

Dear Sam,

When I search the past for you  
you'd not be Basho sleeping  
next to pissing horses, or  
Li Bai dead drunk reaching for  
the full moon's reflection. (You  
can rarely see the Cascadia  
moon & you're more a sea guy  
than a man about rivers.

Leave that for Sund and the cult.)  
More measured than falling for  
that old reflection trick, though  
his moon lunge might've been the  
equivalent of Kevorkian  
in T'ang era Xi'an. And  
the boots remain muddy. How  
Rexroth's alive inside you.  
The last first guy here looking east.

I think about how you love  
to tell stories and always  
happy to set you up. Take  
Long Tall Dexter at Centrum.  
They're gonna play scales even  
if they're the "Master Class." (How  
THAT phrase reverberates  
w/ the unwillingness to  
humble one's self. Ah Port  
Townsend! Will you visit there  
after your last taste of cold  
Otokoyama, return  
as a whisper in the poplars  
of Cape George, or leading the  
*Congress of Trees*? We're still  
digesting your last will and  
testimony, your final  
Habitations.

I thought it was your “Zen golf  
concentration” w/ which you  
screened out backswing distractions  
but no, just yr hearing aid  
turned off. How, at Avalon  
you’ll watch the eagles, know a  
baby eagle as it flies  
overhead while you shoot for  
birdies after a good drive,  
or settle for a lay up &  
take your bogie like a man.

Nowadays four thousand face  
book friends’ll keep your keyboard  
chattering about fracking,  
Guantanamo, bigot’s parades,  
modern day McCarthy’s,  
outsized CEO’s pay or  
Rachel Corrie mixed in w/  
a dash of the masters, strive  
to be a poet of modest  
renown taking Kuan Yin over  
Christ for Christ’s sake. Happy  
w/ cold Momokawa.

How you’d say in an interview  
you cd do the Kevorkian  
(not in so many words) your  
last poems of the melancholic  
but if generosity be love,  
your love studies paid back abundant.  
& they’re’ll be stories galore  
maybe the zen bootcamp you ran  
called a Writer’s Workshop  
& continued resentment  
from the “dilletante periphery”  
you’d warn about over &  
over having felt their wrath

they who'd envy you, want a  
foto w/ you but not want  
the 5A wakeups and strange  
languages, or how they'd court  
the company of dabblers to  
approximate the feelings  
of masters, the life-long shortcuts  
you refused to take.  
In death, you'll be a wise-ass  
Raven above the ferns &  
moss, urging a poet yet-  
to-be w/ a perfect seven  
beat image, then gone -- a blur  
of black in one of a *hundred*  
*avenues of gray across the sky*  
as we hunker down for life  
without that irascible  
orphan who lived it all as  
a sacramental relationship  
that lasts always always urging us  
to live as if we'll be *measured*  
*by stone.*

With Love and Gratitude,

Paul Nelson  
12:13p - 3.15.14