

HIKA Literary Magazine

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Winter 1970

## HIKA - Winter 1970

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**Hika**

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# HIKA

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## THE MARRIAGE

It was the 26th of May Roger and Mary married - a beautiful, waddling, clear spring day; and many people waddled to the church to see them married.

As they were just turned twenty-two and just starting out in life, they took a two room flat in the city. Mary cheerily kept the apartment nice and cooked the meals, and Roger went cheerily to and from work; and they did everything cheerily because they were so much in love.

So in a few years, when it was time for the babies to start, they cheerily moved to a house in the suburbs, close enough for Roger to commute, and far enough away from subversive, city elements. Roger took the new Chevy to and from work, and Mary rode around the house on her vacuum cleaner all day, and sometimes smacked the kids for good measure. Sometimes she flew over to a neighbor's on the telephone, but as the years went on, more and more often she'd fly over in a glass of sherry. Roger, too, sometimes would float home on an ice cube, and Mary would sniff suspiciously at his frozen handkerchief, and run around inside his pockets, and then tell him to put his filthy ice cube outside before it melted on her clean floor.

When Roger was getting some distinguished grey at the sides, and Mary was starting to dye, that is, as they were just turned forty, Roger came home from work one night, took Mary by the elbow to the car-port, heaved her up, and splunched her down into the empty garbage can right up to her armpits and knees. She gasped and flailed her arms and legs and wriggled her largish bottom which caught all the drafts from the rusted away places in the can. She cried out to Roger, but he growled and shook his fist at her so that she shrank back, cowering. He went back inside and slammed the door.

Mary was very careful after that not to make any unnecessary noise for fear Roger would come back and push her all the way into the can and put her out with the other cans for the garbage man to collect. She tried very hard every day to silently extricate herself from the can, but all



she could manage was to repeat the futile wriggling and flailing. She did find, though, that by straining herself upright, she could see through the door window into the kitchen. She watched Roger come down every morning at seven o'clock and eat breakfast. He usually threw her something, a biscuit or piece of egg he hadn't eaten, as he went to get in the car when leaving for work. He often came home much later than usual these days, sometimes floating on two ice cubes, stacked atop each other. Most times after he came home he would give Mary some garbage. She would snatch it from him greedily, cramming it into the mouth as fast as she could, and did not look to see what it was; but sometimes, as she sucked her fingers, she would stare at Roger with glittering eyes, dark with hunger.

Vacations and times the children came home from school, things were much easier for Mary. The children would lift the garbage can and bring it into the living room, and being in the midst of everything, Mary sometimes could forget her restricted mobility. The children brought her nice things to eat, and even Roger sometimes gave her sweets, though he usually fed her too many, so that her teeth would begin to ache. When the children left again, though, and Roger, with tight lips, would roll her back to the car-port, everything seemed all the worse. Mary would renew her efforts to quietly heave herself from the garbage can, though she hadn't much hope of success, as she had begun to rust to the sides of the can from disuse.

Mary always noticed two things distinctly after her children had left to go back to school. The first was that the garbage that Roger brought to her seemed to be becoming of worse and worse quality. The second was that it was daily becoming easier for her to see in the window without effort. It seemed she was developing a kind of x-ray vision that allowed her to see right through the wood, until finally she could see through the whole door. It was then she made her discovery. Every evening, when Roger came home, he went into the house from the car-port through the kitchen door, then, for some inexplicable reason, he went to the other kitchen door, held it open for a few minutes, then shut it

again. When Mary could finally see through the last few feet of the door, she saw what Roger had been opening the other door for. Slithering in came a brilliantly redheaded girl, entirely nude, who slid under the kitchen table. Roger came out and gave Mary the garbage, and for the first time she ate it slowly, examining and picking through it. When he went back inside and sat down to his dinner at the table, the girl sinuously coiled about his feet, pulsing, very slowly curling up his legs. She was up to mid-thigh when Roger, his dinner finished, washed his dishes and turned out the light.

In the darkness, Mary knashed her teeth. With each wave of anger, she seemed to loosen minutely in the garbage can, until in the morning, just after Roger left, she could wiggle sufficiently to topple herself over on her hands and feet. She then crawled, the garbage can swaying ponderously above her, into the house. Beside the phone, she tipped herself upright again and dialed her lawyer, feeling all the while the rust binding her to the can shifting and dissolving.

Mary's lawyer arrived at 6:05 that evening, just twenty minutes after Roger had gotten home from work. After completing her phone call, Mary carefully crawled back to the car-port, leaving all the while a fine trail of rust behind her. There, in the car-port, her lawyer found her waiting calmly in her garbage can. He stood before her. They turned their heads and looked at Roger preparing his dinner in the kitchen. Then, solemnly, Mary nodded at her lawyer, and he, with equal solemnity, handed Mary her divorce papers, signed and validated, with a fat clause about the children's education. Then Mary, holding the trembling divorce papers in her hand, felt herself finally free of the last vestiges of rust, and she burst asunder from her garbage can. Swinging the papers in a great arc about her head, once, twice, thrice, she let them fly crashing through the kitchen window. There just above Roger's head they blew up in a thunderous explosion, sending the whole house up in a great whoosh of flame. However, unfortunately weakened by over-exertion and malnutrition, Mary was unable to escape the car-port before it, too, was consumed in flames, destroying the car as well as Mary.



## HANGING ON

Hardy had had it. He felt connected at the spine with every bad event that had recently taken place. At every trouble rooted out and cured, Hardy was found clinging to those roots, until people would point to where a crisis would next arise by what his interests had lately been. He came to be considered a journeyman troublemaker.

Everyone who had known him would have said that he would always be a stranger to jails, that his silver spoon could only turn golden. Instead, it rusted to the point where he no longer cared; until the days merged into one timeless span. Hardy clocked these days by the distance between, at first memorable, later merely recognizable, events, that would shock him into admitting he was awake. He realized these events always caused him to move, that every move should have been a promotion, only his career was not equipped to handle promotions. When he began moving before he was told, he quit. He'd leave the guilt reside with his associations. He came home.

Here there were no reasons for moving at all. His parents knew Hardy only through his occasional letters, and came to look on him as a character in a work of fiction. When his letters stopped coming they assumed they had finished reading. Home was a private sphere where, like a country club, one could only get in by invitation. Hardy sneaked in.

Here boredom was a game and Hardy always won. He would go to sleep early, get up, lie awake through breakfast, turn on the radio, and wait for lunch. Hardy's return was a shock. Though they always ate in silence, Hardy's presence made his parents feel the obligation for conversation. They resented this intrusion into their lifestyle. It opened up fields of thought that had lain fallow only through disuse. They suggested Hardy go back to school. He turned the radio up louder.

Hardy took on a crash program to become well-read. He dreamed of staying up all night, reading in the interstellar silence of his room. After the blitz he would be a

self-made man of letters. He browsed in bookshops. The clerk smiled and laid an assortment of good books on him. He believed her. She led him through rows of fiction, drama, poetry, history, philosophy, and sociology, explaining, lecturing, pointing. From behind he watched her body twitch, and fidgeted. Hardy thought he should feel guilty. He examined his books. He was inwardly pleased at the gloss of the paperback covers, the strength of the binding, and the freshness with which the pages sounded as he flipped them. He went to the library to acquaint himself with the trappings of his new life and tried to develop good habits. He took out more books, experimental ones, books he thought he might now enjoy and consequently would not want for his personal library, by authors he had never heard of and presumed esoteric, figuring in this way to get a full view of literature, and also be able to drop names and titles people hadn't heard of and appear superior. He threw out his Chip Hilton books. He priced suits and licked his lips at the thought of his first literary reception. He arranged all his books in stacks on the floor by the side of his bed so that when he had finished one he had only to reach down to pick up and start another. The piles were in no systematic order, so that this afforded Hardy the pleasure of rearranging the content of the stacks. He tried colors. Alphabetically. Alphabetically backwards. First names, middle names, maiden names, assumed names. Titles, subjects, race, creed, color. Personal preference. This went on for many hours before he decided to read one. After three and a half days and halfway through the "Republic", he put it face down on the first stack and went downstairs for a break to watch TV. He fell asleep on the living room couch.

Hardy thought it was time he took his life seriously. He set goals for himself. He decided to get some sex regularly.

Hardy tried to hang out. He bought a new undershirt and took the second car. It still had snow tires on. Unaccustomed to not having to look over his shoulder, he ran a stop sign. He lost his feel for the neighborhood, and did not pay enough attention to where he was, so that he soon wound up lost in familiar surroundings.



The composition of the old lot had changed. They were all kids hanging around now. There were only kids. Hardy was disappointed. They had never let kids in before, when he was a kid. Hardy leaned on the hood of his car. Nobody joined him, or even flashed him the glad hand. Hardy did not want the company of tie dyes, tank tops, wide bells, narrow bells, elephant bells, body shirt, army shirts, army jackets, fringe jackets, collars, boots, beads, badges, or breasts without bras. He wished his jeans were more faded. He watched the kids trucking up and down the lot, smiling at the punctuality of arrivals of friends, talking only when they asked if there was something to do and shutting up when there wasn't. Hardy wished he had some friends to call up to come with him. But when he had been younger he'd known too many people to have any friends. Hardy leaned on one leg, picked up the other and crushed his cigarette on the underside on his construction boots. He looked around to bum another. Somebody was passing out leaflets, and periodically being chased off by the manager of the ice-cream parlor who did not hanker to have his place politicized and lose business. They were for a demonstration that everyone knew about, and some would go to, if they weren't too tired when they got up, and it wasn't already too late, and they could borrow their mother's car. He came up to Hardy, trying to recruit the workers. Hardy gave him a cigarette and sent him away.

Hardy watched some of the girls as they shuffled in front of him. He wondered if one would come up to him and make his life a lot easier. The kids did not bother to try and pick up chicks, but rather felt that by the end of the evening they'd fall into place like missing pieces in a puzzle. At the other end someone rolled down his window and showed off his new tape deck, playing something Hardy did not know. The manager came out and told the kids to either get inside and buy something or get off the lot. Hardy had stepped into the middle of a movie in the 1950's. He got in his car and retreated to bed.

He put up a progress report on the wall by his side so he could keep a chart. He practiced for a week and was able to sleep 16 hours a day. He aimed at 20. After eating, that still

left him with two to kill, and he would stare at the walls and wait for them to move. He wished they would pulsate like the air in a heat wave. There was nothing he could do to make them move. This was frustrating. He gave up on the walls and concentrated on the bookshelves. He could make them move but that required that he get out of bed and move them. If he only ate every other day he could stay in bed for longer periods of time. He soon became immobile. His progress reports were all too crowded because he could not get up to make new ones. He was an overachiever. Hardy wanted to call up Guinness's Book of Records. He wanted someone else to do it but he did not know anyone else. He wanted them to call him. When they did he did not have the strength to answer.

Hardy thought he was missing out. He had quit because he thought if he continued in the same direction he would eventually wind up missing out, but it turned out that he missed out anyway. This convinced him life has no meaning.

Hardy decided to rule his life by impulse. His first impulse was to be a musician. He did not take into consideration that he had no musical background because that would have gone against his aesthetic.

He went downtown to the pawnshops to look for an instrument. Inside was a salad of brass and wood. The instruments were racked along the wall, hung like guns. He looked to see if he could see his face in them. The sunlight splintered as though cleaved with a shrimp fork as it came through the window, bumped into the butt end of a saxophone and reflected with a surgeon's precision into the middle of Hardy's eyes. Hardy averted his face into the sun. He remembered the times he'd been blind before.

Hardy turned his head to throw the sunlight off, the sun began to sit in the reservoir behind the trees, the horsetrails echoed sound of hooves like stamping feet, Hardy loped downhill, the pack thinned out and he found himself in the back, the pumping pain in his side, the reservoir on the right, the rocks strewn on the paths piercing the soles of his sneakers, the water caught the sun and Hardy wanted to stop and let the pain sieve out of his side, breathe in the water and sun, lean up against the rocks, come on Hardy take this



man, but he had to move, we're losing move your ass, past the water, to Wheeling, downtown, drowntown, they need the Movement, recruit, explain, organize, there is no difference between our lifestyle and our politics, a flat with no sink and dishes in the bathtub, a small paper with no readers, a storefront next to the Army-Navy store, harangue, harass, take part in the decisions that directly effect your lives, street corner scraping, scrounging, spare change begging, bargaining, black kid lying in the gutter, blood running like rainwater to the sewer, we're here to help, up the hill, up it, take that hill, teammates walking, black star lying in the ditch, leaves swirling over in October wind like a homemade grave, come on Hardy you're our fifth man, hesitate, we're here to help, if I kick your ass when you pass me running drop out 'cause that means you're shit, lying in the gutter stealing, the picked pocket's purse scattering, bills floating like butterflies in winter wind, white hands stabbing like flyswatters to bring them down, grab that stick, hang on to that stick, down the homestretch, call home, no home, go home, faster come on he's gaining on you, panting, puffing, being passed, passing, giving out, running in a dream, willing your body faster, refusing, legs churning in regular maddening treadmill pace, like running in the ocean up to your thighs, the more energy expended the slower you go, the crowd watching, marking down, shaking heads, disappointed, disgusted, shitty, shouting, screaming, move your ass, there is no difference between my ass and my politics, the crowd outside the whorehouse, gathering, the sewing-form facing front if it's cool to come, facing back, face down, the crowd hovering like a collective nun, nursing, musing, muttering, maddening, the wound festering, police smiling, evidence incriminating, the mood darkening, dark days, and days and days, town deadening, issue dying, purpose defeating, we don't want your help, need your help, ain't no help, feet dragging, turn the last bend and the crowd waiting, sweating, expecting, black faces in a black night, turn the last corner waiting, face shaving sidewalk, boots fitting nicely into the gut, hobnails, nobbled, hobgoblins, stop stop, please stop I'll talk, fists and feet pounding leaving faces like chalk, beaten, battered, blamed.

"What'cha doin' back there son?"

"Looking."

"You wanna buy an instrument? Got some good ones cheap. You a musician?"

Hardy shook his head. "Fireman. Build fires."

Outside a slender black came towards Hardy from his right. Over his shoulder he yelled to the white boy walking at right angles to him, as he crossed to the corner. "You fuckin' Polack, I'll kick the shit out of you, right here, and spread it all over the street, you mouth off to me."

"Come and try it," the Polack replied, and shifted his bundle of clothing so he could give him the finger with a visible hand. The black passed in front of Hardy.

The light turned green. Hardy stepped down and made it safely to the other side.



RUNNING DOWN THE ROAD

Thanksforgiving 1970

In Howard Johnsons  
you have to lower your voice  
if you talk about dope over breakfast.  
vacation; by Philly  
it's already eight hours  
past cops reading novels  
fall sunlight sloshes down,  
the country changing tones.

Playing games to keep awake  
(Dozing in the hero's seat)  
tailing the car in front  
changing Dylan tapes  
to New York, thru Jersey  
the factories burn at both ends,  
the swamp in the air heading home  
When they found the Tiger Cages  
someone said prisons like charity begin at home

Dropping off passengers,  
free dinner means parents  
bad directions and wrong exits  
gas money and tolls  
back and forth  
the New York shuttle,  
the Gambier shuffle,  
Kerouac knew of running endlessly  
almost forever off the end of the world  
where a new road is going thru.

ABELARD

On a day like this,  
the thoughts of words unformed  
remains constant inside  
the movement of my hand,  
fingering a passage  
in a volume, naming  
my love by strains of Abelard's  
reply to Eloise.  
If I spoke his words at morning,  
their meaning undone by the afternoon  
would leave you,  
as the daily run of good sense talk.  
In another day,  
thoughts, the form of words,  
reason motion into love  
named by voice as mine.

THE SIEGE

If I could have known anything  
of those nights  
shadow companied, rumour bivoaced,  
and the watch fires,  
memories and denials,  
try the dark  
as their vital allies batter in the days;  
if I had known  
the rattle in the walls,  
I would have learnt my hiding name  
and not that once  
let go your hand.



## RHAPSODY ON MODIGLIANI'S PORTRAIT OF A WOMAN

There were women,  
                                 neither young nor old:  
 white,  
                                 being all colors,  
 is none.  
                                 They were graceful,  
 as black swans on a Finnish lake.  
                                 I can't remember faces,  
 or the peculiar shapes of their breasts -  
                                 perhaps they had none.  
 My latest "objet d' amour?"  
                                 an oval face,  
 like an egg with stencilled features.  
                                 and such an absurd nose!  
 long,  
                                 and like the stem of an ivy leaf.  
 Sometimes,  
                                 (when delighted with a Viennese chocolate)  
 she will pose in the bay window  
                                 with the cut gladioli in the Chinese vase,  
 while the sun slips behind her  
 "Les petits plaisirs du thé,"  
                                 souchong scented with jasmine petals.  
 Her hands flutter among the china  
                                 like pale moths.  
 When the tea is done,  
                                 she searches the few tea leaves  
 that have escaped the pot  
                                 into her cup.  
 I think of the celibate  
                                 at the Eucharist table;  
 of the pallid acolyte  
                                 rooting among the cruets

ESCAPE  
(from cell no. 1, Knox County Jail)

Drooping eyelids in one infinite second  
Obliterate:  
Grey steel, marred walls and minds;  
Utter bleakness destroy, and now  
Create:  
Lightning out of dark clouds;  
Flashing bright images of spirit  
Shivering life through tired flesh.

In the darkness of mind's eye  
Showers of sparks explode  
Of love  
Of hope  
Of strength  
Of men who have not lived  
Of spirits that will not die  
Of hearts that shall revive.

## GARY SNYDER: AN INTRODUCTION

An introduction to the poetry of Gary Snyder should begin with an invocation of the 1950's, a mental picture of pre-hippy San Francisco and the North Beach scene. This was the period when Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, and William Burroughs emerged as the vanguard of a new Romanticism, a school of writers called the Beats, a movement dubbed the San Francisco Renaissance. They may forever be referred to as just a school or a movement, as examples of the spirit of the times (short lived, many feel), and never be accepted as great writers into the canon of American Literature. But what they expressed educated those who grew up on them. Those who grew up on them, myself included, heard the Whitmanesque cries of "Howl" before they read "Leaves Of Grass". They felt a strange compassion for the Byronic Dean Moriarty of "On The Road" before they heard of "Don Juan." Perhaps they even saw for themselves their own "Naked Lunch," ("a frozen moment when everyone sees what is on the end of every fork") before viewing any of Blake's etchings.

The point is not to eulogize, but to jar the memory a bit. That time, now two decades gone, may seem like a romantic past, but what of the romantic present? Ginsberg cut a rather unimpressive figure in a Chicago courtroom and Kerouac died an alcoholic. No one seems to take Ferlingetti seriously anymore. But there was another poet, of whom Kerouac wrote under the improbable name of Japhy Ryder, who is alive and very well in this present day. There was something about Ryder that makes him remarkable as a Kerouac character; he was happy. He liked to climb mountains and he did. He liked to study Oriental languages and philosophy, and that's just what he studied, sitting in his shack in Berkeley, furnished with meditation cushions and rice mats. This curious contentment in a time of malcontents attracted Kerouac, and he wrote a book about him, called "The Dharma Bums." His real name was Gary Snyder, and in the 50's he was, as Kerouac wrote:



. . . A kid from Eastern Oregon brought up in a log cabin deep in the woods with his father and mother and sister, from the beginning a woods boy, an axman, farmer, interested in animals and Indian lore so that when he finally got to college by hook or crook he was already well equipped for his early studies in anthropology and later in Indian myth and in the actual texts of Indian mythology. Finally he learned Chinese and Japanese and became an Oriental scholar and discovered the greatest Dharma bums of them all, the Zen Lunatics of China and Japan. 1.

To demythologize a bit, Snyder was born in San Francisco in 1930. He grew up in eastern Washington, where his family ran a dirt farm in the 30's and near Portland, Oregon from 1942 until '47. He graduated from Reed College with an interdepartmental major in Anthropology and Literature in 1951. By 1955, the time of Kerouac's novel, he was doing graduate study in Chinese and Japanese language at Berkeley. Interspersed among this were summers spent as a logger at Yosemite National Park and as a fire lookout in Mount Baker National Forest, among other odd jobs. 2

I.W.W. socialism, American Indian lore, the wilderness parks of the Pacific Northwest, and Zen Buddhism; call them the seeds of a 20th Century Romanticism if you like. All have a part in Snyder's poetry; the socialism to remember his own roots, the Indian lore to learn from the Guardians of the Land, the wilderness parks to glorify the spirit of that Land, and the Zen for zazen and satori, to discover the truth in oneself and the Way to Enlightenment. It is a healthy dose for any man, and one few men have been able to shape into a coherent poetics. I believe Snyder has been successful, from his first volume of poetry to the present day. In those long years since the first poetry readings in San Francisco, Snyder has been studying Zen in Kyoto, shipping back and forth across the Pacific and Near East as a Merchant Marine fireman, traveling in India, and settling communal farms on the islands of Northern Japan and in the Sierras of Northern California. He has published five volumes of poetry in those years and a book of essays and journals. He has championed, in his poetry and his actions, an Ecology that is not a senti-

mental yearning for a lost past, nor a vague scientific fear, nor even a middle-class rebellion against the paternal monster of technology. Snyder talks and writes about an Ecology of the spirit and the land, the faith of an American Buddhist.

Shiva at the end of the kalpa:  
Rock-fat, hill-flesh, gone in a whiff.  
Men who hire men to cut groves  
Kill snakes, build cities, pave fields,  
Believe in god, but can't  
Believe their own senses  
Let alone Gautama. Let them lie. 3

It becomes a question of finally knowing what you do, not in terms of only dollars and cents, but in terms of balancing an economics of metaphysical and subconscious realities as well. A unifying vision, and not an easy one to keep in mind; full of Sanskrit and Japanese words all too alien to Chicago, pig butcher of the world.

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"  
is rising,  
azure,  
two thousand light years ahead

Great Medicine Master;  
land of blue. 4

Snyder's is a vision of a place for everything and a meaning for every place, in terms of man as enlightened animal, guardian and not owner of the Land, keeper and not usurper of its spirit. Snyder describes his poetry as the paving stones along this Way.



Lay down these words  
Before your mind like rocks.  
                    placed solid, by hands  
In choice of place, set  
Before the body of the mind  
                    in space and time :  
Solidity of bark, leaf, or wall  
                    riprap of things :     5

Along that way Snyder's hope has wavered but never disappeared, and his poetry has been tempered into a fine hard lyric. From the early poems of the mid-fifties such as "Piute Creek" and "Milton by Firelight" to the more recent lyrics like "Seed Pods" and "All The Spirit Powers" . . . the development has been clear and clean; a growing understanding of the self, the needs and desires, the discipline and the ecstasy, and a gradual opening out of the lyric voice until the poems begin to speak not just from the heart of a man but from the heart of that earth the man is part of, not just from the personal experience of the poet but from the wisdom of a cultural mythos.

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.                     6

The earth lifting up and flying like millions of birds  
into dawn

Hills rising and falling as music, long plains and deserts  
as slow quiet chanting,

Swift beings, green beings, all beings - all persons;  
the two-legged beings  
shine in smooth skin and their furred spots

Drinking clear water together  
together turning and dancing  
speaking new words,  
the first time, for

Air, fire, water and  
Earth is our dancing place now. 7

The divine Ecology is seen in many ways in Snyder's writing; thru description of wilderness experience, the mythical language of Indian legend, or the vision of Buddhist escatology. Snyder moves from one to the other like a mathematician teaching identities, and then quickly moves back into the heart, the subconscious mind, the visceral experience of love, tying all the world together like a huge DNA molecular chain, as endless as the mountains and rivers which are their source.

The texts themselves state their meaning and the intrinsic worth of that meaning more clearly than any detailed commentary. His poetry is not a literature of the academy, but it is a literature of an educated experience. As Snyder himself wrote in his Tanker Notes, after six years in Japan:

Comes a time when the poet must choose: either to step deep in the stream of his people, history, tradition, folding and folding himself in wealth of persons and past; philosophy, humanity, to become richly foundationed and great and sane and ordered. Or, to step beyond the boundries onto the way out, into horrors and angels, possible utter transcendence, possible enlightened return, possible ignominious wormish perishing. 8

Snyder has faced that choice, and carried a good deal of his sanity and order with him on the way out, finding, much as Thoreau did more than 100 years ago, the way out is a way



back, back not to a past but to a more promising future, a way for men to be enobled rather than enslaved by their own works. Both "Six Years," the long poem sequence describing his stay in Kyoto in "Back Country," and "Burning", the third section of "Myths & Texts," display the influence of Thoreau. They are poems of experience ordered by its discovery rather than its preconceptions. Both poems reflect on organic form.

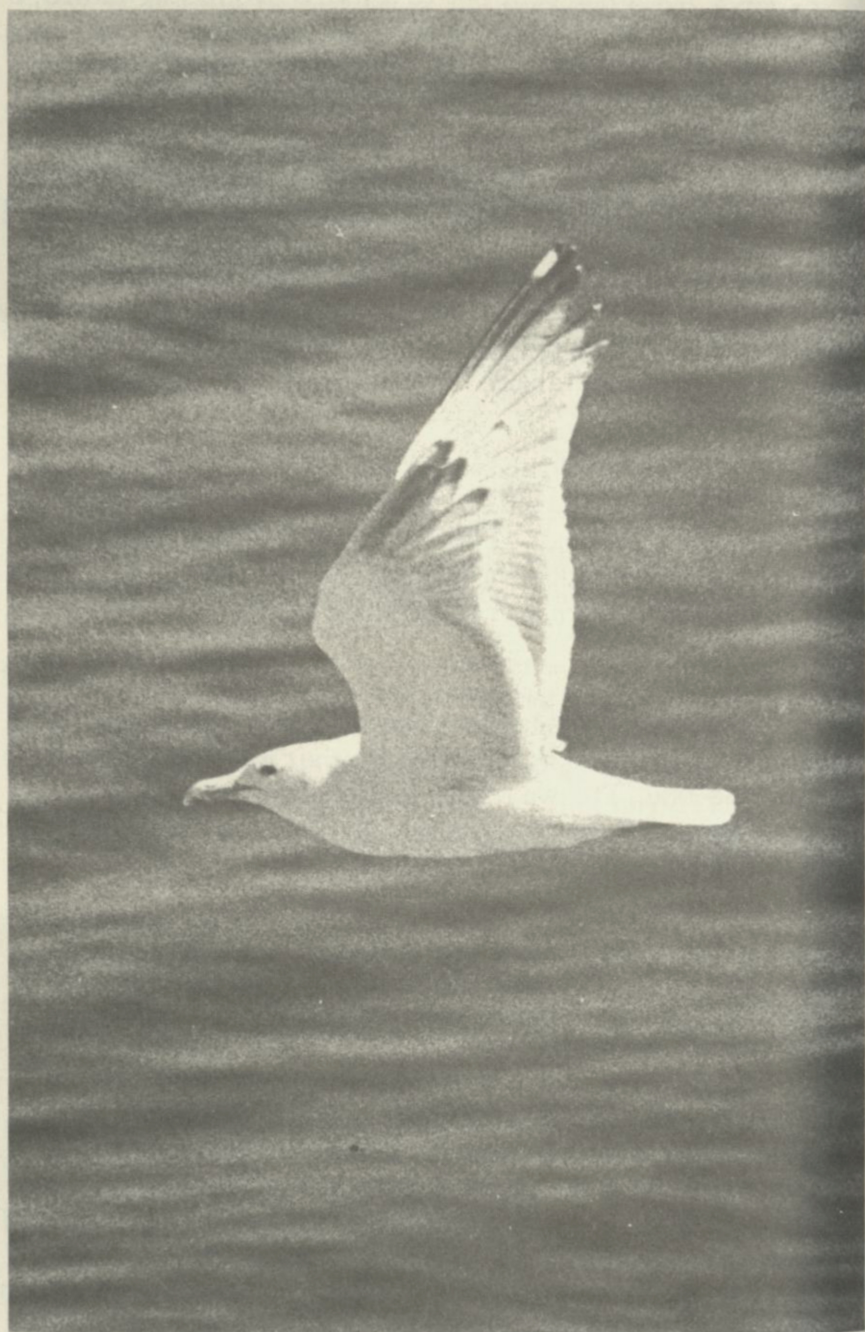
Let us take two examples, written about ten years apart, of how Snyder weaves his mythos into his experience. The first is called "Through the Smoke Hole", written while he was a firman on the tanker "Sappa Creek" in the late '50's.

There is another world above this one; or outside of this one; the way to it is thru the smoke of this one, & the hole that smoke goes through. The ladder is the way through the smoke hole; the ladder hold up, some say, the world above; it might have been a tree or pole; I think it is merely a way.

Fire is at the foot of the ladder. The fire is in the center. The walls are round. There is also another world below or inside this one. The way there is down thru smoke. It is not necessary to think of a series.

Raven and Magpie do not need the ladder. They fly thru the smoke holes shrieking and stealing. Coyote falls thru; we recognize him only as a clumsy relative, a father in old clothes we don't wish to see with our friends.

It is possible to cultivate the fields of our own world without much thought for the others. When men emerge from below we see them as the masked dancers of our magic dreams. When men disappear down, we see them as plain men going somewhere else. When men disappear up we see them as great heroes shining through the smoke. When men come back from above they fall thru and tumble; we don't really know them; Coyote, as mentioned before. 9





What we see through Snyder's eyes is the smoke hole in the belly of a tanker. Through that smoke is the realm of Buddhist enlightenment, the smoke from the fire of the soul striving to attain its Buddha nature. The scene is peopled with the animal symbols of the American Indian. The wild eyed Coyote, the madman, and the shrieking Raven the Hermes/messenger, both exist here. It is a vision of an order, of humanity, of cosmos, levels of consciousness and acts, all growing from the poet's experience, as continued in this excerpt from the second part of the poem:

out there out side all the chores  
    wood and water, dirty  
wind, the view across the flat,  
here, in the round  
                    no corners  
head is full of magic figures

The poem weaves the various cultural disciplines into a clear subjective order which, rather than fall into the obscurity of mixed metaphor, ties the influences into a larger whole, then follows this with a lyric exploration of the newly realized order. Another poem which successfully uses this form of statement of mythos - lyric exploration is "Long Hair" in "Regarding Wave."

The second poem, "The Hudsonian Curlew," concentrates more on the details of the experience than the escatology of the myth. Both are still present, however, like the glass panels of a revolving door. The narrative tells of a camping trip along the ocean.

The end of a desert track - turnaround -  
    parked the truck and walked over dunes.  
a cobbly point      hooks in a shallow bay;

the Mandala of Birds.

pelican, seagulls, and terns  
    one curlew

far at the end.  
they fly up as they see us  
and settle back down.  
tern keep coming  
- skies of wide seas -  
frigate birds keep swooping  
pelicans sit nearest the foam;  
tern bathing and fluttering  
in frothy wave-lapping  
between the round stones.  
we  
gather driftwood for firewood  
for camping  
get four shells to serve up steaming snail. 10

The mandala is there before him, the shifting circles of the seabirds, rising in formations and settling on the waves. The poet sees both the birds, and, through the birds, a sign of his eschatology; the sky, sea, birds all parts of a great circle. Then follow stanzas describing the touching of the sea and land worlds, the birds of each, and then the hunt for supper meat, the shooting of two curlews for the five men.

the bill curved in and the long neck limp -  
a grandmother plumage of cinnamon and brown,  
the beak not so long - bars on the head  
and by the eye.  
Hudsonian Curlew.

Then the poet describes the cleaning and preparing of the birds for the skillet, the plucking and skinning, the eating by the campfire. The life of the experience is captured in the language of the description. The plucked down of the bird "eddies and whirls at my knees / in the twilight wind / from the sea." The cooked birds are "dense firm flesh, / dark and rich." The last stanza relates a vision in the following dawn.



at dawn  
looking out from the dunes  
no birds at all but  
three curlew

ker-lew!

ker-lew!

pacing and glancing around.

The spirit of the birds linger and mingle with the spirit of the men, strengthened by their experience of Nature. Snyder's curlew is related to Thoreau's loon far more than it is to Shelley's skylark or Keats' nightingale. It is in the hunting and the eating that the bird transmits its spirit, its image and song are only a part of that complete spirit. The mandala is both within and without; the subjective consciousness has come to know its experiential object, and the "pacing and glancing" objects in the dawn are new men with more enlightened souls.

Gary Snyder's Romanticism, or Metaphysical Naturalism, is a hymn to the creatures of this earth and the possibility of their enlightenment, not a hymn to intellectual beauty. The forces of Nature are not a sentimental past for him, they are a vibrant present, inviting constant encounter, and holding the possibility of a more vibrant future. Snyder's Buddhism is the cornerstone of his faith and the main integrating force of his experience. Zen is his discipline, and though it is a Chinese and Japanese faith, we need not assume it can not express an American experience. On the contrary, Zen, of all the Eastern disciplines, is perhaps closest to the American sensibility, with its emphasis on common sense, individual acts and achievement, and de-emphasis of the study of scripture in favor of a spontaneity and active seeking of revelation. With all its spontaneity and revelation, Zen is still very much a discipline, as the descriptions of the sessions at Daitoku-Ji in Kyoto prove, as collected in "Earth House Hold." Snyder profits by what his years in Kyoto have



taught him. Without the sublime egotism of a Wordsworth (or a Ginsberg, for that matter) he manages to unify the world and the self. Perhaps because of his trans-cultural background, he is able to see America's beauties and faults with a dedication and compassion all too rare in contemporary letters. He sees in our world many worlds, each thriving on the others, a great chain of being that must be experienced to be understood, and must be cultivated to be saved. More than anything else, there is a sureness to his work, right from the earliest poems, a sartori from the meanness of American materialism. He is a poet who does not need to define beauty to communicate it, not to yell at his audience for them to hear. The poems, like the rivers are there for those who wish to find them.

When creeks are full  
 The poems flow  
 When creeks are down  
 We heap stones. 11

#### Notes:

1. "Dharma Bums" by Jack Kerouac. Singet Books. p. 10
2. "Gary Snyder - A Biographical Sketch and Descriptive Checklist" by David Kherdian. Oyez Press. pp. 7-11
3. from "Logging," section 15, in "Myths & Texts." Totem Press/Corinth Books 1960 p.15
4. from "The Blue Sky", in 'Six Sections from Mountains and Rivers Without End Plus One.' Writing 9, Four Seasons Foundation 1965, 1970 p.43.
5. from "Riprap," in "Riprap & Cold Mountain Poems." Writing 7, Four Seasons Foundation 1965, 1969 p.30.
6. from "Pitute Creek," in "Riprap & Cold Mountain Poems" p. 6.

7. from "All The Spirit Powers Went To Their Dancing Place," in "Regarding Wave." New Directions Book 1970 p.62.
8. from Tanker Notes, in "Earth House Hold." New Directions Book 1969
9. from "Through the Smoke Hole," in "Back Country." New Directions Book 1968 p. 110
10. from "Hudsonian Curlew," as it appeared in "Poetry Magazine" (Chicago) November 1969, pp. 119-122
11. from "Civilization," in "Regarding Wave" p. 84

Mr. Snyder will be in Gambier on April 8, 9, 10. He will be giving a public reading in Rosse Hall on April 9th at 8 o'clock.



"Wallace Stevens: Poetry as Life" by Samuel French Morse; 222 pp. Pegasus, New York; 1970.

Mr. Morse claims for himself a pioneer biography but this is not a biography in any but the most elementary sense. The book is rather a nearly ideal introduction in that it is essentially a chronological exegesis of sources and a summation of the Steven's criticism to date. It is only "nearly ideal" because Morse has an axe to grind. He tries to convince us that Steven's could have written all of his poems by just following out the thought of Santayana and William James, his main undergraduate influences. This is fine but his pseudo-biography forces Morse to mention and then disclaim any knowledge as to what the "few dozen books" lying on his desk were when he wrote this or that poem. As far as Steven's personal life is concerned all we learn is that his wife thought his poetry "affected" and that they had "terrible fights" in their later years. But for these two sentences this too is mere glorified chronology.

So how did I read 222 pages. Well, every five pages or so Morse lifts a quote from Stevens' journals or letters which strikes you as sharply as his poetry that this was truly a man who could think one thing and think it long. An early journal entry about a trip to Ivyland describing relatives: "A self-sacrificing, whole-souled woman who says not much but too well-that is Aunt Mariah. Emma - well Emma reminds me of a tub of lillies-you must pull aside the leaves to see the flowers."

He always had a profound sense of humor about the techniques of both art and human thought and the inherent reductionism of both. Another early journal entry expresses this precisely:

"I forget what I was thinking of-except that I wondered why people took books into the woods to read in summertime when there was so much to read there that one could not find in books. . . . Coming home I saw the sun go down behind a veil of grime. It was rather terrifying I confess from an allegorical point of view. But that is usually the case with allegory."

But Steven's also had his terribly practical side. A young admirer asked him at seventy-five what his one disappointment in life was and he answered that he hadn't made a million dollars. He was a success in both poetry and business. As the "Hartford Agent" said after his death, he was "an outstanding attorney in the bond and claim field." The early roots of these tendencies can be seen in a memoir he wrote in 1954:

"When I was younger, I always used to think that I got my practical side from my father, and my imagination from my mother. I decided to be a lawyer the same way I decided to be a Presbyterian; the same way I decided to be a Democrat. My father was a lawyer, a Presbyterian and a Democrat."

Obviously, his family was highly supportive. There was no generation gap to speak of. Garrett Stevens had made his modest living as a lawyer in Reading, Pennsylvania and had turned to writing as an avocation only late in life. He fostered his son's literary interests but also demanded that he be able to support himself. Consequently, to Wallace Stevens, "Money is a kind of poetry" as emblematic of work done as poetry is of cultural advance. In fact, his wife Elsie was the model for the "Liberty Head" dime and half dollar issued in 1916.

The picture one gets of Wallace Stevens in his late years is that of triumph. He is clearly the man who has never had to compromise anything, or so he acts. He continued his job until his stroke at seventy-six. He maintained his stance that he was merely a "contemporary man writing poetry" and turned down most lecture tours and even a teaching post at Harvard. A letter to a friend in this period defines his mood:

"This spring I have quite a number of invitations to talk here and there but I don't see the connection between writing



poetry and delivering lectures. I am not a lecturer and I have no intentions of doing that sort of thing except in cases in which I very much want to. It would be interesting to meet people in colleges, but then one never meets them at a lecture. If, for example, General Eisenhower should ask me to come down to Columbia and have a few highballs with him, that would be worthwhile. Yet it may be that, even if he did, when I got down there he would want to show me moving pictures of Hitler's funeral or something."

In summation, Morse blurs all of the more interesting psychological questions that we might pose about a sensibility such as Stevens had. This is a record of the public face of a private man. If you know the poetry you will find little that is new. If you know some of the poetry the book is a useful crib. "I have no life except in poetry" said Wallace Stevens, and at least for now you'd better believe it.

"Notebook" by Robert Lowell 265 pp. Farrar Straus & Giroux. \$7.50.

Robert Lowell's expanded and revised edition of "Notebook" adds 90 new poems and changes 100. If it was impossible to judge the first edition it is even harder to judge this third edition. Yet if among your criteria is largeness of scope, greatness of aim, and verbal brilliance then I think you will find "Notebook" one of the greatest single works in this quarter century by an American poet.

But let me advise anyone who will begin it that it is not a book filled with answers. It's light is the light that falls through the chinks of medieval dungeons; dim, hard-won, and necessary. As Lowell himself says, "In truth I seem to have felt mostly the joys of living; in remembering, in recording, thanks to the gift of the Muse, it is the pain."

Yet the reader will not find the main themes allusively personal or unfamiliar. Lowell asks how does one grow in a world--be one young or old--when one has a "declining conception of God," when sex is a madness and a necessity,

when one's health is doubtful or meaningless, and when the bonds between people barely hold. The spine of the action is political (sexual, youthful and revolutionary) ostensibly covering the Columbia revolt and the McCarthy campaign.

This new edition corrects many deficiencies of the older. The central political action is clearer. The book can be read more as a whole. But it is still an uneven book. Parts are unfortunately self-indulgent, which however understandable, still flaw what is undoubtedly a masterpiece. Still the major problem, has been solved, that is a repetition of tone. Now there are poems like this,

("Breakfast")

WIFE, in her tower of 'The New York Sunday Times';  
HUSBAND, rewriting his engagement-book. . . .

WIFE: Nixon's in trouble. HUSBAND: Another family  
brawl? WIFE: Nixon's got profounder trouble.

HUSBAND: You mean our National Peace Offensive?

WIFE: 'Entre Autres.' HUSBAND: When Nixon weighs in  
does he outweigh 'The New York Sunday Times?'

with this,

The sycamores throw shadows on the Charles,  
While the fagged insect splinters to rejoin  
the infinite, now casting it loose leaf  
on the short-skirted girl and long-haired escort,  
and the black stream curves, as if it led a lover--  
not so our blood: in workaday times,  
one takes cold comfort in its variations,  
its endless handspring round the single I,  
the thumping and pumping of overfevered zeal. . .

And the final word is Lowell's own (you didn't want to hear  
me anyway):

'Dear Robert: I wish you were not a complete stranger,  
I wish I knew something more about your mercy,  
could total your minimum capacity  
for empathy--this varies so much from genius



Can you fellow-suffer for a turned-down book?  
Can you see past your tragic vision, and  
have patience with one isolated heart?  
I write as a woman flung from a sinking ship--  
one raft in the distance . . .you represent that raft.'

## NOTES ON BOOKS

Kenyon graduate William H. Gass who is considered one of the foremost prose writers in America just published a highly acclaimed book of essays "Fiction and the Figures of Life."\*\*\*\*\*Those following up the PERSPECTIVE theme of Technology and the Humanites will be interested in the re-issuing of Wylie Sypher's book "Literature and Technology" (Vintage \$1.95). What it lacks in careful discrimination of terms it makes up for in vigor and liveliness of presentation.

## Notes On Contributors

Celia Watson was not only a Brodie girl, she is also one of the little people. Richard Dorfman was never a greaser, he is, however from New Jersey. Belinda Bremner and Philip Davis both appeared in the last issue of HIKA. Bertran Minkin is a student at Beloit. Paul Kahn is a senior reading for honors in English. His honors paper is on Samuel Beckett. Robert Zeek is a former associate editor of HIKA, and unemployed. Frank Ford, at this writing, is having his case continued.

