

OXHERDING POEM

*Ten-pai-nam-k'a, twenty-first of the
twenty-five disciples of Padmasambhava,
tamed wild yaks of the northern desert.*

It is horned.
It moves in snows
and rocks. It
does not run.

By the tail, by
its fringe of hair,
you can't take it.
It is horned.

Ring a bell. The
sound will follow
in snows, over
rocks. Ding ding.

To tame it: not
to catch it. They
come to the bell.
Have a handful

of salt. Its tongue
is very black. It
will take salt, it
also is hungry.

They come. Ding.
The sun shines
six hours a day.
It is horned.

WAITING FOR THE HURRICANE

this window looks
straight out of town
some headlands crumbling
into high seas

if it comes it will come
around these cliffs

and onto this street
perfectly still
old men
sitting in the dark their shirts open
their hollow chests covered with grass
the bar is still open
many blue lights
vermilion sign offering that
we may drink

after the tornados of needles I tried
to remember everything I knew about her
why she stood in the rain looking
in at me through the same window
why the window framed big bugs
getting in out of the drizzle and she
swats them with her very cold hands

and go in and come out and
go on drinking and
we are sharing a window we are
growing into the window we are said
to be united in the bumbling insect
its feet are also moving and drink
coming into the rain
and a god will come to smell the hairy grass
and stitch us together
a perfectly empty blue sky

if it comes it will come like a bat
upside down and thinking it's fast asleep.

MEASURE THOSE DISTANCES

Of this night

Here and now she becomes alive
a roar of things out on the streets
for the first time covered with skin
moving for the first time with the train of waters
here this body is me
and this is why corners are bent and
this is the tunnel of her violent approaches
being out in the open without terror
being out in the parklands hunting for meat
being atlantis unresurrected and carelessly swimming
being navies and heavily-armed convoys
being decked out with banners being
sudden in an animal, being dark
being stone steps being broken on the
steps being thirsty and savage on the steps
being steps and an entrance to a living house
to be rain and twisting animal and a full skin
long hair hands trembling legs peaceful in bed
her madwoman's hair and the air it floats on.

The church

stood deep in woods.
There were thorns
at its side and the ground
around it was broken,

very loamy, very brown.
No one to be there, say
mass there, rest there,
piss against its wall for

a hundred years. It was
the first church in these
mountains and wasps
lived in the caves.

It was not a good place
to be at. The old paint
was still white; trucks
chugged along under the hill.

The boat

floated in the cove
her cat in it
keeping out of the
shipped water

she sat up to her
ankles in slosh
and dreamed over at
Pennsylvania

where there are pines
and wildcats and
barns caved in on
empty mangers empty

troughs and she said
what is that star?
pointing to a single
light a farmhouse

way up the same hill
my father one year saw
a white enormous
silent owl nesting on.

Shohola

River bluff the smell of G.L.F.
grain elevators
leaking next to the railroad
twinheaded janus diesels
up the river down the river

where carriages ran
vacationers from the station up
to German Hill

to a view of Greeley
the practical and poetic commonwealth
the casino

open all night
Rolling Rocks the beer in green bottles
a plaque to Greeley
clashing rocks
the wildcat stirring from her bed
the animals of this night
awakened from her sweet sleep
the moon in her claws

a view of Greeley, Hawley behind the mountains
a road up German Hill
the new farm no silo
chicken and chickenfeed
diesels howling all night

the stone house up there
the grey barn
red bull of the woods
grey barn when in a snow after harvest
the damned silo blew up

In the room

To smell the hair of the Buddha
oiled back over a head
filled with another country
stumble in the smell of peaches and sweat
because that is real
and if there is anything real it is that

and lost his eyebrows
bending over the chimneys of lamps
waiting puffing smelling
extinction and the sudden darkness

and it is far from enough
to smell the Buddha's buttery hair
and to ride in his rough flatbottomed boat
past anyplace imaginable
or to stick up his image saying
there that is the way

The land

Plainly
by the look of those leaves
the rich red inner bark
swelling in the cedar it is
time for a beginning

Of a woman:
taken out of childbed
to walk under the hill, leaving
a lingring Image of her substituted Bodie
in her Roome, which Resemblance
decay'd, dy'd and was bur'd.

Where the olachen, the candlefish
was taken in vast numbers, dried out,
so rich in oil a wick passed through it
burned down slowly the length of its body
one whole night

where the deadfall leaps down on the deer

where the church is hidden in newgrown forests
and you can see the white of it through the trees

where the gravel of gas-stations spreads out in sunlight
and the driver leans out of the shadow and cries *fill her up*

where the pilot, the vessel at sea,
climbs down into his launch and rides
back to the shore never looking behind him

where the stream pools out into meadows
where a rope bridge swings over it where the
shadow of the bridge swings on the shallow water
where the darning needle hums over the sedge