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Orinda matchpoint
the human mortals want

Speak Dis
our b[a][e]d Go[o]d under
speak

And it did
in he-voice first
then later in the vox of birds

winsib, tell it me, tantalize.

But there was no me.

This play, this play!
O they have seen you rise
full-mooned from your lupanars
and take your awe-instilling Place
amidst the architecture of every gender
with the sheer glisten of your gleam
and luster of your far listening—

now can you say it in words?

I knew the director in graduate school
we were mice together, our pale rowboat
drifting oarless mid the shoals

of Benzedrine then Demerol,
unctuous sleep or Galvani woke us
then we were frogs by Bart's place

no living man you could ever know
was he, take off your semaphores
and put silence on

sweetpart yet to come
as springtide red chevron'd blackbird wings
only color in island fog so

likewise
the god is to the religion as the church is to the world
a hint of something better, an iffy beauty twice removed,

maybe a little bit like you, a luscious Maybe
and you look (do it – stand toe to the chalk mark)
the man in the eye, i.e., you drag your eyes away from this museum
and see the man (e.g.) hanging on his cross
and for a moment such a thing makes sense—
who for us humans' sake
came down from somewhere
and his death lives longer than your life—

that one, in shadow, up there
eyes closed now
as if the eyes of one who has seen enough
now needs to think about it

in the dark place where fools think thinking lives

and he leaves you the car keys and Key West.

Sky stroke. Kidneys
compromised,

too much rain inside,
too salt.

(Note the hand on the curve of her stroke)

For by this time they were bodies,
risky adventures of bone
in the meat world
splayfooted stumbling through god grease,
and they were flesh.

—I can't believe the script says that.

—It's not a script it's the play itself, waxy as a lily, all of skin.

—It can't be a play, it's written down,
for play is something logical and quick
children do it and their voices rise
having no need for words

play is dolphin leap or bed or butterfly we guess

—Habitual is what you mean. Just speak
the lines this paper gives you
and trust the paper,
papyrus never lies,
is wiser than the common marsh from which it grows.

—What does *that* mean?

—Just speak your lines and be quiet,
so, grease means grace, means
bone and bad and bed and bee and blood and being

and on the other hand

a string of naughts
stretching from your hip pocket to Damascus.

Stop by the side of the road and change your mind.

Now you've got it, now
all you need is glory,

broken petals of a blow-dried rose.

1 June 2008
Cuttyhunk

FOG, 1

The morning fog persists
in making me very happy.
Deep fog says that here
is the only here there is.

1.VI.08

FOG, 2.

Where the world outside
is just a rumor
no one speaks.
And hard to believe
on this hilltop
that there is a plain
from which this rises
and a sea on all sides.
This house enoughs a world.

1.VI.08

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The sea to hear
and dog nearby
no light in all that sound
crushed clamshell path
leads white
somewhere, down.

1 June 2008

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Irony of the other

lost at sea
the sense of self or
spiritum meum

a seagull after all.
That one over there
is me.

1 June 2008

AN IMPERFECTION

*Mist still on the sea around the headlands
though sun is strong over a modest raft of clouds
dark underbodies of them obscured
only by themselves. Their selves.*

Suppose I really did try to tell you something accurate about you, your power and beauty, without wasting our time figuring out what beauty is or power does. Just you.

How hard it would be. Suppose praise were banned, and only accurate description as such adduced to glorify? *The heavens declare the glory of God* it is written. But now it would have to detail precisely what they detail. What is glory? Of what is it made? What do the heavens say, and how do they say it? Star talk, easy metaphor? Or something tougher, something more? What are the little particulars that sing together, that make up the thing called the glory of God?

What goes to make up a man's love for his wife?

To know that is to know the man, the twisted alleys and forest rides and subway sleeps and austere dawns that led him to a place where he stands and sees before him his way clear or not so clear, the way that is not so different from, or is at least marked out by, his wife.

He stumbles ever morning onto the deck filled with a tumid gratitude, an obscure feeling of having been rescued – not from the night that's past, but

from the weight of living that came before – rescued from pastness into now, where she is waiting, asleep as like as not, deep in the house. She is his rescuer, he thinks. Or the instrument of his rescue.

Obscure, obscurely he tries to fit his mind to the erratic, knotted mesh of his life, to puzzle out the strands, the influences, the intimate catastrophes, the almost unending line of days that led to now. Maybe he will spot at last a pattern, a roadmap even, and all those lines will join to form one line, and he will follow that line with his mind's eye, and finally know where *now* is.

But it is obscure, obscure. And even if he teased this thread and that free, and spent forever at it and got the pattern straight, it would be in the end just his way, just him again, and say nothing about her, the woman he had a mind to praise.

2 June 2008
Cuttyhunk

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A poem is never a well-wrought urn,
an artifact, even when it is.
A poem is a cry for help, no matter what it says.

2 June 2008
Cuttyhunk

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Rose, original terrorist
from Persia yet
sent to shatter
the single hearts
of Christian men
into newfangled love

Not decent lust or
godly worship but
this cloying thing
we so celebrate
and make our culture
on, chemistry,
alchemy, affinities,
the images we cash.

2 June 2008

THINGS BY AND LARGE

are better as they are.

We love birds and
dislike snakes.

If birds lived only
on the ground
we'd like them still
(penguins prove it).

And if snakes flew
we'd really hate them then.

This is an essentialist
argument, not
the momentary
environment but
the whole historical
identity itself.

Never mind your sad story.

We know who you are.

2 June 2008

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Apple on the windowsill
in sun. To warm it
from the fridge. Fruit.
I want to say ice-box
the way my mother did.
An apple in trouble.
A window in sun. Too
many things remembered.
All this means is let
you know someone
has problems like you
of body and soul. No cure.
But not such a bad disease.

2 June 2008

THE FOOLISH PEOPLE OF ZINGA

“As my men lessened in numbers, stricken by famine, fighting and sickness, one by one the books were reluctantly thrown away,” Mr. Stanley wrote. Near the end of his journey, he had only a few left, including the Bible, Shakespeare and the Nautical Almanac for 1877. “Poor Shakespeare was afterward burned by demand of the foolish people of Zinga.”

from a note in the *Wall Street Journal*

Foolish Shakespeare
to fall into the hands
of the poor. Poor Zinga
who needed to make
fire from the words
that way. What did Stanley
tell them was in his book?
Were they burning
his Bible, his book of
spells? And if poor
Shakespeare isn't those,
what good is he? A book
in the clutches of the poor.

What form did their 'demand'
take? Threats or pleading?
Did he burn it to reassure
he came among them
with empty hands? Did he seek
to balance Prospero, who
drowned his book and could
later have dried it back
to life again? Poor Zinga,
what did they want
from Shakespeare? Did
he burn his book just
to keep them warm?

2 June 2008, Cuttyhunk

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for Charlotte

If this were any other day
it would be easy to begin.
But it's not. The day
has a meaning of its own

words try to reach
or even match, distill,
calcine, finally turn
into a single crystal

I would give to you.
Crystal perfect
as any crystal is
yet caught inside it

thousands of tiny things,
signifiers, blackbirds,
crows over the tall cliff,
fishermen, Baghdad,

men and women in-
finitely clear and many,
all the things that
jewelers call imperfections

that make this crystal
different from any other
and worthless unless
you take it from my hand.

3 June 2008, Cuttyhunk

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Something different
or from the other side of it.
It is a winter late afternoon already dark
in a small city in Michigan or Indiana.
Or maybe I mean Michigan City, Indiana,
between the lake and the penitentiary somehow
a street runs along its own trajectory
and I think people are sad walking along it,

thinking of all the criminals executed in their town
and of the crocuses months away sepultured under ratty snow
my God I hate this place the virile murderers the simpering police
the lake like a child's monologue all that beauty is just annoying
the jewelry shop with garbage in the window and still I love thee
makes the world spin round and all that money and all that poverty
America gets more dreamlike every day meaningless prestiges
demons in fancy underwear the president gives up golf
because it looks bad and it distracts him from murdering young men
o go back to the links and stop the war go back to the bottle
get out of town

something quarrelsome and quotidian
not quaint or only querulous,
something quantified and queer
something really smart.

But for that a brain is wanted,
a brain and a flower of some sort,
a rose that Iranian import will do
a rose and a brain and a pair of green eyes
or maybe brown or maybe grey or maybe blue

a brain and a rose and a bone—
shouldn't those be enough?
Nothing is enough and everything is too much—
this is the world, amigo, amiga, whoever you are,
it doesn't get better than this.

3 June 2008

LOQUENDUM

Blackberries and quarrels
strange accommodations

forgiveness like a tree
with catkins in it

for a season.

 A body of water
is always about to speak.
I grew up between a sound and a bay
nothing special, millions did—

and now the whole
ocean's out the other door

just to keep it personal.
No more squishy oceanic certainties
The Sea seems to encourage us to grok.
Only the particular,

theory of anything at all.
Seek it in rapt contemplation of its queerness
will keep me sane an hour more
despite the war I almost manage to forget

with sea hush coaxing up the rainsoaked rocks.

4 June 2008
Cuttyhunk

MERCHANTS

Merchants there be on the road
whose will will
carry them across the ridiculous distances
this sea

no easy way out—
Pound in his day could still conceive
of a solution, giving
value, given right-minded leaders.

Give more and more for the same barrel of oil
the molecules whereof change not
nor do they inure
value au contraire they perdure
and the coin falters, the dollar
'weakens' they say in the media,

o grief when the only god we believe in
weakens. No one now alive
not caught in money. How shall we give
the god back its strength? Or choose
out of the night sky another god?

4 June 2008

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On a quiet island
wet shingles in the rain.
A house little by little
becomes the color of the sky.

4 June 2008
Cuttyhunk