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LOT'S WIFE'S SWOON

**though we are passing near it
the orbit will not intersect
the stupid daydream of our love affair
he reasoned and she concurred
thinking about something else
all the time. And Lot's wife wept,
her salt tears trickled down
to form the shore we stand on
now when every sea is dead.
Thank the Japanese, thank the Bible.
the crass merchants who have trained
their ears not to hear the millions cry.
Lot had been warned. The angels,
those effete but virile messengers,
told him a world without kapital
is a dead drear world,
nothing there but fruit and trees
—get out of town they said,
before the fires of love
come raining down to make you feel
again. But Lot's wife felt. Her name**

**is not given in the official transcripts
but we know she had a name
formed on the name of a flower—
not so simple as lily, maybe, more
complex, like asphodel or primrose,
let's call her Violet, she turned back
again and again to see the town
fill up with dancing and delight
loud over the brackish lakes around
and she cried No, I will stay with music,
with heavenly fire, I will give savor
to all the words and foods and dreams
forever. Here I stand. But Lot hurried
his daughters away to get them
enrolled in the choicest schools.**

7 February 2014

PHILOSOPHY & POETRY

I think with my mouth
is how I say it
the thing they strive for
poets and such, we
think with language, let
the words think for us,
like old women letting their
strong sons work for them.

8 February 2014.

=====

**All poets are spoiled kids,
their poor old parents
do all the work for them:
the ancient words we
play with all our lives.**

Or I don't know what we are.

**In our beginning was the word
and the word begot us
and here we are,
all of us,
dogs with only words to work with.**

8 February 2014.

=====

**Castaways hours
Springheel Jack
blood on the plowshare,
trick of the light**

**ponder lightly the
apple cores tossed
out for deer
hoof prints in the snow**

**house next door
empty, one light
in upstairs window**

**all birds gone
a hawk is by —
burlarious sunshine
empty room—
whose light is that
no one sees by**

8 February 2014

=====

**So many wonders in one—
the sea brings all back
you thought you lost
you only found**

**your body squeezed together
to fit through the air
this tiny world
no wonder you're
always apologizing.**

8 February 2014.

=====

clowns know emptiness takes time

—Mikhail Horowitz, “Beckett”

We sailed from Portsmouth to Le Havre —
that was then, my languages were nugatory,
fragmentary, sintered at too low heat
crumbling as we speak. But France
was the same old wilderness of loveliness,
one gorgeous glimpse after another
like a sentence in Henry James.

Who knew a straight line could hold
so many curves? Then I was young and wise,
knew all kinds of things I had no right to know.

Sixty years later, this year, I have learned
some of the meager lessons

Time is supposed to teach.

And emptiness is best of all,

my hat slung on a brass hook on the wall.

hook's shaped like a duck and I'm still in love.

8 February 2014

=====

**Cast of temblors
quake soon hereby—
I see the fault lines
in the sky**

**the seams
 come open
on the person up there
the bare skin of beyond
shows through—**

person person I know thy name.

9 February 2013

=====

**Because air has a geology of its own
the trees investigate
how else would branches find their way
just where they do and not otherwise?**

**Character is destiny, indeed,
but character fits inside character,
a self is what is left over from other.**

9 February 2014.

(THOUGHT EXPERIMENT)

I have met people from the interior of Asia, who, coming to this country or Europe and encountering Christians and Jews, supposed without question that judaism was some kind of Christian heresy. There are lots of Christians and not many Jews, and the Jews were distinctive, careful of their difference. Natural for Mongols to think that the smaller came from the larger, as most things do.

What if it were true?

The oldest Bible in the world, the Codex Sinaiticus, is written in Greek, not a trace of Hebrew in it; it was written in the fifth century A.D., What if that were the first Bible, the true original. While the oldest Hebrew Bible, the Bible in Hebrew and Aramaic, that is, the Aleppo Codex, was not written till four or five hundred years later.

Could this be the real genesis of anti-Semitism? Christians are angry at Jews because the Jews left them, absconded to some purer condition? The Jews might, like the Protestants a millennium later, have decided to go back to what they took to

be primitive, the unchanged uncorrupted beginnings that they found to their mind represented in the earliest pages of that strange gnostical Greek book called *Genesis*. What if they translated all that into Hebrew or much of it and decided like Protestants a millennium later to go back to that word and live by the word alone, void of priestcraft and Popery? Is that why Christians were angry at Jews? Was Luther's notorious anti-Semitism just the anxiety of the belated?

9 February 2014.

**All a poem is
is a thought experiment
primed for music,**

an idea you can actually hear.

9 February 2014.

SNAKE

Sanded image

small sand-colored

quiet sidewinder

up Echo Canyon

try to be at peace

with that pale difference

all flesh moves towards warmth —

I rubbed my finger on the glass

he came and rubbed his chin against

we were together those few days

never elsewhere always here —

the thing that fears me so I fear —

slim defenseless muscle with a mind

on the thought of you

I thresh out my awe.

9 February 2014.

=====

**Something has to begin
because alwaysness. Burnt
leaves of November lie beneath
February snow – you understand?
No. You’re telling me
what happens, I want to know
but never did but could
the snow on fire, the child
lecturing the rabbis in the shul.
All that happened already, so
you need a new religion?
Necessity is religion enough for me.
The old have contentment
but no patience. Paradox.
Says you. With only
a few years left to live
who has time for doubt?
Shall I wait for time to coursen
them, should I give them a chance
to doubt even me?**

9 November 2014.

=====

**As if there were coconuts say
or half-ripe mangos clustered
on a market stall somewhere
you are not supposed to be**

**because you'll start dreaming
and when you dream you need
always desperate need to find
some way to get home right now**

**you're always somewhere else
so far away from the airport
and you've missed the train
of course, all that fruit heaped up**

**and you never get to eat
you've done what you came
to do, why can't you leave,
why can't you ever eat in dream.**

9 February 2014

=====

**Born with a diamonds
once? Or in my ashtray
1972 Los Angeles a stub
of some woman's cigarette—
how could anyone with so long?
Lipstick on unfiltered tip
crimson smudge on white soft
dim shreds show through.
Why is memory, darling?
How long does the past go on,
carrying us, blue with longing
into impossible eons
built of my meager tomorrows?**

9 February 2014.

=====

**Something comes later. Cup
with Chinese words on it
“characters” in columns.
And some women in flowing
flowery dresses walking
quietly down the sky
towards me and pass by.
I drink from this
for twenty years.**

9 February 2014.

=====

**Tribal Council. Meet in the interior.
Antechamber of the spleen, sorry,
you lost yours in a VW mishap —
most common trauma, live without,
meet somewhere else. The car
is ectopic. Now that your trees
are somewhere else your EEG
is what is described as normal,
a citizen, a mortgage owner,
churchgoer, consult the Pandects,
memorize poetry, like to swim.
Neurotrauma is the non-stop dream.
Bronze medal in telling the truth —
it is supposed to rhyme, to be
as easily remembered as rain
but you made it complicated
at the last second, like the remorse
of a suicide as the silk tie digs in.
Choose another meeting place —
the body is all used up.**

10 February 2014.

=====

**The thing is can we choose
to be different. Tenth Avenue.
shows the way. Money
changes everything but itself.
That's why museums are so imposing,
palaces of art or reminiscence,
Pergamon, Samothrace, Nineveh.
I choose and choose again,
elbow on chair arms, hard
wood and a poor memory,
could never remember my lines
so still have to make everything up
to keep you company in time.**

10 February 2014

=====

**Everything turns pale.
This winter wonders me,
skateboards buried
under drifts — I miss
the harsh grinding music of their,
wheels, the crumbling
concrete, the broken steps.
The world was young before I came along,
old Hiems argued, but I know better
everything was always as it is right now.
Flip this switch to invent electric light.
Then forget it all tonight
when cave bears still infest the dark.**

10 February 2014.

=====

A word left to speak it
4 AM and from a dream
my father left me, walked
out in his white T-shirt
into a rainstorm “for
a little walk “— I wasn’t ready,
no shoes, couldn’t go
with him. Was I angry
he left me? Left me again?
Would he ever come back?
There I stood in a big
half remembered unknown house,
looked at furniture, found my
raincoat hanging on the staircase
waited. And I called, called.
The trees came close to the house
the rain stopped, two girls
walked far away from a quiet
party , midnight, how lost
I was, how serene. And here

I was, alone in this town too.

Nothing to do but wake.

Despite all that rain

my mouth was dry as death.

10 February 2014.

