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How we spell our names
spells us right back.
Black people know this
and spell old names new ways
to empower them. Enchant
the way they do.
Spelling means a spell.

Another way to say this
is everything is a bird.
One cup boiling water
¼ cup sugar. Cool.

Feed your hummingbirds—
I sit all afternoon
watching them, their
feed feud mate dance
soaring verticals over
high their clear sweet goo,
I watch them spell my name
with ancient alphabets new to me
though I have been reading all my life.

18 June 2009
THE DIVAN OF THE INSCRUTABLE

Left-over luncheon meats
they used to call it
dead-pig one and all
in pinkish guises
studded with pistachios
or their own fat, strewn
out on floral plastic platters
roses and violets not a
thorn in sight, I hate food
that doesn’t fight back,
flee from such repasts
into vaguely vegan paradises
where everybody eats and
nobody dies, nobody
ever gets milked, sucked,
touched, let alone a spring
haircut yielding fine wool.
Everybody’s left alone
in the silent music of long
repression. Brookline
matrons coax their two children
through the science museum
where everything smells of money,
every process has a red button
you can press, instant grat,
molecules dancing on command
obedient to the laws that sad
scientists script for things—
god know what things would
get up to I left to themselves.

18 June 2009
Cuttyhunk
Was it too early?
Not for me or the sun
doing its do-re-mi
already over Nashawena
5 AM – I have a photo
of us doing it together,
I’m the one you can’t see,
this side, holding the Pentax.

18 June 2009
Cuttyhunk
wind hum
strong now
sounds cold
is

time
to light fire
old enough
to know better

whole life
hate heat.

18 June 2009
Too sleepy to tell lies
he let words do it for him
just set them on paper
and leave them to it
everybody will blame him
but then they always do
this way there’s a chance
something might be true
enough to make them call
off their dogs or bring
plates of food whatever
this poor sleeper needs.

18 June 2009
Cuttyhunk
Find my way through
until it answers.

Be wrong with me
quiet as hands on skin

make me a rainbow
she said and you did

kneeling backwards
sky of where you’ve been.

18 June 2009
Cuttyhunk
Sun rises up through all the colors of clear
to hide behind the cloud bank
coulisses of the world – a play
with no actors, we
the impertinent audience adrift on stage.

18 June 2009
Cool skin on cold tile
the difference
sings inside you
it is almost the beginning

in knowing the body
apartness is energy
the touch discharges
in all this sudden world

you feel you.

18 June 2009, Cuttyhunk
Welfare of waves
curdy quick today
storm wind to
see them coming

sky manuscript
fondling the light
rifting through

there and here
how wet the ordinary
wood the mind.

19 June 2009
Cuttyhunk
Cause of it cost of it
not even a fishing boat
but a bird can ride it
in fact they all do
what else can they do
but be in the way of being,
fog and bluster
like a human idea.

19 June 2009
Cuttyhunk
WHO?

Woke up not thinking
but not thinking about what?

That is always the issue of silence
what word it is
not being spoken

and even absence is the absence of.

19.VI.09, Cuttyhunk
ACTUARIAL

To account for the want.
So loud in fog. Five a.m. a crow
so rare on this island, usuall
only at the west end. Loudness
tells: mainland storm,
sea as sympathy, a signature
even I can read
in my greatness golden hour’d
in a gland garden
trifling with peace.
Halter no more, uberrimous!
Disclothes your lisping secrets
of ordinary salt – this
makes us live.

20 June 2009
Cuttyhunk
The stars come home
stagger drunk through barless nights,
toxication is the air alone,
lead, kindly alkaloid,
one comes (hush, shush)
and then another curls,
comes, and this goes
on forever. Math
is one dull way of knowing this,
count them, but experience
is another, that messed-up
history of the local mind—
so go out mindless now
and stumble through the fog
over slippery shingle down
to the touch of the thing
and all the sciences will attend thee
hips hard against you as you stand there
and you come home wet from knowing them.

20 June 2009, Cuttyhunk
Amid the circles I have made
plant this square—
a map of listening.
Go there by hearing this.

20 June 2009
Cuttyhunk
DAWN FOG

Without thinning or diminishing
it is occupied by brightness
new words flooding an old text.

20.VI.09, Cuttyhunk
Public where she is.
He, no telling. Paladin of promises,
unsatisfier, undiscloser,
meet me at Mass. Whisper trash
while she tries to pray
whatever that means. Where
do such words go? Hers,
his. Everything screams
around her, stone columns
pretend to be trees. A steep
roof between her and heaven.
What is he saying, he’s not
even here, she remembers
each of his promises. Repression,
hers, all her attitudes
of improbable expectation,
chutes of chastity, breath
is so short, only long enough
for lies. No explanations.
The priest was saying: We get
what we deserve, we get
what our actions have earned us,
there is causation. She
believes in a world with no causes,
pure rapturous effect, like a bird
settling to the first flowerets of hortensia just turning their sky blue. Or a wolf ravening in snowy woods. Unaccountable appetites. Hers. For what happens to her.

20 June 2009

Cuttyhunk
Everybody’s first name is the same but unknown. So we call everyone princess to be sure.

From the jungle they came out determined not to tell what they had seen. Years later one of them broke down and wrote a book nobody believed. Everybody bought it to make sure there was nothing to believe.

And as long as they lived on the island refused to use any word that meant ‘the sea.’

21June 2009
Cuttyhunk
Nobody is ever ready for it
when it comes

Why would they be?
It is an alien, come from outside their system,
some people thought of it
as an enemy but couldn’t be sure

because only those it had come for
could really tell and they’re not talking

you could say all this in music
in many fewer words

but it would take much longer
and maybe it would come before you’re done.

21June 2009, Cuttyhunk