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Arming against order. A brick circumstance, red as lying in the road. India.

Do you remember? The faces change less than in Africa, Americas.

It is all things we have to tell you, truths and terrorists. We lurk in your ink.

And then the alphabet changes.

A river is gone. Leper at my elbow trying to be me while I’m trying to be the girl across the street. First Communion Sunday. Brittle sunlight on new grass.

The white veils of compulsory mortality. Leaves on the ash.

24 April 1994
He mistook the shadows of bare branches on a white wall
For a map of the town. He will look
Forever for what is naturally his own—
Street, house, home, hearth, fire, wife.

24 April 1994
Wappingers Falls
Joggers in their white shoes
come over the hill, he stays
one stride ahead, her knees
already giving out. I am watching
a couple running towards trouble
and can’t help. They won’t listen.
If she won’t trust her own knees
who will she trust? The confusion.
I thought we were on the world
to give joy and redeem our pledges.
What has that to do with running away?

25 April 1994
Full Moon Morning
The one I must not say. The pillar
In the desert, with fresh inscriptions,
Blue tile round the doorway but no door.
Climb me, I am the forbidden. Decline me,
Better folk than you have left me here
Casting perfect shadows all year long.
I am essence hungering for accident. I hum
In the wind and call it music. Who made me?

25 April 1994
EAUX AU
SOMMET

LAP LUI E
DES
CEND RES

AUX SERRES
VIT RINE

a purity from April 1994 —
All the amazements
cycle of institute
a board stretched over mud
to bne my face!

Nightly!
Green sprouts whitely
surround a tree root,

things surrender
to each other,
swallowing earth
lift or heave

a nub of silica.
Aluminum ethics,
we are made
by radio.
We are the was.

(2 IV 94)
25 April 1994
SMALL PEOPLE OF ANOTHER OTHER

Not my own other.
But what we find
beneath the tree
when we go out
breathless and afraid
into the television.

Where a man holds a large green ball
spinning it on the palm of his
like God holding the world where are we now?
Some kind of city.
Some waiting animal.
Blue feathered, made of air.

There are things to be studied.
There is wind.
A plate of rice,
watching my step.

*Useful, usual, hence true.*
Try a distant relative,
the Queen’s lady-in-waiting
a noble jaw. My face,

I can’t trust you.
This is a sinister motel.
And there is always this:
a plate of rice with hot chilis,

a spring on a hillside,
wet ankles. Lush nervousness,
like lust without an other,
an audience is looking at my teeth.
2.
How did you learn to speak?
I listened.

How did you learn
to walk? I fell.

3.
But how did I learn to cry?
I watched the green shoots come
under the rich grey skies of April.
I watched a woman naked
and a frightened man. The river
choicelessly went by.
And then I lost the knack of weeping.

4.
After thirty-three years it is time
Kingston City said something to me.
Of course I’ve been wanting it to speak
in Dutch and nakedness.

But then I knew it spoke
all the dialects of sky,
sky and waiting, sky and waiting and
being wordless, watching the way it is.

(Early April 1994, Kingston
chez Yeshe Namdak)

25 April 1994
WHITE

birch trees
bare
against pure
blue

sky April evening cold

and bright.
Everything this.

Mid-April, Saratoga Springs
SMALL PIECES FROM A PUBLIC LECTURE

1. Heard from Laurie Patton

Practice is
progress. Sanskrit
hair, a challenge
threatens grasping.

Is any text the same?
What is exposed
in expository
writing? The rule
of revision.

See it again, was it same
the first time?
Who hears
when you don’t speak?

Pronunciations
of a road.

2. Spoken by Sally Mertons:

Analyzing my future
put yourself at risk with those ideas.

3. Spoken by Deirdre d’Albertis:

By virtue of smallness
our responsibility
is to design.

23 April 1994
ONE SITTING IN THE AUDIENCE

In coif she was and tight
woven wimple white
a face pinched by air:

She is a nun of it, of questioning, a nun
in a saintless society
finding her own godway.

She is doing something
bigger than she’s ever done
just by being here.

After years of engineering
it is raining words. They’re drenched now,
you can see people shining

in their wet fur, shivering,
waiting for silence to love them again,
as it does at four a.m. when they briefly wake,

the flag of Thingland rais’d over an empty world.

23 April 1994
A very bisque Nabisco in a plastic sleeve with ordinary
tan light crisp —but not too— tells an overOrdinary story
like a dromedary in the pasha’s tentative
entablature of ars nova music interpreted nowadays for the guitar
o it is to wonder if the cascara-bitter laxative ceremonies of “our”politics are
ever likely to cleanse this world we (complaining
tone) require more of than the usual whereas that and that alone
has the mysterious temptation to be difficult
of which girls’ first post-prom pinafores are made
stiff-starched and shadow-shushing as they go
walking in and out between parked cars your Uncle
perhaps is one of those with a camcorder in his fist
judging nicely the Historic Moment when
now becomes Then and is worth a slot in the book.
Nothing is ever really ordinary enough am I?

25 April 1994
Near the altar a crush of flowers. Businessfolk in ponytails, their hard lenses set on sanctity. The news is good today—night closed its doors. Those who love sunlight are stuck with it. The king has gone away. Whenas the truth of virtue is rain and the king come back.

26 April 1994
Floored by opportunity I wait a kind
of grass, a board to measure me against,
a puzzle tree with birds, a ship not making land.
Secret name of this:  *a man at morning.*

26 April 1994
ALONE

In the coal cellar they waited, 
loosed into human sleep by burning 
or into the fancies of the idling child 
hiding in those hard hillocks, 

the salamander speculations of desire. 
I was a child who hid beneath the stairs. 
There was so little room for me to be me 
anywhere, any angle unobserved 
was precious, like a street at midnight 
or a closet floor. I wanted that closed garden 
where no one walked a dog and sunlight only 
trembled nearby through a gauze of leaves 
and wind was sedulous and fine rain toyed. 

Then I could meet myself below the pine, 
high noon, color of balsam in the air, a waft 
of everywhere condensed as here. The elixir 
of privacy. I hear those other voices now.

26 April 1994
MOROSUS SUM

The dismal gists of authorship
arrest a matchflame halfway to its candle.
A green field fills up with louts.
Lutes. We call it seasonal and it may be,
but I sense the ancient ghosts come back
with all their brutal yearnings still intact

—there is no noise where the dead hang out
so they want music here. I see each one
uncountably many, pretending to be dandelions.
Trucks roar in hot muffled leafless air.
The self-humiliating young attend the quivering
and shout, the least they can do is join the dying.

*Alors* (as books say), they are persuasive,
*les morts*, they want us all to join them
but most they want the young, the ones whose skins
best show wounds and weals. It is *The Seduction of the Living by the Dead*, though men call it springtime.
You can tell because they beckon from the ground.

27 April 1994
The withers of that horse go touch me
evensong at morning my lute is perforate
in a pattern of stars street maps silhouettes
till I can’t tell I muse from I remember, or I do none of these,
breeze and billowing curtains! A Cuttyhunk morning
and still on earth! The curve of it (bowl or
soundbox) intends to propagate verdurous
Sanguinaria whose root writes red — pure Chinese music
— depends on how many planets a culture reckons —
tones — in the dream house a horse is led
three times round the sleepers and if he neighs
the sleeper perishes, that is, wakes up and goes to work
with a horse all day at the back of his head.

28 April 1994
Until I do nothing but what I do
and the sky falls down

meek children looking for mothers
fathers looking for jobs

what are you looking for
you who are reading this?

Can you see me? Can you guess the man
waiting under the stone of the word,
insect man or druid man,
Merlin come to whisper in your sleep?

The leaves of trees tell you what I tell.

29 April 1994
Catch me saying no! It hovers
like a grand crow over sunny lawns
and wiser than they are and sees far.

Tells me what to do, this No
with two wings (myself and others), with loud
heartbeats in the sky,

whose lovesong is always a warning.
Intimate crow flies up in my chest
not to say No but to say nothing,

quick shadow on grass instead of any word.

30 April 1994
NI]-re

I open my mouth in the place I am told
I open an hour, I make a hole
in the side of the day and it speaks

I open a word when I am told
the word has a heart in it
This is the skill they taught me
that I have hardly learned,

I do not label things I speak their names
I pierce the armor of their seeming
and out of the crack they speak
they call and we are busy hearing

I open my mouth and the mouth of me
is a hole in the side of the world
the mountain chooses to speak through me
and the cloud is persuaded to tell what it knows

going and no staying and no coming and no fear,
I open my mouth in the house I am told.

30 April 1994
S A W K I L L

Then at my house. The leaves come out
the stream is hard to see
sparkle and darkling quick
between the trees is all

a rush, a sense of going
but nothing gone, it’s always
there when I look close,
river on the other side of the mind.

30 April 1994