

9-2013

## sepC2013

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## A SONNET THAT EXPLODED

1.

I wonder of the cool of it  
the transform in the rigging  
lets the wind speak consonants  
at last, that great Voweller  
brought to our dumb school  
at last, at last  
someone else is talking.  
What say you, breeze marine?  
Have all the old packboats  
finally let you come home  
and new books to be read? Alas,  
not likely. The new books  
have the same words as the old.  
The ship we are  
has no rudder of return.  
Alas again we have to stay  
in the same story, it seems,  
the seeming itself until  
we hear the surf at last  
crashing on the other shore  
and then, and then  
we slip between the reefs  
to the glad island of nobody home.

2.

All you conquistadors  
I know you know,  
it wasn't for those famous G's  
that sent you out  
— God called glory girls—  
it was the quest for a desert place  
a dear final land  
with nobody in it,  
you wanted a place  
outside the system,  
a voyage from samsara  
to all the other thing,  
the genuine West.

3.

And there the words would all asleeping.  
And you could change the names of things,  
walk right out of your story  
leave your beliefs behind  
walk into the actual light. And you too  
could be a seed of something else,  
be planted there and grow,  
or else be a soul again and come back  
to lead new mariners to those shores  
in new caravels and steamships and submarines –  
to flee from this into this,

**come ashore on this  
actual moment  
washed clean,  
still the taste of salt  
on your skin. Our salt.**

**8 September 2013**

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**Hearing someone speaking you hear  
words beneath the words the person says  
the overtones talk too, the partials,  
and all the physics of speech  
begins — dozens of words  
that scurry outwards from  
the word apparent,  
the word the speaker means**

**but what is intention worth  
in a physical world?  
is there a word that breaks  
open like a milkweed pod  
and scatters airborne seed  
inward rather,  
deep into the hearing itself  
so one word is many and is yours?**

**8 September 2013**

## **CLOUDS**

**not just relief from the sun's brightness —  
polarized light is itself a healing,  
calming, reminding.**

**A cloud lets you think.**

**All great inventions  
come from rainy countries.**

**The cloud  
is the coating of the mind.**

**8 September 2013**

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**Night is one long  
continuous voyage**

**each day a different  
port of call.**

**8 September 2013**

## **SISTE VIATOR**

**It said in my head  
again what it said  
sixty years  
ago and I did.**

**2.**

*Traveler stay home*  
**is what it meant, in my best  
medal-winning schoolboy Latin,  
we are proud  
of the words in our mouths,  
but do we really pay for them,  
for the pride,  
pay dearly for what we've won,  
for what has escaped our grasp.**

**3.**

**Years ago I flew on a plane  
from somewhere to Phoenix, Arizona.  
On the plane was Bob Hope  
the famous comedian, he walked  
up and down the aisles smiling,  
a transparent enthusiast, delighted  
to bring delight to others,  
a kind of saint, I thought,**



eager to make people happy,  
a saint of the Cowper Powys mold,  
or smiling Francis.

When we got out of the plane  
the first thing I saw on the runway  
was a Gila monster watching me  
and it cracked me up,  
I thought it was part of his routine.

I think of Hope now I think  
because he wrote a funny  
book I never read  
about his travels: *I never  
left home*. A better  
translation of my Latin

4.

There, you wanted an anecdote  
to fix the sentiment in mind.  
*Exemplum* as the moralists  
of what we call the middle  
ages (they called themselves  
we of modern times)  
called telling little stories  
exhibiting virtues and vices  
in operation. So there is  
my Gila monster story

**with famous comedian**

**for what it's worth.**

**Laugh at me.**

**Everything makes us live longer.**

**I never went back to Phoenix, Arizona.**

**9 September 2013**

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**Let the tongue  
stay home  
in its nice bower  
moist and shady  
well-guarded by teeth,  
let it sleep.**

**Keep the peace  
by keeping still.  
I have a little agate  
I keep it in my pocket  
it says *Tais-toi*  
when I look at it.  
We all need  
a pebble or two  
to remind us of  
the long silence of stone.**

**9 September 2013**

## **DAWN**

**The light is almost up now,  
gives color slowly to the pink rose  
that all this while has been  
just a curl of darkness in the dark.**

**9 September 2013**

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**I wonder about these things  
how close we have to be  
to the rising Sun  
to understand  
where night is coming from.**

**There are so many places  
where night was.  
And where it took us  
also, tripping through the curious mazes  
between what we remember  
and what we desire —**

**sometimes I want to recover  
a past I never had,  
sometimes I want to imagine  
something I never imagined before,  
something dawn-like,  
something on the other side of dawn  
that isn't day,  
that isn't anything I know how to say.**

**9 September 2013**

## **SCRAPS FROM STRAVINSKY**

**But own the sound of none.**

**Or not. The down drone  
of what is not known.**

**Need it. A unit  
of what is certainly known.**

**]Example: the earth moves  
around the sun.]**

**What shall we call  
something as sure as that?**

**A gnoeme? It should be  
what is not lost in poetry.**

**But what is found?**

**If you dream the deeps  
the surface will be known.**

**The future is built  
into the surfaces of things.**

**Read the gleam  
of sunlight on the skin.**

**Where the great poem sleeps,  
waiting to be new.**

**9 September 2013**

[hearing Stravinsky and Lourié last month]

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**Always from quiet beginnings,  
Shakespeare idling by the Avon pool  
praying no one would come along,  
not even pretty women or young men,  
no one for whom his mind  
must make his tongue find words,  
those imagined words that real people  
are saying in your head while they  
smiling pass you by, to waters  
of their own, leaving you alone  
to make up all they'll do and say  
and how you'll have to answer them.**

**9 September 2013**

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**But did I know you—  
then we were talking  
of course the bar, I was  
not drinking — who**

**do you think you  
are? You said  
to come close-lipped  
to a fountain**

**or something like that  
I alluded to my kidneys  
and some doctor  
years ago when men**

**still drank cocktails  
remember? You didn't.  
You had your own  
idea of human organs**

**how they work or don't  
and you said Listen  
Tiger, have a drink  
or take me home.**

**10 September 2013**



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**The opera of the faraway  
like a Victorian children's book  
I hear voices inside the word  
of old adventurers, their lions,  
glaciers, killer whales,  
the green of Shalimar  
blood-spattered as with roses,  
the opera of all we never knew  
here in our trembling hands.**

**10 September 2013**

## A SONG OF MISREADING

I know you I want to know you  
better I want the btter  
salt of your regrets to squeeze  
out of your pores into the poor  
mouth, this stammering oracle  
of almost love.

I need you  
I need to need you or else  
I stand alone every square  
foot I stand on the Arctic pole,  
everywhere I go I have to step  
away from the center,  
you are the center  
I can transfer it it all there  
eager molecules of my seeming  
soft between your hands, I also  
have a hand in it,  
alone together on a desert will.

2.

Deep in the low of hello  
there is a church downtown  
beloved of seminarians  
where on the walls around

**the altar Christ has written  
I am the Lambda and Omega.**

**. We get our desires —  
these are called the next life.  
Heaven is here and hell  
and the clamorous opera  
of in between only high  
churchmen believe in  
but most of us wind up going to.**

**3.  
So that day I was Dante  
and slept alone. A girl  
on Eighth Avenue gave me pause  
flexed her skirt against a thigh  
as if a million years had  
suddenly passed and all this  
nothing but geology and she  
laughed among her friends  
but not at me. I was part  
of her climate, our shared poetry.**

**10 September 2013**

## **SHEER**

### **Song**

**Aladdin's answers  
to the law  
of finders,  
cave  
is anything  
you can go in,  
hide,  
a song  
is anything you sing.**

**2.**

**But what of a song  
made up of songs,  
is it one or many  
as the Gentiles worried  
about the world around them  
the worlds they could only  
see but we can sing?**

**3.**

**Sheerly what it is  
and not another,  
a song impersonates itself  
in every weather.**

**A song never loud  
because it is music  
not the muscles sing.**

**4.**

**Solomon put them in a book,  
Solomon someone, King of time.**

**He had one day  
and the thousand nights.**

**For every song we sing  
one night is added to our lives  
until the music runs out  
and the song has to find  
another mouth.**

**Meanwhile you go on meaning  
what you think you mean  
but it is the song that means  
only to go on.**

**11 September 2013**

