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HOROLOGY

SAMPLER

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*Vouchsafe, sweet shipwrecks,
weeks of gentle evenings
in the moments while we drown.*

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Prologue

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Imagine an azimuth in an imagined way. Imagine a line
and let it be bent, a silverstring kink in a showman's
rope strung from two petals of a compass rose.

Call the line a cipher. It slants. It slants fugato and fails.
Call its direction a center on loan from peripheries and
say it escapes itself up a penknife altitude to parallax.

Between is and was is a flicker: the smaller of two suns a
sextant feeds to a miniature sea. You say meridians.
Let's make a list of illusions. That's one.

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I say meander and say the tropics are vagaries that tilt
out of true. The ecliptic, a carafe's hip a half second of
arc absails, and only the equator is real.

Look for longitude in the length of a wave but look for
length in nothing. I say I've heard it said that it rides
leviathan chines and steers by parallels of broken hulls.

Of latitude let's speak crosswise of ink on ink, edges and
pages from portolan charts. Imagine a ship sails over
ellipses and an ellipse undoes an edge with little ado.

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Say from the ship circumference is faience, *sine qua* frit
and *non* save blue. Say what heading you will for the
ship, but I say headwinds and permanent red.

Cerise by west by weathercraft. A sounding bell cedes to
fathoms and halves. Call 'by the board' and count deep
six a half a dial's worth of time. Next, say dials are days.

Then number hours their cantons. Let minutes chamfer
the hours that minutes misfit. Secondhand tangents lever
the ship in circles. It finds its way by a watch.

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There are tables to chart courses by Jupiter's moons.
Hash marks, plumbago, and hoaxes! The promise of
moons is misconception.

Some sailors count miles by cannon shot. Some starve
ravens and set them free for land. Others ask their routes
of oracles who never know oceans for staring at stars.

Would you follow the cries of the Lorelei...? Castaway
pleas and the shriek of sad epistles leaked from chopines
come to pieces on far away cliffs.

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The colures may crisscross the poles. But X marks the
anonym, a hapax for the shanty man, a spot among
flotsam and the rocks that caused the wreck.

North or South, East or West, each has its share of
epithets. And no matter. Call them what you will. I call
them four fairweather airts not fair in any weather.

I've heard of islands where fishermen lie prone in pitch
paper canoes, commune with currents by touch, and
direction is a prose tattoo down a helmsman's back.

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And I've heard of batik shadows on sailcloth that come
alive wayanging where the wax gives way to point the
wayward home. But say me no lessons of the lost at sea.

Of their improvised prayers, of their lodestone agalma
and their legerdemain. How many fata morganas mistaken
for Maida? How many hulks trawled hard aground?

Apparitions founder. And travelers, they founder after
apparitions all the same. Suppose a vision only
masquerades as real, or that it forgets to be untrue.

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That visions move as the counterworld without moves,
too. And time begins in motion. That the yaw in a squall
admits what memory allots the squall to admit.

And no more. Gather your remainders and buoy the
lagan. Overboard, both. Wish them liquid halidoms,
haint shades of sloe and stygian blacks.

Up backwash, up brine! Fetch a spare breath from a
wineskin lung and know that here the needful things
you keep will haunt you.

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Gitane, the breakers that bewry a windup ship.
Imagine whirlwinds flying witches' kites louver its sails.
Think quiver is the answer they give and stow away.

A rhumb line of thunderheads. Aubergine pennons of
vapor with a cutthroat edge approach the moments just
after after. A black jasper gale. *Exeunt omnes*. To the hatches.

Riffle your thoughts and think whipcord. The rigging
revelles a skeleton crew. Look, spyglass obols fixed to
their eyes. Sternway, sternway the naufrages. . plunge on.

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