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## From Moss-Light to Hopper with Love

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## FROM MOSS-LIGHT TO HOPPER WITH LOVE

Or as a woman fond of wearing hats opined: "Chic chapeau!"  
catching me pensive in the microwave fluorescence  
of the pharmacy, buying a pack  
of red Trojans, unsure where a certain amour  
was leading, but not above precautions. Handy,

a hat under such conditions, to shield the shoe-ward  
glance, the muffled smile that hints toward  
a bald indiscretion. Being bald yourself,  
you would commiserate with the unfurnished apartment  
of my eye-to-eye with her, slashed

by a brim of voluptuous gloom where a shadow tranced  
my cheekbones. At such moments a hat can make  
all the difference, since cat-like, we are creatures invigorated  
by notions of dignity. So on film Marie Lloyd  
became "an expressive figure" for the British lower classes,

and Ray's stories tore down more than motorcycles  
in rented living rooms across America  
to announce the sinking middle and working classes.  
An expressive figure, you seem to say, lends dignity  
to moments alone in the stairwell, or emboldens our solitude

when love, even at one's elbow, is mostly craving  
and window-gazing. If dignity were not precarious, we would be  
worth less. "There goes my dignity," shrugged the Irish musician  
Joe Burke, at O'Toole's one midnight, pulling a drunken mate's foot  
out of his accordion. Dazed as I am by hemlock shadow, it

is foreign to encounter the bald intensity of your nearly criminal  
sunlight, so white it drives out yellow, the way concrete  
in sunlight cousins marble. Daylight, when it is *that* white, is  
night's apostasy—as too much loneliness companions itself.  
A day with you and I am inwardly shouting: "I suffer like a door!"

for those women in your paintings who could not think to shout, ignored in train cars or offices at night. Their despair wasn't chic then or now. On their behalf we must swing pressure to the moment because the present is, as you insist, clean and tearing enough to hold back the overhang of future. But how relieved I am!

to be at the fountain's center with *you*. The gush and sparkle, so silent here—I am buxomly relieved and clumsily gorgeous, my haunches at a bay mare sway—as if to say “Take that, Degas!” And what would you make of the starved-down magazine waifs of my time, these blitzkrieg-of-the-spirit

inhalations? Aren't we as perishingly alive and nose-to-nose with the unutterable, as fatal to ourselves as they? Such a long way from the counter to the purse with these red Trojans. My hand so below, so at bottom, so cloud-worn and muted by... solitude trails me off.

You see how easily two puritans slip into the sensual with their blinds half pulled? A bluish gleam is blushing me toward you. Could this moment be the calm, desirous darkening where realism and impressionism overlap? Categories, you see, like us, my not-so-sweet, are simply errands. To be

fulfilled, yet transitory. And now, my banister, my bald-pated blank abode, allow me the full gold of this neither-nor in which we do not meet. This *is* eternity—with my purse snapped shut, its armory in place. Ah, my glance, my pall-like lids of homage as I pass you, braced there at the counter above an open book.

Soon, too soon, we will gallop our particles of “racing electric impulses” under the viaduct. But first, that tonic blast of your sunlight, a primitive canon to the heart. Sultry and expectant, I doff my hat to you, unfurling Modigliani brows.