

Unfinished Animal

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Between the Demon and the Star
marking time
expecting the worst
watching for a miracle

The tide is out
the inlet almost motionless beneath
the early fog

gray light gray water

I walk beside the torpid morning surf
wrapped in rain
cloud-shrouded

The horns of unseen ships
bellow across from Georgia Strait.
Now and again, shadows of seabirds
sail wing-spread
through the veiling mist
come and vanish
like sudden prophecies

I have it on good
authority
that west of this
cloud-bound coast
there are islands
beyond the islands

My thoughts—as always—broil with
reports of the daily terror.
I pay too much attention to the
latest news,
let the seasons of eternity slip
by and by

Yes, I know
the fierce convictions that tear
 the Earth.
are impassioned ignorance, bubbles
 of angry ego.
But the suffering of people is real
the victims are real, one by one by one

I worry for my daughter, little girl
 lost
in the forests of war
I cannot shake my mind free ...

cannot mediate my way
around the cries of children
my head is always busy with ...

I wish I could feed my mind
to these wheeling gulls, let them
 carry it
across the gray waves, find light
 and peace
on the far side of this cloud

Let my attention grow still and
 perfect
in the still and perfect light
a point of concentrated flame

a star

This morning
from where I stand

I can hardly see the islands
nearest shore

But let me tell you
what I've heard
about the islands

If I could only
 tell you
of the islands

O, islands
islands

Vancouver, 1975