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Have I come so far to look at the sun?
There will be teachers of this in the evening
the commentators who withstand
the plain sense of the offending passages
and trope the helices instead with gaudy blemishes
of analysis, whirlpools of theory
sucking wisdom down the sink. The gurgling
clockwise of our lost hope. Bandanna
over the eyes. Spearmint reveille though,
wake up to ordinary mind, the single permanent,
the blue permission. The sky. No journey
is too far for that.

24 August 1993
Cuttyhunk
SELF

An island trying to secede from the sea.

24.8.93 Cuttyhunk
The ambivalent is still waiting for me.
A port in any call, a gale
waiting for the coast of France—

I have seen you many times but never enough
though always satisfying — best of countries!

to be the shape of the weather
or to be small. That's where it is possible.

Or here a tree and there a mackerel sky
over the channel. Rumor ruins islands.

The Japanese are on their way
out of the hazy sun at eight o’clock

our fears zero in on me, the quiet
is the only value, hush here and everywhere,

that's all a place can offer, the silence
of hearing yourself think,

the excitement of meeting yourself
and listening at last to what you have to say.

24 August 1993, Cuttyhunk
The presences are near but never here, the absences are never far. We have come to the ocean that washes the definitions, first clean and then away. Antigone sleeps her arms tight curled around her sense of being right. Virtue is something I’m finding it harder and harder to understand maybe there is a cynic or a sinner in me now that blurs the honest face of virtue where she sleeps, confident in piety while buzzards pluck the newly dead. Civility is all, I think to benefit the living and forgive the dead. What else is our freedom for but conquering the minds habitual patterns. The dispositions. And she who is always right and always able to score a moral point over the mere ordinary people who have to work hard to make it all the way to supper, she sleeps serene in bitterness, glad in the embrace of will, her only lover.

24 August 1993
Cuttyhunk
Feast of S.Bart.
THE PLEASURE

Redbird, the angry spirit holding the flag stretched wide in the summerwind
so that small Italian planes
skim down to meet their ensigns over the narrow channel
not much more impressive than a flock of swifts
zipping up from the turtle pond, crazy the way they do,
suddenly and unaccountably hungry for the sky.
Like those, these for the earth, the snake-skinny
isthmus out between the waves that do not read,
do not remember, do not even care, but always come back.

24 August 1993, Cuttyhunk
RAIN IN A YEAR OF DROUGHT

Like a miracle
the sound of rain

I couldn’t believe it, the delicate
tinkling of bones,
toes, sparrows inside clouds
or how to score it,

the release, the at last,
the soft, the down spiring
minarets of praise, the pale
honesty, all relevant,

falls to on a cool breeze
wake me over and over.

25 August 1993, Cuttyhunk
Imagine anything easier, a falcon hunting, a little snake in wet grass, even a wind looking for a rock. We are lodged in connectedness. If *free* meant a thing, it would be not to be.

25 August 1993, Cuttyhunk
FOR HER

Stickish vines from the round stones of the chimney
tap the wet windowscreen
the deadpan lunacies of Dickinson
make the world better
a pair of jeans on the washline walking in wind

25 August 1993

Cuttyhunk
THE CLASSICS

You never know
how long forever will last
it may be like milk
sour in its clean cool glass

it may be arguments
about the Antigone
still worth fighting about
after two thousand years

a story (is it any story)
is a permanent grit.

25 August 1993, Cuttyhunk
JENNY

I still don't think she was beautiful—
remember what I told you when we walked
the low road and the high meadow
up to our ankles in the spring,
it was the light of intelligence made her
noticeable, not intellect, not beauty.
Quick to take advantage, generous
with her body, quick to evanesce—
no wonder it worked. And you
with your pale fleshly doubt, with dark
expectations and big eyes, believed me
no further than you trusted me, zero of a man,
my lies like stickleburrs, my piggy truths.

25 August 1993, Cuttyhunk
All these hysterics take the form of a quiet dog waiting at the door. A bite in rain. Walk to the rocks where the tide is coming in—an absolute measure like a cubit or an autumn or an owl. I walk inside a body not my own.

25 August 1993, Cuttyhunk
ADVERTENCIES

Eccles cakes at the island bakery
as if distance never was.
All islands are the same,
a gull comes home.
A spiral whisker caught in a swift's nest,
a child cries loud enough
for all the neighborhood to relax.
It's OK now, we can be loud,
it's morning, that funny thing is light,
we are alive. Coffee and so forth.

25 August 1993
Cuttyhunk
ON BARGES BEACH

I’m sitting on warm sand
the waves can reach my toes
if I don’t move soon
I’ll be caught by the tide.

If you’re caught by the tide
you’ll be late to tea,
late for the wind,
the moon will whirl you
into the violet sky
and the waves will keep repeating
your name like a drunken friend
trying to find you in the dark.

Up to your shanks in water
you see a far sail, a white
isosceles you have to solve
the world is full of fatal mathematics.
Don’t turn on the light
your feet are still there
but they’re not yours.
They belong to the sea.

25 August 1993
Cuttyhunk
A PIECE OF MORNING

To wake before the sea breeze 
when everything’s still still 
only the sea breathing 
to be heard, soft scour 
on sand beach 
then a deeper flurry 
among rocks, and a bird 
just one 
malarking on a rose of sharon.

Will I understand the day 
when it comes 
all this sun glare on the sea 
all mine, the population curve 
erased, a sudden spike, it’s me, 
an identity proposed 
by false analogy with a bird 

a bird by hunting and a wave 
mauve flowers and a game 

a gull lost in the glare.

26 August 1993, Cuttyhunk
CALLING CARD

Name me, I cerebrate.
Unusual advantages my eyes
a breeze be warm
a breathing out

from name the mouth and nostrils who
is leaning out into the air of the day
days too full of certainties
bound to the old soft wheel
fragrance of an unknown woman a tree at night.

26 August 1993
Cuttyhunk
MR NUNEZ

To make believe the breeze
and then it’s here
as if the world could read,
some dew on the fisherman’s car.

26 August 1993
Cuttyhunk
Up sun to these events a family stirs
First the dogs of it then the clogs of them
Shuffle on deck and the sun sneaks through their clothes
— a body is only a dream of opacity —
Then the cups get into play and all
The ancient planetary symbolism begins, shadow swords,
Hair on fire with sundisk, deep-breathing the news.

26 August 1993
Cuttyhunk
WINDS

Agitated, like a forest by the very wind that doesn't move here now, the fur of the monster reminds the audience that their own passions have to be set aside if only to watch the story to the end. Art interrupts action again. Viburnum, first planted on the island in the 17th Century, happens to blossom now. Movies take a long time to end. We wait in darkness eating salty things, holding hands. It is a kind of life, this observation, dull as salads but a man's whole life, we guess, is just one mood. Followed somewhere by another.

26 August 1993
Cuttyhunk
MAÑANA

Mañana comes
hot as a string
weedcutter
going crazy
in the sun haze

the red & white
pea tuniers
give a Polish look
to windowbox

if I remember
aright a zax is
a slate-cutter's tool
build me blue

my Onteora!
walk me in shadow
under the sea
my sole cloud.

Despondency
of words!
Just grass
& passing.

27 August 1993, Cuttyhunk
TO EXAMINE IT

as if by a mollusk or a sparrow
so many words
leaning on the crutch of time
to help them heal

and no diseases, actually
no one is sick
but those from whom the word
has passed into silence

then they get to hear
what is not language
and understand it all too well

the miracle of grief.

27 August 1993, Cuttyhunk