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ELEMENTS

1.
A dream I didn’t want
and barely dreamt
and woke to end
stays with me all day
but now only as a thing
important I remember,
not something over-
whelmingly now.

2.
Burning wet wood
sets element
against element.
Not good. Not cold
today, so no need
to make water burn.
Or make stone
fly off into thin air.

3.
“Sometimes things just fall away,
like pounds from a dying man.”
“You’re sinister today.” “It’s
this macabre sunshine’s doing.”

4.
Gather driftwood
the way his old girlfriend
gathered kelp and thought
she was a bird. No actual
bird could make that mistake
if that’s what it is, not even
a crane. Or the calm
oystercatcher on the pond
on a spit of sand no bigger
than the feet he stood up on.

5.
I marked the spot
where the driftwood heaped, fuel aplenty, bring the cart, come back later. Learning is rulebound scavenging.

5 June 2007
Cuttyhunk
Scaremonger prelacy
unbeds dearest lovers

and like a heap of sand
blown on by a steady
wind, then fitful, then
gusty, the patterns
of their separation
will never be deciphered,
let alone healed.

The big voice booming
down the nave at them
affrights the innocent
into nescience. Leaving
the wicked and insensate
to carry forth the world’s
work while the saints
tremble, aspen leaves in
hardly any wind at all.

5 June 2007
Cuttyhunk
Eating on its way to something else
a road describes a menu

losses losses chicken bone
all empty and hurt,

the dignity of its destruction.
Its own incapacity incapacitates the organism.

Any broken bone is every bone.

5 June 2007
Cuttyhunk
When the mind is tired and not know it
dawn happens behind my back
and here the light is already, foregathered on the shore
like Greeks in their tenth year at Troy
and plunder soon. Something in us
is pillages by consciousness.

Something spoiled. Next time you teach
the Iliad tell them it's an allegory, a little
bit impure, it really is the history
of the war of intelligence against soul,
philosophy against poetry. Poetry always loses,
since the hatred in Reason is the violence
of death, while the resentment in poetry
is the swoon of exhaustion and forgiveness and dream.

I am tired of I am. It is no accident
that Eichmann quoted Kant in his defense.
I am Priam among phantoms, begging
for the bodies of my dead. But I'm tired of I am.

6 June 2007
Cuttyhunk
Can’t I say a simple thing
about the sea
without it being me?

6 VI 07, Cuttyhunk
I haven’t prayed to the sea since I got here, 
that’s twenty four hours of the oldest atheism
because the sea was the first god we discovered
whoever we were or are or don’t you remember, 
help me out, it’s not so long since I was born, 
featherbrained immigrant to this big island.

6 June 2007, Cuttyhunk
So quiet noon
I never saw.
Three minutes to twelve
and not even the sea
spoke. A pause
in nature. Some
thinking rested.
And what I’m saying
is the only sound.

6 VI 07
IN THE CHURCH OF CTHULHU

I heard one testifying:

“I seed the legs of hell spread wide
its fire caught me
and I rushed in
fast as my cock carried”

“Only Father Fish can save him now!” they shouted

At first I thought they meant a common priest, some Jewish convert or Hudson Valley Republican. But no – he is the fish priest, embodiment of the Abyss, green-glitter-mitered. He stands before us.

6 June 2007, Cuttyhunk
We always think of devils as sly and elegant, and paint them with our peasant superstitious fears of gentry ways and city manners. But hell is coarse and loud and arrogant. Any elegance it shows would be a scrap of heaven still stuck in place. When you hear coarseness, hell is close. When you witness violence and war, hell is there, however glorified by novelists and epic poets and the media they may be. When you feel love and happiness and see people making other people happy, you are in touch with heaven, however vilified it may be by hell’s propaganda machines – the churches, the law courts, the schools.

6 June 2007, Cuttyhunk
THE REAL ESTATE

One more opportunity to be less.
A deck over nothingness
but you advertise it as The Sea.

6 VI 07
Macerating thought in night,
at least say what has not been said,
a coral bead rolling down a linden leaf
a girl fiddling with amber
asking each irregular resiny lump
Who are in you?  Are you my father?

6 June 2007
Cuttyhunk
Break through here.
There *is* another side
a fat woman tends her boat
the star Arcturus
is not ours. Things
people say. The boat
was a moon once
and left for the sun
and left us only one,
*el tuerto*, the one-eyed sky of night.

6 June 2007
Cuttyhunk
The case of the rabbit the mild interferer.

There is a world out there (*in here, my pulse insists on adding*) that does not run on discourse. Some other logic words concealed shortly after word created it, the hiding or *calypse* for which we wait a new unveiling, the unsaying of silence, when even the dumb bunny speaks at last. Says Learn unlanguage first, then we'll talk.

7 June 2007
Cuttyhunk
J.S. Bach:
PARTITA No. 6, e minor.
(Glenn Gould)

1.
Heavily the forest—
out of Thomas Bernhard’s undergrowth
a quail.

I study its gait along the sandy track
birds walk
as if they can’t fly, why, why

do such sciences intrigue
the shadow government in my spine
that stops me as I walk

(stumble, shuffle, dodder)
along this woodland path having
presumably purposes and goals of my

own and yet I stand
to watch a bird do
so well what it isn’t even born to.

Sometimes I am the last man on earth.
But then I pick up some book,
I didn’t write this, there has to be

someone else in the forest,
Bernhard coughing in the shade
or this quail’s non-de-plume

reading displeasing letters from his publisher.
The motto of any music is
You can’t get away from this.

I turn out to be whatever there is to have been.
I have a shadow too for Christ’s sake,
I let it lead me this far along the road.

Water ripples nearby now—
I have come to another religion at last,
I will follow its silly rules another mile.

7 June 2007
Cuttyhunk
Sometimes something works.
Blue afterthought,
a glow. A sky forgives.

A sky for you
alone, Princess—
it is evening all day long there

because whatever else Night is
it is a recognition
that this is all there is.

Make use of it, she tells me
or I tell her, not sure which,
it’s too dark to tell.

7 June 2007
Cuttyhunk
Crack open an olive, listen.
They fall from the trees on California campuses,
they are dark red underfoot, they get crushed
onto paved walks, red, dark red,
bitter evil if you dare to taste one
uncured. The natural is a disease
we heal through artifice.

That is a clue
to the invention of God.
To balance nature
with something beyond nature.
Something we must become.

7 June 2007
Cuttyhunk
DATES

I want dates. Dates and figs. Goats and pigs. Cheese and needles, honey and straw. Nettles come in here somewhere, and stones, water boiling from hot stones dropped in, I want what has always been around, always possible, always needing us to be consumed, or do I say it backwards, I must have dates and barley and milk. Everything else is afterthought. Everything else is wrong.

7 June 2007
Cuttyhunk
The stars don’t obey the star maps anymore.
What’s more, they’re different from what they used to be
and the sky feels wrong.
The Milky Way is mostly dried up now
and the Big Dipper empty at last.
But Arcturus is still there,
though they swear he shouldn’t be,
that he’s a star captured from another galaxy.
The things they say! Who would steal a star?
What kind of pirates live in the mind?

It’s all about being free to do what we want—
what other astronomy could there possibly be?

7 June 2007
Cuttyhunk