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They don't have lights on
what they need
a grey grey wall
like a cat in a museum

show me wide
open to your guidebook
splayed in disarray
to form that unity

scholars rave about
fingering their cash
you and me amigos
are just anyone

who stops to look
and then gets seen
and seen until nothing's
left of us but

the shape of a shadow on a wall.

23 June 2000
Cuttyhunk

This dawn way this only waiting
sun coming to make fun of us, will
lash us soon with its intolerable sermon

a sloop rests in a pale harbor
in the habit of an island
mere grief bleeds away

faster than rough roses after June in the sea rocks
a scar of gold cloud
now athwart the actual rising

hidden behind tomorrow island
across the channel where Bart's men saw
other men, swart and comelier, taller than themselves

a decent chronicle of landfall
when there was woods to it
this same is now a beam across the roof

and a brave reef excites the combers
white plump birds pacing out their Iliads
sailors heave towards waking

24 June 2000
Cuttyhunk

FEAST OF ST JOHN THE BAPTIST

Don't be prosy,
plunge your convert
deep into some water
you find handy

it breaks your life
to start it running
from the rock,
only you, only you

can make it come
fast enough to wash them
clean of the sins
you have both imagined

it must be terrible
to see such power
flow from you always
into another

a lover like you
always spending
when all the river we have
is birds and weather

night coming down.

24 June 2000
Cuttyhunk

THE PATTERN

Just once let dawn
in all its particulars
from first light to full
gold over shore
inspect your mind
then you can spend
your life decoding
the scripture it
silently inscribes.

24 June 2000
Cuttyhunk

It knows what it's going to think

and sometimes it seems to veer me away
so I don't think that thinking
(don't hear it thinking away in me
in all its other words)

so that which thinks
sees the whole carpet ahead of it
and spread all around

sees the pattern in it and can tell
when it will get around to dwelling on
this weave or color or bereavement
where the cloth was ripped from the loom.

24 June 2000
Cuttyhunk

Now pen the harbor stiff with boats
and beat back memory's challenge
to think of other islands. Boats
for the most part are white when rich
men ply them, are dark and green
when they go out to work the sea.
Money likes to think about clouds
puffy over a crayola blue ocean
like heaven or the Greek flag.

Thronged with passage I sweat to stay.
It is hard work being in a world of going.
Or giving in a world of getting.

I mean to be a telescope, that's all,
so boys and girls like me who rise up
from the drear of family circumstance
could see another world, better far
for being far, and see it lucidly refined
even if I have to make my heart be glass.

24 June 2000
Cuttyhunk

Words, do my thinking for me.
Do my ordering.

Leave me to burn
Your meanings in my clay,

cuneiform, I wedge
the tool in, I set the fire.

Twirl the sable tail tip
brush and drag like grasses

down papyrus.
I float on oceans

of your possibility
buoyed by your

mysterious eternities
locked in a groan

or grasp, the call
of your hands.

25 June 2000
Cuttyhunk

SEVERAL YEARS BEFORE THE REFORMATION

I propose to trap an angel
and set him loose inside a blue cathedral.

— Where will you find him, and what's the time?

— I'll go downstairs and get him
in my own mind, corner him
between the rat and the silverfish,
in the old coal bin, anthracite,
threaten him with a bottle of wine
(I'll drink all this if you don't surrender)
and he'll come and yield me his hand.

— Angels have hands? And what time *is* it?

— How else could they build cathedrals,
carve outrigger canoes, paint pretty girls
snoozing beneath banana trees,
construct alphabets and the rules of chess
talk to me when everyone is sleeping?

— So that's when it is? You are
a buccaneer of other people's dreams,
work while they sleep, suck
into your own designs the polymorph
epistemologies of their frantic repose.

— I am a mercenary of the night
disposed to daylight, seconded to the senses
to dream up a patient world,
one that will love us.

— Seems like
you are the angel. I see that you have hands ...

— Not hands (though I have hands).
Rhetoric. That's what you see.
That's the difference between a cathedral
and some dim acre in the woods.
You have to believe in the skin you touch,

have to worship the commonest stone
just to make it stand there.
All religions are beside the point —
or there is one, the reverent unconscious
disposition to accept as real
the hilarious evidence of our senses
pain by pain. Evidence!
What judge would let an apple tree
testify? And to what.

That angel is still standing there,
honing the light, and whittling slow
his hand-carved prohibition
of our meek ecstasies.

— Things
have a way of making fools of us,
don't you think?

— I think
no more than I am paid to think

End of Notebook 236

spilled from nearby galaxies
my easy money. Suffering
makes no sense — that's why poetry
will always need surrealists,
the luxury of pain.

This is the spell
recited by the broken shell,
the poor whelk in it dying
in the drought of a sandy path
up to the church house
where the bad gull dropped it
I bent to try to save, dead it was

and full of sand, agony
after agony, by Christ that shell
in its little minute hurt as much
as watching my mother die,
it all is pain. Up to me
to spell an alphabet of it
and make it talk, make
conversation where there had been
nothing but creed.

— Hence Reformation?

—Pronto, straight man.

25 June 2000
Cuttyhunk

Such sheen and long suffusion
this day the sun
how land's humiditas turns
to yellow glory here
the primary in a gauze of air
lacquering the sea with simple gold

25 June 2000
Cuttyhunk

wake up the neighbors wake up the dogs
there's too much significance afloat
moths around a sleeping candle
too much meaning for me alone

wake up my beloved (sleep late darling)
and let her share with me this breakfast of sense
tossed through the mezzanine of haze
dawn wind full of its empty news

25 June 2000
Cuttyhunk

yachtsmen these surfers swimmers
graceless as they are their
instincts accurate:

*get back to the
sea, go to the sea, the sea
has something to tell you,*

the sea has something you need.
But they don't know what to do,
how to be with the sea

it is the goal
of education to teach even rich
people how to behave to an ocean.

25 June 2000
Cuttyhunk

ISLAND LIGHT SEEMS FROM ROCK ITSELF

Or spilled from crucifixes
yard-long and the sculpted human
of course is someone's God,
crucifix like a stiff bird
taking off forever from a broken beach
dawn after dawn, no one in the world
gets up early enough to see it fly

its wooden wings its bloody wings

2
why are the colors missing when I woke
all clay and copper, roots
stuck to the sky above me

vines groveling down?

There is a woman
who sails her bull's eye
across the channel

always another island
the sail half slack in the pale wind

3
there is a woman
who sails to another island
and visits the graves of Chinese exiles,
Indonesian narcolepts,
Greek philosophers with rotting skin
from Alexandria.
Everyone suffered once

4

history was made of wind
 just searching and researching
just blowing through old papers, old hallways,
 scouring old faded mirrors

sometimes even the light itself is sick
fades out
 sometimes the only island is too far

5

not found.
 Brilliant
 rubber balls of insolent French children
playing in Central Park,
 how dare they be happy in another language?

Haitian habits die hard.
I belong to what I believe in.
Sometimes the god I credit fills me with his wine.

The blood I make of other people's beauty —
beauty can only belong to the other
never be one's own

 one's own
no matter how I try with clothes and wineskins
 lipstick and philosophy,
our own is never far enough away to be beautiful.

6

loss of detail
 “poreless” the skin
 the eye abstains
also from too much inquiring,

we accept the stones of Ely as a shimmer
of erection, weight-bearing,

a glamour of gravity
eight old oak trees lifting
a stone lantern to the sky
a thousand years holding the sky.

while this island was full of oaks and beech trees till we came.

25 June 2000
Cuttyhunk

PROSE FOR THE WANDERING JEW

It was said long ago that Joan of Arc escaped the pyre. (Who was burnt in her stead?) She lived her whole life to the end, dwelling with her brothers and sisters somewhere, named, in the south of France. No more angels. Only the mistral ever came at midnight to tell her the truth.

There is reason to think that every historical character had a fate, or still experiences a fate, different from the one textbooks assign to him or her.

Jesus. Jesus did die, did harrow hell for three of our nights, did rise from the dead on Easter morning, just as it is told. And he did ascend into heaven — the Ecstatically Evident God (sambhogakaya) did, at least so ascend. But left the Visible God Man (nirmanakaya) to walk the earth, an eternal witness.

It is possible that this Jesus body* is the original of the Wandering Jew. Jesus the man is the wandering Jew.

If this is too shocking or theologically implausible, perhaps it went like this: Jesus said to Ahasuerus not “Tarry till I come again” but *Tarry with me wherever I go*. And so, like the Chinese Tripitaka and Monkey in *The Pilgrimage to the West*, or like our own Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, they still walk the earth.

Jesus is never recognized — perhaps he can only be seen by exalted perception. But Ahasuerus reveals himself gladly. He is still a loudmouth, well-meaning, unable to resist wisecracks or wise ideas. After a while reading the annals of humankind, we get to recognize the feel or smell of the man, his *patte* on the canvas of history. We recognize him in all the holy quacks and backwoods messiahs, Cagliostro, Starkey, Kelley, Paracelsus, Quimby. I met him once when he was calling himself Castaneda. Immensely experienced, very wise, he has no access to omniscience — unlike his silent master and friend. Still, Ahasuerus does what he can to help the world, cures some of the sick, tricks some of the credulous, and always means well.

I think back to our one meeting, Dressed to look like a Mexican lawyer, in short sleeved white shirt, a gold wristwatch on his hairy arm, the chubby little man admitted he really came from Brazil, and that his first language was

Portuguese. He nimbly erased a tape we had made of his conversation, and replaced it with the sound of wind wuffing across a no-account desert somewhere. Maybe in his poor lost Palestine two thousand years ago. In those days I didn't have sense to ask him real questions. Or to look carefully around for his eternal Companion.

* The Jesus Body: Having once been indistinguishable from the Divine Nature, that is, Permanence, this body does not (or at least has not yet had to) experience aging or perishing. It has a sort of mineral nature — like water, which is soft, fluent, healing and everlasting within the system. And like rock, which is firm and keeps the shape, preserves the contour of the idea or impulse that shaped it.

25 June 2000
Cuttyhunk

Mist and everywhere
droplets signifying
the earth is raining
up to heaven

there is a worm
lifts to the sun
only such inquiring
quarter the light

tell me tell me
be my gull
and scream inside me
fly non-stop ocean in me
speedwinged soar
across my ribcage

over the lost Atlantis of my heart.
To live without bone
in a hard world.

What temple is the sun in now
a feel of brightness
in the dent of cloud

I look at something else
but can tell the sun is looking at me.
For I am one who dreads
the coming of the light,
leaguer of darkness and hailfellow of trolls,
vampire agency and pre-dawn alchemist

every morning the sun breaks my flask.

26 June 2000
Cuttyhunk

SUN SMALL IN MIST

and now it's here
a leering peso in heaven
sometimes fading sometimes
burning through again: pale
moon-like quarter,
no, a dime now, fading

the real size of something is its glory
what our clouds let through
is instrumental belittlement
like Blake's 'rather like a guinea'

how little the sun is
peers through fog
it's dim enough you dare
to see the mountains on it
and the hot valleys
where weird eternal
art gets made
by boneless seraphim,
industrious flames,

the banausic current
runs through all things

hello hello the world is art
and everybody knows it
except those few who sell
or mean to sell a commodity
bearing the same name

but art is not the rarest
not by far, from a child of seven
paints a lively sailboat
standing on top of a green
wave and you feel
the wind around it
lifting it and us

all the way up to the Demiurge
kneading universes for his pleasure
according to those other artists
who wrote that role for Him to play

maker of a universe
that uses me in it
to make Him

I am saying the sun is small today
a beast sometimes not to be seen,
the wet wind coming from south and west
over the ocean to deposit here
skin wet from its distillate
my rough lips soaked with what it said

with where it's been. Running
water purifies itself
in a hundred feet he said
or was it yards, my father,
soundings in feet
or is it fathoms, am I deep
enough for you
or like the sun just a muscle

a scandal in the sky?

26 June 2000
Cuttyhunk

Be the wind. No one
on the telephone.
Would you ever
buy an island advertised?

Are you a hawk? Gull,
serenity of greed, music
of the lover air
unvexed by instruments.

Doha. Supreme one,
Be aware of my transgressions
so the shame of I am
leaves a bad taste in my mouth.

26 June 2000
Cuttyhunk

Pentecost
before its time
or is it now
after all

a glow of grace
and what
do these marks
mean, how

grace™, god™, ghost™
holy or not, inspire™ us?
Something in the air
will always mean us

if we let it.
It comes down
and scorches
with heaven's sulfur

our doubt and certainties together.

26 June 2000
Cuttyhunk

Sedimentary. Then egret,
then sea poppy. Then cormorant.
I live between the names of things
as old Augustine bitched
that we are born between the shit and piss,

rock is as hard as it is
because all the Time
has been squeezed out of it

time is our juice,
it is time on which
men and animals survive,
time is the fuel,
the lordly catalyst
for all these famous
oxygen exchanges

the longer you live the more time you lose
Napoleon's adulterous prick now a scrap of tough leather

and the fish that hurried this ocean once are
stones beside the living mineral of the sea.

26 June 2000
Cuttyhunk

LO



Nothing.
Not nothingness. Not no thing.
Not void not futility
not absence and not presence
not finite and not immortal,
not anything, not a thing
erased from its place, not place
not reft of place,

nothing. ∞

Infinity lying in the lap of time.

26 June 2000
Cuttyhunk

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