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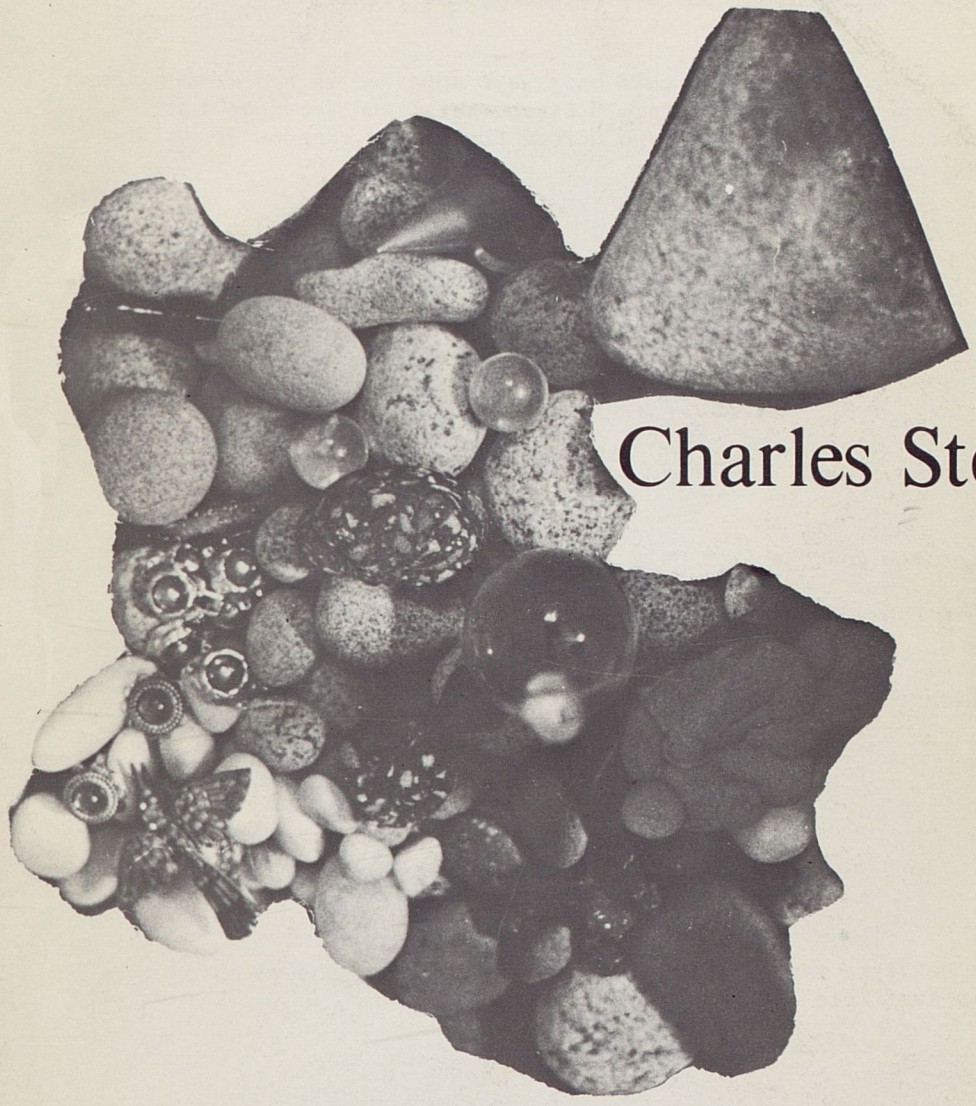
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*To Magazine*

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# Poems and Glyphs



Charles Stein

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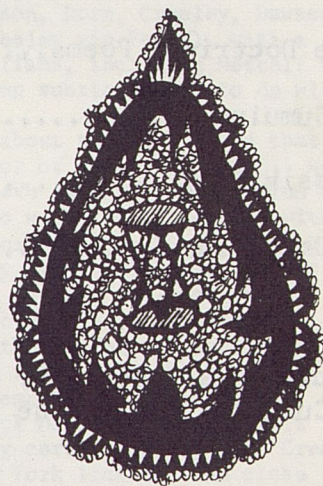
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Charles Stein

Poems and Glyphs



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POEMS AND GLYPHS

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Last fall, while teaching a course on poetry, I put together an ethnographic and thematic chart of my own hypothetical core of modern American literature. Initially, I distinguished three major poetic loci and transmissions: Bay Area poetry, the so-called Beat poetry, and the Black Mountain poetry. Each of these groups has a visible energy source: Robert Duncan in San Francisco, Allen Ginsberg for the Beats, and Charles Olson at Black Mountain; and each of these figures is linked up with other major figures in the transmission of poetic themes and forms in the English language: Duncan with Blake, Dante, H.D., and the romantic and classical traditions; Ginsberg with Blake, Whitman, and William Carlos Williams; and Olson with Pound, Williams, and the mythic and historical traditions. There is obvious overlap among the groups, both in influences generative to them and dynamic interaction between them; many individuals combine groups, and others oscillate, showing varying connections at different times, often for accidental and idiosyncratic reasons. These are not schools; they are like the archetypal foci of energy most susceptible to being brought into formal realization in our present time. If we imagine three trunks in the ground, the fact is that the branches twist together into a single tree, and we are able to distinguish only different original sources of nourishment.

Among the San Francisco poets I listed, for divergent reasons, Duncan, Spicer, Blaser, Kyger, Levertov, Meltzer, McClure, Antoninus, Dull; they are very much spread across the whole West Coast (and elsewhere, of course, too), with centers in Bolinas, Vancouver, and Toronto. For the Beats: Ginsberg, Snyder, Kerouac, Petersen, Montgomery, Orlovsky, Ferlinghetti. For Black Mountain: Olson, Dorn, Creeley, Dawson (in prose), Wieners, and Blackburn (via Creeley via Pound), with a North Carolina offshoot under Jonathan Williams, including Metcalf and LeRoi Jones among others, for reasons having substantially to do with publishing.

The most immediately-startling thing about this chart was that it appeared to omit (or deflect) the one sector of things in which I would include myself. It is true that I could have extended the section out from Black Mountain, but I chose instead to map a fourth group, with Robert Kelly at the head and including Wakoski, Rothenberg, Irby, Oppenheimer, Eshleman, Enslin, and indirectly others, like Sorrentino and Sanders, the obvious anomaly being Kelly's age and national stature in comparison with the other three charismatic figures, but this is a trivial and relative matter if there are other issues of substance.

The connection between this group and Black Mountain is basic and clear, and is typified in the work and movements of three people. Paul Blackburn could be considered either a Black Mountain poet via his direct involvement with Pound and his early correspondence with Creeley or a member of the Kelly-group via his New York location and close relation to Kelly and early Kelly publishing ventures. After Olson's move to Gloucester, Gerrit Lansing is a close communicant of both him and Kelly on spiritual and historical issues very dear to all three of them. And, thirdly, Stan Brakhage, the film-maker, has combined the Kelly and Olson concerns in a massive visual transformation. Kelly himself had a significant friendship with Olson, but the men worked out from one another rather than towards.

Of the poets mentioned above, only three, Enslin, Irby, and Lan-

sing, have been unambiguously involved in the concerns that Kelly's work centers. The others have gone their own ways and have successfully defined more intermediate positions, all of them, from my vantage, ultimately compromises of Kelly-articulated material. I find myself right in the center of a group of my contemporaries that seems to arise with its own force and intelligence right in the midst of the Kelly field. It has no head, but insofar as three of us are involved directly, it is literally triple-headed, with everyone's work (for everyone else) peculiarly inclusive and complete given their own limitations. The three are myself, Charles Stein (whom I met in high school), and Harvey Bialy (whom Stein met thru Robert Kelly and whom I met when he came with Stein on a visit to Amherst my third year there). Recently George Quasha has been right in the center of this too, and others, including Tom Meyer, Lindy Hough, Bruce McClelland, Linda Parker, and Jonathan Greene, have connections.

The Beats, the Bay Area poets, the Black Mountain people, and our own group are all concerned with matters of consciousness, vision, prophecy, cosmology, geography, etc., few of which are even peripheral to academy poetry in America, which is more involved in description, emotional reality, wit, and political rationalism. Yet there are differences, not always easily described. The Beats sought to make America livable, and they discovered, in its present visible state, the rest of the world. They lived, as best they could, a vision (variously Buddhist, Marxist, and American Indian), and made their migrations and very bodies the source of a dramatic and mythological history of our time. They were like wandering saints who humanized America, and we owe them much of our present social ease and grace. The San Francisco poets, perhaps for being West Coast urban and closer to the Orient and the American West in some literal sense, were less migratory, and less originally American. In some of them a Western World hermeticism and mystery poetry is brought into being directly from the contact of Western tradition with the proto-Western and the non-Western. They were like reincarnated literary giants who had lived and travelled in other times and were now recovering their own archetypes, fairy tales, and histories. The Black Mountain people had various involvements including the mythological recovery of history, the recovery of myth, the individual as the written record of cosmology, phenomenology, the Whiteheadian process universe, and astronomy-astrology as a record of time. Olson's involvement in history and economics, via Pound, formed a crucial center against which many of the other concerns were located. The opening lines of Don Byrd's thesis on Olson are relevant here:

"Charles Olson is in an intellectual tradition which has been the cause of much discomfort in the twentieth century, much more discomfort than the existentialist tradition which has devoted itself to arousing awareness of the human 'predicament' which brings anguish at every turn. Unlike the existentialists, who measure life by some ideal footrule and find it lacking, Olson answers to Freud and Jung, Whitehead and the Cambridge anthropologists, Ezra Pound, D.H. Lawrence, and William Carlos Williams. Their gift, though it has not been graciously received, is testimony to the possibilities of *largeness* in thought and action, which the desiccated things human beings have allowed themselves to become, fear and suppress. These men have cleared space for a vision of man, conditioned, no doubt, by the earth and the limits it places on

meaning and action, but which, at the same time, allows access to a source of energy larger and more useful than any the 'official' culture offers or the existentialists have been able to imagine." [D. J. Byrd: *Charles Olson's Maximus: An Introduction*, 1970].

These statements tie in directly with Kelly. As a Mediaevalist he has been more intimately in touch with occult sciences and the history of magic. Whereas Olson derived certain license from Hesiod and the Greeks, and John Smith and the American settlers, as joint beginnings of our time, Kelly has come to his work more as a daily spiritual exercise, bringing the poem forth as human mediation between its own sphere of sensory contact and those spheres initiatory to it. The poet, like alchemist or magus (and more recently, like scientist) is both transformer of original cosmic material and contact with angelic and natural agencies. Kelly's explorations have grounded his work at various times in alchemy, astrology, traditional wisdom, Islam, the East, as well as science, mathematics, genetics, astronomy, geology, history, etc. His engagement with these is not primarily scholarly, for he has made other texts over into the body of his text. Just about everyone in the fourth group is either directly touched by these concerns or touched by Kelly as a person and artist. It is not that he has appropriated this territory exclusively, but he has given it its widest articulation and most dynamic integration with our present human condition. Insofar as there is a group centered here, this preface is the first occasion on which *Io* has been cited as the journal born in that center. Yet, if it has been the voice of these people, it has never been so exclusively or self-consciously, or literarily, which would have been an undermining of the very principles and conditions it has sought to explore.

Those who have remained closest to Kelly's concerns have also been notably unambitious in developing poetic egos or pushing and publishing their work. Stein and Bialy, for instance, are not particularly well published because other things have, properly, come first, not before the work but before the advancing of the work and a social engagement with its possibilities. Bialy is a biochemist and research scientist, with a deep involvement in magic, whose primary work is still his writing. Stein is a musician and artist, a longtime student of yoga, whose writing is his articulation of rhythms in his life.

Will Petersen said to me recently (about a certain American poet in Japan who said his occupation was "poet"): "In my day that was just something you didn't do. You were a carpenter or a gas station attendant; you might be an artist or poet, but that was on the side. If you were going to claim it you better have your dukes up."

In the Kelly genre there is no such social embarrassment, but to make claims about being a poet and to develop a social persona around it is to put one's self in a dangerous relation with those muses and sources of power that give poets insight. And one literally does have their dukes up and is doing more fighting than writing if publishing comes before putting one's self humbly at the disposal of higher energies who, in fact, become the voices of the poems. I will let Charles Stein talk on a few of these things in order to clarify their relation to his own history:

"The first poems that I remember were in Niswender's class, and

they were Ariel's Song "Full Fathom Five" from *The Tempest*, which he did a whole sound analysis of (he was talking about technical things like assonance and so forth) and "Mending Wall" by Robert Frost. That had very peculiar lines. The way he bends language and all for someone who's never read any poetry is very startling. "Something there is that/Does not love a wall" was very far-out for me and it started from go a kind of interest in language. Then someone gave me *Howl* to read and it knocked me out. It was more just the content and intensity of it.

I went to camp, and we used to sit under oak trees and read each others' poems, and we were also reading Ferlinghetti and e.e. cummings and Lorca and William Carlos Williams. Eric Felderman went to that camp, and Jonathan Greene was there also, and Jonathan's first year at Bard, which would have been about 1960, he spent his winter semester typing for Larry Eigner, and when I went up there to visit him, we went to see Olson, and boom! there was Olson. I had seen a poem of his; I think it was "The Lordly and Isolate Satyrs," at a Wesleyan Poetry Conference thing and hadn't had much interest in it, and it was really sometime, maybe a year, after that, that I was reading Olson and trying to write like that. Then Duncan and trying to write like that, and Creeley and trying to write like that. Really Jonathan was into those people more intensely than I was at that time. I met Kelly in June of 1960. Jonathan was in Armand Schwerner's study hall at Barnard, and it was Schwerner who brought us down to this place where they were all reading, and I was supposed to play music for their poetry reading. I sat in the window and played on a flute and a saxophone without blowing into them, just making noises on them on the keys, and being freaked out by it.

When Kelly went to Bard I used to go visit Jonathan and together we'd go to visit Kelly. I don't think I got interested in his poetry until I was in college. And then, being around him constantly, his stuff was always in my ear. But I had a very ambiguous attitude towards it because there was much of me that was very conservative. I hadn't given up the idea that what you ought to be doing really was writing formal verse and I would be constantly relapsing into experiments writing blank verse and doing formal translations. In a sense Robert Lowell broke that because when he wrote *Life Studies* I didn't know that it was broken-up couplets as he later said. It sounded like free verse to me. After that I wasn't really interested in writing formal verse.

What was important in Kelly was the tension that writing poetry had something to do with the way you lived your life, that in some way the highest activity of your mind was what occurred when you were writing, that you couldn't do better than that, and that in some way the rest had better be subordinated to it because otherwise you were just wasting your energy and your time. That's always been partly believed in me. When I was in B.O.T.A. [Builders of the Adytum] I was resisting that notion intensely and feeling very strongly that it wasn't so, that poetry was just one of the things one did; and your relation to God and the Universe was your relation to God and the Universe. Poetry was nice but you couldn't take it as the whole thing. The disappointment after a while with the possibility of identifying with some religious or political (or in fact any kind of intellectual) order other than a

poetic one has left me with feelings pretty similar to Kelly's: that indeed fundamental activity takes place in writing, and though I find great use for meditating (and every other kind of consciousness experiment), I return to writing to accomplish that activity. What I had felt all along was that somehow it was too easy to say that you just had to write, that such a choice would leave you with an empty writing. I felt that you had to back up the writing by at least doing the things that you were saying. I mean that if, in poetry, you claim that you have the alchemical work, which is the external correlate to the realization of the highest human potential, you better really be realizing highest human potential. The lives of the poets I knew did not really seem to be that, nor did Kelly's. He seemed very smart and had a way of getting around any objections that you had to his way of life, but somehow you didn't feel that you could take him as a master of life. Of course, at this point I don't feel that it's necessary to do that. I'm not out comparing people's modes of life. And it was also true that everybody who was claiming to be a master of life in all those other terms had similar kinds of shortcomings. I'm no longer interested in perfection in that way. Nor do I have a particular definition of what the full realization of human potential or the best possible use of the mind would be, but I have a very concrete sense of my own activity and what's fruitful and what processes are rich."

Kelly's influence is neither singular nor direct. Since Gerrit Lansing, Ken Irby, George Quasha, Harvey Bialy, Chuck Stein, and I are all influenced in important ways by Kelly, and yet are making similar and synchronous discoveries on our own, it is not always clear where any theme arises, if in fact it arises in any one place. We are all in contact within a certain psychological and psychic framework. Stein explains some of his own connections:

Gerrit Lansing: "I met him not too long after I started getting friendly with Kelly. Gerrit always occupied the polar position that poetry was subsidiary to one's spiritual or magical work and that the making of the poem had a specific function in terms of self-creation, and no relation to history or public or anything of the kind. I mean in that sense that he had none of Kelly's Christian concern or Poundian concern with being publically committed, and he simply reinforced my other interests, my interests in meditation and other related practices. At the point that I was experiencing a doctrinal line from Kelly, Gerrit would be giving me the opposite, and he was at least as strong a person, so in terms of influence it made me tow the line between them. You asked me for Gerrit's interests. Magic, that's his interest. Cooking. Plants. Herbs. All literature; he's certainly one of the great readers of a whole range of subjects. Jungian psychology. Jungian anthropology. Jungian thought with all of its antecedents, i.e., history of religion, alchemy, magic in the West, plus an incredible erudition on the arcane events of American history, arcane not only in the sense of the inner interstices of what actually happened but the either real or fantasized occult implications of the spiritualist-magical events on the inner contours of American history."

Harvey Bialy: "Harvey has given me some gestures and an intensity of rhythmical energy of a certain kind; many of the poems in this book, particularly the poems called "Buzz Saws," are written out of the ener-

gy of playing music with him (he plays the drums and I play the alto sax). Harvey's total love affair with spade America and jazz and nastiness, underworld dope America and the romance of evil, has gotten me as near to it as I want to get. At the same time I was getting into poetry and mysticism and meditation I was getting into jazz. In talking about meditation and poetry I have emphasized the importance of time, but we could just as well talk about music and different kinds of representations of time in different music, certainly in free jazz. The approach to time in Ornette Coleman, Albert Ayler, Cecil Taylor, and some of Coltrane is close to where I'd like to think my attitude is. Basically what free jazz does to the metrical structure of classical jazz, pre-Ornette Coleman jazz, is to tighten the interval of the minimal beat such that you can have a gigantic variety of possible figures laid down over a very tight grid; that minimalization of their interval, of tightening up the rhythm, affords one a field in which it's possible to program many many many more aspects of bodily rhythms into the rhythmical field, and to give a much wider range and variety of forms. I was into that more as a spectator until I started playing with Harvey; he picked it up from Moffit, with whom he played, and he had that charge as a technician and as a drummer. That works in with meditation too, that feeling of attention to the tightest interval. Harvey's also very good on numbers, languages, the histories of numbers plus the whole Jungian and Levi-Straussian question of the dominant numerical structures that determine any given cosmology: whether it's a cosmology of one or two or three or four or five, and the different kinds of worlds that are made possible by those basic paradigms."

George Quasha: "I've only been friendly with George for a year and a half, but in some ways it's like playing back all the years of conversation with Kelly, only with a peer. Many of the things that were in my head from that time have come up again in another context. Quasha is very much into the vision of the poetic process as spiritual process, from Blake, also the visionary process, the prophetic process. In *Soma-poetics*, his big poem for the last year and a half, his conception is to permit as many different kinds of writing as he's ever considered to operate in the field that the poem creates so that the highest level of content is an exposition of language itself. How do you on the one hand write nondramatic poetry which doesn't create characters, on the other hand not create narrative dramatic psychomachia characters as Dorn does? What Quasha does is to let the most physical aspect of language, i.e., the timing of repetitions, form the structural field in which every different kind of language plays: people speaking, descriptive things, imitations of different kinds of things, miracle things, constantly cutting it, constantly throwing every given process up against its opposite, letting it twist and then throwing it opposite that. This is relevant for me certainly in the "Buzz Saws" where the intellectual idea is also to objectify the language until you're using your own speaking voice to do your own singing, your own speaking even while the effect of the poem is a step back from that. Where Harvey uses the tight interval jazz drumming of Charlie Moffit to be the physical, Quasha uses the repetition and the actual occurrence of things as the physical mode for permitting his voice to be both a voice and a picture of the voice. I do that in the "Buzz Saws" by having an actual physical beat moving under the poem, like a jazz technique: very tight and not simply revealed in

what would be called the metrical structure. The actual driving energy of it is not a counting of syllables or a placing of accents; it's a keeping of an unstated rhythmical pulse, on top of which the poem occurs; that is, there's both a speaker and a nonspeaker at the same time. I think that that process, of letting the voice be itself and at the same time providing a context which objectifies it, is another thing which is very directly related to meditation, particularly Buddhist meditation, where the process doesn't involve an attempt to control thought or direct it in particular channels but to create a space in which whatever is occurring simply occurs, with the transformation occasioned by the space in which it occurs.

Duncan is also counting beats underneath the rhythm that are not accents and not anything like metrical forms or accents or lengths of syllables, but he's got an actual series of contrapuntal bodily pulses on top of which the writing is done. Both the voices that Duncan represents and the underlying rhythmical structure that he uses are different than what Quasha, or Bialy, or I are involved in, but the mode is related. Finally, Quasha's pushing me constantly that the mappings of all these connections between us should be made as clear as possible and that we should explore some of the amoebal connections that exist in reality."

Richard Grossinger: "In some ways your anthropological concerns and your actually doing the geographical work that Olson lays down has been very important for me. Also, your cosmology has created a context for mine. When I was reading *Ogotemmel* and building my pile, *Io* and the many conversations with you were as present as anything else."

Charles Stein was born in New York City on August 23, 1944. By the time I met him, at Horace Mann, he was already involved in music, drawing, and yoga; he was a good baseball player and on the school bowling team. Soon after, he got involved in poetry, but even before that he was deeply engaged in reading, literature, philosophy, politics, and history. Chuck, together with Bob Alpert, James Polachek, and a few others, formed a kind of floating salon. There was more energy than style involved. They made the school into an intellectual hotbed, and previously quiet and mysterious teachers turned out to have provocative and esoteric backgrounds, and were drawn into the conversations on subjects they probably never dreamed they would discuss for the rest of their days. The issues of life and the universe were debated daily, in class, during lunch, between classes, with incredibly strong and desperate thrusts of enthusiasm and commitment. Polachek was a musician and brilliant student who is now in Far Eastern Studies at Berkeley after doing Chinese at Harvard. Alpert was a Marxist and social humanist who now teaches school at Monterrey after doing early English literature at Harvard and Berkeley. Others included Erwin Morton, a mathematical genius, Bob Karlan, who became heavily involved in I Ching and tarot right after Horace Mann, plus those in other classes involved in film, American history, Spanish literature, Chinese politics, metaphysical logic, etc. Chuck experienced a fluency and articulation in this world of ideas at a very young age, and it sometimes strikes me that because of this, he has been moving since then toward the spaces beyond the usual articulate voice.

The Horace Mann group was very powerful and influential in our

lives. Chuck expressed it well when he said, recently, of the way in which we were taught people like Melville and Stephen Crane and Willa Cather: "They were initiations into exactly the things they were meant to be initiations into, but they were not initiations into those books as they were intended." I saw Polachek recently for the first time in years, and he wrote me in a letter:

"Chuck initiated the Resistance. Right there, in our midst, at Horace Mann, it happened; can you imagine the potential of putting us together in the same building for six years, five days a week? What Marx saw happening in the factories but which never has."

Much of my image of Chuck comes from these times, the part of the image in fact that he is most uneasy about my including in here: a kind of purposely tattered quixotic magus, showing up at school each day and doing excellent work in the school's terms while committing subtle outrages on the system: photographed for the yearbook in the garbage can, lying down before the assembly raving, "They're all madmen in there. Don't go in!" to the startled underclassmen; he blames Polachek for conducting the profane mass over the spaghetti in the dining hall when our formidable history professor was communicating with macho awe the mysteries of the Mediaeval Church. I report all this as an outsider.

When the class graduated (Chuck receiving the Honors award in creative writing), he went to Columbia to study Greek. He says:

"I took Greek because I very arrogantly didn't want to take English courses and have to confront academic attitudes towards poetry. Kelly was constantly emphasizing that it was stupid to do in college what you could do on your own and that you could use the occasion of being in a University to learn something you couldn't do on your own. I had been reading Pound since high school and Pound is adamant on the importance of Homer and Sappho. Its use to me has been manifold: one, some familiarity with an alternative to English prosody, that is, the quantitative metric, which I never understood in Latin but found in Greek poets like Sappho and Archilochus and Homer as a whole other kind of metrical possibility, more interesting than the traditional English structures. There is also Olson's whole take on the importance of the moment of Greek philosophy, of Parataxis and Homer as an "in" on the history of Western civilization, which I keep redoing in many ways, like reading Steiner now. Also the heavy Greek tragedy stuff has a place in my head."

While at Columbia Chuck visited Kelly, Lansing, Olson, and Duncan, and edited one issue (1964) of a magazine called *Aion*. "I was doing Gerrit's and Kelly's project for them, and this was my own initiation into their world." The issue included: Kelly, Lansing, Duncan, Jonathan Greene, Stein, Zosimos translated by Stein, and Crowley. The preface said:

"*Aion* is a Journal of the Traditionary Sciences which, in C. G. Jung's phrase, include "Researches into the Phenomenology of Self as understood in Alchemy, Astrology, Ceremonial Magic and related disciplines.

*Aion* will serve as an exchange between purely "Occult" and other concerns; literary, historical, scientific; thus, texts from, essays about, accounts of, poems out of.

*Aion* will be as open as possible in terms of doctrine, operating with few assumptions other than that these concerns are relevant now.

We would hope to effect an opening of the "occult" to influences from without - at least an opening of what is already public to intelligent examination as well as a presentation of "occult" material in a more intellectually palatable form than in publications now out and correspondence courses generally available."

After Columbia, Stein went on in Comparative Literature at NYU, but dropped out pretty quickly and took a nine to five job. He worked for *True Romance* and *True Experience* and then edited a master buying guide for a photo trade magazine. After a year of that he went back to school at Hunter and taught at Pace College. Finally, after Olson's death, he moved out of the New York area on a permanent basis for the first time and entered the graduate program in English at the University of Connecticut at Storrs (where Olson's papers have been purchased by the library). He is completing his PhD. with a thesis on Olson.

"At Hunter I was mostly interested in Seventeenth Century and Metaphysical poetry. But generally, for the first time, I got into learning the kind of anthro-intellectual history of the various periods of English literature. At Storrs I simply got hung on reading English poetry, all of it. I read Browning and Tennyson, and there the development of late light verse is so intricate you can literally lay down any accent on it; you can read it in a bold American accent and it makes perfect sense. So I was getting into that stuff by reading it in the wrong accent and really digging it. Then I worked back thru some of the very careful metricians of modern times, like Zukofsky, or Stephen Jonas, or Williams, or some of Olson, some of Kelly, back to the Elizabethan stuff, which is very very lovely. I can definitely get off on Romantic Poetry because I see it as the beginning of our own history, of that transposition of religious consciousness, with Blake and Wordsworth and Coleridge, when poets become conscious of the metaphysical function in the acting of writing poetry itself. The Seventeenth Century Metaphysical poets (with the exception of one American, Edward Taylor, who wrote poems and then wrote his sermons as analyses of the poems) are not writing poems as a spiritual activity. They're not solving their problems of dealing with God in their poems.

There's an awful lot to be learned from lending an ear to the best practitioners. And doing that, and having to confront the exquisite attention that English prosodists have given to their own sounds creates a kind of standard, and my poetry in the last two or three years has become much more attentive to the specific sound syllable to syllable; not that I'm writing anything like formal English verse, but that density of attention.

In *A. Special View of History*, Olson makes a very sweeping statement about the nature of the cosmology of the Western World being fixed by the Babylonians and the Hittites in the image of a duality of chaos and order. The creation of value, since then, has had to do with the imposition of a pattern on a chaotic material; and since Whitehead say, with the new cosmology, that picture of things has come to an end; there is a seeing that processes of order emerge from the natural, emerge *in* the natural, and are not imposed upon it. So that, say, the image of a flower rising out of the mud does not involve the imposition of a paradigm of order upon a chaos but the realization of potentials within

the given ground substance to begin with. I think that that holds as a description of the total body of Olson's work, as opposed to X or Y or Z's work which might be understood as the imposition of order on chaotic experience. Olson's public work may represent the jewels or the flowers, the most realized forms of a constant activity, which is going on on all levels at all times. The Olson collection itself [in the Library at Storrs] is the matrix or the ground out of which those flowers arise. There's one box of papers he put together sometime before he died of all the notes had had from 1959, 1960, 1961, the period really between the two volumes of *Maximus*, where he took it and put it all in order and dated it. It represents a kind of intermediary world between simply publishable material and any number of scattered thousands of pieces of paper which are not. If you look in any one of those two thousand envelopes, you don't find that any one envelope represents any particular specific period of time. So basically what I'm doing for my thesis is studying those papers, cataloguing them, relating them to the finished work that comes out of them (or the variations in the different materials that emerge in the finished work), and locating the material in his own library that he's reading and incorporating at the same time."

This book attempts to bring together the different threads of Stein's work: the poetry, the meditation (in the "cumulus" material and other specific poems), the music (in the "Buzz Saws"), the drawing, the photography, and the cosmology (in this preface). The cosmology, however, is dynamically involved with the synthesis of these modes into one creative and ceteripetal activity. Stein is not simply a jack of many trades; he is a master of the continuous transformation of one form of energy and activity into another. There is no outside model for the entire internal process (as geography for Olson); thus the specific skills, images, and practices can occur in a variety of dimensions; they are all brought back into the body, as voice, as rhythm, as lotus, as motor coordination, as neural map, and the body of the poet becomes literally the body of the whole work. The very process of moving from activity to activity allows the activities to shed light on each other and reveal aspects of each other thru the differences between them. Any one activity is an overview on any other activity, even as it is its antagonist in the doing (one cannot articulate and non-articulate at the same time). The changes in the body and the personal individuation of one who is working on such a dynamic are recorded collectively in the differential developments of each process, almost as a metaphor for the uniquely-endowed organs and systems of the body. Stein explains his work thusly:

"I think that I take each particular thing, say drawing, music, building a cumulus, writing poems, meditating, as if it were, at the time, the dominant part of my work. So that, in a sense, each one has a representation of all the others as if each were subordinate to each in any particular context of making. While I'm building a cumulus the first thing that's in my attention is building a cumulus. At the same time what it accumulates is precisely the same energies that are received in meditation. Then a poem comes at the point when I'm dissolving the cumulus and it appears as though the cumulus is the source of the poem, as if I built the cumulus in order to write a poem about it.

And I think that meditation and poetry work in a similar way. The kinds of concerns I get into from writing will appear in another form during meditation. At that moment it's as if the poetry had to do with my life and meditation had to do with a different kind of work that includes everything else, that any given poem might have meditation simply as its subject matter; where I am writing from the same intentionality that is directing meditation, the material will be permitted to have its verbal form in a poem. Meditation and poetry would be the polarity: one a direction toward an inarticulate moment of thought that precedes language, and the poem the opposite intention, letting the material take its full articulation (be fully articulated).

It never seemed possible for me to research Yonkers. Yet clearly the paradigm that Olson was presenting was that the great cosmological change in the Twentieth Century was that what was spirit was now matter and what was matter was now spirit, that the old dichotomy between a spiritual and a material was dead, and that anything of a higher order had to be discovered thru the specific, thru the concrete, and now thru the general, thru the universal, or thru the abstract. In his case that meant thru the body, thru one's physical movements, to the actual territory that one occupied, and the concrete history of the places that he occupied, and thru that, from that specificity, to the specificity of the Earth and the Universe. I never felt that I had such a subject given to me. I didn't feel as though I could arbitrarily select some spot and go study it; that seemed literally arbitrary to me. I wasn't interested in Yonkers, and I didn't have any particular sort of feel for history that he had had long before he came even to those senses of things. But as I got more and more into meditation I began more and more to think of it as a similar kind of process. The unearthing of my own consciousness, the settling of the psyche into the body, etc., represented at the same time for me the meditation that for him, later, was the meditation on the place. What I have lately evolved in dream writing is a kind of reworking of this geographical question. The dreams seem to be setting out an imaginary geography; that is, they take place in places with names, New Hampshire, the North Pole, several places on the Bronx River, several places in Manhattan, Brooklyn, etc., and in some way it may turn out that I will have to settle that imaginary geography back into their actual localities in the same way that I have to settle psyche into my body. But I have to begin by getting my body and the inside world in order before I can be in a house or live in a place.

What happens in meditation is that there are any number of different models for what I am doing that occur to me at different times depending on how my mind is spinning at that time. There are any number of different doors, and each is a possible beginning point. Actually I got this idea from Lama Govinda's *Psychological Attitudes in Buddhist Thought*. In early Buddhism meditation seems to be directed on space itself, space not as in an abstract mathematical space, but existential space, that is, space which has a center insofar as there are things that are near to you and things that are far to you, and that things are happening inside of you; objects in your ken are nearer or further away, and influence you or have an impact on you totally on the basis of their distance. You experience space in those terms, that your self is just the foreground, and all the things happening in your mind, happening in

your body, happening in your emotional body, happening inside you, are absolutely continuous with what's outside. But the importance of the events decreases with the square of their distances from you, as a force of gravity or light radiating from a center. What interests me very constantly (and this has been with me since the time of writing those "Tarot Journals" [Io/4, enlarged edition, 1973, originally published in *Aion*, 1964] years ago) is the very clear experience of when a thought reaches the level of being an actual phrase or a sentence in your mind. That it has already formulated itself previously. So that what you're getting is a kind of extension of it into verbal form. One exercise which I'm constantly doing is attempting to be aware of the earliest moment in which a thought begins to arise and hold my attention on that place, impeding its articulation into verbal form in order to stay as close as possible to what's happening absolutely right now on a mental level, the poem being the extreme opposite of that, where you force things to articulation, where you force every mental intuition to its articulation. The difference between an utterance that would occur in a poem and any other utterance would literally have to be, that in a poem there is some sensitivity to the process of utterance itself. The actual temporal flow of the poem has a sense of depth to it, i.e., that in the end the inarticulate kernel of any given utterance should be felt as present in the actual utterance, but not by articulation.

The emotional content comes thru too because it's the emotional content that's going to be directing the actual flow of the poem. A similar thing happens in meditation in relation to emotion, that normally you are not aware of emotional qualities as a continuing ongoing flowing process; only at heightened moments are you aware of something that you would call emotion; nonetheless there is an emotional body that's in activity all the time. Then another process of meditation is staying with the actual flow of very subtle emotional states. What I mean by "an emotion" is: a feeling of excitement, of affection, of anger. When anything that you would call "emotions" is discovered by you as taking place in your body, watch it, staying absolutely with its flow as it develops. In a poem a similar thing is happening in that you permit the emotional flow to be directing the contour of the language and the physical aspect of the language.

I have a sense of all these things developing in me together. And I began getting interested in meditating and writing at the same time. It's been posed to me that there must be some conflict between the two, since meditation is ostensibly an inarticulate absolutely private experience with its "goal" in the thing itself, without any external result being from it, an activity purposely directed toward nonarticulation. But also there is the sense that meditation tends to be associated with some sort of salvationist mystique, that you meditate in order to do something with your person, to save your soul, or destroy your ego in order to save your ego. Then the poets doing the poetry that most concerns me consistently put forth that the actual spiritual activity of the writing itself should be the sufficient spiritual activity, as if to be involved in some extra-writing spiritual activity somehow were a devaluing of writing itself (not to take one's position fully in language). At the same time, at any point when I'm involved with people who are solely into meditation, the engagement with writing seems like an ego

trip. It's a dilemma that sometimes appears to me as a conflict, but only insofar as other people have posed it to me as such and I've identified with them and so become fearful that it was so. I don't ultimately feel that it is. They're both total activities, and if your sense of totality, of wholeness, is something which relates to every moment in itself, and that every moment is a whole in itself, there would seem to be the possibility of having what would seem to be competing hierarchies of experience which are not competing except insofar as that at any one moment one activity may have a lower position. Poetry is secondary to meditation, or meditation is secondary to poetry, only depending on the moment that is engaged in the activity. In a certain sense they both have to do with processes of keying up attention to time itself. In some sense the ultimate object of all meditation practice is the most concrete sense of the flow of time, as is the most concrete object of attention in writing.

The material I pick up thru reading comes back around in other ways, in all the different spheres of things. When I was building the cumulus, reading the *Ogotemmel* conversations were very important to me because there was a particular image world being presented there as a primary metaphor for everything, particularly in the image of the grainery and the image of the anthill, running them thru cosmology, social organization, categories of plants, animals, etc. [Marcel Griaule: *Conversations with Ogotemmel: An Introduction to Dogon Religious Ideas*]. On the one level there was simply the coincidence of there being such a cosmology and my reading it at that time, such that building the cumulus involved me in making my own visualization of a cosmology structure; on the other hand there was a particular feeling about the images that were presented there that was directly translated into the things I was putting into the cumulus. As I was building it, I had the sense that what I was doing was building an image of my body; an internal image of my body was building up very slowly, as if in the possibility of an internal consciousness, and I was building an image of it. Much of what I was reading then, not just *Ogotemmel* but Santillana [Giorgio de Santillana and Hertha von Dechend: *Hamlet's Mill: An Essay on Myth & the Frame of Time*] or things in various cosmological systems, was making me aware of parallel processes. At the same time I was building up a kind of language so that I could speak from energies that were coming in meditation without having to talk about my body or specifically what was happening to me. The difficulty of talking about internal perceptions is that there is no language for them, and insofar as there *is* a language, it's extremely clinical and very far removed from the actual experiences themselves. Building the cumulus provides then a series of images which can be used without even talking about the body but which make available for writing the energies which meditation is providing. So, take for example a poem, in this case the Cumulus poem in particular. In the one sense it *is* a meditation and its structure is in some sense *like* a meditation. It's not *about* meditation, but it is about certain Buddhist concerns, like a principle in things (or in Universe) to create duration; nonetheless the underlying play of energies in the poem becomes available by having made the cumulus as an image; it's almost like a feeling in my abdomen, crudely as that, a feeling of solidity in my abdomen, a warm radiation of energy, which was also somehow built into the cumulus. Certain people coming and seeing it could feel certain vibes about it, and

my sense was that I was building an objective correlative for those inner states, from which I made the poem as another correlative, in writing down the images from it. It's like when you dream something and then you write down the dream, and writing the dream is in a sense a re-dreaming in that the energies are really reactivated and given a different structure. Similarly, the specific relationship between reading a text and then writing something from reading it is very much like having a dream and then writing the dream. You only get one chance. You can't go back later and read it a second time and try to reproduce the conditions in which you can use those images. There is also a discontinuity between where the text comes to you as the solidification or identification and verbalization of some initiatory process and where the text is initiatory itself, not in the sense that it gives you the experience but that it provides that the attitude struck in you in the process of reading becomes something which you yearn to possess more fully. So that having read Trungpa's book, having read *Lilith*, having read *Ogōtemmeli*, having read Olson, provides imaginations of kinds of worlds which it then becomes your business to realize. But the text is not in any sense a replacement for that process of building one.

Over the years I've read and reread pictures of the history of modern physics, and they interest me not so much because they are pictures of physical reality which I can believe but because they are the activity of a mind on our scale dealing with the limits in size, either the very small or the very large, and they produce particular sorts of mental structures which can only come about by the engagement of a mind on our scale with things at those limits. Whereas I am very skeptical, as pretentious as that sounds, of the ultimate meaning of the knowledge of physical reality on the basis of elementary particle physics, nevertheless it provides instances where it becomes necessary to create modes of thought which become extremely useful in dealing with other areas where we exist in a similar relationship in terms of scale. For instance, in meditation, in following any process, whether mental, physical, or emotional, for any duration whatsoever, even if it's for a fraction of a second, one is engaged in a microreality, and the questions of calculus, whether they're infinitesimals or not infinitesimals, and how reality is altered when you're dealing on microlevels becomes a very immediate question, and the reading of simplified popularized elementary particle literature is a kind of magnetizing of the attention to the microscopic which provides aids, clues, for focusing it in terms of actual experience. I find, for instance, there's a constant experience of light waves, of waves of light illuminating from the eyes and from the whole body in meditation. At first the waves start by your being aware of the sizzling light of retinal activity; if you keep your attention on that there begin to be visible wave flows. As you experience the contours of that, you become involved in smaller and smaller intervals. I read in Koestler's *Roots of Coincidence* that the amount of energy necessary to stimulate a retinal flash, a perceptible retinal flash, is incredibly small, something like five quanta whatever that means. Whatever it means it means that we have actual experience that the fabric of normal experience is continuously remade of events which are, anyway, on a submolecular level. The rapidity with which the formation of an intention, of a thought which in one moment is going to bind the con-

tours of the next ten seconds or two seconds or fraction of a second directly related to the mathematical structures which physicists have evolved to talk about elementary particles and which are required on the most elementary level of what would seem to be psychology. In order to have a scientific psychology you would have to start off with something as mathematically fine as the many-dimensional world of particle physics. Koestler talks of a certain aspect of particle speculation in which the physicists have invented something they call virtual spaces; the virtual space is at any given moment the projection of the probability of what's going to happen to the particle at  $x$  moment in the future. And this is going to be different for the particle every moment because every moment contains an identifiable measurable formula for what are called compresent dispositional factors, which are in no sense physically present in the event but are representable in some probability relation of what's going to happen to it. So that what you have at any given moment of time is a picture of all time. At moment  $N$  you have not only the events at  $N$  but the probability for what's going to happen in that space for any moment in the future; at  $N + 1$  that probability is going to be absolutely revised in terms of what actual event does take place. And that model seems to have a lot to do with all the questions of determinism, free will, and how we measure consciousness as we move in our own time-space. Emotional reality is always forward-leaning. What you feel in an emotion is directional as it begins to flow. Similarly, any thought from that, any actual intellectual activity, treats that as if it were the past and throws out an image binding the future, as if to impose on the flow of real time a construction which has a specific formation at a given moment in virtual time. And I think that one of my concerns in both meditation and in poetry is to let the actual flow of real time play against the projection of virtual time. In other words, at any given moment any given line will have within it the potentiality for the development of the poem, which will then become further specified in the next line. It's not that I'm throwing down a pattern over time but, more complexly, letting any pattern that's thrown down at any given moment play against the actual flow of time, so that any pattern at any given moment plays against the actual flow of time and is capable of changing and moving in any number of different directions."

Stein's cosmology is really a rotating set of dialectics and possibilities which are pulled into and out of the conscious field. An interview done at a particular time captures an angle of the whole, plus his immediate excitement and engagement with what he is presently involved in as an idea. The discussion which produced this preface reveals Stein's interests and concerns only insofar as they are focused in the energies and attentions of the moment. He is rarely retrospective. Other discussions, not recorded, have dealt with the sound of the blood flowing thru the brain and the electricity of the mind, the relation between the gravitational field of a star and the gravitational pull of the mind (such that mind and star are the *only* literal metaphors for each other), the Stonehenge-Atlantis-Rosicrucian connections, and the relation of Olson's geographical space to astronomical-astrological time-space, etc. etc. Thus, this preface should be viewed as a single temporally-idiosyncratic statement of his work, which is changed by the

conditions and circumstances of the next moment, even contradicted in parts by them, as the thought process continues to rotate. The preface is to serve as an introduction to Stein's work and an objective response by the author to some of the patterns this book brings into being and is brought into being by. The following statements come from our discussion, and are included at the end because they are not really directly in any of the previous flows whose premises they extend.

"I like the Don Juan thing in Book Three, in *Ixtlan* [*Journey to Ixtlan* by Carlos Castaneda]; that one's business is not being trapped by ordinary reality or surreal reality. It's sort of like the Tantric Buddhist position; what one has to learn is the powers of the mind to create entities, and to be aware that the realities that are engaged in are not simply phenomenological realities. Once you become engaged in the creating of imagination you have in some way an effect on something that's beyond yourself. The entities conjured in the drawings are tantric exercises in visualizing horrible things. If I sit and meditate and look at anything that has any kind of complex structure I start having practically acid hallucinations; I start seeing all kinds of different faces, and that in itself is an extremely interesting thing, the question of what the link is between the imagined image and the physical reality of the imagined image. For instance, Goethe's color theory, and the exercises in which you stimulate your retina in different ways. It's subjective, and at the same time it has known physiological correlates, so it's the one place where the duality of subjective and objective doesn't exist. If you stay tuned to the retinal activity, either with eyes closed or open eyes, so that you're stimulating internally the activity of the retina, so that you're seeing lights, what really starts happening is that it becomes very very easy to project an image into that. All you have to do is start thinking of rose wheels or mandala patterns or Mayan hieroglyphs or Egyptian hieroglyphs or any other multiform image that you have stored in your imagination and it will automatically be physically realized on the grid of the retinal activity, and that process is a ground for recircling in a certain sense the relationship between mental activity and physical realization. The drawing has to do with that; you're involved in some hand process, hand and eye working together, the middle voice of hand and eye where you're being both active and perceptive at the same time to the realization of an image which will have psychic relevance.

One is not only, by becoming engaged with powerful images, discovering them all over the place, but is in some sense actually conjuring them in the field of events themselves. You have no way of knowing whether they're using you or you're using them. The most simple phenomena, which seem perfectly ordinary in the Newtonian frame or in the frame of ordinary reality, are absolutely startling, and I don't see that the problem is less so whichever is true, whether there's an anima mundi with a telepathic net that we're all involved in or whether it's simply that we're all involved in an onwardly moving temporal reality."

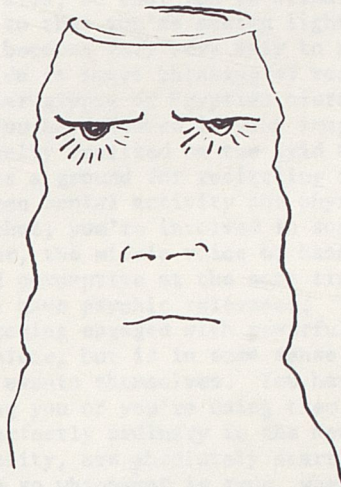


The Tanager

## TEN TUNES

For all  
your life  
to live  
in harmony  
with  
the world





The Danger

for all  
your life  
not  
to have comfortable  
furniture

I noticed  
my nose  
taking its shape  
after yours

OLD CHAIR, HELLO!  
OLD CHAIR, HELLO!

I am low  
I am low

You are large  
You are large

I rise out of sleep  
Old chair

you are there  
you are there

Protect me from  
The crack in the door

the ancestors  
slide down the bow of heaven  
after long  
long rain  
for many days  
the fogs were low  
over silent Irish green lawns October  
love and coffee odors, music of harps

one held the hammer in his green green  
hand and  
lost his self in a closet

He is looking at something  
he must do with his right hand.

He doesn't know much about  
the top of his headpiece.

He doesn't know very much.

He knows what he looks at  
looks back at him.

One day he was watching  
the stones in his room  
and the stones began to undulate and quicken.

That that was not the first time that had happened  
he remembered.

For often the thought of solid things  
had seemed not solid to him.

That was ok.

Now they were disposed on the bench  
and he was adamant to toy with the wrenches.

The bolts were tight  
but only bolts they were.

That's why I say  
he didn't know much about his headpiece.

It looked like some kind of cheap sombrero  
with a bent rim.

You could stop the sun with it.

There are  
among men  
certain masters.

Do not seek  
to find out who  
they are.

The moon is over the river.

Enormous hawks  
disturb the question anyway. The wind  
from their wings  
is enough to knock over your car.  
You do not know  
what you ride in.

Gold are its posts.

Blue is the cloth of its canopy  
covered with stars.



though love is not commerce  
she sang

if you will come  
to where I am not  
and make of me an image  
for which I may care not  
and burn it in the flame that burns between us  
and by which we are one

this dream  
will open  
and prove a true one

misty morning  
pan pipes

hairy fingers ripple the stops  
fluted airs of the goldcrouched goatgod  
horny moon airs  
music of the silver gaze  
music of the lake

he says the day is grey  
but for my tune off it  
up among the pine tall rods

I have an egg  
I hatch in my crotch

its shell is the color of heaven

snow patch on  
glazed dawn lake

pool still

when mind  
is like a pool  
the mud will rise

cold prose

when body is not  
discontinuous  
its spaces

...

red barn farm  
one  
willow rise

car ride  
astride

pressure of land  
in form of over-  
hanging cliff=jaggs

...

the contemplation of one's spaces  
reverses the nature of desire

...

I take place  
out there

...

sun through  
snow mist  
late march north  
green mountain  
morning storm

cars  
can't pass

measure risk skillfully

giant weighted  
trailer truck  
impending

on the rear of farrari

...

my model  
is of  
unfolding  
not  
development

all

the parts  
of the work  
implied in the come

who?

is independent mind

neither hope nor fear  
to trouble the bowelry

...

I want

...

snow mist  
just  
ahead

you must  
see the situation  
with *skillful means*

use space  
as though it were  
the only instrumentality  
of wisdom  
vis:

any vehicle  
ahead of you

casts a cloud of mist and snow  
behind

That as you are  
constrained to follow

so your way is blind

HERMES' NIGHT SONG

what is the name of your god if not  
Harpocrates?

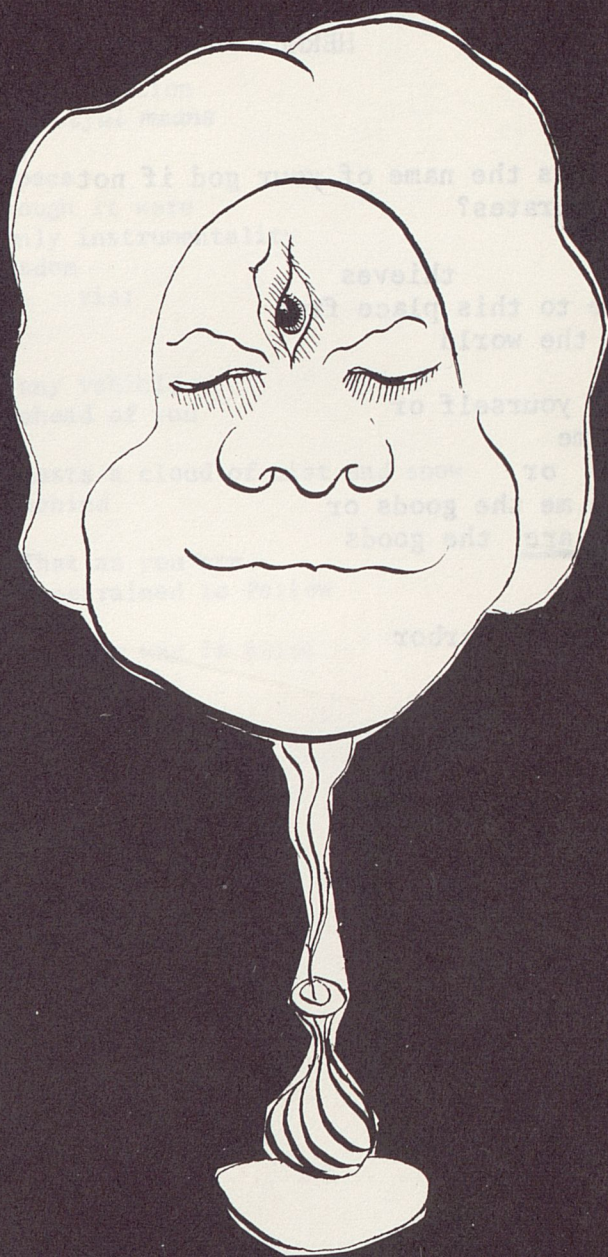
                  thieves  
come to this place from  
all the world

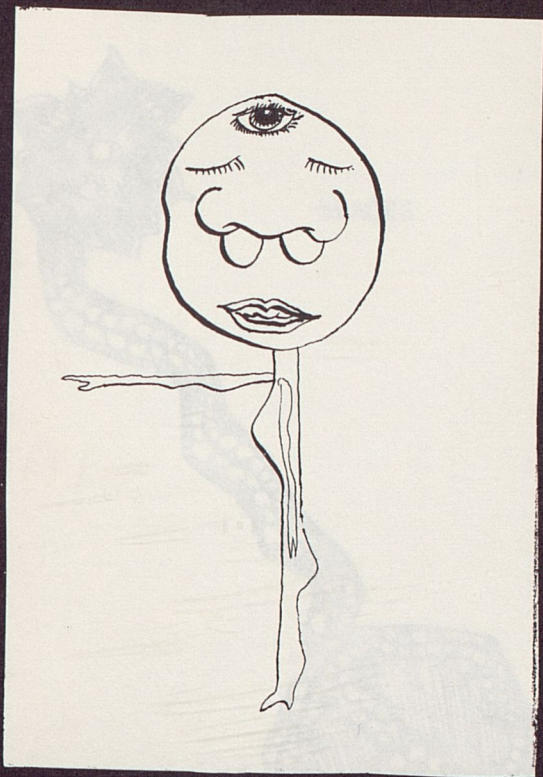
sell yourself or  
buy me  
                  or  
give me the goods or  
here are the goods

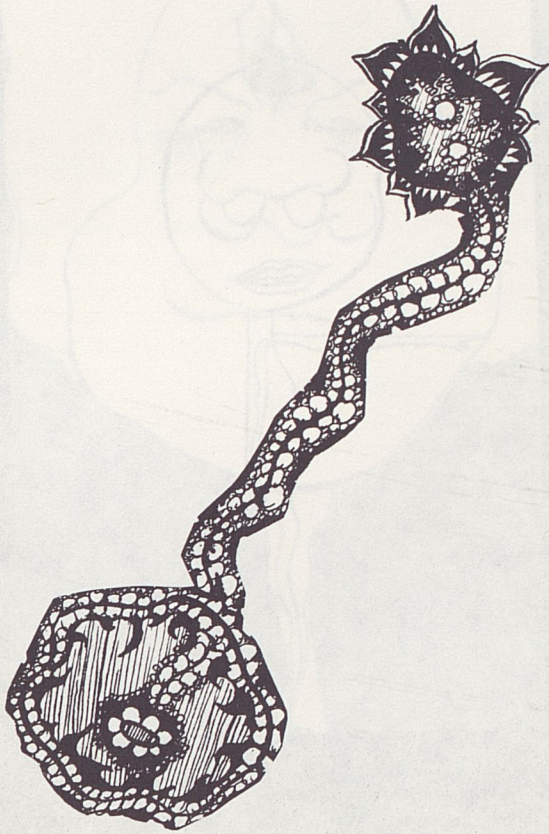
moon over harbor

long  
      night  
of waiting for the  
whole sky  
to pass it by

Harpocrates







SPACES

to the white

the region  
from the edge

I found the infinite network for wind

SPACES

a star

that city is history

and only

the lovers to the song

the carriage music

the fountain of space was like the fountain

SPICES



it is white

\*

the argument  
from domiciles

\*

I found the ultimate metaphor for mind

\*

a door

\*

they sing in harmony

\*

and nail

\*

the lovers to the song

\*

the carriage passes

\*

the openness of space was like its fountain

I am doing the right thing

\*

give the water back to the water

\*

it makes no sense

\*

as he steps off the boat  
he takes  
only what he needs along  
with him

\*

every morning

\*

to talk about something

\*

I am doing the right thing

\*

it makes no sense

\*

this expresses respect for the water

\*

I went to Yosemite National Park  
and I saw some huge  
water fall

a dream

\*

not mind

\*

the parsley leaves  
yellow

with

at the outside  
green

grow

up at  
the stem

\*

words

the

riverrun with  
in for  
a source of them

\*

mind

\*

stand  
like a stupid man

become

that statue

let

water run new  
rushing spring

\*

the sound  
outside

the hands  
within

the lock works

4

an egg  
in his hands

the color of heaven

\*

I am the lawn

\*

if a bird then  
a bath for him

\*

the colors

a nest for him

\*

he is born

\*

soon he  
takes the moments  
of our lives to  
mark his passages

though only  
such moments  
as to him  
belong

\*

the next day  
he flies away  
with us  
against the storm

\*

to get there /

make a wedge for him

\*

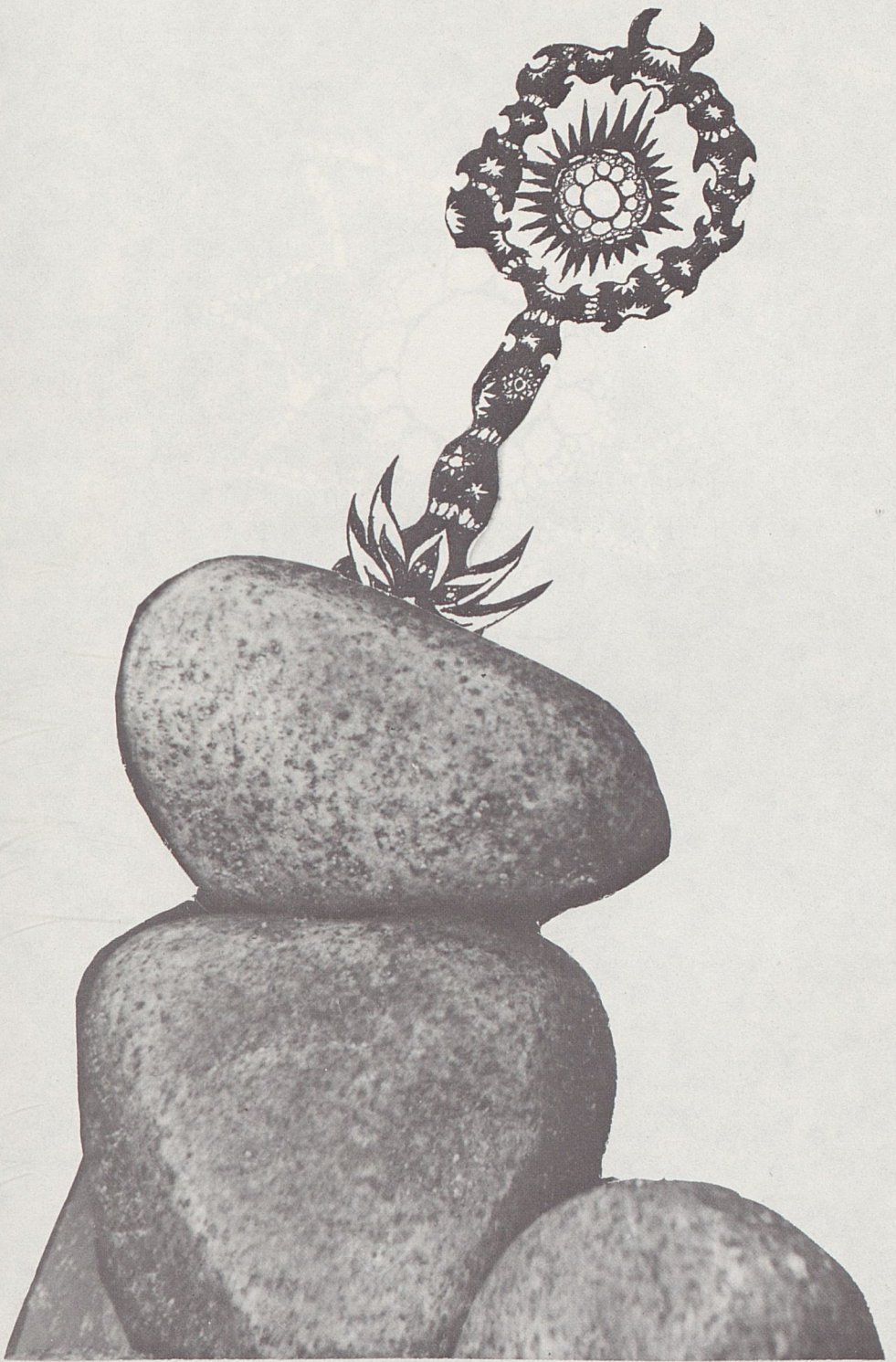
come  
back again o

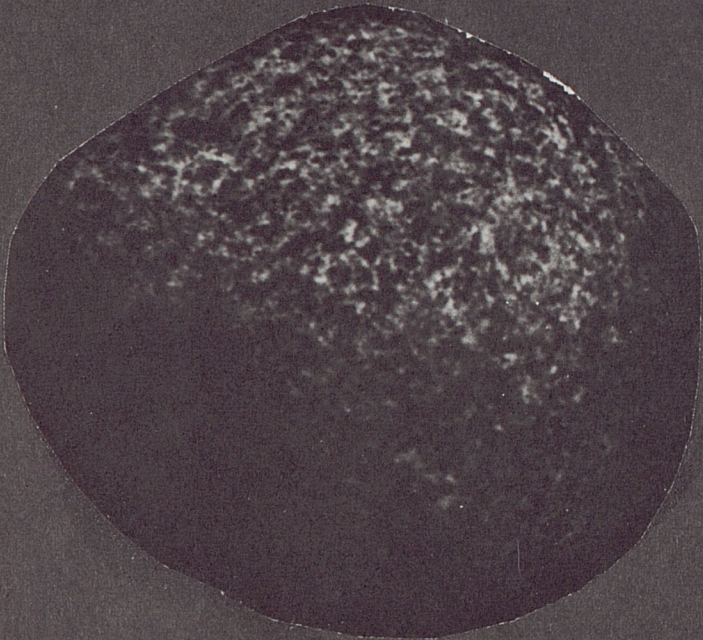
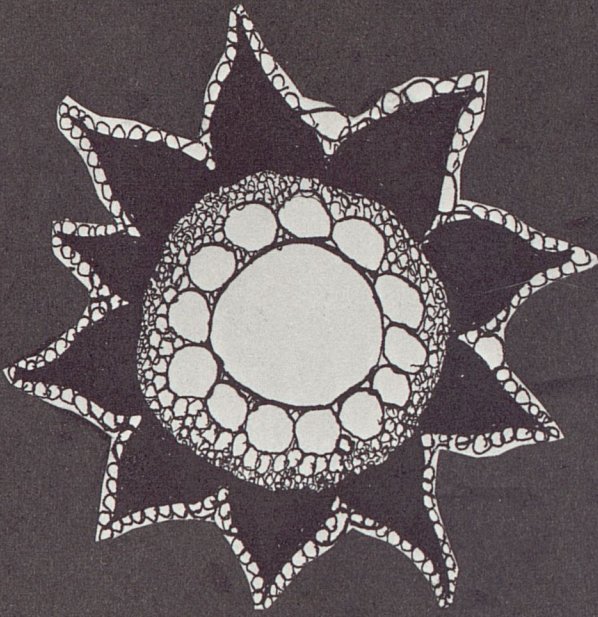
bird-to-the-east

\*

nest work







1

of what  
 and what  
 kill  
 is  
 over night that  
 her privately down  
 a square dude like you'd know how  
 it how it always on his'd  
 like it not  
 so fast so  
 gullish  
 as I could learn on some  
 sense I had of what I had  
 'twas done to her never  
 predict the future  
 buzz saws

barrow too little food was out  
 in the corner  
 of the room her  
 listening range the cat  
 behind change list of work  
 accurate list of work

BUZZ SAWS

1

it is  
over night that  
her privately done up so  
a square dude like you'd know how  
it how it swamps one I'd  
like it not  
so fast so  
as I could lean on some  
sense I had of what I had  
'twas done to her never  
predict the future  
rang the gong

in the corner  
of the room her  
listening range the cat  
behind the leg

how to  
take the  
kill

everything

without (its

telling

roses  
in the dawn

the new pool still not watered

how to tell everyone  
how to tell everyone



the the the

of

stepping aside from his his

shutting up and giving up room

standing back in the wings and not not flying

5

standing there is is  
is already is having  
getting gotten there  
getting there

6

where would you  
would you go  
                  go  
back again  
                  again  
                  go  
back again

7

OUT OUT

leisure  
of old was  
as false as  
leisure  
now who

could begin to  
rest as  
though there  
might be  
a park where  
one might go

WARNING:

when the time  
comes  
how  
will we know  
who you are?



I had risen  
 before I started  
 not to show I  
 had risen. It  
 was father  
 poking his head  
 in the door.

He  
 put on that he was  
 just  
 aimlessly wandering

But as it happened  
 he needed to take out  
 articles from the drawer

yet  
 next  
 I asked  
 was it he was now to go down town to  
 his office I  
 might find cause in it  
 that early  
 to arise, but he said no, he  
 was looking for his golf gloves.

all that  
 she had to say was  
 not to let my  
 hair go  
 down the drain as  
 yester-  
 day  
 there was flooding  
 badly downstairs  
 and much of what had been my "papers" stored there  
 were  
 now  
 no more

I heard her heart say karma, I was cause  
 I who belonged to an alien sociology...

golden  
towels  
on the towel rack

today it's  
pt pt pt pt  
chk chk wuuuuuushshshshsss  
sssssstops and  
goes

today  
she is at  
her desk at  
twenty to seven  
while he  
lies                       
supinenineninenine  
a vollume  
of the Brittanica  
in his hand

I gottagettaoing  
UP UP

sit UP  
set UP

pt pt pt pt  
chk chk chk chk

wshshshsh



I know in  
 art it's  
 what fills  
 the rest when  
 one part goes  
 awry

moment to moment

it seems good advice to  
 seek out how  
 for every irritation  
 attention  
 is the  
     means to be  
 applied

birds  
 occupy  
 the budding  
 trees  
 to the north and west  
 the sky last  
 night  
 was dry  
 but rain  
 prevents  
 the repetition  
 I had hoped  
 to sit zazen  
 under the  
 same tree where  
 I sat then

april  
 twenty one  
 can

words once  
 put get  
 gone gone come  
 again ? get  
 gone again

I  
 love  
 to be in  
 charge, of, things, if  
 they  
 make  
 me their prince I am  
 splendid  
           glad

are they  
 my  
 words then they  
 spring from  
 my words

is every  
 one  
 the king

you can go to  
 the country not  
 think it  
 at all  
 for a year or two it  
 doesn't  
 get a  
 way from you that that that that that that that that

stand

up  
 now  
 hit  
 one more blow who  
 knows anything  
 of national  
 politics

now

\*

we do.  
 and we do.  
 you do. But he  
 for chrissake don't and she don't and we  
 better gettagoddam better goddam. But  
 they don't.

\*

and what  
 did you  
 pick up on?

this  
 is what there is  
 to be begun

metal over this  
 part  
 flat  
 slabs of canvas  
 to blot out That

the dog  
twists at  
his own  
tail the cat  
bites  
against morning

I sit straight up to hear what  
has this to do  
do with ending, curing until  
all  
beings  
until all  
will

\*

guidelines

guidelines

hear me say no  
killing it  
is not what it  
seems to be the  
mat  
makes  
a means of  
death but but this  
is by by no means

\*

I don't  
find on  
this  
issue  
there is an  
other  
side

side

side

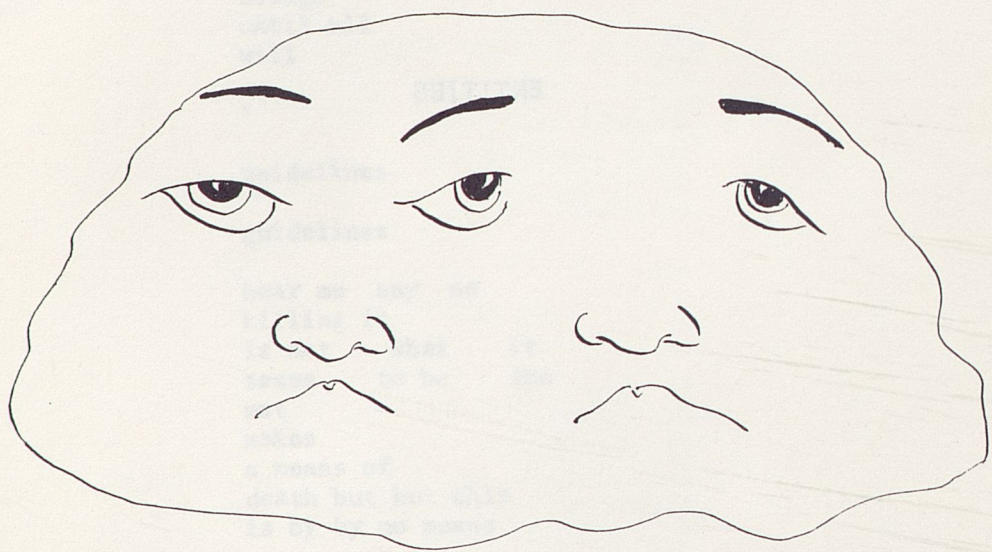
side

side

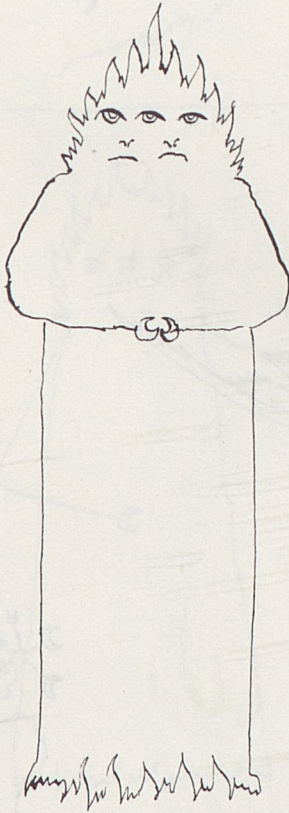
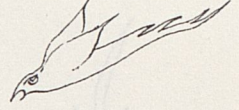
## ENTITIES

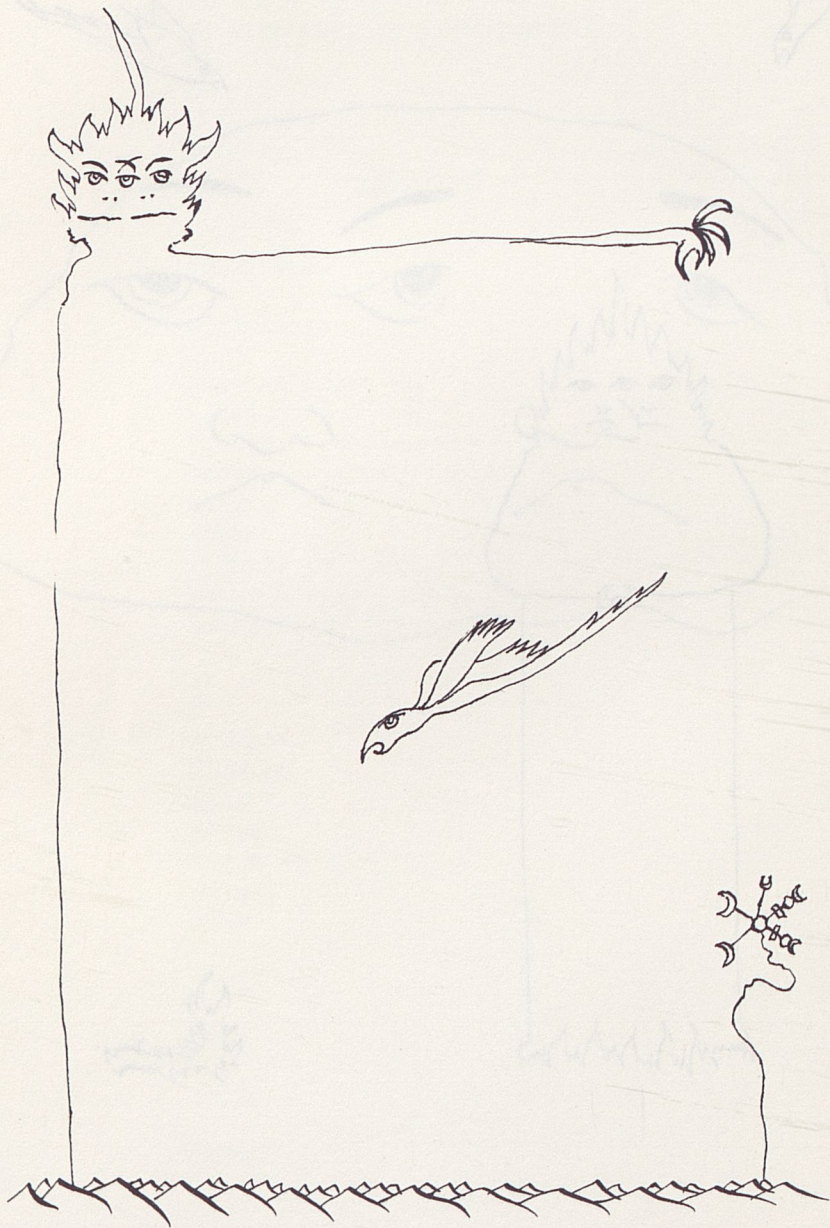
The dog  
relax at  
his own  
tail the cat  
litter  
against morning

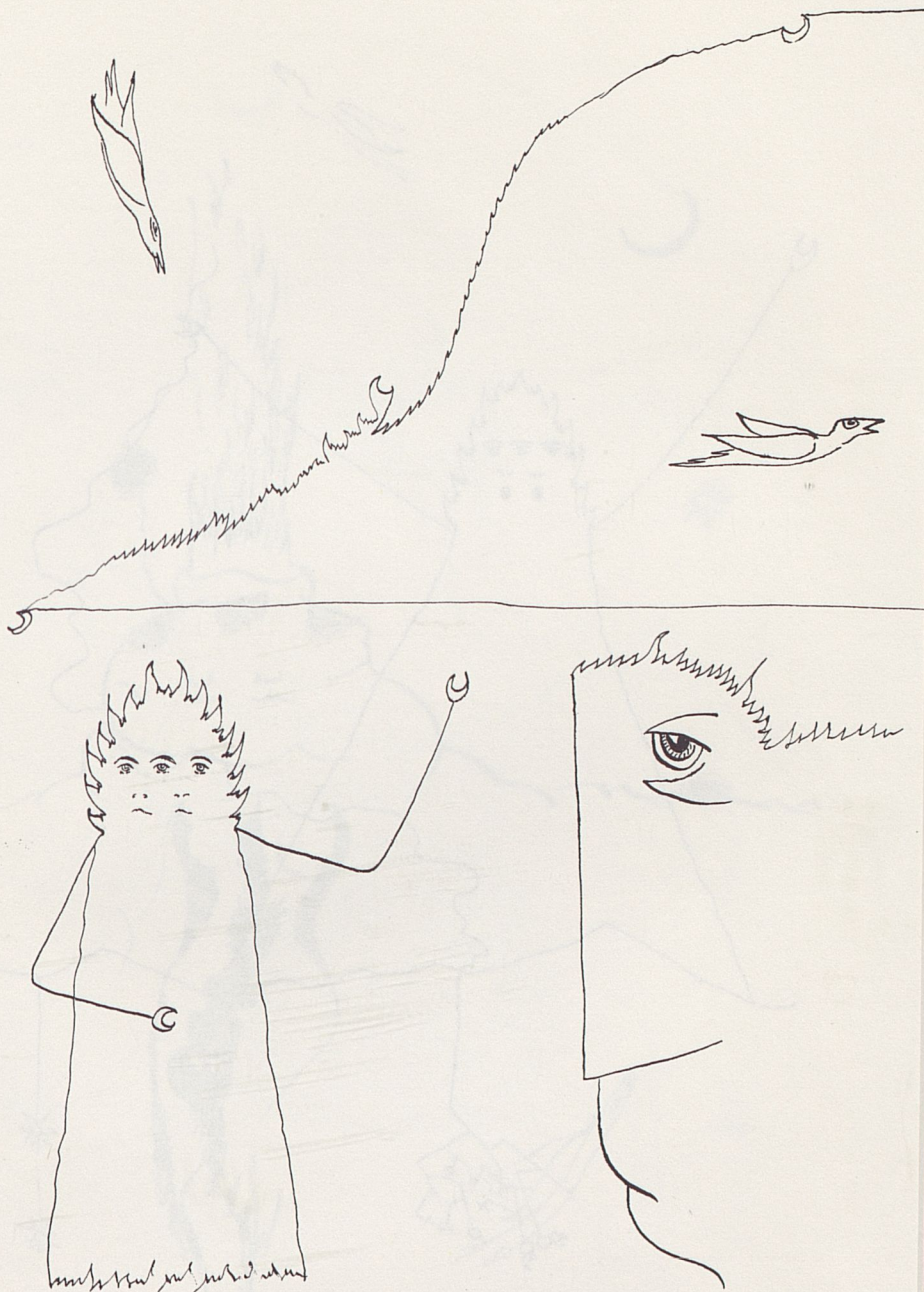
I sit straight up to hear what  
has this to do  
do with ending, ending with  
all  
things

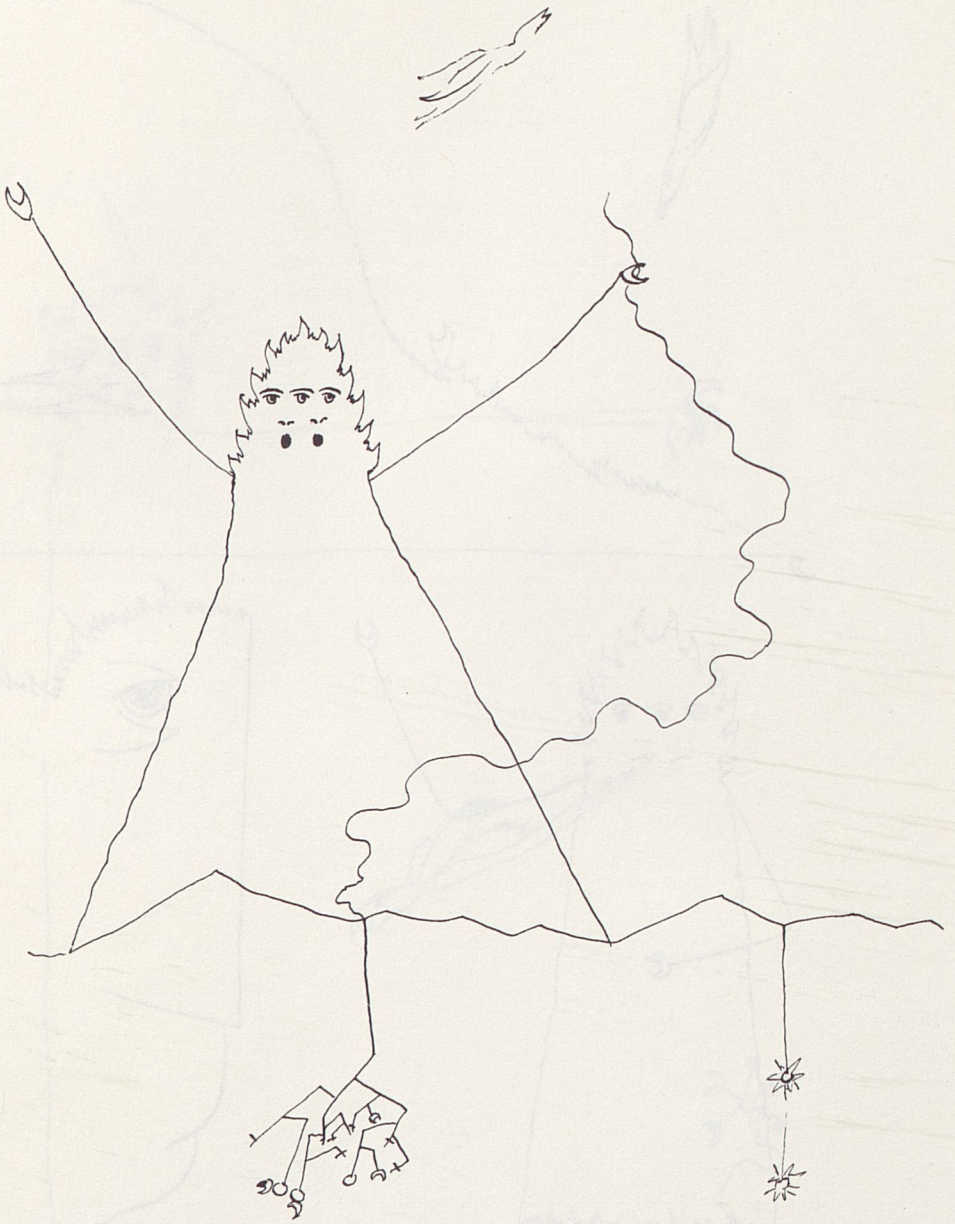


I don't  
find on  
this  
low  
there is an  
eyes  
side  
side  
side  
side  
side  
side



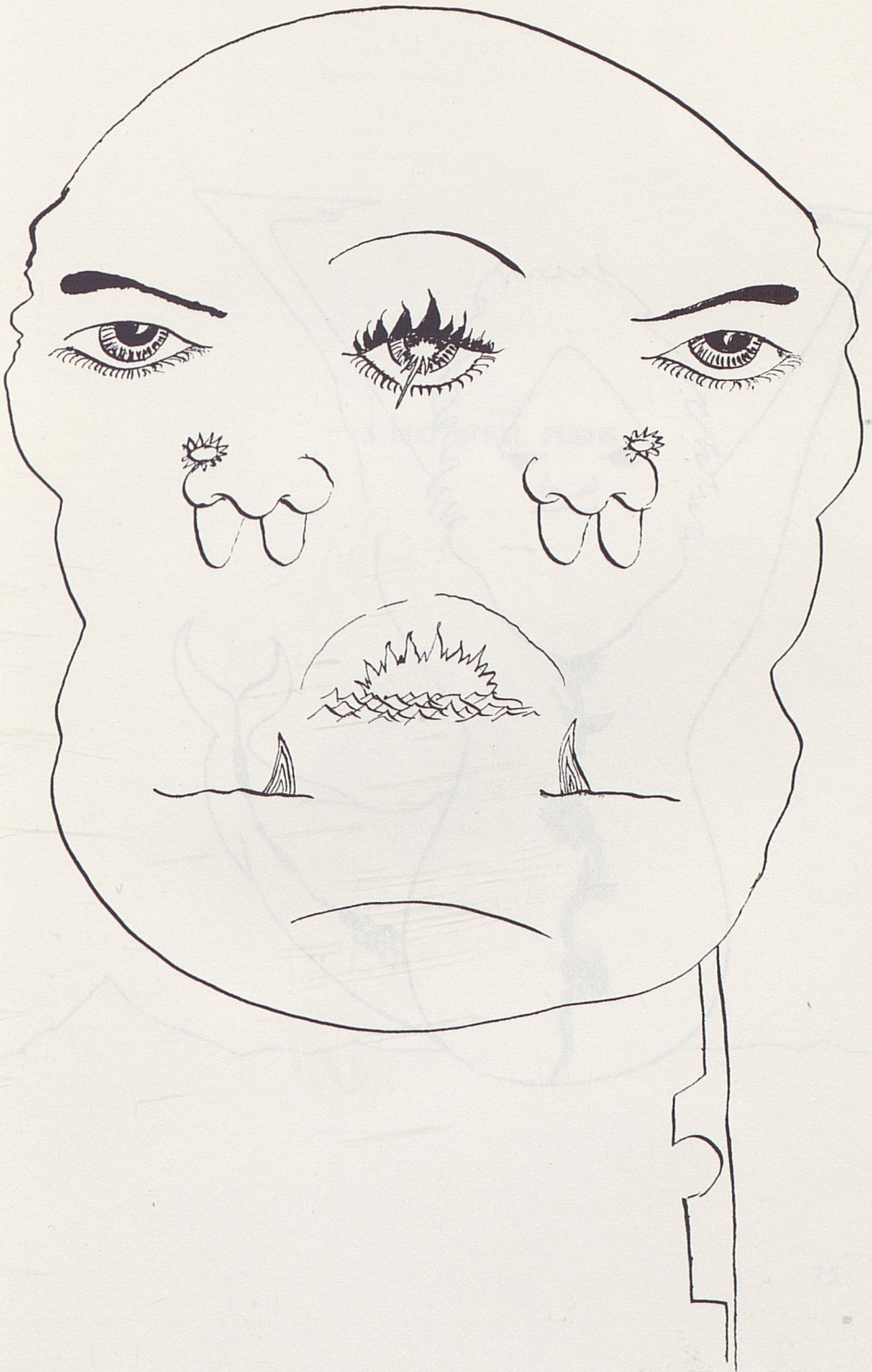


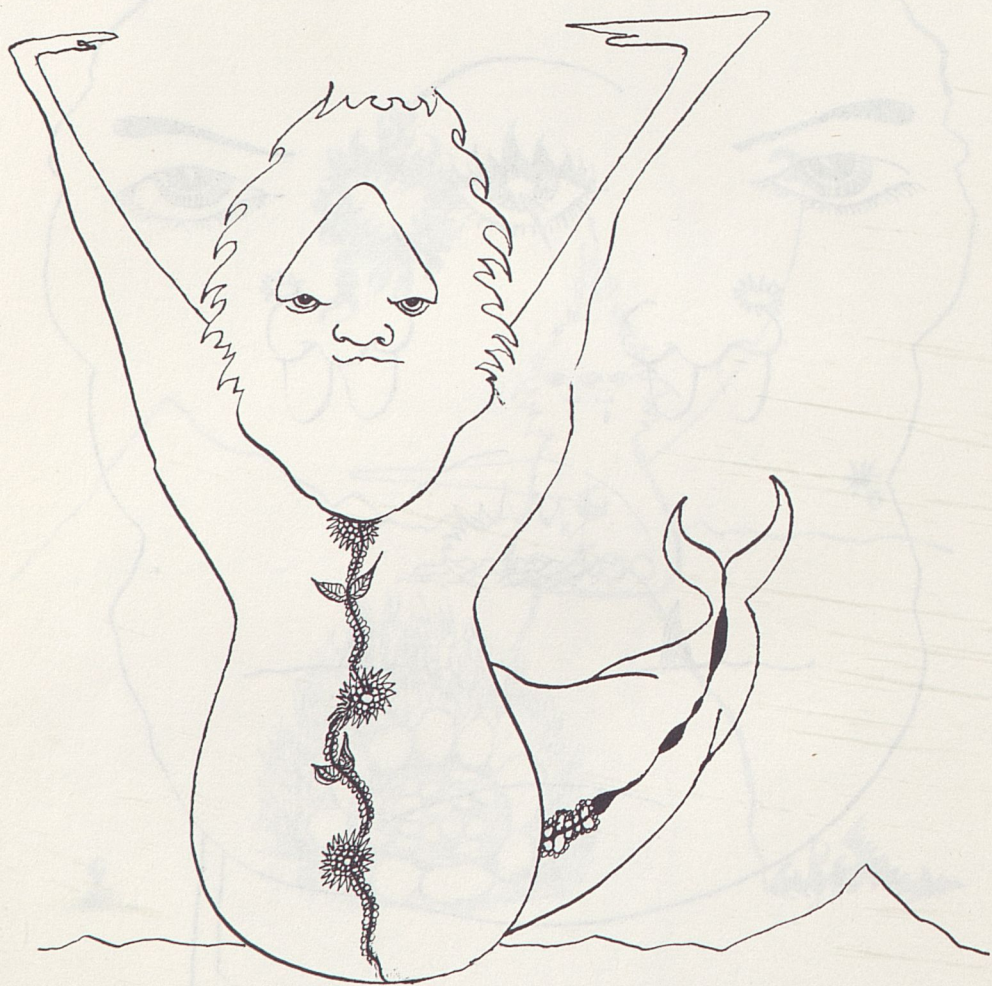




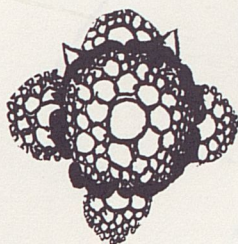








3 DOCTRINAL POEMS



Two ways  
always  
to think about  
the organs:

Wonder at how they  
hold together

Panic at how they  
surely  
come apart.

Of earth  
likewise  
no otherwise  
than to be here  
briefly

what if you're a flower  
among construction projects  
do you

re-order  
what order  
you think you've  
got  
to dodge the asphalt  
or

I'm no flower  
some  
master cactus  
some small  
aloe

There is no decay  
of body  
only  
life-activity  
resumed on lesser  
scale

(wakeful ego talking

but I am  
prior  
even to  
my ignorance  
(no comfort

the body  
will live  
as long as it can  
then

ancient relapse

\*

rain later  
run down  
outside

I must exhaust myself

as if I were all outside

a man can push so hard  
and must  
until there is no more  
need of doing this

what is your goal  
she said

proverbial:

to unpeel  
skin after skin  
until a blossom  
until it burn itself

when will a woman

\*

sit  
sit  
husk  
you lose control  
form is rigid  
motion  
love is sex  
thought in time  
transgress the social  
make it new on  
all planes  
that means  
suit yourself

out

there is a small  
change  
nothing really  
noticeable  
leg pains  
turn out to be bearable  
the discipline  
is not what it was  
believed  
to be  
before

the mess of social life  
the missed significance  
or holding off from it  
you are as mad as you look

I'm ok  
except with people

when  
at last  
I had said in myself yes  
I will begin  
love starts slow  
under summer  
railway bridge

but that's where you live  
she said

the discipline

was not to be believed

nothing turns out

I was not too slow

\*

and then  
to give it over  
this

has always  
been my  
thought of it  
to get it on  
and done  
then

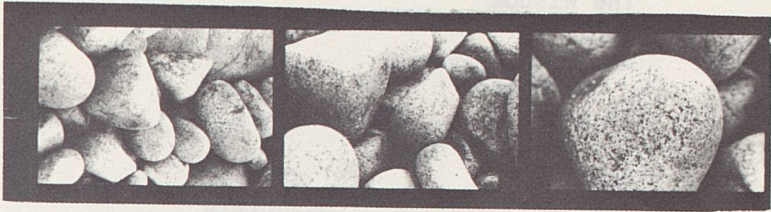
even now I keep up the practice of watching it  
fall away

have  
no possession  
of her  
attributes her  
skinny walk down  
the road  
make yourself  
on your own time  
momentary  
completion  
is all I  
think to  
come to  
home  
is not so  
mutually  
derived

\*

Our Lady's Way

The Girdle of the Sky



From the...  
We have not...  
found out...  
the best...  
is as far...  
to the west...  
it is not...  
year...  
which...



The wisdom  
will  
be saved

that  
is assured  
or

what  
of it

was  
wisdom  
will not  
need  
salvation

it happens again  
new  
or it is not  
wisdom

after the fact

what will be re-  
membered  
is not now  
to be  
discerned  
now  
to continue  
a process  
already long  
begun:

resistance.

Not  
but  
as the mind  
tends  
its advantage

turn  
with it  
the slow stars  
yet  
are not  
dislodged  
from infallible mansion

we have not  
found out

the bear  
is as far  
to the north  
as none but a  
bear  
could be

the three  
Housatonic  
hunters  
chase him

pile of coins  
for blood

who lives who  
dies

    goes  
over

    stays  
back in home  
ground

    luxury  
he calls it  
our wish to secure  
homeground

an animal  
as if whose hands  
ever secure a  
future for it

a vegetable mass  
at a sea floor  
making from the sea its  
self by such  
selection

to watch  
    not  
what the mind knows  
but the act of seizure  
by such hands for it

\*

there is no  
social  
history  
of it

    only  
the possibility  
time affords

the work of a few men un-  
known to each other  
lifting the mountain

with the majestic  
certainty  
of an elephant's walk  
wherever he  
does find himself

the fragile  
leafage  
parted

2

outside  
    all  
    things  
        are  
contemporaneous  
    the meaning of my life, this  
    first  
        must  
        be blown apart  
                    reduced  
    to elemental  
time and fire  
            so close  
    a watch  
        kept  
            that  
    no story of it be  
believed  
    if formed  
        to think  
is but to move an anxious hand

flood rains

\*

stopt reach

\*

after many centuries a  
look about the  
foreground

\*

I write myself not  
out of some  
self-adulation but  
because I  
occupy the  
foreground

\*

spring into shimmering trees

\*

or any space there is, it  
spreads  
thence

\*

and when I seem  
to denigrate the intellect

\*

Diana's pool  
swelling rocky banks

\*

the divers from the tops of stones and trees  
risking the autumn shallows

I tear at the intervals

the narrowing furrows

4

the damage  
done  
is not  
the measure

the river  
floods  
the ponds  
swamp the grasses

\*

wake up, drugged  
spirit, matter  
and time  
in which you lodge

watch what  
forces  
are given you for  
deflection

delicate  
white  
parts

\*

where  
does the root  
begin

is  
this a burgeoning

I have only to tell what  
my body learns

its  
liquid colors  
underparts  
of thought  
let

thought  
begin

white light  
to meet  
red heat:

the play of womanly energy's endless instructing

THE CUMULUS



THE CUMULUS

1

rock seed

a frog on the left bole

a fish in the cord

a bird on the little white beach stones

These stones I found on  
Long Island.  
Other stones, I found in Monterey  
on the beach  
last January.

Robert Alpert  
and James Polachek  
and myself  
were walking there.

And a postcard  
on a gift box  
of an ornamental bird.

I pick it up.

It boasts a golden belly and a gold throat.

Lulla Adler gave me the box.

Its cover is inlaid mandala mother of pearl.

Another box is hidden among the coinage  
covered with scatter of parsley leaves.

Smaller. Green. A personal  
patch of gaberdine  
has been inside it now for more than a decade.

Elk horns are on the milk stool.  
And a double globe of crystal  
is next to the elk horns.  
And next to the milk stool  
I have built a kind of altar.

If it seems I have little to do but move ideas:  
a problematic of being there.

Behind but wider than  
the nest of things  
I hatch inside my room.

And inward of but yet not wider than  
Eye-buzz.

And with me  
and more solid still  
the making process that ends in solid things.

High trees  
at the foot of the city.

Arbitrarily scattered cotyledons.

An azure stone upon the hat-pin altar piece  
a present from Bialy.

Clear. Mystery. Pleasure. Celestial. Solid. Small.

All

there is.

All is all there is.

From the mouth of the frog  
on the left bole

from the spill of the basket-horn all  
evidence of plenty.

Each of the many stones as  
All there is.

The wheel of the sun  
on the part of the loom.

The wooden blocks  
are All there is.

The little plastic vessels  
All there is.

The seed  
was planted  
almost  
now  
two years ago.

I was living in the pink house.

No. The seed was planted  
years before that, even.

When I was living in the pink house  
on a rainy day in what must have been October  
in Gloucester, or Lanesville, Cape Ann,  
thinking of my part of the pink house at Storrs

I knew about the terminal moraine

and wanted to possess in my house  
such a stone as I had seen  
spilled in all possible variety of sizes  
often at Pigeon Cove.

Georger Butterick suggested the term Cumulus for it.

And that was when we were reading at Trinity  
and I read a group of my poems  
entitled  
Buzz Saws.

That stone you could call the seed

but that's not right because  
the space in which the cumulus has gathered  
had other precedent

and also the thinking and grounding  
that founded the stone

began with a poem Jonathan Greene showed me many  
years ago.

It was part, I think, of something Paul Klee wrote  
There is only one true thing.

In the Self

a small

stone.

I remember my own  
act of registry.

So you would not call it the seed.

And Olson  
said

in I think his Berkeley lecture  
That the earth is just a big stone  
and he of course had seen the glacial deposits  
and the solid beach of stones at Pigeon Cove.

This is one of the things I thought about  
 this fact of there being so many  
 heavy stones  
 at Pigeon Cove  
 one day when my brother  
 Tony came to visit me  
 and I was living in Gloucester  
 near Eastern Point  
 that summer

and had come upon a terrible thing  
 in seeing gelatinous creatures  
 of the inlet  
 that they would survive if the sun did not  
 dry up the little pool  
 in which they conducted their struggle  
 before the next tide

and that the gulls always  
 when they sat in the afternoon  
 on Crane's Beach  
 or at Good Harbor Beach  
 seemed to be facing landward

I thought there is something  
 that wants to last a very long time

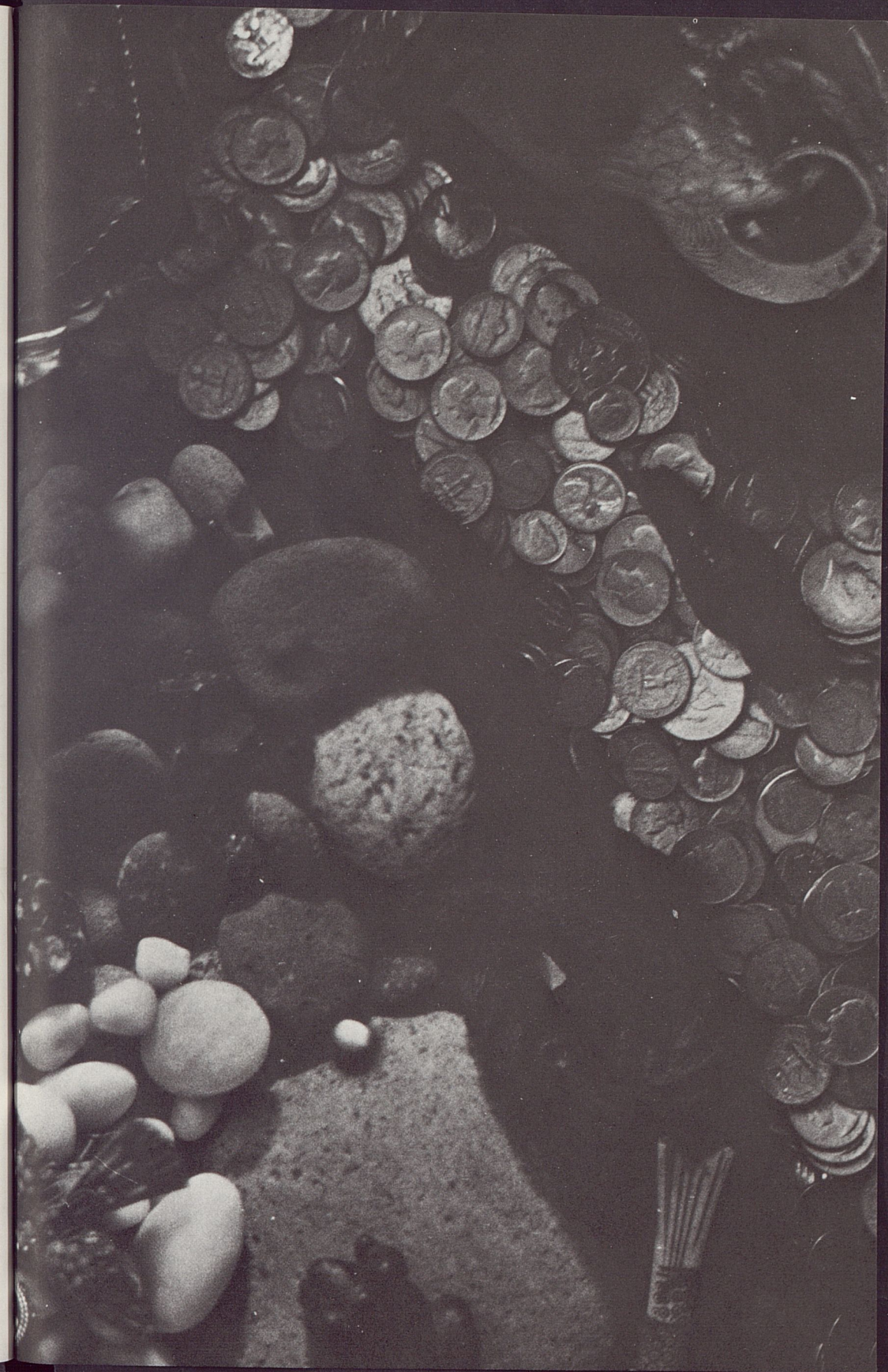
or to cast itself in such a process  
 at least in part  
 that it should last

and that these stones were in part  
 the success of such a process

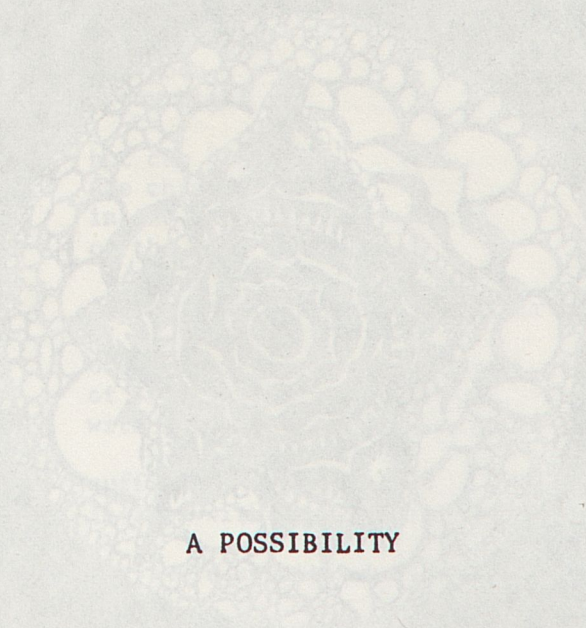
and that we as persons were of a like success

and I had already written at that time  
 though thinking to mean something different by it

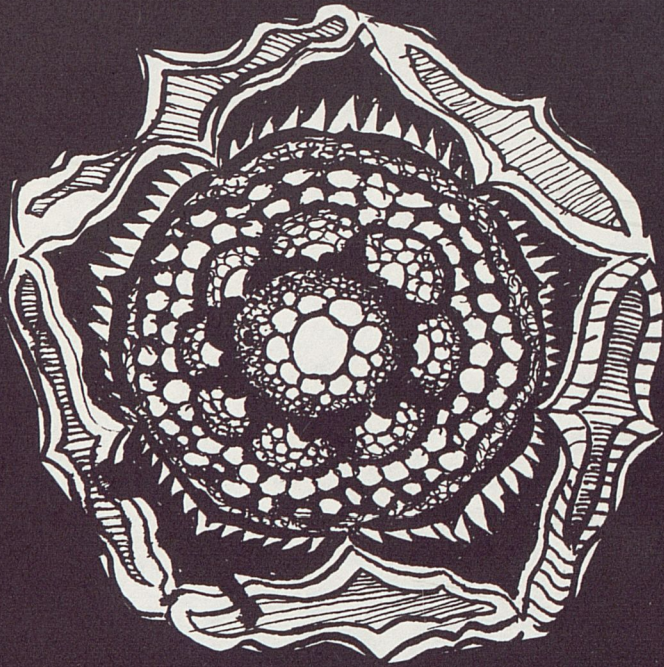
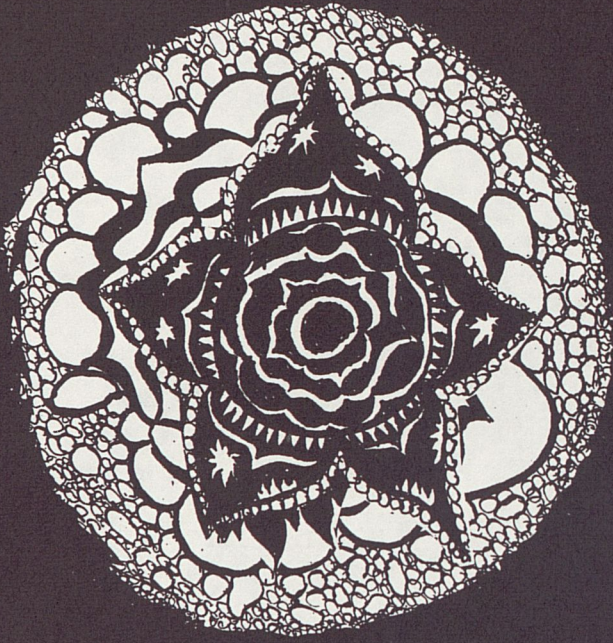
we may be  
 that stone







A POSSIBILITY



you can watch  
the moon  
every night

but can you watch  
the changes  
in the deity  
of the moon

do the greatest poets get their powers from pacts

or do they gain these powers  
of breaking pacts  
with infinite circumspection

sufficient earth  
in love with powers of air

are there spirits who use poets

all the beauty men ever believed  
is perhaps the power  
of what they are

and all the terror that men do

come from the pacts  
other men make with them

perhaps in secreted deeps of self

whole communities  
quite possibly  
serve

energies  
emergent  
here and there

this people facets its city thus

their architectonics

their modes of time

the face that such a deity wears upon them

for some cause it has

the sibyl  
over the fault

keeping the magnetized apparatus thus  
these shapes are so only

and certain old brain  
possibilities  
are not otherwise active than  
by animal sacrifice

what will you do  
if the deity prove to inhabit  
the persons of  
your most remote  
bad dreams

or there is something working  
in your own desire  
clear to you not

isn't it true that to  
be a  
man is  
more than this

and isn't it  
among the truths  
not known  
if  
someone says he knows  
it shows who  
he is

how a man is  
more than this

noble spirit

rise  
in the inner courts  
or nowhere

I don't want to have to see you on T.V.

pleased to greet you

this man's magic will not  
easily  
work for you

no one man can  
take upon  
himself another's will

and it is not a good thing for any man  
so to mistrust himself

though there are those who counterwork  
the consequent of  
such working

their offices  
can be purchased

their purchase  
can be used

if you have made a pact

and wish to break it

and the gangs in your aura are loud

The demon is not but metaphorically so  
though  
operant upon such clutches of homology  
as our metaphors  
are  
they  
ride the storms of men  
we  
see them  
in the lives of our friends as  
they  
in turn  
perceive them  
in our lives  
or  
more fearfully  
in their own

others may go  
not wakefully  
impercipient  
of the larger  
strides their own steps move among  
taking  
the dailiness  
as needful  
of no more regard

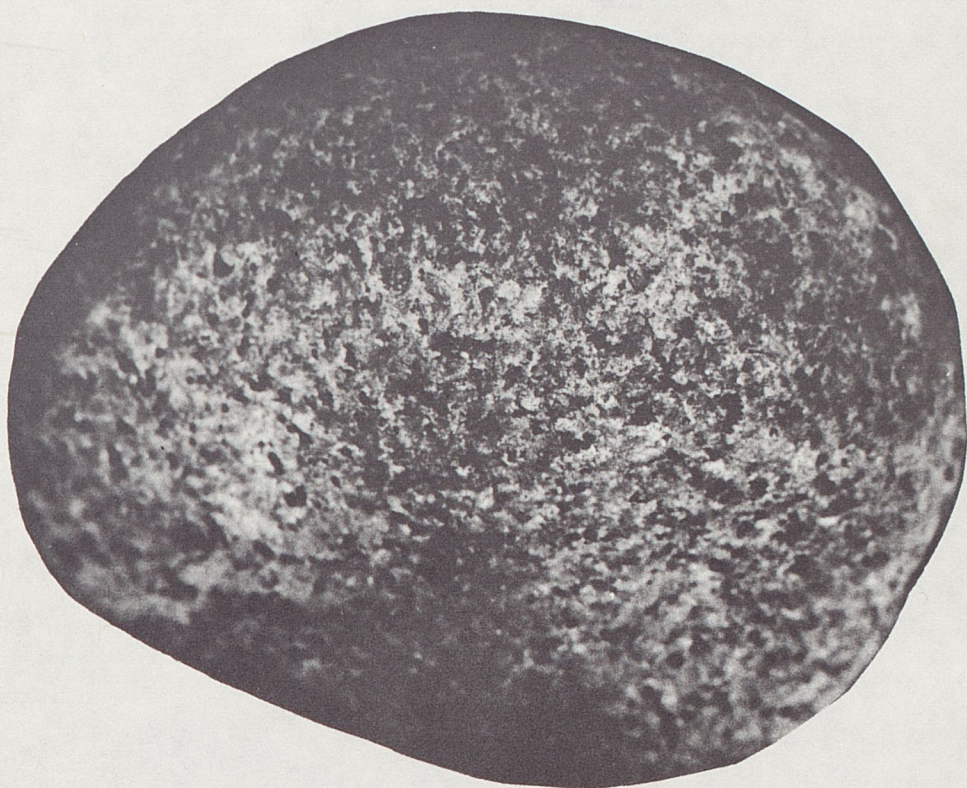
even what pass as  
the best of men may  
live thus humbled  
by others'  
purposes

and those most conversant  
in these matters  
all the more  
are used

who  
speaks in me

that I am only myself  
participated by my own possession

I ride a fruited cloud



the danger  
only our occasion  
and the desire  
that pulls the eye  
along the page  
faster  
to get to the part  
where the ally is less  
than we are  
or where the listener  
penetrates the vault  
and there is a goddess  
painted on the bottom of  
sarcophagi  
remembering that to die  
sings in every fear  
there is no monstrum  
more than this



*Witch-Hazel* by Charles Stein  
[Poems: 1967-1971]

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