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

DOWN

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

\textbf{BLACK TANGLE MOTHER EAGLE}

   ah bottom less blessing, gulping

\textbf{FALL}

   beyond behind beyond below beyond

\textbf{EMPTY BELLY VOMIT MUSIC WHIRLING}

\textit{stars!}