

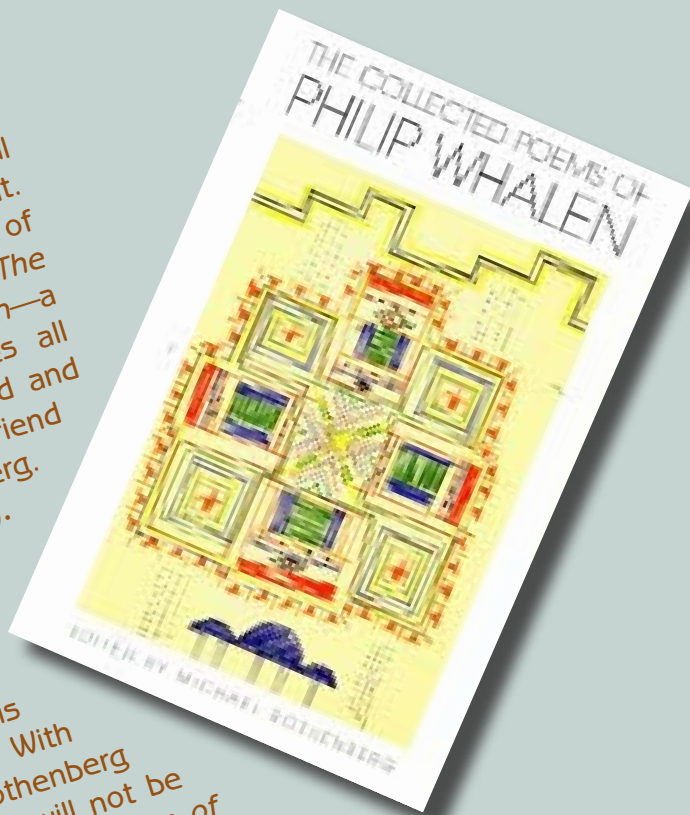
FROM

THE COLLECTED POEMS OF PHILIP WHALEN



PHILIP WHALEN has been described as the poet laureate of the Beat generation. His poetry is inspiring, original, candid, and often witty. It is filled with perceptual moments of profound insight. Here we have selected a few of his 'Buddhist' poems from *The Collected Poems of Philip Whalen*—a 900-page tome that includes all of Whalen's poems, collected and assembled by his longtime friend and editor, Michael Rothenberg. (Visit www.bigbridge.org).

Whalen worried, in the last years of his life, that no one would have access to his poetry after he died. With this new volume Rothenberg has ensured that this will not be the case. *The Collected Poems of Philip Whalen* (published in 2007 by Wesleyan University Press) is available in print as well as online as a Google Book.



A Vision of the Bodhisattvas

They pass before me one by one riding on animals
“What are you waiting for,” they want to know

Z-, young as he is (& mad into the bargain) tells me
“Some day you’ll drop everything & become
a rishi, you know.”

I know
The forest is there, I’ve lived in it
more certainly than this town? Irrelevant—

What am I waiting for?
A change in customs that will take 1000 years to come about?
Who’s to make the change but me?

“Returning again and again,” Amida says

Why’s that dream so necessary? walking out of whatever house alone
Nothing but the clothes on my back, money or no
Down the road to the next place the highway leading to the
mountains

From which I absolutely must come back

What business have I to do that?
I know the world and I love it too much and it
Is not the one I’d find outside this door.

31:iii:60

Grace Before Meat

You food, you animal plants
I take you, now, I make you wise
Beautiful and great with joy
Enlightenment for all sentient beings
All the hungry spirits, gods and Buddhas who are sad

30:v:67

Japanese Tea Garden Golden Gate Park in Spring

1. I come to look at the cherryblossoms
for the last time
2. Look up through flower branching Deva world
(happy ignorance)
3. These blossoms will be gone in a week
I'll be gone long before.

This is to say, the cherry trees will blossoms every year but I'll disappear for good, one of these days. There. That's all about the absolute permanence of the most impossibly fragile delicate and fleeting objects. By objects, I mean this man who is writing this, the stars, baked ham, as well as the cherryblossoms. This doesn't explain anything.

2:iv:65

Mahayana

Soap cleans itself the way ice does,
Both disappear in the process.
The questions of "Whence" & "Wither" have no validity here.

Mud is a mixture of earth and water
Imagine WATER as an "Heavenly: element
Samsara and nirvana are one:

Flies in amber, sand in the soap
Dirt and red algae in the ice
Fare thee well, how very delightful to see you here again!

5:iv:65

Kitchen Practice

They got it all fixed up the way
They wanted and now
They've changed it back again
They've eaten all the sugar
They've taken all the teapots to
their rooms.

23:vii:73

The Lotus Sutra, Naturalized

I got drunk your house
You put that diamond my shirt pocket
How am I supposed to know?
Laying there in drunk tank
 strange town don't nobody know
Get our of jail at last you say
"You already spend that diamond?"
How am I going to know?

27:iii:64

The Ghosts

Of people dead fifty year and not only people—
Theatres and streetcars and large hotels follow me
Into this dusty little gully. None of them ever liked California
Why don't they stay in Portland where they belong.
I'm tired of them.

A new ghost in this morning's dream,
Beautiful and young and still alive
How far will that one follow me? I'm not chasing any,
Any more.

14:Vii:79

Haiku, for Gary Snyder

IS
Here's a dragonfly (T O T A L L Y)
Where it was,
 that place no longer exists.

15:i:60