brightness
back again, oikumene, the world
inhabited by talking people,
even barbarians have something
to report, we need philosophers,
to understand their crude remarks
and make them ours, elegies,
shopping lists, encomiums
of blowhards dead in battle anyhow,
whale expeditions, shopping malls,
Shaddai in the sky and you in bed,

spill, as each word does
the content implicate
in all others,

spill, as each distinction
makes all the rest,
how could we be otherwise,

a man, alone with a woman
a woman alone, with a man.

9 June 2003

Cuttyhunk

=====

We come here to see
the world doing nothing
but being itself
and letting us look

and so we museumize
reality, choosing the vista
with our feet, our boats,
our little noisy seaplane

tottering down the wind
bringing you to me and me
to you in the special way
called here, the island.

9 June 2003

=====

Thou more import than thee
a swallow distinguishes this wine
from that sky, a man mends
a woman perfects, a wind
seeks out the seagulls wake! wake!
they cry only to each other
lest in long sleeping miss the world
comme tu me manques egregious
foreigner -- I love the rain but miss the moon
now in the tenth day of her labor --
by these spectacles I discern the dead
operating in our midst, shameless
facilitators, scouts from new hells
sampling our talents -- when a love
is gone -- move to the middle
of the bed and rock yourself to sleep.

9 June 2003

=====

I cast myself in the future I say look back
and claim me as your ancestor
since I as you have learned to do
trust no theory but this risk
this speaking out what comes to mind

disciplined to be different
--neither confession nor construction--
a shout instead from where the words live
inside a biosystem -- you -- a man
or a woman is a situation -- a shout
from the alloy, a groan of the material
deep in the cellar of our making,
urgent, not to be resisted, can't keep
from spouting out, misery, mystery
of love, do this, think that, let
it all go, hold each other hard
crow call snow fall proud avowal so.

9 June 2003

Cuttyhunk

HERE

it is really not being in America
or not America yet

the island where it could have been different
401 winters ago

I see myself across the sea.

10 VI 03

=====

We look for something in the air
a bird maybe
with a flame in its beak
to teach us fire

or is it otherwise, did fire
always live with us
and watching its tongues leap up
taught birds to fly?

10 June 2003

Cuttyhunk

NOT ONLY THE BIBLE,

el-Bib, maybe every
myth tells its truth backwards
or side to side like a mirror
my left your right

our hands touch anyhow

but why don't mirrors
turn upside down
or do they so that too
and we never know it

Myth is the cluttered closet of a people,
leave it closed, there's mold in there,
and dust, and sweet mildew,
and all the ideas are old

but when you slam the door it wakes the dead

wake me instead
a tongue in the right place
a word understood
no need to speak

In the last section of my *Chansons de Printemps*, it asks: is the familiar exclusion from Eden story also told backwards?

The wall was built around the garden. But maybe we're still inside it. This is Eden, old and obvious and full of work -- why else would it be a garden, an orchard, a hard acre to delve and dig and sow and weed and reap. Outside Eden, we'd be no gardeners, we'd not be toilers of earth or sea or air, notebook and checkbook and miner's pick. Outside, there would be being. But an angel with a flaming sword stands there -- Manjusri -- not to keep us from the gate, but to show us --why else would the sword flame, give light? -- the way out.

Truth is naked. But she has her back turned to us. We may delight in the shapeliness of her apparency. But one day we must lure her to turn round, so we can see her face at last.

10 June 2003

Cuttyhunk

LINES FOLLOWED FROM DREAM

I wear shoes that walk sideways
that walk me cat-a-corner
diagonally up the sidewalk
zig zag slow, I wear shoes
that don't get there ever,
that make me dream,
I wear shoes that are too big for the steps
I can't go up easy
I can't go down at all,
my shoes have laces, the laces
are alive, keep coming untied.
I stagger from one building
to the curb and back, I keep
going, I wear shoes
that are too small for the distances,
I have killed my brother
there is no place to go.

11 June 2003

Cuttyhunk

=====

Watching things anyhow a cardinal I have to give you more of my reading
but I don't read books anymore
and it's hard to get the weather in an envelope
but that's what I study, the clouds,
partner, the airs barely visible
that soar around the island of my head,
the long science of feeling
what it's like to be me,
the smell of scotch broom yellow mad in June, the nameless gizmos
that work the machinery all round me,
birds and such, three old men
last night with a twenty pound fish
a fourth man was scaling and fileting

with gulls waiting their turn
o seagulls I used to be so full of quotations,
the sky used to be a book that fell
asleep on my chest at night
when I could read no longer
and fell into the real world
like an old heavyweight crashing to the canvas.
But one night the dream ended and I woke
and there was morning
perched on the window sill
and since then she has held me
faithful, she has treed me and girled me,
has fed me and eaten me, has wifed me and left me alone,

and the books flew from their endless shelves
and scattered in several flocks
mostly to the north
where it is said that men still live
with room in their heads
for another word or two to come in,
and here I am, thick with love,

with many pairs of interesting shoes

11 June 2003

Cuttyhunk

=====

but actually what am I saying
goodbye to when I say hello
remember I'm a Libra my hands
are in your hands,

Ptolemy

called us *Chelai* the Claws
of the Scorpion because we handled
and we chose
fussing around until we were sure
and we were never sure
so we buy a lot and use a little

touch, touch, in other words,
and who will fault me
if my eyes are dim from the beginning
with too much beholding
conning fair women departing
over the lawns and a rabbit
at dawn at his devotions,

I am the stars
as you have come to know them
and I have forgotten once again
to water the day lilies on the deck
but the rain will forgive me

I'm not the last man to pray to the weather
that island made up entirely of the sound of the sea.

11 June 2003 Cuttyhunk

=====

When I breathe I hear voices in my chest
far away they seem to be talking
quiet voices of children
doctor what does it mean
I hear them inside me

you should try to make out
the words they're saying

it's in another language

well go there and learn it
it can't be that far away
if you can hear it all the time

just when I'm sitting in a quiet room
morning kitchens
places like that
and no one is talking outside me
and I breathe

go there and learn that tongue they talk in

how shall I go?
are there books that show the way?

You hear them
it's your body

they're singing in
you must have the map
to follow
or maybe you are the map
and listening is enough,
why dont you listen?

I hear them but my breath
is louder, I mean they seem
to be made up of my breath
and I can only hear them when I breathe
but the sound of my breathing
hides what they are saying
and who are they, doctor,
who are they?

they must be the people
you want to hear you
the society you want to join
--you say they're children?

their voices are children's voices
I don't know what they really are
maybe animals have children's voices
or maybe things have too,
or parts of the body, could parts
of my body be talking to me,
and I am the grown-up
and they're my little children?
it seems wrong to me,
I think they're my ancestors,

I think my lungs are my grandmothers,
maybe it's old women's voices
that I'm hearing,
maybe old people and children are the same,
why don't you tell me
who they are and what to do?

Go there and speak with them,
or maybe just sit where you are
in the quiet kitchen
and tell them things, talk
as you would with a foreigner
or a real child, say
what's on your mind, answer
what you think they're saying
and maybe they are saying that,
maybe they will understand
and then you will too.

But when I talk
it drowns out what I'm hearing,
what I'm feeling.
Can't I get there
by just listening
alone, do I have to talk,
I am so tired of talking.

11 June 2003
Cuttyhunk

your shoulders

your shoulders, your arm
in first light the *sign*
of waking

to be so close
as we have been
to feed all those
birds together

12 June 2003

Cuttyhunk

To know a self

a tile a title

roof hard rain

ratcheting a word

through your machine

mourning-doves

castigate rain or

I still am here

am I still here

12 June 2003

Cuttyhunk

Trüber Tag

low clouds give way
to high
 color comes back

slowly the far headland

everything prophesies

now it is so clear
the trees have leaves

listen to them
 telling

12 June 2003
Cuttyhunk

EVEN THE WEATHER

even the weather
is something somebody said

fore
cast

saying closes
what is said
stays closed
around the saying

becomes object
not a “process
in the weather of the heart”
said the old young poet
who still believed

it could be said.

12 June 2003

Cuttyhunk

=====

rub them together
like two sisters
the moon rises

12 June 2003

Cuttyhunk

for Sappho

=====

in all that rain
there's a boat down there
the mist is rising
the men stand
outlined against
the sea they're working

windows all a-steam
cardinal scolding a tree

what more could
anybody ask

12 June 2003
Cuttyhunk

THE GULLS

only earliest morning
gulls walk on the lawn
like nuns together
slow airy breviary

the way we seem
is the only way we are

12 June 2003

Cuttyhunk