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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

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 M A Y M O R N I N G

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

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

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

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

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

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

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