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A flower is another kind of mirror
I look in to see itself

the one nobody knows
and everybody sees.

In every word
they say people are telling I
don't know how I got here
trust nothing
I tell you I am lying
so you'll get the point
there is none and I don't know what to do.

Whereas a flower does not consent to itself.
A flower is always other.

1 May 1994

In memory of the mirror
when I could still see my confusion
smiling at me, hand
maybe raised to my face
to stroke my cheek or say good-bye.

1 May 1994

1
I want
to hide

2
the word
inside

3
I want to hide the word inside itself.

1 May 1994

THE NATIVE

City being
being belle

ma ville and how
to get over that

this me
historical

flesh-wound of a town
musing me anew.

How slow
they move.

In quiet rain
we can't hear

above the grey
drone of stone

buildings,
color of *to stand*.

Not to fall.
Sunday brunch

Fifth Avenue the old
yellow and green

lunacy of buses
old double-deckers once

irishing down
crowded avenue now

an empty ordinary
street uncrowded.

Low traffic
and simple eye

touching it
all again.

1 May 1994 NYC

On the twelfth day of Flowermonth and
the day 8-Tooth a guide
is supposed to appear and a guide
arrives out of the air

a mouth full of teeth
speaks: teeth
cut the breath
by shaping
where the tongue
sits when the wind
rides

dust over the piazza
the stir of sunset
wind falls,

corn, crows. Nada.

A whole day in one second,
like total anesthesia
waking, after, and hearing it's done, all done,
the thing, the cut, the ceremony
for which your whole body suddenly seems meant.

This is the day marked Today on the bitter calendar—
sweet green lawns and teeth--of-line
and red leafed fruit trees meant to blossom,

all we mean, all we mean, a marriage of us to what passes.

2 May 1994

VOCATION

I will sit beneath this tree
and issue valid destinies
to those who pass me and
to those lower ones who move
down on the grand floor of the atrium.
Me and my fig tree
making sense of you.
All of you. I look and tell
the first thing that comes to mind.
And that is you. Forever.
Your story. Told.

2 May 1994
Galleria, Poughkeepsie

DRUNKEN MAN FALLEN MAN IN THE
STREET

—Why did you do this to yourself?

—So that the rest of you
could feel good about yourselves

and pity me. Over aeons
you may yet develop
a little human decency.
This is a small price for me to pay.

2 May 1994
Galleria, Poughkeepsie

THE CASTING

for Charlotte

Cast from the door an image of the room:
the island over that fallow sea
with sweet blond animals on it
mooring at dawn to wake you

for you are also milk and cloud
tatters round the edge of a bright mind
you never heard the wind

you never felt the wave, the Orinoco
still yellow a hundred miles at sea
and your shoulder slips from under the sheet
waking me with the sweetness of your smell.

We wake into the senses from where?
Clear-minded and baffling and apart,
the other room we keep arriving from.

3 May 1994

Dust and clouds and wax and wood
the table is. A knot
in pine where density
is destiny, a car goes by.

Enough clues. Solve. I'm waiting
on the other side of the lawn.
I am your native language now,
speak me. I chose you

from all others. Do you know it
at last? Gold and road.
Leaf, and foam. The information
hurries over the falls. All I am

is waiting for you to speak.

4 May 1994

I sit down to it this job this opening
(a woman lying in the surf)
they are calling me
to be drenched by the occasion

to give birth to your instructor in a field
nine nights after you fell from heaven
rested calmly in the water till the lifeboat came
stood on line and now you have bread in your hand

the miracles are too frequent to notice, it is the law
that's hard to find, we live among exceptions
who will teach us what to pick up what to put down?
(you came with a candle it burned the water)

mother is the largest conversation (you spoke
the subway shuddered its way north under fountains and museums)
the conservation of inequality is every political agenda
(give me all your love) nothing is personal everything is close.

5 May 1994

YARLUNG ZANGPO

Today in Tibet they say

Yarlung Zangpo canyon is 198 miles long 5 kilometers deep aswarm with monkeys and tigers, cut by the Brahmaputra in the Pliocene

is bigger than the Grand Canyon, i.e., about the same length but three times deeper.

How wide's not said.

There must be a unit ~200 miles for Great Terrestrial Canyons.

Semitropical Tibetan gorge. Imagine the feel of it, the ripe of it, with the river flushing through.

I wonder if the Chinese news agency was trying to say Tsangpo, the Tibetan for R. Brahmaputra. [Yes— later postings make this clear. It's the river name. The canyon itself is NAMCHE BARWA.]

I wonder if it's true. What is waiting down there for me?

In ferns wet with warm eternal spray, monkeys howl.

[News of 5 May 1994]

Grey sky relieving anxiety
the light is everywhere the same—
live with it. For one day
the glare does not rehearse my death.

From the quickening glint work of the stream
I glimpse through new leaves, weeds,
I guess the usual conduct: kings,
concubines, clergymen, the bleak

sincerity of the rich. Size
means something still. We are all
the audience, and gape at one another
since we are the actors too.

The Zlata business. The babies
in Rwanda entertain us
(the technical term) all night
in CNN. Men flee their wives

down the tunnel of inept addictions
when *I alone was set the task*
to make you free is what she says.
If she could speak. If he could listen.

The self-consuming celebrity, the light.
That's why I feel peace this morning, Peter,
the smug promises of democracy.
No shadows on a rainy day

but no rain yet. One more
contract signed. Idleness
may save us yet, the quiet mind
staring at itself, relaxed, unwanted.

6 May 1994

Abendrot

The arrogance of light that finds us
equalizes all. The same sigh.
No more the exquisite carpentry
of nights abed. My hammer
dreams of you alone. Flower
here and flower there. The years
in their quiet sarabande
go slow around me, they wrap
their arms around me, fly me
into the evening sky, that map
of pure memory. Over west
one last scarletting along the world,
bright bright and then the not.

6 May 1994
Listening to Haydn's 99th

A gap stares me. Yawning
through Haydn. This is too
Analytical Triumphal, it
leaves no room for my doubt.

And I have doubt. Even the dreary
classic say-everything-three-
times does not communicate
insecurity, as it does when I do it.

But the healing gap, hole in clothes,
belt loop, ferry slip, zeppelin
hangar, radio tower stuck in the sky,
keyhole, tongue-in-cheek, flower calyx

drowned in pollen captivating bees,
blue ogival Mary Mother of
God window of true blue in the yellow
flame on the candle, a light

in the darkness, hole in the ground.
Thinking of these I found a mood
or mien of silence, love,
to tend us through these ceremonies,

your head on my shoulder, tender
weariness of this music, small
leafbuds on our private shrubbery
back home, singsong of Great Doubt

reminding us: *true is only something we can do.*

7 May 1994

Twenty pages of prose fiction snapped like a twig
from a dead branch on a live tree. Tell me

who the words are for? Tell me the frightened child
eased by such lies. It is in me like a ship

breasting endless waves in endless wind
and the god sun sparkling over all.

7 May 1994

[Note 1 to Brian Kim Stefans]

Nancarrow did you
know our friend L.B.
was the one who
got him all that money
the Grant

the “trick with
all of it” the shame
we have to talk of such
thingly occasions when
spirit-people

wearing white Confucian
caps are riding
sober in the Mourning
Cart grieving
specifically our Poverty

that lady
you saw me cross
the road with also
her brown ratskin cloak
her broad feet

Plato was full of it.
On the fifth day
of the fifth month one
climbs high situations
and eats rice tamales

steamed in banana
leaves, the confusions

of history
are upon us,
we taste them, every

Friday we buy more sum.

7 May 1994 / le 17 Floréal

NOTE 2 to BRIAN KIM STEFANS

It isn't
(continuing
with Nancarrow)
music
you can't imagine

for example
when I
predictably in California
finally heard him
it was precisely
as I imagined he would be

only more so.
Berkeley Irby
old Columbia
vinyl it would be
from an earlier
revival—
think of it,
an archaic revival

clangor and horns
all insistent
from the one
spectacular piano
—imagine whales
sounding in butter
imagine the sun
trapped in a kitchen drawer

the exaltation
is nearby and domestic
and very intricate
it is built
four inches past
the edges of hearing

no one can understand
music
in the first place.

Isn't that
what we've been saying
all along
in what must now
with accuracy
be called our
practice?

(I don't know
I think I have sunstroke
today, pouring
pine trees
on the fire

and Charlotte saw
two herons above us
on our way to the fire

((and even now
says a certain immature
Broad-winged Hawk
we saw two days ago
for hours patient

has just come back to our tree.

9 May 1994

