

GARY SNYDER

For Robert Duncan

Walking down Grant Avenue just short of the Place
late at night,
ran into Robert Duncan, we embraced.
nineteen fifty-five.

He said, “Gary, your number.”
Gave me a copy
of *Letters*; signed it standing in the streetlight.
number sixty-nine. The gleam
in Robert’s sidelong eye

And I think of Neuri,
whose elbows and jaw-juts and knees all jangling
I wrapped up in my arms and packed into the car,
'37 Packard,
her so drunk, she beat my
face and eye—mean and sweet—
and in the poem I wrote for her I said
“because I once beat you up”
when it was me got whacked.

Old “male chivalry”
and a literary scholar trots it out
because I’m “Allen’s friend”

slender girl I never slept with
you liked women.

And I loved Robert for his teaching.
Some crime.

PERKY EDGERTON

Downstairs, 2018

Oil and collage on canvas, 30 x 40 in

