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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

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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

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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

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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

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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



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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

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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

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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/77<sup>th</sup>)

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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

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MA VILLE

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

21 July 2000  
New York

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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 75<sup>th</sup> 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

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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

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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

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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

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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

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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

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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