

5-2010

## mayC2010

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## A METHOD FOR EVERYTHING

And blue exceptions  
teach humankind  
evil ways of being  
outside ourselves  
in language lost—

two deer  
standing by an empty road  
no need to cross

the trees beyond  
are of no different breed  
but their shadows beckon

we are waiting for something  
beyond us, a danger,  
a gospel, a headlight  
far up the road.

4 May 2010

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You and me staggered by desire  
athwart the common space

a room is a chemical retort  
condensing common space

I am bothered by everything you say  
I want to be you

I want to be you making love to yourself  
there is no room in this world for someone like me.

4 May 2010

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Less difficult might be a red coat  
worn thirty years ago by a dead woman

it is painful enough but birds still fly.  
Song of the station but no train.

The rails cold in moonlight,  
people crouch there, considering.

Of course you go to church  
in every town when you are traveling

She is your Mass just hope she lets you in.

4 May 2010

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There are no proper names  
in this city. All the pain  
is in the vowels, absurdity  
of being gone. All  
that breath lost into  
one dumb sound, Mute.  
At least French death  
politely fades away.

4 May 2010

## FRAMED LEAF

*for Gracie Leavitt*

A two lip leaf! How I want to take it in my own lips like a child whistling on a blade of grass (we are infants, Whitmans, wobblies). But then there would be four lips, and who has ever seen a Fourlip Tree?

Or to kiss the leaf the way one kisses the relic of a saint, Saint Liriodendron the Tulip Bearer, the tree that stands closest to heaven of all the trees in our forest. But the relic is safe from my caress, immured in glass will keep it snug forever.

So the eyes alone must worship, and do the work of reverence for the whole body, the way it is when we, walking through the streets or on the beaches of foreign cities, observe the appealing bodies of strangers, and do them honor only with our glance. One gaze says all, as the harsh critics explain.

But then the harsher scientist looks at me askance and asks (askance must mean askingly) "What makes you sure that this small leaf, all mulberry and douce, is a leaf from that immense kind of tree you mention? Why not mulberry, the tree with three different kinds of leaves, Holy Trinity, but all one tree? It grew in your mother's garden. But now I see I've made you cry..."

For one does cry, thinking of the lost, lost parents, lost lovers, lost opportunities to touch the cool skin of not so strange a stranger, losses, little losses, less and less until one stops crying, seeing around oneself a world of losing and finding and I'm so sorry and come again. I look at my leaf and know it is our leaf, our walk from nowhere to nowhere by way of everywhere and a

mottled leaf lifted, was it by you or was it by me, that became ours. We stopped  
crying long ago, thankful for all that is ours.

4 May 2010

## LILIES OF PERU

Dumb folding policy  
or founding or polity  
the grass needs mowing  
but who says so?

broken letters  
fell out of the mail  
women hover near the  
banister alstromeria

on the gateleg table  
little sandwiches  
salmon paste watercress  
to such a hostess

these flowers are like  
a bite on the lips  
the wrist but now  
the girls are sitting

up and down the stairs  
the night is late  
the gate needs going  
smokers on the terrace



but one rude jade  
inside her smoke  
following room to room  
her restless quest

why do we come  
at last and so often  
to such places and  
why are flowers?

5 May 2010

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Too music to begin.  
Maybe nervous  
will soothe me,  
calm me into frenzy  
where a little quiet  
sense gets made.

5.V.10

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The falsities  
unspeak the world  
the vocabulary  
has to contract  
to the shortest  
densest words  
until at last  
it says the one thing  
language means.

5 May 2010

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Not an hour's worth of going gone  
and the princess still slept on her throne

the small one birds lifted through the air  
thousands of sparrows thousands whirring

yet never woke her the Imam said  
and we listened joyous that there'd be a second heaven

one unbooked and undescribed. a lunar brightness  
we could play all night in with our guesses

all the ways we'll try to make her wake  
and come down to us from her bothered chair.

5 May 2010

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Lost in something found.  
The cars snarl by at 80.  
There is truth in little things  
alongside the road, a live  
bird worrying a dead one.  
Prayer really does work,  
wind comes up, sandstorms  
cover the Gobi. Underneath  
everything there is a city.  
It maps us from below,  
streets us, houses us, and we  
belong to its archaic design.  
The country came later.  
Eden was a city, the apple  
was the sight of the blue sky.  
Eve was the sun. Adam  
struggles towards her still.

5 May 2010

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Know where the breaks are  
in the tunnel the light comes in  
under the Vosges but right here  
a starling on the windowsill  
looks in. I worry about all signs.  
Every token is ambiguous.

6 May 2010

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And then pull away  
from what is need, or known,  
an apple,  
          one, I dislike the taste of it,

or not the taste so much as the sensation  
of so mild a taste beneath the barricade  
of that pungent skin, pierced,  
into so subtle a yielding, one bite  
and everything is known

                                  whereas the pear  
—another malid— lets down  
into a deeper odyssey of taste  
almost without core,

                                  such a fruit,  
so sweet, eat all of it almost,  
is a Mass said for the poor,  
leper at his little window,  
we squint also in at truth.

Over in the corner the famous  
apple now rolls along the floor  
gathering dust where it was bitten,  
ill-eaten by the sinner even,

who dropped it after one nibble,  
alas to taste a thing  
destroys it, to know a thing  
wounds some part of the world—  
but what if nobody listened,  
would the sin still cry out,  
and who would hear it in the empty chapel?

6 May 2010



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A bird perches often on her windowsill,  
pecks once with its yellow  
beak against the glass: inside  
the room that sound seems louder,  
a person knocking on a door.  
The woman looks up and sees  
and knows it is her own bird  
somehow, the one that comes,  
so often, to her window. Why.  
To greet her. Know her. Inspect  
her. Protect her. In the soft  
twilight she begins to get ready  
for bed. One by one her clothes  
come off, she is slow and serious,  
she folds them neatly, each one  
where it should go in the small room.  
Now she is naked and watches  
the bird who watches her. Dips  
his beak saying Yes. Yes you are  
you, we are safe in the world  
again, you and I, each of us  
as we really are. Yes,  
you are certainly you. Now  
she puts her pajamas on,  
still studying the bird. Yes,  
we investigate each other,

we protect each other. How  
can I protect this bird  
she thinks. Now she likes  
to sleep with the window just  
a little bit open, the fresh  
air from dreamland, a sense  
the air carries to her of being  
continuous with everything  
that is not her. Outside.  
The bird. Won't lifting the sash  
scare the bird. But birds  
who know how to go also know  
how to go and come back.  
She is not afraid. She lifts  
the window. The bird  
flies upward, to the right.  
Something has been offered,  
received, understood.  
In bed a few minutes later  
she drifts in peace away  
into the deeper exchanges.

6 May 2010

*ALIA -in memory*

I think she knew the most important thing is how we think about our thinking. The constellation of our whole project of thinking, the light it sheds on the materials for thought that we've gathered. Not many people know how to know this. It is really letting yourself think about your thinking, so you know when you *are* thinking and when you are doing something else, like sleeping, or (as we are always so tiresomely doing) getting ready to be about to be making love. Oh those other people! But other people *are* the chief materials for thought, along with colors and numbers and how each uses the others. All we know of history, for instance, is colored shadow with some numbers flashing in it – years, reigns, miles, casualties—or flashing on the faces and bodies of the people we meet who from time to time unconsciously impersonate the names we have heard about—the Emperor Frederick or the Virgin Mary or my uncle who died in the war before you were born.

I think Alia knew how to think about these things and could *prescind*—tell the colors from the numbers, tell the numbers from the people and keep the people, tell the woman standing in front of her from the Queen of Sheba without losing either. When we met, I knew she knew I was an envoy from Atlantis, as so many of us here are, and I knew that she would never tell. See, I am scattering her thinking here and now, the way a friend of mine scattered his father's ashes from a headland onto the Etruscan Sea. Now we have all the materials for thought, but no one to think them aright. Until we do.

7 May 2010

I

But the star my father gave me  
that counts too,  
a way of drawing it  
so that one line makes five points and comes  
back to itself

as the mind also  
sketches out heaven and earth and the skies  
then comes back to itself  
the point of it all  
and then takes the point away.

What is left is what is so.

2.

He also drew horses,  
liked them, sometimes  
bet on them, never rode,

who would presume  
to ride on a horse?  
We see stars every night

but never go to visit them  
shyly, carrying a white  
box of cake from Ebinger's  
tied snug with baker's string.

Never go empty handed into the dark.  
Where the hungry poets are waiting,  
Tiresias, Pindar, Shakespeare, Rilke,  
bring them sugar to nibble  
and they'll tell you stories by starlight  
till you wake. And you'll never wake.

7 May 2010

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I don't have time to have feelings

I am a happy man.

7.V.10