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juID2000

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Color me earwig
I am design exclusive
of space I am *endure*
or *gneiss*, admire
me most when I falter.

I am true to you then
contour should be
a native word what
would the first woman
have called the hill
that rises as her body

or that she held
can hold still
between her hands
no more than
you do this to me

question tone color
a lagoon architects
balkan with canals
weave water

the most devious
insect tells the truth
ill-equipped by Venus
to prevaricate

they are the ever
present witnesses
of a glory we

question tone have
— so caught with
our good-not-good
up — lost
the eyes for

smell me
I am Asia
unquote an attitude
made comely the subject
a long sentence
without an object

nothing proposed
save continuous breath
out of which question
god knows everything
night comes down

16 July 2000

Close enough to be far
all the villainies = history
a bucket of words griefgrease
thunderpockets a fascist light
escapelessly overt

Boyscouting burgeoning a troupe
of null wit wearies
the no longer happy few
this is anger this is Mars
remembering your wallet

slung on hipbone thick
with alien meat
cryptic celebrations of not I.

16 July 2000

Relay race in hypertime you
propose to wriggle before me
through wormholes in cosmic
Miracle Whip until I catch
up with inside myself in you

try to be you and guess what you did
virgently luridous a smee
coasting down a smile
you land me
into the capture you tingle.

17 July 2000

Give me the least part
Of what I'm not

Time's asthma
Be no measure

Let it troll quick water
Free let it limber

Let it web
Till beauty by itself

Says everything backwards
And we are home again.

18 July 2000

ENSAYOS

the breasts of the goddesses are bare
to tell us we should be shameless in doing good

bare-breasted compassion, give milk to everyone,

it should not occur to us to think: I've done enough
or Leave people alone, they want to be miserable.

Be shameless, nakedly caring, nakedly helping.

18 July 2000

Twenty years ago my mother and father
Came up to help me clear up my house
After one more wrecked marriage. They
Had been married sixty years. It gave them
Pleasure to take little things I didn't want
And array them outside the house — a yard sale,
Each item with a little price on it,
And how proud they were at the end of the day
Bringing me a few dollars for all the junk
That moved away from the house and never
Spoke to me again, things, things. But they
Took the most pleasure from the quiet hours
Sitting in sunshine by my porch and talking
To the other, mostly old, people who stopped,
To look, people who were old enough to find
Life in the looking, and who still could nibble
A certain tender life left in other people's things.
I think about them now, who love the world
Piece by piece, a knick-knack on my shabby lawn
An augury of glory. The tenderness
Of their love, their quiet, terrible contentment
That frightened me so much, the serenity of God.

19 July 2000

A man's first island is the only one he knows.
Or: every island is the first one that you've known.

Born on one I didn't know it, we went
To another all the time that wasn't called one,

But all the time we saw an island there: Blackwell's
Island in the slender channel, bottle green

The water those days and gaunt tall buildings
On the gaunt scary island. Sick and mad lived there,

My aunt among them, of whom nothing was said.
An island is all surmise, an island is all exile.

It was a kind of leper island. Insulate, isolate
Both mean: make like an island. Be alone.

20 July 2000

THE GYPSY'S CURSE

Because all we have is what the French call
Sensible teeth we tend not to test-bite
Silver coins that cross our palms,
Treating them just like any other cliché —
It works, it means, leave it alone.
And then the pain begins. Upward
From the receiving hand along the vein
To throb its way into the gum, the eyelid
And finally the brain, that uneasy pudding
For the sake of which I guess our bones
Stand upright a hundred years or so
Getting yellower all the time, like teeth.
Like dandelions finally and we blow away,
Gnashing our teeth at the coachmen,
Having seen too many Bergmann movies
Not to recognize them as Death, Inc.
So that's my opera, Joe. A few tunes
And your work is done. I had to do
All the living and dying, love and dentistry.
Now it's up to you. Go find a song.

20 July 2000

Any sentence is an insult.
Grammar rules. That's
the beauty and the beast of it,
what makes things clear
makes them too clear.
Verdict means 'truth telling'
and that truth kills.
In the name of the state
which language plus guns
forever. Break a comma
and think you're doing something good.
But all the good has been done already.
So shut up and listen.
Pay not attention to any sense it makes.

20 July 2000
Amtrak

INCIDENTS OF TRAVEL IN CITIES

I'm mostly about anger and algorithms.
But sometimes I try to be nice,
And the woman said I looked like the ocean.
Color, size, instability, unpredictability I wondered
Which of these she meant when she saw me.
Or was it all just the first flattery
That leapt to her lips, i.e., like a poem,
Saying what comes to mind. As mind.
I do take a special pleasure in hotel showers
And never any two of them the same
All my life. Pour it on, the rush of water,
The artifice of clean. Variations on the simplest
Most satisfying technology. Poetry.

20 July 2000
New York

People busy remembering.
Charles O'Malley my priest
At 32 Cornelia Street all
French and elegant and poor
Beyond any poverty I'd known
And bent double with desire,

Now across the street is Mario's
Famous Po at 31
And rich is poor is rich and
High is low forever falling
Bent double on the wheel of change
I remember the licitness of love
Before the indulgences began
That spook the heart with warning

Warning in the house of longing
And the people perish the food
Rots in the dumpster and only
The numbers linger, no way
To get numbers out of the mind.

21 July 2000
New York (Bway/77th)

People sit in café windows
Undressing other people as they pass
Feels like Vienna today
Off the Praterstern, past the Admiral's column
Traffic moving brisk in blue shadowed morning
On a wide uncluttered road

Under little oak trees someone planted

A city a god

Now Thomas Bernhard are you grieving
In Schimpfenheim behind the clock
Where hell's raduates are groaning
In their anxiety to recur
To this condition long supposed unpropitious
For sleek-garmented revenants

But now we know it is the socket of desire
Everything in creation longs to shove inside it

And there is no mercy for a man who talks too much.

21 July 2000
New York

MA VILLE

Lattes and ginkgo
Leaves an old
Man waits for the bus.

21 July 2000
New York

And what is worthwhile coming home to see?
a man trembling in the summer sun,
a wind analyzing ivy. Redhead angry
at dumb escort in red car.

I came to see the Son of Man
looking old and tired in the mirror
to find the Christ in me where I come from

these sun-spoiled streets of Nazareth
Broadway and 75th Uncle Christ dreams beneath the tree
how the bullet dreams of fleeing from the gun
into the shape-annihilating impact of the wound

to have done once and for all with symmetry!

And it is always to a sentence one comes home
sense of something you want, hence
something to ask for, explain, excuse, entreat.
A child behind me screams Ow out loud
with mechanic regularity of insistence
I turn and see him smiling
in his mother's eyes
who's thrilled with his attention.
Emotions are not even self-consistent

So you need a different logic to be alive.

21 July 2000
New York

ARS POETICA [21/7/00]

So writing
Is café conversation with the absent

This pen my Bräunerhof my Deux Magots
This notebook my Left Bank

And what I imagined to be my thoughts
Are just pigeons scattering through Broadway trees
Startled by a juggernauting downtown bus.

21 July 2000
New York

Now that every city is a foreign country
The boy gets home in time to hear “Jack
Armstrong All American Boy,” the news
From Iwo Jima, Ypres, Gallipoli,
Gangrene soldiers in the sludge of Waterloo.
There are no boundaries in history —
A little snake around her wrist to tell the time.
In the Elderberry Museum at Grosse Pointe you
Get mildly tiddly on free samples of Primary
Shield Mid-continental Elderberry Wine.
Carrot wine. Wheat grass juices in Seattle.
Or you name it, I’ll forget it. Stand up comedy,
Fall down tragedy, every hour of day a waltz.
Eventually we take everything seriously
— that is the haunted law library of the world.
God give us a few artists in each generation
To come up with a few exceptions. The lake
Of order is a stifling swamp. But I love
Your profile when you raise it to the Moon.

21 July 2000
Amtrak

Cast lots for His coat again
and cut each color
free from every other.
Then take His pure blue pure red et cetera
and the Star of India that J.P.Morgan gave
to the Museum of Natural History
palest sapphire with its six point star
hundreds of carats and the yellow
citrine of her little ring
and you're in business. Magic, Inc.
Magic = Interludes of order in a nonsense world,
a little order for Christ's sake
in this disreputable abode.
Be careful with your colors.
I'm too tired to tell you
how many of them you'll have then
softer than a foreskin.
Stronger than a Roman arch.

21 July 2000

The radio though does not know how to listen
and the eye sees nothing of what you see
when you look through it towards me

whatever I seem to be. Or used to seem
playing Skilball in the arcades of Rockaway
because in those days I was not up to much.

Just watching and biding your time
till you got around to getting born and being
ready for me. Till then I had to accumulate

what I now long so ardently to disperse.
The transformer. Every wave that creamed
up that amazingly white sand back then

supplied the information I needed then you
need now we both can sail on for the rest of
time. That mystery of discomfort, that subject

so appalling to consider, we who can't tell
the future from the past. But setting that aside
we are the masters of a most sacred transaction

by which we seem to have made the world.

22 July 2000

PHILATELY

Summary values
principality of first day issues
BxRx a verb of doing something
such that nothing feigns something
long enough for us to fall in love with it

the world. You darling
are my postage stamp you
send me to the destinataire
but also indicate
indeed comprise my *value*

magenta as I am in face
and perforated as I would hope to make you too
penetrated like a watermark

a flavor lingering in an empty mouth.

22 July 2000

I can see through the paper
the sun on the lawn
my feet are warm in their felt shoes

the one-size-fits-all love poems in the anthologies
make me want a brasher truth
something just for me and you

but by the time you read my wishes
you could be anybody again
and all my precious lies

turn boring generalities
your amber eyes
your highfalutin hair.

22 July 2000

It is all I can do
to watch the sky
keeps telling me
stories I want

to be in them
their hero their
heroine all
the high walkers

in that placeless
place always over
the inescapable
theater we're in

everything here
reflected there
and never know
how much comes down.

23 July 2000