

5-1993

## mayA1993

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*for Charlotte*

Be special. And it is special,  
the avatar of everyday  
comes down the old stairs  
dressed as sunlight.

It is still New England,  
we are always ready to  
begin we think but now  
something is unaccountably old.

It may be me it may be  
the seaplane dock at New Bedford  
or the white deer by Lake Cayuga  
or the four of hearts. The new lord

ruling hard in the room of the old.  
Yesterday on Mill Pond  
where there's never anything,  
a single swan. Is it he?

1 May 1993

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or less.  
Easily less.

But, the problem, ever,  
in our faces  
since 1950  
(Olson Eisenhower Jasper Johns)

is can we more.  
Can there be more.

Even yet there is a guess, a grail that something means.  
Stress there,  
on the last word.

Countdown, waiting  
for the first human footsteps on the,  
Earth.

1 May 1993

[responding to a posting from Pierre Joris responding to my response to jamato's  
test. Done, from the numbers 3, 2, 1.]

# THESE FLOWERS SLOW TO FADE

*for Betty, on Mothers' Day*

It has flowers in it war poor people death  
Mozart and marzipan. Now and then  
someone walks along and makes a road.  
There is a thought that runs through all this  
but is not this. It is a way to go. Somewhere fine  
where you can catch your breath and turn around  
to help the rest of us. You know all this.  
Milarepa knew the way and Francis.  
Marx sat writing postcards of the view  
that Moses saw. Maybe Mozart heard it too.  
On May Day everything looks close to what it is  
—gnats shouting at the setting sun  
finches' ballet art of appetite.  
Somewhere in all this grass and glare is Wisdom  
mother of Buddhas and the only sense.  
Every mother you find yourself become  
can't be any mother but the mind.

May Day '93  
to go along with Charlotte's video

# GARLIC

*for Charlotte*

you cut out and discard the green bone  
that lies along the axis of each clove of garlic

this is not the only thing you do  
but I never saw anybody else do

making a longitudinal section with a sharp knife  
and prying the long green prong out

a bone I never knew!  
a taste I never knew was wrong!

Now we sit and listen to Rossini realizing  
the world is stranger than we know.

That much we know.

1 May 1993

## FROM THE INFINITE ABHIDHARMA

The obscuration of wanting what you already have to become fresh again and kiss you with its special long-familiar difference.

The obscuration of wanting to know the names of birds.

The obscuration of knowing too many names of flowers.

The obscuration of habitually drinking the morning coffee before your taste is ready to notice it.

The obscuration of desiring food your parents said is good for you, you doubted then but now you believe, they're dead, everything is sad and you want that food. The liver. The tomato. The corn muffin.

The obscuration of thinking there is something to say.

1 May 1993  
(3 May 93)

## ALTARMORNING

*for Charlotte*

Caught in the fibers of the world  
my horsy priestly day comes up again  
equiflaminiar 7♥  
seven as a heart, a string sung  
out of the woods to loop around a sheaf  
of still upstanding maize,

the mild milpa of my condition,  
far out from the track. In the old woods  
a horse is a balance,  
the slay the horse (October) is to break  
the stasis of the equinox,  
the threat to hold the world unchanging,

*impermanence is chance of change*

7 *Quiej* A horse apart. A me  
among roses, expecting nothing.  
Counting my shoes in the hall closet  
like a king in hell.

I own  
only the weather. I am suited  
by obedience but who hears me  
blindly? Only the fibers  
of the world, trapping  
in their rough honesty  
the drift of what they think I say.  
Trapping us—  
loggers, trappers, missionaries.

You're better off trusting the moonlight  
the tricky rhetoric of shadows.  
I am translated. Of new. A sore  
bound round by breathing, some word  
it behooves me (*oportet*) to say.  
O native language, why are you any?

Why can't I sit in the mountains of Moontown  
and dream about a pale solitary egg  
that opens and talks to me? *All love is there*  
transacted from the Soviets of Central Asia  
into the actual wood of memory,  
put it in my hands, how smooth you are,

all the Mongol history, all the Uighur rage,  
the small tempests of each nomad heart  
desiring and desiring and fleeing over the grassy horizon,

where can never plant somewhere's corn?  
And here's a dragon (*kLu*) neutral in bedrock  
in a groove of shale. Every micron of the earth  
is full of speaking populations,  
every owner owned. Each speaks to us  
in a language borrowed from all the others,  
the lady cardinal talks to me in mine  
she thinks, I answer with awkward  
whistles. Things work,  
the continuity

holds.

Things separate by nature. For the Lord  
hath joined together no one and nothing, the nature  
of nature is such approximations  
you take as fixed items in the inventory.  
Whereas. On Sunday the churches go to you.

2 May 1993



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Bring home what would please a wife.  
A duck flying low in a very blue sky—  
see, it can be easy, kiwi, it can  
nibble the particulars and report its dreams,  
to be young and always on the march to it

knowing it will always be there,  
imagine a world without to go. εμμ  
always, a friend in the restlessness itself.  
I get tired of counting my shoes and put the light away.

Color names, cities in Spain, shirt buttons,  
a figure in midnight beyond calculation.  
A bee in the cash register. Smell of cheese.

2 May 1993

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So some things have been decided.  
Decoded. I can't forget  
the imperial meaningfulness of  
what looks like. What the years  
have bent into resemblance.  
That's what counts. The valleys  
east of Oneonta. The hills  
of the Terai under Himalayas.  
Don't let the names fool me.  
I think I cannot tell this lie again.  
We despair of language precisely  
because language is the only  
form all of us do. And we all are guilty  
of it. Holocausts of terrible words.

2 May 1993

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The ones on our side are not here yet—  
a road opened (they call it window)  
among the ravishing horses

and while they think it was Sea Hero who slipped through  
“like the Red Sea parting,” his jockey said,  
and while a hundred million people were watching

down the same chute *between things* poured  
the troops of the High Prince of Aldebaran  
and we are occupied again.

Planet of the War Games. If I dared  
I would tell all, and name the dynasties  
up there who fight their duels down here—

they find us and begin.  
If I were brave I would list the eras of their occupation  
and all the wars they made us fight,

and for whom. But I am lonely of their princesses,  
and full of fear. But I assure:  
they do come, and they are here.

What seems to happen here  
(Lincoln's Round Dance, Plato's Crucifixion)  
is arts & entertainment to distract us

from the war we are.  
From their enterprise among us.  
We wake from strange dreams anxious to be ordinary

and find the bears came down also  
from the woods and paw our pretty  
cars with greasy not-quite-hands.

2 May 1993 Red Hook

# ã\*v-d-

A Meditation on the word,

*trel-wa*

a gratitude, a sense  
of what we have been given,  
all  
that I have been given  
by man or stone,

all the weather gave me,  
and the river

what my mother made me, what  
my father said  
to get me going

and every one and every one  
who gave me what I am.

Not so much a matter of return  
but being mindful of the huge permission  
in which I stand.

The kindness of them  
I exist to understand.

3 May 1993  
Kingston

## ENCAUSTICUM

We can't overwhelm the past with the future  
but in a present Fire use all up  
& leave it Now. These words, ink  
burn, seem scorched into what I say.

A circle around nothing. A center full of self regard.

3 May 1993

## THE SECOND CHANCE

If I were sitting here waiting for it to begin  
the circus that fell from the stars  
in green their apparatus and in gold  
the capes of her who pivots  
on a purely noumenal reference point in  
the middle of the air

the funambulist of the lower, is she  
the queen of this whole mistake, whirl,

the kid I was gazes up at all the tinselled joinings, This  
is the world! I will grow huge  
to accommodate it, I will grow a bone  
big enough for all your music—

maybe *this* time I would see right through the colors  
to the uninflected light before.

3 May 1993

## WAKING

*for Charlotte*

Sometimes it's very like the dark.  
When the people you know are in there  
won't answer when you call.  
You wind up speaking to them  
in a mild, expostulating, terrified voice.  
When the light switch in your hand  
clicks and clicks but nothing changes.

It could be a map on the wall  
of a country you fell out of years ago  
and only the language is left  
but nobody's speaking.

4 May 1993

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At what age should a man begin his castle?  
At birth he already begins to die.  
His whole mind and heart should be set on leaving,  
learning, saying good-bye to each leaf of every tree.

4 May 1993



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*for Charlotte*

This book I'm writing in is so light  
so fine of paper and full of levity  
a word is not guilty of furrowing,  
it floats in Malibu, the sun  
remembers itself, a dog sings.  
All transcendence becomes a thing to touch.  
Not hold. The sunlight  
is tired of impersonating my skin.  
In the new white muslin curtains  
the day comes in like the seacoast,  
the leaves outside seem nodding birds  
mired in grey sky. How can a book  
let a man see? In a cup of sand  
a stick of incense smolders.

4 May 1993

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The mowers have come.  
My chubby friend sits on his tractor  
annihilating (Marvell's word)  
the morning. On this grey day  
it's up to him to wake the blackbirds  
who wake us. Around the Triangle  
he goes and goes, like a humiliating  
memory I can't get out of mind.  
That time near the source of the Rhine.  
Black swan in Austria. Yesterday  
her skin felt otherwise, all my failures  
sailed back to the old country. Sound  
diminishes with the square of the distance—  
the other end of the Triangle is bearable,  
the thing he does, this outdoor housework,  
this angry wife of the world. Time  
has these surprises. No place to hide  
from sound — which proves that music  
is invented by our skin, our fault, our Bach,  
our portable hell. Later we'll take comfort  
like fools in the smell of new-mown hay.

4 May 1993

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Place it where they sit  
a stone bench far back from the altar  
or what to call it where the deed is done,  
bema, ambo, umbilicus or rugged diorite  
flattened for another body to stretch out on.

Not yours. You're sitting here with sunlight  
remembering old slurs. Usually  
a family is hell on earth enough, and a woman  
flees it into worse. The history  
of things, cæsura, the tribes contending.

I come back to the waterfall  
as if I had been here before,  
half-Merlin, half-Lewis Carroll,  
never knowing when the Utterance  
suddenly makes sense  
and all the silliness  
is seeligkeit and soules ward and sympathy  
sinewing the worlds together

and from its absurd relationship  
discover the meaning of the broken dandelion

a flower tossed into the sky

and lands on earth.

Give what is beautiful, whatever  
you do find so. This offering  
is of the mind that offers it,  
And since you love your body best,  
start out with that—

O yes you do, don't tell me how it fails  
and falters and gives pain — it is the first  
of all your lovers and you never forget.  
It is the first of you, and lasts  
while you do, thinking as you do.  
So start with that.

I cannot stand  
this information, it sounds  
like the lunacy of schools, hummingbirds,  
brass basins steaming under fly-buzz in Jerusalem.  
Go back to the stone,  
the informing vacancy  
waiting to make holy  
what is placed upon it.  
There set your thought.

Ordovician. The premise  
of geology. A world on its way

(they talk among themselves  
the way they talk with strangers,  
listen, Doctor, it happened in the park,  
I saw a dog mount up upon another,  
big or little, young or old,  
and I amazed myself by looking away,  
blushing like an old brick wall,

o darling, doctor, I saw a bird  
frantic in a sandbox, they say sparrows  
bathe in dust, this must be that,

consecrate me with your touch,

I saw a shadow of a China tree  
fall on an old brick wall  
and looked like my hand before my face  
when I look up from crying, I saw a house  
and I was in it, a long hallway  
full of merchandise, parrots and peacocks,  
a smell of terebinth, a paper azure dragon  
hanging from the calendar, I saw a woman  
pouring tea from a brass basin  
into an endless series of tiny china cups.

And she gave me one, saying my name  
I thought it was, a sound  
I had never heard, halfway between  
a redbird crying 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and a  
man selling tofu in the street  
playing his flute, the cool water  
sloshing pleasantly in the shallow wooden tub  
of elm wood he carries on his back  
from block to block of the old neighborhood,  
doctor, can you free me from this park  
I want to feel inside me,

I thought the names,  
and thought the names would free,  
  darling,  
isn't there any more to me?

  The chipmunk  
has an appointment  
underneath the porch,  
  an assignation  
with his appetites, which are his destiny.

Hence they called this *paradise*, "the park"  
and we are the Sunday of the galaxy

stroll in blue sunlight  
dancing & romancing  
for the pleasure of beholders  
our beholders  
who are as many  
as the stars you see  
on the top of autumn nights  
times all of us.

At eight o'clock I eat a crust of bread,  
darling, the way we take care of our skin,  
a paper full of flower petals, moth wings,  
crucifers healing what they do,  
oil of brassicas, rich men's white buildings  
along the Narragansett shore.

Music will always have its way with us,  
doctor, therefore I petitioned the warden  
to disconnect my neural passages  
for I found torture in the random sounds  
the other prisoners cannot live without  
and deem their pleasure.

But he reluctant to disengage me  
from any source of pain  
explained the irritant  
using language that seemed to comfort him.

Rhetoric of the park, darling,  
I was talking to a shirt hung on an old china doorknob  
light came across the floorboards towards it  
and no one understood.

Reluctant warden, tape recorder,  
black and white, an ocean urgent,  
how slow geology is to remedy  
the Ordovician upthrust of our nightmares,  
lust unwrapped in perfect silence  
a woman naked in the pines  
shivering beneath the anxious words

and in cold morning and in flight  
to the Land the river comes from.

5 May 1993



## L A R U S

Can I attend to this necessity  
while the optional  
carries itself high, like a black-winged gull  
over a river a hundred  
miles from the sea

There is ruin everywhere  
to feed on, there is change.  
I bring this to the committee  
of like-minded terrified intellectuals

promising that wherever the moon  
reaches there will always be a tide.

5 May 1993

Cinco de Mayo / Poet Day: fifth of the fifth / The High

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For all the rain we had  
this is the first rain

April actuality come late, things  
arising, a hole here and there  
in someone's sock. First rain,  
then prospering. To edit  
an old war. Displace  
a few hundred thousand legionaries  
and settle them on the frontiers.  
Corn cows beer with C&W  
and all of Rome will be safe.

Save the center  
from the circumference—

this is the goal of every autocrat, the work  
of every committee.

Lost in my anarchy, I have no better answer  
than take things apart and run in the rain.

5 May 1993