

5-2004

## mayG2004

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**What is happening in that tree**

that look-alike locust

so paltry-feathered now

as if it hardly even yet had

begun thinking,

                  what is it with things

that seem to look at me,

warning built into weather,

I want to say warning us,

I want to say we

who are wallflowers in the immense ballroom

where all is silk and whirling green

and we try to learn the figures

the dancers follow, so hard because they are so soft,

holy embarrassment we feel before a stranger

someone you have never seen and wonder,

wonder what it will do to your life forever

if you speak to him, how terrible

if it changes everything, terrible

if it makes nothing different.

In this world only the stranger makes a difference.

24 May 2004



**BEL CANTO**

In a bookstore café  
you see  
first what  
book they're  
reading then who's  
reading it a  
woman who looks  
a lot like a  
lot of other women.

24 May 2004  
Lincoln Center

=====

having gone to the city and come back  
and seen everybody and listened and said this and that  
I am an ox. A white ox.  
I am a steamboat whose gambler is kaput,  
in jail, dead, resurrected.  
I am an ox, a large white ox  
with some peonies festooned on my horns.  
I have denied myself to all who might have needed me,  
might have healed me. So I am an angel,  
a tremor in the wrist nerve, tendon, a pale tendon  
running through meat, an ox, I am an ox.  
I doubt Bible chronology.  
I know there will be no Rapture.  
I have a rosary of ruby beads  
a clean handkerchief a room full of people  
talking to me. I am those people  
but I am not the room.  
My edges broke. My boundaries  
are black and blue from wanting you.  
I seem to be the one who says I here  
and not be lying. But nobody who says I  
can tell the truth. The other has become me  
entirely. For instance it's a rainy night with one crescent  
moon deep red low over the Catskills  
setting. I mention this just to remind us both

we are living in the same world, have the same  
ornamental white ormolu clock in the sky  
that sips our juices drop by drop until.  
Only tonight it's blood orange bloody red.  
I hold my balls and swear an oath but I forget the words.  
The oath of an ox is made of grass.

24 May 2004

<late:>

**I can tell you things no one ever told you.**

What difference does it make that they're all lies?

Truth takes time to turn into itself.

And things turn true by listening. Listen to me,

as far apart as we are we live in the same town—

you are the courthouse and the public library,

I'm the all-night diner and that dingy park

behind the middle school where all the love and lies

began, along with that tremor of the skin

that tells you here I am, with the one

I am meant to be, and be, and become.

24 May 2004

## ON THE DAY FIVE MAIZE

Who gave you this corn?

Some lady under the ground.

Did she say her name?

I was too busy eating the corn

maybe her name was corn–

have you ever met her?

Everybody knows somebody who knows her.

Are you looking for her?

Everybody is looking for her all the time,

I keep following the wind

but I'm never sure

which way it's telling me to go,

where the wind is headed

or where it came from,

the house that may be hers.

25 May 2004



=====

**Nobody has the same name anymore**

the oracle is somebody in the street  
talking about nobody, and nobody  
is everybody's shadow and I heard.

Nobody has the same  
names, nobody tells the truth,  
everybody tries to be a flower and a lawyer,  
everybody tries to be the middle of the night.

25 May 2004, Kingston

(And maybe the voice in my head just meant that nobody is Phyllis anymore, or Irving, or Beatrice.)

<late:> =====

**Something went me**

and I was as one sick  
stagging the road  
into place from  
tree to tree  
until night came  
and showed me how  
all confusions  
had made a path  
soft underfoot  
through undergrowth  
on the way to my little  
summerhouse  
hidden in trees,  
Everything is in retreat.  
The moon is a luster  
left on the sky  
after some spermy character  
brushed against it  
on her way out of the world.  
All the things we see  
are stains  
of someone who has gone.

25 May 2004

## GROVELING

Groan, a heap of gravel  
ground bait  
where is the elevator now  
when the moon is void of wheat  
and what drips down?

Calyx they call it  
and the church makes priests.  
Couldn't it be otherwise just once  
and the moon give mirrors back  
their fabulous transparencies,  
to look *through* circumstance at last  
where the fox is fretful in the hedge  
red as the moon in urban haze,  
a handful?

A handful of moon, is rightly?

Or will your left hand  
give me money  
in the sense of silver?  
How bronze you are, and easily divide.  
How soft you sit there on the lawn  
as if the sunlight were in business too,  
what *is* the other side of something red

or when the chariots roll in  
on soft white cloud wheels  
softening the taxman's tribulations  
and stiffening the bishop's rod,  
who will be able to go or let go  
down to those chariots above,

the art of magic is an incarnation  
for we will go down to the chariot  
we break our wits in pieces and reweld  
we god our way down to man stuff and girlitude,  
we enter the ascension backwards  
we go down to the chariot  
we pray with our blood and most brief breath  
we escalator down the clouds demanding

we demand everything  
a place to stand  
a shadow of our very own  
and light to cast it

how much we require  
to enter the untransparent!

And this is just the first of all the roads.

2.

At the spectral intersection

Waybody, met,

said:

A bridge carries the river  
like a lady carrying her handbag.

The lady is old, a bridge  
is always old.

3.

<late>

But who said different?

What kind of person am I fighting  
and how high?

Is he a he  
and up there, speaks Hebrew,  
does he, or some she  
tongue, full of magic,  
a form of the verb that says  
whatever this is we will do it forever?

4.

I have no secrets for you.

I have come from nowhere

with Atlantic Avenue leaking out of my pocket

like a spill of rice,

I walked home leaving the city behind me,

my spoor, mind scat, red roses,  
the Korean deli man, his tubs of flowers  
who could credit nature be  
so aggressive unrelenting colorful?

Name me. Cypresses grow over my signs.  
I street.

26 May 2004

4.

as much as anyone can  
barley, oil of bridges, salt,  
sugar of time (that *saccharum temporis*  
of the alchemist Rufilius  
or it might mean sugar  
of each season, from his treatise  
On the Broken Monad  
not yet found, you lost it,  
didn't you, mean one,  
or tender one, who hides all things  
from me, hides them  
in the back of my head  
because you know I'm always  
looking forward, so hard to find,  
find it, I hate the past,  
I worship your back not my own,  
wont look around,  
you find it in me for me  
(that's how it works)  
you find inside me  
what some you has hidden  
and you fetch it out  
and wear it as your clothes  
so that I can see it  
again or at last,  
avenue by avenue the argument,

sweet river and bitter bridge,  
the proposition.

Sweet you,  
the unforgiving forgiver,  
the forgiven, I am always guilty,  
as any god is, it all  
fell from my wanting and disdain,  
I did it, I built a garden and a rule,  
a wall and broke it down,  
a door and locked it against myself,  
sweet you, my keyhole and pale sky.

5.

The other side of being must be said.  
It is said. The one who said it will.

Willing is at an angle to to be. A stammer  
in the soul consents to yes.

Young nervous ones as if on stage  
(that's what he meant), all the world's  
a stage and to be a being on it  
is a song of stagefright, bright fear  
and sweet persuasions, why don't we  
hurry to the coulisses of the dark?

27 May 2004



=====

**But on another day another wise man**

staggered in from the east  
and no one listened

belated he was, exhausted,  
disappointed, drunk  
on distances

the famous child was older now  
a trial to his parents  
as usual, a little demon, smart

fond of stones and stories  
throwing them, calling out  
up in the hills to make echoes come

down in the arroyos  
irritating the goats  
a little insolent to adults

to strangers like this one  
with that quick tongue  
would never leave him

Where have you come from  
he wanted to know and the wise  
man no longer could remember

And why weren't you here  
with the others when I needed you?  
I was late the star was dim

and everything was far  
all I remember is  
that everything is always far

I can barely see you  
the road was so long to see  
and what I hear

is the voice of a boy  
inside the shadow  
so you must be the one

the one who is always young  
no matter what we do to you  
there will always be another word.

...late spring 2004

27 May 2004

=====

Gone from the edge  
to the center. Let the  
center be a door  
and go in. Let the states  
south of the border  
interpose pale clothing  
to keep you from your body,  
I hate your body,  
it is the one thing you must not use.  
It will die, it will be tin,  
no punctuation,  
the air will break,  
I can touch your name already,  
your small songs, your  
recitation of the morning dream,  
the nervous pigeons  
on your almost city roof,  
I can stand all of it  
but not your skin.

(mid-May 2004)

27 May 2004

=====  
So this is Africa.  
The place  
from which I have always  
been arriving.

Into that Vienna  
deep embedded in  
the complex Brooklyn  
where I grew,

sacred luncheonette,  
holy academy  
of music, my street

peeled off the ocean,  
my street sucked out of dream.

(mid-May 2004)

27 May 2004

=====

*Sly sailors wooing ache in my inert breast –*  
the one of them would sail to Taprobane  
across the inky ocean while the other  
would come ashore in Albany among  
the tankers and the truckers, the hard  
living hardhats of a third-rate port but  
that's how all the oil comes in we burn.

(mid-May 2004)

27 May 2004

=====

Because everything is alternative  
and no one sweet thing exists  
that doesn't have its else.

What is my else? Blue music  
from opera's latifundium,  
purple music from the date-stamped library

where all the good books are out and overdue.

(mid-May 2004)

27 May 2004

*sobolowe brwi*

the eyes are under

so many wars

have waded through me

I hardly know

sable eyebrows

ashen eyebrows

I am where the things are

a little knot of nada

near the boundaries of spring

I will listen and be still

the river runs me

and summer is a horn.

(late May 2004)

27 May 2004