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FROM THIS NEW ÆGYPT

for Charlotte

The cartouches of lesser majesty
embedded in sandstone
celebrate a *recuerdo*,

an old tune
not quite reheard inside but
the found rhythm of its lost melody
organizes the thing you want to say.

The thing you want to say.

A lost song hears you
in me.

This is how we wash our hair
wear our clothes, wish on stars
fall down stairs, this snow
unfallen tumbles us
and makes no sense, narration
makes no sense.

Now when Jetsun Milarepa had come to the Vajra Snug Dale of
the Pale Grey Overhanging Rock,
a yogi disappointed in long practice
bespoke a remedy.

Mila answered,
*Be done with thinking. Then be done*
*with thinking you’re done with thinking.*
*Both and neither, and be kind.*
I groaned, and woke to love you
morning before pale sunlight, cool.
What is that queen's name I read
graven in the stonework of my sleep?

shar.lho

Arising
in the south east,
arising.
    Spell the name with a bee and a
dark red filet around the bronze of her hair.

Arising. The thought
that rises
is enough, the thought
selflessly adequate.

15 May 1992
The solution
is to borrow
liquid from the air
and salt from light

*Sal luminis*
*pulv. dr.ii

until you breathe again.

Sparrows turn into herring gulls.
The old white sow rolls over in her sleep.

This is Roman history, this is dread.
Actium and all that tower full of dying—

the sea never meant that,
the sea meant
a surface agitation of what is permanently still

—dead elm leaves scour the yellow Tiber
slow and always turning to the light.

16 May 1992
AT LAST THE ISLAND

for Charlotte

How to be closer to you than this sea.

By far pillboxes we watch three deer
far off wade the shallows
that shelter the pond from the ocean.

The war never came. Islands
are made for prayer, I think,
or I think this because I see your face
in so many sunsets watching calm
the last lovely convulsions of apparenncy

until there is only mind. The night.

[16 May 1992]

I dreamed of a deer older than any
grey mousy skin of them and a complicated
puffin-bill of a muzzle they grazed
down the baybery slopes to the sea and they talked

One wakes with the impression of a marriage.
The unity has found its way inside as one slept
and the dawn — that wide belt of light
shimmering over Nashawena and the Vineyard

finds us. Us. We are found in each other
where we slept an island. Three deer play on the lawn
and pelt heavy-footed up past the porch
I guess made uneasy by the little old dog

who waddles up the street to look for friends.
And the deer of the dream, strict profiled
against a sort of Mayan sea predicts:
You come here to keep the log, Daymaker.

(For the day is one more great ship that knows to go.)

Free of hope and fear how glad would be.
Still stay, on the kind ley
by which the Dragon moves,
kin-kind, to summer with us again,

\textit{grían}, Lady Sun.
Know the letters (gold, bronze-beset,
blur of Bourgogne silk filleted,
face of a lion)

\hfill spell her name.

The sun is sleeping in the sky
so serene the morning light.

Sea-spangle, past the Neck,
engulfing it.

\hfill And later, by starlings,
love in making is making love

though the also
we woke to each
between the sheets
this morning
is the core of it,

sweet body fledged by sleep flies into day
the heavy sweet sleep-breath in your mouth

asleep or awake
no one moves like you

(is not description)   sun squall
               the channel.

The nerves of sea
stretched across the small body of the earth

—which we have seen intact
               the whole blessed blue ball of it
in Dharmakaya view
from Gid Fisher's seaplane over Penikese
passing the world on our starboard wingtip
on our way to the Rose Apple Tree Universe's
central intelligential shrine,

the Invisible Mountain
whose slopes are the sea.

2.

The waves vee in along a certain
break in the blue a red-brown
commotion. Reef. Preposterous
alliance of sky and sea
to rob me of resistance.
It is all about entering, and I want.
So many rabbits. Think about this weather, island without major sports, a curt channel over to Nashawena where the sheep are. They still are, you tell me, and go to look for the binoculars which never are. The pen dreams of another sort of ink, we read the words perverse photographers teach our eyes to descry written in the skin of water.

Desire

is the earliest ocean

deer move on the lawn,
bunnies are bold. The huge features of this geology,

the glacier that left this island here also left my home.

The moraine, the manor
to which we are born,
fiefdom of stone.

Cosmographers

try to remember earlier incarnations on the back stairs of distant suns. Silk in all this westering.

Sea woven

off the west end, near Gosnold’s monument where cormorants stand face into the wind enduring an unimaginable information.

You tell me everything. How you lay down when the house was empty, how the sun made you orange and the light opened the door and took this old photograph kept with pencils and envelopes in the little drawer.

[17 May 1992]
3.

The sea resumes our conversation—
all night it held remembered
the salient issues of our disagreement
and summarized them now as I look out the door:

You will die. But not before you've lived
a life richer than gods live. And everything you do
means, and bears consequence for lath or well.
But for all this beauty it is a sorry place
and my own ever-changing mirror of one
single simple substance is the truth of it.

This is what the waves say while I stare
across the Vineyard Sound towards Gayhead
where billionaires begin to rouse from weekend sleep
and wince before their own bright mirrors
and the lighthouse on the cliff sends out
forever a ray of white, pause, a ray of red.

4.

I thought I had some more to say—
it must have been the coffee
since caffeine makes a spider weave jagged webs
impatient and ineffective,
a stupid mesh
to catch meanings in,
such arrant haste
to fabulate,
I'm trying to say speak.
It's not a thoughtful dumpster to sort
clear glass from green glass in,
it is a sentence with a jive to live,
a strive to still, a rat to nestle and a barn
to fill with amber corn,

   it is a neck
to kiss a torc on of bold old gold,
it is a love to bring you and an amethyst,
my sober bride who's ecstasy.

They get up early here. Mr Wilder's yellow jeep
just skimmed along the shore and turned uphill
going home. A big man with vague movements.
A hoop of straw upon a neighbor's house.
It's like a monastery with no god,
an island is, the enforced coaction —
we know too much about the world.

Good roofs and shabby walls — a happy breed.
We saw deer playing in the surf. Recycle
the least attention into the miracle of speech
always something left to be said, or rises
shar.lho in the southeast, across the lawn,
lapeluche, the plush, where the deer came
tripling their shallow wits in kindly play.
Here I am king. Overcast but east is red.
Lawn mower, and a child in winter coat, its maybe
mother swings downhill with a cigarette.
Every daylight is a street. And not just speech,

there are as many miracles
as suckers like me to attend them.
No wonder there is so much to say.

In the plane the only
movement's up and down,
an old car it's like
jouncing on a rocky road
like the one uncoils
out to Gosnold Pond
along your cliffs.
No sense of forward
motion; the world below
hops backwards by.

5.

1. Why is the sea *always* arriving at the shore?

2. Where does it come from that it goes all ways out and all ways comes in?

3. Maybe Shakespeare is right; maybe this is the island.

4. No matter how close the other islands may be (Nashawena, Penikese), there's no way to reach them. No boat.

5. Boats are ordinary magic, like Giambattista della Porta's. Boats are craft and skill, mere genius.

6. Islands are miracles.

7. They transcend.

8. And at night all coasts are equally far.

9. The ship was wrecked on Barges Beach—indeed, its bones jostle with the hollow barges still.
10. And my attendant Spirit led them me, up amidst Bay Berrie Bushes along the track carved in the mud cliffs to Gosnold's Pond.

11. Let not thy World be a Screed of Impermissions.

12. Overland, past the din of the '38 Hurricano, to the settlement of refugees in squats above the Sow and her Pigs.

13. Cormorants of two species guard the coast, erect on rocks.

14. She sought and found small perfect shells, or almost so, to speak her island to me in the sweet French of given things. And then in Spanish, ¡Mira! she cried, and gave me three tiny round shells like sardonyxes, the size and shape of kernels of Indian corn.

15. For what is imaginable is to say, and what is imagined is so.

16. Their wings half unfurled dry in the sea breeze they face.

17. On this soft cliff you sat.

18. South is the wide sea. You will find this direction close inside my play.


20. I told you this before, with music and a woollen shirt, a drunken monster on a waterbed and drink you low into a passion stunted like a winter'd cedar blest by wind. Wound me! the island said.
21. People who live on islands talk a lot. This drama is my ease, forgive out loud. Gossip forgives the silences.

22. A cold fog hides the Vineyard shore.

23. Like a fort or a castle, house on Canapitsit Channel.

24. Act V, Scene 2. The permissions:

   engulf you
   like the wave.
   The woman is your wife.
   The gold
   is dormancy,
   frigates bring it.
   auks murres and puffins, a glow
   coming over the Elizabeths. I designed
   this absent Forest for my Queene.

   Having no right (example) to a ship
   let alone one falmouth'd out in canvas
   gaudy on the Lord's day sailing past the harbor mole,
   the rigging alone
   in these old pictures
   worth a king's watchmaker,
   a broom to beat carpets,
   a May wind on the islands.

   Take your mask off, Love,
   and see the faults of earth
   transformed in green,

   travertine the cut of sea,
   the smooth resemblance,
   all our dynasties.
The sea keeps coming.
And tonight we saw
a dome of crimson light

effused around the focus:
sunset. Light
going down into America and we
the least of islands
doing so much love,

the work of time, the amplitudes.
In all my life I never saw such a dome or Grail of light,
it held the chest of the continent wide
open so we saw the heart,

the paradise.
But the lines in rigging
predicted it,
their glad foibles
to snare the captious wind!

[18 May 1992]

6.

Wake in sun glare and strong wind, 630, the sun
over Nashawena,
but in the other manuscript Gosnold is
writing
to Will about "Nar Lo the Teep. a common Oath & likely God of
these Islanders, wherein the first Element pretendeth to say
Power, and the laste as if to say the Deep, like to our Neptunus
but less pleasant. No songs are sung to this Divinitie."

Island people & an island god.
No wonder. The fishermen in yellow slicker suits
keep odd hours in their yellow red jeep, I'm looking at it and I get the color wrong,
the names we live in,
the drafty words.
House shakes in wind.
The master of this house calls himself Marvin Mandell,
a transparent guise for Marvel in Mind—
may he prosper!
His daughter fledged with honey hair
hath sav'd my Life from th'inconstant Wave.

Who can I be in the story,
sir, please!
I'll be the tent the lovers
sheltered from mosquitoes in,
I'll be the ruined shepherd's cot
under the ruined light house,
sound floor and the sky falls through the roof,
o I'll be the Portuguese and the German girl,
the pressure-treated lumber new deck,
some orange life-vests on the wall.
And even now in wave I'll be the cormorants.

So many rabbits and no raptors.
A word or two should be enough to contradict
(house shakes in wind)
the words are darker on the bottom
where they rest on earth,
the draw of tide
knows us here
(we'll be waiting for the ferry)
(time to leave the Island)
(the can of chunky beef soup leave behind?
the peanut butter?)
A day is all day long,
my brusque tragedians,
don't fob us off
with ornamental outcomes
as if a spurt of blood meant anything,

his poor blind eyes.
The pain of life is every minute of it
and every minute of it empty as the sea

(just like the sea, bearing no harvest,
ατρυγετη,
nothing but the next wave.

On the neighbor island they raise their sheep. "A couple times of the Year, at Tedding & at Yeaning & at Wool, they send their twice-keel'd Canoas over to see to the needments of the Shepherds, & to fetch back such Woole or Cheese or Flesh as pleases them best. Moastly they eat Fish."

Fierce disproportion of their breath
luminous yesterday
on the hidden pond
on our way to Church's Beach
a duck at evening.

7.

I shave looking over at Nashawena
black beyond the sun glare
empty island of my mind—

fingers finding my cheeks, what
will I be thinking in that
universe ten seconds from now
writing this down?

And then?

By now I know the people who walk up and down the street. The hill. Suchness of this People who are proud and unaccommodating, like Grieks or Portugueze. The Mistris of one comes down regularly, her small Leggs long in black Leggings & a Cloak of Colours I cannot telle from heere as of the Skins of Birds. Sometimes she drinketh from a Cigarro held in her lefte Hand or right indifferently, blue Smoak in blue Air! And a meagre Man in a Singlet and a littil Cap, belike a Seruaunt or an Artizan.

Wherever you look the sea is waiting. Gosnold's anxiety.

The tower, faux-windowed,
built of stone 1893.

On an eyot unreachable, though I wanted to borrow use of a dory tied up by the shore here. "No one borrows on this island," you said, and I left the forty foot gulf uncrossed. Smell of shellfish, we stood on a hill of oystershells, shaggy dirty white rough, good footing.

Every minute the sea is writing.

Come up through the shimmer, Naiadës, and you white-horsed adjutants of a dark power knee-deep in destiny,

I taste the salt on your shins, daughters of dark need, Nodens, the Core.

Blameless, the sky we cloud.
8.

Some other number waits for us,
Allan Wilder's yellow car, Low's greedy maisonnettes.
I am a red truck.
In consternation we are round beset
    as by the Musick menaced.
Now a blackbird stands on the air
    at evens with the seawind
and now a carpenter walks down the hill—
    is not this a wonder Island?

And the secret place where we found fiddleheads
    and the secret places where you kept
watch one whole night on the haunted house
    and the grassy secret place where you slept
in the condign Eastering sepulchers of hidden earth
    to wake into your risen Qualities,
admirable Person of this Island!

And what are those
trees we saw over Church's Beach
so twisted, do the apples of unreason grow there
to pluck and eat in frenzy of some Messidor
among neo-pagan riff-raff revelling?
And from the Cliffs saw Puffins summering
far south of their natural Waters.
    And a Duck.

They come soon, sailing in money on a greenback sea
and we're the last Reds left,
to preach of justice in the lap of lust
and stir them both to liberty. Self-liberated,
    the thought transpires.
Then the air. And the duck takes off
we thought had been a Barnakel or Canker on that Rock it was
a Goose and flustered into the clear Skie with a great Cry that
lingered down the Wind

the fleet
of puffins hurrying low,
parrot-billed, penguin-habited, quick
a yard above the sea flew north.

What benefit an island
if it all is lingering?

19 May 1992
Cutthyhunk Island
THE LIFE OF

Thayer Street the cheeks the chic
all these meek foregrounders of an attitude
seem far from an ocean as you can get but
they are waves. The union
of appearance with desire
forges hell
of what had been that peaceful tong-pa-nyi,
an openness without contrivance.
Without reaction. Call it that:
kleshas are reactions,
reactionary patterns. Saxophone.
Habitual patterns breed reactions.
Saxophone outside, a busker loud in shade.
Je déteste ça. And a Haydn trumpet concerto within,
the Higher Muzak, not much better. Et ça.
The waves of how I feel. Dark Costa Rican coffee,
petit pain. At Aches-less-Pains in the Savoie o I remember
Joyce found his way by sound,
the sound of the look of the words,
an Irish blindman in the dark.
Musculature of the words. Tattoo the street,
the Bodie of this Island modified by flagrant arrow.
The gentle sky. And Gosnold, what did he
understand of what he found
if we barely understand the puffins off the cliff?

The trumpeter. The bike messenger with a message in his teeth
clutched the way his fingers do the handlebars,
Yellow Cab, against the outrage traffic, backpack, high sun,
the Haydn finds it way to an end — during the coda's
pause the sax
drifts in and loopydoops
its aimless curlicue —
two women with small heads walk by,
sisters belike—
and the orchestra finesses.
Mr Skateboard takes his shirt off in the street
pulls it inside out and puts it back on
all in the intersection, because it is
the summer season tattoos appear,
the deep unreliability of time
is never more obvious. Smile at the academy,
the world is rife with passage.

Let the lunch
be French,
let the rissoles
confuse the meek pilaus of the Seine, let the savory
immemorable dinners of the English
shoo us into the dim caress where no cab waits
and we are union'd and there is no war.
1914 Tunnel just for busses
dug under College Hill, a common dare
for early settlers, to race their T-Birds through
with the Tubal-Cain of AM blaring down the tunnel.
Forgive me for my mouldering intelligence
for I have looked more than I have studied
and wanted more than I looked.
Wherefore the British Princess for whom the Island's called
came naked to me one sennight in springtime
all summer-naked under her white clothes
I clutched you to me
all this morning as we were waking,
I was pretending we were just playing, I needed you,
I need you, you are the atmosphere my body needs
to breathe its meaning in an inland world.
You wife, you private ocean.

And when I stop reacting can I act?
What I hate is the act of hating.
"he is the President of regulation," gay as sparrows,
there is no fire in all this smoke,
no heat in all this fire,
no light in all this heat.

Leading 200 Hopi this way through Mongolia—
meet the decor halfway, wriggle your hips
the way you woke me,
the way you are today.

They change their uniforms. They take off Tantaquidgeon's
feathers, they put on scarlet coats. They take these off and put
on blue. They tattoo. They are Amerimen, they spring.
Racket of baritonal excess
down by the island's only backboard,
feints and lunges of a simple war,
a hoop.

Crushed oysters in their shells,
"dear God the tides."
Bless the changes, for they let us go.
And: Bless the changes ere they let us go.

On the Breakage of our Craft two Sorts of Lichen appear to
flourish. The one is yellow as an Egg's Yelk, or as Gamboge from
the Indies, and it is not hard to find. The other is as common,
yet hard to espy. Black or chesnut-shell in Colour, it is small. It
hides as if a Part of the Wood itself he groweth on.

People hurry down the street
fleeing from the barnyard
of all their resemblances.

They are exceeding harde, and
yeild not to my Fingernail,

whereas it is fun
to be no one.

20 May 1992
Providence

=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=

for Charlotte

Then call it this day
it is the sun
broken over the valley
and it is summer now.
The cars are preening
under the new maples,
the U-Hauls propose
fabulous destinations
to uneasy graduates.
The drink is ready.
*Trink, mein Faust,*
the apparition
is ready for you
trapped behind the useless stove,
the chapel wall
is disguised with roses.
The cross means you.
All of your urgency
waits for this hour:
last night you were sick,
this morning well.
The coffee consoles you,
your wife
is a species of splendor
you rise early each day
to understand—
you watch her as she sleeps.
Does she know you study
her sleeping body as it stirs
an hour or two later
luscniously to light?
You're not sure what she knows
but think it's everything.
You have outlived another science.
They wait for you tomorrow
in their gowns, professing
and receiving and yawning
like wasps in sunshine
while the famous people bleat
kindly twaddle from the rostrum.
How can it be that underneath
your flapping black robe
you wear an ordinary human body
full of hope and healing,
and that at home the woman
waits in the heart of her work
that even now you struggle to comprehend? How grateful you are to the crows for their raw blasphemies above the civil lawn, for the shadows for falling and teaching us to fall. We do not belong to these ceremonies, we are candles in the sun and intellect is waiting for the dark.

22 May 1992