

29 Visionary HYMNS

29 Visionary HYMNS

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#1

Sal bright and early shrugged off sleep and tucked  
his rations into him and stretched & buckt  
and walked out in the world.  
A friend told him once,  
"Sal, war is not the worst we have *done*, not  
by a long, slow, awkward fuck,  
  
and we got to get *on*." So Dean & I  
we packed & went.  
This is a testament  
to fame & love & songs & dreams wrecked,  
which we not owned or earned, but because we asked  
were granted  
  
from the bones & books of them who bled them.  
We gathered in abundance sundry leaves  
and read them -  
and when the lights of the world grew dim  
and we could not read, we raised our voices, up  
from their blues, to HYMNS -

#2

Well, Dean - wake up! - this is to weep: what we done  
(the after-after generation) to  
be here, hung  
up high & heavy on a OldWar-ColdWar jib?  
John left, and left his baby Henry (one  
of two

& some who stayed behind) and Sylvia  
went, too, and Ellison and Malamud  
are gone,  
and Allen howled himself to sleep, and Jack,  
tho sick, was not too sick to drink - and you  
and I are swift & long

dropped on the twenty-*first* century. Bones:  
-You is átomized. De hungry centry gon'  
an' dévoured yo' future wit'  
him heavy past. -Uh-uh, Sir Bones, there I think  
you're wrong. There's a voice awake & young  
& speaking Dean & we are it.

#3

In attempt to find history's pulse - exact  
from death to advance the father mother - figure  
born from these beat veins  
(cold and red and black and blue tracks).  
Still raised white marks don't stay the trigger  
fingered daily in the dark.

Tell Mr. Bones to drop that gun  
"Point away for that cog does not know its own worth!"  
So I figured, yessir  
But whyze you afraid o that little ol' bomb  
(when our other advances have not gone so wrong)  
please simply and hush.

Quiet you sin, we've seen it and done. It's  
stitch-o-matic that tattered fabric  
staunch that gaping red  
And in its place it's you, essss  
Us you A-hole, commit, purchase away  
that nervous tic and speak

#4

With memory Sal is fed up. There are things  
he knows unsavory, even wicked - worse,  
of which he not speaks,  
seeing no reason to upset the sway & swing  
of life, friends, which has too much to remember  
already. In the streets

of Hiroshima, for instance, there is  
everyday something. Dean & he were there  
and know  
that suffering and history make their own sense,  
or version of it. Improbable things occurred.  
Even distant and obscure Never

managed to make a scene, one more  
scar to cut & package & export, mon amor,  
for which reason Sal hushes certain scenes  
of his own up, and even Dean  
don't know how sick Sal is of them memories  
and of this long losing war.

#5

Gave whit with your pen, Sir Ralph, sir mired mouth,  
seemserved that sealed letter sent, or did he  
sal  
you agree, that youngbloods now can read his sep'rated  
voice, and self? Age yellows visible ink (some think) but  
not egg on the face

(not a slap at any race) -- Jack, your secretive Chinamen  
built the railroads, long ago - but humility will always be  
the root of humiliation  
In the fifties, unc o i led firehoses shaved off black skin,  
but your man, feared (earmuffs, Bones) white dames  
with ropes.

Maybe with cause, but what would an okie know,  
parents west, you flew east to the city's sad belows  
Bird Parker  
Must we really bury him?  
After war, before peace, grave  
history, unmarked ignored

#6

Unzipping from the lip down him lovely body,  
spilled Trueblood him black guts, so reeking & bloody  
& só bláck Never  
in her sickness did Plath  
suffer darkness as utter or scribe so  
absolute an adjective as the shadow

of that act, that *act* -  
I ask you, Bones: when in the shattered & shocked  
catalogue of ways & whys he came upon  
him self in negative,  
did a tick of madness go off like a bomb  
& whistle & scream in the echos of him hungry mind?

In the dream I have I am scared and lonely. I am old, too.  
My hair is white and trimmed neatly back. I am  
wearing bright white shoes  
with black trim. I'm terrified. I can't see too clearly,  
but I think what I'm staring at is you, Bones. Bones,  
--Dat ain't mé, son - das yóu.

# 7

Yes! Yes! Peelit Eat its hart - become its rhind  
You need no bop master, no pastor blind -  
ride improvised reality.  
Dain't shuffle round  
yelling go cat blow leave that to Dean  
(Mistah you gonna fail this test - don't blame me)

I can't fail (he says) I never gót my degree.  
As hungry as I am - my education  
is in freedom  
taught over frequencies too low to hear  
but your dream ear might (in light's  
absence)

hear that what isn't said, but felt - an absence  
of opportunity in opportunity's name. Instead  
spend that money  
you saved - on black dresses, same  
as the Rose of the funeral she cut before. Funny,  
already dead.

# 8

Henry, reverent the morning after, rose  
and read the news and took in hand the pillar of his worth  
and made it proof.

He etched in tender verse  
the shape of her - Henry took off her clothes  
again, and showed. The ocean was not moved

by her nakedness, nor were the shops affected, and the Congress  
took no notice, and neither did Henry's father -  
but Henry knew. It was enough for once.  
He felt she had slipped, bare & broken, from that long dress  
of hers into his grave, almost by accident.  
But Henry could not be bothered

when the obituary grew speculate -  
ovens, in general, do not operate  
themselves.

He, however, had been instituted once and twice  
& more - enough to tell the accident is Life's,  
not Death's, to die in hell.

# 9

Sylvia once dreamt a real pamphlet 'bout the dangers  
of wearing neckties near machinery. Occupational  
hazards bull.

Moments before being ground into recyclable  
sob stories - the cartoon man sweats  
cartoon quotes.

He is mostly remembered for the  
odious smell lines his messd pants  
wrote

Whose fault? His!, dressing so - thank modern Dr.  
for his new home - Seven Iron Lung Ave. its  
For His Own Good -

A familiar phrase - give it up if you've heard it  
(lopped prefrontals land onstage) - Sylvia has, Henry  
too & the Jew

Give it up! Ovens in general, do  
not repair themselves. They are  
serviced.

# 10

*Op. posth. 11*

Hail Henry who loved & whom we lost. Say him an  
Our Father (who art in thy sadness stricken).  
Lay him in the earth.  
Say over him some good words --Well, sah, him  
dat take *poison* mus' *sicken*.  
Das how it *is*. --O! Bones, but he was worth

a world of alchemists, whom only his own  
splendor could not save!  
& misery & despair & disgust & woe  
converted in Henry's pages' crucible,  
but in his heart stayed concentrated  
better articulated otherwise unchanged.

And Dean one morning said to me, in the wake  
of Henry, "The cross over that man's heart, Sal, marks  
the spot the place  
where the world birthed & killed & laid  
a perfect and perfectly infernal mind  
and confusion finally made its masterpiece.

# 11

*Op. posth. 12*

In all the lands under the sun,  
Henry mostly dreamed of milk  
and sweet buns.  
But still he uptook  
his cat-o-nines, his prodigious hair shirt,  
and wrote his books.

Having no dull pencil - or inkless pen,  
knowing none could put a life back together again -  
sat on the fence.  
For any barker's sake, he'd dance.  
Or for the memory of a tender fuck -  
seventeen line romance.

- But you a missed pearly dawns & teeth & gates,  
Mistah poet man. Got forgot for graves?  
- They give me aches  
(he told me once). Content to inhabit autumn's  
body - nowhere but down to go  
from the bottom.

# 12

Huffy Henry - breathless so from chasing  
himself across the page. Life makes a long  
journey tasting  
of cigarettes - stained whiskers and long  
misery. Heir of a gator & shotgun death,  
so long agone.

Duffy, Leo - soilfull so, from rolling  
himself in filth - claims a long  
role (among other things),  
in staining the future. He brought along  
pre-partum cracks in a new era  
but failed to break (or shave).

Levin. Just, Levin. No I'm not a-  
I'm running too! No, Yes!...err...  
Where I failed as a teacher?  
Along the sylvan path - No! I mean yes, sir...  
Who I remind you of? Running from the  
past? Maybe I oughta shave my beard.

# 13

Leo Duffy, tarred & turkey-feathered, fled  
trampling through panic dreams conceived in the folds  
of Levin's guilty & sleeping & terrible head.  
Wherefore Levin asked questions, which he should not have,  
like, "Who?" and "What?" and "Why?" and received instead  
of answers quarters and halves

of explanatory fuck-offs. Which did not mean  
there was on the subject nothing to be said,  
but in the throats  
of them folk unpleasant thoughts stuck stubbornly,  
or else were surgically had out. Duffy's dead  
ghost was evoked

in warning, pal, but tar & feather obscure  
& full of fear. Rumors rose. Someone said  
he had once been seen after shaving and cutting  
himself, and underneath (I swear) he was all over Red.  
Levin looked in the mirror and was shy and unsure  
and thought, I guess I ought to cultivate my beard.



# 14

"Excuse me bub...do you belong here?"  
"Me? I mean, I'm Levin. I'm off along, sir."  
Perennial spy, you  
sly dog, you. Get so secret? Turn  
so shy? I'm sure I don't  
know why.

Forgive yourself your trespasses,  
idle Christian - come in from the Cold  
(if you will).  
Put on your Groucho face, stow those spyglasses.  
You already covet your enemy's wife - try and love him.  
Surely Leamas did.

True, he realized it not, lapped up that  
stuff - was sicked on instead. Turned on his heel.  
Frozen rat, spinning his wheel.  
Containment agent zero - weight yourself for our race.  
German expert's death. Don't provoke that cat  
if you can't run the race.

# 15

*August 13, 1961*

Walled out, drinking, LeCarré gave up on grace,  
bought a bottle, a tape of ink and went  
to work, liver and fingers,  
lips and quivering heart and stunned gut, to type  
a pulpy, palpable indictment of his foul & malingering  
race.

Wrote he furiously, and finished reasonable quick,  
and with it  
the race was some pleased, more than most.  
In later years he claimed success never  
again came with quite the same kick,  
tho a host

of novels followed,  
and good ones, too. All firsts are untouchable after, and this  
particularly, it being the truest, bitterest  
bile ever coughed & vomited out of his guts.  
Sal was appalled. Nudes he likes, but not such naked lunches.  
Bones, --You fo'get, Sál, how eagerly you lapped it up.

# 16

--Tell me one more before bed, Bill.  
--But I am dying.  
--A story will maybe make  
the passing easier.  
I can't get to sleep without my pills  
anymore, Bill. --It's not even worth trying.

I remember, long ago - I must have been seven,  
roughly - I liked Oh-Boy Gum.  
That's how it starts, you know.  
Used to chew that stuff  
till my cheeks glowed,  
and, boy, that was heaven.

--Old Bull, heaven is less near than my past  
or the corner druggist, where I am no longer welcome.  
I cannot now remember when I came  
here, but everyday I stay another day, while hell comes  
dripping through my veins  
like a slow leak from a cold tap.

# 17

*Personal Poem*

Sal did not smoke Gauloises, nor Picayunes,  
nor anything - he didn't even drink,  
and in general his solemn & square  
personality was tolerated only by some few,  
like Dean, who does smoke, drinks, & thinks  
Sal interesting, fewer those similarly impaired,

& also Allie, who's just glad to know  
a heart as sweet as hers. Sal thinks that Frank  
would like him too, although he can't be sure,  
Frank being gone. But Frank was on his own,  
like Sal, quiet & high, & soberer than most,  
& wrote because he liked it, not to hurt,

& might have lived forever, had not the beach  
made tragicomedy of him - which is  
of his accomplishments not least:  
among so many laughless tragedies -  
Billie's bad end, and Jack's - it's nice to see  
someone with guts enough to die comically.

# 18

Reading over, considering, Sal sipped & yakkt.  
He recognized his pome was horseshit verse,  
but was not sorry.  
Frank it did no wrong, who liked self-reflection,  
and would have gladly sat with Sal, & laughed and cursed  
at the black & starry

night that has been eating friends of ours  
so long.

Much better to be run down by a buggy  
after years of museums & lunches & poems &  
batting averages & love & Lady's songs -  
and not be painless - only over pain,

only apart from it, superior.

You were, Frank, who saw Miles clubbed 12 times  
& lost and lost & loved and loved the more,  
and sad and joyful-eyed watched from the wings,  
and never praised below your own inferior  
things.

# 19

*A Song for Gin*

For a gin, I might, maybe  
even a dance, too. The same dreams all  
get us through.  
Allen surely feels as strong as Bill, baby  
lust - nót Freudian - but biological.  
And lovely, too.

Felt like a cotton lover, ah-ah-choo!  
-Bones: I sneezes too, Dean. Must be dis flesh.  
-Can't be.  
It's vapors from my burning purity.  
Sibilant esses, repetitive catches. Ah-ah  
coo coo coo.

Thoughts given in solitude to one's self lack  
The centered excellence of withdrawal  
denied.  
Grant me a kind word & I'll fall  
back. I swear I'm much bigger than my one track  
mind.

# 20

*Another Song for Gin*

Holy! Holy! Heaven beckoned, hot  
& tropic sultry, and the steam off it  
did Sal somewhat affect.

He was not badly burned. Madness did not  
his mind destroy. And yet Sal must confess  
that even after days

he can remember, reading over, each  
inflection of the voice that sang it. He  
could have sworn  
that she (yes, yes) was speaking to him, had not  
she boldly stated Allen wrote it, that the  
words were not her own.

Unthinkable - the voice *must* have been hers.  
Even Jessica thought the love, in the best of ways,  
unmasculine,  
which shows there's more to it. He's good with words,  
but the way you (shine together) said the piece  
surpasses him.

# 21

*Dog*

Of alleyways declared Sal himself king,  
and pontiff of a hydrant. In the street  
two cars passed.  
He knighted them discreetly with his pen.  
Swaggered in one ear Jack, --I had a slouch hat  
too, in the other --Thou art that,

Bodhisattva said. Sal was confused, (Bones too:  
What grace him have him stole, like dat hat.  
Buddha, who is you to let him keep it?  
Dis poem even don't belong to him)  
and split his skull in two - this half,  
Sal thought, will do; this will not do.

The alley darkened, was smaller and larger, & Sal wished  
he'd brought his dog out with him. That would be  
easier. He was worried someone would see  
him. O well. The sign was old and infirm & he was willing  
(Four More Years!) to risk (a good civilian) in killing  
it absurdity, & even death. He pissed

& passed

# 22

*Autzen Footbridge Blues*

From lesser heights, in sentimental mood,  
Sal lookt out at the dim  
Sangsara sun-duskt world. He hymned of Jack  
& joy & kicks & darkness, and dreamt of fame  
& love and felt the germ, & he askt  
Buddha Lord to pérfect him.

And Buddha said: --You will need company.  
Whereon Melissa, low & lovely, yakkt  
him foolish, & Babak (a perfect man!  
Already! No details!) put in his hand,  
& Amie (c r o c o d i l e !) couldn't be kept back,  
having her say early & often, & Dean

said, last of all, --Perfect? You take a lesson from me,  
Sal, you say the damn word right once, the one time  
someone is listening,  
and go on. It's in the timing, pal, & we  
may be skilled, but at best we are seasonal.  
-Thank you for everything.

# 23

*A Battle Outside*

--Some sing along, eh Dean? How many times  
you think that song's been sung? --Well, twice tonight,  
Sal, what more  
can you ask? --Tell me Dean, how many wars  
you think that song's been sung for? --Maybe nine,  
maybe a dozen, might

be more, Sal, I don't know. --How many languages,  
you think? --I don't know, what's your point, Sal? --Well,-  
But Sal could not explain,  
exactly, it - except that he was grateful for  
two voices raised, remembering things have changed,  
and still are changing.

There's theft & love in it. Sal, too, thought Nick  
was quite magnificent. Some ladies' eyes,  
he noticed, sparkled, moved,  
wishing he would sometime sing for them. Sal sympathized:  
If he'd been she, he would have liked that too.  
As is, he wouldn't mind.

# 24

*Temple*

Sal on a hill slept, overlooking Springfield,  
sometimes - sat in the half-dark and wrote  
at 2, at 3 AM.  
Content, he let the world devise, & drifted.  
The weather cooled, & crisped when  
the rain lifted.

Two days running Sal saw, first thing, his breath  
fogging the morning, and that warmed him. He  
scraped the ice off windows  
and moved on.  
And these nights the lights beneath his little temple  
tell him he's home

wherever he is. Where he lives there are  
no eaves, no gold-leaf statues, only this -  
only every small thing -  
& the voice that put them in his head was *nó*t his,  
which is nice for once, he thinks, hearing the rain start  
on his thin roof & a car clank by outside.

# 25

*Water Shed*

The city is shed, the country is shed. Somewhere  
tide charts are being read, and the sea is rising &  
I know why. The day I heard the universe  
was dying of entropy I was elated. It was  
the closest I had ever felt to everything.  
Lovers are warm in their beds tonight, but not me.

The water that you shed would never  
fill a tub, a bucket. It wouldn't fill a glass,  
but my heart is thimble sized and overfloweth -  
with the things we said, with so many places, & your  
tears & our past. I myself have not cried in some years.  
It's not something I'm good at.

But if we could both drink where the roots of life are hid  
we'd still taste of each other. If we could walk the  
backward path, & make a chart of the ways  
we went and where they parted, it would be  
a map of America, of its Great Divide, a sketch of the  
forlorn Buddha, Christ's wounded side, & time's slow death.

# 26

*The Song Lady Sang*

The dead young men are rising from their graves,  
green sinewed. They are climbing up the bows  
of time. They hang there.

Bones: --Dem's strange fruit, sah. Let de past alone.

--I cannot, it will not leave me alone.

How can you bear

forgetting? --Well, dem boys is harder to kill  
if dey seem human. I can' 'ford to remember.

--You killed the young men, Bones? --What you mean *killed*,  
sah? I's still at de killin'.

--The soldiers, Bones? --Yassah. --The innocent civilians?

--Dem too. --The children, poets? Did you lynch Henry?

--Henry done fall heavy & ripe straight from de vine  
of histry & splash in ruin, & from der him grew.

--Then you didn't do it, Bones?

Bones: --I cut de cord & encouraged him seed.

--How could you, Bones?

--Sah, I followed yó lead.

# 27

*Praise For Sick Women*

Sal was sick too - though not his thighs, his hands  
were often bloodied, and his shins, by some  
strange sin  
of regularity (his own). Not that  
them two can be compared. He understands  
his blood

is not as valuable as Christ's  
or hers, what currency it had, pal, spent on sins  
his own  
and not his own. Sal's conscience reels, and spins,  
sick & sorry, at fault & not, his head.  
He's male and white

and what else he nót knows - and honestly  
them two ideas been fucked with much & much.  
Sal's kind will soon  
die. He's not, love, wise enough to sour at your sight.  
He did not mean to set you high up, and he is too  
afraid & not to reach & touch  
the Moon.

# 28

*Piute Creek*

Lindsey went camping, took Sal & the kids -  
all twenty-one of them (Satan thrown in -  
the ornery child).

Satan, --I like this, lady, can we stay?  
Sal, sorry, spoke, interceding for him,  
and wicked & wild

darkness began to spread: the fire, dim  
already, grew pale as Adam's flesh, and cold  
as Eve, cast out  
(whom recent evidence proves, I hear, African,  
which makes that first match mixed, & hell  
cold as it's ever been)

&, after so much misuse, murder cold.  
Satan was such a nice boy once, and Sal  
was too - but we got old.  
Sal, --It wasn't our *fault*. No matter, pal,  
the world will fade away.  
We'll go with it. One more summer, one last fall -

# 29

*Bomb*

Dean, open the windows. Let light in. The room  
is too dark and I have slept and dreamt un-  
pleasantly.

In it there was a thorn bush, nestled at its feet a small blue gun,  
and next to them a road, on which walked cartoon  
priests & pilgrims & peasants & Dean

we were two  
of them & we, walking, sang disconcerting lullabies  
to the moon,  
which grew, and the farther we walked  
the more it grew,  
until it looked like a huge white lollipop,

of light wrought simply, celestial & forlorn.  
A long time we trudged ahead, very long, squinting at the moon -  
and then too abruptly night vanished, and it was day,  
and burned, in brilliance, our hopeful furcal mouths,  
and our eyes were taken away,  
and the world's sleep was shaken & roused & torn.



## 29 Visionary HYMNS: Annotations

The *Visionary HYMNS* constitute 29 poems written in the form of John Berryman's *Dream Songs*, co-authored by two dubious young counterparts writing under the names Dean Moriarty and Sal Paradise. These names are entirely unrelated to the coincidentally identical names used by Jack Kerouac in *On the Road* to represent Neal Cassidy and himself respectively. Apart from this aberration, the poems are very much concerned with and dependent on the literature of the Cold War and Beat generation. They form a running commentary on a series of texts used in Suzanne Clark's Honors College Colloquium "The Cold War and Memory: The Bomb, Trauma, Subversives and Sex."

In order to make the poems more intelligible to anyone not involved in the class (and to clarify things for those who might have occasionally dozed off during it), the authors were asked to a compile set of annotations. Of course, they refused. They spent enough time writing the bloody book. How the following notes came into existence no one will ever know. Divine intervention, we expect.

### Hymn #1

2: "stretched & buckt": see Dream Song #34: "he verbed for forty years, very enough, / & shot & buckt."

10: two jolly clever indirect allusions to collections of poems by John Berryman: *Love & Fame* and *Dream Songs*.

18: see Kerouac's *Brooklyn Bridge Blues*: "From these Blues we'll / go to H Y M N S".

### Hymn #2

5: John Berryman: "Henry" is Berryman's name for himself in the *Dream Songs*, and the names John and Henry are used more

or less interchangeably in the *HYMNS* to indicate Berryman. Here Henry appears as his own baby. Weird, huh?

6-7: "two / & some who stayed behind": Berryman committed suicide in 1972, leaving behind children and a wife, possibly some determined friends as well.

7-10: Sylvia Plath, Ralph Ellison, Bernard Malamud, Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac.

11: see *Brooklyn Bridge Blues*: "I'm too sick and tired / of this world to drink in't".

13: Bones, Sir Bones, Mr. Bones, etc: Berryman's minstrel version of himself in the *Dream Songs*. Often taunts Henry, the better angel (slightly), and enjoys above all things dry wit and predatory, philosophically pessimistic discussions with haggard minds.

### Hymn #3

Perfectly lucid. Anything you can't understand is your own problem.

### Hymn #4

12: Never: a French town. Alain Resnais's 1945 film *Hiroshima, Mon Amor* portrays the short relationship of a man from Hiroshima (referred to in the film only as "Hiroshima") and a woman from Never ("Never") as they try to deal with the war traumas of their past lives.

### Hymn #5

2: "sealed letter sent": refers to the sealed letters that Dr. Bledsoe gave to the narrator in *Invisible Man* before he went to New York City

4: "youngblood": reference to Jim Trueblood in *Invisible Man*: on the narrator's watch, the narrator and Mr. Norton visited a farm near the college where they meet Jim Trueblood – an older black man who relates his troubles gotten from impregnating his daughter (according to him, it happened while he was dreaming). This meeting precipitated a series of events that

resulted in the narrator's subsequent dismissal from the college and his relocation to New York City, where the rest of the book takes place. "Youngblood" is also a reference to those of our generation.

10: "uncoiled firehoses": see *Invisible Man* (Chapter Nineteen): narrator sees an uncoiled firehose (phallic reference) with Sybil before he goes up to her apartment.

13: "okie": Ralph Ellison was born in Oklahoma.

14: "city's sad belows": see *Brooklyn Bridge Blues*: "in the blue sad belows of Manhattan" (Chorus 6).

15: "Bird Parker": Charlie "Bird" Parker was a bop musician important to both the Beats and to Ellison, who studied music in college.

#### Hymn #6

2: Jim Trueblood (see above).

7: "that act": copulating with own daughter, in bed with wife & other chilluns.

9: "he": Mr. Norton, founder of the University & patron of black education. The (unfortunate) exemplary of progressive black & white relations.

15-17: "bright white shoes / with black trim": see *Invisible Man*: "I stared at the two pairs of shoe before me. Mr. Norton's were white, trimmed with black. They were custom made and there beside the cheap tan brogues of the farmer they had the elegantly slender well-bred appearance of fine gloves. Finally someone cleared his throat and I looked up to see Mr. Norton staring silently into Jim Trueblood's eyes. I was startled. His face had drained of color. With his bright eyes burning into Trueblood's black face, he looked ghostly" (Chapter Two). Presumably an extremely metaphorical statement.

18: "--Dat ain't mé, son – das yóu": note: Bones is a minstrel version of Henry - they are the negative images of one another. Presumably another extremely metaphorical statement.

#### Hymn #7

1: "rhind" and "hart": reference to Rhinehart in *Invisible Man*.

2: "pastor blind": reference to the blind pastor Homer A. Barbee in *Invisible Man*. The pastor is a fervent praiser of the narrator's college's founder (a person to whom the narrator ascribes dubious intentions).

10: "frequencies too low to hear": refers to final lines of the Epilogue in *Invisible Man*: "And it is this which frightens me: / Who knows but that, on the lower frequencies, I speak for you?"

17: "the Rose": refers to the rose that Esther is given to hold in a photograph in *The Bell Jar*.

#### Hymn #8

5: "her": Sylvia Plath.

8: "Henry's father": Berryman's father's suicide haunted Berryman (age 12 at the time and finder of the body) and his poetry and is a recurring obsession of the *Dream Songs*.

13: "speculate": as to whether Plath's suicide was intentional or accidental.

14: "ovens": she gassed herself in her own oven, becoming the Nazi to her own better (slightly) angel, and leaving children behind (tucked into bed upstairs). Berryman mentions Plath in several *Dream Songs* and seems somewhat preoccupied with the parallels.

16: including psychiatric institutionalization.

#### Hymn #9

16-18: see Hymn #8.

#### Hymn #10

"Op. posth.": alludes to a sub-series of *Dream Songs* (#78-91) entitled *Op. posth.* (Opus posthumous) and constituting the first book of *His Toy, His Dream, His Rest* (the second collection of *Dream Songs*).

3: "Lay him in the earth": see *Hamlet*, Act V scene i: "Lay her i' the earth". Berryman studied Shakespeare extensively and was very fond of teaching and getting drunk to *Hamlet* in particular.

17: "perfectly infernal mind": see Dream Song #9: "Fancy the brain from hell / held out so long. Let go."

18: see *Macbeth*, Act II scene iii: "Confusion now hath made his masterpiece!"

#### Hymn #11

1-3: see Berryman's Dream Song #52: "Henry—wonder! all, / when most he—under the sun" & "Will Henry again ever be on the lookout for women & milk".

8: consider a famous egg.

9: "sat on the fence": see Dream Song #36: "What if I / roiling & babbling & braining, brood on why and / just sat on the fence?"

10: "for any barker's sake, he'd dance": see Dream Song #28: "I wish the barker would come"; Dream Song #40: "for any hound dog's sake".

11: "tender fuck": see Dream Song #46: "I myself walked at the funeral of tenderness. / Followed other deaths. Among the last, / like the memory of a lovely fuck / was: *Do, ut des*."

12: "seventeen line romance": note: Berryman's last poem in Dream Song form was his suicide note, with a five line final stanza (leaving the poem one short of the normal eighteen).

13-15: see Dream Song #50.

16-17: "Content to inhabit autumn's / body": see Dream Song #77: "He would be prepared to live in a world of Fall".

#### Hymn #12

1: "Huffy Henry": see Dream Song #1.

5: "heir of a gator and shotgun death": see Dream Song #34: "My mother has your shotgun." Note: Berryman's father shot himself early in the morning outside of the family's Florida home.

6: "so long ago": see Dream Song #76: "my father / who dared so long ago leave me."

14: see Dream Song #23. What the hell is he talking about?

18: "Maybe I oughta shave my beard": see Dream Song #188: "I look less weird / without my beard".

#### Hymn #13

1: see *A New Life*: "Levin woke with a sob from a dream of wrestling Leo Duffy, who when last seen, riotously tarred and turkey-feathered, was riding a rail out of town."

16: "Red": damn Communists.

#### Hymn #14

10: "stow those spyglasses": in *A New Life* Levin watches Pauline with his binoculars at a basketball game; also Dream Song #46: "Their glasses were taken from them, & they saw."

17: "German expert's death": see Dream Song #41: "If we sang in the wood (and Death is a German expert)".

#### Hymn #15

"*August 13, 1961*": the day ground was broken for the construction of the Berlin Wall.

1: John LeCarré, author of *The Spy Who Came In From the Cold* and other thrillers. For details on "Walled out" & "drinking" see Preface to *Spy Who Came In*.

5: "a pulpy, palpable indictment": *Spy Who Came In*.

17: "naked lunches": allusion to Burroughs' novel *Naked Lunch*. Title was suggested by Jack Kerouac and indicates the stark & direct & un stomachable confrontation of human addiction & depravity documented therein.

#### Hymn #16

1: "Bill": William S. Burroughs. His name for himself in *Naked Lunch* is Bill Lee, which Kerouac adapts in *On the Road* to Old Bull Lee.

2: "But I am dying": see Burroughs' novel/screenplay *The Last Words of Dutch Schultz*.

13: "Old Bull": Burroughs again, the wise old sage & comforter.

### Hymn #17

"*Personal Poem*": the title of a poem by Frank O'Hara.

1: "Gauloises," "Picayunes": cigarettes appearing in O'Hara's "The Day Lady Died".

8: "Frank": Frank O'Hara.

13-14: was killed by a beach buggy on Fire Island.

17: Billie Holiday: also known as "Lady Day" - died of cirrhosis of the liver: too much drinking, too many drugs; Jack Kerouac: died of cirrhosis of the liver: too much drinking, too many drugs.

### Hymn #18

2: see *Brooklyn Bridge Blues*: "that's intro / And that's horse shit verse".

10: "museums": O'Hara was an associate museum curator;

"lunches & poems": an allusion to O'Hara's *Lunch Poems*;

"batting averages": see "Personal Poem": "the last five years my batting average / is .016 that's that".

14: see "Personal Poem": "LeRoi comes in / and tells me Miles Davis was clubbed 12 / times last night outside BIRDLAND".

### Hymn #19

4: "Allen surely feels as strong as Bill": Allen Ginsberg and William S. Burroughs.

7: "cotton lover": see *Dream Song #1*: "All the world like a woolen lover / once did seem on Henry's side."

16-17: "fall back": Shakespeare, as in Act I scene iv of *Cymbeline*: "With five times so much conversation, I should get ground of your fair mistress, make her go back, even to the yielding, had I admittance and opportunity to friend."

### Hymn #20

1: see Ginsberg's "Footnote to Howl".

4-5: see "Howl": "I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness".

10: "yes, yes": see Ginsberg's *Song*.

17: "shine together": see *Song*.

### Hymn #21

"*Dog*": see Lawrence Ferlinghetti's "Dog". Also consider Ferlinghetti's dog, Homer, who famously pissed on a cop.

5: see Kerouac's "I Had a Slouch Hat Too One Time" (a document in larceny).

6: "Thou art that": a level of enlightenment for the Buddha or his disciple at which he is able to identify himself in all things and all things in himself. These folks, as we understand it, spend the majority of their waking hours scanning to the horizon, saying "Thou art that, thou art that, thou art that" to themselves.

10: He's right, you know.

13: see "Dog": "The dog trots freely in the street / and sees reality / and the things he sees are bigger than himself / ... / and the things he sees / are smaller than himself".

17: "Four More Years": an antiquated slogan appearing in the re-election propaganda of, among others, a certain corrupt and dangerous American politician in the early years of the 21st century. Since defunct.

18: see Ferlinghetti's "#15" from *A Coney Island of the Mind*: "Constantly risking absurdity / and death".

### Hymn #22

"*Autzen Footbridge Blues*": refers to Kerouac's *Brooklyn Bridge Blues*.

1: "in sentimental mood": a recording by Duke Ellington and John Coltrane of "In a Sentimental Mood" was used in the performance of Kerouac's *Brooklyn Bridge Blues* by a group of five students of which the authors of this book were two.

2-3: see *Brooklyn Bridge Blues*: "High, / overlooking whole auroras / of Sangsara sun dusk".

4: "joy & kicks & darkness": the phrase "joy, kicks, darkness," appearing in *On the Road*, is also the name (changed a bit: *kicks joy darkness*) of a collection of recordings made by various

artists, many set to music, of Kerouac's poems and prose.  
Choruses 1 thru most-of-9 of the *Brooklyn Bridge Blues* are read by Allen Ginsberg, the-rest-of-9 thru 10 by Eric Andersen.  
4-5: "fame & love": *Love & Fame* (see HYMN #1).  
5-6: "he askt / Buddha Lord to perfect him": see *Brooklyn Bridge Blues*: "I lookt up at the blue deep perfect / and asked Buddha Lord to perfect me". Note: in his practice and performance of this section of the poem, Dean persistently pronounced perfect perfect. This, among other things, earned him the title of "Jack's Bastard Tongue". As he is a perfect man, however, we can only assume he was right to do so.  
7: see *Brooklyn Bridge Blues*: (continued from above) "and said 'What are the requisites?' / and he said 'You are perfect already'".  
8-9: "yakkt / him foolish": the concluding Chorus of the *Brooklyn Bridge Blues*, containing the lines "Without the Eternal Light / you're only a yakking fool," was performed low & lovely by Melissa, who took her name ("Jack's Yakking Fool") from the passage.  
9-10: see *Brooklyn Bridge Blues*: "I am the perfect man, / the Buddha of this world.' ---- / already perfect ! -- I forget the details!" Note: Babak, also known as "Jack's Seasonal Eroticism," is also a perfect man.  
11-12: Amie, or "Jack's Interrupting Crocodile," who was extremely eager to get her lines out, performed the two Choruses of *Brooklyn Bridge Blues* that begin *in medias sentence*, and during rehearsals tended to interrupt earlier and earlier in her preceder's speech. She also interjected the rather bizarre "c r o c o d i l e" into Chorus 4.  
14: "you say the damn word right once...": Dean, in the course of 87 rehearsals and 1 performance, pronounced the word "Tathagata" (Chorus 5) 88 different ways. The correct one was used during the performance, demonstrating him, by immaculate timing, the perfect man.

17: "seasonal": like Jack's eroticism. The phrase is taken from a description of Jack by an acquaintance appearing in the documentary *What Happened to Kerouac*.

18: "Thank you for everything": a note from Sal, "Jack's Writing Buddha" & the author of this Hymn, to his friends and fellow Jacks, who are all already perfect men & women (lovingly borrowed from Berryman – thanks also to him).

#### Hymn #23

"*A Battle Outside*": a phrase from Bob Dylan's "The Times They Are a-Changin'": "There's a battle outside / And it is ragin' / It'll soon shake your windows / And rattle your walls / For the times they are a-changin'."

2: "that song": "Blowin' in the Wind," performed on the last night of class as a duet and then a sing-along.

13: "theft & love": stolen from Dylan's album "*Love and Theft*," which is stolen in turn from Eric Lott's *Love and Theft*, a book about the origins of blackface minstrelsy.

#### Hymn #24

"*Temple*": see Gary Snyder's "Toji: Shington Temple, Kyoto".

14: see "Toji": "Under the eaves of Toji" & "Peering through chickenwire grates / At dusty gold-leaf statues".

18: see "Toji": "The streetcar clanks by outside."

#### Hymn #25

"*Water Shed*": see Anne Waldman's "Our Past".

1: see "Our Past": "It's wonderful the way the city turns serenely into country with no fuss, the city is shed, or is it the other way around, the country falls off into the city?"

#### Hymn #26

"*The Song Lady Sang*": refers to the song "Strange Fruit" sung by Billie Holiday. This Hymn is also connected with Kenneth Rexroth's poem "Thou Shalt Not Kill".

1: "dead young men": see "Thou Shalt Not Kill": "You are the murderer. You are killing the young men..."

9: "You killed the young men": see above.

#### Hymn #27

"*Praise For Sick Women*": taken from the Snyder poem of the same name.

1: "though not his thighs": see "Sick Women": "Blood dripping through crusted thighs."

1-4: a bizarre, reckless, & unsubstantiated statement.

14: maleness & whiteness: the author is of very mixed blood, 6 inches short of the NFL ideal, & too poetic to be properly manly in this day and age.

16: "sour at your sight": see "Sick Women": "Apples will sour at your sight."

17: "He did not mean to set you high up": he just likes standing on chairs.

18: "to reach & touch the Moon": see "Sick Women": "Arm out softly, touching, / A difficult dance to do, but not in mind"; "Where's hell then? / In the moon. / In the change of the moon".

#### Hymn #28

"*Piute Creek*": the setting of Snyder's "Milton By Firelight".

Adam & Eve & Satan are also transferred from Milton via Snyder.

10: Richard Dawkins and some other folks agree that the nearest universal female ancestor of the human race was African. The men, apparently, have been spreading it about too far & wide to tell.

14: Well, he was.

17: Well, it will.

#### Hymn #29

"*Bomb*": refers to the Gregory Corso poem of the same name.

8: see "Bomb": "There is a hell for bombs / They're there I see them there / They sit in bits and sing songs / mostly German

songs / and two very long American songs / and they wish there were more songs / especially Russian and Chinese songs / and some more very long American songs / Poor little Bomb that'll never be / an Eskimo song".

12: see "Bomb": "I love thee / I want to put a lollipop / in thy furcal mouth".

15-17: images of mass intimate personal & horrifying violence inspired by John Hersey's *Hiroshima*.