

5-1994

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## FULL MOON OF VAISAKHA

Watering the shoe so  
the world will grow

In the first week I will walk  
over the future to be sure  
and in the second I will walk  
the past to see that nothing's left

Then when I'm sure the coming and the gone  
are both swept clean  
in the third week I will walk  
into the endless now

Where you are waiting for me  
wearing my clothes.

25 May 1994

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As if raised on a thunderstick a quiet tree  
endures its own  
unpiecing into flower

vague or amber pink a smile in shadow  
and then in perfect grey of rain  
it gives. The smile deserts the tree.

Sight beyond control  
fills the sky with feeling.  
Even my deaf ear can taste this.

26 May 1994

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Balanced last midnight at the precise  
boundary between two scents  
the rhododendron the lily of the valley

stands the doorway of our house.  
What do the Arabs know of Araby?

26 May 1994

## PICTURES

Lifting a life out of all these lives.  
Old snapshots. In every one  
I am dressed for my part in some absurd amateur production,  
embarrassed, embarrassing.  
No matter how close it comes to the present,  
the past is always ridiculous.  
Who are these people? Who wrote these plays?

27 May 1994

**Note 7 to Brian Kim Stefans 27 May 1994**

*I grew to dread falcons, by the shore*  
—BKS

wdnt you know it  
that's the line that hit me  
(dropped on me  
suddenly  
from the turbulent grey sky of the Sestina region)

that exorcism, is it, of a cloying  
poem (the one of his I never liked, why,  
and John Martin gave me  
for a wedding present once  
a framed boradside of it, magnificent,  
a glad bother,

and marriages like that did not last,  
the shore is always where the sea is busy  
with that schoolgirl learning subtraction  
thoroughness she has,  
Amphitrite, a maybe mother,  
queen I guess of steep-hipped sea birds  
who waddle on land but slice

through wilderness of air.)  
The shore is always falcon enough of its own.  
The beak is always working us over.  
A bird drops out of the air  
then drops through us  
and down through earth away,

but the sea is always at it.  
Like poems at the back of the mind, ones  
you don't like too much  
but stay in there, like this and like that, an endless  
zoo of comparisons from which nothing is safe,

I'm sorry about Joe Brainerd's death two days ago  
it is to be assumed that he is still, or again,  
laughing in the light. Or at the light.  
The way a sestina is finally  
ridiculous as an opera house or a seagull  
  
but I would hate, hate, hate to live without them.

27 May 1994

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As if the work had a simple measure  
the way a door frame nestles a door  
or a wall stands. *There are degrees  
of perfection, & we live.* That's what the old  
shepherd kept saying in my head,  
the one who'll do anything to go on.

1.

I marry you in noble instances.  
There are birds there, few here, river same,  
forest some, the train. I have tried to coax it  
and I have tried to sleep. This last night  
I managed the latter. The Mesmeric Union  
sends for me, and Mary at the bank, and Kim  
holding a flag without device, just passages of color  
like a tired pianist trying to forget.  
There, I've said it again.

2.

Union of the sooth with the need since we  
sort of speak one, language  
and we have rejected the identical God  
and we sell the same dusty grains and engines to the world  
and the same sun reddens my neck too. Union  
of the living with the dead, the desire  
with the deed, of stone  
with animal (= a bone), of books with fire (poetry).  
Some accommodation must be possible.

3.

All leaders are glorious, all armies  
feathery with valor and a snarl  
of sunlight and they kiss metal pieces.  
Breathe on me. I still want  
to hear Gruberova sing Elvira,

not some minor league team from Indiana.  
There's a Taj Mahal in every town  
if only you can find it.  
Let down the roof on your convertible,  
trade in your false teeth for postage stamps,  
tie a broom to the bowsprit and fly away,  
the adorable measure of the common day  
still keeps reminding you of what you forget.  
Just pay attention when they snicker in your face.

28 May 1994 KTC

## AN ADDICTION

Not to be consistent. Write Greek e's  
like my father and round e's like me.  
Or me's, since how can I tell  
which one stopped—a heartbeat ago—  
being you?

What I remember  
of drunkenness is falling into the arms  
of something that had no arms.  
A startled Invisible Man I was  
suddenly outlined with snow.  
Everyone could see me then. The terror  
of wanting and not touching and nowhere to go.  
And everybody knew what I was thinking,  
no way to hide, they laughed at my tumult of desire  
since only drunken people want and want and want  
in a world all round me sound asleep with having.

The last time I was drunk stood on an iron bridge  
over the Harlem and hated what I felt,  
the poverty, envy, jealousy and lust  
that hid from me the glory that I *knew* was here,  
not fame, the pure glory that is purely there  
welcoming, behind the sun or wet in the moon's lap,  
certain, splendid, meaningful and true.  
Ready to jump I stopped and reasoned  
if this is the *veritas* there is *in vino*, give me lies,  
the merciful sobriety of city mornings. No hope,  
no fear, just people on their way in light.

So here I am three decades later leaning  
on this slender plow (prow?) that leaves a dark furrow  
no wind or rain or music will efface  
because it speaks in you. The wake is permanent  
in this strange water. Premise: a word

spoken goes on listening, and lasts. The cabin  
where the word lives is in the purest mountain.  
Sometimes on top and sometimes deep inside.  
Whatever you are, this word follows where you go,  
in you like a faculty of listening. In you like tears.  
In a dark room, for instance, someone suddenly  
looped over the doorknob a string of artificial pearls.

29 May 1994 KTC

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1.

The shape of attention  
is more formal —shapely— than  
the shape of what's attended to.

And so we triumph over war,  
love and mystery.  
Everything except death

which seems to have a shape of its own.

2.

Insidious measurements.  
There was a king then I forget  
a fall from on high to a condition  
of diminished opportunity  
—where death looks like felicity—

and the mad have made their contract  
with the earth itself, no human  
interveners in their accurate dance.

The slope against which it is to climb  
from time  
to time distracted by the smell of fresh bread.

29 May 1994

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I was sitting here in the food court at Price Chopper  
drinking their hot weak coffee and  
wondering why it all seemed so familiar.  
The people, the thick people, the eyeglasses  
on the little boy. The eyes that rove but warily.  
It is the market, the shouq, the bazaar,  
the kermesse, the Wednesday market  
in Thonon and all the market towns of England  
and the knife vendors of Darjeeling and  
no matter how many roofs they span over it or  
middle-management levels it is the market still.  
We come to it and are the same. I am the same.

29 May 1994

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A little offering  
This body  
Into that mind.

30 May 1994

## CINNABAR

's the name of this tune.  
My sidemen  
are rhododendron flowers  
some purple finches blue jay squirrel—  
business as usual  
in the ballroom of the Hotel Samsara.  
A dove's here too—  
color's a pretty  
reliable guide— a grey  
mourning dove in fact  
temporarily silenced by breakfast.  
Sun coming over the highway,  
must be summer. Northward  
travel of the primary,  
remember all the ancient wisdom  
superstition agitation what to think and  
what those leaves are growing at your feet  
to bend and eat the satyr dances  
of all our ancient guidance.  
The tradition  
is spectacular—  
drink comfrey tea.  
And remember me—  
or do something else  
just as well  
as I do this and that's me too.  
Whenever you get it right it sounds like this.

30 May 1994

## GLASS

Here I am sitting facing you again  
they call it confronting  
my hands are in front of me  
my wishes behind me I am looking into the small  
aperture where the future is stored  
in the back of the breadbox behind the dry cookies  
and the packet of raisins came with cereal  
you never opened and ate preferring flakes dry

o I am looking straight at you again my seemly companion  
I suppose all the while you're a Greek philosopher  
i.e., interested in everything, but what if I'm wrong  
and have been all these years and you could care  
(as they say in Terre Haute) less about  
all my dreams and explanations (Indians of the Great Plains,  
the Coptic vowel system, Piranesi's staircases,  
the logwood bubbling over my spirit burner,  
my peach tree, my alkahest).  
You have your own city and never mind me.

But I mind you, you're all I have to mind,  
I bring you all my chickens and you  
(in this respect only like Suzie Rasula in Indiana  
who cut one artful into pieces and cooked in several forms  
so that one chicken served seventeen)  
do what has to be done. You market. You bagnio  
steamy with intrigues. You serene twilight.  
You empty sky.

Whatever you say  
I want to hear vocal music,  
not the words, just the striving—  
Bellini, Berlioz, Rossini, Verdi, Wagner,  
Puccini, Strauss, the body leaping  
out through its own mouth up  
into the preposterous world of the actual

we inhabit so dumbly all day long.  
And it sings in me to stay so.

And if you're not interested what do I do then?  
Me with all my doors and entrances,  
my fountain pens and coffee mugs, I ask you—  
is there an order in this evolving  
so the yellow bus becomes a family car  
like those Oldsmobiles that creep before me  
neatly bearing smug retirees slow  
and then the ambulance, the hearse, the scow  
and there I also go, me with my loves my  
interesting velleities—that go nowhere,  
library of cellular desires. But to will is all, that's all.

31 May 1994

## Fax Note Numero 8 to Brian Kim Stefans

I never went to Rutherford only  
himself ever made me stand  
in vision over the Falls  
of the Passaic

can you imagine  
what it would have been like  
all of us around the Old Man  
honoring him and being  
honored by his genuine slippery  
attentions? Paul  
wanted me to go out with him  
“many a time” but I’m probably  
making up the many,

once upon a time  
to Jersey  
beyond the copper  
domes of Jersey City

Hamilton's Weehawken  
valhalla, the fallen  
meadows sprawled around Newark,  
that insidious churchman  
Archbishop Marchenna who  
ran the diocese for the Primate  
Gerald Shelley himself  
the descendant of the same Mont  
Blanc I sheltered under  
word by word entrancing  
enlacing

until the hour fell

and it was now,

and farewell Jersey.  
Farewell Union City of burlesque and  
Lenten Passion Play

“the Oberammergau of America”  
Christ dying in purple light  
while Meyerbeer’s march from *Le Prophète*  
convulsed the auditorium,

one wept, one does weep  
at such things, that simple death  
meant to revive us

we live forever  
it seems  
in some fashion

Ceravolo, Brainerd,  
Spicer, Olson,  
Blackburn,  
how are they different  
having closed their books

except for us to open.  
A cartoon of a man on his deathbed  
worrying about a comma.  
Tomb of the Unknown Poet  
crushed under the bridge at Mostar,

what do we know of anything,  
even the best of us just fantasy-mongers,  
the silly narrative of Dante waking the dead.

OK. I have said some names  
I honor. Steve Jonas  
never had a chance. Listen to him  
if you get a chance. He knew  
how to make Pound’s text listen  
to us. In those days they called that Jazz.

31 May 1994

