

No people in this poem. As if it subsisted
by the very disappearance of places and people.

*A cuckoo calls
for me, for the mountain,
for me, for the mountain*

Sitting under his lean-to on a rocky ledge
listening to a waterfall hum in the gorge,
he had before him the folds of a wooded mountain
and the setting sun which touched it
and he thought: how is it that the voice of the cuckoo
always turns either here or there?
This could as well not be in the order of things.

*In this world
we walk on the roof of Hell
gazing at flowers*

To know and not to speak.
In that way one forgets.
What is pronounced strengthens itself.
What is not pronounced tends to nonexistence.
The tongue is sold out to the sense of touch.
Our human kind persists by warmth and softness:
my little rabbit, my little bear, my kitten.

Anything but a shiver in the freezing dawn
and fear of oncoming day

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and the overseer's whip.
Anything but winter streets
and nobody on the whole earth
and the penalty of consciousness.
Anything but.

Berkeley, 1978