

5-1992

## mayC1992

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FROM THIS NEW ÆGYPT

*for Charlotte*

The cartouches of lesser majesty  
embedded in sandstone  
celebrate a *recuerdo*,

an old tune  
not quite reheard inside but  
the found rhythm of its lost melody  
organizes the thing you want to say.

The thing you want to say.

A lost song hears you  
in me.

This is how we wash our hair  
wear our clothes, wish on stars  
fall down stairs, this snow  
unfallen tumbles us  
and makes no sense, narration  
makes no sense.

Now when Jetsun Milarepa had come to the Vajra Snug Dale of  
the Pale Grey Overhanging Rock,  
a yogi disappointed in long practice  
bespoke a remedy.

Mila answered,  
*Be done with thinking. Then be done  
with thinking you're done with thinking.  
Both and neither, and be kind.*

I groaned, and woke to love you  
morning before pale sunlight, cool.  
What is that queen's name I read  
graven in the stonework of my sleep?

*shar.lho*

Arising  
in the south east,

arising.

Spell the name with a bee and a  
dark red filet around the bronze of her hair.

Arising. The thought  
that rises  
is enough, the thought  
selflessly adequate.

15 May 1992

=====  
The solution  
is to borrow  
liquid from the air  
and salt from light

*Sal luminis*  
*pulv. dr.iiij*

until you breathe again.

Sparrows turn into herring gulls.  
The old white sow rolls over in her sleep.

This is Roman history, this is dread.  
Actium and all that tower full of dying—

the sea never meant that,  
the sea meant  
a surface agitation of what is permanently still

—dead elm leaves scour the yellow Tiber  
slow and always turning to the light.

16 May 1992

## AT LAST THE ISLAND

*for Charlotte*

How to be closer to you than this sea.

By far pillboxes we watch three deer  
far off wade the shallows  
that shelter the pond from the ocean.

The war never came. Islands  
are made for prayer, I think,

or I think this because I see your face  
in so many sunsets watching calm  
the last lovely convulsions of apparency

until there is only mind. The night.

[16 May 1992]

I dreamed of a deer older than any  
grey mousy skin of them and a complicated  
puffin-bill of a muzzle they grazed  
down the baybery slopes to the sea and they talked

One wakes with the impression of a marriage.  
The unity has found its way inside as one slept  
and the dawn — that wide belt of light  
shimmering over Nashawena and the Vineyard

finds us. Us. We are found in each other

where we slept an island. Three deer play on the lawn  
and pelt heavy-footed up past the porch  
I guess made uneasy by the little old dog

who waddles up the street to look for friends.  
And the deer of the dream, strict profiled  
against a sort of Mayan sea predicts:  
You come here to keep the log, Daymaker.

(For the day is one more great ship that knows to go.)

Free of hope and fear how glad would be.  
Still stay, on the kind ley  
by which the Dragon moves,  
kin-kind, to summer with us again,

*grían*, Lady Sun.  
Know the letters (gold, bronze-beset,  
blur of Bourgogne silk filleted,  
face of a lion)

spell her name.

The sun is sleeping in the sky  
so serene the morning light.

Sea-spangle, past the Neck,  
engulfing it.

And later, by starlings,  
love in making is making love

though the also  
we woke to each

between the sheets  
this morning  
is the core of it,

sweet body fledged by sleep flies into day  
the heavy sweet sleep-breath in your mouth

asleep or awake  
no one moves like you

(is not description) sun squall  
the channel.

The nerves of sea  
stretched across the small body of the earth

—which we have seen intact  
the whole blessed blue ball of it  
in Dharmakaya view  
from Gid Fisher's seaplane over Penikese  
passing the world on our starboard wingtip  
on our way to the Rose Apple Tree Universe's  
central intelligential shrine,

the Invisible Mountain  
whose slopes are the sea.

2.

The waves vee in along a certain  
break in the blue a red-brown  
commotion. Reef. Preposterous  
alliance of sky and sea  
to rob me of resistance.  
It is all about entering, and I want.

So many rabbits. Think about this weather,  
island without major sports, a curt channel  
over to Nashawena where the sheep are.  
They still are, you tell me, and go to look  
for the binoculars which never are. The pen  
dreams of another sort of ink,  
we read the words perverse photographers  
teach our eyes to descry  
written in the skin of water.

Desire

is the earliest ocean

deer move on the lawn,  
bunnies are bold. The huge features  
of this geology,  
the glacier that left this island here  
also left my home.

The moraine, the manor  
to which we are born,  
fiefdom of stone.

Cosmographers

try to remember earlier incarnations  
on the back stairs of distant suns. Silk  
in all this westering.

Sea woven

off the west end, near Gosnold's monument  
where cormorants stand face into the wind  
enduring an unimaginable information.

You tell me everything. How you lay down  
when the house was empty, how the sun  
made you orange and the light opened the door  
and took this old photograph  
kept with pencils and envelopes in the little drawer.



### 3.

The sea resumes our conversation—  
all night it held remembered  
the salient issues of our disagreement  
and summarized them now as I look out the door:

You will die. But not before you've lived  
a life richer than gods live. And everything you do  
means, and bears consequence for lath or well.  
But for all this beauty it is a sorry place  
and my own ever-changing mirror of one  
single simple substance is the truth of it.

This is what the waves say while I stare  
across the Vineyard Sound towards Gayhead  
where billionaires begin to rouse from weekend sleep  
and wince before their own bright mirrors  
and the lighthouse on the cliff sends out  
forever a ray of white, pause, a ray of red.

### 4.

I thought I had some more to say—  
it must have been the coffee  
since caffeine makes a spider weave jagged webs  
impatient and ineffective,  
a stupid mesh  
to catch meanings in,  
such arrant haste  
to fabulate,  
I'm trying to say speak.

It's not a thoughtful dumpster to sort  
clear glass from green glass in,  
it is a sentence with a jive to live,  
a strive to still, a rat to nestle and a barn  
to fill with amber corn,

  it is a neck  
to kiss a torc on of bold old gold,  
it is a love to bring you and an amethyst,  
my sober bride who's ecstasy.

They get up early here. Mr Wilder's yellow jeep  
just skimmed along the shore and turned uphill  
going home. A big man with vague movements.  
A hoop of straw upon a neighbor's house.  
It's like a monastery with no god,  
an island is, the enforced coaction —  
we know too much about the world.

Good roofs and shabby walls — a happy breed.  
We saw deer playing in the surf. Recycle  
the least attention into the miracle of speech  
always something left to be said, or rises  
*shar.lho* in the southeast, across the lawn,  
la peluche, the plush, where the deer came  
tripling their shallow wits in kindly play.  
Here I am king. Overcast but east is red.  
Lawn mower, and a child in winter coat, its maybe  
mother swings downhill with a cigarette.  
Every daylight is a street. And not just speech,

there are as many miracles  
as suckers like me to attend them.  
No wonder there is so much to say.

In the plane the only  
movement's up and down,

an old car it's like  
jouncing on a rocky road  
like the one uncoils  
out to Gosnold Pond  
along your cliffs.  
No sense of forward  
motion; the world below  
hops backwards by.

## 5.

1. Why is the sea *always* arriving at the shore?
2. Where does it come from that it goes all ways out and all ways comes in?
3. Maybe Shakespeare is right; maybe this is the island.
4. No matter how close the other islands may be (Nashawena, Penikese), there's no way to reach them. No boat.
5. Boats are ordinary magic, like Giambattista della Porta's. Boats are craft and skill, mere genius.
6. Islands are miracles.
7. They transcend.
8. And at night all coasts are equally far.
9. The ship was wrecked on Barges Beach— indeed, its bones jostle with the hollow barges still.

10. And my attendant Spirit led them me, up amidst Bay Berrie Bushes along the track carved in the mud cliffs to Gosnold's Pond.
11. Let not thy World be a Screed of Impermissions.
12. Overland, past the din of the '38 Hurricano, to the settlement of refugees in squats above the Sow and her Pigs.
13. Cormorants of two species guard the coast, erect on rocks.
14. She sought and found small perfect shells, or almost so, to speak her island to me in the sweet French of given things. And then in Spanish, ¡Mira! she cried, and gave me three tiny round shells like sardonyxes, the size and shape of kernels of Indian corn.
15. For what is imaginable is *to say*, and what is imagined is *so*.
16. Their wings half unfurled dry in the sea breeze they face.
17. On this soft cliff you sat.
18. South is the wide sea. You will find this direction close inside my play.
19. The seaplane takes off now. Cold afternoon in Palestine the refugees hammer on thin walls. Construct an economy of waves.
20. I told you this before, with music and a woollen shirt, a drunken monster on a waterbed and drink you low into a passion stunted like a winter'd cedar blest by wind. Wound me! the island said.

21. People who live on islands talk a lot. This drama is my ease, forgive out loud. Gossip forgives the silences.
22. A cold fog hides the Vineyard shore.
23. Like a fort or a castle, house on Canapitsit Channel.
24. Act V, Scene 2. The permissions:

engulf you  
like the wave.  
The woman is your wife.  
The gold  
is dormancy,  
frigates bring it.  
auks murre and puffins, a glow  
coming over the Elizabeths. I designed  
this absent Forest for my Queene.

Having no right (example) to a ship  
let alone one falmouth'd out in canvas  
gaudy on the Lord's day sailing past the harbor mole,  
the rigging alone  
in these old pictures  
worth a king's watchmaker,  
a broom to beat carpets,  
a May wind on the islands.

Take your mask off, Love,  
and see the faults of earth  
transformed in green,

travertine the cut of sea,  
the smooth resemblance,  
all our dynasties.

The sea keeps coming.  
And tonight we saw  
a dome of crimson light

effused around the focus:  
sunset. Light  
going down into America and we  
the least of islands  
doing so much love,

the work of time, the amplitudes.  
In all my life I never saw such a dome or Grail of light,  
it held the chest of the continent wide  
open so we saw the heart,

the paradise.  
But the lines in rigging  
predicted it,  
their glad foibles  
to snare the captious wind!

[18 May 1992]

6.

Wake in sun glare and strong wind, 6<sup>30</sup>, the sun  
over Nashawena,

but in the other manuscript Gosnold is  
writing  
to Will about "Nar Lo the Teep. a common Oath & likely God of  
these Islanders, wherein the first Element pretendeth to say  
Power, and the laste as if to say the Deep, like to our Neptunus  
but less pleasant. No songs are sung to this Divinitie."

Island people & an island god.  
No wonder. The fishermen in yellow slicker suits

keep odd hours in their yellow-red jeep, I'm looking at it and I  
get the color wrong,

the names we live in,  
the drafty words.

House shakes in wind.  
The master of this house calls himself Marvin Mandell,  
a transparent guise for Marvel in Mind—  
may he prosper!

His daughter fledged with honey hair  
hath sav'd my Life from th'inconstant Wave.

Who can I be in the story,  
sir, please!

I'll be the tent the lovers  
sheltered from mosquitoes in,  
I'll be the ruined shepherd's cot  
under the ruined light house,  
sound floor and the sky falls through the roof,  
o I'll be the Portuguese and the German girl,  
the pressure-treated lumber new deck,  
some orange life-vests on the wall.  
And even now in wave I'll be the cormorants.

So many rabbits and no raptors.  
A word or two should be enough to contradict  
(house shakes in wind)  
the words are darker on the bottom  
where they rest on earth,

the draw of tide  
knows us here

(we'll be waiting for the ferry)  
(time to leave the Island)  
(the can of chunky beef soup leave behind?  
the peanut butter?)

A day is all day long,  
my brusque tragedians,

don't fob us off  
with ornamental outcomes  
as if a spurt of blood meant anything,

his poor blind eyes.  
The pain of life is every minute of it  
and every minute of it empty as the sea

(just like the sea, bearing no harvest,  
ατρυγετη,  
nothing but the next wave.

On the neighbor island they raise their sheep. "A couple times  
of the Year, at Tedding & at Yeaning & at Wool, they send their  
twice-keel'd *Canoas* over to see to the needments of the  
Shepherds, & to fetch back such Woole or Cheese or Flesh as  
pleases them best. Moastly they eat Fish."

Fierce disproportion of their breath  
luminous yesterday  
on the hidden pond  
on our way to Church's Beach  
a duck at evening.

7.

I shave looking over at Nashawena  
black beyond the sun glare  
empty island of my mind—

fingers finding my cheeks, what  
will I be thinking in that  
universe ten seconds from now



writing this down?

And then?

By now I know the people who walk up and down the street.  
The hill. Suchness of this People who are proud and  
unaccommodating, like Grieks or Portugueze. The Mistris of  
one comes down regularly, her small Leggs long in black  
Leggings & a Cloak of Colours I cannot telle from heere as of  
the Skins of Birds. Sometimes she drinketh from a *Cigarro* held  
in her lefte Hand or right indifferently, blue Smoak in blue Air!  
And a meagre Man in a Singlet and a littil Cap, belike a  
Seruaunt or an Artizan.

Wherever you look the sea is waiting.  
Gosnold's anxiety.

The tower, faux-windowed,  
built of stone 1893.

On an eyot unreachable,  
though I wanted to borrow use of a dory tied up by the shore  
here. "No one borrows on this island," you said, and I left the  
forty foot gulf uncrossed. Smell of shellfish, we stood on a hill  
of oystershells, shaggy dirty white rough, good footing.

Every minute  
the sea is writing.

Come up through the shimmer, Naiadës, and you  
white-horsed adjutants of a dark power  
knee-deep in destiny,

I taste  
the salt on your shins, daughters of dark need,  
Nodens, the Core.

Blameless, the sky  
we cloud.

8.

Some other number waits for us,  
Allan Wilder's yellow car, Low's greedy maisonnettes.  
I am a red truck.  
In consternation we are round beset  
as by the Musick menaced.  
Now a blackbird stands on the air  
at evens with the seawind  
and now a carpenter walks down the hill—  
is not this a wonder Island?

And the secret place where we found fiddleheads  
and the secret places where you kept  
watch one whole night on the haunted house  
and the grassy secret place where you slept  
in the condign Eastering sepulchers of hidden earth  
to wake into your risen Qualities,  
admirable Person of this Island!

And what are those  
trees we saw over Church's Beach  
so twisted, do the apples of unreason grow there  
to pluck and eat in frenzy of some Messidor  
among neo-pagan riff-raff revelling?  
And from the Cliffs saw *Puffins* summering  
far south of their natural Waters.

And a Duck.

They come soon, sailing in money on a greenback sea  
and we're the last Reds left,  
to preach of justice in the lap of lust  
and stir them both to liberty. Self-liberated,  
the thought *transpires*.

Then the air. And the duck takes off  
we thought had been a Barnakel or Canker on that Rock it was  
a Goose and flustered into the clear Skie with a great Cry that  
lingered down the Wind

the fleet  
of puffins hurrying low,  
parrot-billed, penguin-habited, quick  
a yard above the sea flew north.

What benefit an island  
if it all is lingering?

*19 May 1992  
Cuttyhunk Island*

## THE LIFE OF

Thayer Street the cheeks the chic  
all these meek foregrounders of an attitude  
seem far from an ocean as you can get but  
they are waves. The union  
of appearance with desire  
forges hell

of what had been that peaceful tong-pa-nyi,  
an openness without contrivance.

Without reaction. Call it that:

kleshas are *reactions*,  
reactionary patterns. Saxophone.  
Habitual patterns breed reactions.  
Saxophone outside, a busker loud in shade.  
Je déteste ça. And a Haydn trumpet concerto within,  
the Higher Muzak, not much better. Et ça.  
The waves of how I feel. Dark Costa Rican coffee,  
*petit pain*. At Aches-less-Pains in the Savoie o I remember  
Joyce found his way by sound,

the sound of the look of the words,  
an Irish blindman in the dark.

Musculature of the words. Tattoo the street,  
the Bodie of this Island modified by flagrant arrow.  
The gentle sky. And Gosnold, what did he  
understand of what he found  
if we barely understand the puffins off the cliff?

The trumpeter. The bike messenger with a message in his teeth  
clutched the way his fingers do the handlebars,  
Yellow Cab, against the outrage traffic, backpack, high sun,  
the Haydn finds it way to an end — during the coda's  
pause the sax  
drifts in and loopydoops  
its aimless curlicue —  
two women with small heads walk by,  
sisters belike—

and the orchestra finesses.

Mr Skateboard takes his shirt off in the street  
pulls it inside out and puts it back on  
all in the intersection, because it is  
the summer season tattoos appear,

the deep unreliability of time  
is never more obvious. Smile at the academy,  
the world is rife with passage.

Let the lunch  
be French,  
let the rissoles  
confuse the meek pilaus of the Seine, let the savory  
immemorable dinners of the English  
shoo us into the dim caress where no cab waits  
and we are union'd and there is no war.  
1914 Tunnel just for busses  
dug under College Hill, a common dare  
for early settlers, to race their T-Birds through  
with the Tubal-Cain of AM blaring down the tunnel.  
Forgive me for my mouldering intelligence  
for I have looked more than I have studied  
and wanted more than I looked.  
Wherefore the *British Princess* for whom the Island's called  
came naked to me one sennight in springtime  
all summer-naked under her white clothes  
I clutched you to me  
all this morning as we were waking,  
I was pretending we were just playing, I needed you,  
I need you, you are the atmosphere my body needs  
to breathe its meaning in an inland world.  
You wife, you private ocean.

And when I stop reacting can I act?  
What I hate is the act of hating.  
"he is the President of regulation," gay as sparrows,  
there is no fire in all this smoke,  
no heat in all this fire,  
no light in all this heat.

Leading 200 Hopi this way through Mongolia—  
meet the decor halfway, wriggle your hips  
the way you woke me,  
the way you are today.

They change their uniforms. They take off Tantaquidgeon's  
feathers, they put on scarlet coats. They take these off and put  
on blue. They tattoo. They are Amerimen, they spring.

Racket of baritonal excess  
down by the island's only backboard,  
feints and lunges of a simple war,  
a hoop.

Crushed oysters in their shells,  
"dear God the tides."

Bless the changes, for they let us go.  
And: Bless the changes ere they let us go.

On the Breakage of our Craft two Sorts of Lichen appear to  
flourish. The one is yellow as an Egg's Yelk, or as *Gamboge* from  
the Indies, and it is not hard to find. The other is as common,  
yet hard to espy. Black or chesnut-shell in Colour, it is small. It  
hides as if a Part of the Wood itself he groweth on.

People hurry down the street  
fleeing from the barnyard  
of all their resemblances.

They are exceeding harde, and  
yeild not to my Fingernail,

whereas it is fun  
to be no one.

*20 May 1992*  
*Providence*

=====

*for Charlotte*

Then call it this day  
it is the sun  
broken over the valley  
and it is summer now.

The cars are preening  
under the new maples,  
the U-Hauls propose  
fabulous destinations  
to uneasy graduates.  
The drink is ready.  
Trink, mein Faust,  
the apparition  
is ready for you  
trapped behind the useless stove,  
the chapel wall  
is disguised with roses.  
The cross means you.  
All of your urgency  
waits for this hour:  
last night you were sick,  
this morning well.  
The coffee consoles you,  
your wife  
is a species of splendor  
you rise early each day  
to understand—  
you watch her as she sleeps.  
Does she know you study  
her sleeping body as it stirs  
an hour or two later  
lusciously to light?  
You're not sure what she knows  
but think it's everything.  
You have outlived another science.  
They wait for you tomorrow  
in their gowns, professing  
and receiving and yawning  
like wasps in sunshine  
while the famous people bleat  
kindly twaddle from the rostrum.  
How can it be that underneath  
your flapping black robe  
you wear an ordinary human body  
full of hope and healing,  
and that at home the woman  
waits in the heart of her work

that even now you struggle  
to comprehend? How grateful  
you are to the crows for their raw  
blasphemies above the civil lawn,  
for the shadows for falling  
and teaching us to fall.  
We do not belong to these ceremonies,  
we are candles in the sun  
and intellect is waiting for the dark.

22 May 1992



