

5-1994

## mayB1994

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L ' A L B A   S E P A R A

Goddesses de-stress the night.  
Saltarelle summer is on hand  
and the sea's on — when the dreams  
of others come much closer,

that's how it means, when sun goes north  
subtending the Arch of Somnium  
so all the images slide in  
along the voluptuous angles of a summer night

and there they are, the dreamed-of,  
rich with ontological confusion,  
clothes, cars, cavalcades, food  
they bring you and deep in your dreams

appear to wake you from yet deeper sleeps  
where even truer heralds blew their horns  
and shouted prophecies in your timid face.  
Wake after wake. And now this.

This is the ordinary day, the advertisement  
we have to live through till the night  
gathers up into coherent narratives  
these random pixels we jitter through

on our way to the bank and the basilica.

8 May 1994

## PETROLEUM

Crudes. The parcel unwrapped past  
eager stretch of sea. Ope wave, ape mind  
fossick in geo. Suck out wet black war.

This is to go. *Eamus in tenebris* to no port of call.  
Cull. A monster with one claw. When you steal  
from the earth you stand on, a brief convenience  
is sequeled by a mighty grief. Stone vengeancees.

9 May 1994

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Setting up early on the outside corner  
in case an angel. Or a printer from Mantua  
circa 1497 should open up his shop  
with a creamy-leafed densely commented  
round a cool well-leaded root text  
edition of Virgil's *Eclogues*  
and his young apprentice from Genoa  
beckon to me from the inky doorway  
at first light when old priests are still  
shuffling maniples on over their forearms—

his eyes in the doorway! Brother, lover,  
servant, angel, friend! Everything  
promised me me in a dream of prairies!  
*Take this book my body and read its text  
close, which is your own.* Every word  
makes flesh. The interchange,  
lie down in the grass and read me  
and I will read you deep. We will play  
this sentence out a thousand years  
till men weary of sunlight and poetry and throwing balls.

10 May 1994

## A MAY MORNING

*for Pat Smith*

As if there were a summer borning  
and facts of katydids indexing loud  
all night long outside until you memorize  
the ordinary earth and go to sleep

then it is there, the other one  
you struggled for in northern mud and  
in the dog-swept boulevards of poor Detroit  
waiting for the messiah in the heart of money

vacant lots we called them in New York  
the space of godliness where you first make out  
in the same trenches you dug for War  
when you were six, OD on local splendor

the fierce rush of their names up your throat  
as you shout them down like angels  
from the hidden tarry roofs of heaven  
and down they come to you, and they spill

they kiss your throat and promise you You  
are my special one my poetry my special knower  
you know how to get born in cities  
until you wake with my word on your lips.

10 May 1994

### Note 3 to Brian Kim Stefans

Angels in New York also  
but to make sense  
we say anhel  
and there they are  
swift to understand the brotherhood  
of bad ideas  
(the Univers  
ity) they fly  
over our swooning heads, ¡mira!

So the trouble as I read it  
is that hierarchies are more trouble  
to fight against than to accept

—meet the king with silence,  
authorities can't stand silence—

and that to struggle against the Archons  
is, finally, to turn into one  
oneself,

we become what we contradict.

The burden  
of language  
and all the assertions  
that become  
invariably  
what they specify.

Be at peace with great folk  
they pass like weather  
and when they have done with us  
we have the earth  
and they have their celebrity.

Something like that,  
to rouse.  
Semaphores, streetlights,

music is to umbrellas  
as silence is to rain.

Ahoy, nothing but skin!

10 MAY 1994

## SOLAR ECLIPSE

The white cars hurry past as if a place  
were a bad idea to be in. You know the sea:  
always coming in. For days now  
a certain hawk has nested in our tree,  
I mean the one we see with our eyes,  
out there, where the cars are busy fugitive.

The white cells dawdling down my arm  
on their mercy missions —blue berets, UN  
on the prow— which of us “has  
looked into his brother’s heart,” the marsh  
the cruel morass where the names alone  
of women grow, like cat-tails and grasses ammophile

until the hawk in heaven gets tired of the sun.  
Then how sweet you are, no-name and all leaf,  
no leaf and all fruit, no-fruit and all feeling  
and it is brave of me to be out anywhere  
in the little sunlight left. Birds twitter  
in their bedtime way at noon. Eclipse

is what it is, southwest to northeast, bend sinister  
across America. O light dissolve my poverty of forms.  
The marsh where I was raised, no wonder  
ever day’s a miracle of sky, and fear of dogs,  
over the grey catwalks to liberty, skin wet  
with the annals of ocean, lost friends, the never  
stop touching us no matter light.

10 May 1994

## M A N G O

A woman hand a mango to her mother.  
This is morning and I am.

Dove perched this morning in a tree  
where for a week a hawk has been sitting.  
(I am not skilled in mockery—  
a little Irish sarcasm, a little English chill,  
there are shabby asbestos shields  
to hide some star-fire earnest in the core.)

two sailboats moored in a private cove  
high wind and green Hudson, to be so white  
and obvious and safe!

Now both birds  
are gone. A mother knows what to do,  
is taught by the same ancient instant science  
that makes the ferns unfurl around her.

Pleasing patterns of our fruit. Domestic  
arrangements of Americans. The hand  
of the mother is busy accepting it.

To be clear about the little things I can.  
Later we will all eat. Wash the rice,  
wake up and wash it again.  
Grain by grain it makes you you.

11 May 1994



## A MARKET WHERE IT MEANS TO BE

1.

Eft-snappy to slither under  
handy stones. Sunburst. The women come  
weight and monikers. Baled firewood  
shin to stoke day stoves. There is a bird  
called Randomness sings in the forests of number.  
No man has seen it the women know.  
That is why they keep coming. Port of clicking keys.  
Gnawed of the city, vacant loads, seasons,  
chastisements.

2.

Candlespunk.

Goblin-greedy for sensation, a mark  
on the small of the book. Anything  
worth a taste, blue baton, buzz  
of municipal authority. My dog.  
My dog in fog. The disappearances.  
After you had read me  
I felt this weird sensation in my quick.  
Unsat, the sat-on chair held always.  
Time —space— room for one more.

3.

And then the mercenaries roved in  
shuffling through flocks of geese, tiny  
kids curled safe on shelves, a sense of sundown.  
The noise of me.

You who took  
this trifling for a town  
and this terror for a man

gave me a name and pressed your fingers in:  
*These are eyes, and that's two ears*  
*and here's a mouth to answer me*  
*whatever ever comes to mind.*

11 May 1994

## HOLY MINSTRELSY

1.

Knowing the encumbrance  
vitality waiting always  
for the Graduate of Particular  
Cunnings whose flowers

—bland as sassafras and  
dangerous as comfrey, o or  
goldenseal— do heal.  
I ask your pity, human

brothersisters, in this our cold  
calvary, our scree.  
Scramble with me  
up the exhilarating glassy summits

of other people's minds,  
those touchable bodies  
no law can fend our glad from,  
gleeman, sing me what form.

For I would touch them  
where they live, a clever  
dove from up there  
settling into their tree.

11 May 1994

2.

So a mind is a body you can  
touch then, a mind is legal,  
a mind is where to find them  
and where they most excite

their wet-haunched followers  
drifting up from Jordan,  
o in thee I am dipped.  
Scatterbrain though I am

I also kept parity with good  
and saved the water of his flood  
that coursed along me  
and called it what it is to think.

But mind is water. It is death  
almost to think. But to hold  
is heal. Hold that flowing  
into the crystal now. The crust

of where we are. Bring mowers then  
and wake me from a gaze  
of gardens. Make me think  
and then what I am drink.

11 May 1994

#### **Note 4 to Brian Kim Stefans, about Days**

O the eclipse and it all  
by now is a memory  
of a shadow  
somehow different  
or an empty light

only a memory  
but what isn't  
there is a threat  
to live completely  
on air: Therese  
Neumann all  
through the War my  
childhood did so  
sustained by the Host  
she took at Mass  
once every morning  
that is the Body of Christ  
in all particulars  
present  
under the species  
of pale unleavened bread

like a cracker really  
that melted on my tongue  
and made me strong

o those days were all  
strobe lights going off  
inside the head and holy

we live on  
what little eludes us,  
sustained  
by what is outside  
and stays there

blue mystery of days.  
You have already  
counted them  
and I accept your numbering,

dactyls and epitrites and  
Pindar looks over his shoulder  
where from the sad yellow dust of a hot afternoon  
Hieron of Syracuse slips down from his creaking chariot

not a young man anymore  
but the winner  
and father of a son  
and fleshy under the forearms

since driving this craft is mostly anyhow skill.

11 May 1994

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To be only  
who one is  
in such a big world

and yet the mind  
of knowing that  
is a handy mind

a knowing one  
that holds firm  
or eases up.

Knowing  
is going.  
No more than that.

12 May 1994

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Trucks converging on their ancient enemy the house.  
Hawk scream far even at times down here. Early  
but not specially. No wind in some trees.

The deadpan virtues of a common flower  
continually shame our glib politics.  
(A Gandhi comes once a thousand years.  
We are not prepared for public men with private lives  
let alone lives of the spirit. They must be statues  
and think like stone. Impervious to all but our projection.)

It is torture to be right. Not wit. A devious  
machine that lives us and we sneak outside  
to look at the stars. Who plugged us in?  
The intricate addictions of our lives. Stairs  
and doors and looking glasses, salt and silk and going places.  
What else is us? In the sea of ink  
some strange constellations are reflected  
that look like home. Beautiful rainy morning  
you are my mind. But I am something more,  
sticks out six inches past the rim of life,  
round all the ring of it, a blur of fair empty  
around the grab of full. Home's never somewhere else.

12 May 1994



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They stand about deny his power  
that sustains them. Infants  
at the root of a house.

Gum  
sparkling in sun on a peach trunk  
answering no question. Precision  
is its own answer. The foot of things,  
the weight, on earth  
to bear.

If language were only, ever, the giving!

13 May 1994

THAT EACH SPRING THE MIND'S NEWBORN

Weeks, and roots. The growth  
of green kind  
mercied by the farmer's daughter  
veiled from passersby  
by elder (roadside) and alder (waterways)  
until an emerald close is all  
and safe to travel in, spreading ever  
inward to the center of herself  
until she finds the golden wife inside her hand.  
Land. Only the crows hold  
opinion of her, high as they are,  
impaneled by great Lucidity  
to stand sentinel by sky sides. The dark  
himself watches kindly from the ground.

She is safe then in her sense to move.  
As when on the saint's day the gold carozza  
plunges through beast boys of the village  
belling and sacramenting and the holy one herself  
in gold and plaster and fresh irises totters  
and all the mothers consecrate out loud,  
a small child born for fervency preserves  
heart-whole the guessed meaning of the Saint  
herself apart from all the tumult, so  
this young bare intellect among the lilacs now.

14 May 1994

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The boat swims through the house  
the house is big

twisting cleverly from room to room  
wherever water rushes

for water builds us  
and Gods are watching the go

twisting down the veins of me  
until I can't tell in from out—

rapacious happenstance  
is all a man has left.

14 May 1994

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Sometimes it doesn't say.  
The sailor forgets his knots,  
distances dissolve. Everything  
is so close. That tree  
for instance, what is it  
doing in my sea?

Villainy is hard for me—  
a cave is best, to face  
the inscrutable habits of my mind,  
but once I go *there*  
I pay my dues to Old Duality  
and bring *here* with me always,  
my mocker, my me.

But somewhere quiet need to study noise—  
or watch the salt waves lapping round my root.

15 May 1994

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Mist in trees. Meekly  
accept the name you come to bear,  
why not, all the sounds

say something (=we get some feeling  
when we hear them) and nothing  
(can't prove a thing, can't even

remember). Then you look at his face  
and say I don't remember,  
I know him, maybe a common kind of name,

nothing happened when I heard it,  
not just his face who-are-you at me,  
who? Still I will honor the angel,

the unknown visitor, the angel gene  
plasm meat of the name given,  
core of each sound full of informing

process, algorithms of anything you hear.  
And then the anecdotal overplus  
of silence. Everything

speaking at once, the white of time  
when all the colors sing together  
and god is born.

You wear such raiment too.

16 May 1994

## NOTE 5 TO BRIAN KIM STEFANS

Everything turns  
they say naturally

(what do they know  
about nature,  
that genesis, that  
leprosy and sudden death  
that cat  
eating a mouse  
still alive, that hawk  
with a feather in its beak

turns to money  
(that is our nature)  
turns to the dark trees  
up over Olivebridge  
where the reservoir  
holds all the water  
you will drink tonight  
and Kim Lyons will  
and James Levine  
if he's in town

*urbis aqua*, water  
of the city  
guarded (warded)  
by old New York City  
policeman in familiar  
blue whose patrol car  
sits up there  
under the hemlocks  
a hundred miles from Nueva

waiting for you to drink.  
Protecting you  
from crazed Woodstockian hippies  
tossing blue sugar and mind-rot ergotamine

into the clarity of water

the meek of it  
waiting for you.  
It has been weekend here  
and *Gelassenheit*, that lovely  
(you translate it,

I can't) releasement  
from Meister Eckhardt and  
questionable Heidegger

(not Jane Heidgerd, her  
of those same hills and hems and haws  
hungering in blue slate valleys  
for the accurate

up Ohayo Mountain  
from which last night  
we didn't see  
this celebrated Ashokan  
of which I speak.

A glass with you  
anyhow,  
in amity.  
Seeing what comes.

16 May 1994