

Introduction

This is an anthology of America's Zen poets from the middle of nineteenth century to over twentieth century. The representatives who symbolized the period of the seeds of Oriental thought were two New Englanders, both Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau. A modern and distinguished poet, who was originally born and raised in Hartford, Connecticut, was Lindley Williams Hubbell. He was also a 'witness of the twentieth century.' Gary Snyder is a Zen poet named so-called Dharma Bums, who lives in the foothills of Sierra Nevada through twenty first century.

This anthology is arranged chronologically, by birth dates. The traces of Oriental thought can be found in the poems of Emerson and Thoreau in the formative years of American poetry. Emerson is the archetype of American poets. Snyder is much like Thoreau in manner and at one time his indebtedness to him. I also have devoted a greater portion of this anthology to Hubbell's presentation.

The chief purpose of this anthology will have been accomplished if it the four American poets help to raise the standard of taste in America's Zen poetry and gives, young people, native or foreign, a better opportunity to educate themselves through it.

Ralph Waldo Emerson (May 25, 1803 - April 27, 1882)

He was born in Boston, Massachusetts, as the fourth child of Ruth Haskins and William Emerson. After educating at Boston Public Latin School where, at age of eight, Emerson began writing poems. He studied shortly at Harvard University Divinity School in 1825. In 1826, he began career as minister. In 1832 he gave up position as minister and sailed for Europe; traveled in Italy, France, England, and Scotland; met Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Wordsworth, and Thomas Carlyle. He settled in Concord, Massachusetts in 1834. He published first important work in 1836, the essay *Nature*. In 1838 he became closely associated with Henry David Thoreau. Emerson collaborated with Margaret Fuller on *The Dial* (1840 -1844); regularly contributed to the journal. He published *Essays* (1841), and also *Essays: Second Series* in 1844. In 1846 he published *Poems* and further collections of essays, *Nature; Addresses, and Lectures* (1849).

Hamatreya

Minott, Lee, Willard, Hosmer, Meram, Flint
Possessed the land which rendered to their toil
Hay, corn, roots, hemp, flax, apples, wool, and wood.
Each of these landlords walked amidst his farm,
Saying, ‘ ‘Tis mine, my children’s, and my name’s:
How sweet the west wind sounds in my own trees!
How graceful climb those shadows on my hill!
I fancy these pure waters and the flags
Know me, as does my dog: we sympathize;
And, I affirm, my actions smack of the soil.’
Where are these men? Asleep beneath their grounds;
And strangers, fond as they, their furrows plough.
Earth laughs in flowers, to see her boastful boys
Earth-proud, proud of the earth which is not theirs;
Who steer the plough, but cannot steer their feet
Clear of the grave.
They added ridge to valley, brook to pond,
And sighed for all that bounded their domain.
‘This suits me for a pasture; that’s my park;
We must have clay, lime, gravel, granite-ledge,
And misty lowland, where to go for peat.
The land is well, —lies fairly to the south.
’Tis good, when you have crossed the sea and back,
To find the sitfast acres where you left them.’
Ah! The hot owner sees not death, who adds
Him to his land, a lump of mould the more.
Hear what the Earth say:—

EARTH-SONG.

‘Mine and yours;
Mine, not yours.
Earth endures;
Stars abide—

Shine down in the old sea;
Old are the shores;
But where are old men?
I who have seen much,
Such have I never seen.
 ' The lawyer's deed
Ran sure,
In tail,
To them, and to their heirs
Who shall succeed,
Without fail,
Forevermore.

'Here is the land,
Shaggy with wood,
With its old valley,
Mound, and flood.
But the heritors?
Fled like the flood's foam, —
The lawyer, and the laws,
And the kingdom,
Clean swept here from.

'They called me theirs,
Who so controlled me;
Yet every one
Wished to stay, and is gone.
How am I theirs,
If they cannot hold me,
But I hold them?

When I heard the Earth-song,
I was no longer brave;
My avarice cooled
Like lust in the chill of the grave.

Brahma

If the red slayer think he slays,
Or if the slain think he is slain,
They know not well the subtle ways
I keep, and pass, and turn again.

Far or forgot to me is near;
Shadow and sunlight are the same;
The vanished gods to me appear;
And one to me are shame and fame.

They reckon ill who leave me out;
When me they fly, I am the wings;
I am the doubter and the doubt,
And I the hymn the Brahmin sings.

The strong gods pine for my abode,
And pine in vain the sacred Seven;
But thou, meek lover of the good!
Find me, and turn thy back on heaven.

Henry David Thoreau (July 12, 1817 – May 6, 1862)

He was born in Concord, Massachusetts as the third child of Cynthia Dunbar and John Thoreau. After studying at Concord Academy, he enrolled in Harvard in 1833; graduated in 1837. Formed close relationship with Ralph Waldo Emerson, and through him associated with transcendentalist group. He taught at Central school, Concord, in 1837. He regularly published poems and essays in *The Dial*. In 1845 he built a cabin on property of Emerson's at Walden Pond, in which he lived for over two years. He spent a night in jail in 1846 for refusing the payment of poll tax. He wrote first book, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* in 1849, and the most important book, *Walden, or life in the Woods* was published in 1854. The essay, "Resistance to Civil Government" was published posthumously under the title "Civil-Disobedience" in *A Yankee in Canada, the Anti-slavery and Reform Papers* (1866). Thoreau wrote more than 200 poems, mainly between 1837 and 1845. Many poems appeared in the journal that he kept from 1837. He wrote few poems after 1847.

The Thaw

I saw the civil sun drying earth's tears—
Her tears of joy that only faster flowed,

Fain would I stretch me by the highway side,
To thaw and trickle with the melting snow,
That mingled soul and body with the tide,
I too may through the pores of nature flow.

But I alas nor tinkle can nor fume,
One jot to forward the great work of Time,
'Tis mine to hearken while these ply the loom,
So shall my silence with their music chime.

“My life has been the poem I would have writ”

My life has been the poem I would have writ,
But I could not both live and utter it.

“The Rabbit leaps”

The Rabbit leaps
The mouse outcreeps
The flag out-peeps
Beside the brook.

The ferret weeps
The marmot sleeps
The owlet keeps

In his snug nook.

The apples thaw
The ravens caw
The squirrels gnaw
 The frozen fruit;

To their retreat
We track the feet
Of mice that eat
 The apples root.

The willows droop
The alders stoop
The pheasants group
 Beneath the snow.
The catkins green
Cast o'er the scene
A summer sheen
 A genial glow.

The snow dust falls
The otter crawls
The partridge calls
 Far in the wood

The traveler dreams
The tree-ice gleams
The blue jay screams
 In angry mood.

Smoke

Light-winged smoke, Icarian bird,
Melting thy pinions in thy upward flight,
Lark without song, and messenger of dawn,
Circling above the hamlets as thy nest;
Or else, departing dream, and shadowy form
Of midnight vision, gathering up thy skirts:
By night star-veiling, and by day
Darkening the light and blotting out the sun;
Go thou my incense upward from this hearth,
And ask the Gods to pardon this clear flame.

Lindley Williams Hubbell (June 3, 1901 – October 2, 1994)

He was born in Hartford, Connecticut. He started to read Shakespeare at age of 8 and did not intend to go to a college and studied on his own about Western literature, Hindu literature, art, and music. He worked at New York Public Library, 1925-46. Once he returned to Hartford, taught art and drama at the Randall School of Art from 1946-53. He traveled to Italy and Puerto Rico. His first poetry collection, *Dark Pavilion* (1927) won the Yale Younger Poets prize. It was followed by *The Tracing of a Portal* (1931), *Winter-Burning* (1938), *The Ninth Continent* (1947), *Long Island Triptych & Other Poems* (1947). He corresponded with Gertrude Stein, whom he met on her American tour in New York in 1934. In 1953 he moved to Japan by relationship with Ruth Fuller Sasaki of The First Zen Institute of America. He taught Shakespeare, English poetry, Ibsen, and Greek drama at Doshisha University in Kyoto. He legally naturalized as a Japanese citizen with the name of Hayashi Shuseki in 1960. After retiring Doshisha, he taught at Mukogawa University in Kobe, 1970-85. His significant poetry collection, *Seventy Poems* was published in 1965. It was followed by many other collections and published in Japan: *Pasiphae* (1970), *Autobiography* (1971), *Atlantic Triptych* (1971), *Climbing to Monfumo* (1977), *Trilogy* (1977), *Ten Avatars of Vishnu* (1978), *Czerny* (1981), *The First Architect* (1982). He also published critical essays and translations including *Lecture on Shakespeare* (1958), *Studies in English Literature* (1982). The collections of poems and essays as a two-book series, *The Work of Lindley Williams Hubbell* appeared posthumously in 2002.

from DARK PAVILION

REMEMBER THIS

Remember this, O pitiful heart:
As surely as lover and lover part,
So do a man and his sorrow take
Divergent paths, for healing's sake.

Remember this, O hunted mind:
The years are slow but certainly kind;
And every grief and every crime
Will seem less terrible, in time.

JANUARY THAW

That which endures,
Deeper than any root,
Being the earth itself
From which each fruit
And the substantial grain
Are born, and perish to be born again;

That which remains
Far down, oh, far below,
Wakens and stirs,
Feeling the melted snow;
And things which seemed to be, but were not dead,
Rise to be fed.

I REMEMBER A HILL

I remember a hill with trees growing thick at the top,
And I remember a boy who climbed the hill
On summer evenings and looked out over the city
And watched the city grow still.

And I remember what the boy had in his heart,
Sitting there hour after hour with his eyes blurred
And finally laying his head on the grass and crying,
Certain of not being heard.

THOSE WHO HAVE BEAUTY

To those who have beauty
I would speak this word:
Do not barter this thing
For the gift of wisdom.
If you had wisdom
It would stay with you always;
If you have beauty
It will leave you soon,
But do not barter this thing
For the gift of wisdom.

BIRTH-HOUR

There was rain falling as I walked through the quiet
streets;
It was still coming down, later, as I lay on the bed
Listening in the dark to the great drops striking the window;
And I knew that something was born and something was

dead.

My heart spoke to me out of the voices of the raindrops,
Saying, "From this night onward, until you are dead,
You will lie alone, you will lie without your desire;
Not even in the grave will you find a colder bed."

DARK PAVILION

It lies in ruins now, but it was always
A terrible place to come upon at night;
And I have seen many and many a person,
Confronted by it suddenly, take flight.

It was always a terrible place, but now that it lies in ruins,
Nobody ever walks that way at all;
And mine are the only cars that ever listen
When the bats hock and the rotten rafters fall.

from THE TRACING OF A PORTAL

AFTERNOON FERRY

The rain fell slowly into the hushed city
And into the dark water of the bay.
Gulls rode the tide on blocks of ice,
Gray upon gray.

There was Hoboken ahead of me, and Union City,
And the rain wetting my face,
And the boat plowing through water and broken ice.
From one desolate place to another desolate place.

UNDERTOW

Always at my feet,
Too plain to doubt,
I feel the pull of the tide
Dragging me out.

I strain to the shore, hearing
The receding foam hiss;
But the undertow is stronger.
I am no watch for this.

In spite of all I can do
The water will rise
Over the knees and the heart,
Over the mouth and the eyes.

NEW YORK

The city rises from the sea like an iron lily.
The city opens to the light like a cluster of
 metal flowers, rigid on the stem.
As a pool is fragrant with water lilies, so has the
 ocean brought forth
Flowers without essence to pierce the air like blades.

For miles around the islands shed cold cluster upon the
wave,
And in the center, like a flower or a gem harder than a
flower,
The great lily, the lily of marble and steel
Cutting the air with its petals.

Surely the heart is made whole that has beheld,
Perfect upon the stem, this flower.

LAST SONG

This is then last,
Now it is over.
From friend and lover
I shall keep fast

The battered door;
Neither god nor mortal
The beleaguered portal
Shall enter more.

Bring riot and shout,
Bring swordsman and lancer;
You will have no answer,
The torches are out.

from WINTER-BURNING

MASK

In early and in middle youth
The images are still confused
And shifting that eventually
Into individual truth
Harden, or are quite refused.

Soon the elect and single image,
Haphazardly and for no reason
Beyond the crotchet of a season
Chosen, will eclipse the sky
With its accidental plumage.

AIR PARADE

They flew in V's, like wild geese flying south,
Over the city to the river's mouth,

Over the harbor to the Jersey shore,
And still they came, and there were always more.

Their wings were spread like ganders, and their call
Was louder far but no less beautiful.

Their shadow swept the city like a cloud,
Darker and darker, till I cried aloud:

The beauty of one airplane in the sky
Is vehement enough for such as I.

QUATRAIN FOR YEAR'S END

Clouds will lie low in the west with a cold wind
 Blowing,
Evening without a star and the year at December.
The day will be almost gone and the year will be
 going.
Though no one else should remember, I shall remem—
 ber.

from LONG ISLAND TRIPTYCH & OTHER POEMS

PORTE-BOUTEILLES

The first year of the war Marcel Duchamp,
In a gesture beautiful and lonely,
Exhibited a rack for drying bottles:
The first ready made.

Art had been heading for annihilation
A hundred years. He was the purest eye
Since the industrial revolution. He only
Was in at the kill.

After that it was easy: Dada, the machine cult,
Objects found, objects found and assisted,
Irrational objects and the thoroughly rational:
Cylinder, cone, sphere.

He himself went on for a while wearily:
Bicycle wheel, snow shovel, typewriter cover,
And at last the immortal urinal, the porcelain Buddha,
Signed: R. Mutt, 1917.

But the game was up: he turned to chess and roulette,
Concentric circles on a gramophone table,
One great and final painting, done on glass,
Shattered when finished.

Meanwhile the surrealists continued the pastime:
Vegetable roots, watch springs, boules de neige.
The object departed from its original purity,
Becoming self-conscious.

LONG ISLAND TRIPTYCH

ONE GREENPOINT

I

The Glory of God shines Greenpoint.
The oxen of the sun
Tread out the darkness along Newel Street.
The first stenographer announces dawn.
The delicatessens open. It is day.

II

Between Newtown Creek, Bushwick Creek,
and East River,
Lies the green peninsula, the green point of land,
Covered with sea green grasses. The Canarsie Indians
Camped here for ages and in 1638
Sold it to the Dutch West India Company from whom
On April 3, 1645,
Dirck the Norman received the patent, whose sons
Sold it to Pieter Praa in 1684
And from that time until the public highway
Was put through in 1838, only
The families of Pieter Praa's daughters: Meserole,
Bennett, Provoost, Calyer, held the land
Where, in the fullness of time, Mae West was born.

The Russians, the Slovaks, the Hungarians
and the Poles came.
It became part of the town of Bushwick.
The Italians, the Germans, the Irish and the Jews came.

Bushwick became part of the city of Brooklyn.
The refineries, the foundries, the warehouses and
the gas house came.

Brooklyn became part of the great city,
The wonder of the world. At noon the sun is hot
On Winthrop Park, the colonnade and the angel.
In the side yard of St. Stanislaus the Polish boys
Are playing handball. Along Engert Avenue
From McCarren Park to Fidelity Memorial Park
The glory of God moves like a procession
With gold fringe, black plumes, and muffled hooves.

III

The heart,
Said Rena,
Must learn to compose, like Palestrina,
Contrapuntally, for many voices,
Each one a separate part.
While one rejoices
Another sweats in anguish.

My dear,
Said Rena,
I suffer for you but I don't worry bout you
Because I hear
The contrapuntal texture of your living.
Whatever mess you are in, that goes on without you,
Getting clearer and clearer.
Essence,
Said Rena,
Is what matters. The rest
Is always either too little or too much.
Sight without touch,
Image without presence
Are good, music without image would be best.

V

We see the Germans first in the austere
And lovely prose of Caesar's Gallic War,
On the first page. The Belgae, so he says,
Are bravest of the Gauls because they're near
The Germans who are bellicose, wherefore
The Belgae keep in trim. He says they have
No sacrifices and no priest who prays
To unknown gods, they worship sun and fire
And moon; in other words, what they can see,
The objects of their sight and their desire,
With no Druidic nonsense. Nothing save
Hunting and war concerns them. They are free.

In Tacitus we find them no less
From Roman government and the austere
Stoic morality, but in him we see
More of their culture. They had all poetry save
The writing down of it (and they were near
The time of runes). This barbarous poetry prays,
Foretells the future and incites to war,
Extolls the magical excellence of fire,
Bays at the moon, howls at the stars, and says
Unspeakable things about the hot desire
Of earth at sowing time. All this we have
Only on hearsay, with its why and wherefore.

But these are modern things. To know wherefore
Man became upright, capable and free,
Behold the earliest German that we have:
Pliopithecus, who came so near
To being a full-fledged gibbon, never prays
To anything at all, is never austere
In act or concept, never wages war
Except to eat or breed. Anthropology says

He lived in the Lower Pliocene. Desire
Lay lightly on his shoulders. He could see
And think no further than he saw, could save
Himself from animals, but had no fire.

The next German may have discovered fire
(Homo Heidelbergensis); how and wherefore
We are ignorant. It is the tongue that prays
And that is lost over forever, but we have
The jawbone and the teeth which are very near
To human. It is not likely he was free
From utilitarianism, the desire
For shapeliness in flints, for cooking and war,
Was probably far from him, yet he says
In this hand - ax from Saint - Acheul, that save
The proper human, nothing as austere
Had been designed, and it is here to see.

Next, the Ehringsdorf - Taubach man we see,
Proto - Neandertal, must have had fire,
Must have had manual skill, and seems to have
Aesthetic sense. He seems to have desire
For beautiful objects, witness these austere
And beautiful topaz tools, unfit for war
But exquisite to see. No doubt he prays
To the spirit of his prey, and conjures near
The animal ghosts. The primitive shaman says
The cave - bear and the saber - tooth are free
Without his charm and fetishes, wherefore
The first priest signs the first contract to save.

The true Neandertal was human, save
For the higher arts; in his artifacts we see
A sense of harmony, the flint tools have
Proportion that could only come from desire
To make things comely. Abstract art is near

When the body is painted with manganese. For war
He fashioned axes. When the shaman prays,
He bears the cave – bear’s jaw in his austere
And hairy hand. His imagination is free
From the grossest kind of fear. Familiar fire
Burns on his hearth perpetually, wherefore
He waits the lightning. He speaks
and knows what he says.

Ireland appears in the Mesolithic, says
Science, but there is little enough left, save
Some flints from Larne. The Mesolithic prays
No longer to the beast. The cult of fire
Flourishes and the sun is worshipped. Free
From the nomad’s life, man now evolved the austere
Art of the potter, textiles for peace and war,
And microliths, to satisfy the desire
For beauty and utility, wherefore
The Maglemosean pointed bone shafts have
Them fitted in. Just at this time we see
The old age fading and the new age near.

As the end of the Neolithic age drew near
Came megaliths: dolmens, menhirs (which says
“Stone-on-end” in Celtic) and we see
Cromlechs and artificial caves which have
Blankets of earth covered with stones, wherefore
Great tumuli were heaped for man’s desire
To preserve the body was no less austere
Than it became in Egypt. Here he prays
To hafted ax and serpent, still not free
From chthonian terror, but the sun can save
The Heart from darkness, and the friendly fire
Disperse the night and the nightmare of war.

Between the stone age and the bronze the war

Of metals passed through copper and gold, drew near
To iron and steel. Copper came first, wherefore
We speak of Chalcolithic, then the austere
And loveliest of metals, gold. Who says
Gold says Ireland. It covered it like a fire.
The Irish fibula spread to Troy that prays
To pre-Homeric gods, became the desire
Of all Europe. In the Iliad we see
The golden socket of Hector's lance. All, save
A little, came from Wicklow, duty-free
And it was beautiful, and hard to have.

The first American Indian that we have
Is Folsom man. We see him first at war
With giant bison, peccary we see,
Sloth, camel, horse and antelope.

Wissler says

He is Mesolithic, had the use of fire,
Was nomad, without pottery, with austere
Absence of decoration. Certainly prays
To something, limited use of bone, wherefore
He lagged behind Crô-Magnon. The desire
For durable baskets must have brought him near
To pottery but he never reached it, save
Possibly here and there: surmise is free.

The poosepatuck Indians roam free
At Mastic where the salt winds blow. They have
Radios and have long since conquered fire,
Gas and electricity. They are near
Neighborhood movies, but the guide book says
Their blood is mixed with African, wherefore
The shinnecoeks, further out on the island, see
No reason to cultivate them, they desire
To remain unmixed, continuing the war
On racial tolerance. When will the austere

Voice of reason reach this island and save.
The wretch who hates, the hypocrite who prays

In Greenpoint only the broken hearted prays,
Prowling the streets at midnight, but the free
Frequent pool parlors, frequently they have
Tail in the park. The social worker says
They are a problem, being too the to see
That only in this way they are able to save
Themselves from going completely nuts, wherefore
They are wise to warm themselves before the fire
Built in an ashcan, and to huddle near
Each other in the apathetic war
With death. Only when they are filled with desire
Are they beautiful, and in some strange way austere.

Who once was free and now is filled with desire,
Who burns in fire and can no longer see
To whom he plays, to whom he would draw near,
Cries out and says, it is better to have what I have,
To be thus at war with death, than to be the austere
Who know how to save themselves, who know wherefore.

VI

As I turned into Newel Street
The gas house smelled as plain
As when you were a Child, and there
Was the old smell again,

And people that I never knew
Came crowding on the wind
Like drunken ghosts, their faces pale
Wavering and thinned,

But there was one who stood apart

And fixed me with a stare,
More beautiful than all the rest
And more than I could bear.

VII

The light that shines at the center of the universe,
The flame that burns at the center of existence,
The fire that glows at the Center of my being,

The tranquility of Brancusi's bird,
Of Mondrian's great black and white diamond,
Of Debussy's clouds,

This is my home, this is where I live,
I have stayed away too long,
I must try to go back.

The wafers of triple bromide in the medicine cabinet,
The luminol, the phenobarbitol,
The codeine hangover,

The horrible dream in which you think you wake up
and find it is still true.

The fear of going to bed, the cup of hot milk,
The long walks at night,

The coffee in counter joints on Driggs Avenue
At four in the morning, the lousy sandwiches,
The dirty cup,

The hysteria, the clowning, the embarrassment,
the repeated pattern,
The renewed attempt, the discouragement, the shame,
The continued failure,

The humiliation of the mind, of the heart,
of the flesh, of the intention,

The taste of self hatred sour in the throat
Like vomit,
The literary men who hate Shakespeare, the scholars
who hate life,
The artists who hate each other,
the bitching one's friends,
The political row,

The religious crap, the mystic cult, the phony messiah,
The dull lecture, the frustrated and jealous women,
The fake experience,

The loud bullshitting in the pool rooms
and the bowling alleys,
The unfunny joke, the two packs of butts a day,
The bum liquor,

It is all good, I would not unlive a moment of it,
I do not disown a moment of it,
I thank God for it,

But it has taken me far from the center of my being
Where there is sound within silence and silence
within sound
And light within darkness.

I have been gone long enough. I have not forgotten
The way nor the direction. I shall go back
This time to stay,

And in that place where the air is unstirred
and untroubled
The wolves of confusion, disorder and excess

Will fall dead at your feet.

VIII

Anaptomorphus Homunculus

The tiny primate

Lived in North America

During the Eocene

Resembling the lemurs

Of Madagascar

With short muzzle

And large brain

Before the ice sheet

Passed over Long Island

Before Pliopithecus

Chattered across Germany

Before Propliopithecus

And Parapithecus

Lived in the Fayum:

En ce temps – là le desert était people d'anachorètes.

IX

Why are these people indifferent ?

They are indifferent because they are ignorant.

But why are they ignorant ? In every city,

Town and village there is a public library,

And though they are tired when night comes they are
not too tired
For radios and movies, for bridge and comic strips.
Why then do they remain ignorant ?

They are ignorant because they lack curiosity.

Is not a lack of curiosity indifference ?
Is this a vicious circle ?

No.

Real indifference is knowing and not caring.
Lack of curiosity is not caring to know.
They do not care to know.

Emily Dickinson said,
My mother does not care for thought.

Precisely.

But why ?

Because they lack imagination.

From lack of imagination comes lack of curiosity.
From lack of curiosity comes ignorance.
From ignorance comes indifference, or what seems
Indifference. Being without imagination,
No bomb is real except the one that hits them.
What can be done about lack of imagination ?

That is the artist's job.

The artist has no job except to be an artist.
It is the educator's job to use wisely
What the artist has done.

Then you have faith ?

Only in what I see.

X

In early middle age
There comes a quiet time
When you think the fight is won.

It has not even begun.

The fire roars in the wood,
The tide rises higher
Than you thought it ever could.

from SEVENTY POEMS

FORAMINIFER

The foraminifer is ameboid
But like the snail
Secretes a hard calcareous shell
And lives therein,
Visible to the unassisted eye,
Being no smaller than the head of a pin.

It dies in rain upon the ocean floor
One third of which is paved
With foraminifer's abandoned house.
The trilobite, which is a sort of louse,
Has been extinct these many million years
But foraminifer,

Its Cambrian contemporary,
This exquisite, just visible architect,
Still falls, like snow within a boule de neige,
Upon the stormless bottom of the sea,
Leaving in layer on layer
Its chalky heritage.

THE COURTSHIP OF THE ANNELIDA

The bristle-worms, marine and segmented,
Take places for the dance.
This is the primal mime, preceding far
Rococo and romance.

The males wriggle in rows, the females watch,
Nubile and excited.
Compared with this then partridge's pavane,
The grouse's gavotte are modern and sophisticated.

From this original came Cro-Magnon ritual
Accompanied upon the cave-bear's jaw,
The passion of Osiris and Dionysus,
Shakespeare, and Shaw.

MALEVICH

You put a pencilled square on a piece of paper,
And then a circle, off center, then two squares
Perfectly balanced, and the public cried out in terror:
We are lost.

At last, having purified the intellect beyond example,
You painted a white square, on a diagonal axis,
In cool white, on a background of warm white,
Calling it White on White.

Those were the morning days, after the great revolution,
When the poet stood on the platform without speaking,
And came down, saying: That was my poem,
Which is silence.

But the going was rough, and Lenin said:
This is a disorder of Leftism, let us have no more nonsense.
Movies are what we need, posters and book jackets,
And sets for the theatre.

Something must have gone wrong: it is the intellectuals
Who reject you now, it is the new smartness to laugh

At your sort of thing. Who better than a simple person
Could understand a square ?

Martyr who died in bed, entirely artist,
The circle and the square are impregnable.
They will survive a great deal of talking,
And a good many laughs.

MONDRIAN

Three flower pieces done in nineteen six
Show the object receding already.
Cubism freed the line,
But he went on looking for the single, incredible thing,

Granted to only a few out of a generation:
The key to the private door, the word list
Of a language not worn out
By a million egotistical mouths, by a tribe of talkers.

It happened, to him uniquely among so many,
At the moment in which hope was abandoned,
The miracle awaited with fear,
Without possible explanation it happened.

Mathematician and saint, these pure canvases
Answer the question that a desperate generation
Had put to itself. It is no longer necessary
For a serious man to renounce art.

GRAFFITO

I often remember
the unknown poet
who went (in 1940
or thereabouts
on one of the posters
in an east side El station:

NUTS TO PEOPLE

HALF CENTURY

From nineteen ten to nineteen twenty
There was art and art aplenty.
From nineteen twenty to nineteen thirty
Experiment was confined
To the unconscious mind.
From nineteen thirty to nineteen forty
Economics ruled the roost,
Superseding Freud and Proust.
Since then there's been a general route,
Courage has given out
And poets home, like well trained pigeons,
To various obsolete religions.

UNDERSEA

Under the wave and a long way under
Bar below the ebb and the flow,
Beneath the sound of the surface thunder,
Beyond the reach of the undertow,
Grow the anemones, lies the lonely,

Long abandoned, forgotten freight,
And there abide such creatures only
As can endure the weight.

NIGHT PIECE

Night clears.
The islands of the sky
Come out, and the nearer stars.
The moon is high.
Touching each tree
And every hill with light.
We do not ask for day,
But for a clear night.

IN YOKOHAMA HARBOR

What am I doing here,
where my people unleashed
the age of horror

sowing the plague
that will kill us all ?
Can I be Loved ?

Is it possible
this earth will not scorch
the soles of my feet ?

Lord Buddha and Lord Christ
help me to walk

lightly on this soil.

THE ROCK GARDEN AT RYOANJI

This is the ultimate subtlety of art,
The marrow in the bones:
A rectangle of raked gravel
And a few stones.

KATSURA IMPERIAL VILLA

Americans can see a Mondrian
But Japanese can live in one.
That is why they do not care at all
To put one on the wall.

SOUNDS

To me the sound of falling rain
Is very beautiful,
But Japanese prefer the sound of snow
Which I can't hear at all.

NICHIREN TEMPLE

The Nichiren temple was red lacquer and gold,
Definitely après guerre; as you'd expect,
A little too much like Radio City, but having

Its own kind of self-respect.

A girl was kneeling before the altar, praying
And sobbing. She bowed from time to time
Until her forehead touched the floor. She was obviously
In some sort of a jam.

A priest was howling “Namu Myo Horengekyo”
Over and over, like someone bereft
Of his senses. He must have said it a thousand times
Before I left.

There was no one else, except a mantis
Clinging torpidly to the edge
Of a screen. When I poked it, it hardly moved.
It was dying of old age.

A STUDENT WHO SAT FACING ME
ON THE OSAKA EXPRESS

Under his persistent look I closed my eyes,
pretending to doze.

When I opened them he was still staring
so I resumed the pose.

Sitting there with closed eyes, I thought:
Look your fill.

I have no defences left
and no concealment. I am what you see,

an old man, twisted and ugly,
and as unconcerned as a tree.

KYOTO

Coming home in a taxi
after the day's heat
the cool air poured in the window

and over the city in the west
Venus and the new moon
brighter than I had ever seen them.

There is no end, I said,
of love and beauty
and fulfillment,

and my dust
will be a part of Japan
forever.

from CLIMBING TO MONFUMO

BUKOKA

When storms rage on Victoria Nyanza
Hammering against the piers of Bukoba
The rector of the Anglican church
Is disturbed in his devotions, but the crocodiles
Are quite unmoved, in fact they rather
Enjoy it. The Arabs accept it
As an inscrutable gesture on the part of
Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

The herons, fearful for their delicate
Feathers, huddle among the reeds.
The natives simply lie down and go to sleep.
The tsetse flies simply lie down and go to sleep
On the natives. Thus do all creatures,
After their kind, respond
To the inscrutable gesture of
Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

BEER BOTTLES

Irving Katzenstein told me a poem once
that had been written by a friend of his:

There are more paintings in the world
Than empty beer bottles.

I have forgotten the name of the man who wrote it
and now that Irving is gone I'll never know,

but I think of it so often, changing it to:

there are more poems in the world
Than empty beer bottles.

So many millions of poems have been written !
What happens to them all ? Who reads them ?
I remember so many I have loved at one time or another
and then lost somewhere along the way.
I remember a poem by Edgar Fawcett that gave me
some of my most satisfactory sex fantasies
when I was a boy (I found it in the virginal bookcase
of my maiden aunts) and a little later
an exquisite small book in green covers, called
A Cabinet of Jade, by David O'Neil
(he was George O'Neil's uncle and now they are both forgotten)
then there were the wonderful poems of Walter Conrad Arensberg,
now forgotten, though he himself is not,
being the most illustrious collector of Duchamp
(he also had some very peculiar theories about Dante and Shakespeare)
and there was Mina Loy, whom Ezra Pound
considered as good a poet as Marianne Moore,
now quite forgotten (she might make a come-back, though)
and there were the six-syllable poems of Yvor Winters,
the dada poems of Louis Aragon
and of Elsa, Baroness von Freytag-Loringhoven,
and that great-souled woman, Charlotte Perkins Stetson,
who wrote the poem about the recalcitrant butterfly:

I do not want to be a fly !
I want to be a worm !

and the New England woman, whoever she was, who wrote:

I don't know whether I'm High Church
And I don't know whether I'm Low.

and I remember a lovely poem by Helen Frazee-Bower
who disappointed me when I rediscovered her forty years later
by having become a tub-thumping, come-to-Jesus evangelist,
and a noble poem by George Brandon Saul who afterwards
did something about Yeats, the last I heard of him
he was working in an advertising agency in Hartford.

And there are the long poems:

“between 1650 and 1670
French poets produced as many as
Forty epic poems”

and the English are not far behind. Who reads them ?
Who reads, for example, Sir Richard Blackmore ?
As for me, for *The Light of Asia and Towards Democracy*
I would gladly sacrifice:

Paradise Lost
Paradise Regained
The Prelude
and *The Excursion*

and Sir Christopher Hatton wrote *The Silver Swan*.
There is no greater lyric poem in English.
He must have written lots of other poems.
What happened to them all ? Where are they now ?

Beer bottles . . . beer bottles . . .

NOTHING

There are two kinds
of nothing:

one is the real
nothing

the other is like
a clogged drain.

LADYBUG

The orange wings with black dots, folding,
Meet cleanly with sharp edges
Joined perfectly, fitting your
Body like a shield.

Your progress across my hand
Is singularly inoffensive
Considering that I am not as a rule
Partial to insects.

When I have opened the screen door
And extended my arm,
The neat case becomes a sudden
Whir, like a hummingbird.

from THR FIRST ARCHITECT

THE FIRST ARCHITECT

The valves of the diatom are sculptured,
But you cannot see them. You cannot even
See the diatom, and yet
Its convex walls of silica, two shells
Which fit each other neatly as a pill box
Fits the pill box cover, are wrought
With no less concentration
Than the Apollonian pediment at Olympia,
And may be bought for fifty cents
To look at under a microscope.
O wonder, fifty cents for something you can't see
Until you take it home and put it on a side:
An invisible plant building its invisible house.

The curtains have parted, this is a far cry
From colloids and carbon compounds.
The individual has appeared.
You can say, "It begins here.
It ends there." Something has happened,
A conscious shaping, and (most significant)
No two alike. Spheres, crescents, and queer shreds
Like something by Kandinsky. We are consciously
After a billion years of biological evolution,
Doing the same thing. We are consciously
Making forms. Making form.
An invisible plant making its invisible house,
A man painting (just as invisible doubtless

To a grosser eye: Moholy-Nagy
Placed on a side for fifty cents

Would be seen doing the same thing:
Consciously making forms. Making
Form.) They live in fresh water
Or salt water with equal complacence.
Their walls are of opal.
One hundred and twenty million of them
Weigh an ounce. They are without number.
Their opaline and sculptured walls,
An invisible plant making its invisible house,
Are where you have to begin if you want to understand
Art. Consciously making forms. Making form.

PEBBLES

These two pebbles from Miho no Matsubara, so marvelously shaped
by the immemorial sculpture of the ocean,
antedating by a billion years
the architecture of the diatom
and the mimesis of the annelata,
surviving the shock and shifting of continents,
abraded by wind and water and lava flood,
lie here at last on my desk, perfect works of art.
Only Brancusi could have made anything as beautiful.

WAKA

I am not a person.
I am a succession of persons
Held together by memory.

When the string breaks,
The beads are scattered.

from WALKING THROUGH NAMBA

CRICKET

I found a cricket in my bedroom
but I chose to ignore it.

The next night it was still there,
looking, I thought, rather dejected.

I caught it in a handkerchief
and put it outdoors.

All that night
it sang under my window.

MODERN ART

In 1863 Cezanne
attended the Salon des Refusés.
He was twenty four
and still a student.

Three years later
at Le Jas de Bouffan
he painted L'Oncle Dominique
and modern art was on its way.

Just a century later
Piero Manzoni
canned his faces
in ninety cans

of 33 grams each

and offered them for sale
to art collectors
for their weight in gold,

the price to fluctuate
according to the vicissitudes
of the international
gold market.

Thus, in a hundred years,
modern art progressed
from Cezanne
to a can of shit.

SUZUMUSHI

The suzumushi's name means "bell insect."
Now, in September,
They sing in my garden, in a cage,
Replenished with tomato and cucumber.

They eat their husbands. Like everything else, they have
Their saturnalia and their hells.
All night I lie and listen to their song
Like little silver bells.

TREE

Like fruit from a shaken tree
my beliefs have fallen from me.

Like leaves before a gust

they lie scattered in the dust.

After the autumn rains
only the trunk remains.

from TRAVEL DIARY 1953-1954

LEAVING HARTFORD

I shake the dust of this city

From my shoes.

I pronounce Anathema

On the people of this city

Because, being insensitive

And without imagination,

They expected me to explain to them

The art of poetry.

LEAVING LOS ANGELES

As I leave my native continent,

Perhaps for the last time,

My people are shaken by momentous events.

Lana Turner has married Lex Barker.

Rita Hayworth is going to marry Dick Haymes.

Ava Gardner and Frank Sinatra are reunited.

I have pondered these portents

Profoundly. I have turned them

Over and over in my mind.

Anraku Ritsu-in. Sakamoto.

The flat stones under the
miniature waterfall
were blood-red with algae.

The enormous black butterflies
flopping among the azaleas
had long tails forked like swallows.

The Tendai priest laughed and said,
I designed this garden myself.
It is my Soami.

It looked like Soami all right,
even barer than Ryoanji:
one rock and some raked sand,

not at all the sort of thing you'd expect
to find in a Tendai temple,
definitely in Zen taste.

Then we came to the Soami garden
(not really Soami, a school piece)
with anachronistic imported palms.

The woman said, We stopped the brook.
It made everything in the house
so damp.

ROCK GARDEN BY KOBORI ENSHU. NANZENJI.

All other gardens, except
incomparable Ryoanji,

make me a little nervous.

Here I am relaxed.

When I told my friends

(in America)

that I loved Edward Hopper

they were always surprised

because I am supposed to be

“modern”

but I told them:

Edward Hopper

gives me the same pleasure

that Mondrian does.

Gary Snyder (May 8, 1930 -)

He was born in San Francisco, California, and raised in Washington and Oregon. In 1951 he got his MA in anthropology from Reed College. After working as logger, forest ranger, and seaman, he studied Oriental languages at Berkeley, California 1953-56, during which time met Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac. He published first poetry collection, *Riprap* (1959). Next year he published *Myth and Text* (1960). He moved to Japan in 1956 and lived mainly in Kyoto, studying Rinzai Zen at Shokokuji under Miura Isshu Roshi and from 1959 at Daitokuji under Oda Sessō Roshi. He returned to the United States in 1964 to teach at the University of California at Berkeley. In 1969 the prose book, *Earth House Hold* was published. It was followed by many other collections; *Regarding Waves* (1970). *Turtle Island* (1974) won Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1975. *Axe Handle* (1983), *Life Out in the Rain* (1986), *Mountains and Rivers Without End* (1996), *No Nature: New and Selected Poems* (1992). His interviews and essays were *The Real Work: Interviews & Talks* (1980), *The Practice of the Wild* (1990) and *A Place in Space* (1995). In 1999 published *The Gary Snyder: Prose, Poetry, and Translations*. He now lives near the foothills of the Sierra Nevada, California.

from RIPRAP AND COLD MOUNTAIN POEMS

MID-AUGUST AT SOURDOUGH
MOUNTAIN LOOKOUT

Down valley a smoke haze
Three days heat, after five days rain
Pitch glows on the fir-cones
Across rocks and meadows
Swarms of new flies.

I cannot remember things I once read
A few friends, but they are in cities.
Drinking cold snow-water from a tin cup
Looking down for miles
Through high still air.

PIUTE CREEK

One granite ridge
A tree, would be enough
Or even a rock, a small creek,
A bark shred in a pool.
Hill beyond hill, folded and twisted
Tough trees crammed
In thin stone fractures
A huge moon on it all, is too much.
The mind wanders. A million
Summers, night air still and the rocks
Warm. Sky over endless mountains.
All the junk that goes with being human
Drops away, hard rock wavers

Even the heavy present seems to fail
This bubble of a heart.
Words and books
Like a small creek off a high ledge
Gone in the dry air.

A clear, attentive mind
Has no meaning but that
Which sees is truly seen.
No one loves rock, yet we are here.
Night chills. A flick
In the moonlight
Slips into Juniper shadow:
Back there unseen
Cold proud eyes
Of Cougar or Coyote
Watch me rise and go.

WATER

Pressure of sun on the rockslide
Whirled me in a dizzy hop-and-step descent,
Pool of pebbles buzzed in a Juniper shadow,
Tiny tongue of a this-year rattlesnake flicked,
I leaped, laughing for little boulder-color coil—
Pounded by heat raced down the slabs to the creek
Deep tumbling under arching walls and stuck
Whole head and shoulders in the water:
Stretched full on cobble—ears roaring
Eyes open aching from the cold and faced a trout.

from REGARDING WAVE

ROOTS

Draw over and dig
The loose ash soil
Hoe handles are short,
The sun's course long
Fingers deep in the earth search
Roots, pull them out; feel through;
Roots are strong.

REGARDING WAVE

The voice of the Dharma
the voice
now

A shimmering bell
through all.

≡ ∈

Every hill, still.
Every tree alive. Every leaf.
All the slopes flow.
old woods, new seedlings,
tall grasses plumes.

Dark hollows; peak of light.
wind stirs the cool side
Each leaf living.

All the hills.

⇒ ∈

The Voice
is a wife
to

him still.

om ah hum

from

MOUNTAINS AND RIVERS WITHOUT END

THE BLUE SKY

“Eastward from here,

beyond Buddha-worlds ten times as
numerous as the sands of the Ganges
there is a world called

PURE AS LAPIS LAZULI

its Buddha is called Master of Healing,

AZURE RADIANCE TATHAGATA”

It would take you twelve thousand summer vacations
driving a car due east all day every day
to reach the *edge* of the lapis lazuli realm of
Medicine Old Man Buddha;
East. Old Man Realm,
East across the sea, yellow sand land
Coyote Old Man land
Silver, and stone blue.

.

Blue. Belo, “bright colors of the flames”
flamen / brahman,
beltane, “blue fire” —

Sky.

[The dappled cloud zone—
Sanskrit *sku* “covered”
skewed (pied) skewbald (. . . “Stewball”)
skybald / piebald]—

Horse with lightning feet !

A mane like distant rain,
the turquoise horse,
a black star for an eye
white shell teeth.

Pony that feeds on the pollen of flowers
may he
make thee whole.
Heal, hale whole.

The Spell of the Master of Healing.

Namo bhagavate bhaishajyaguru-vaidurya-
prabharajaya tathagata arhate samyak
sambuddhaya tadyatha om bhaishajye
bhaishajye bhaishajya samudgate
svaha.

“I honor the Lord, the Master of Healing,
shining like lapis lazuli, the king, the
Tathagata, the Saint, the perfectly enlightened
one, saying OM TO THE HEALING
TO THE HEALING TO THE HEALER HAIL !
svaha.”

.

Shades of blue through the day.
T'u chüeh a border tribe near China
Türç
Turquoise: a hydrous phosphate of aluminum
a little copper
a little iron—

.

In the reign of the Emperor Nimmyo
when Ono-no-Komachi the strange girl poet
was seventeen, she set out looking for her father
who had become a Buddhist wanderer. She took ill
on her journey, and sick in bed one night saw

AZURE RADIANCE THUS-COME MEDICINE
MASTER

in a dream. He told her she would find a hot springs
on the bank of the Azuma river in the Bandai mountains
that would cure her; and she'd meet her father there.

.

“Enchantment as strange as
the Blue up above” my rose of San Antone

Tibetans say that goddesses have lapis lazuli hair.
Azure Old French *azur*,
 Persian *lazhward*,
—blue bead charms against the evil eye—

(Tim and Kim and Don and I were talking about
what an awful authoritarian garb Doctors
and Nurses wear, really, how spooky it is.
“What should they wear?”

— “masks and feathers !”)

Ramana Maharshi Dream

I was working as a woodcutter by a crossroads—Ko-san was work-
ing with me—we were sawing and splitting the firewood. An old
man came up the lane alongside a mud wall—he shouted a little
scolding at some Zen monks who were piling slash by the edge of
the woods. He came over and chatted with us, a grizzled face—

neither eastern nor western; or both. He had a glass of buttermilk in his hand. I asked him “Where’d you get that buttermilk?” I’d been looking all over for buttermilk. He said, “At the O K Dairy, right where you leave town.”

.

Medicine, measure, “Maya” —

Celestial. Arched cover. . . *kam*.

Comrade: sharing the same tent or sky,

A bent curved bow.

Kama, God of Love, Son of Maya,

bow of flowers.

.

Shakyamuni would then be the lord of the present world of
sorrow;

Bhaishajyaguru

Yao-Shih Fo

Yakushi Nyorai,

“Old Man Medicine Buddha”

The lord of the lost paradise.

(Glory of morning, pearly gates,

tlitlitzin, the “heavenly blue.”)

.

Thinking on Amitabha in the setting sun,

his *western* paradise—

impurities flow out away, to west,

behind us, *rolling*,

planet ball forward turns into the “east”
light-years beyond,
Great Medicine Master:
land of blue.

The blue sky

the blue sky.

The blue sky

is the land of

OLD MAN MEDICINE BUDDHA

where the eagle that flies out of sight

flies.

THE MOUNTAIN SPIRIT

Ceaseless wheel of lives
ceaseless wheel of lives

red sandstone;
gleaming dolomite

ceaseless wheel of lives

red sandstone and white dolomite.

Driving all night south from Reno
through cool-porched Bridgeport,
past Mono Lake's pale glow,
past tongues of obsidian flow stopped chill,
and the angled granite face
of the east Sierra front—

Ah. Here I am arrived in Bishop,
Owens Valley, called Payahu Nadu not so long ago.

Ranger Station on main street,
“I'm a traveler.
I want to know the way
to the White Mountains,
& the bristlecone pines.”
She gives me maps. “Here. The trail
to the grove at timberline
where the oldest living beings
thrive on rock and air.”

“—Thank you for your help.”
I go to the pass, turn north,
end of day, climbing high,
find an opening where a
steep dirt side road halts.
A perch in the round dry hills,
prickly pinyon pine boughs shade,
a view to the Last Chance range,
& make a camp.

Nearby, a rocky point.
Climb it,
passing a tidy scat-arrangement on a ledge,
stand on a dark red sandstone strata outcrop at the edge.
Plane after plane of desert ridges
darkening eastward into blue-black haze.

A voice says

“You had a bit of fame once in the city
For poems of mountains,
 here it’s real.

What ?

“Yes. Like the lines

*Walking on walking
under foot earth turns*

But what do you know of minerals and stone.
For a creature to speak of all that scale of time—what for ?

Still, I’d like to hear that poem.”

 I answer back,
“—Tonight is the night of the shooting stars,
Mirfak the brilliant star of Perseus
 crosses the ridge at midnight

I’ll read it then.”

 Who am I talking to ? I think,
walk back to camp.

.

Evening breeze up from the flats
from the valleys “Salt ” and “Death” —
Venus and the new moon sink in a deep blue glow
 behind the Palisades to the west,
needle-clusters shirring in the wind—
listen close, the sound gets better.

Mountain ranges violet haze back fading in the east
puffs of sailing dark-lit cloud, a big owl's
swift soft whip between the trees,
unroll the bedding, stretch out blankets on the
crunchy dry pine needles sun-warm
resinous ground.

Formations dip and strike my sleep.

.....

—Approaching in a dream:

*“Better ghosts that kick their own skulls like a ball
happy ghosts that stick a flower
into their old skull's empty eye—
'good and evil'
—that's another stupid dream—
for streams and mountains
clouds and glaciers,
is there ever an escape?”*

*Erosion always wearing down;
Shearing, thrusting, deep plates crumling,

still uplifting—ice-carved cirques
dendritic endless fractal streambed riffs on hillsides

—bitter ghosts that kick their own skulls like a ball
What's it all for ?*

A meteor swift and sreaking
Like a tossed white pebble
arcing down the sky—

the Mountain Spirit stands there.

Old woman ? white ragged hair ?
in the glint of Algol, Altair, Deneb,
Sadr, Aldebaran—saying, “I came to hear—”

I can't say no: I speak

The Mountain Spirit

*Walking on walking,
under foot earth turns*

Streams and mountains never stay the same.

*Walking on walking,
under foot earth turns*

Streams and mountains never stay the same.

into earth rock dives.

As the mountains lift and open
underground out,
dust over seashell, layers of ooze,
display how it plays.

Buttresses fractured, looming,
friction only, soon to fall, each face
a heap of risks
talus slops below
flakes weathered off the buried block,
tricked off an old pluton,
and settle somewhere, ever lower down—
gives a glimpse
of streaks and strains, warp and slide,
abraded gritty mudwash glide,
where cliffs lean

to the raven-necklace sky—

Calcium spiraling shells,
no land plants then when
sands and stones flush down the
barren flanks of magma-swollen uplands
slurry to the beach,
ranges into rubble, old shores buried by debris
a lapping trough of tide flats and lagoons
lime-rich wave-wash soothing shales and slits
a thousand miles of chest-deep reef
seabottom riffled, wave-swirled, turned and tilled
by squiggly slime-swimmers many-armed,
 millions of tiny different tracks
 crisscrossing through the mud—

trilobite winding salt sludge,
calcite ridges, diatom babies drifting home,
swash of quartz sand
 three hundred million years
 be rolling on and then

ten million years ago an ocean floor
glides like a snake beneath the continent crunching up
old seabed till it's high as apls.
Sandstone layers script of winding tracks
 and limestone shines like snow
 where ancient beings grow.

*“When the axe-strokes stop
 The silence grows deeper— ”*

peaks like Buddhas at the heights
 send waters streaming down
to the deep center of the turning world.

And the Mountain Spirit always wandering
 hillsides fade like walls of cloud
 pebbles smoothed off sloshing in the sea

 old woman mountain hears
shifting sand
 tell the wind
 “nothingness is shapeliness”

Mountains will be Buddhas then
 when—bristlecone needles are green !
 Scarlet penstemon
 flowers are red !
(Mountains feed the people too
stories from the past
 of pine-nut gathering baskets quickly full
 of help at grinding, carrying, healing—)

Ghosts of lost landscapes
 herds and flocks,
 towns and clans,
great teachers from all lands
tucked in Wovoka's empty hat,
 stored in Baby Krishna's mouth,
in Vimalakirti's one small room.

Goose flocks
 crane flocks
 lake Lahontan come again !

Walking on walking,
under foot earth turns.

.

The Mountain Spirit whispers back:

“All art and song
is sacred to the real.
As such.”

Bristlecone pines live long
on the taste of carbonate,
dolomite,

spiraled standing coiling
dead wood with the living,
four thousand years of mineral glimmer
spaced out growing in the airy sky
white bones under summer stars.

—The Mountain Spirit and me

like ripples of the Cambrian Sea

dance the pine tree

old arms, old limbs, twisting, twining

scatter cones across the ground

stamp the root-foot DOWN

and then she's gone.

*Ceaseless wheel of lives
red sandstone and white dolomite.*

A few more shooting stars
back to the bedroll, sleep till dawn.

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APPENDIX

An Anthology
of
America's Zen Poets

by

Yasuyoshi Miyoshi

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