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LIKE I SAY

Philip Whalen

LIKE I SAY

POEMS

Philip Whalen

TOTEM PRESS

in association with

CORINTH BOOKS

32 West Eighth Street

New York 11, New York

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To Stanworth Russell Beckler
in return for
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“another volume for the Lodge library”

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“PLUS ÇA CHANGE . . .”

What are you doing?

I am coldly calculating.

I didn't ask for a characterization.
Tell me what we're going to do.

That's what I'm coldly calculating.

You had better say “plotting” or “scheming”
You never could calculate without a machine.

Then I'm brooding. Presently
A plot will hatch.

Who are you trying to kid?

Be nice.

(SILENCE)

Listen. Whatever we do from here on out
Let's for God's sake not look at each other
Keep our eyes shut and the lights turned off—
We won't mind touching if we don't have to see.

I'll ignore those preposterous feathers.

Say what you please, we brought it all on ourselves
But nobody's going out of his way to look.

Who'd recognize us now?

We'll just pretend we're used to it.
(Watch out with that goddamned tail!)
Pull the shades down. Turn off the lights.
Shut your eyes.

232775

(SILENCE)

There is no satisfactory explanation.
You can talk until you're blue

Just how much bluer can I get?

Well, save breath you need to cool

Will you please shove the cuttlebone a little closer?

All right, until the perfumes of Arabia

Grow cold. Ah! Sunflower seeds!

Will you listen, please? I'm trying to make
A rational suggestion. Do you mind?

Certainly not. Just what *shall* we tell the children?

THE ROAD-RUNNER, For L. J. Reynolds

Thin long bird
 with a taste for snakes' eyes
Frayed tail, wildcat claws
His pinions are bludgeons.

Few brains, topped
By a crown
And a flair for swift in-fighting—
Try to take it from him.

IF YOU'RE SO SMART, WHY AIN'T YOU RICH?

I need everything else
Anything else
 Desperately
But I have nothing
Shall have nothing
 but this
Immediate, inescapable
 and invaluable
No one can afford
 THIS
Being made here and now
 (Seattle, Washington
 17 May, 1955)

MARIGOLDS

Concise (wooden)
 Orange.
Behind them, the garage door
 Pink
(Paint sold under a fatuous name:
"Old Rose"
 which brings a war to mind)

And the mind slides over the fence again
Orange against pink and green
Uncontrollable!

Returned of its own accord
It can explain nothing
Give no account

What good? What worth?

Dying!

You have less than a second
 To live
To try to explain:

Say that light
 in particular wave-lengths
 or bundles wobbling at a given speed
Produces the experience
Orange against pink

Better than a sirloin steak?
A screen by Korin?

The effect of this, taken internally
The effect
 of beauty
 on the mind

There is no equivalent, least of all
These objects
Which ought to manifest
A surface disorientation, pitting
Or striae
Admitting *some* plausible interpretation

But the cost
Can't be expressed in numbers
Dodging between
 a vagrancy rap
 and the newest electrical brain-curette
Eating what the rich are bullied into giving
Or the poor willingly share
Depriving themselves

More expensive than ambergris
 Although the stink
 isn't as loud. (A few
Wise men have said,
 "Produced the same way . . .
 Vomited out by sick whales.")
Valuable for the same qualities
 Staying-power and penetration
I've squandered every crying dime.

THE SLOP BARREL: Slices Of The Paideuma For All Sentient Beings

(NOTE: "Slices" was suggested as a title by Mike McClure. The anecdote of the bicycle's demise is the original property of Mr Grover Grauman Sales Jr. of Louisville and San Francisco & used with his kind permission.)

I

We must see, we must know
What's the name of that star?
How that ship got inside the bottle
Is it true your father was a swan?
What do you look like without any clothes?

My daddy was a steamboat man
His name was Lohengrin, his ship
The Swan, a stern-wheeler—
Cargoes of oil and wheat between Umatilla
And The Dalles before the dam was built

I want to look at you all over
I want to feel every part of you

So we compare our moles and hair

You have as many scars as my brother, Polydeuces
That's the only mole I've got
Don't look at it. I worry sometimes it will
Turn into cancer. Is that the mark of Asia
On your body? It is different from my husband's.

It was done when I was born
A minor sacrifice to Astarte (the priests
Lose everything)
A barbarous practice, I suppose.

Gods demand a great deal. This coming war
Nothing will be saved; they claim
It will rid the earth of human wickedness . . .

Nevertheless when we are vaporized
To descend as rain across strange countries
That we will never see
The roses will grow human ears for petals
To hear the savoy cabbages philosophize.

II

You say you're all right
Everything's all right
Am I supposed to be content with that?

If I told you everything
You'd have nothing to say
If I fell to pieces you'd walk away flat
(A weather-vane)

Suppose we were the first to begin
Living forever. Let's start
Right now.

Do you want this peach?
It's immortal.

Both my watches are busted.

Meanwhile, back at the ranch
Pao Pu-tzu ("in the latter years
Of a long lifetime")
Is making those pills . . . ("the size of a hemp-seed")

(I would prefer the hemp, myself
Since *Sa majesté impériale*
"took a red pill . . . and was not."
None of them artificial kicks for me.)

to show up later
Riding a Bengal tiger
Both man and beast gassed out of their minds
Laughing and scratching
Pockets and saddlebags full of those pills:

The business of this world
Is to deceive but *it*
Is never deceived. *Maya Desnudata*
And the *Duchess*: the same woman. Admire her.
Nevertheless she is somebody else's
Wife. I don't mean unavailable
I mean preoccupied.

You and me
We make out, the question is
How to avoid future hangups, and/or
Is this one of them now?
We could take a decent time
Figuring out how to avoid repeating
Ourselves

*I know where I'm going
I been there before
I know when I get there
I'll travel no more*

Do you?
Are you still all right?
I don't want you to freeze.

I guess my troubles are pride
And doubt. You *are*
All right.

Have a jellybean . . .
Here comes a tiger.

By standing on the rim of the slop barrel
We could look right into the birds' nest.
Thelma, too little, insisted on seeing
We boosted her up
 and over the edge
Head first among the slops in her best Sunday dress

Now let's regret things for a while
That you can't read music
That I never learned Classical languages
That we never grew up, never learned to behave
But devoted ourselves to magic:

Creature, you are a cow
Come when I call you and be milked.
Creature, you are a lion. Be so kind
As to eat something other than my cow or me.
Object, you are a tree, to go or stay
At my bidding . . .

Or more simply still, tree, you are lumber
Top-grade douglas fir
At so many bucks per thousand board-feet
A given amount of credit in the bank
So that beyond a certain number of trees
Or volume of credit you don't have to know or see
Nothing

Nevertheless we look
And seeing, love.
From loving we learn
And knowingly choose:
Greasy wisdom is better than clothes.

I mean I love those trees
And the printing that goes on them
A forest of words and music
You do the translations, I can sing.

IV

Between water and ice
(Fluid and crystal)
A single chance

Helen, Blodeuwedd manufactured
Entirely of flowers
or flames
A trilium for every step

White trifolium, purple-veined
(Later completely purple)

The heavy folds of your brocade
Black waves of your hair
Spilled across the *tatami*
Black water smashed white at Suma
“No permanent home”

I just don't understand you, I'm really stumped

Petal from the prune tree
Spins on a spider web
Slung between leaves
A flash in the sun

Baby scrooches around on the rug trying
To pick up the design

PAY NO ATTENTION TO ME

The pen forms the letters
Their shape is in the muscles
Of my hand and arm

Bells in the air!

At this distance the overtone
Fourth above the fundamental
Carries louder
Distorting the melody just enough
To make it unrecognizable

YOU DON'T LOVE ME LIKE YOU USED TO
YOU DON'T LOVE ME ANY MORE.

The sun has failed entirely
Mountains no longer convince
The technician asks me every morning
“Whattaya know?” and I am
Froze.

Unless I ask I am not alive
Until I find out who is asking
I am only half alive and there is only

WU!

(An ingrown toenail?)

WU!

(A harvest of bats??)

WU!

A row of pink potted geraniums//???)

smashed flat!!!
The tonga-walla swerved, the cyclist leapt and
The bicycle folded under the wheels before they stopped
The tonga-walla cursing in Bengali while the outraged
Cyclist sullenly repeats:
You *knows* you got to *pay* for the motherfucker
You knows you *got* to pay for the motherfucker

The bells have stopped
Flash in the wind
Dog in the pond.

HOMAGE TO ROBERT CREELEY

What I thought
was a fly on the window was
A knot on the branch outside

Near it a real fly sat
Quiet in the sun

Wind rocked all the branches the fly
sat still

SCHOLIAST

Regards the chrysanthemums
Stalks flat on the ground
Flowers twisting the tips
Past the roof shadow

A honeycomb
A hornet's nest
Significant once, as a pattern—
But a theory of progress?

A constant explosion produces all shapes
Quiet fringed yellow
Burning— and the bush
Utterly consumed!

THE SAME OLD JAZZ

OK, it's imperishable or a world as Will
& Idea, a Hindu illusion that our habits continuously
Create. Whatever I think, it
Keeps changing from bright to dark, from clear
To colored: Thus before I began to think and
So after I've stopped, as if it were real & I
Were its illusion

But as Jaime de Angulo said, "What's wrong with two?"

So Sunday morning I'm in bed with Cleo
She wants to sleep & I get up naked at the table
Writing
And it all snaps into focus
The world inside my head & the cat outside the window
A one-to-one relationship
While I imagine whatever I imagine

Weed
dry stalks of yarrow,
repeated Y-branching V's, a multiplication

Of antelope, deer-horns? Umbels
Hairy brown stars at the tip of brown wires
A *menorah*, or more learnedly, “hand” written in Great Seal Script

Almost against the window, horns again
Reindeer colored (in the sun) branching
Bare young loquat tree

Next door on the right the neighbors are building
Something in the garage, sawing & whirly-grinding
On wood. Models of the NINA, the PINTA & the SANTA MARIA
Life-size with television sails

Bright sky & airplanes & bugs mixed with
Flying paper ashes, the lid's off somebody's incinerator

There all that is & the reflection of *tatami*-color
In the silver bowl of my hanging lamp.

What if I never told any of this?

White cat
Spooked in the grass, alert against the satyrs
That pursue, she's full of kittens already
 . . . gone under the steps, under the porch

Cleo rises to bathe
& closes the bathroom door
My own bathtub becomes a mystery

Now that cat's on the window-ledge
Propped against the green sash, whiter
In the creamy light reflected off the kitchen door

What if I never said?

Singing & splashing in the bathtub
A mystery, a transformation, a different woman
Will emerge

 The birds have been pleased to show up
Bugs in the air won't last

And the chief satyr cat arrives
Ignores the birds, ascends the back stairs to spray the newel-post
A Message To The White Queen:
 “Sweet Papa is here.”

He disappears and immediately
There she is, delicate pink nose reading:
 “Sweet Papa! The same old jazz.”

Water glugs in the drain
A strange girl scours herself with my tired old towels
I think of her body & stop writing
To admire my own, some of her beauty rubbed off on me
Now some of my ugliness, some of my age
Whirls down the bathroom drain.

She'll go away. I'll go away. The world will go away.
 (“The idea of emptiness engenders compassion
 Compassion does away with the distinction
 between Self & Other . . .”)
But through her everything else is real to me & I have
No other self.
“What's wrong with two?”

from **THREE VARIATIONS, ALL ABOUT LOVE**

I

So much to tell you
Not just that I love
There is so much more
You must hear and see

If I came to explain
It would do no good
Wordlessly nibbling your ear
Burying my face in your belly

All I would tell is you
And love; I must tell
Me, that I am a world
Containing more than love

Holding you and all your other
Lovers wherein you
And I are free from each other
A world that anyone can walk alone
Music, coathangers, the sea
Mountains, ink, trashy novels
Trees, pancakes, *The Tokaido Road*
The desert— it is yours

Refuse to see me!
Don't answer the door or the telephone
Fly off in a dragon-chariot
Forget you ever knew me

But wherever you are
Is a corner of me, San Juan Letrán
Or Montreal, Brooklyn
Or the Lion Gate

Under my skin at the Potala
Behind my eyes at Benares
Far in my shoulder at Port-au-Prince
Lifted in my palm among stars

Anywhere you must be you
Drugged, drunk or mad
As old, as young, whatever you are
Living or dying the place will be me

And I alone the car that carries you away.

III

(BIG HIGH SONG FOR SOMEBODY)

F

Train

Absolutely stoned

Rocking bug-eyed billboards WAFF!

No more bridge than Adam's
off ox

Pouring over 16 $\frac{2}{3}$ ds MPH sodium-

Vapor light yellow light

LOVE YOU!

Got *you* on

like a coat of paint

Steamy girder tile

LOVE YOU!

Cutting-out blues

(Tlaxcala) left me

like stoned on the F-train

whole week's load ready

for that long stretch ahead

Prisoners jailed

SHBAM

Train chained to this train

boring through diamonds

SQUALL

LOVE YOU!

Barreling zero up Balcony Street

Leaning from ladders

Same angle of lean; different cars

The Route of the PHOEBE SNOW

LOVE YOU!

Blue-black baby
 16-foot gold buddha in your arms
Taking you with me!
 Straight up Shattuck Avenue
Hay-burning train, bull-chariot
 With bliss bestowing hands

LOVE YOU!

And I'm the laughing man
 with a load of goodies for all

Bridge still stands, bulls may safely graze,
 Bee-birds in the frangipani
 clock

LOVE YOU!

INVOCATION TO THE MUSE

Green eyes, you always change
A rose-bed complete with briars
Making liars of angels
Cats-meat of gods
Boxers into queens.

Let down that golden ladder
 one more time
I'll shinny up and make a song or two
Before the withered hand
 clips those locks
And tumbles me among the thorns.

SMALL TANTRIC SERMON

The release itself—
The comfort of your body—
Our freedom together and more, a
Revelation
Of myself as father, as a landscape as a universe
Being. . . .

This breaks down,
Here, on paper, although I am free
To spread these words, putting them
Where I want them (something of a release
In itself) .
All they can say is
 Your foot
 Braced against the table-leg beside the bed
 Springing your hips to admit
 My gross weight, the other foot
 Stroking the small of my back:
A salacious picture of a man and a woman
Making out together
Or ingenuous autobiography—
“Memoirs of a Fat & Silly Poet”—
It might as well show them gathering tulips
Or playing cards

To say concisely
That the man in the picture
Really made it out through the roof
Or clear through the floor, the ground itself
Into free space beyond direction—

Impossible gibberish no one
Can understand, let alone believe;
Still, I try, I insist I can
Say it and persuade you
That the knowledge is there that the revelation
Is yours.

INVOCATION & DARK SAYINGS, IN THE TIBETAN STYLE

1.

The biggest problem in the world:

“Where are you?”

And the second:

To persuade you that I truly
Want you here. I mean goddamit
That since you removed that celestial
SNATCH
From these now desolated regions

Nothing.
Blank.

Vaseline,
Soap,
Hand-lotion,
Cold-cream,
Baby-oil,
Raw eggs,
Butter,
One pound of raw liver (delicately oven warmed),
One canteloupe (" " "),
Several chickens,
One heifer,
Half a dozen assorted trulls,
A versatile but rather confused young man: : : :

Double-blank equalling
Half-nothing
With which I'm supposed to be content while you
Retain the only delectable sparkling furry magical

WHEN ARE YOU COMING HOME?

2.

MESSAGE: To the Reader
 ½ of me is asleep
When it wakes up
 EVERYTHING
Will be destroyed
Or transmogrified.

(Have you got a hard-on?
I've got a hard-on.)

You will never know what I think
Because I'm not saying.

"This is a picture of a man.
"The man is hiding something.
Try to guess what it is.
If you guess wrong, . . ."

Look at that old thing stand up there!

A midge crosses the page
Slowly
Then feels his way (wings balancing)
Along the edge and falls
On his head.
When he wakes up,
Watch out!
I mean like

"Look where it comes again!"

(You dirty bastard, where did you ever get
Such a filthy mind?

My daddy lay on a sunny stone
Fiddling with his cock
The sun shone hot, the sun yelled
 "Sam!"
My daddy went home
But here I am.)

“Knowledge cannot be transmitted.
 You can recount your own experiences
 And a person who has had similar experiences
 MIGHT know what you meant. Perhaps
 That is communication. However; . . .”

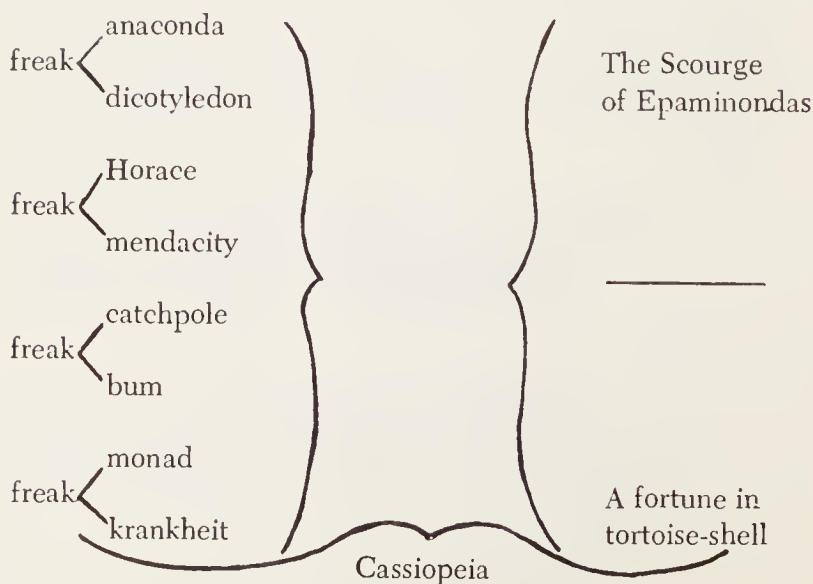
You will never know what I think.
 What you see
 Is a dead idea.
 Now I'm thinking of
 Something else:

I can't tell it fast enough.

TAKEOUT, 15:IV:57

To have something fall is bad
 To fall and break worse.

fruitful ape
 wiggy porcupine



We must learn to make mistakes gracefully;
However, all the fun resides in trying to be right
every time

Suppose it had floated in mid-air
That heavy solid porcelain teacup?

TERROR

The contravention of seemliness, abrogation
of all that is, &c.

(“&c.” equaling “if p , then q ; if not p ,
then x , solve for x ,” a simple quadratic) let it

Go.

HARANGUE FROM NEWPORT, TO JOHN WIENERS, 21:IX:57

What if I never told you
What if I never said what I'm trying
To say now?

A long time ago I thought it would be better
If I hadn't been born
But since I had been it might save trouble
To minimize the whole thing:
Play it not only cool but invisible

That doesn't work any more, everybody
Asks: “What's the matter” “Are you mad about something?”
“What's worrying you now?”

Well, what. . . .

I just saw my landlord go by
the great carbuncle on his nose
a sea anemone at low tide, petals retracted
center full of sand, the circulation
in his legs is bad so his feet hurt & he has

dizzy spells because he won't stop eating
fried fish
 (athero- or arteriosclerosis,
 anyway, too much cholesterol)
being some sort of Swede

Now what?

My hernia has skidded again

More:

I found a couple chunks of jasper-agate on the beach
and one entire family (7 or 8 of them) jumping about
in the surf with all their clothes on
being some sort of Dukhobors-in-reverse?

More?

I should burn the garbage and wash the frying pan
I should write you something that would
Scare you, make you laugh
Or generally turn you on

WHAT

I'm doing now: Trying hard to be visible, to be
Totally conscious of this time and place,
 of you
And every sentient being

I'm stacking bb's day & night
Working miracles left & right

(Log-truck pooped by in the street while I'm writing—I
changed it into gold: perfect wisdom, perfect compassion,
perfect freedom. . . . Texas-boot red shirt sideburns bodhisattva driver
instantly swung out of the cab to render his bows and perform
his circumambulations)

NOTICE,

That the landlord still has his carbuncle
That the family who frolicked in the waves have wet sandy
 clothes which chafe them
That the frying pan remains unwashed
That the log truck must go live at Ft. Knox
And that nobody can see me, I've closed all the blinds
 it being night outside
But everybody knows I'm here
 the light's turned on

Notice also that you not only see me clearly

(A MIRACLE!)

You understand everything I say.

4:2:59 TAKE I

What I need is lots of money

No

What I need is somebody to love with unparalleled energy
and devotion for 24 hours and then goodbye

I can escape too easily from this time & this place
That isn't the reason I'm here

What I need is where am I

Sometimes a bed of nails is really necessary to any man
Or a wall (Olson, in conversation, "That wall, it *has* to be there!")

Where are my hands.

Where are my lungs.

All the lights are on in here I don't see nothing.

I don't admit that this is personality disintegration
My personality has a half-life of 10^{∞} years; besides

I can put my toe in my mouth

If (CENSORED), then (CENSORED), something like
Plato his vision of the archetypal human being

Or the Gnostic Worm.

People see me; they like that . . .

I try to warn them that it's really me

They don't listen; afterwards they complain
About how I had no right to be really just that:
Invisible & in complete control of everything.

LETTER, TO Mme. E. T. S., 2:I:58

so T. comes on with the usual
“Come, tell me how you live” routine & I:
“Like a pope, on indulgences; like the king
on benevolences.”

Poor little fly ain’t got no home

Nor the seagulls outside, dining—
an abundance of Pacific decapods
(copepods?)

T: “But what can you *do* there? Noplace to go,
you don’t see anybody . . .”

I: “I have a part-time job;
I read and write.”

& everyone marvels at my Devotion to Literature
Or figures I’m coming on too innocent, I must be
Up to Something
(T. imagines, “Some chick is on the scene”
& L., “Or an infallible connection . . .?”)

All day Christmas the sea whirled this tangle—
Spruce logs, redwood stumps, fishboxes and lightglobes—
A big eddy at the creek mouth
Carting several tons of debris back & forth across a hundred feet of beach
In water maybe a foot & ½ in depth

As the tide went out a gull rode a heavy smooth-swimming log
Perfectly flat-footed, no trouble balancing
Nothing to hang on to
Nothing to hang on with, raining like hell
Poor little seagull got no home
Riding just now for the fun of it
In a generally Japanese direction

I think of children in a department store
Playing on the escalators, kings and queens
In magic palaces where the stairs walk up & down
Whether you move your feet or not

Poor little fly ain't got no clothes

L. (at the end of a letter) “What are *you* doing?”

THE DISCOVERY.

Laid end for end this poem is exactly
a foot & ½ in depth
Try to buy it

27

FOR C.

I wanted to bring you this Jap iris
Orchid-white with yellow blazons
But I couldn't face carrying it down the street
Afraid everyone would laugh
And now they're dying of my cowardice.

Abstract beauty in the garden
In my hand, in the street it is a sign
A whole procession of ithyphallic satyrs
Through a town whose people like to believe:
"I was made like Jesus, out of Love; my daddy was a spook."

The upright flower would scare them. "What's shot,"
They think, "from the big flesh cannon will decay."
Not being there I can't say that being born is a chance
To learn, to love and to save each other from ourselves:
Live ignorance rots us worse than any grave.

And lacking the courage to tell you, "I'm here,
Such as I am; I need you and you need me"
Planning to give you this flower instead—
Intending it to mean "This is really I, tall, slender,
Perfectly formed"—is uglier than their holy fantasies,

Worse to look at than my own gross shape.
After all this fuss about flowers I walked out
Just to walk, not going to see you (I had nothing to bring—
This poem wasn't finished, didn't say
What was on my mind; I'd given up)

I saw bushes of crimson rhododendron, sparkling wet
Beside the hospital walk— I had to see you.
If you were out, I'd leave these flowers.
Even if I couldn't write or speak
At least I broke and stole that branch with love.

SOUFFLÉ

TAKE I Carol said, "I looked at all my cells today
Blood & smear samples from all over me.
They were all individuals, all different shapes
Doing whatever they were supposed to
And all seeming so far away, some other world
Being I."

TAKE II How do you feel?
Me? Oh, I feel all right but sometimes
I feel like a motherless child.
I feel like walking out of here & spending
vast sums of money. How do you
Feel? I feel with my.

TAKE III The wind increases as the sun goes down
The weight of that star pulling air after it
Naturally the prune trees blossom now
And some kind of bush with pink trumpet flowers
All the other trees except acacias have quit

TAKE IV High strato-cumulus clouds and a
Light north-easterly wind (possibly
Two m. p. h. on the Beaufort Scale)
"What ever became of old Whatch-callum,
Old what's his name,
Old . . . you know, the old fellow
Who had that little ranch out by Mt Pisgah,
Out by the Pisgah Home? Had that
Eight-finger Chinese cook & everything
tasted like kerosene,
We went out there once & put up blackberries."

"Why, Dell, I don't remember . . .
He was a friend of yours."

TAKE V How do I feel? I'm under it
Way under but I'm
Coming out, working out
The weight, the pressure
Piles of detritus already removed

The weight of half the earth, slowly
You can hear me underneath it all
Breathing, a faint
Scraping, a sifting rattle
Falling away below
Back towards the hollow center.
A little more
And I peer out

TAKE VI

Intolerable
You don't accept or reject it
You see it and know.
There is a difference.
*"You got to wash them dishes
(pronounced "deeshes")
And hesh that clattering tongue!
Lolly-too dum, too-dum, &c."*
No particular reply because the question
Isn't a question at all, it's the presence
Or absence of light
among those trees.

TAKE VII

Nowhere, this is getting us no-
where
And we need a place to do it.

TAKE VIII

I drank myself into a crying jag face down
On Ginsberg's woolly green rug
Roaring, "Gone, everything gone,
Cold, cold, cold, cold, cold!"

A nearly perfect vacuum at minus 278 degrees
Absolute

H O R R E U R D U V I D E

The Messrs. Ginsberg & Kerouac, also juiced,
Wrapped me in blankets while I froze & squalled

TAKE IX

"I want you to go out & amount to something;
I don't want you to be an old ditch-digger all your life
Work with your head if you can, let other people
use their hands"

TAKE X Can you look at a bug without squashing it?
Can you look into a glass without hate, without
Love, without murder?

We have nothing but thoughts of murder, i.e.
Complete ignorance of the world's own nature; or
Where there's no sense there's no feeling.
As for myself, I'm a genuine thug, I believe
 in Kali the Black, the horrific aspect
 the total power of Siva
 absolute destruction
BUT it don't mean
What it looks like
 and the description misleads.

TAKE XI Bud-clusters hang straight down from the sharply-crooked
Geranium stem like strawberries, the wild mountain kind
These flowers almost as wild right here
Barbarous thick-jointed tangle, waist-high
Escaped once for all from the green-houses of the north
A weed, its heavy stalks jointing upwards & winding out
In all directions, too heavy to stand straight
The neighbors clipped some out of their yard
The stalks lay in the gutter & grew for days
In the rain water, flowering red
Ignorant of their disconnection

TAKE XII I shall be in LA
 La Puebla de Nuestra Señora La Reina de los Angeles
 On Palm Sunday
 a necklace of skulls & fingers,
 her belt dangling human arms, legs
 & heads
 her several hands brandishing
 the noose
 the sword
 the axe
 the skull-cup, of blood
 the *dorje* (double lightning-bolt)
 Fire
 Drum
 Rosary

Having (DV) arrived by streamline train
“Coast Daylight”
“in a throng of happy apprehensions”

TAKE XIII Don't you ever get tired
of your own sunny disposition?

TAKE XIV I know perfectly well what became of old Mr Daigler
Greatly advanced in years he removed from Mt Pisgah
To the Odd-Fellows Home in Portland where he died
Of malnutrition and the radio.

TAKE XV The whole point of it is,
When I saw that her necklace was made of my own
Severed fingers, that I'd only just combed the hair
on that skull
(now containing lots of my blood
& her wasting it, slopping it
All down one of her arms)
She was mine & we made it together
The Island Of Jewels
On a tiger-skin rug

The Sun & Moon shining together.

TAKE XVI It was so noisy in my head a rush of lights & motion
And music & now the type lies on the page
Perfectly silent, perfectly static, perfect
The same temperature as the space between

Minus 278 ABSOLUTE

radio frequencies in the ten-meter band
from the direction of the constellation
Herakles

Light

Hard radiation (cosmic particles, beta
& gamma rays)

A few vagrant atoms of hydrogen, scatterings

of metallic &/or mineral dust shoved along
by the pressure of the

Light

Absolute

O

10:X:5, 45 YEARS SINCE THE FALL OF THE CH'ING DYNASTY

The Summer Palace burnt, the Winter Palace, wherever it was
“*Ordre, ordre, Je suis une maniaque pour l'ordre!*”

(Meaning that all those sheets are promptly sent to the wooden
Laundries of the Seine,

That all the shoes and sox are lined up in rows

That the words follow each other in ecstatic parentheses, NOT

That you and me are lined up against the innocent wall, torn
By the bullets of righteousness)

I am hid, as William Blake puts it, where nobody can see me not

Even those sad angels who busted the slippery membrane across

My stifled face so I could breathe the incense coming in

From the pavilion under Coal Hill my brocade sleeves raveling

Among the chips of jade and the withered peony blossoms and

The night of the boat-light Dragonboat orgies on the River

In pious memory of whosis that first made the water scene

With an ingenious system of *canali* and Nationally Federated Dams

Where nobody can see me

I read all about Jimmy Dean with 16 photographs

and more than a hundred pages of vulgar prose

Nobody can find me I came here with that purpose of being alone

(R. says we have all these self-destructive impulses and it

BUGS him, like he went to the neighborhood soda-fountain

For a coca-cola and everybody/all these monster teen-age hoods/

Jumped on him at once)

Not unlike the United States Marines building teakwood campfires

Out of the Empress's bedroom furniture on the Phoenix-Viewing

Terrace roasting their wienies.

LETTER TO CHARLES OLSON

This surface (which grows increasingly Riemannian)

how's your topology now? When you turn this over
do you have a right- or a left-hand glove?

(A WALL)

Right now is just fine, don't monkey with the postoffice
It's shut for the night:
I won't be able to buy a stamp for this until after 9 A.M.
No matter what I do, no matter how hard I try.

(A WALL)

So here we are, sweet Indolence and I and middling Luxury

(NO WALL)

And at last I can hear the radio say:

“It is 29 minutes past 3 A.M.”

Without flipping into a spin about being on time in the “morning”
Because I shall . . .

No strain

But— can I turn off Brahms' TRAGIC OVERTURE
now ? Put out my pipe and go to bed?

Not until

(ouch! a pain in the skull!)

I've said this

(and in the left eye, the frontal sinus
breaking down.)

(A WALL)

I guess it's tragic if he said so, incidental music
For some Shakespearian or Goethean tragedy, I forget
although I read about it ONCE

No, I'll get up . . .

Well, go on, let Brahms take over with plenty of tremolo,

e. g.:

I will collapse time, it is 4 A.M.
And this is the Berkeley cottage, I've been drinking
Wine with Allen & Jack, I must be at my sink at 8
ON TIME, as I was the morning before, after a similar
4 A.M. wine & goof-balls

(AN ARTIFICIAL PARTITION)

TIME IS RELATIVE/ or irrelevant; it is space, the surface
Which makes the distinction?

(& of course Rexroth has the last word,
it is the PERSON)

Or more nearly canonical, Epictetus: "Not events
But the judgement of men . . ."

("all that learning so gratuitously hurled at us—
why don't he (i.e., PW) get a job in a college?")
Dryden sang, ". . . Jealousy, that Tyrant of the mind"
As if the mind weren't tyrannical enough
on its own hook

(Very beautiful lady on a visit to apartment inhabited
by Snyder & me, years ago . . . she views a hunk of my
library:
"Did you take English 1109 at Cal.?"
"No."
"But you have all the *books*!"

(A WALL . . . OF BOOKS)

Lacking either space or time
Here we sit between Planck's Constant & the Speed of Light (*c*)
Theoretically discontinuous & haunted by an antique radio voice
(Mr Jack Pearl in the character of "Baron Munchausen":
"Was you there, Charlie?")
The whole world looking at its hand,
Betelgeuse at or near the eighteenth turning of whose particular
Small intestine? (Cf. a cartoon by Mr George Gamow)
(our editor writes me,
"You are *not* interested in geometry!")

“the judgement of men”
the postoffice: Closed
the time: Well, my watch is wrong
but now is more or less six days since the first line.
The library is in storage. Leave it there.

(A WALL . . . OF BOOKS)

People is a door, particularly for me, ladies I have loved
And the mind a Moebius-strip, a single surface
Turned through itself— or better, a sphere inside a sphere
That can be a torus (like the body) without losing anything
No wasted material.

Wall certainly is here, 3/5ths Philippine mahogany
Peachy-painted plaster for the rest.
There is a top and a bottom and two ends—
And another side! which is yellow, a DISCONTINUITY
Like radiation (Planck again)
“each radiator emitting energy in equal amounts
termed *quanta*, the value of which depend on a universal
constant (A WALL) and the frequency of the vibration
of the radiators”

I said LEAVE IT THERE!

The song tells it best:

*So high you can't get over it;
So low you can't get under it;
So wide you can't get around it—
Got to come in by the door.*

which is what don't exist, although the wall does
(Notice the absence of “Therefore, etc.”)

FOR REFERENCE ONLY

Wm. Shakespeare: A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM, Act V,
Sc I, 11. 161-162:

Wall. “This loam, this roughcast, and this stone doth show
That I am that same wall. The truth is so.”

TORUS: looks like a smooth & perfect doughnut. It will bear only 7
contiguous areas of differently colored paints without the

repetition of a color. Turning itself through itself it
becomes a sphere with a sphere inside itself.
Which way is up? Charles is in Gloucester. I am here.

NEWPORT NORTH-WINDOW VIEW (For Bruce McGaw)

Graveled vacant lot
Left corner breaks into blackberry gulch

Straight ahead, spruce and jackpine grove
A set-up for Sesshu, the jackpines good as his
Sitka spruce behind them, stiff ragged feather wall

(Marred, I thought at first, by these trashy little shacks:

Left-hand cabin partly dropped in the gully, its base
battered a little outward, a single row of windows
under the roof-line, not badly proportioned,
a jackpine leans toward its left back corner and up
then my direction; hazelbush hides front corner

A pile of stovewood
High square end of a blue bus (truck? trailer?)
Half-round-top cabin, government colored, up on blocks
portable office for a construction boss
Square gray house, white trim, its corner facing me, its
back against two pines)

Yesterday early evening fog dissolved the shacks into the scene
An occasional plane edge or corner, two or three steady lights
While up above, black tree earth air water transmutations

Cloud becomes mountain
Tree becomes beast
Beast into cloud

Now in full sunlight
Trunks and branches carve black space out of walls and roofs
Which become flat irregular plane surfaces of light
floating among the trees;
jumbled apricot pyramid woodpile blazes on the tawny ground.

TAKE #4, 15:VIII:57, For N.

You say, "I want you to kiss me" and you being
Beautiful I comply becoming right then
Beautiful and universally loved, like I don't know what
Year it is or come away with me into the lush life

Which is this,
Sitting in the dark by the radio jazz writing in the light
From the bathroom, one cat already stone out on the floor
The tradition of this place
You never saw such a pad all the wine all the ones
Who made it here the poems proliferating from this point

THE MUSES HELICON

I know what I want I want you and all this
Which is impossible . . . what can I

Not just the most the best I want the superb
With hot and cold running water unimaginable nothing
Else will do, in the center of an impenetrable wilderness
Square miles of it you couldn't guess that . . . or that I've
Had it and it's not enough . . . what can I

With my last paycheck buy a new suit & a pair of sox
And a good paying job to keep you?

We are nowhere and nothing ever started

I guess you wanted a point of reference, right then
To locate yourself, OK? But I've been further than you
And back again, it's the same at both ends: You're looking
At two sides, your own and one that's different and scary

(I have an argument with X . . . who keeps talking about
"Low Life", "I keep wanting to do a novel about Low Life,
Like I knew a lady boxer, I was crazy about her, she had
A beautiful body, I used to strap her into her iron brassiere
She was a gorgeous woman . . . and absolutely queer.")

It's an imaginary choice between two imaginary worlds
Here I am high as a kite writing or trying to spell properly
THE TEARFUL TRAGEDY OF THE MINOTAUR IN LOVE or, THE BULL-
HEADED MONSTER (as Picasso draws him, although I don't have as good a
Build) . . . the body of a man but alien
Non-human from the neck up
Most Notable Monster

Our children would have the heads of angels
And the bodies of cows

All that's the honest picture of a cheating mind
I mean hogwash—I didn't have or want anything—
I needed you and didn't know it
I hung the monster mask on you and ran away
Imagining scenes of you asleep at nine and I
Standing by the bed at two A.M. trying to waken you

“Come outside, the stars are falling,
I've found a caterpillar that glows in the dark!”

For all I know, I'm the biggest prize there is
Certainly you are
& maybe you would like to starve with me
& if I had you what would I care about food or the telephone bill?

But I never asked you
Supposing that I knew all the answers. . . .

What else is there to find out?
It's all very simple, it's all like this,
We are 750 miles apart.

I stand here in my underwear wondering what to do
What was I going to do. . . .

clean these pipes,
Illuminate all these worlds. . . .
I'll eat breakfast

Attentively as possible
Thinking of you.

DENUNCIATION, Or, UNFROCK'D AGAIN

The trouble with you is
That sitting on a bench in the back yard
You see an old plank in the fence become
A jeweled honeycomb of golden wires
Discoursing music, etc.

The trouble is aggravated by the grass
Flashing alternately green and invisible
Green and non-existent
While the piano in the house plays
The Stars & Stripes Forever

The landlady's son has a tin ear

"The trouble with you is you keep acting
Like a genius: Now you're not a genius
You're nothing but a prick . . . in fact you're
Not even that, you're nothing but a son-of-a-bitch

GET OUT OF MY HOUSE!"

"There you are, sitting in the sun too . . .
Have you noticed all the flowers? There
Is an iris; there are hyacinths; these
Are tulip buds. I thought that was
A peach tree in the neighbor's yard; the
Landlady says it is an almond,
But the almond is always the first to flower."

The trouble with you is
You neither take it nor leave it alone.

What plant puts out those
Tall thin stiff green leaves? Lines
Drawn from the tip of each one
Would describe the surface of what
Regular solid polyhedron?

You don't dare invent a name;
Nameless, it threatens you with destruction.

To hell with it. It's a subtropical lily.

The trouble with you is that you're backed up
Against a wall
Convinced that any instant
You will fall right through it.
The real trouble with you really is
That you don't think,
You simply worry.

I sat down in my house and ate a carrot.

UNFINISHED, 3:XII:55

We have so much
That contemplating it
We never learn the use—
Poisoning ourselves with food, with books
with sleep

Ignorance quicker than cyanide
Cuts us down

No lack of opportunity to learn;
Flat-footed refusal! Call it
Perversion, abuse, bullheadedness
It is rejection of all we know

A single waking moment destroys us
And we cannot live without
Ourselves

You come to me for an answer? I
Invented it all, I
Am your tormentor, there is no
Escape, no redress

You are powerless against me: You
Must suffer agonies until you know
You are suffering;

Work on that.

FURTHER NOTICE

I can't live in this world
And I refuse to kill myself
Or let you kill me

The dill plant lives, the airplane
My alarm clock, this ink
I won't go away

I shall be myself—
Free, a genius, an embarrassment
Like the Indian, the buffalo

Like Yellowstone National Park.

SOURDOUGH MOUNTAIN LOOKOUT

For Kenneth Rexroth

I always say I won't go back to the mountains
I am too old and fat there are bugs mean mules
And pancakes every morning of the world

Mr Edward Wyman (63)
Steams along the trail ahead of us all
Moaning, "My poor old feet ache, my back
Is tired and I've got a stiff prick"
Uprooting alder shoots in the rain

Then I'm alone in a glass house on a ridge
Encircled by chiming mountains
With one sun roaring through the house all day
& the others crashing through the glass all night
Conscious even while sleeping

Morning fog in the southern gorge
Gleaming foam restoring the old sea-level
The lakes in two lights green soap and indigo
The high cirque-lake black half-open eye

Ptarmigan hunt for bugs in the snow
Bear peers through the wall at noon
Deer crowd up to see the lamp
A mouse nearly drowns in the honey
I see my bootprints mingle with deer-foot
Bear-paw mule-shoe in the dusty path to the privy

Much later I write down:
 “raging. Viking sunrise
 The gorgeous death of summer in the east”
(Influence of a Byronic landscape
Bent pages exhibiting depravity of style.

Outside the lookout I lay nude on the granite
Mountain hot September sun but inside my head
Calm dark night with all the other stars

HERACLITUS: “The waking have one common world
But the sleeping turn aside
Each into a world of his own.”

I keep telling myself what I really like
Are music, books, certain land and sea-scapes
The way light falls across them, diffusion of
Light through agate, light itself . . . I suppose
I’m still afraid of the dark

 “Remember smart-guy there’s something
 Bigger something smarter than you.”
Ireland’s fear of unknown holies drives
My father’s voice (a country neither he
Nor his great-grandfather ever saw)

 A sparkly tomb a plated grave
 A holy thumb beneath a wave

Everything else they hauled across Atlantic
Scattered and lost in the buffalo plains
Among these trees and mountains

From Duns Scotus to this page
A thousand years

(“. . . a dog walking on his hind legs—
not that he does it well but that he
does it at all.”)

Virtually a blank except for the hypothesis
That there is more to a man
Than the contents of his jock-strap

EMPEDOCLES: “At one time all the limbs
Which are the body’s portion are brought together
By Love in blooming life’s high season; at another
Severed by cruel Strife, they wander each alone
By the breakers of life’s sea.”

Fire and pressure from the sun bear down
Bear down centipede shadow of palm-frond
A limestone lithograph—oysters and clams of stone
Half a black rock bomb displaying brilliant crystals
Fire and pressure Love and Strife bear down
Brontosaurus, look away

My sweat runs down the rock

HERACLITUS: “The transformations of fire
are, first of all, sea; and half of the sea
is earth, half whirlwind. . . .
It scatters and it gathers; it advances
and retires.”

I move out of a sweaty pool
 (The seal)
And sit up higher on the rock

Is anything burning?

The sun itself! Dying

Pooping out, exhausted
Having produced brontosaurus, Heraclitus
This rock, me,
To no purpose

I tell you anyway (as a kind of loving) . . .
Flies & other insects come from miles around
To listen
I also address the rock, the heather,
The alpine fir

BUDDHA: "All the constituents of being are
Transitory: Work out your salvation with diligence."

(And everything, as one eminent disciple of that master
Pointed out, have been tediously complex ever since.)

There was a bird
Lived in an egg
And by ingenious chemistry
Wrought molecules of albumen
To beak and eye
Gizzard and craw
Feather and claw

My grandmother said:
"Look at them poor bed-
raggled pigeons!"

And the sign in McAlister Street:

"IF YOU CAN'T COME IN
SMILE AS YOU GO BY
L♥VE
THE BUTCHER

I destroy myself, the universe (an egg)
And time—to get an answer:
There are a smiler, a sleeper and a dancer

We repeat our conversation in the glittering dark
Floating beside the sleeper.
The child remarks, "You knew it all the time."
I: "I keep forgetting that the smiler is
Sleeping; the sleeper, dancing."

From Sauk Lookout two years before
Some of the view was down the Skagit
To Puget Sound: From above the lower ranges,
Deep in forest—lighthouses on clear nights.

This year's rock is a spur from the main range
Cuts the valley in two and is broken
By the river; Ross dam repairs the break,
Makes trolley buses run
Through the streets of dim Seattle far away.

I'm surrounded by mountains here
A circle of 108 beads, originally seeds
 of *ficus religiosa*
 Bo-Tree

A circle, continuous, one odd bead
Larger than the rest and bearing
A tassel (hair-tuft) (the man who sat
 under the tree)
In the center of the circle,
A void, an empty figure containing
All that's multiplied;
Each bead a repetition, a world
Of ignorance and sleep.

Today is the day the goose gets cooked
Day of liberation for the crumbling flower
Knobcone pinecone in the flames
Brandy in the sun

Which, as I said, will disappear
Anyway it'll be invisible soon
Exchanging places with stars now in my head
To be growing rice in China through the night.
Magnetic storms across the solar plains
Make aurora borealis shimmy bright
Beyond the mountains to the north.

Closing the lookout in the morning
Thick ice on the shutters
Coyote almost whistling on a nearby ridge

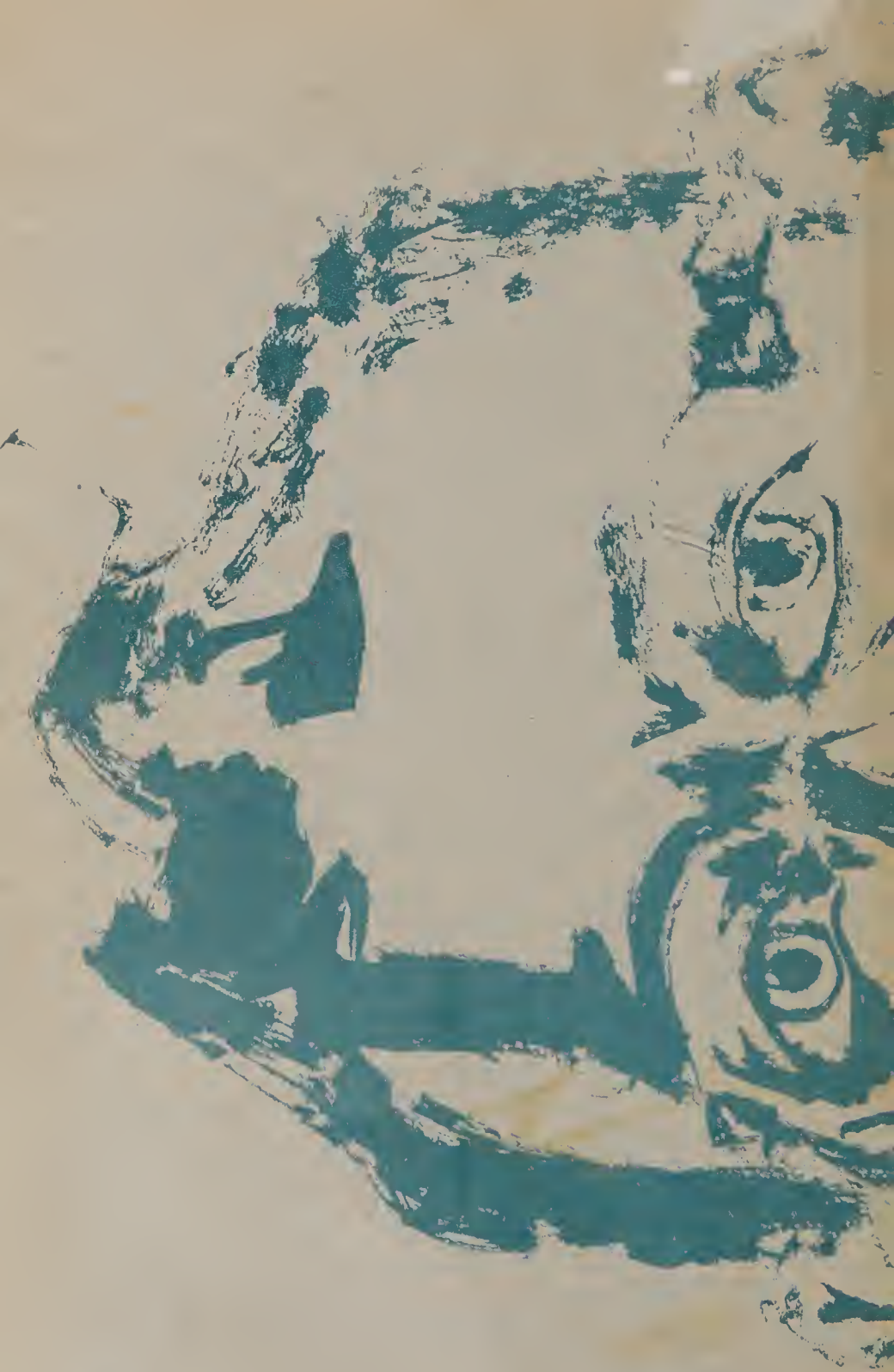
The mountain is THERE (between two lakes)
I brought back a piece of its rock
Heavy dark-honey-color
With a seam of crystal, some of the quartz
Stained by its matrix
Practically indestructible
A shift from opacity to brilliance
(The zenbos say, "Lightning-flash & flint-spark")
Like the mountains where it was made

What we see of the world is the mind's
Invention and the mind
Though stained by it, becoming
Rivers, sun, mule-dung, flies—
Can shift instantly
A dirty bird in a square time

Gone
Gone
REALLY gone
Into the cool
O MAMA!

Like they say, "Four times up,
Three times down." I'm still on the mountain.

NOTE: The quotes of Empedocles and Heraclitus
are from the John Burnet translation.



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