

1970

Down

Gary Snyder

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universe?—as a condition of the work, as an act of faith founded on profound basic trust. It is not the register of social naivete. The distance from lookout to ashram is long and difficult; it is not easy for us to enter the back country nor find the archaic springs. We cannot expect literature to cure us, only to hearten us by showing us new and true possibilities and how much may be achieved in life and art by conscious endeavor. Snyder's work, already a substantial achievement, does this. And it may be especially heartening to us because in it an American poet has finally turned to the Orient and shown how much of America might yet be discovered in a passage to India.

Gary Snyder

D O W N

from Mts & Rivers

Back to where it started.
Over the fields, looks level,
Begins to go down.
Thicker trees in this shade
A few ranches on benches
 what river? valley
Lower, shadier, the trail less worn,
Rougher gulch,
Rockier, brushier,
Opening out on bare stone hogsback
 arching bull hump forward
 over and tilting, opening,
 gorge,
Switchbacking down to that edge and around it,
Steeper, darker,
Cliffs breaking *under*, closer,
A cool a well
 of nothing
 happening beneath, and to the lips
 there's no stream
 there

It keeps going:
old tree-trunk ladders,
rusty iron stakes
driven in to cracks, descending.

A rock falls.
Wind blowing softly *up*.

I swallow, lean forward, look down:
My balls and belly turn over

can I make it?

It pulls—I hold—I hang *on*
Freezing—the chill—the pulse roar in the skull

ah, gone off

BLACK TANGLE MOTHER EAGLE

ah bottom less blessing, gulping

FALL

beyond behind beyond below beyond

EMPTY BELLY VOMIT MUSIC WHIRLING

stars!