

# CHICAGO REVIEW

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# JAIME DE ANGULO, GUI MAYO & WEST COAST MODERNISM

Edited by Edgar Garcia





## Introduction

“I wish I could have lived in the inhospitable climate of Chicago,” wrote Jaime de Angulo in his strange multidisciplinary work of comparative linguistics, *What Is Language?* He wrote the words in a footnote that expresses his love for the work of linguist and anthropologist Edward Sapir, who taught at the University of Chicago during the years (1920s) in which Sapir worked to legitimize the discipline of linguistics (particularly in its professional adjacency to the discipline of anthropology). It would not be an easy task (especially for the kind of linguistics Sapir envisioned)—and maybe his adviser at the time, anthropologist Alfred Kroeber, warned Sapir on the linguist’s departure to the Windy City, as he would do to later students: “if you’re going to go to Chicago, you’ll need a thick scarf.”<sup>1</sup> What de Angulo loved most about Sapir was something like the thick scarf Sapir wore in his intellectual pursuits. Undaunted by the blustery pedantry of linguistics in his time, Sapir rode forth on an idea that language is poetry, and poetry is language when it becomes self-aware. This highly artistic sense of language was radical in a time when linguistics was dominated by the family tree of philology, the so-called phylogenetic framework, in which the purpose of linguistic analysis was to trace genetic relations back to shared primordial origins. Riding against that Adamic tide, Sapir was a poet of difference, a linguist keen on seeing the tremendous variety of ways in which people the world over have found themselves in language (stumbled upon themselves even) and, in thus happening on themselves, sought to make others linguistically self-aware in poetic speech.

Sapir also wrote poetry, of which little is good or interesting. He must have seen in the poet, anthropologist, and linguist de Angulo a reflected image of himself, a mirror shining back a clearer reflection of his own aspirations, an anthropologist-poet stumbling upon self-awareness. He wanted to help de Angulo find work in academic circles. But he was warned off by Kroeber:

De Angulo has quite unusual intellect along with an unstable personality. He gets tremendous pure enthusiasms as a result of which he works some aspect of science through and then drops it. Since I have known him in the past three years his interests in succession have been psychiatry from the psychoanalytic side, ethno-psychology under the influence of Levy-Bruhl, phonetics, and now California general ethnology and linguistics. A few days ago he came back from a month of field work with the Achomawi. He certainly got insight into their minds, I think a good deal of knowledge on their culture, and laid a foundation for an analysis of the language. Whether he will ever follow the work up to produce a useful monograph I do not know. I have always kept him at arm's length in spite of a good deal of liking for him and a quite thorough admiration because of a fear of his inclination to fall around one's neck when he forms an attachment. Emotionally he is inclined to be vehement and infantile.<sup>2</sup>

If Kroeber had really set out to depict the enthusiast in de Angulo, he might have added a few more of the many other vocations, avocations, pursuits, and identities the Spanish-born anthropologist-poet picked up over the years: rodeo cowboy (in Wyoming and Colorado), military psychiatrist (in the US Army), fruit fly researcher (at Stanford), prison guard (in British Honduras), emergency worker (during the San Francisco earthquake of 1906), transvestite (and later transsexual) avatar of the Bohemian Bay Area, impertinent tutor (in linguistics and folklore, most notably to poets Jack Spicer and Robert Duncan), cattle rustler (in Big Sur), linguist (with specialization in at least twenty-two native languages of the Americas), immersive anthropologist, ethnomusicologist, anarchist, musician, painter, novelist, radio performer, nonfiction writer, cookbook writer, literary translator, and, of course, poet. None of this would have helped his case with Sapir, who wrote back to Kroeber: "Somehow I feel from what you and [Robert] Lowie write that I had better steer clear of de Angulo. I don't need an enthusiastic genius...."<sup>3</sup> De Angulo's multiplying enthusiasms were too much, even for a scholar who envisioned disciplinary multiplicity as a cornerstone of responsible scholarship, who saw the interaction of poetry, anthropology, and linguistics as deeply meaningful.

If de Angulo was too much for Sapir, he would certainly never have made it in academia, where even Sapir was already quite fringe, a little rough around the edges, and weird in his multifaceted interests. This was a source of endless frustration for the poet featured in this special issue—and such frustrated ambition is reflected even in the quote with which I began this essay. We might ask ourselves: who uses a footnote in a supposedly academic study of language to reflect on where they wished they'd lived and why? Who appropriates the paratextual apparatus of the footnote to comment on their own relation to such incommensurable environments as Chicago (not that bad actually, if you have a good scarf)? Who footnotes to endnote their own life, as it were, a life in which one never makes it to Chicago?

Whatever we might make of such a footnote, at a basic level of interpretation, its appearance says a lot about how distorted disciplines were in de Angulo's view of ideas. It's not normal to interject biographical details, let alone little notes of personal longing, in a work of purported scientific interest (or, at least, not to do so in such a plain-faced way—perhaps others are a bit more circumspect about the horizons of desire embedded in their footnoting). But then—as readers who will peruse the excerpted pages of *What Is Language?* in this special issue will find (only a portion of the lengthy, full manuscript, which also has multiple, very different drafts)—there is much about de Angulo's writing that resists disciplinary formation. When we might expect his anthropological professionalization, he leans on his poetic avocation. When we are asked to lean into his poetic inspiration, he channels such poiesis into anthropological inquiry or sociological analysis. One gets the sense that he felt that it simply couldn't all be done in one disciplinary language. (Readers sensitive to my allusion here will be assured to learn that de Angulo was one of Ezra Pound's liveliest correspondents during that poet's time at St. Elizabeths Hospital—indeed earning that interned poet's praise as “the American Ovid”—and it wasn't just with Ezra that he wrote letters, but Dorothy too, as can be seen in one of the letters published here, a rich inquiry of which can be found in Lee Bartlett's essay in the *Paideuma* issue of 1985.)<sup>4</sup> But pushing even past the rather fictional boundaries and fences of our disciplinary formations (helpful for keeping us out of each other's backyards, but troublesome when it comes to outstretching trees, shrubs, and weeds that grow on their own terrestrial principles),

de Angulo also experimented with the medial formations in which we view our intellectual self-understanding.

As the reprinted drawings, illustrations, pictographs, designs, and semi-hieroglyphic images in this special issue show (representing various de Angulo projects—his “Old Time Stories” typescript, manuscript, and radio broadcast; a novella, *The Witch*, written while staying at Mabel Dodge Luhan and Tony Luhan’s home, out of spite for D. H. Lawrence, also staying there at the time; translations from Federico García Lorca’s *Poema del cante jondo*; transcriptions and visualizations of California indigenous songs; hieroglyphs of language as such in his *summa linguisticae*, *What Is Language?*; depictions of Bay Area parties, e.g., the one pictured for Robert Duncan; and plain and simple poetry), de Angulo’s writing often bled into his illustrating, just as his illustrating bled into his writing, in such a way that distorts easy distinction between text and image. Or, better put, that places intellectual pressure on how we think about the representation of intellection on the page, that is, where and how intellection takes up the space of the page and, in doing so, how it interacts with what other semiotic traces surface on the eye’s scanning jelly when we read a work of poetry.

De Angulo reminds us of the multiformat, multimedial, and multidisciplinary nature of poetry, extending far beyond the casual domains of “creative writing.” His work is as rigorous as it is reclusive, as intellectual as it is intuitive, as pictographic as it is alphabetic, as visual as it is representational, as oral as it is abstract, there, on the page, staring at you waiting for you to hear its voice speaking to you, through you, in the oral poetics in which it was originally imagined, inscribed, drawn, and variably composed.

This visionary work of an oral poetics communicated in combined textual and pictorial form is nowhere better represented than in de Angulo’s radio broadcasts, the culmination of his life’s work before he died of prostate cancer in 1950. All of the contributions in this special issue address this key aspect of de Angulo’s lifework, and correctly do so, inasmuch as this was his self-cognizant farewell to the tidings of earthly life; a kind of goodbye that was also his greatest huzzah for what it means to write across semiotic formations and representational formats. The radio broadcasts are worth seeking out and listening to because they communicate de Angulo’s real source of poetic power—his voice.

He had a strange reading voice, somewhat British Caribbean—that is, English, but with an inflection of British Honduras, where he likely learned the language—complicated by his own maternal languages of French and Spanish, while mixed in with the many indigenous languages of the Americas he learned with great intimacy. It sounds like a mockery of language, a joke of tongues, which, if you take Sapir seriously, is the most serious kind of poetry—the poetry in which the speaker of a tongue creates self-awareness in language. After listening to a session of de Angulo reading from his “Old Time Stories”—a compendium of anthropology, poetry, storytelling, and linguistic, immersive, creative analysis—I find myself telling stories to my daughter in a different intonation, a different voice, a voice more comfortable with its uncomfortable relation to comfort, estranged in its relation to what it might think its natural home is. Not English exactly and not Spanish either, and certainly not the handful of languages I’ve studied over the years, but something more like the migratory horizon across those tongues. After hearing de Angulo tell these stories, I come to speak in strange tones of tonal strangeness. Listen to it and maybe you’ll know what I mean.

For these reasons and more I’m happy to announce that this special issue has already helped to breach new terrain in the literary scholarship of Jaime de Angulo. At the time of its publication, Andrew Schelling has published an astonishing mythopoetic biography of de Angulo (an extension and elaboration of which is published here); Albert Flynn DeSilver has been inspired to send us his bizarrely self-intimating creation stories featuring de Angulo; Anna Elena Eyre has persisted in her insistence of de Angulo as a poet writing in the disciplinary formation of linguistic anthropology; Darryl “Babe” Wilson aka Sul’ma’ejote (California Pit River Nation, Achumawi and Atsugewi) reminds us of the relations to land, earth, and indigenous heritage inherent to de Angulo’s writing; Lisa Hollenbach recalls the critical function that the radio medium played for de Angulo and his crowd in the Bay Area in the mid-twentieth century; and indeed the excerpts published here from de Angulo’s daughter, Gui Mayo (evocatively introduced by Peter Garland, whose own trailblazing work on de Angulo’s ethnomusicology is also represented in these pages), remind us of the deeper context of Bay Area poetic sensibility that preceded and exceeded de Angulo’s time on the twisty earth—which of course is not to mention the iconographic

representation of de Angulo's impact on the Bay Area scene, whose presiding personages were Duncan, Spicer, and Robin Blaser.

But, maybe most pertinently for the present moment, by way of this issue, Jerome McGann has initiated a new consideration of de Angulo as a literary figure who will certainly redefine our understanding of the twentieth-century world of letters. De Angulo was no recluse. He was intimately familiar with many of the modernists who define what we call literary modernism; yet, somehow, he has dropped off that literary map. McGann's effort is therefore one of critical recovery, and it necessarily extends beyond this special issue, which can only bring together a limited number of selected texts and, even then, limit itself to texts that can be reproduced in a print issue. The problem with de Angulo's creative output is that he always pushed past print. He has remained in the shadows because the technology has had to catch up with him: what technology in the 1920s–40s could have possibly communicated the simultaneous pictorial, oral, musical, and textual format in which he worked? None. It's not until the present moment that we can build the platform for such multimedial representation, let alone consider its long-standing relation to indigenous forms of knowledge-making and world-building. It is really only in the present digital moment that such multimedial knowledge-making can be adequately presented in its composite imagistic, oral, vocal, musical, and textual aspects. De Angulo didn't seem to see the limits of his own technological ecology—he tried in various ways to represent the oral poetics of pictorial writing: drawing, radio, spatial composition and assemblage of text, and indeed embodied performance. But it only came together in his person—as it should have. The necessary intersection of media has always been the body, and de Angulo was nothing if not intuitively, medially embodied.

But today, at least, we have the potential of media platforms that can become bodies of sorts—aural, visual, tactile, textual, and stratigraphically sensible in a way not possible outside of our personal bodies in the past. The digital ecology, especially in its affinities with the sensorial quality of intelligence and intellectual communicability, is finally ready for de Angulo. He was no angel—he was certainly something of a devil, but beyond all that, he was a child of the contemporary moment. McGann's aim—in which I join him in inspired collaboration with our various contributors—is now to

digitize de Angulo's works in the full breadth of their aural, visual, and textual extensivities. No such work has ever taken place; its very effort says all that is needed to be said about de Angulo's vision. He was only a poet inasmuch as he was a storyteller; he was only a storyteller inasmuch as he was a researcher; he was only a researcher inasmuch as he was kin in other-than-human worlds; he was only other-than-human inasmuch as he might try to outdrink you, to drink himself to animality (he wrote a cookbook, *The Hangover Cookbook*—our special insert—to help with this special difficulty); and he was only a drinker inasmuch as that old derangement of the senses led back to the original intellection of all things, poetry.

I can't tell you what to do with these writings. They're strange, evocative, sometimes outranged, outrageous, and outraging; but, still, they are always precisely focused. I've been most intrigued by their sincerity of focus—they take on the poetics of the Americas in the fullness of its complexity, and they do not scare away from the difficulty of such a project in its implicated particulars—linguistics, anthropology, indigenous studies, historiography, and mythistory. In his own introduction to the last journal of poetics that dedicated a special issue to de Angulo—Jerome Rothenberg and Dennis Tedlock's *Alcheringa* in 1972—Bob Callahan tells us that such poetry was deeply felt for de Angulo, who was perhaps as vehement and infantile as Kroeber said, which is to say, he was nothing if not embodied in poetic sensibility:

In later life de Angulo had become something of a legend here in Northern California, both a legend and a mystery. A tragic, dark figure, some would say, the darkness of a northcoast Poe. No, old friends replied, he was just wandering. "I want to speak now," he wrote that first spring, "of a certain curious phenomenon found among the Pit River Indians. The Indians refer to it in English as 'wandering.' They say of a certain man, 'He is wandering,' or 'He has started to wander.' It would seem that under certain conditions of mental stress an individual finds life in his accustomed surroundings impossible to bear. Such a man starts to wander. He goes about the country, traveling aimlessly. He will stop here and there at the camps of friends or relations, moving on, never stopping at any place any longer than a few days. He will not make any outward show of grief, sorrow or worry. In fact he will speak of what is on his mind to no one, but anyone can see that he is not all right. He is morose, uncommunicative. Without any warning he will get up and go.

People will probably say of such a man: ‘He has lost his shadow. He ought to get a doctor [medicine man] to get it back for him before it is too late.’”<sup>5</sup>

Lurking in de Angulo’s writings is a shadow, not lost at all, but rather a palpable, penumbral spirit that is biographical and historical. In later life, sorrows gathered around him like so many dark flowers: the death of his son in a gruesome car accident; his own suicide attempt with a razor across his throat from ear to ear; his isolation in his hilltop cabin in Big Sur that he named *Los Pesares* (the sorrows); and the squally rejection from all the intellectual and creative circles that in turn gravitated to him and pulled away from him in repeating cycles of fascination and fear. These personal sorrows entangled with the historical injustices he saw: the displacements and death of indigenous friends and collaborators in native California; the loss of native languages he tried desperately to document; and the terrible disregard of academic institutions that refused to archive his wax cylinder recordings of now forever-lost indigenous songs and voices—another key feature that the necessary digitization of de Angulo’s archive will address. These were the sorrows of a life creatively and spiritedly engaged with the Americas in its indigenous, colonial, and contemporary crises. Amidst all this, de Angulo went wandering—intellectually, disciplinarily, medially, and poetically. With this issue we hope to give him at least a visit to that “inhospitable climate of Chicago” he had wished for.

## NOTES

1/ Gary Snyder and Nathaniel Tarn, “From Anthropologist to Informant: A Field Record of Gary Snyder,” *Alcheringa* vol. 4 (1972), 108–9.

2/ Alfred Kroeber and Edward Sapir, *The Sapir-Kroeber Correspondence*, ed. Victor Golla (Berkeley: Survey of California and Other Indian Languages, 1984), 384–5.

3/ Kroeber and Sapir, *The Sapir-Kroeber Correspondence*, 386.

4/ Lee Bartlett, “The Pound-De Angulo Connection,” *Paideuma* vol. 14, no. 1 (1985): 52–77.

5/ Bob Callahan, “On Jaime de Angulo,” *Alcheringa* (New Series) vol. 1, no. 1 (1975), 5.



## NOTES AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We have taken a light approach in transcribing and editing Jaime de Angulo's manuscripts and typescripts: edits for clarity were balanced with respect for de Angulo's orthographic and syntactical idiosyncrasies and creative tendencies. This editorial adjustment has also involved editing for length (without distracting paratextual marks) in *What Is Language?* We have not edited where a seeming typo might include a veiled double meaning or generative ambiguity—as in, for instance, the given case name of “adlative” for what might be “ablative” in the typescript for *What Is Language?* We have used section breaks to signal omissions from the original manuscript. Throughout, we have prioritized de Angulo's poetics over any sharpened disciplinary professionalization, as we feel he would have preferred.

We are profoundly grateful to all the contributors to this dossier. We also wish to thank David Miller, Mary Kerr, and Dee Plunkett for letting us publish texts and images from Jaime de Angulo's archives, housed at the University of California, Santa Cruz and the University of California, Los Angeles, as well as Gui Mayo's unpublished manuscript. Peter Garland was essential in this dossier's consideration of Mayo's work, and we're grateful for his help and guidance. Harry Bernstein, Caren Meghreblian, and Harry Friedman shared with us Robert Duncan's crayon portrait dedicated to Gui Mayo (included in the visual dossier) and we would like to thank them for their help as well. We are also grateful for Carlos Alonso Nugent's assistance with de Angulo's and Mayo's correspondence at the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library at Yale University.

Due to the ongoing global pandemic, this issue has long been in the making; several previous cohorts of interns helped produce it from its earliest stages. We would like to thank Wahid Al Mamun, Alexis Franciszkowicz, Caitlyn Klum, and Sam Mellins for all their labor and dedication.

The Editors

*from What Is Language?*

Introduction

If a child were marooned on an island,  
and if that child were able to survive,  
I am certain he would develop a language  
of his own, and for his own use.

Either he would do that, or he would grow into an imbecile.

In other words, the prime importance of language is not that it serves as a means of communication between human beings. Other mammals and social insects communicate well enough without language.

The important thing is that man thinks. And thought is a representation, partly memory, partly phantasy, of the reality (whatever the reality may ultimately be). Therefore, thinking is essentially creating.

That is why language is art.

Because it  
deals with form.

Language is also philosophy because it deals with meaning.

When language sticks to logic,  
it is like mathematics.

But language, astride intuition, is  
forever cutting corners and taking  
short cuts.

A baffling thing.

§

## Chapter II

### LANGUAGES: analytic or synthetic

In the last chapter we have taken a glimpse at the wide variety of structures that may be employed by different languages to express the same thought. There are few languages more simple in structure than the Chinese, and there are few more complex than the Pit River. Between these two extremes you may find any degree of complexity or of simplicity.

Languages like Chinese are called analytic because they analyze a sentence into separate elements of meaning, and then express each element of meaning by a single word.

Languages like Pit River are called synthetic because they enclose inside the limits of a single word several elements of meaning.

English is close to the analytic end of the scale. Basque is close to the synthetic. Spanish stands somewhere near the middle.

We ought to stop here for a moment, and examine what we mean by an element of meaning. Take an English word like “loved.” It contains two elements of meaning: one is the primary basic concept conveyed by the word “love” (fonetically: lʌv); the other is the concept of past tense or completeness, conveyed by the element -ed (lʌvd).

Another example: in the word “men” (mɛn), besides the primary basic concept conveyed by the word “man” (mæn) we have the concept of plurality conveyed by the change of (æ) to (ɛ). So, the word (mɛn) contains two elements of meaning, and is therefore synthetic as to technique.<sup>1</sup>

In “lovingness” there are three elements of meaning.

In highly synthetic languages a single word may contain a dozen separate elements of meaning.

You may ask: why should languages choose such different techniques? Why not be satisfied with the simple technique of analysis since it is quite sufficient to express any kind of thought however subtle and complex?

The answer is probably the same as that to the question: why do fashions change? The desire for change is a primordial urge in the constitution of the human animal.

People get tired of expressing a thought always in the same way. Some picturesque fellow starts an innovation. He gets imitators. Very soon a new trend in language technique is started. Once started it continues of its own momentum. From an initial technique of analysis a language may ultimately reach a degree of high synthesis. But this process cannot go on forever: a point is finally reached where the structure is too complex, too cumbersome for use. The momentum however still urges to change. Then there is nothing else to do but to start breaking down, and analysis takes the place of synthesis. The language becomes more and more analytic, and when the point of ultimate analysis is reached the whole merry-go-round starts again.<sup>2</sup>

## §

### Chapter III

CLASS (also called “gender”). The grammars of Latin, Spanish, French, and other Indo-European languages always speak of three genders: masculine, feminine, and neuter. Those names are very unfortunate. They lead people to expect something male or female about these genders or classes.

In English, there are also three genders, and they are truly based on sex. However, it only appears in English in very few cases: he, she, it; him, her, its; his, hers, its.

In many Amerindian languages there are two genders or classes: animate and inanimate.

In Pomo there are three: 1) long objects (pencil, match, finger); 2) flat objects (paper, cloth, hand); 3) objects that have volume (apple, ball, rock, head, a baby).

In Taos (New Mexico) there are three: 1) the names of all animals and humans in the singular, and of plants in the plural; 2) the names of all animals and humans in the plural, and of plants in the singular; 3) the names of all inanimate things, whether singular and plural.

In Latin there are five classes (the “declensions”).

All the classes enumerated above concern the noun; verbs are also classified in some languages. They are usually called “conjugations” in the grammars.

The Bantu languages of Africa have gone to town on the class category. Some of them have as many as twenty classes.

*SPACE* (location, direction, and orientation). This category is richly elaborated in California Indian languages, even though it is not at all related.<sup>3</sup> We find the following concepts expressed formally in the verb (and therefore quite different in treatment from “Case”—the Adlative, Elative, Inessive, Exessive, etc. concern the noun): towards, away from; hither, thither; upward, downward; on top, below; alongside; downstream, upstream; around (hither and yon); across; homeward (sometimes extended to mean “to return”); uphill, downhill; along a ridge; around the hill; into, out of; by the door; in connection with the house; in the brush; toward the lake, away from the lake; and others.

This category is also well represented in English by such prefixes as under-, over-, up-, down-, cross-, home-, in-, out-, by-, etc. Most of them are primarily independent adverbs which have lost their force as such.<sup>4</sup> Others were acquired from the Latin, via the French, as an essential part of the anglicized French words; they can be dissected out, but have not acquired the status of freely movable affixes; such are ad-, ab-, but many more have become quite moveable, even more so than in French, e.g., pre-, post-, ex-, de-, etc.

## Chapter IV

The *PREPOSITION* is another part-of-speech which is intimately connected with the category case. Prepositions are words like “of,” “with,” “by,” “for,” “to,” “at,” etc. Their content is almost nil; there is very little of the concrete about them; the Chinese grammarians call them “empty words”; yet they are not abstract. You may say that the word “color” is an abstraction. Red is concrete, and so is violet, blue, orange, and so on; but “color” is an abstraction. So is “dimension”; big and small are concrete. I don’t think it is possible to define abstraction in a practical way. It is at best a question of degree: one word is abstract when compared with one, and concrete when compared with another. The ultimate degree of concreteness is a sensation (or, to be more exact, when speaking of language and words, a perception). Anything is abstract that substitutes for the immediate perception-idea a concept.

“Horse” is a concept, and abstract; only one certain particular horse in the herd is concrete.

In that sense, a preposition is not abstract. The difficulty is solved by saying that prepositions express relation. And what is “relation”? It is that which is expressed by words like of, with, by, to, at, etc. And that’s as good a definition as you can give. But you must see immediately how it puts the preposition in a class apart, as a part-of-speech. The only other part-of-speech that expresses relation is the conjunction (and, but, since, because, for, etc.).

The conjunction also expresses “relation.” What, then, is that thing called relation, that is so elusive? I would not lay any stress on it, were it not so important, in language. I have said before that language stretches infinitely from the pole of the concrete to ultimate abstraction. And yet, that does not express relation. Abstraction is not relation.

What is it that you do when you introduce a word like “of,” or “by”? The son of man; he did it by turning? What category of thought are you introducing?

The grammarians and the philosophers call it RELATION. And it is the same thought that lies at the bottom of both “prepositions” and “case.”

## §

### Chapter VI

#### THE TECHNIQUE OF LANGUAGE (not really the “technique,” but rather the “tools” of language)

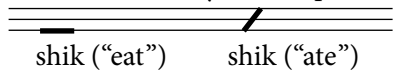
The term “root” is used more especially in an etymological sense, in tracing back the genealogy of a word. Thus, the root of such words as stand, step, state, constitute, etc. is traceable back to Teutonic, Latin, Greek, and finally Sanskrit, as st. This is a question of history, of historical data and evidence.

But, in the more strictly objective analysis of a given language, we are not supposed to know anything about its history; we are supposed

to take it at its face-value. Looking at it from that point-of-view we find two sorts of “radicals.” Take a word like “dog” in English; we may superimpose secondary elements of meaning by means of suffixes, as dogs, dogged, doggedly, etc. In all of these, that part which is not the suffix corresponds exactly with the form “dog” which has a real existence in the language as a complete word by itself. But take now the equivalent word in Spanish; is it “perro” or “perra”? The radical is evidently perr-; but perr- is not a real concrete word in Spanish; perr- may then be called an “abstracted radical.”

Take now a word in English, which appears sometimes as sing, sometimes as sang, and again as sung, or song. If we are going to be as strict as we were in the Spanish example above, we must say that these four words have a common abstracted radical which is s..ng, unless we think we are justified in choosing one of them, let’s say sing, as the primary form.

In the case of “sing, sang, song,” “foot, feet,” “goose, geese,” the grammatical process involved is fairly simple. It involves the change of sound in a vowel, and so may be called vocalic change, or vocalic variation. The change may involve a consonant, instead of a vowel, as in “house” (haus) and “to house” (hauz). It may involve stress, as in Spanish tomo (“I take”), tomó (“he took”). It may involve pitch-tone, as it often does in Chinese:



or in Pit River: astsuj “winter”  
astsūj “winter-house”

All these changes may be grouped under the general heading of inner variation. But some grammarians use other terms: internal change, internal modification, ablaut, inflection, apophony, etc.<sup>5</sup>

Inner variation may occur not only in the radical, but also in the affix.

§

In the same way jānwaḱāādī (“he cut”) is decomposable into j- (“he”), -ānwaḱāād- (“cut”), and -ī inflection proper to 2nd conjugation.

But between the verb-stem and the inflection however, you may introduce, like a sandwich, a suffix that modifies the primary meaning

of the verb-stem; for instance, we can introduce the suffix -wām- (“in twain”):

jānwākāād-wām-ī: “he cut it in twain”

There are twenty-five such suffixes in Pit River; neither are you limited to the use of one; you can use two; for instance, let us add -īin- (“long ago”):

jānwākāād-wām-īin-ī: “he cut it in twain long ago”

You can have three suffixes; introducing the benefactive -ūj- (“for the benefit of someone else”):

jānwākāād-wām-ūjīinī: “he cut it in twain for him long ago”

Introducing the comitative -asjam- (“in company with someone”):

jānwākāād-wām-asjam-ūjīinī: “he cut it in twain with him for someone long ago”

Introducing the habitative -aswadz-:

jānwākāād-wām-asjam-ūjaswadzīinī: “long ago he used to be always in company with someone cutting things in twain for somebody” (“they used to make a team, splitting rails, long ago”).

Verbs of that length are by no means rare in Pit River. It must be realized that the pattern of tones and long and short syllables, up and down, and down and up, helps very much in the recognition of the individual component elements.

Now, what should here be called “stem”? Is -ānwākāād- to be called a stem or a radical? Or should we call “stem” the whole complex -ānwākāād-wām-asjam-ūjaswadzīinī-, of which -ānwākāād- would be the “radical”?

The thing is not easy to decide. For, as I have already said, every verb in Pit River is represented by three forms, which may be called the normal, simplified, and collapsed.<sup>6</sup> For instance in the case of the verb to cut, the three forms are -āākāād-, -ānwākāād-, and -ākāt-. It would seem that the element -..k..d- is common to all three, and maybe



that is what should be called the radical. In the same way, we have for “to eat” -āmm-, aām-, and -ām-. For “to go” -upt-, -āpt-, and -ūpt-.

What are we to consider the “abstract radical” to be in each of those cases? Perhaps the answer is that we cannot abstract the radical, and must remain satisfied with giving it as a multiple form, however awkward this may be. For instance, to the question: what is the radical of the verb to go, in Pit River? let the answer be: -upt-, -āpt-, -ūpt-.<sup>7</sup>

I may appear to have lost the thread of my argument. We started this chapter by talking about the tools of language; we went on to consider two of these tools, affixation and mutation;<sup>8</sup> we were led to discussing roots, radicals, and stems; then I branched off an illustration of the problem of radical vs. stem, as exemplified in the Pit River language. I chose the Pit River, rather than Latin or Spanish, because in analyzing a hitherto unrecorded language we have less difficulty in putting aside the prejudices that we may have acquired by learning a certain language out of an orthodox grammar. I will return to Latin and Spanish later, after a little further consideration of Pit River will have helped us to acquire a freer viewpoint.

So, we have seen that in Pit River, every verb-stem (or verb-radical) appears under a triple form; we have seen also that Pit River arranges, or classifies verbs in six different patterns of Conjugation.

### §

IMPERFECTIVE	PERFECTIVE
$\left. \begin{array}{l} \text{-ba-} \\ \text{-bi-} \end{array} \right\} \text{temporo-modal}$	$\left. \begin{array}{l} \text{-vera-} \\ \text{-vi-} \\ \text{-veri-} \end{array} \right\} \text{temporo-modal}$
$\left. \begin{array}{l} \text{-a-} \\ \text{-rei-} \end{array} \right\} \text{modo-temporal}$	$\left. \begin{array}{l} \text{-veri-} \\ \text{-visse-} \end{array} \right\} \text{modo-temporal}$

It's the old question of trying to represent three dimensions on a two-dimensional flat piece of paper. Those of you who are used to mathematics will realize how the scheme can only be really expressed by a system of co-ordinates, x1, x2, x3, and in a moment we will introduce x4 to represent the passive (category voice).

Language is really poly-dimensional. That is what I am trying to explain when I say that it is like an emerald or a solution of eosin. It shifts as you look at it and change your angle of looking because several planes of coordination of meaning exist. This is a very inadequate way of expressing what I mean, but it is the best I can do.

## §

### Chapter VII

“Metathesis” is a transposition of sounds. It happens frequently in our languages as a mere accident, a *lapsus linguae*, especially in rapid and excited speech, e.g., “porcunopia” for “pornucopia”; “oecunemical” for “oecumenical”; “ax” for “ask”; but it has no functional value. In Latin there are a few not very clear examples: *misceo*, *mixtu* (for *misctus*) *sterno*, *stravi* (for *starvi*). But in Miwok, an Indian language of California, it is a regular grammatical process: *a’win* “to play,” *’auni* “game”; *hu’wat* “to run,” *’huwta* “race.” In Modoc also it is very frequent: “egg”: *napal*, pl. *nanapla*; “root”: *woka*, pl. *wowak*; “tobacco”: *qatskal*, pl. *qaqatslka*; “ear”: *momoats*, pl. *momotsa*; “hip”: *pusaklas*, pl. *pusaslka*; etc.

Both reduplication and metathesis are essentially the process of sound-variation.

It should not be necessary to point out that sound-variation may be superimposed on affixation; in other words, an affix may itself be subjected to sound-variation. The “inflections” of the language of the Indo-European family are based essentially on just such sound-variation of the suffix. Take for instance the declension of a noun or an adjective in Latin: *domin-us*, *domin-i*, *domin-o*, *domin-um*, etc; *bon-us*, *bon-a*, *bon-um*, etc. Here the suffix which expresses “case” is subjected to sound-variation, instead of being invariable as in Basque, or in the languages of the Ural-Altai family (Turkish, Mongol, Finnish, Hungarian, etc.).<sup>9</sup> The same is true of the conjugation of the verb in the languages of the Indo-European family. The suffixes which express the categories Person, Aspect, Time, Mode, etc., are subjected to the sound-variation. In other words, what is called an “inflection” in those languages amounts to nothing else than sound-variation of the suffix. This is the normal technique in these languages; and since these

languages were the first ones subjected to grammatical analysis it was assumed that all languages should behave that way. When languages where the suffix is invariable were discovered, this characteristic struck the grammarians, and they labelled these languages as “agglutinating” (to agglutinate is to stick together as with glue). The term is still in use, and like “inflection” it has a certain value in description, but as an analysis of technique in linguistics it is entirely too superficial.

§

i am trying to keep my mind on a revision of the mss. (I am sober enough for that, just ½ and ½ ), but i have kept the radio going and here they are playing Bach...and all the sounds flow in a cascade, never ending and ever-repeating, in a beautiful summation at every point, of all the simple sounds that flowed in a telling of the simple tale at the beginning of the tale...and it starts again, and it starts again, and it...no, a new voice breaks in...Oh! Jump, i wish i were a musician. But i never will be! Too late!!

§

It seems to me that this is looking at Case from two different angles, and getting them rather mixed up: one angle is the fundamental concept which lies back of the technique, and the other angle is the technique. The fundamental concept is that of relation. That relation is fundamentally that of subject to verb, and of verb to object. It may or may not be expressed by means of special words (prepositions); it may or may not be expressed by the technique of affixation; it may or may not be expressed by the technique of inflection; it may be expressed by mere juxtaposition; it may be expressed by phrase-order, by word-order. All this is a question of technique. But the concept back of it is fundamental, it is present in all languages, it is of the very essence of language. That concept is a concept of relation.

Is that concept a “category”? Yes and no. We have seen that a category is not necessarily expressed in a language. For instance, the category gender (or class) is completely absent in many languages. Mode is almost completely absent in Pomo, but time is fundamental in that language. The reverse is true of Pit River. Of course it is

impossible to avoid all mention of time, or mode, or class, in speech. But the mention may be incidental, casual. Relation however must be expressed; otherwise speech would be senseless.

It would seem, from a certain angle, that relation is a matter of syntax, not a question of category. In a strictly analytical language, one may say that in a certain sense none of the categories find expression, since all words in such a language are primary basic idea-words without any superimposition of a secondary item of meaning. The use of words like “many,” “past,” “female,” does not constitute category. But in a strictly analytical language relation is most decidedly expressed by means of word-order, and also by means of a whole class of idea-words which have lost their primary basic content and serve only as relational words (prepositions).

Now, there is nothing essentially illogical in expressing the relational by other means than word-order or prepositions. One can choose to indicate the relation of noun-subject to verb by adding a suffix to the noun. For instance, in Pit River one adds -wāga to the subject noun. Word-order is of no significance in Pit River, and there are no prepositions. Thus: *īs-wāga wah jīwatwā* means that “the man (is) killed the bear (wah)”; but *īs wah-wāga jīwatwā* means that “the bear killed the man.” All the relations, all the “cases,” are thus expressed in Pit River by suffixes:

- īs-ū* “of the man” (possessive relation)
- īs-a* “by means of man” (instrumental relation)
- īs-ādē* “on, in, at the man” (locative relation)
- īs-wal* “with the man” (comitative relation)

All the above are clearly “relation,” syntactic relation if you prefer to call it that. The most essential syntactic relations are thus satisfied in Pit River. But what about less essential syntactic relations expressed in other languages by means of prepositions? There are no prepositions in Pit River. Let us see. Let us take for instance the relation expressed in English by the preposition “for” (in some languages called the prolicative case, or the beneficiary case). In Pit River this concept is expressed not by adding a suffix to the noun, but by inserting in the verb a special suffix -ūj- between the verb-stem and the inflectional ending. Thus: “he works” (*jīntālūumā*) becomes “he works for” (*jīntālūum-ūj-ī*).

For instance, “Coyote works for Fox” (Coyote is dzēēm, and Fox is kuān, and the suffix for the subjective case is -wāga): dzēēm-wāga kuān jīntālūm-ūj-ī. Does that give you the feeling that the benefactive here is treated as “case,” as “relation”? There are twenty-five suffixes in that group in Pit River. Of them, nine have clearly nothing to do with relation; they express such ideas as the past, the future, in twain, with a twisting motion, the habitative, etc. Four are usually considered “cases” in languages that have cases: the beneficiary, the comitative, the inessive (into), and the elative (out of). Three might by some people be considered as involving relation of a sort: the reflexive, the reciprocal, and the causative. Five might very well be called “locative” cases in other languages where they would be expressed by suffixes to the noun, instead of to the verb; they express direction (thither, hither, downward, upward, around).

I cannot help the feeling that here what should be regarded essentially as relation, is not so regarded by the Pit River language psychology. In other words, Pit River apprehends certain kinds of relation in a rather concrete manner. Categories like time, aspect, class, mode, number, person, in fact all the categories except perhaps voice, and certain kinds of space, are essentially concrete. When you modify a primary basic idea-word by adding a secondary item of meaning, that item of meaning is after all concrete in the sense that time, number, space, are concrete. I find it difficult to express what I mean; perhaps it will help if I say that relation is not opposed to the concrete, but in another sense. That sense cannot be expressed in any other way than by saying that it is relational.

In Latin we find the same mixing of concrete and relational. Latin has cases. But these cases express not only the relational, but such concrete categories as male and female and other classes, and number, besides using the case to correlate adjective and noun. Probably a majority of the synthetic languages exhibit such mixing.

Sapir coined a word for the concrete in the sense that I have tried to describe. He called it the “derivational.” In chapter V of his magnificent book on language, he brings out most beautifully this antithesis between the relational and derivational. I wish I could quote the whole of that chapter (indeed I would like to quote the whole book...), but I must be content with a few excerpts:

...our analysis may seem a bit labored, but only because we are so accustomed to our well-worn grooves of expression that they have come to be felt as inevitable. Yet destructive analysis of the familiar is the only method of approach to an understanding of fundamentally different methods of expression. When one has learned to feel what is fortuitous or illogical or unbalanced in the structure of his own language, he is already well on the way towards a sympathetic grasp of the expression of the various classes of concepts in alien types of speech. Not everything that is "outlandish" is intrinsically illogical or far-fetched. It is often precisely the familiar that a wider perspective reveals as the curiously exceptional. From a purely logical standpoint it is obvious that there is no inherent reason why the concepts expressed in our sentence should have been singled out, treated, and grouped as they have been and not otherwise. The sentence is the outgrowth of historical and of unreasoning psychological forces rather than of a logical synthesis of elements that have been clearly grasped in their individuality[...]

...what, then, are the absolutely essential concepts in speech, the concepts that must be expressed if language is to be a satisfactory means of communication? Clearly we must have, first of all, a large stock of basic or radical concepts, the concrete wherewithal of speech. We must have objects, actions, qualities to talk about, and these must have their corresponding symbols in independent words or in radical elements. No proposition, however abstract its intent, is humanly possible without a tying on at one or more points to the concrete world of sense. In every intelligible proposition at least two of these radical ideas must be expressed, though in exceptional cases one or even both may be understood from the context. And, secondly, such relational concepts must be expressed as mooring the concrete concepts to each other and construct a definite, fundamental form of proposition. In this fundamental form there must be no doubt as to the nature of the relations that obtain between the concrete concepts. We must know what concrete concept is directly or indirectly related to what other, and how[...]

...if I wish to communicate an intelligible idea about...(here a sentence like "my man kill tiger," and so on)...it is not enough to state the linguistic symbols for these concrete ideas in any order, higgledy-piggledy, trusting that the hearer may construct some kind of a relational pattern out of the general probabilities of the case. The fundamental syntactic relations must be unambiguously expressed. I can afford to be silent on the subject of time and place and number and of a host of other possible types of concepts, but I

can find no way of dodging the issue as to who is doing the killing. There is no known language that can or does dodge it, any more than it succeeds in saying something without the use of symbols for the concrete concepts. We are thus once more reminded of the distinction between essential or unavoidable relational concepts and the dispensable type. The former are universally expressed, the latter are but sparsely developed in some languages, elaborated with the bewildering exuberance in some others. But what prevents us from throwing in these “dispensable” or “secondary” relational concepts with the large, floating group of derivational, qualifying concepts that we have already discussed?

I cannot continue to quote forever from this most profound book on language that I know, but I shall cull just one sentence which I might well have used as an invocation before the preface:

Logically there is an impassable gulf between the Concrete Basic Concepts and the Pure Relational Concepts, but the illogical, metaphorical genius of speech has wilfully spanned the gulf and set up a continuous gamut of concepts and forms that leads imperceptibly from the crudest of materialities to the most subtle of relations.<sup>10</sup>

Perhaps the reader will get from these quotations of Sapir the same feelings that I do, namely that the relational is not a category (Sapir does not speak anywhere of “categories”; perhaps what he calls the derivational is what I call categories—or to be more precise: the essence of category is the derivational). The relational is perhaps an angle of polarization, an angle from which to look at language, a plane of division. It would divide languages into two planes: the derivational and the relational.

Yet, the relational is constantly being mixed up with the derivational, by the genius. Perhaps there is no solution to this riddle, but to accept it as a riddle; which is what Sapir seems to me to do.

I think that “Case” is a particular example of this mix-up. There would be no need for the term “case” if relation were treated purely as relation. It would never appear as one of the categories. It appears as one of the categories because, in languages with which we are most familiar, the derivational is mixed up with the relational. The

grammatical processes of suffixation or of sound-variation, the technique by means of which the relational is expressed, have nothing to do with it. Relation as expressed in the Pit River noun (not in the verb) is pure relation. Relation as expressed in English, and even in Latin, by prepositions alone, is pure relation, not a category. But in the Pit River verbs, in the Latin declensions, in the few English examples like “him” and “hers,” relation is mixed up with the derivational, and hence becomes a category, the category known to grammarians as “Case.”

There are some other points on which my mind is not clear in regard to the relational.

What about the category “Voice”? Isn’t there something relational about Voice? Does it not, in the main, establish a relation between subject and verb, between verb and object? But the moment we take that view a mere twist of the polaroscope changes the plane, and we see causation, transitivity, reflexivity, as concrete as the “flow” of the action which is the basis of the category aspect.

What about the category “Space”? When we say “I am in the house,” “I went into the house,” are the prepositions “in” and “into” relational or derivational? In English they are prepositions, and therefore from the point-of-view of English as mainly an analytical language, they express relation: (I) (into) (house). But in Pit River the same idea is treated differently:

“I go” (No, it does not work with a verb like “to go” in Pit River. To go is in a class apart. But I am sure it will work with “to look”)

sīnīmāādzi “I look”  
 ḍillūūdzi “a house”

sīnīmāādz-āālū-ī “I look into a house”

### §

It was evident to the first savage, to the first baboon. It would have been evident always to the end of time to the very last descendent of the baboons were it not that they had to sacrifice this knowledge for another (perhaps a lesser) boon of speech.



Speech mixed everything in a hopeless hodge-podge.  
It was no longer possible to use logic.  
The baboons in the trees gave it up in despair.  
Man kept on, stubbornly.

§

Chapter IX

THE CRUX OF LANGUAGE

I think I have made it clear, in all the other chapters. I think I have made it clear that there is no solution, and there can be no solution to the problem of language. I think I have brought the problems of language, slowly, gradually, from this and that angle.

I have tried to show that it was a “multi-aspectual” problem, that you could train a polaroscope on it, that you could look at it from this angle, and then from that angle.

This is a very short chapter. I think I have failed to explain what I meant.

## NOTES

1/ In the phrase “many deer,” the technique is analytic; the concept of plurality is conveyed by a separate word. Similarly, the phrase “will love” is analytic.

2/ The same sort of merry-go-round can be observed in fashions, and indeed in all forms of art.

3/ At least, not related etymologically. There is a very important question hanging here. What is the test of cousinship in languages? Etymology (tracing descent through vocabulary), or morphology (tracing descent through grammatical categories)? This is a very moot question, which we will take up later in detail. But here is a good example to be noted for further reference.

4/ It is interesting to note a fairly recent trend toward using the same adverbs as suffixes with a slightly different meaning. Compare over-turn and turn-over, up-take and take-up, out-let, and let-out, etc.

5/ See Jespersen, “Language,” Ch.II, § 5.

6/ When you write the grammar of a hitherto unrecorded language, you often have to invent particular terms to describe what you find in that language.

7/ Similarly, in Spanish: “to come” (ven-, veng-, vjen-, vin-); “to say” (des-, dig-, dis-, dih-).

8/ Another term for “inner variation.” It has the advantage of being short and handy. The reader might just as well get used to handling all these different synonymous terms, because all the various authors do.

9/ This is not absolutely true, but it is true largely.

10/ The reader must realize by now what a debt I owe Sapir. When his book came out, twenty years ago, I read it first in amazement, then in despair, and wrote him, whom I had never met, impulsively: “You wrote the very book I had hoped to write!” There followed a long correspondence over the years, but I only met him twice. He lived in Chicago, and I in San Francisco. His was a most fascinating personality. I wish I could have lived in the inhospitable climate of Chicago. He went into some very abstruse, mathematical-like investigations of language. Swadish, one of his pupils, was all for it. Dyk, another of his pupils who had really worked with real Indians and their languages, was for a more realistic treatment. Sapir then died.

DARRYL “BABE” WILSON

## Pit River Country Today: Destination Unknown

Setting: The high northeastern desert, from Likely (*Hammawi*) to Goose Lake (*Kostalektewi*), July 8, 1990.

It is still the same out here, just as when Jaime de Angulo, “Buckaroo Doc,” wandered through this high desert with the Pit River Indians in the late ’20s and early ’30s. Morning sun reaches long fingers between the sage brush casting ebony shadows. Over there in the little draw the tip of a juniper is aflame where the sun kisses it. Farther still, the staggered forest is sprinkled with gold. Moon, full and brilliant, looks upon the land, frosting where the sun has not yet touched.

Listen! It might be only the movement of the wind—or it might be somebody calling to the morning spirits—a distant and soft whispering with some intended velocity. Further, below and far to the west, there is a faint rattle—like a Model A sputtering slowly along, or is it a rattling of bushes in the morning breeze?

The perfume of sage is mixed with the aroma of juniper and it wafts across solitude. In the shadows to the south, old coyote yodels to parting night. On a distant hilltop to the east, a young one answers. In the crisp of dawn three Canadian Honkers, wings whistling upon the winds, move to the north and east towards Goose Lake, their click-trumpeting in the distance growing faint as they, like a melody, move into time.

In the early calm, I pick some pregnant juniper berries (“medicine” to my twin boys) and pop them in my mouth. I give some to *Ch-ar-tes-ee* (Hoss) and *Ro-nee-wee* (Boss). As I bite into the berries there is an explosion of sour pitch. Bitter. Bitter! It must have been the same for the twins. They keep the “medicine” in their mouths but try to voice its instant action in excited mumbles. As the fresh juice from the berries oozes down our throats, we notice a blue-shadow

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movement in the blue-shadow brush over to the left. We freeze. *Dose!*

Alert, they move out of the draw, ears and tails motionless. Silent. Mist from their nostrils puffs, then is gone—magic. As shadows among the grayness of dawn, *dose* melt back into the blue morning like silver trout diving back into the vastness of the big river.

Last evening I read, again, de Angulo's *Indians in Overalls*. This morning my imagination moves me to smell the burning of juniper and sage, of buck brush and cedar. From a nearby draw, I "hear" a garbled shout and carefree laughter. There is a muffled groaning, almost the sound of an engine, then solitude—or was it the shifting winds?

We listen, then make our way across the soft rolling hills through "avenues" where we can walk and not scrape against the brush or make noises by snapping dried branches underfoot. An old barbed-wire fence, stretched by many winter snows, leans over in a long curve. We open the wires and cautiously crawl through them. "Boss" is hung up on a barb and has a wrestling match with his jacket before he is free. Topping a small rise, we look into the curving draw where my imagination had conjured up a fire just a moment ago. In the dim light an old and rusty 14" wheel, red paint peeling, lies nearby—the sight bringing to mind the description of the "tin lizzies" that de Angulo wrote so clearly about. The ancient machinery would break down and be dismantled and fixed by our people—with a screwdriver, a hammer, an adjustable end wrench and some wire.

Then, when the *hudatsi* (heart) or *himal* (brain) was repaired, there was a general resting of the people—sometimes for weeks. Jaime would try to locate *wehalo* (chief) to see why the people were still resting a week after the jalopy was fixed. He found no *wehalo*. But, just when he was beginning to rest, there was a shout of "*Lehupta!*" with moments of chaos, then off they went deeper into the mountain desert.

It is still the same here. The pickups and cars still break down. There are still the hammers and the single wrench. There is still a variety of wires available to fix whatever it is that broke on a rock as the old vehicle came across the open prairie to the unannounced yet pre-arranged rendezvous.

In the old days the gatherings were for communion with each other and with the spirits assigned to protect the land (the *dini-howis* and *damagoomis*, the “powers” that will bring either good or bad luck, sometimes depending upon the moon condition of the violated wife). However, the greater reason for the excursion was to re-affirm acceptance with the Great Power that turns the earth around the sun and the sun around a greater wonder.

The “old gatherings” lasted sometimes an entire summer. Now, they last only one night, usually around a flickering fire that paints silhouettes powder orange on one side and powder black on the other. There is still the small talk and the laughter. There is still the broken-down truck or car. There is still the goodness of being together, and at dawn, there is still a hollering across the vastness, *Lehupta!* All of the vehicles roar their engines and the people depart in a variety of directions, some of us not seeing each other for years—or, never again.

Like a huge moth, an owl floats out of a juniper tree and glides silently into the shadows of the little gully to the south. Moon fades from silver to diluted lemon. Reluctantly it moves to the west. Sun, strong now, shakes the whole world awake. We hurry to our car.

In the distance, moving slowly through the brush, a hunch-backed shadow is “calling” to the spirits of morning. The shadow disappears in the sage brush. I hear a “tin lizzie” rattle up to the top of the distant hill and a hoarse, accented voice calling to the moving shadow. There is silence, and there is more calling. Then there is a yelling! and some unprintable words thrown! by “the shadow” at the person driving the jalopy!

“Jaime interrupting Sukmit who just about tamed a new power,” I mutter. Silence. The twins and I get into our old Chevy and softly head southward.

In my lingering thoughts I vividly see hesitating jalopies filled with our people bouncing along with them. Destinations unknown. On the seat of his old jalopy a notebook, dirty, torn, and oil-stained, but scribbled with so many memories of “his” *Indians in Overalls*, my precious people dwelling, yet, beside the Pit River.

## Land that Has Been Here Since the First Coyote Gathered It Up: Tracking the *Old Time Stories*

### I.

A few years ago I published a book of folklore titled *Tracks along the Left Coast: Jaime de Angulo & Pacific Coast Culture*. Even though people call it a biography I never thought of it like that. I imagined I was writing an ideogramic account of bohemian poets, wilderness encounters, linguistics, Native California mythtelling, and the still-present, but harder and harder to find, spirit powers of Alta California, the “señores of the brush.” My hope was to sketch out the ecology of the world Jaime de Angulo and his wife Nancy inhabited. By using the term Left Coast I wanted to invoke the anarcho-pacifist stance de Angulo had held since his college days when he moved in socialist and feminist circles. It was a stance held roughly, almost instinctively, by his Big Sur neighbors Robinson Jeffers, Henry Cowell, Lynda Sargent, and Henry Miller.

When I turned to de Angulo’s culminating work of oral and written storytelling, I titled the chapter “The Real History of California,” hoping to locate traces of what de Angulo had learned of the Old Ways, which lie just beneath our highways, cities, suburbs, and under our current assumptions about culture and history. I had to distinguish three separate but related works. First there is a tangled-up collection of *Indian Tales* manuscripts, existing in several different states or conditions, some carrying the handwritten title, *indian tales for a little boy and girl*. By 1949 and 1950, the final year or two of de Angulo’s life, the tales were turned into a brilliantly elaborate manuscript. Robert Duncan, serving as household secretary, helped type and format it. With “fonetik” spelling, a biomorphic layout on each page, multiple drawings incorporated into the text, de Angulo’s own specially devised musical notations, and large amounts of Achumawi, Pomo, Karok, and Shasta language, this became the living “score” for de Angulo’s recitals on the newly founded KPFA radio in Berkeley. KPFA referred to those original tapes and broadcasts as *Old*

*Time Stories*, a title the station used for decades when it rebroadcast the episodes. I like *Old Time Stories* for the oral, radio version. This title seems to have been de Angulo's own. This is a bedrock work of North American literature, maybe the defining volume of the postmodern archaic, and an early manifesto for bioregional living. It holds a mix of languages, all Native Californian but for the framework tale itself told in Anglo-American English.

§

It must be one of the oldest frames for oral mythtelling. A group of characters—in this case people who are animals, who live in the beforetime, the mythtime, when people were animals and animals people—go on a journey. One of the reasons to take a journey is to visit other tribes, meet up with relatives you haven't seen in a while, and to hear everybody's dramatic accounts of what happened in mythtime, including how Coyote helped with world-making, how he caused irrevocable havoc, often got himself killed, then came back to life. (Coyote, we say, often gets killed; but he never *dies*.) Journeys are also important to learn something of the lifeways of people in distant lands, swap songs and medicine objects, gamble together, meet a possible mate—and maybe most important, to compare thoughts on “how the world was made.” Who made the world, how they did it, what was here before, and so forth, must be one of the oldest and most respectable intellectual quests. Children in particular can't get enough, and much of the *Old Time Stories* was designed for the radio-listening children of the East Bay in 1950. Only modern adults seem to lose that fervor for hearing accounts of world-making. The least curious of adults then fixate on a single theme—even turn it into religious dogma—creationism, evolution, Big Bang, remote demiurge, Father god, or some other notion, and forget the delight of arguing over nuances, contradictions, and the plain damn foolishness of it all.

Here I want to draw one important distinction. To all the approximately 500 language groups we know of that populate (or did populate) North America prior to European incursions, the fundamental literary distinction is between “old time stories” and all other sorts of oral or written art. “Myths and texts” would be the salvage anthropologist's two categories. De Angulo used the Achumawi or Pit River Indian term, *dilasani'qi*, for tales of myth time.

Other stories, songs, narratives, chronicles, and so forth, take place in historic, or maybe hearsay time. But the “old time stories” exist in their own special dimension.

When I listened closely to de Angulo’s *dilasani’qi* radio broadcasts, comparing details of the journey he outlines with his many ethnographic and linguistic writings, I realized that he has described a journey through real territory. Would it be possible to identify the route through existing Northern California? That is what I have tried to do in this essay.

II.

“Even their linguistic concepts seem to reflect the nature of the  
land they live in.”<sup>1</sup>

In 1953 Gary Snyder reviewed *Indian Tales* for the journal *Midwest Folklore*. Then a folklore student at Indiana University in Bloomington, Snyder says something prescient about the book that comes out of his studies and his own keen instinct about mythtelling. It is, he observes, “a story that might be told by Indians of a real journey through objective territory by real people, after the telling of it had been filtered through several generations and the real people become confused with the half-animals of folklore.” De Angulo’s characters who make this journey are modeled on his own family: Bear, Antelope Woman, whose hoofs are tiny French heels in his drawings—the sort his wife Nancy favored—and two children, Fox Boy and Baby Quail. The family travels in a sunwise journey, and I think I can get most of the geography identified: the objective territory that really is out there. De Angulo was not making up rivers and mountains, watershed drainages, or ancient migration routes. He was describing country he knew. He had traveled much of it by horse, car, or on foot.

“I have mixed tribes that don’t belong together,” de Angulo says in his foreword to *Indian Tales*. On the tapes he places a Modoc song in the Miwok story-cycle recounted by Coyote. As Snyder observed, “A variety of details show that de Angulo truly did mix the tribes up.” I do not think he mixed up the geography though. He was an early bioregional thinker and his writings have become sneakily important documents for Alta California, an entity that has been consciously developing as a bioregion among counterculture people since the 1970s.<sup>2</sup> Beneath



the political boundaries and Anglo-American assumptions, an older and a newer world has taken shape—a world that has always, actually, been here. De Angulo minutely details the actual terrain, down to characteristics of specific hills, creeks, trails, vegetation, and climate.

The Bear family can be readily identified as Pomo. They come from one of a cluster of villages that stood near current-day Kelseyville, several miles west of the shore of Clear Lake. Clear Lake—if you want to use a map—lies ninety miles due north of San Francisco. The best known of its western shore villages was Shabegok, home of the Habe-napo or “rock people” of the Eastern Pomo. This was where William Ralgalan Benson grew up (his mother was Habe-napo). Benson came to be a renowned basket-maker, knife-maker, holder of tribal lore, linguist, and skilled raconteur. He was one of Jaime and Nancy’s closest friends, and the first person de Angulo did linguistic and ethnographic work with. De Angulo writes:

The Habe-napo live on the western shore of Clear Lake, and this is a mountain lake, fairly large, some one hundred miles north of San Francisco. This is a pleasant region of small fertile valleys where wild roots and seeds once grew in abundance; where acorns, laurel nuts, buckeye chestnuts were once plentiful; where the streams were once well stocked with fish; where the hillsides were once covered with numerous bands of deer. The lake itself, surrounded by mountains, teemed with fish, and flocks of aquatic birds of all kinds were constantly flying by.<sup>3</sup>

The past tense in the above paragraph shows how much had already shifted by the 1920s when de Angulo spent time there. Anglo settlers, intent on ranching, timber, and mining, had little use for the old biodiversity. By 1976 when Bob Callahan issued the little fragmented volume *Shabegok* (a hodgepodge of outtakes from de Angulo’s KPFA tapes), he wrote: “All that remains of the village of Shabegok today is a rather large midden located by the side of a natural creek in the northwestern corner of a huge orchard on Soda Bay Road outside Kelseyville.”<sup>4</sup> In the forty years since Callahan wrote, Clear Lake has become a destination for tourism and has a newly emergent wine industry. Soda Bay Road was recently widened, condominiums have sprung up, and even the midden known to Callahan would be hard to locate.

At the outset of the complicated versions of the *Stories*, Turtle Old Man, modeled on William Benson, tells the Bear family he does not want to travel with them. He will “watch over your house while you’re gone.” He does ask the small party to bring him back some obsidian from the “Mountain of Black Glass” and a few duck feathers. Heading west, the party climbs a ridge the first day and can see the ocean. Now in the Foreword to *Indian Tales* de Angulo points the reader to what I think was his principal sourcebook—other than his own field work and writings—Alfred Kroeber’s 1925 *Handbook of the Indians of California*. “Excellent, comprehensive,” de Angulo calls it, “a fat book [995 pages]; and you may find it pretty dry (but all the scientific books written by anthropologists are bound to be dry). But Kroeber knows the California Indians as nobody else does. And in his book you will find a complete bibliography.”<sup>5</sup> He is not putting down Kroeber’s accomplishments. As to his own singular ethnographic style, de Angulo tells the reader, “I have also written a dozen or so articles. But they are mostly technical works on linguistics, and would put you to sleep in five minutes.”<sup>6</sup>

In Kroeber’s *Handbook*, in the section on the Pomo, he provides a detailed map. You need to squint to see the terrain it delineates, but you can make out a trailhead from Shabegok, near modern-day Lakeport, leading almost due west. This dotted-line trail crosses the tangled landscape of the Coast Range—here the Mayacamas Mountains—with its steep ridges, angled valleys, creeks, pines, breathtaking redwood, deer, and rabbits. It is this trail the Bear party would have followed. The trail might be forty or fifty miles long, reaching the coast at Point Arena, just a few miles south of the town of Mendocino. There is a partly paved road on current maps, heading west from Ukiah, which looks to me like it approximates the old route.

And yet, “Coyote country has not been mapped,” says Kroeber’s daughter, Ursula K. Le Guin. She adds, almost coyly, “If utopia is a place that does not exist, then surely (as Lao Tzu would say) the way to get there is by the way that is not a way.” However, what is certain is that, prior to Spanish entry into Alta California, trails led everywhere through the territory. Trails do not mean maps of course, and Le Guin quotes her father: “The California Indians. . . usually refuse point blank to make even an attempt [to draw a map].”<sup>7</sup> So we might need to take our own referral to roadmaps, guidebooks, or GPS with a touch of self-mockery.

Before they have gone far from Pomo territory, the Bear party or Pomo family stops to visit, gamble, and stay a night with the Hawk people, and a subsequent night with the Flint people. The Flints, according to the Hawks, “live right at the foot of Black Glass Mountain. That mountain is made entirely of black obsidian, and some of it is just right for knives and arrowheads. But the Flint people have the sole rights to it. . . . They are crusty people, quick to anger, but it’s only the surface. They really are good people.”<sup>8</sup> De Angulo may be playing a bit with the geography. Mount Konocti or “Woman Mountain,” near Kelseyville, but in Wintun territory just to the east, is in an area filled with volcanic domes and mountains and was the main local source for obsidian or flint. In the 1920s it had been named Uncle Sam Mountain—that’s one name de Angulo uses to identify it, another is Big Mountain. Today it has reverted to its original name, Konocti. It sits on the lakeshore several miles east of Kelseyville.

The Big Valley Rancheria of the Pomo, right off Soda Bay Road, has many obsidian arrowheads on display, part of their heritage. However, I think the Flint people are meant to be a small group known as the Lile’ek to the west. The Lile’ek are linguistically related to the more northern Yuki, but had their own small territory which was surrounded by Pomo lands. Both the Yuki and the Lile’ek had among them obsidian shamans. Kroeber provides some fine “dry” accounts of these doctors, who keep obsidian blades in small buckskin sacks. They rattle their “flints” in these pouches to invoke supernatural power. In de Angulo’s tale, one of the Flint chiefs gives Fox Boy just such a bundle of magic flints. He sees something admirable in the little boy: he’s a good and fearless gambler. The buckskin collection of flints, says the chief to the little boy, may prove handy when magical power is needed.

After staying the night with the Flints, the Bear family “tramped all day along the trail.” They walked up and down valleys and hills into increasingly remote terrain. “There were no villages, no people. . . . the trail winding in and through the brush, through the chaparral.” Here, far from any settlement, they happen onto a house with a smoke-hole used for the entrance—not a Pomo form of architecture, which typically had a ground-level door with a mat of tule-reeds or a buckskin to cover it. This house, built in a style commonly found north and farther east, with its entrance through a smoke hole on top, is Coyote Old Man’s.

Now nobody can say if Coyote really lives here or whether he might have houses in many places. It is also unclear if anyone expected to meet up with him. Coyote is a wanderer and really belongs to no one place. But the group is close to Lake Miwok territory, and the first set of old time stories, told that night by Coyote, is a sequence of tales about how Weasel burned the world, how Coyote brought a flood to extinguish the flames, about a journey in search of fire to bring comfort to the ruined world, another journey in search of the sun, and finally a repopulating of the world with people. Not how the world was made. How it was remade after being destroyed.

De Angulo heard this cycle of interconnected stories from Maggie Johnson, a Lake Miwok woman, in about 1927. The tales were “confirmed by Salvador Chapo, of the same tribe; told in practically the same terms by Clifford Salvador, of the Southwestern Pomo.”<sup>9</sup> De Angulo had written about Johnson, a member of a new religion that had emerged among the local Indians, in an earlier essay. “The first one to be possessed of the new spirit was Maggie Johnson, herself a Western Miwok from the Middletown rancheria, but married to Henry Johnson, a Southeastern Pomo from the Sulphur Bank ranchería. She got her revelations about two years ago, but did not come out in the open with them until last year, when she cured a Thomas from the Sulphur Bank ranchería, and also a woman from the same place. These two now started to smoke Chesterfield cigarettes like her, and got power, and began to cure other people around.”<sup>10</sup> The tale-cycle heard from Maggie Johnson opens with a recognizable formula: “They all lived at Túleyomi.” Túleyomi according to de Angulo means “Middle-Village,” and is the site of present-day Middletown, south of Clear Lake. Kroeber identifies it with Lower Lake, about twelve miles north and on the lake itself. Over a divide to the south, Kroeber adds, is Oloyeme, “coyote place.” “This region was named after the coyote in all the surrounding languages.”

Another tale told to de Angulo by Clifford Salvador—which he holds back for much later on the KPFA tapes—has Coyote borrowing feathers from some blackbirds and sticking them all over his body. “Now he could fly.” But full of more puffery than prudence, he ranges too high; the blackbirds, who’d given him their feathers, disgusted at this self-inflation, pluck the feathers out. And Coyote “came tumbling down and crashed on the ground at Hunáday.” He was killed of

course. Once he was nothing but a heap of bones, however, the bones (“Coyote’s bones”) began whistling for a doctor to put him together. After a series of misadventures—in which his body gets reconstituted all wrong—two medicine-men brothers stick him together “the right way.”

Hunáday is current-day Sulphur Banks, on the eastern shore of Clear Lake. A place of geological complexity and tilting strata, the soil is striated with sulfur, mercury, good clay for brick making, and other minerals. When de Angulo was hearing the story from Clifford Salvador, the place was under control of the Sulphur Bank Mine, one of the nation’s notable open-pit mercury producers. The mine was leaching contaminants into Clear Lake. The Bureau of Indian Affairs used tailings toxic with mercury to construct a road out to the adjacent Elem Indian Colony in the 1970s. That road and the mine itself—where Coyote fell to earth in the beforetime—were declared an EPA superfund site in 1990.

In de Angulo’s framework story, this mysterious Coyote Old Man joins the party for their travels north. He may or may not be related to—or even the same as—Coyote of the myth-time. How a sagely observant, and quite circumspect old Coyote, connects with the Coyote who shows himself a reckless braggart—who can say? It is worth noting that in his initial publication of this story, de Angulo did outline the riddle of the several coyotes. “Now, in dealing with the Coyote character in western American folk-lore,” he writes, “it is important to differentiate between two things.” In the first, de Angulo writes, the Coyote figure is “at the same time a fool and a clever magician, a sort of oxymoron, always getting into trouble, always getting out of it by his cleverness.” He contrasts this with the Grandfather Coyote Theme, in which the Coyote is everyone’s grandfather, and “is full of kindness and forbearance. He is Grandpa Coyote....” And de Angulo distinguishes one further Coyote, or the “Theme of Coyote as the Spoiling Creator”: “He would like to make the world a disagreeable, nasty place, and is only restrained with difficulty...the evil of the world is traceable to Coyote.”<sup>11</sup>

### III.

“that’s a veri poor stori!’ said Bear, ‘there is no point to it!’  
‘WHY! it’s a veri gud stori!!’ the children sed  
Coyote was laughing and laughing”<sup>12</sup>

Shortly after Coyote joins them, the family meet up with Bear’s brother, Grizzly, and his strange, intuitive, precocious daughter, Oriole. Oriole Girl is fiercely preoccupied with medicine power. The expanded kin-group travels northwards, towards Karok country. Antelope hopes to visit her sister, who has married into the Karok tribe, and this is one objective of the journey.

Karok settlements lie along the Klamath River, with three principal clusters: “at the mouths of Camp Creek, Salmon River, and Clear Creek,” says Kroeber in his *Handbook*. “The land of the Karok is substantially defined by this array of villages along the Klamath. There were few permanent settlements on any affluents.” He modestly acknowledges that knowledge “of the Karok settlements is still involved in confusion.”

This will be a long journey for the Bear party. After having headed west, they will now walk a hundred and twenty miles due north before they reach the Klamath. The trail away from Clear Lake, over the Coast Range, goes all the way to the coast on Kroeber’s map, but the travelers only see the ocean from several ridgetops. I think they turn north around present-day Ukiah or Willits. What’s certain is that they spend several nights among massive redwoods; most of the unfelled survivors are now clustered in a series of California state parks. The Bear party’s route at this point leads more or less along what is today Interstate 101, the “redwood highway,” where the most accessible old groves stand.

A hundred and twenty miles by foot is a long journey indeed. But what is distance? Or time? What are our lives for? Maybe we live to dream, and to ruminate on time, distance, and the palpability of other life forms. Humans, and perhaps half-human, half-animal people, live a hundred years if we are lucky. But the manuscript asks “hwat iz a sentyuri to a redwuud tree?” Given how full of other lives the world is, how sentient those numerous other beings are, and how much medicine power they can hold, one must show courtesy. Especially when traveling, since it makes you a perpetual guest.

Old Man Coyote sed an espeshal gud-nayt tu  
dheyr nyuw howsts, dhe ring of redwuud-triyyz “gud-nayt,  
Redwoods, protekt us in aur sliyp! wi ar gud piypl  
travling on aur wey tu the kowst wi hav no kwarel  
with eniwun wiy wish harm to nowun gud-nayt!”<sup>13</sup>

Somewhere around Eel River country they meet up with a character nobody could forget: Loon Woman. She is a doctor, though like all doctors rather secretive if not downright coy about it. If an actual acquaintance hovers behind Loon, it would be Old Kate, the Modoc doctor, whom de Angulo portrayed unforgettably in “Indians in Overalls.” Of the many forms of doctoring known to California, Loon Woman uses the shamanic—or “northern”—version, common to the Achumawi and Modoc. De Angulo draws his description for Loon’s scary but effective doctoring from what he had himself seen, watching and helping Blind Hall and Sukmit (both Achumawi), and Old Kate, the Modoc. Loon must first summon from the bush her *dama’agomi* (Achumawi word for medicine power, or poison). Loon’s poison is Big Lizard, *Wa’wa’la-lünnēh*, “the great bereaved one” in Achumawi. “My medicine! Come!” she cries, *ittū dāmāagōmī tūnnōo!*

On her overnight visit to the camp of the travelers, Loon not only sings songs for her medicines, but also sings a song for the baby Quail. “That song,” she tells her friends, belongs to the Wolf Tribe (Achumawi), who speak “a nordh3rn langwidzh.”

“Iz dhat wher yuw k3m fr3m?” asks Oriole, in de Angulo’s “fonetik” typescript. “I am a little like your Doctor Coyote,” Loon replies. “I belong everywhere. I am a wanderer, as we say...it’s a lonely life, peopl don’t like us loons.”<sup>14</sup> Pressed by the children, Loon tells why her people have such a troubled reputation. It is a story of her ancestral mother, the Loon Woman, who burnt the world. De Angulo heard the story from Mary Martin, “an old woman of the Atwamzini group” (the Pit River name might be cognate to the word “big,” probably referring to Big Valley). “She herself learned it from ‘Captain Jim,’ who was already an old chief when she was yet a young woman.”<sup>15</sup> Her tale opens with a formulaic phrase, just as the earlier Miwok tales did. Only the location is altered: “They were all living at Tulukuupi....”

That’s what the tapes say. It is one of the stories de Angulo tells twice.<sup>16</sup> In the manuscript, though, de Angulo has not written Tulukuupi; it says Alām’seegi.<sup>17</sup> Both are Achumawi villages (Tulu’kupi

is Happy Valley). So are other villages that will appear on the tapes: Dalmo'ma (or Dalmooma), which gets named in one of Loon Woman's principal medicine songs; Astariwa, from "hot" or Hot Springs (Canby Valley). De Angulo will also refer to a band of Achumawi, the Qosalé'ta, who live north of Alturas; the name, from *qōsi*, juniper, means "a hillside covered with juniper." So he knew a great many villages, not just Tulukuupi where Loon Woman's fury occurs. Kroeber's encyclopedic *Handbook* simply says, "We know no Pit River villages." De Angulo's fieldwork did not begin until the early twenties, and Kroeber probably had no opportunity to see de Angulo's full Achumawi studies, since Kroeber published his "fat book" in 1925. The de Angulo material did not start to come into print until several years later.

Eight different peoples knew the story of Loon Woman, according to Kroeber's wife Theodora, who tells a composite version in *The Inland Whale* (1959). These eight tribes lived adjacent to one another, all in far northern California. Outside these territories the story seems unknown. Of the Loon Woman story itself, Theodora Kroeber says its parts are like "a jig-saw puzzle, only partially assembled, of pieces old and new." It is a tale reminiscent of Aeschylus: incest, humiliation, murder, fratricide, and the destruction of a great house. Its climax comes when the ancestral Loon burns the entire world in her fury, clearing out the old inhabitants, making way for newcomers. It was the point that the old-time animal-people, the FIRST PEOPLE, turned into real animals, and vanished into their species-particular habitats, making way for humans, *Homo sapiens*, the new "generalist," as biologists would say.

De Angulo has softened the Loon Woman tale a little for his radio audience—one of the few instances where I would take his original 1931 version over the way he tells it for radio broadcast. I invite anyone curious to check out the two versions for yourself, with the more bawdy one the more accurate retelling.

### §

“...an old person who is in charge of making the world again every year, just the way it was made in the beginning.”<sup>18</sup>



Just before the party reaches the Klamath drainage and the Karok territories, another group of travelers joins them. These are Antelope people: Paiute, from the east side of the Warner Range, far to the northeast in California. They are, of course, Antelope Woman's people. De Angulo had visited Fort Bidwell briefly in the summer of 1926. Thanks to help from the government agent Mr. O. C. Gray, he had spent time with Perry Parker and Bige Archie, as well as George Townsend, "a very old man living in his shack at the 'Indian Camp' on the outskirts of town. He claims 1840 as his birth-date."<sup>19</sup>

The appearance of the Antelopes gives de Angulo an opportunity to provide ethnographic detail, comparisons between languages and song traditions, and to devise some further characters for his framing tale. Of course their presence in the group of travelers allows him to recount tales from their story traditions and to sing a great many more songs. He characterizes the melancholy, dry Paiute songs as being like the desert wind, lonesome and eerie.

Paiute culture covered a great deal of territory, almost all of it within or along the rim of the Great Basin—an arid, sagebrush-covered region of scant resources, limited water, and lonesome wind. The elder chief of the Paiutes de Angulo calls Sunset Tracks—one of those points where he deliberately mixes up tribes and people.

Tahteumi, or Sunset Tracks, or red track, also known as Blind Hall or old Hall, was one of de Angulo's memorable Achumawi friends, a doctor and a storyteller. Old Hall had, among other powers, the ability to be in two places at once or maybe nowhere at all. Once an angry rival unloaded a six-shot revolver at him from point-blank range, but it turned out old Hall was actually somewhere else at the time and later enjoyed a good laugh over the foolishness of it all. De Angulo depicted Tahteumi with loving detail in "Indians in Overalls."

As for Paiute studies, in 1926 de Angulo was there specifically due to his linguistic interests. He had just a few days at Fort Bidwell, and could "obtain only a general impression of the morphology, and a fairly sufficient semasiology." As it stands, "the material," which he is able to write up, "is scanty both as regards ethnology and language."<sup>20</sup> Remember: he is a professional linguist...of sorts...more than just a loping coyote.... You can hear in his professional wording a bass note of regret. Nothing drew him more fervently than to hear a new language in Northern California.

As the now fairly large band of travelers approach Karok territory the tales they tell on the recordings become Karok stories, none of which make it into the book *Indian Tales*. The de Angulos recorded these Karok legends when they camped summer of 1927 on a flat sand-and-rock bank of the Klamath. At first they had a difficult time meeting Karok people who could help them with the language. But Nancy wandered downriver one day by herself and encountered an elderly couple who asked her back to their cabin, fed her lunch, and provided her a satchel of tales. She recounts the chance encounter and friendship in her unpublished memoir. The first Karok tale told on the radio tapes is a trickster story, “Bluejay and Hummingbird.” It introduces the listener to a new pantheon of figures and a topsy-turvy way of storytelling. Maybe, as de Angulo noted of the Karok language, the tales too “reflect the nature of the land they live in.”

It is into Karok territory the travelers head, the Bear family accompanied by the band of Antelopes. They intend to reach the Klamath River watershed, then move upriver, *ka'ruk*. One thing they hope to do is to watch the world-making ceremony at Katimin (*ka'timi'n*, upper weir). The travelers mount a ridge and see the ocean briefly to their west. Then they drop into a steep canyon following a stream, which has to be the Trinity River or a near tributary. The corridor of plunging hillsides lowers them rapidly through a darkening corridor of forest. This opens into a large valley, populated by Crane People, who are the closely related Yurok and Karok tribes. The travelers have reached the Klamath River, at the hamlet of Weitchpec. This town de Angulo regards as the southern end of Karok territory. Its name, Weitchpec, comes from a Yurok word, *wecpec*, that means confluence. The town sits where the Trinity River enters the Klamath.

On the alluvial flats of the Klamath—where nearly all Karok villages sit—the group witnesses a doctoring session, done by a Salamander Woman. The large number of women doctors to be found in Northern California intrigued de Angulo. In his ethnographies he observes that among the Achumawi, a majority of the doctors were women. The Achumawi term he uses is *tsigitta'waalu*: “a real old-time woman doctor.” He cites the same term in his technical study of the Achumawi language: the suffix *-wá-lò* “is nearly always inseparable from the stem, and on that account it is difficult to determine exactly” what the root word might be.<sup>21</sup> This Salamander, this real old-time woman doctor

who has entered his tales, has a “poison” (medicine power) that is a rattlesnake. Kroeber’s *Handbook* notes that among the Yurok there are rattlesnake shamans, though he passes over them quickly with little detail.

When Salamander Woman sings her medicine song, it is an Achumawi song, one of those points where de Angulo has mixed up the tribes—or perhaps Salamander, like Loon, is a loner, a wanderer, and pragmatically collects power-songs among whomever she visits. Power is power, wherever you find it.

At Weitchpec or a nearby village along the Klamath, the group meets up with Antelope’s sister. This proves a bit of a letdown. After a few days Antelope observes that her sister has become too focused on property, things to own and to display, so that her family can achieve status in the grand Karok ceremonial dances. “She also was always talking about insults and payment for insults and money and beads and valuable things.”<sup>22</sup> Despite this letdown—ethnographically precise in its observation—the travelers do get excited at the prospect of witnessing two of these ceremonies. First is the white deerskin dance, which sounds like a rarity since it depends on the village having secured white deerskins, something nobody I have spoken with has seen in the wild.

“They use several of these white deerskins in that dance...I tell you, it’s a beautiful sight to watch in the light of the fires!”

The other Karok event is the annual world-renewal ceremony, which takes place in autumn, when the first acorn crops come ripe, and the salmon are running. “September, normally dry and sunny.” So they head upriver towards Katimin, one traditional location of world-renewal. On the way they pass Amweykyaara (Kroeber spells it Amaikara). “That’s the place where the spirit man stole the salmon and gave it to the world.” A bit out of character, de Angulo does not tell the story of the theft of the original salmon, which would sustain the Karok people. Instead, he alludes to the story as a defining character of the landscape, a landmark. A woman “now living in Quartz Valley,” Mrs. Margaret Harrie, had told the de Angulos the tale in the summer of 1927.<sup>23</sup>

Shortly they reach the high bluff over the river, Katimin, on the banks where the Salmon River joins the Klamath, and where the

important world-renewal ceremony takes place. (Ka-timin is upper weir, distinct from *yu-timin*, lower weir; ka- is a directional prefix meaning upriver, yu- downriver. Similarly *Ka-rok* and *Yu-rok* are the upriver and downriver people.) The elderly chief in charge this year of the difficult, perilous task of making the world new again proves to be a woman. “She went out and wandered over the mountainside, visiting certain places in the brush, mumbling formulas, thinking.... She was making the world, and this evening she was going to make a new fire.” Here de Angulo gives a touch of Karok language. The old woman is called the *isivsaanen pikiavish*. *Isivsaanen* means “the world, the acorn trees, the rocks, the deer, the salmon, everything.” *Pikavan* means “one who makes it.”<sup>24</sup>

A small cone-shaped mountain, A’vich or Auwitch, (the current Karok website also gives the name Sugarloaf), sits in the tight canyon near the confluence of the Klamath and Salmon Rivers. This is the actual ceremonial site of remaking the world. After the elderly chief has climbed Auwitch she kindles the world-renewal fire while everybody else covers their eyes, since the moment of renewal is too powerful to watch safely. Afterwards she “stayed on the mountain all night, mumbling formulas, and some stayed with her to help her keep awake. It is not easy to make the world anew,” comments de Angulo in the book.

This, I suspect, is the moment to cite one of Ursula K. Le Guin’s essays again.

What the Whites perceived as a wilderness to be “tamed” was in fact better known to human beings than it has ever been since: known and named. Every hill, every valley, creek, canyon, gulch, gully, draw, point, cliff, bluff, beach, bend, good-sized boulder, and tree of any character had its name, its place in the order of things. An order was perceived, of which the invaders were entirely ignorant. Each of those names named, not a goal, not a place to get to, but a place where one is: a center of the world. There were centers of the world all over California. One of them is a bluff on the Klamath River. Its name was Katimin. The bluff is still there, but it has no name....<sup>25</sup>

IV.

“You are going into a country of old time doctors, not the half-dead fellows of our land, with their silly mumbo-jumbo. These doctors where you are going, the country is full of them—mean ones—so watch your step.”<sup>26</sup>

After witnessing the world-renewal ceremony, the group, fatigued by the humid, tightly contained Karok country, continues upriver. “What a terrible place,” says one of the Paiute. “You can hardly breathe. That’s all you can see of the sky, that patch of green up there. The people who live here, how do they keep the moss from growing in their hair?”<sup>27</sup>

So they head doggedly, breathing the uncomfortably thick air, to the last Karok village, Asisfutunik. *Indian Tales* says they “turn northwest and go upstream,” a clear error. Anyone editing the book—if they thought that this might be real country, real territory—would know that going upstream along the Klamath takes you northeast, which is what de Angulo says on the tapes. For those of you who like maps, Asisfutunik is about the site of present-day Happy Camp. That is where a Crane man arrests them with the Karok tale, “The Mysterious Bird and the Land of the Death”—another story the de Angulos had heard from Margaret Harrie. This story too opens with the old formula, “At Katamin they lived long ago....”

From Happy Camp the travelers rise through steep slopes covered with forest and to the relief of the entire party emerge from the tight, high-walled, twisted canyons and dark, tangled gorges of the Klamath. “The strange Karok country,” de Angulo had described it: “The river runs in a deep canyon between two walls of uninhabitable mountains.” The Antelopes—sagebrush people from the Great Basin—are particularly glad to leave the claustrophobic, skyless river valleys and get into open country with crisp air. “Now we can breathe again!” To the east they see the dramatic cone-shaped sweep of Mt. Shasta. “It looked beautiful, rising all alone, so high, and the very top covered with snow.”<sup>28</sup>

However, the next days will be rough. They will skirt Mt. Shasta to the north and travel through uninhabited badlands. “There is nobody living in these places. There are only a few springs long distances apart.” This is Modoc (Wildcat) country, silent, lonely, waterless, flat, with little game; at least the air is “crisp and thin,” unlike the forested depths of the

Klamath. This part of the journey would be a hundred miles on foot, through country few people ventured across, but de Angulo collapses it into a comparatively brief narrative. The way goes through what is now on the maps as Lava Beds National Monument, in the far north of California, by the Oregon border. “Really bad lands, lava beds left from ancient volcanoes, black shiny rock everywhere, no trees, no brush, nothing but black shiny rock.”<sup>29</sup>

Once across the Lava Beds they enter “real sagebrush country.” In a journey that real hikers, seasoned with experience, might make in three or four hard-traveling days (about sixty miles), they reach the edge of a large mist-covered lake. Its shores are bristling with tall tule reeds. “It was a weird place, no forests to fringe the lake, and the water was brackish.” They had reached Goose Lake, far to the northeast plateau of California. State Highway 395 runs up its distant (eastern) side these days. And just beyond, a few miles farther east, the Warner Mountains. This Range separates California’s high northeast plateau country from the Great Basin. “That’s our home!” cry the Antelopes excitedly. “That’s where we live, beyond those mountains.”<sup>30</sup>

Here, in Qosale’ta territory (Juniper Hill), one of the nine divisions of the Achumawi according to ethnographers, the party splits. The Antelopes head east, to cross the Warners and return home. The remainder of the party turns south, following Davis Creek, an affluent of Goose Lake. They intend to join a river coming up from the South Warner Wilderness, the South Fork of the Adzuma. Adzuma (or Ajuma, or Achuma) means flowing and in the old language refers to the present-day Pit River. The suffix *-wi* means people. So the *Achuma-wi* are the Pit River people. It is their territory the travelers have entered.

The Pit River were the people de Angulo loved the most. He wrote at least two grammars of their language (one seems to have gotten lost when he sent it to Franz Boas in the mid-1920s); an unpublished ethnography “The Achumawi”; his fine essay of 1950, “Indians in Overalls,” details the Pit River Indians. Pit River was the name they knew themselves by in the twenties. Achumawi, de Angulo explains, is a term applied by anthropologists. The term would have been unrecognizable to Indians or to whites from 1914 to the late twenties, the period he came to know Achumawi territory and people, first ranching, then pursuing linguistic fieldwork.

That evening the group, following Davis Creek away from Goose Lake, reach a village called Dalmooma. Fox Boy remembers the name from Loon Woman's medicine song and reminds the others.

*dal moo ma, hi li ma dai mi...*

At Dalmooma by the spring,  
I dig for wild turnips.  
At Dalmooma in the evening  
I dig nothing but rotten ones.

"That's a song of a Shaman," Coyote remarks, "a good song, a fine song, full of power."<sup>31</sup>

They soon reach the confluence of the two streams—where the South Fork of the Pit meets Davis Creek. Here is the village of Tulukuupi; this is the place where the original Loon Woman burnt the world. It is just upstream from Kosealekte, the site upon which the modern-day town of Alturas sits. Kroeber writes:

Their villages were all on the Pit River itself or on the lower course of its affluents. The back country was visited and owned, but not settled. A solid color on the map accordingly gives a one-sided impression of the relation of many California tribes to their habitat. This is particularly true of the Achomawi, all of whose territory is high and comparatively barren as soon as the streams are left behind, while a large part of it, particularly to the north of Pit River, is pure waste lava.<sup>32</sup>

He quotes an earlier adventurer who said, "the Achomawi territorial limits are particularly vague and immaterial."

Territorial boundaries may have seemed vague to an earlier visitor, but de Angulo's tapes are particularly rich here, regarding ethnographic and linguistic material. This is where he knew Jack and Lena Folsom, Blind Hall, Wild Bill, Sukmit, and a host of other friends who show up in his essays. He now introduces into his framework-tale a young man named Tsimmu. (The name means wolf in Achumawi: the Achumawi are the Wolf Clan, the *tsimmu-lo*). Tsimmu's full name is *Suwasaqtseemi tsimmu*, "I dreamed about a wolf," from the verbal stem *-ōwasāqjām*, to dream.<sup>33</sup> Among the Achumawi, the wolf is highly regarded; to

dream of one might mean that it has visited in order to become your *tinihowi* or power animal. The wolf may also bear some distant, ancestral connection with Coyote. In de Angulo's words, Coyote is a "coadjutant" in making the world. Coyote is *jēmūl* or *jimmu-á-lo* (or *tsēmūl*), likely a diminutive of *tsimmu*, the timber wolf.

An elderly Paiute woman who has married into the Wolf people tells the travelers a suite of stories of "how the world was made." These are tales de Angulo heard from Jack Folsom, either in Pit River sagebrush country, at his and Nancy's house in Berkeley, or at the de Angulo ranch down at Big Sur. De Angulo wrote them up for "Achumawi Texts," an unpublished manuscript housed in the Boas collection in Philadelphia. The stories flesh out a good deal of Coyote's relationship with his co-creator, the circumspect Silver Fox. Coyote's enormous appetites go on exhibit in these tales (big libido matched comically with short supply of good sense), as well as his clownish errors, his futile lies. The way he keeps getting killed, the way he keeps coming back to life without ever wising up.

These tales did not make it into the *Indian Tales* selection. In them, Coyote appears so libidinous, absurd, clumsy, untrustworthy, and boastful that A. A. Wyn probably doubted their suitability for children; it was a children's title the publisher wanted to make. But are these tales, told to the travelers by the elderly Wolf woman, really authentic accounts of how the world was made?

"Nah," Fox Boy says later. Fox is the real philosopher of the bunch, studious, rational, a good candidate for a degree in comparative literature. He wants always to deepen his understanding of the way the world was made, or the way people tell it. No, the old woman's account, "That's just a Coyote story," he scoffs, "not a real creation myth."<sup>34</sup>

West of Alturas—the direction the travelers take, following the Pit River—the Pit gets to be "quite a stream." The terrain itself gets nearly impenetrable. De Angulo knows because one year he tried to get down that way by car but found it scary. He was low on gasoline and cash at the time, plus it was late in the summer, so he turned back.<sup>35</sup> On this fictional journey though, *Tsimmu*, the young wolf, "showed them how to take a shortcut," to "rejoin the river farther to the west and save several days of rough travel." I'm guessing this is a route de Angulo knew. It may be the route he himself took on



horseback in 1916, when he and a hired hand, a cowboy named Boggs, drove a dozen horses from Clover Dale to de Angulo's homestead at Partington Ridge in Big Sur. The Pit River shortcut de Angulo refers to on the tapes is, in any event, a detail that would have no standing in the book unless he had a specific route, through specifically rough terrain, in mind.

One evening down the Pit River, in that rough territory where the course of the river veers sharply north to a place known as Big Bend (where the Pit makes a dramatic oxbow), Fox reminds Tsimmu that he had promised "to tell the story of how the world was made." Tsimmu begins his elaborate account on page 165 of *Indian Tales*; it continues for a dozen pages. This tale is an oddity, a departure for de Angulo. The grand account of the boy An-nik-a-del (who planted the idea of making the world in Coyote's head) is not a story de Angulo himself had heard. He drew it from C. Hart Merriam's translation of Istet Woiche's account. Merriam says the Achumawi begin this recitation "during the first moon of December and stop about the 20th of March." (Winter in the big Pit River communal houses is the time for storytelling.) Istet Woiche—known to the local whites as William Hulse—lived with his wife near Big Bend—the place de Angulo had tried to reach by automobile but had been forced to turn back from. A photograph in Woiche's *An-nik-a-del* shows the Pit River couple framed by what I take to be yellow pines and poison oak, or some sort of chaparral. The country looks awfully dry. The couple stands on flinty, unforgiving soil.

"He showed me the sacred rocks," Merriam wrote of Woiche,

on which are preserved the footprints of Jā'-mul the Coyote-man and others of the FIRST PEOPLE. As our acquaintance grew...he disclosed such intimate understanding of the ancient and present-day myths, traditions, customs, and laws of his tribe, such surprising knowledge of the stars and their positions with reference to the seasons and the maturing of certain plants, and such philosophic views of natural phenomena and human nature, that I came to regard him as a remarkably learned man.<sup>36</sup>

At first there was nothing but water, begins Istet Woiche's account. No land, no light. The world was dark. Apponahah, the Cocoon Man, saw a cloud and drew it to himself...by singing....

V.

“Go to the middle of the world and wait for me.”<sup>37</sup>

Tsimmu, aware that Fox Boy seems to be collecting creation myths—maybe tucking them into his little buckskin pouch of magic flints—qualifies this tale at the outset. It may not be the definitive account of world-making, Tsimmu says, but his account will prove to be “at least, one of them. . . . I have heard many different ways of telling it.”<sup>38</sup> Fox Boy, the little rationalist, listens carefully but says nothing. He has learned by now that everybody has a different way of telling how it all got made.

On the tapes de Angulo intersperses Achumawi with English for the first few minutes. It is a bilingual performance, made more remarkable when you realize that de Angulo likely has no Achumawi text in front of him. He is translating Merriam’s English version directly into spoken Achumawi, then recounting it in his own vernacular Anglo-American (and Spanish and French) speech patterns.

One characteristic of the newly made world in Tsimmu’s (and Iстет Woiche’s) account is that it has three corners. In *The Achumawi Language*, under “Adverbs of location,” de Angulo had written, “There are no words in Achumawi to express simply the ideas of north, south, east, and west. It is necessary to use complex verbs referring to the wind, the rain, or the sun, followed by the adverb *tántàn*, “direction.” The expressions used differ very much according to individual taste. On the whole, the concept of the cardinal points is a foreign one to the Achumawi. The world was considered as three-cornered before the coming of the whites.”

I have found another glimpse of the word of *tántàn*, its initial “t” altered due to sound changes into a “d.” At the bottom of one de Angulo manuscript page, in the midst of a doctoring session by Frog Old Woman, de Angulo has typed:

...she pissed  
in all directions  
over the roof of  
the winter-haus

tsikiaālāstsā astsūy-wādē tōllī-wa-dāntan<sup>39</sup>

The opening cluster is built around the verb *-allāsts-* to urinate and surely has both animate and feminine markers, as well as a marker for past tense. The *astsūy-* is the ceremonial house (same thing as the winter house), with a locative suffix, *-wādē*. A verbal affix *-wa-* means “outside the house”; *tōllī* is all, every. And *-dāntan* is the direction adverb. *She-pissed atop-the-winter-house outside-every-direction*. I’m reminded that D. L. Olmsted says in his *Achumawi Dictionary*, that in de Angulo’s late writings the people “speak in their own language,” and the “sentences [are] undeniably (and perfectly grammatical) Achumawi!”<sup>40</sup>

After the two nights it takes for Tsimmu to recount his version of world-making, the travelers pass the final Wolf village, where the Pit River falls away from the high northeast plateau country. The soil turns from alkaline to red, and the land falls in a series of shelves into a wide valley. Turning south, the group enters a land of oppressive heat. They are eager to get home before winter rains set in—this means it is late autumn—but here in California’s Sacramento Valley the heat remains stifling and intense. “So they dragged along, hot and thirsty.” Even the grasses look white and shimmer in the sun, a detail familiar to anyone who has spent time in that area at that season. The group moves deliberately; the narrative goes even faster: more than one hundred miles sweep past in a few sentences. From around present-day Redding they follow what has now become Interstate 5 southward.

At this point, where a few sentences won’t convey the length of the hot, enervating journey back to Clear Lake, de Angulo fills his narrative with conversation between the travelers about world-making and linguistics. He sings hunting songs, gambling songs, puberty songs, and discusses their obscure, koan-like lyrics. He had devised his own musical notation for transcribing Indian songs into his field notes and these give his manuscripts yet another dimension. One of these many notations made it from his manuscripts into the book, page 104’s “Whirligig Song.” I figure they work like concrete poems or visual poetry. You can see many more in Peter Garland’s edition of *The Music of the Indians of Northern California*.

After a long slog, made bearable by banter and song, the group reaches “another creek,” which judging by the tapes I take to be Stony Creek, where they cross a wide, shallow ford strewn with pebbles and rock. Turning west they rise with relief out of the punishingly hot valley,

onto a forested plateau, up “the wall of mountains.” It is a mountainous landscape, with “ridges and small secluded valleys,” as well as mountain lakes. “Now,” says Bear, “we are in our land.” It is not exactly “*our own home* yet,” but anyhow, they are “out of that valley where we couldn’t breathe.”<sup>41</sup> This is the territory of the Northeastern Pomo. The wall of mountains here is fixed in place by St. John Mountain, with its summit at 6,743 feet. Just north is Hull Mountain, a hundred feet higher. Three different trails show up on Kroeber’s map, leading from Stony Creek into this high, cool mountain terrain. The group takes the southernmost of these trails. They still have forty or fifty miles—a couple of days walking—south to Clear Lake. When they reach its northern end they only need to circle the lakeshore to the west and drop south ten or fifteen miles to reach home. Mount Konocti, the laccolithic volcano filled with prehistoric obsidian, lifts into view.

### §

At the end of the tenth CD, when the travelers arrive “home at last after all their wanderings of the summer,” de Angulo might name their home village. I cannot hear the recording clearly enough (by now we have left far behind what manuscripts UCLA holds—those leave off mid-sentence near the end of CD six). The village also does not appear on Kroeber’s map: he chose to note only “principal villages of each group.” However, we are quite close to Shabegok, at a cluster of Eastern Pomo hamlets around Kelseyville. A “clear stream,” Kelsey Creek, runs through the village.

What I have tried to do is sketch out the route de Angulo’s travelers took on their journey into myth time. They traveled by foot about eight hundred miles. They circled sunwise through what is today called Northern California. It took all summer and much of the autumn. The basic landmarks are there to recognize. Some are geographic, some become recognizable based on stories that identify distinct tribal territory. Some landmarks are clear if you dig into the indigenous California languages, which almost always define the territory. This was a journey through real territory, much of it well known to de Angulo.

If you take a trip around Northern California, stop a few minutes to study the rivers, mountains, gullies, gorges, lakes, and obsidian domes; the pines, the grass, the chaparral; the cañadas, redwoods,

madroñas, and oak. This is “the land that has been here since the first Coyote gathered it up from some smoldering embers of fire and remade it, by luck, in his fumbling way,” says de Angulo on the *Old Time Stories* tapes. That first Coyote may be studying you too, from behind some hill that has lost its old name and is waiting for a new one.

That hill is one of the centers of the world.

## NOTES

1/ Jaime de Angulo & L. S. Freeland, “Karak Texts,” *International Journal of American Linguistics*, vol. 6, no. 3/4 (Apr., 1931), 194.

2/ Bioregion refers to the organization of territory according to natural, biotic boundaries, rather than political borders which are often arbitrarily drawn. Not everyone is in agreement about how to define or delineate or map a bioregion, but those uncertainties are just quibbles. The assumption behind bioregional thought is that people who inhabit an area with shared climate, flora, fauna, resources, economic bases, mythologies, and so forth, know better how to organize it than outsiders do. Significant bioregion thinkers include Jim Dodge, Gary Snyder, and recently the exacting scholar Eileen Crist in her book *Abundant Earth: Toward an Ecological Civilization* (University of Chicago Press, 2019).

3/ Jaime de Angulo, *Shabegok* (Berkeley: Turtle Island Foundation, 1976), 103.

4/ Bob Callahan in de Angulo, *Shabegok*, 103.

5/ Jaime de Angulo, *Indian Tales* (New York: A. A. Wyn, 1953), 5.

6/ De Angulo, *Indian Tales*, 5.

7/ Ursula K. Le Guin, *Dancing at the Edge of the World: Thoughts on Words, Women, Places* (New York: Grove Press, 1989), 97.

8/ De Angulo, *Indian Tales*, 24.

9/ Jaime de Angulo & L. S. Freeland, “Miwok and Pomo Myths,” *Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 41, no. 160 (Apr.–June, 1928), 237.

10/ Jaime de Angulo, “On the Religious Feeling among the Indians of California,” *Laughing Horse*, no. 10 (1924).

11/ De Angulo & Freeland, “Miwok and Pomo Myths,” 249.

12/ *Indian tales for a little boy and girl*, no date. Ms. p. 111. The manuscript I am citing was listed in UCLA’s Library Special Collections ten or fifteen years ago. I requested a photocopy, which the librarians sent. The manuscript ends at page 195, but this number is misleading. De Angulo or his assistant

Robert Duncan added in pages along the way. Some numbers actually cover quite a few pages: for instance page 164 is nine pages long, noted as p. 164-1, 164-2, and so forth. A “Preface for the Parents of the Little Boy and Girl” of eight pages has separate page numbers. Additionally many pages hold only drawings by de Angulo. These drawing-pages have no numbers. One tale begins on page 101, gets suspended, then begins again sixty pages later.

Several years ago I was able to visit UCLA’s Library Special Collections and found they had a confusion of manuscripts. One folder holds a manuscript with “My Own Copy” written on the folder and another has “Gui’s Copy.” Other folders hold what look like the pages of as many as three other manuscripts often quite unorganized. A few of these have editorial notes signed CS (Carl Solomon, an editor at A. A. Wyn Publisher). I do not know which of all these manuscripts I have in photocopy. It is, however, the one I am using for this essay. Page numbers for the manuscript may be misleading.

13/ Ms. 119.

14/ Ms. 139.

15/ Jaime de Angulo & L. S. Freeland, “Two Achumawi Tales,” *Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 44, no. 172 (Apr.–June, 1931), 125.

16/ Loon tells the tale of her “greyt-greyt-greyt-greyt-grand’m3dh3r” (Ms. 139) on CDs 5–6 of the Pacifica Radio recordings. These recordings were originally taped on reel-to-reel tapes in 1949–50. At some point they got edited from about one hundred sessions to eighty-eight, and transferred to cassette. Later they became twenty-two CDs, and are now available online. I have not compared the CDs closely to the online twenty-two sessions but they probably are pretty close. Tsimmu the Wolf tells the Loon Woman story in almost the exact same words on CD 19.

17/ Achumawi, the language de Angulo knew best, is a tonal language. The bar above or beneath a vowel (or right- and left-slant diacritical marks) indicates high or low tone. Achumawi is like singing, he wrote Edward Sapir, but it is so hard to learn the tunes! The apostrophe indicates a glottal stop, as in English uh-oh, (uh’oh).

18/ De Angulo, *Indian Tales*, 139.

19/ De Angulo & Freeland, “Notes on the northern Paiute of California,” *Journal de la Société des américanistes*, vol. 21, no. 2 (1929), 313.

20/ De Angulo & Freeland, “Notes on the northern Paiute of California,” 314.

21/ Jaime de Angulo & L. S. Freeland, “The Achumawi Language,” *International Journal of American Linguistics*, vol. 6, no. 2 (June, 1930), 82.

22/ De Angulo, *Indian Tales*, 138.

23/ De Angulo & Freeland, “Karak Texts,” 194.

24/ De Angulo, *Indian Tales*, 139.

25/ Le Guin, *Dancing at the Edge of the World*, 82.

- 26/ De Angulo, *Indian Tales*, 138.
- 27/ De Angulo, *Indian Tales*, 147.
- 28/ De Angulo, *Indian Tales*, 147.
- 29/ De Angulo, *Indian Tales*, 147.
- 30/ De Angulo, *Indian Tales*, 149.
- 31/ De Angulo, *Indian Tales*, 149.
- 32/ Alfred L. Kroeber, *Handbook of the Indians of California* (New York: Dover, 1976), 305.
- 33/ De Angulo's linguistics had him writing the "apical fricative" as ts-. Olmsted's dictionary uses a different phonetics, and gives *j*-. My linguistics here are from de Angulo's unpublished grammar in the Boas collection, Philadelphia, or from Olmsted's dictionary.
- 34/ *Pacifica Radio*, CD 9.
- 35/ Letter to C. Hart Merriam. C. Hart Merriam Collection, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.
- 36/ C. Hart Merriam, *An-nik-a-del: The History of the Universe as Told by the Mo-De-Se Indians of California*, (Boston: The Stratford Company, 1928), iii.
- 37/ De Angulo, *Indian Tales*, 168.
- 38/ De Angulo, *Indian Tales*, 165.
- 39/ Ms. n.p.
- 40/ D. L. Olmsted, *Achumawi Dictionary*, vol. 45 (University of California Press, 1966), 5.
- 41/ De Angulo, *Indian Tales*, 180.

JAIME DE ANGULO

*from Old Time Stories*

the stori uv WEASEL and the DEER-HEAD DECOY

but first uv all i must tel yu hwat a deer-head decoy iz

it's a stuffed deer-head dhat yu wear on yur  
own head in order tu fool the deer hwen yu go  
out hunting

yu skin dhe head of a deer and stuf it  
with straw and hwen yu see a herd uv deer grazing in dhe  
distanz yu strap it on yur own head and get down on yur  
handz and knees and creep along as if yu wer grazing

deer dont see very wel az long az yu  
keep to the leeward uv dhem so dhey dont smel yu

BUT YOU MUST NOT PLAY with one of them, or yu wil  
spoil its charm, make it lose its power... a gud hunter  
never lets anyone touch his hunting tools, his bow, his  
arrows, his spear, and it holds true for dhe deer-head  
decoy, also.

Pine-Marten and his litl brother dhe Weasel  
wer living with the Marten's woman and her folk.

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Editor's note: although this manuscript is the source for both *Old Time Stories* and *Indian Tales*, we have decided to retain the former in accordance with the scope of Jaime de Angulo's project beyond the page (including typescripts, manuscripts, radio performances, and illustrations).



The Marten's woman was Frog—her father was Coyote....the Weasel, HE never cud get a woman for himself! his real name is Yās but some people call him dhe Dīnikī .....(dhat word: “diniki” does not mean anything—just a name— but it always makes him mad hwen yu call him dhat ....

The Marten his name is Tamāt'Hē he is kind of slow and deliberate—he smoked an old stone-pipe.

dhe Marten's wuman waz sick

her mother, dhe Old Wuman Frog sed to him:

“dhat girl iz sick...maybe she die...  
i can do nothing...

    yu go and see mai younger  
    sister, the one hu livz  
    at dhe end uv dhe valley at tulu'qupī  
she has gret power dhat wun!”

        dhat udher wuman, the old one's  
    younger sister, she waz a strong doctor

Tamāt'Hē, the Pine-Marten, left in dhe morning, but befor  
he went he sed tu dhe Weasel:

    “Listen, you! My wuman is sick...  
        dhat's why i hav had no luck, hunting ..  
    i am going tu dhe end uv dhe valley to get dhat  
    doctor, dhe Old Woman Frog's sister —she has got  
power, dhat one, maybe she can help....I'll be gone  
one, two, three days...maybe four, five days, I dont know...  
ai dont want yu tu com along—yu alwayz make trubl—  
dhoz piipl dher ar strangerz—yu wud make trubl....

...and listen, you Dīnikē, you behave yurself hwail  
ai am gon....Help arund dhe camp....Bring in firewood  
for dhe old wuman....and LEAVE my bow-and-arows ALONE,  
dont play with dhe deer-head decoy!...dhoz ar hunter’s  
tools, NOT litl boy’s playthings! Now I go.”

that was a long speech for the Marten. Then he left.

Pine-Marten and Weasel, dhey wer brodthers, and  
dhey alwayz traveld tuggedher—dhey went all over dhe world  
together, dhoz two—but this taim the Marten traveld alone.

after the Marten was gon, Weasel did not do anything  
to help around dhe camp....he never brot in firewood for  
Old Woman Frog—he never helpd pound acorns for the  
soup—HE went Out HUNTING lizzardz on the flats ...he was  
angry! He sed:

“Yu cant catch lizzard without bow-and-arowz!  
My brodther wants me to help dhe piipl...I am  
trying to catch lizzardz for dhe soup...but  
yu cant catch lizzard without bow-and-arow!!  
tu the devil with it!!!”

he went arund dhe camp  
grumblng....but nobody paid  
any atention tu him—dhey wer  
woried about dhe sick girl.

he got up in dhe morning he tuk the bow-and-arowz he tuk the  
deer-head decoy he went out on dhe flats tu hwer ther iz a butte  
and ther he played all day

he wud thro dhe deerhead way high into dhe air  
and dhen run down dhe hill shooting arowz  
at it he did laik dhat ol day climb up

dhe hill, thro dhe deer-head high in dhe air  
run downhill shooting arowz at it I AM A  
HUNTER THAT'S hwat I am!

he played laik dhat all day—he waz geting taird—dhe sun was  
geting low in dhe sky—it waz lonely out dher on dhe flats—time  
tu go hom

I'LL TRY ONE MORE THROW!!

he threw the deer-head decoy high intu the sunset

hwent it came down that time IT WAS GRINNING

Wesel did not shoot  
he threw down the bow-and-arowz  
he runs, he is running home thru dhe  
flats, crying

AND THE DEER-HEAD IS CHASING HIM

it was a big elk  
running after him

he was nearly hom but the elk got him  
the elk picked him up on his antlers and then he turned  
around and went up to the hills with dhe Weasel  
on his head

tamat'Hē the Marten came hom

“wer iz mai litle brudher?

“yur yunger brother iz gon....  
it's not our fault....  
dhe big deer tuk him tu dhe mauntains...?

Marten sat down and cried

Frog Old Woman came tu him:

“is mai sister coming?

“yes, she is coming  
she’ll be here to-morow...

tamat’Hē was crying

dhe old woman’s sister araidv she was a powerful doctor

she went intu dhe brush she was singing in the brush  
all day

then she went to Marten:

“hwy du yu cry for yur brudher ?  
he is gud for nothing, that Weasel...  
but it hurts me to see yu cry, and ai  
wil help yu to get him back,  
that yas,  
that dinikī

tamat’Hē was crying

that woman, she was a tsigittā’wūalu a real old-time  
woman-doctor

she sed tu dhe Marten:

“now, listen to me, you...  
hwen I make him com  
he wil be on the antlers uv dhe big deer

then YOU SHOOT HIM—yu understand ?

shoot yur brother...NOT the deer!

dhen she made ol dhe rest but Marten go down intu  
the underground haus  
but she stayed on dhe roof with tamat' Hē

then she danced she made a gret storm to gather  
over dhe mauntainz lightning and thunder

##### and RAIN in torrents rain rain RAIN

dhe waters wer coming down frum dhe hills down  
dhe gullies and dhe canyons

all dhe animals wer fleeing before dhe flood

all the deer frum dhe mountains

and their hoofs made a great noise

and their antlers clashing

at dheir head came a big mule-deer

and dhe Dīnīnikī was holding on to his

antlers crying with fear

##### tsikiaālāstsā astsūy-wādē tōlli-wa-dāntan ...she pissed  
in all directions  
over the roof of  
the winter-haus

the water was rising on the flats

and the deer  
wer milling araround  
the haus

tamat'Hē strings an arow he slowly takes aim

“NO! DONT SHOOT THE DEER!  
Shoot your brother!!  
shoot your own brother!!!”

Tamat'Hē lets fly the arow went thru the Dinīkī

it knocked him off the antlers uv the big deer

he rolls to the ground

and the elk loped off tu dhe mountains

tamat'Hē picked up dhe body uv his litl brudher

he held him upside down dhen the old woman-doctor picked up  
sum sagebrush twigs and she whips dhe Weasel with it

he came back to life, dhe dīnīkē, the Weasel, his real  
name is yas.... he sits up...he rubs his eyes and  
looks araround.... he says:

“Well, brother, I see yu got back...While yu wer  
gon I went intu dhe mountainz and tracked a big  
deer...if i had a bow-and-arows i wud hav shot  
him sure!..but I'll take yu tu dhe place to-morow”

Marten sat on a log, smoking his stone-pipe

he did not answer



## Jaime de Angulo, Modernity, and the Living Voice

“If the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is, Infinite. For man has closed himself up till he sees all things thro’ the narrow chinks of his cavern.”

—William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*

“Except...ye become as little children,  
ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.”

—Matthew 18:3

### I.

Jaime de Angulo’s eccentric academic career as an ethnographer and linguist of far-western Native America has obscured a matter of importance: that he is a twentieth-century American literary figure of great consequence. In 2004 the anthropologist Wendy Leeds-Hurwitz tried to clarify the situation by proposing that his fieldwork undermined his institutional practices, on one hand, and, on the other, intensified his concern with two of anthropology’s axial questions: “What is the nature of language? and What is the nature of the primitive mind?”<sup>1</sup> Because standard academic protocols fell shy of such large and—in a scientific sense—impossible questions, de Angulo looked for other means to address them. He “present[ed] his conclusions regarding the nature of the primitive mind in ‘Old Time Stories’ and [...] the character of language in ‘What is Language?’”<sup>2</sup>

But serious problems with de Angulo’s work continue to hang fire for two reasons. In the first place, his work’s public presence remains fractured and tenuous. The book project *What Is Language?* was never quite completed—the excerpts printed here are a first attempt to show what it was aiming to do. The imaginative work presents other difficulties. The stories, the fictions, literary essays like “Indians in Overalls,” the poetry, the translations, and not least of all the works commonly called his *Indian Tales*: though much of this is accessible to readers, by far the greater part exists in a decidedly unsatisfactory



textual condition. What appear as elementary editorial problems—and they are that—are also oblique signs of the significance of de Angulo’s literary discoveries and achievements.

But real clarity about such matters will not begin until de Angulo’s literary work is no longer framed within the socius of professional and amateur anthropology and ethnolinguistics. Introducing Leeds-Hurwitz’s splendid book in their “Critical Studies in the History of Anthropology” series, Stephen O. Murray and Regna Darnell expose the problem when they repeat the well-established professional judgment “about de Angulo’s accomplishments and limitations [...] in anthropology.” With this even-handed judgment they mean to endorse Leeds-Hurwitz’s argument for the importance of de Angulo’s imaginative work: that it “prefigures recent experiments in ethnographic writing and in positively valuing Native American oral literature.”<sup>3</sup> For Murray, Darnell, and even for Leeds-Hurwitz, the orbit for assessing de Angulo’s accomplishments remains firmly anthropological.

If we shift to a literary focus, however, his imaginative work looks very different, as it once did to a remarkably diverse set of major twentieth-century American writers during the last two decades of de Angulo’s life: William Carlos Williams, Marianne Moore, Ezra Pound, Oliver La Farge, Gary Snyder, Henry Miller, Robinson Jeffers, Robert Duncan, Allen Ginsberg, to name only the most prominent. One cannot read “Indians in Overalls” or illustrated fictions like *The Lariat* and *Indian Tales* and not recognize writing of unusual power and decisive originality. But those works are just the piedmont of de Angulo’s massive oral masterpiece *Old Time Stories*, which he delivered in two oral performances on KPFA Radio in Berkeley, California in 1949–50, one that went for thirteen hours, the second for approximately twenty-two. Placing that remarkable work within the corpus of twentieth-century American literature—of American literature tout court, it seems to me—would force a major upheaval of our view of American literature and culture.<sup>4</sup>

To see what is involved here let me begin with “Indians in Overalls,” de Angulo’s account—written over twenty-five years after the fact—of experiences he had among the Achumawi in the early 1920s.<sup>5</sup> It is a carefully composed report of his attempt to learn the language of the Achumawi and thereby achieve an Achumawi experience of the

world. The theme is declared at the outset when de Angulo returns to the remote Pit River region of northeastern California looking for his Achumawi friend Jack Folsom. When they run into each other, Folsom is pleased and surprised: “Why...Doc! Where you been all this time? What you doing here now? Looking for another cattle ranch?” “No,” he says, what he wants to do is learn Folsom’s language. Folsom is amused at de Angulo’s naivete. “You mean you want to learn our talk, Pit River talk? You can’t do that, Doc, no use you trying. No white man can.” Undaunted, de Angulo says, “Well, I can try, anyhow. Will you teach me?”<sup>6</sup> When Folsom immediately answers “Sure I will,” we can see what’s coming: a dogged, touching, and comical tale of effort and expectation and desire and something nevermore about to be.

Despite the forecast failure, that candid and sweet exchange exposes the “use [in] trying” to acquire an entirely different way to live and move and have one’s (white) being in a wider world. De Angulo’s exchanges with Jack Folsom, Lena, Sukmit, Blind Hall, Old Mary, Old Kate, Wild Bill, and the others unfold a series of wonderful and revealing misadventures. A campfire exchange involving Sukmit, de Angulo, and Old Mary is typical. When de Angulo invites Sukmit to come to Berkeley “to record one of your own medicine-songs,” Sukmit resists, imagining that if he goes, “maybe I die” because the phonograph’s electricity might cause his *damaagome* to get lost or stolen. When de Angulo tells Sukmit not to worry, the *damaagome* “couldn’t hear that phonograph all the way from Alturas,” Sukmit insists that it can because, like electricity, “it goes underground.” The conversation collapses into a series of exasperated screwball exchanges:

“What do you know about electricity?! Electricity doesn’t work that way!” “Hell, what do you know about *damaagomes*? You are nothing but a white man, a goddamn tramp.” “No, I am not a white man!” “Yes, you are a white man, you are a white man forever!!”

Sitting nearby and hearing their wrangle, Old Mary “chuckled”: “You two always quarreling like two old men. You Indian, you white man, ha-ha-ha! You both crazy!”<sup>7</sup>

Seeing himself as a white man forever and his Achumawi friends as Indians forever and everyone as crazy people forever is, in a crucial, sympathetic sense, the point of it all, the point of presenting the

world as a scene of men quarreling like Sukmit and de Angulo. When Jack Folsom tries to get de Angulo to see the difference between a *damaagome* and a *dinihowi*, their exchange comes to a similarly comical finale. Folsom's explanation is a story of how, in a quest for his *dinihowi*, he once tried to "beat the sun [...] to the top [of the mountain.]" A Western view might gloss those words as either a childish game or a mythic exploit, but de Angulo lets the narrative proceed entirely free of interpretation. The words take the reader to the tale's climax—a close encounter of a third kind where a befuddled de Angulo is brought face to face with his exasperated Achumawi friend:

"Did you get to the top that day?"

"Yes, I got to the top. There ain't nothing there."

"Then what?"

"Then I came down."

"Oh...."

"What do you mean, oh? I got my *dinihowi*, didn't I? I am always trying to tell you things, Doc, but you are worse than a young Indian."<sup>8</sup>

He is worse because, while he keeps trying to understand, the best he can do is to recognize—show and tell—that there are true, important, and deeply human things he cannot comprehend. Though he is educated and has a medical degree, his ways of knowing are as primitive as any shaman's.

From such encounters comes de Angulo's will to reveal the unrecognized and living features of an overall peopled world. He was not mistaken when he set out on his impossible quest to learn the language of the Achumawi. That key focus of "Indians in Overalls" gets underscored in the climactic exchange about language that de Angulo has with Wild Bill. At issue are the Achumawi words for Indian, animal, people, and inanimate things. (The ellipses here are de Angulo's.)

"Listen, Bill. How do you say 'people'?"

"I don't know...just is, I guess."

"I thought that meant 'Indian.'"

"Say...Ain't we *people*!?"

"So are the whites!"

"Like hell they are!! We call them *inillaaduwi*, 'tramps,' nothing

but tramps. They don't believe anything is alive. They are dead themselves. I don't call that 'people.' They are smart, but they don't know anything.... Say, it's getting late, Doc, I am getting sleepy. I guess I'll go out and sleep on top of the haystack...."<sup>9</sup>

Wild Bill's last remarks to de Angulo explain why their exchange involves far more than a linguistic lesson that, in Achumawi, Indians are people and whites like de Angulo are tramps from a dead world. Note that Wild Bill doesn't say "Like hell you are." De Angulo "is" a white tramp from a dead world. But he is also, for this company they are all keeping, that more particular human creature "Doc," Wild Bill's friend. For Doc, there is a use in trying to live in Wild Bill's world, where everyone drives everyone else crazy trying to understand how to live.

## II.

Following the lead of innovative anthropologists like her mentor Dell Hymes, Leeds-Hurwitz values ethnographic fiction like de Angulo's because it gives Western readers "a more complete understanding [...] of [Native American] culture."<sup>10</sup> Oliver La Farge put her view most forcefully in his response to the 1953 publication of *Indian Tales*: "Mr. de Angulo penetrated the minds of his Indian friends in a way that very few ethnologists [...] have before."<sup>11</sup> But according to "Indians in Overalls," what de Angulo began penetrating in the 1920s was less the habitus of the Achumawi than the bereft and godforsaken regions of the Western mind. He was explicit about this in a letter he wrote at the time (21 February, 1922) to Cary Fink. While his fieldwork brought him "to understand the 'primitive mind' [of the Achumawi] better and better,"

What I have really gotten out of my study, so far, is less an understanding of the primitive psychology of the Indians than a clearer understanding of the primitive psychology of most of us.<sup>12</sup>

With that insight and at that moment de Angulo began writing/ exploring fiction set in Native American contexts. By the summer of 1922 he had completed his first novel, *Don Bartolomeo*. Professional

work dominated his writing for the next few years, but in 1927 he returned to fiction with another even more brilliant short novel, *The Lariat*, a work no less magically realistic, though far less baroque, than *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.

At that point he made his crucial first move toward what would become his masterwork, the *Old Time Stories*. He began writing a series of “Indian Tales for a Little Boy and Girl.” Drawn from his firsthand acquaintance with Native American people, life, legends, religions, and languages, he wrote them for the pleasure and instruction of his children, Alvar and Gui. How regularly he worked on these tales during the ensuing years is not perfectly clear, but we know that writing “Indians in Overalls” in 1948 spurred him to turn that early work into the spectacular KPFA broadcasts of 1949–50.

The structure of the KPFA *Old Time Stories* is not unlike the mash-up of *Moby-Dick* or, in our own day, William T. Vollmann’s *Seven Dreams* (1990 and ongoing) or, perhaps even more so, *The Atlas* (1996) and *Europe Central* (2005). That is to say, it is a heteroglot collection of imaginative writing (in various forms) interwoven with detailed information about Indian lifeways. But unlike those highly cultivated literary works, *Old Time Stories* is organized throughout in a minor and comic key. It is recognizably a work of children’s literature that, at the same time, paradoxically pledges allegiance to and actually executes an oral epic. The loose narrative tracks the excursion of a small group of human/animal characters who meet and interact with many more similar characters as they undertake their significantly insignificant journey west from their home near Clear Lake, California, and then back again. *Old Time Stories* and its fractured print spinoffs—*Indian Tales*, *How the World Was Made*, and *Shabegok*—are insignificant because they are simply storytelling and they are significant because they are simple storytelling.

Transacted as literature rather than as anthropology, they are revelations of first and last things cast in a discourse of everyday life now being stripped of its Faustian illusions, those signal marks of the modernity that is de Angulo’s overriding critical object. Creation stories abound in the *Old Time Stories*, the first coming when the travelers head west to wake up Old Man Coyote who has been “sleeping in the hills [...] for a long long time.” Fox Boy tells him he wants “a good old-time story” like the ones Turtle Old Man tells. “All

right,” he says, “I’ll tell you how Weasel burned the world.”<sup>13</sup> It unfolds into a story where Old Man Coyote emerges as a character in his own complicated tale of how he and other creatures fare in the world that Weasel burned. It is a tale that shows by telling how the living world once upon a time and now here again lives and dies forever.

That condition is why an anthropological category like “Creation Story” shadows de Angulo’s tale-tellings.<sup>14</sup> “Creation Story” is the attenuated anthropological model for all the tales in *Old Time Stories* and for *Old Time Stories* itself, which is a work designed to lift tale-telling out of the death-in-life of academic interpretation. The argument between Turtle Old Man and Old Man Coyote about who made the world, Kuksu or the Marumda, is exemplary for all the work’s various tale-tellings.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, their dispute explicitly pervades even the abbreviated print versions of *Old Time Stories*, where it is regularly echoed and recalled. It provides not a model for tale-telling but a set of call-and-response procedures.

*Old Time Stories* calls them “spit-and-scratch” exchanges that, like epic flyting or the dozens protocols of Black culture, serve to provoke and maintain imaginative action. When Uncle Grizzly finishes his tale of Erkinner and Erihutiki, Fox Boy turns to Grandfather Coyote and wonders if he “did not get mixed up in your story the other day” about Weasel and the burned-up world.<sup>16</sup> When Old Man Coyote indignantly defends his tale-telling and the dispute begins to spill over to others in the party, Oriole gets annoyed at Fox Boy and tells him to stop questioning “the grown-ups[.] They don’t know the answers. You only embarrass them.” But Fox Boy insists he “want[s] to know the truth.”

“What for?”

“Because I want to know the way it really happened.”

“IT HAPPENED THE WAY they tell it.”

“But they tell it differently!”

“Then it is because it happened differently.”<sup>17</sup>

Later Fox Boy will get his own back against Oriole Girl’s witty riposte after Grandfather Coyote finishes his tale of “little louse girl,” which he stops telling but does not “end” because it is a true old story and, as Coyote says, “in the old days they used to tell one story after another all night long until the dawn.”

“Goodness!” cried Oriole. “WHEN did they sleep?”  
“When they didn’t tell stories, Smarty,” said Fox.<sup>18</sup>

With that kind of truth—the truth that Fox Boy says he wants—the tale-telling, like life and death, never ends. In the first KPFA recital, which carried over three weeks, the sense of a neverending becomes a profound listening experience.

De Angulo was persuaded he could assemble a selection of the *Old Time Stories* in a print version that, if carefully composed, would do justice to the oral masterwork. So he put together a collection that became his popular, much reprinted, and vastly truncated *Indian Tales*, which finally appeared three years after his death. Collating the printed work with the KPFA broadcasts reveals a great deal about de Angulo’s plans for both and for his literary work as a whole.

The final broadcast that comes down to us is organized as four distinct episodes—movements might be the better term, given the work’s unmistakably rhythmical character—each one closing with the same refrain: “Good Night.”<sup>19</sup> The opening movement is a slightly more elaborate version of a coherent unit in *Indian Tales*, the story of the rats who stole fire from the South and the doves who drove the sun into the sky.<sup>20</sup> Movement 2 also has a clear correspondence with *Indian Tales*: in this case, to a pair of widely separated passages. Movements 3 and 4, however, survive only fractionally in the print text—a skeletal reduction of the glorious two-part final sequence that runs in the broadcast to thirty minutes.<sup>21</sup>

De Angulo’s print reorganization of the oral performance, which I shall discuss more fully in a moment, throws into relief the extraordinary character of the 1949 broadcasts. They aren’t merely far more extensive than *Indian Tales*; their live performance is structured and executed very differently. Of great consequence is de Angulo’s voice, which has a witching, otherworldly quality because his English is haunted by certain French, Spanish, and Native American tonal colors. Then the tales are delivered in a lilting chant that rises up naturally from de Angulo’s prose-poetical style, which works from very simple, chunked parataxes. Because so much of the material is conversational exchange between different characters, that chanting style lays a recurrent rhythmic base under the dramatic and highly inflected dialogues that de Angulo recreates as the face-to-face exchanges that

inform his oral performance. In the recordings one also hears from time to time a rustle of the papers that are serving de Angulo as a prompt text. Paradoxically, the noise comes to signal just how freely he is handling those printed documents. His delivery is frequently earmarked by colorful flourishes and spontaneous variations from the text.

All of this comprises a rich set of oral features that echo the basic metonymic sense of the stories, whether they are delivered in print or in performance. But the performance model de Angulo adapted from his work with the Achumawi is the decisive reference point for his literary work. Indeed, it seems clear that he composed the *Indian Tales* as an imaginative explanation of the performative event. In Friedrich Schiller's famous terms, the 1949 performance is a naïve work and *Indian Tales* is sentimental. The two correspond to what Coleridge called the acts of Primary and Secondary Imagination.<sup>22</sup>

Consider the climactic five-minute finale of the broadcast. In movements 3 and 4 the small company that set out initially on their westward journey is winding its way back to Old Man Coyote's house. They are leading along a host of the young and old—characters met on the journey—to a final gathering. And this is how it all goes:

They were teasing and laughing in the shadows. One of the young people stood up on his elbows, he shouted: "Who tell this story tonight?" They all yelled for Tsimmu. "Hey you from the North, hey you...tell now the story of how the world was made...that secret tale...." All the youngsters cried in the darkness, "Oh, Tsimmu, tell us."<sup>23</sup>

And then, as "Tsimmu began" ("out of nowhere"), the words suddenly shift to a musical language we do not recognize. De Angulo is channeling Tsimmu singing an old secret tale, fragments of which break into these closing moments of the performance. We no longer clearly distinguish Tsimmu's singing from de Angulo's chanting as, we are told, "he translated for all these people who did not speak his language": "There was no land, there was only water everywhere [...] and out of nowhere the coyote came." And so the tale-telling continues to create the world it speaks of, flowing "out of nowhere" as fragments of Tsimmu's speech work an enchanting exchange with various other



voices, English and Indian, and all in that familiar transrational “voice [that is] almost sing-song.” We no longer even think to distinguish who is speaking from who is hearing from who is responding. The coyote asks: “What is that world coming out of you? I don’t believe it!” And someone responds, overriding altogether what would be a non sequitur in a less magical world:

Then the coyote made the world—the coyote and the fox, they both made the world out of their own heads.... They were singing in the fog... somewhere singing in the fog. Then the world came into being.... There was silence for a while in the house. Then Fox Boy said: “But the sun, the sunlight.” There was no sun and there was no sunlight at that time. Tsimmu’s voice left [it] out. They were all going to bed, finding their blankets, the old ones, and the young ones, finding their beds. Good Night.

### III.

A superb work in its own right, *Indian Tales* is very different from this and nearly as postmodern as Italo Calvino, Thomas Pynchon, or Angela Carter. Its character is declared in the way it opens and closes. First comes an “Author’s Preface” that sets the context for the tales. This is a personal essay de Angulo organizes in three parts. The initial section makes his own experience of living with the Achumawi an analogue for a reading experience of the tales. He takes us to a house and Pit River living spaces unfamiliar to a mid-twentieth-century American. Then come two paragraphs recounting how he came to write the stories and how they stand in relation to his professional life and writings as a linguist and anthropologist. A brief conclusion invites his reader to engage the tales in the spirit of their own “marvelous improbability.” It recalls the opening of William Morris’s *The Earthly Paradise*, where his readers are urged to “Forget six counties overhung with smoke,” etc. The preface ends by asking readers to forget its world of Western explanations—preface, parts 1 and 2—and read his Modern/Sentimental work as naively as possible, “the way they tell [the stories].”<sup>24</sup>

So when the tale-telling begins, de Angulo disappears along with the quiet thoughtful voice of the preface. Suddenly “they” are here, everything is alive and immediate, we are in medias res: “COME ON,

GET READY, we are going to start this morning,' said Bear coming back into the house." The place is the house we toured in de Angulo's preface. But now it's no longer a studied object but the living space of a company of human/animal creatures.

This sudden experience of a strange socius is moderated partly because de Angulo in his preface already answered "a lot of questions" about the Pit River world and partly because the discourse field of the first episode is recognizably children's literature. But with the second episode the sense of a familiar locale begins to slip away in the conversation about "Everybody's shadow" and the uncanny song Fox Boy and his parents sing about the shadow's homecoming.

I'm coming, I'm coming. Over the mountains I come home.  
I'm coming, I'm coming. With the daylight I come home.  
I'm coming, I'm coming. From the east I come home.<sup>25</sup>

At this point a world of pure invention begins to extrude itself from itself, like some magical Rube Goldberg machine. When Antelope stops singing and pivots to a simple prose remark—"Now look, we'd better get up and help Bear cook breakfast"—the song's witchery seems to index its pervasive, quotidian life. This is de Angulo's signature metonymic move, to be replayed in a host of different styles and registers throughout the storytelling, whether chanted orally or delivered in print.

But the difference between de Angulo's extensive KPFA broadcasts and his abbreviated *Indian Tales* collection is decisive. Indeed, *Indian Tales* is essentially a sophisticated critical commentary constructed by the book's publisher and editors after de Angulo's death. In de Angulo's *Old Time Stories*, what comes as the final episode in the *Indian Tales* appears much earlier, with fully two-thirds of the action still to come. Placed thus in medias res it is certainly a self-conscious reflection on tale-telling, but put at the end it gives finality to a work that eschews finality from its dateless beginning to its open-ended closing.

The episode is largely a conversation between Fox Boy and Oriole about narrators, narrating style, and the character of the fictional world they have been part of and now are being driven to talk about. Oriole opens their literary dialogue with a ludicrous play on words that Fox has no difficulty "go[ing] on with":

“Fox, WHAT did you DO to your tail.”

“What’s the matter with it?” asked Fox in an injured tone.

“Why it’s so ragged—and it’s getting shorter and shorter...ever since you were initiated.”

“Oh, go on with you,” said Fox, trying to bring the end of his tail to the front to look at it. He was turning and turning around.

Along with Oriole’s joke and Fox’s comic lament about their transformation from magical animals to mere people, de Angulo is lamenting the ragged brevity of *Indian Tales*, the very work in which this final dialogue is now taking place. For Oriole, the fault of the work is entirely de Angulo’s. “Listen to me,” she tells her mixed up friend,

The man who is telling our story, it’s his fault, he has done something wrong with the machinery of time, he has let it go too fast. You see, he was supposed to take a million years to tell our story. The poor fellow, he is too old, he gets all mixed up. He should go and take a rest in the country for a while.

It’s difficult not to read de Angulo using these words to reflect on his own illness at the time he wrote them and the death he knew to be imminent.

Here de Angulo uses Oriole and Fox Boy to remember that in 1949 he composed a work that danced to the music of a million-year tale, a tale that ought to “go on forever.” “But,” Fox Boy worries, the world, like tale-telling, “must stop somewhere—it can’t go on forever.” Ever the shrewdest of de Angulo’s creatures, Oriole asks: “WHY?” “I dunno,” Fox Boy admits. And as the two quarrel over who told their story in the first place, Oriole explains something about the tale-tellers and tales:

Look at that man over there walking. He seems to be just crawling along, but if you were close to him he would be going much faster. That’s the way with the man who is telling this story. Sometimes he is closer and sometimes he is farther away, so for him that makes us go faster or slower.

In the framing of *Indian Tales*, and especially in this artful episode, de Angulo is examining (and inviting us to examine) his creatures

and his tale-telling's relation to them. So as they pass slowly they are scrutinized and time weighs heavily. But in the broadcasts we are all swept along and as time flies, it also flies away. "And thus we are absorbed, and this is life," as another poet once said.

So at this closing sentimental moment, *Indian Tales* implicitly shows how the broadcasts represented and actually performed a naïve imaginative relation to Modernity. De Angulo made time stand still for a few magical weeks in Berkeley in 1949. Afterwards he went back and, in the space of the foreshortened time span of *Indian Tales*, he remembers that there is still a time, not so long ago, when time stands still. The memory now throws him back once again to supposing how "to take a million years to tell our story"—how to *take* a million years and tell *that* story, "just as Tsimmu was telling in his story of the creation of the world. Don't you remember?"

When Cocoon Man was floating around in nothing but air and fog he waited a million years for that cloud to come near enough so he could jump on it.<sup>26</sup>

It all comes down to something like the "nothing" from which "that cloud" arrives—which cloud was that exactly?—and somebody, say a Cocoon Man, waiting patiently, takes his long-delayed leap into nowhere.

*Finnegans Wake*, Joyce has told us, would be best read by being recited. On the printed page, however, it is complex code begging decipherment. So is *Finnegans Wake* a kind of sleeping beauty locked up in a printed fortress? Modernism's greatest shaggy dog story, it has to be orally remediated before its outrageous comedy can fly free. But if it begins to awaken when it is recited, and it surely does, that is exactly when we realize how its nonsense is dancing in a landscape of immense loneliness, forbiddingly intertextual and literary. It was never not first of all, at least for the world it sought to address, an academic work of English and world "literature [...] all but completely shaped [...] in the printing press."<sup>27</sup> By contrast, *Old Time Stories*, as even its ragged offspring knows, is all but completely shaped by fireside tales and bedtime stories.

In that perspective, *Old Time Stories* and *Indian Tales*, its commentary, have a cautionary tale for Joyce and a literature that, according to Eliot,

made the modern world possible for art. It's a nice question, and in another sense not a nice question at all, to ask in what relation Joyce's mythic method might stand to the savageries of enlightened Modernity.<sup>28</sup> Operating at a 180-degree angle from Joyce, *Old Time Stories* is certainly trying to make the savage modern world possible for a different kind of art.

## NOTES

1/ Wendy Leeds-Hurwitz, *Rolling in Ditches with Shamans: Jaime de Angulo and the Professionalization of American Anthropology* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 104.

2/ Jaime de Angulo, *Indian Tales* (New York: North Point Press, 1997), 283. Here I shall follow Leeds-Hurwitz in referring to the full complement of his Native American tale-tellings as the "Old Time Stories," to distinguish that work—the KPFA broadcasts (see below)—from the various abbreviated print collections and, in particular, from *Indian Tales*, initially published in 1953. Unless otherwise indicated, as when I transcribe from the KPFA broadcasts, I quote from the currently available North Point Press edition of *Indian Tales*.

3/ See Leeds-Hurwitz's extensive discussion of "blurred genres" in chapter 8, especially pp. 247–273.

4/ For a good response to de Angulo's linguistic Modernism see Anna Elena Eyre's "Jaime de Angulo's Relational 'I': A Morphological Poetics," *Paideuma*, vol. 41 (2014): 79–110.

5/ I quote from the text reprinted in *A Jaime de Angulo Reader*, ed. Bob Callahan (Berkeley: Turtle Island, 1979).

6/ De Angulo, *Indian Tales*, 188.

7/ De Angulo, *Indian Tales*, 226.

8/ De Angulo, *Indian Tales*, 218.

9/ De Angulo, *Indian Tales*, 240–41.

10/ Leeds-Hurwitz, *Rolling in Ditches with Shamans*, 262.

11/ "Before the White Man," *New York Times Book Review*, 22 March 1953, 4; cited by Leeds-Hurwitz twice, 267, 273.

12/ Quoted in Leeds-Hurwitz, 100.

13/ De Angulo, *Indian Tales*, 34–35, 37.

14/ Every creature in de Angulo's tales has a "shadow" that is dangerous to lose.

- 15/ De Angulo, *Indian Tales*, 33–34.
- 16/ De Angulo, *Indian Tales*, 223, 82–87.
- 17/ De Angulo, *Indian Tales*, 223, 87–88.
- 18/ De Angulo, *Indian Tales*, 186–88.
- 19/ In the tape of the broadcast, which takes just over fifty-seven minutes, the first movement ends at 15:08, the second at 27:28, the third at 42:06, and the last at 57:30. Here I transcribe from the tape and supply some print punctuation. I must emphasize that this punctuation doesn't begin to mirror the extraordinary richness of de Angulo's oral delivery and punctuation.
- 20/ De Angulo, *Indian Tales*, 41–52 and 218–21. These are the second and third episodes in what *Indian Tales* presents as its first creation story, Old Man Coyote's four-part tale that began with "how Weasel burned the world" (37–41). The fourth part, a tale of the creation of people (49–52), is taken from the opening sequence of the second movement of the final broadcast performance.
- 21/ 27:30–41:51 and 42:00–57:29. The general point of reference is *Indian Tales*, 218–26.
- 22/ Coleridge worked out of a Christological distinction between divine and human acts of creation. De Angulo, like William Blake, did not. For both, what Coleridge called Secondary Imagination was a self-conscious and reflexive turn upon acts of Primary Imagination. Wordsworth's distinction between the poetic phases of "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" and "emotion recollected in tranquility" is analogous.
- 23/ 52:20–57:29.
- 24/ De Angulo, *Indian Tales*, 7.
- 25/ De Angulo, *Indian Tales*, 15–16.
- 26/ De Angulo, *Indian Tales*, 233–236.
- 27/ William Butler Yeats, "Literature and the Living Voice," *Samhain*, vol. 6 (1906): 4–14.
- 28/ See T. S. Eliot's famous essay "Ulysses, Order, and Myth," *The Dial*, vol. 75, no. 5 (1923): 480–83.

## Jaime de Angulo's *Indian Tales* and KPFA-FM

If you lived in Berkeley in 1949 and you owned an FM radio receiver—still relatively rare in those early days of FM—you might have tuned in to a new experiment in local public radio. KPFA, the nation's first listener-supported radio station and the inaugural station of Pacifica Radio, was established after World War II by a group of conscientious objectors, radio professionals, and poets to bring an alternative, independent voice to the airwaves. For just over a year, during a low-wattage trial and fundraising period dubbed “KPFA Interim,” the station broadcast a mix of classical, opera, and folk music, news and commentary, drama, readings from literature, and children's programming—much of it live, much of it featuring local artists and activists, and all of it in opposition to the conventions and profit motives of commercial radio.

If you did manage to listen to KPFA in that inaugural year, you might, on the same evening, have caught two programs surely unlike anything you might have found on the AM dial. *Indian Tales* featured the sixty-two-year-old Jaime de Angulo reading, in fifteen-minute daily installments, a cycle of tales about a family of human-animals—Fox Boy, Bear, Antelope, and baby Quail—who take a journey by foot to visit their relatives, traveling among other tribes and meeting characters, like Coyote Old Man, who share old-time stories. Presented as a children's program, the fictional tales were based in part on ethnographic research that de Angulo had conducted on Native American languages and culture, predominantly among the Pit River tribes of California. A few hours later, you might have listened to Jack Spicer, a young poet and graduate student, host his weekly live show on Anglo-American ballads for the *Folk Music Series*. Spicer's program showcased a wild, spontaneous half hour of folk singing with local musicians, occasional drop-in guests, and the tone-deaf Spicer, who also provided scholarly (and mock-scholarly) commentary on the

songs. De Angulo's and Spicer's programs were different in content, format, and stated audience, but the hosts were both linguists and poets known to and, to some extent, admiring of one another.<sup>1</sup> They also appeared at this historical juncture on the cusp of a generational shift from an earlier twentieth-century West Coast modernism to the postwar San Francisco Renaissance, and from the "golden age" of American radio to the FM revolution.

I'm interested in why these two programs that aired more than seventy years ago to minuscule audiences have persisted in the West Coast literary imaginary and what it might mean to listen to them again. I ask this knowing that only de Angulo's program, *Indian Tales*, can still be heard; preserved and rebroadcast on Pacifica stations from the 1970s on, de Angulo's recordings are now available online for digital streaming.<sup>2</sup> Spicer's folk music show, in contrast, was lost to the ether, so knowledge of the radio show of the writer who famously claimed that "the poet is a radio" is known only from a few accounts by contemporaries and archival traces.<sup>3</sup> While my focus here is on describing the reception of de Angulo's radio program, Spicer remains for me an important interlocutor for thinking through the complicated meanings of reception in postwar oral poetics.

In a mock letter to Federico García Lorca drafted but not included in Spicer's first book, *After Lorca*, Spicer writes to the dead Spanish poet (whose works de Angulo also translated): "I could not have translated your poem from a tape recording of your voice. As a matter of fact, having heard your voice, you would become as much a stranger to me as my best friend—the narrow line on which we communicate would be broken."<sup>4</sup> What, then, is communicated—what has been communicated—by de Angulo's recorded voice? What have listeners heard in this strange and strangely intimate recorded voice, with its unplaceable accent of French-Spanish-American English singing songs in Achumawi? Andrew Schelling, in his recent biography of de Angulo, celebrates the KPFA recordings as "a spooky set of tapes—full of voices, ghost voices... whispering or singing in languages that no longer have living speakers."<sup>5</sup> But this is no more an essay about dictation, in the Spicerian sense, than it is about replaying de Angulo once again as a technology for salvaging a vanishing Native America, as though the phonographic logic of modern anthropology hasn't also been one of



erasure. Ignore the ghosts. Let's attend instead to the "city of chattering human beings," whose voices, as Spicer knew, are also in the air.<sup>6</sup>

Because if you were one of the few who listened to de Angulo's and Spicer's radio programs when they aired in 1949, and listened intentionally, then you were probably a poet. Or at least linked to the community of Bay Area poets, artists, intellectuals, and pacifists who met in Kenneth Rexroth's poetry salon and anarchist reading group; attended Ernst Kantorowicz's lectures on medieval history at Berkeley; participated in the large poetry festivals at the San Francisco Museum of Art; published in little magazines like *Circle* and *The Ark*; and circled around Spicer, Robert Duncan, and Robin Blaser's collectively mythologized "Berkeley Renaissance." This literary social network was connected to KPFA, as Pacifica founders like Lewis Hill, poet Richard Moore, and radio producer Eleanor McKinney circulated within it. "Of late, there have been many...rumors about Jaime de Angulo's Indian Tales," reported a KPFA program guide from July 1949: "This is one of the station's most distinguished children's programs, and there is ample evidence of its popularity with the younger generation. But there is also evidence that the program is acquiring an academic cult."<sup>7</sup> An academic cult, a community of peace activists, a queer literary coterie: it's hard to imagine now what it meant to address and cultivate such audiences for radio at midcentury.

De Angulo was recruited to KPFA by Eleanor McKinney, the station's program director, who had first met de Angulo a few years earlier, like Spicer and many others, at his ranch in Big Sur through Henry Miller.<sup>8</sup> By 1949, de Angulo had been diagnosed with prostate cancer and had moved back to the Berkeley home of his wife Nancy (aka the anthropologist L. S. Freeland). Robert Duncan moved in soon after, serving as nurse and secretary to de Angulo until his death a year later. When KPFA launched, McKinney invited de Angulo to share with young listeners the stories he had first started telling decades earlier, first to his own young children, and then to friends and their children. He appears to have told his stories for KPFA twice: first, in a series of fifty-two episodes told over the same number of nights and presumably broadcast live; second, after an enthusiastic response from the station and its listeners, in a more formal and extended version of disc recordings, of which more than eighty programs (around twenty-two hours) have been preserved by the Pacifica Radio Archives.

The stories were informed by de Angulo's ethnographic fieldwork in the 1920s and 1930s among the Achumawi, Atsugewi, Karok, Shasta, Modoc, and Pomo tribes in California, as well as Taos Indian and Zapotec Mexican indigenous communities, and he incorporated into the narrative specific details about indigenous cultural practices, beliefs, and languages—including many songs, which de Angulo sung in their original languages—in addition to information about regional California geography and ecology. It's important to note that in 1949, to broadcast a children's program about the languages and cultures of indigenous people was to debunk the dominant ways that Native Americans were represented in mainstream American media. 1949, after all, was the year that *The Lone Ranger*, long a popular radio program (and one that would continue on radio until 1954), premiered as a television series on ABC, with Mohawk actor Jay Silverheels in the monosyllabic, sidekick role of Tonto. In a letter to Ezra and Dorothy Pound, de Angulo described his motivation for the radio show as deriving, in part, from his desire to rebuke dominant myths about Native Americans: "Nothing has exasperated [me] more than the romanticization of the Indian, the Hiawatha and Chief-Bull-Sits-in-His-Pants sort of stuff. I welcomed this opportunity to show the children...what *real* Indians were like, how unromantic, how realistic, how tolerant."<sup>9</sup> As commercial broadcasters were reproducing stereotyped images about American Indians for a new generation of television viewers, de Angulo and KPFA strove to provide a more "realistic" representation—though this representation, too, was mediated by the voice and ethnographic perspective of a white European immigrant to the US.

De Angulo's *Indian Tales* are, of course, not faithful translations but creative assemblages that wove information gathered from various tribes together with de Angulo's fictional narratives and personal memories. These aspects of *Indian Tales* tended not to impede its reception as authentic among KPFA radio listeners or later readers of the posthumously published (and heavily edited) book, many of whom have understood de Angulo to be participating in indigenous oral literary practices.<sup>10</sup> Yet interestingly, the recordings of de Angulo's KPFA program do not exactly capture a performance of oral literature. Instead, we hear de Angulo reading the stories from a manuscript, presumably the typescript that he was in the process of preparing with Duncan. Thus, de Angulo's radio show is not prior to but inextricable

from the written text—both are artifacts of inscriptive technologies operating in a feedback loop, so that in the recordings one hears de Angulo turn the pages of the manuscript from which he carefully reads, while, in the typescript, one encounters the unique phonetic spelling de Angulo invented to more precisely record linguistic sound.

The notion that de Angulo was participating in the oral storytelling traditions of California Indians, however, was crucial to KPFA's ethos of noncommercial authenticity. Pacifica historian Matthew Lasar argues that the supposed early popularity of *Indian Tales* on KPFA was due to de Angulo's "capacity to convey the thinking of the indigenous peoples of the American West in a way that Berkeleyans could experience as utterly authentic" and as "a refreshing alternative to their own world."<sup>11</sup> It was then the *performance* and *reception* of authenticity by a predominantly white liberal audience that helped create Pacifica's developing anticommmercial aesthetic. This aesthetic was further reflected in KPFA's emphasis on folk music, which a 1950 station program guide explained by appealing to a generalized trope of indigeneity as the binary opposite to a debased consumer culture:

in an age of violent extremes the commercial music industry is a categorical extreme, and of folk music one can say—it is not that. . . . The staff members discussing this problem [of how to define folk music] found that they share a peculiarly emotional wish to get at the indigenous in their own culture and the archetypal in human life.<sup>12</sup>

This is the view of folk music that Spicer sought to subvert on his program, mocking KPFA's "emotional wish to get at the indigenous" and the "real, honest, basic" authentic origins of American culture. In a retrospective account, Jim Herndon recalled how Spicer would insist on his radio show on "mak[ing] terrible changes in some revered 'authentic' version" of a well-known folk tune, "making up phony takes of 'oral tradition' and singing fake verses" in pursuit of "association, *not* authenticity, at least not in the sense of the folk-song purists."<sup>13</sup> Against such purism, Spicer surreptitiously disseminated his own view of American folk music as a constructed avant-garde assemblage.<sup>14</sup> In doing so, he also participated in the broader redefinition of cultural authenticity as performative impersonation that would return in the context of the folk revival and the white youth counterculture of the 1950s and 1960s.

De Angulo, too, believed that his stories for children could undermine the assumptions and beliefs of KPFA's Berkeley audience. He delighted in "fooling them," as he put it in one letter to the Pounds, "the damned pious Christians...[by] preaching agnosticism to their children, right under their noses"; in another letter, he wrote of "confusing the lil dahlings' notions of ethics and who-created-the-world," adding that "the FBI hasn't heard of ME yet."<sup>15</sup> De Angulo imagined, then, that the *Indian Tales* might teach "the lil dahlings" suspicion of authority, dissent, rebellion, and ethnic and religious tolerance. When de Angulo learned that many of his listeners were from the university, he was doubly delighted: "of cors i took great delight in circumventing the University arm-chair anthropologists," he explained, mocking the academic community that had never fully accepted him.<sup>16</sup>

But why would adults, academics, and poets have tuned in to a children's program? The reason, I want to suggest, wasn't only anthropological interest in Native American cultures and languages. Instead it had to do with de Angulo himself, who by that time had already achieved a legendary status among the literary, anthropological, and leftist communities in the Bay Area. Ironically, while de Angulo objected to the romanticization of Native Americans in mainstream US culture, he himself would become the object of romantic fascination according to familiar frontier tropes: a cowboy, homesteader, and white shaman all rolled into one. For poets like Spicer, Duncan, and Rexroth, de Angulo represented a link to a distinctly West Coast lineage for the developing oral poetics of the Berkeley and later San Francisco Renaissance, one that connected the early twentieth-century modernism of figures like Henry Miller and Robinson Jeffers (and Pound and Williams) with the indigenous oral cultures that predated white settlement of California.

This mapping of a literary lineage for the San Francisco Renaissance reproduces settler-colonial ideologies about cultural exchange and modernization, to be sure, but it's worth noting that for Bay Area poets like Spicer and Duncan, de Angulo's significance as a cultural boundary-crosser was also linked to their perception of his queerness. In an interview with Bob Callahan, first published in 1979, Duncan described de Angulo's nonconforming gender identity and body—his occasional appearances in public as a woman, his interest in transitioning, his experience with hormone therapy during his cancer

treatment—as “keyed to [his] constant fascination with what was a shaman.”<sup>17</sup> Though it’s not clear whether de Angulo understood his own sense of gender identity in this way, later commentators have sometimes followed Duncan in presenting de Angulo’s trans practices (at times in transphobic terms) as just another aspect of his performance of indigeneity, another way of “playing Indian.”<sup>18</sup>

Duncan’s interview with Callahan was originally conducted for KPFA in 1977 in conjunction with the station’s first rebroadcasts of *Indian Tales* since the program had aired almost thirty years earlier. Callahan—poet, editor, and publisher of Turtle Island Press—collaborated with KPFA world music producer Susan Ohori on the project, editing de Angulo’s recorded stories and replaying them over several months. The rebroadcast of *Indian Tales* under the new title *Old Time Stories* was linked to the more general recovery of de Angulo by Callahan and others in the context of the ethnopoetics movement, which generated a 1975 special feature on de Angulo in *Alcheringa* and the publication of multiple volumes of his work, including *A Jaime de Angulo Reader* by Turtle Island.<sup>19</sup> Like the original *Indian Tales* did for the Berkeley Renaissance, this resurgence of interest in de Angulo helped to reclaim the ethnographer-poet for a new generation of West Coast writers, and for a new cultural and political moment.

But KPFA was also changing. The 1970s had seen the groundbreaking expansion of, and contentious struggle for, feminist, gay and lesbian, Black, Asian American, Latinx, and Native American programming on Pacifica stations. During the 1969–71 occupation of Alcatraz Island by American Indian activists, Pacifica Radio transmitted *Radio Free Alcatraz*, produced by the poet and activist John Trudell (Santee Dakota), live from the island to all of its stations. By 1977, the program *Living on Indian Time*, produced by Peggy Berryhill (Muscogee) for Native American listeners, had been part of KPFA’s regular programming for several years. One imagines, then, the possibility of dissonance for some listeners who tuned in to de Angulo’s stories, resurrected on the airwaves by Callahan and Ohori. Who listened? What did they hear? As the digital audio archive and publications like this special issue recirculate in new media forms de Angulo’s print and oral work, we might ask similar questions. Who listens? And what do these histories of reception mean for how we might listen to de Angulo again, now?

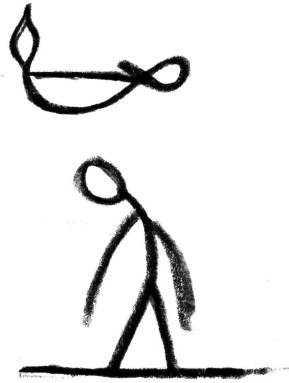
## NOTES

- 1/ Andrew Schelling posits that Spicer first met de Angulo in Big Sur in 1947 and studied linguistics informally with him sometime after (*Tracks along the Left Coast: Jaime de Angulo and Pacific Coast Culture* [Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2017], 190–91). Robert Duncan recalled Spicer’s opinion of de Angulo as characteristically ambivalent, in certain moments “dismissing Jaime entirely from consideration” and in other moments expressing admiration (“The World of Jaime de Angulo,” in *A Poet’s Mind: Collected Interviews with Robert Duncan, 1960–1985*, ed. Christopher Wagstaff [Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2012], 232). A letter from de Angulo to Ezra and Dorothy Pound in 1950 identifies “a young fellah named Jack Speicer (or is it Speiser?)” alongside Kenneth Rexroth as one of the “very few non INJUNS in California capable of intelligent approach” that de Angulo has met (quoted in Schelling, *Tracks along the Left Coast*, 249).
- 2/ “Indian Tales: Jaime de Angulo,” recordings of 1949 KPFA radio broadcasts, ed. Gui de Angulo, streaming audio, [https://archive.org/details/canhpra\\_000044/canhpra\\_000044\\_t15\\_access.mp3](https://archive.org/details/canhpra_000044/canhpra_000044_t15_access.mp3).
- 3/ Jack Spicer, *My Vocabulary Did This to Me: The Collected Poetry of Jack Spicer*, ed. Peter Gizzi and Kevin Killian (Middleton: Wesleyan University Press, 2008), 374.
- 4/ Spicer, *My Vocabulary Did This to Me*, 448.
- 5/ Schelling, *Tracks along the Left Coast*, 240.
- 6/ Spicer, *My Vocabulary Did This to Me*, 307.
- 7/ “Enlarging on a Rumor,” *KPFA Interim Program Folio* vol. 1, no. 4 (July 17–30, 1949): 8, <https://archive.org/details/kpfafolio1n4paci/page/n7>.
- 8/ Matthew Lasar, *Pacifica Radio: The Rise of an Alternative Network*, updated ed. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000), 90.
- 9/ Jaime de Angulo, quoted in Gui de Angulo, *The Old Coyote of Big Sur: The Life of Jaime de Angulo* (Berkeley: Stonegarden Press, 1995), 423.
- 10/ Jaime de Angulo, *Indian Tales* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997).
- 11/ Lasar, *Pacifica Radio*, 90.
- 12/ “Folk Music, Quid Est?,” *KPFA Interim Folio* vol. 1, no. 18 (Jan. 29–Feb. 11, 1950): 12, <https://archive.org/details/kpfafoliojan29feb1150paci/mode/2up>.
- 13/ Jim Herndon, quoted in Jack Spicer, *The Collected Books of Jack Spicer*, ed. Robin Blaser (Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow Press, 1996), 375.
- 14/ Stephen Fredman, *Contextual Practice: Assemblage and the Erotic in Postwar Poetry and Art* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010).
- 15/ Jaime de Angulo quoted in Gui de Angulo, *The Old Coyote of Big Sur*, 424, and Schelling, *Tracks along the Left Coast*, 223.
- 16/ Jaime de Angulo quoted in Gui de Angulo, *The Old Coyote of Big Sur*, 424.

17/ Duncan, *A Poet's Mind*, 230. Gui de Angulo quotes a letter from her mother that describes de Angulo's trans practices as extending back to childhood and later formed in dialogue with Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*; she does not make any connections to de Angulo's interests in indigenous cultures (309–10).

18/ Philip Joseph Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

19/ *Alcheringa: Ethnopoetics* vol. 1, no. 1 (1975); Jaime de Angulo, *A Jaime de Angulo Reader*, ed. Bob Callahan (Berkeley: Turtle Island, 1979).



JAIME DE ANGULO

## Correspondence

To MABEL DODGE LUHAN

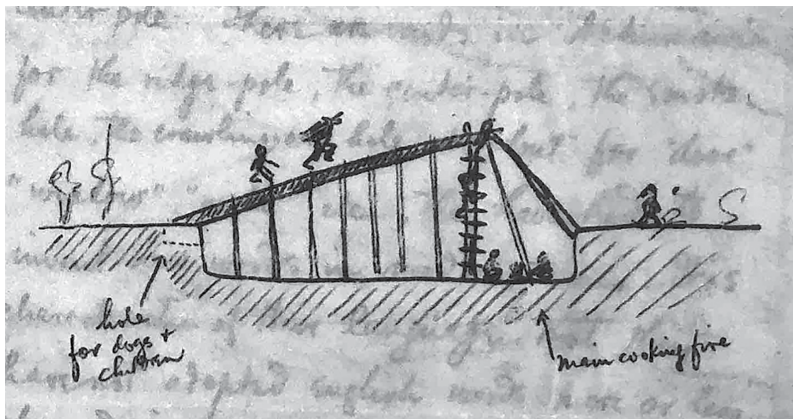
My dear Mrs. Lujan,

I was in the midst of writing to my wife and telling her of my plans about going to Achumawi indians next summer—and I started telling her about them, and before I knew it I was in the swing and then I slipped a carbon paper and decided to write it in reality for you. Here goes. I think it will interest Mr. Lujan.

Yours,

Jaime d A.

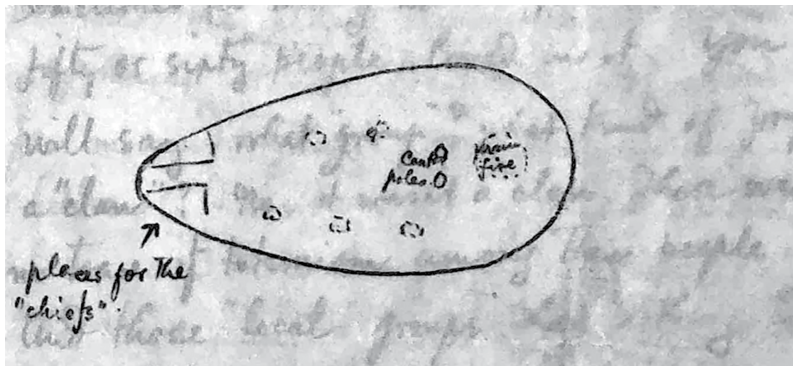
...in the old days the indians built community houses, partly dug into the ground, and roofed in by a long ridge pole and rafters, covered with bark, earth and then snow.





Ventilation must have been very efficient because there was a small hole at one end (for dogs and children to crawl in and out), and then the smoke hole at the top, which acted also as the main entrance for people. In fact there were two ridge-poles, usually, that is two big pine trees, raised side by side, parallel, and each one supported by a smaller tree with a crotch at the top, for a center pole. To go into the house you walked up the inclined plane between the two ridgepoles, up to the smoke hole and then descended by the ladder of the center pole. There are words in Achumawi for the ridge-pole, the center-pole, the smoke hole, the crawling-out hole, etc, but for “door” “window” “wall” etc, they have had to invent new words in modern times. It is characteristic of their language that they have not adopted English words, more or less changed in form, as is the method in certain tongues, but say “a to-go-through” for a door, “the to-stand-up-flat” for the wall, etc.

That’s a rather unexpected way of using language to my mind, turning to a verb instead of a noun. But there is so much that hangs thereby in relation to the problem of abstraction and generalization etc. To go back to the house. The ground plan was oval:



The main cooking fire was back of the center poles. There were several other fires, as many as there were “families” congregated in that particular community house. You must not think of that house as being part of a village. No, it stood by itself, alone, in a certain locality which was the winter camping ground of a certain group. It itself was the whole village, as it were. Sometimes as many as ten families, fifty

or sixty people, lived in it. You will say, what “group”? What kind of “group,” a “clan”? No, it wasn’t a clan. There was no trace of totemism among these people. And those “local” groups had nothing to do either with kinship. I don’t know what held them together. Convenience, I suppose, and custom. My father always goes back to the Hot Springs ([astayi-uwi], “to be hot”) at the end of the fall, so I am in the habit of doing the same thing when I grow up. But if I find some good reason for stopping at another winter camp, next year, I will do it—provided the people living in the community house at that locality have room for me and my wife, or wives, and my children. I know most of them at that place, and their language is almost like mine, and a “sister” of my wife lives there (that is, a daughter of a brother of her mother for instance), therefore I will have somebody to joke with—but come to think of it, there are two old men in that house that are “chiefs” (wehelu) and both claim to have the say and that makes for trouble and quarreling, so I guess I shan’t live there this winter...etc etc.... That’s the way I fancy the Achumawi indians thought and felt. I don’t think there was anything that held the groups together, except the very real facts that there are not, on the Modoc lands, very many convenient places for camping in winter. There are many, but not very many. The distinction is important. If there were very few, say only two or three, that would have meant real villages, with two or three hundred people at each site. If there had been lots of equally good places all over the country inhabited by the Achumawi, then the groups would have remained very small. As it is there are probably not more than fifteen or twenty such places. I know one winter camping ground very well, the one at the Hot Springs. It is the point of convergence of several narrow valleys or swales that come down from a higher plateau covered with tall timber, big pines and junipers. Fine place for hunting, this is quite obvious to anyone who has camped at all in the wilds. That tall timber is full of deer, a large, indeed very large variety, known as the mule-deer, almost as large as elk. There were elk, too, in those days. The great herds of antelope that were still roaming there thirty years ago, are also gone—but I suppose they lived only on the main floor of the valley. I wonder how the indians hunted with “pits.” We know that they dug “pits” to trap large game (hence their common name among the whites of “Pit Indians” (also spelled Pitt sometimes). I suppose they made big drives.

Another great advantage of the Hot Springs is the boiling hot water that comes out of the ground. This is great when the thermometer drops to thirty below.

The very fact of hard winters and deep snow makes the whole culture of these tribes quite different from those in the valley of California. Rain instead of snow, for instance, would have made that kind of roof over the community houses impossible. They leaned young trees to act as rafters, against the ridgepole, then on the rafters they laid large flat slabs of bark, and on top of that they piled the earth. Then the snow made a thick blanket over the whole thing. Several feet of snow cover the ground from November till April. Rain would soak thrū such a roof right away, and besides it would seep into the hollowed ground that constitutes the base of the community house. That kind of house is quite draft proof. The temperature inside must have been very comfortable since the indians used to strip to the waist. In the evenings, when the main fire had died to embers, they closed the smoke hole with a flap made of deer hides and everybody lay down to sleep, or at least lay himself down where he was to sleep. Then some old man would begin telling a story, very often an episode of the great creation myth. And he would tell and tell and tell, for hours, while one by one, the listeners dropped to sleep. That was the time when the young men who were keen and ambitious, and wanted to learn the “law” tried to keep awake and memorize the long epic. Then, later on, when they were mature and began to raise their voices at important meetings, and some difficult and tangled case came up for decision, they could quote an episode to the point...“when Coyote went hunting on Big Mountain he met Chipmunk. Chipmunk’s sister had a boy, etc. etc.” Little by little this man acquires a reputation for wisdom. He becomes a wehelu, a “chief,” at least that is our word for it. But if by chief we have in mind a definite investiture of office, either eligible or hereditary, with certain powers of command, then our word does not describe at all the Achumawi custom. Nobody elects the “wehelu.” Anyway, there is not only one such. There may be more than one in a group, althō it is likely that one man’s influence is so much more forceful than that of any other that by unanimous unspoken agreement he is regarded as the wehelu of that group. “He is the one who speaks” is about the best translation of what the indians say in such a case.

Well, after a while, even the most ambitious young men drop off to sleep. Then all is dark, pitch dark and silent in the big community house, save for the whisperings and the clandestine love affairs.

Well, I see that I went way off my original task, which was to tell you that now they have not community houses any longer, but live in cheap wooden houses, badly built, full of drafts, most of them—some of the indians even live thrū the winter in tents. And I will have to make my choice during the summer and pick out a good house[....]

§

TO MABEL DODGE LUHAN | July 11, 1924.

Bully for Clarence! Oh I am so glad somebody could be caveman enuf to turn on D. H. and spank him. But I am not surprised that it was Clar. Clarence was a baby, not a woman. That's what D. H. is, beard and all. He fights like a woman, says mean things, and for all his bitter sarcasm is at bottom very fond of warmth and affection. Not so at all with Clarence. If he would stop being a baby, he would be a real male, perhaps even too much of one, as he appears to have shown in this recent episode. Nothing as terrible as a mouton enragé. But you have not told me what was Tony's reaction to it all.

I miss Tony. I miss him a great deal. Taos worked itself into my self much more than I realized at first. Lawrence was such a disturbing factor—Ida Rauh also. I don't want white people around when I am with Tony—or only people like Nancy, Paul Louis Faye, and...well, that's all. They are the only whites I know who have succeeded in harmonizing themselves with Indian surroundings. And one girl, too, I know here, she could do it. I think—I believe she would. We call her the Yogi.

I am working hard (linguistics)—and also quite a bit of my time is still reserved for helping Nancy—But she is lucky! Really, I have never never heard of such an easy baby—he sleeps soundly all night thrū—he never frets. Whenever he frets it means he is hungry. He has a splendid appetite. He is growing like a young Eucalyptus. And he is becoming awake to the world. I mean he is getting an individuality.

Well, adios—

Oh my S. I must remember to fix that deer hide and send it to Tony for his uncle. You know I always have an impulse to call him (Tony's uncle I mean) "Turtle Old Man" I wonder why.

§

To MABEL DODGE LUHAN

My dear Mrs. Lujan

I am taking the liberty of sending you a story. It is not primarily about indians but still it will give you some feeling of the atmosphere of the California tribes. While coming home last night, and thinking about you and Mr. Lujan, I suddenly realized that you did not know anything about California and the California indians—and all the time I had been taking for granted that you did. They are so much less organized than The Pueblo peoples, so much less picturesque—all that is exotic and alluring in them is hidden away—even you with your understanding of the indians' spirituality would be shocked and disillusioned, I think, at least that would be the first impression. Theirs is a very slow rhythm, I mean in a very low pitch, hardly differentiated from the very rhythms of nature, if you know what I mean by that. I hardly dare look back over my last sentence. I think it has neither queue ni tête and is not English at all, but I think you will guess what I tried to say. Now Mr. Lujan, by his aura, gave me the feeling of something quite specialized, where the values of life have already taken a very definite form of expression, as strange to me as the Japanese, for instance, but crystallized and definite, quite far from the fluid state of psychological stuff of people like the Achumawi, the Miwok, the Pomo, the Wintus, the Maidu etc etc. I wonder what would be Mr. Lujan's reaction to them? Perhaps he would be puzzled and would not understand them. You see, you must realize that something like four or five million years, let us say, separate his culture from theirs—I don't mean at all to be exact—I just say four or five million years, as a sort of proportion to the slice of historical sequence that we are able to compute with certainty from early Egypt down to us—computing from that. Anyway you see what I mean. Gad! but I would like to see what his reaction would be.

Well, anyway here goes my story. As I say the indian mentioned is only incidental, but it is the only thing I can put my hand on, push off, I mean the only thing I can trust—I will look around and find some other things in the literature and mark off passages for you.

Please try to read it before Thursday, so I can take it back with me, because that leaves me without any copy at all—you can read it in an hour.

Yours sincerely  
Jaime de Angulo

§

To TONY LUHAN | 1924

So, you want me to write “straight to you,” Tony. But that is quite unnecessary—you know what my thoughts are, the deep ones, those deep in my heart. Even at a distance of a thousand miles, you must feel my friendship. When you see me again, we will just keep on, as if it were only the morrow. I am not all Coyote, my big brother Bear. My heart is deep, too—it is quite different from my head. You could lock your “box” against me, but not your heart. That’s enough for me and I can wait until I see you again.

And as for the little news, there are not much. I am pretty busy helping Nancy or working on the grammars of my Mexican languages. And there is always a lot of friends passing through our house.

I took a short trip to my ranch a little while ago and got a deer. I skinned it carefully. I am going to pack it and send it to you as a present for your uncle. I like him. I also saved the sinews of the back muscles, and the long tendons of the leg. I have learned to drive the car very well, so next year we will all have a fine trip together.

I have made two drums with old kegs and rawhide. One of them is quite large (out of a lime barrel). It gives a fine booming deep note.

My friend Paul Louis Faye is here. He is the man I told you about, who lives with the Navajo sometimes. He is as much as an Indian as we are. We are all happy together.

Alvar is growing very fast. He is very healthy. He laughs all the time.

Jaime 1924

To MABEL DODGE LUHAN | November 22, 1924

Dearest Mabel,

I knew it, I knew it, that Frieda was the next. When we finished the Bret's (loaned to us by Una Jeffers) I said to Nancy: "there is nothing left but for Frieda to write her memoirs and address them to me!"

What's the matter with Taos, and your not being able to write it? Why not? Don't you remember that thing you wrote for the Laughing Horse about a door? That was perfect. You gave, in there, an excellent picture of the Taos Indians, as good a picture as either Collier or I could give. Your sleeping with Tony hasn't made you any closer to it or any more understanding of it than either Collier at one end, or me at the other. You know it, Mabel. To hell with the Taos Indians, say I, to hell with all their whisperings...and long live the Indians everywhere! Here is the way I look at it, Mabel: You have made the present movement (of justice to the Indians), you have put John C. where he is, you have made the Indian à-la-mode. But you can't do any more than that! What would you? Pretend that he has more of a soul than he has? Tony is the most beautiful of them all, and you know he has no soul. Great God! Woman, what more can you do or want? You, you alone with your money and brains and imagination have swung around the policy of a nation as big as the United States. Isn't that enough for you? You still are hankering after some illusory mystical beauty!!! Mabel, Mabel, cant you see that Tony is beautiful, perfectly beautiful in his massive childishness—in fact, he is absolutely beautiful—and that the whole Taos "religion" is a silly rigmarole, and so is Jung, and so is Freud, and so is psychoanalysis, and so I used to be, too!

Oh! Well maybe you aren't ready yet. But I feel that it is time for you to start something else. What? I don't know. Haven't the faintest idea. Perhaps you dont know yourself. You are one of those cosmic forces, as it were, working blindly.

You know, Mabel, you never made any real impression upon me, until I read your memoirs. I never understood all your funny quirks

and temperamental sizzlings. I put them all down to being spoiled. I wouldn't give you credit for a "maladie de l'esprit" (although Nancy did). I suppose it was stupidity on my part. It was stupid of me to be under your compelling personality, and yet not to be aware of it. I was aware of it, in a way...in a vague way. I saw you ruling about, and although I love to be ruled, you weren't ruling me, so I went my way. I never understood what mechanism you were obeying. I felt vaguely sorry for you, that's all. Then, in your growing up in Buffalo, I saw your soul as you have put it out in that book, nakedly for every one to see, for every one to weigh the same experience for themselves.

My God! What am I writing? A volume?

Listen, my dear, I want to go thru the memoirs in order [This means I want to start after the last page of the published book]. Nancy and I hugged each other when we read your letter and your offering to send us the pages. We will take care of them, my dear. Please send them to Big Sur, Calif.

What shall I tell you about ourselves?

What is there to tell...sorrow—sorrow that cannot be assuaged. We cry and we cry and we cry, my dear, and all our tears would not fill the ocean—

You are a darling to ask us. We will go and see you and Tony after a while. Right now, we are too broken up. We don't want to go anywhere, you come and stay here for a while, Mabel.

§

To MABEL DODGE LUHAN | December 24, 1924

Movers+Shakers?  
Jaime de Angulo

Los Pesares  
Big Sur

Dearest Mabel

We finished your second volume yesterday. Nancy said "Do you realize there is only one more chapter? What are we going to do until she sends the next volume?" Nancy is going to town to-morrow, and she will mail the volume from there to you.



And now I want to speak about this second volume. But I don't know where to start: there are so many things that I want to say! In the first place, I cannot find words to express my amazement. And this is not just blarney. Mabel, please believe me. I liked the first volume tremendously...but words fail me for this. I think this is stupendous. My dear, nothing has ever been written like this. It makes Jean Jacques Rousseau and the rest pale into insignificance.

But you never dare publish it!! You cannot. You may not care whether you lift your own shirt, as we say in our own inelegant Spanish, but others do! You simply can't publish it. It wouldn't be decent!

But, what a loss if you don't! The interest of it is so human, so psychological, that one forgets to evaluate its literary merit. I know I did. I completely forgot to listen and hear whether it was well written. I was so interested! And I think that's the highest praise.

And do you know that you are an entirely different Mabel, to me, now. Will you forgive me if I tell you that I always took you more or less for a four-flusher, at times, at other times for a naive idiot. But not now! Only I'll be jigged (spelling correct?) if I can reconcile the different aspects of you! On the whole I think you are a monster of some sort, craving after power and more power and more power (and I am lucky that you never were tempted to hook into my poor flesh!).

Another point: why doesn't John Evans hate you? I would if I were he—has he read the second volume? I read his book. I liked it tremendously. Evidently he is your son, and he's inherited your literary abilities, whoever his father may have been. I never appreciated him either. To me, he was a handsome young man, very well-bred and rather inarticulate. I didn't dream he would write a book like that, so mature, so profound (by the way, somebody had it that *you* were jealous of its success—I don't believe it). (Yes! I do, too, on second thought!) I try very hard to guess whose son he was, from the second volume, and I can't tell. Either your adorable first husband or that terrible magical lover. I suppose the physical resemblance must tell, by now. Please tell me, I am curious to know. Why did you never make any erotic appeal to me? You ought to have been the very one. That's a puzzle to me. But then, I never saw your beauty as I see it now.

By the way, (I don't know why the last remark brought this out, because it has nothing to do with it) have you ever heard of me as "Orlando"?

There are a million other things I want to say about the second volume, but I am getting tired of writing, and there are some other things I want to say.

One of them is that we have rented a house in Carmel, to serve as a pied-a-terre (we are not going to live in Berkeley any more. We are letting both our houses there). I pushed Nancy into it because I saw that she was going to get claustrophobia (or agoraphobia?) out in this wilderness, unless she felt there was another home within reasonable distance. I myself don't want ever to go out into the world again, but that's no reason for dropping her out into this howling wilderness. —Will you and Tony please honour us by making it your pied-a-terre? I can't remember the address, but then Jeffers will tell you how to get there—the landlord lives next door and has the key.

Oh! Bother!! The man is standing outside with the horses—I must finish and seal this, otherwise it may not go for two weeks.

But there were so many other things I wanted to tell you!

J.

My best love to Tony.

§

To MABEL DODGE LUHAN

Dearest Mabel

We have finished reading the third volume (Makers and Shakers). There is no use repeating to you again and again how much I love you as a writer (I also love you otherwise). In fact, I love your writing so much that I wish not so much of this volume were made of other people's letters to you. —Now, let me qualify that; I loved for instance the crazy assortment of letters you received when you were trying to social experiment; or, at least, I loved them for a long time, and then I grew weary. I also liked all the letters of Alex. Berkman (altho God knows I did not like him much in real life, little as I knew him, but he was so damn smart and elusive—in fact he was the very antithesis of Ben Reitman—but in the letters he writes sincerely, like one who believes what he says).

But, so many, so many others—and especially Gertrude Stein’s! I have never met her, and maybe she is all right. But I think anyone who writes as she does is an ass and does not know it.

Now, you understand, Mabel, I am not criticizing this volume. I am not telling you, this should be, and this should not be. I am merely giving you my own personal reaction, and you know that I am not a literary critic. I was bored by so much correspondence. Finally, I would say to Nancy: “Oh, let’s skip all that...see where she begins to talk again.” And then what a sign of relief when I would hear your clear voice again!

But then, is it not simply that I am interested in you and your reactions more than I am interested in this third volume as an historical document?

But there is the rub. I was interested in it as an historical document. Some of that history I knew a little, and was a little mixed up in it myself—I mean the radical crowd from 1908 to 1912—but I found out in your volume much that explained things I did not understand. Some of that history was a completely closed book to me—I mean the modern art movement. It all happened after I left home (you know I was brought up in Paris). Then I wandered around. Then I was too preoccupied with reconciling my native anarchism with Cary’s socialism and my native lawlessness with her adoration for social organisation, and fighting with my hero De Leon, and fighting with everybody at the Hopkins, to pay any attention to art. Anyway I had committed myself to science. It was not until Nancy forced me to look at the Roerig’s exposition in S. F. (1918 or so, I think) that I realized I had skipped just about fifteen years....

But where am I wandering? I started to tell you how extremely instructive your history had been to me. I had missed all that, while I wandered around, and had come back to a world that had changed its artistic outlook [and I had not yet met Johanna], and I could not bridge the gap, and never did until now, when I read your reminiscences—which I call a “history of arts and manners in New York and Paris at the turn of the Century”—but perhaps “Intimate Memories” is a better title.

So, you see that I was interested in more than just your personality and the special flavor of your diction—yet, I got frankly bored when I got too far away from your own voice. I wouldnt have mentioned it,

but I think it (the correspondence and newspaper articles) was about one fourth or even one third of the MS. Did you realize it yourself?

All right, now I am going to read Una's letter and see what she said.

Good for Una! "the zero hour in your life + Stein too, I've never willingly thought of her in my life..." See, darling—and I have never discussed Stein with Una, at least not that I remember.

—"but all that conversation + excitement of the New York group is dry as dust tome..." [not to me] "...and I am sorry to say John Reed does not excite me either" [neither me, Mabel, neither me; he probably was fine in bed, but except for the good taste of having loved you he seems to have been a jackass performing with a pen].

—"it wouldnt surprise me if this book had a fine sale" —that, I don't know a thing about, nor care, nor, I think, do you. Or do you? You are vain (or at least so you say, although I never saw it, clever as I am), but not as a writer. You'll get your books published, you know that. I don't really think you care a damn whether people like them or not. There they stand, for posterity.

P.S. Listen, Mabel, one leettle thing bothers me. I see from the publishers that they have very competent men "read" your manuscripts. What about the French? You know what a funny feeling you get when you read misspelled French. Nobody will remember to blame your typist, you know. I will be quite willing to go all over the French, if the passages are marked in blue pencil, or some other way.

Mabel, why didn't you ever tell me that you had almost been brought up in France. Why did you let me flounder on in English? You are a strange person.

And by the way, what about making our own proof readers' corrections in your next installment? We did not, in this, or the ones before, because we thought it was probably too late and Hartcourt, Brace's bright young men were already on the job.

Jaime de Angulo.

Mabel, did I thank you for the copy of the second volume which you sent us? Well, if I did not, here they go. I see they have left some of the most interesting passages off. A mistake I think. They wouldn't have libelled you. I am really sorry. Cant you see, Mabel, that your genius lies in your amazing veracity, and that when lopped off of (oh hell!

when...having had some of it lopped off, the rest may sound coy?).

However, your publishers know best.

But, please have the unexpurgated versions saved in a bank safe for another age when publishers wont be so squeamish.

The pictures in the book were quite new to me. You probably dont realize that I never saw you when you were quite young. You were very, very charming, darling. And Nancy likes them even more than I do. I had forgotten we wore such funny clothes. As a matter of fact, ours are funnier, to-day. And anyhow I can hardly place yours. My sweethearts didn't wear them. But then I was in Paris, moving around very conservative families. I suspect you looked like a freak—but very adorable.

What shall I tell you about us now? Not much to tell. I never move from here. I read the news, ten days late, and am interested in what happens in the world. But Nancy and Guiomar go to town every two weeks, to have G's teeth attended to. Then we all work in the garden, or we drive the turkeys at sunset so the coyotes wont eat them, sometimes afoot, sometimes on horseback [we, not the coyotes, you understand]. Then, in the evening, we read, "Mabel" if we have some (with shouts of joy from Guiomar), or something else, if we haven't.

The same humdrum life, day after day, day after day, forever looking at the infinite sea, forever thinking about the dead one, forever planning for the live one. Looking ahead for the next visit from Tony and you.

§

To MABEL DODGE LUHAN | January 16, 1925

2815 Buena Vista Way  
Berkeley

Those were two very sweet letters you sent us. We should have answered long ago, but you know how it is with us and no servants, and all the spare time we can scrape devoted religiously to writing up the grammar of the Taos language. We are collaborating on it N. and I.

Well, by this time you must have heard from Tony an account of my suddenly appearing in Taos with Jung. It was all very sudden. It seems that he decided out of a clear sky to cross over to America for the sake of a little vacation on the steamer. Then the first thing I knew there was a telegram asking me to come and meet him at the Grand Canyon “no expense to you.” I recognised the generous hand of Mr. Porter (of Chicago). The telegram mentioned the possibility of visiting an Indian Pueblo.

You can imagine my excitement. I made up my mind that I would kidnap him if necessary and take him to Taos. It was quite a fight because his time was so limited, but I finally carried it. And he was not sorry that he went. It was a revelation to him, the whole thing. Of course I had prepared Mountain Lake (Antonio Mirabal). He and Jung made contact immediately and had a long talk on religion. Jung said that I was perfectly right in all that I intuited about their psychological condition. He said that evening “I had the extraordinary sensation that I was talking to an Egyptian priest of the fifteenth century before Christ.” The trip was an immense success all around. Jung got a great deal out of it. I got a great deal out of Jung, both about philosophy and about my own work. I needed his confirmation of all the stuff I have been working out by my own lonely self and against all anthropological precedent. And I got Porter and young McCormick interested in the Indian question. They realized my thesis: the white American must preserve the Indian, not as matter of justice or even of brotherly charity, but in order to save his own neck. The European can always tie back to his own mother soil and find therein the spiritual pabulum necessary to life. But the American, overburdened with material culture, is threatened with self-destruction unless he can find some way to tie himself to his own mother soil. The Indian holds that key.

They saw my thesis, and they solemnly promised me that they would not forget it but would use their energy and their influence towards some sort of steady campaign. Maybe they will. Maybe they wont. Maybe the dream of my life is on its way!

What news of Clarence? and of Lawrence?

J.

To MABEL DODGE LUHAN | November 2, 1933

Dear Mabel,

Thank you ever so much for this copy of *Memories*. And what a coincidence: it came just on the day that we were reading the last chapter of it (Nancy reading aloud to me) in a copy lent by Marie Short. So we returned the copy to M. and read the last chapter in our own copy!

And how we were sorry when we closed the book, and wished the second volume were out! Oh! Mabel, you are always interesting, whether in real life or the printed page. Just like your Lorenzo in Taos. We read it last year and roared and roared over it. And by the way, why should you have a bad conscience about me? I thoroughly enjoyed the caricatures you made of Frieda, and Bret, and Clarence, and, worst of all, of yourself. So why should I not enjoy my own caricature? Every line of it was true—oh, except one, a mere detail, but it got my goat, so let's have it out and have it over with. You have the impression that we had invited ourselves: had you forgotten how you invited us and invited us and invited us? Well, it's a small matter—when you read a book it is all easy—when you write it, it's different. But can you imagine either of us who pride ourselves on our breeding above all else, doing that?

But, to come back to the book, I mean *Memories*, gad! Mabel, that's even better than Lorenzo in Taos. That was amusing, and keen, and well told (all except Lawrence's own letters—what a bore! most of them; how insincere, and pedantic...but let's not fight about him anymore), but *Memories* is something deep. Some of it I don't thoroly understand but N. says it's so much like her own background. Beyond that, I mean: beyond that ignorance on my part of the overtones of American society in the nineties and the next decade, there is a further lack of comprehension on my part, which N. can supply for me. It has to do not with culture, but rather with types. (By the way, answering your query to Una about me: no! to hell with psychoanalysis!) I mean, not Jung's "types" in the orthodox psychological sense, but just types in ordinary parlance. And N. is, more or less, of the same type as you: all made of important sensations that come flooding into the receiving

self, some of them single, some of them in pairs, some quite complex, but all and every one of them sensations, accepted without elaboration on the idea they resolve into when translated into organized thinking. Now, don't misunderstand me! N. even when she takes the trouble to think, is much better at it than I am. But most of the time she would rather let the world of sensations flow into her, just such as they are, like a train of ears arriving into a station—piling in, piling in, piling in, until some organizing becomes imperative.

(While I start to organize between the arrival of the second and third ears).

Neither of us arrives at a clearer understanding of the universe, but each one understands the other only through supplying what's missing in the "completeness" of one's own self.

In the same way, a million things that puzzled me about you, became quite clear as I watched N. reading all your introversions ("introvertizings"?) with perfect ease, as one quite used to them. I cant understand you myself—you are too "funny"—but I can understand you through N. You are too strange for me. I don't think or perceive or feel or rationalize or do any thing else like you. There is absolutely no bond between us, except three or four little funny ones. For instance, I cant diminish the reality of your existence to me: there you are, bang (of the hair) and all, with the peculiar thing about the corners of your eyes. I feel about you very much as (I imagine) Tony does. You are funny, and fundamental in spite of it.

Your descriptions of Buffalo and all of you and all that you felt, all the sensations that penetrated into you, are a masterpiece.

That will stand for all time. What you wrote about L. will stand (for the public) only as long as he still is the fashion. But what you wrote about your growth will stand for all time. Not for me—I mean, I did not grow that way—but it stands as an exposition of how one particular girl grew in New York-Delaware-Pennsylvania civilizations—culture in the nineties. N. grew that way, and understands it.

N. is calling me to supper—and so is the smell of chops.

Well, good-bye, my dear  
Jaime

P.S. If you speak French so well as you do in the book, why didn't you use it with me?

2. P.S. Tell Tony I am the same as ever.



## “Singing with my Antennae”: Jaime de Angulo’s Outside Poetics

Jaime de Angulo’s modernist poetics stem from his ethnographic praxis, which acknowledged that his subjectivity was open to transformation. Although recovered by Wendy Leeds-Hurwitz as an important figure whose anthropological practices were ahead of his time, there is no comprehensive study of de Angulo’s unique contribution to poetics. Just as de Angulo was an outsider to the cultural anthropology of his era, so too was he an outsider to modernist poetry. This marginalization allowed him to be open to personal transformation and to create poetry deeply influenced by the spirituality of the Achumawi people of Northern California. From this marginal position, de Angulo became an influential figure for West Coast Modernist poetics, in particular for Jack Spicer’s thinking about poetry.

Perhaps the best place to grasp de Angulo’s own perception of his poetry is in his correspondence with Dorothy and Ezra Pound. Although he never met Dorothy or Ezra in person, his correspondence with them, begun near the end of his life in 1948, was extremely valuable to him. Pound equally valued de Angulo’s correspondence (it is said that the only painting in his bedroom when he died was a portrait of de Angulo) and he facilitated the publication of *Indian Tales* with the help of Marianne Moore. Although their respective poetics were strikingly different, they must have found camaraderie in one another’s genuine love for the study of languages and translation, as well as in their shared idiosyncrasies.<sup>1</sup> Dorothy and Ezra Pound were eager to seek publishers for de Angulo’s poetry, but de Angulo felt pressed to explain that he did not know much about poetry and had never thought of himself as a poet—even though his earliest poem is dated 1915.

He first began translating poetry in Baltimore as a medical student, where Sun Hsueh Wu tutored him in Chinese. There, de Angulo and

his first wife, Cary Fink, worked together on translating Lao Tse. Fink would later give de Angulo a book of Federico García Lorca's poetry from which he immediately started translating *Poema del cante jondo*.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, de Angulo insisted he was not a poet. He wrote to Dorothy, "you really must BELIEVE me hwen i say that i hav a curious blind spot hwen it comes to poetry i cant explain it something missing in me somehow."<sup>3</sup> This "something missing," he later elaborates to her, is prosody: "[this] is why I never (or hardly ever) showed my poems to anyone. i didnt see how they cud have any merit since i did not [know] any of the principles of writing poetry..."<sup>4</sup> That de Angulo claimed he knew nothing of prosody (meter and metrical forms—the sound and rhythm of poetry) is interesting in light of the fact that he was most interested in rhythm and sound—the embodiment of the languages he studied. His own prosody is more akin to that of the oral poetics of Native American song rather than the prosody of English and European poetry.

In contrast to other linguists working in the field at the time, de Angulo went to great lengths to record on wax cylinders the songs and oral recitations of the Native American peoples with whom he worked. Sadly, because the linguistic community valued text over recorded transcript (a position since flipped), de Angulo could not secure funding to transfer the wax recordings to vinyl records and the recordings were lost. In this context it is telling that the poetry manuscripts housed in the UCLA collection all include the word "songs" in their titles: "Songs of the Hillside," "Songs of the Shaman," and "Songs of Myself." From these titles, it is clear that de Angulo considered his poetry to be song and hence of a more embodied, oral, and mythic derivation.

Unlike poems by Native Americans that would appear in translation alongside their originals in later ethnopoetic works (such as *Technicians of the Sacred*, edited by Jerome Rothenberg), de Angulo's poems do not appear as translations (although some do maintain Native American words written in English "fonetiks").<sup>5</sup> Not enough research has been conducted to determine which of his poems were translations of Native American songs or oral literatures he encountered in the field. There are a few, such as "Old Kate's Medicine Song," that can be attributed to certain people and tribes (in this case a Modoc medicine woman); however, the majority appear without attribution.

Cultural anthropologists at the time (such as Franz Boas, Margaret Mead, and Zora Neale Hurston) were mostly holding a mirror up to the modern Western world. De Angulo however was highly aware and critical of the crypto-colonialism Boas and his students were practicing by viewing the cultural other as strictly informant or subject. Perhaps de Angulo was aware that the only way to truly learn from and share his experiences and transformations during his time with the Achumawi (one of eleven tribes grouped under Pit River in Northeastern California) and other Native Americans was through poetry or fiction.<sup>6</sup>

He was adamant that the Native American people and languages he worked with were not exploited, stereotyped, or considered specimens. He was not interested in mining tribes for folkloric or mythic sources as were other linguists. It is perhaps for this reason that he was the only linguist entrusted to study the Tiwa dialect and several ceremonial myths of the highly secretive Taos Pueblo People—a study he promised would not be published and to this day requires special permission to see.<sup>7</sup>

A further example of de Angulo's thoughts regarding Native American representation is clearly stated in a letter to Pound. He writes, "nothing has exasperated [me] more than the romanticism of the Indian, the Hiawatha and Chief-Bull-Sits-in-His-Pants sort of stuff...i never cud make the anthropological world accept my thesis that so-called primitive man had as much logic as we, only did not choose to employ logic all the time (after all, the meta-logical thinking is as valid as the logical)."<sup>8</sup> De Angulo is exasperated by the way Native Americans are represented in popular American consciousness as both regal and illogical.

De Angulo's closest relationship developed with the Achumawi people of Northern California from 1913 until his death. His thinking on language and poetry was highly influenced by their beliefs, and a significant portion of one of the longer manuscripts of his projected book *What Is Language?* is devoted to a study of Achumawi language. His sustained encounters and friendships with the Achumawi people not only gave way to careful linguistic study of their language but to a deeper understanding of their spirituality.

After moving to Modoc County and making contact with the Achumawi in 1913, he wrote to his wife Cary who was in New York at the time:

I have never understood so well before all the mysterious poetry of...of...of what is it? What is its name? It is not life, nor nature, not the cosmos, but something, something, something not real, not not real since it is not material, more like a creation of our spirit, and yet pertaining to the forces of nature. Perhaps I should call it the relation of ourselves to the rest. But how vague that is and how inexpressive! No wonder some call it God...It is the purest, most unalloyed form of religion...I can never be religious. There never was a more confirmed atheist, a man more 'irreligious' than myself. But I can now understand why those clear minds have accepted religion—a puzzle incomprehensible before.<sup>9</sup>

Here de Angulo struggles to articulate the profound transformation he experienced. As he admits, no one is a greater atheist than he is, yet he cannot explain this deep sense of connection as anything other than “a creation of our spirit.” In this “relation of ourselves to the rest” he is picking up on what he later articulates as key to understanding the spirituality of the Achumawi, a key that formed the basis of his philosophy of language and poetics. This relationship to the outside world (the nonmaterial, the light in all things) is what shapes one’s self at the deepest level. One of the best ways to have a relationship with the outside is to sing. Each voice is unique, and when one sings, one animates shared language with a personal life force—a light inside that is in relationship to other life forces. Moreover, the tone of song and its continuous sound allow the voice to carry emotion and to affect the emotion of others more so than the written word.

Although de Angulo first met the Achumawi people in 1913, his first official fieldwork as an ethnographer with the Achumawi took place for approximately six weeks in 1921. In 1926 his first published article on the spirituality of the Achumawi appeared in *American Anthropologist* under the title “The Background of the Religious Feeling in a Primitive Tribe.” There, he is careful to argue that the spirituality among the Achumawi is not of an explanatory cosmology but rather an experiential awe for nature. He asserts, “Therefore it is logically impossible for the rational man to understand the religious feeling of the primitives, and this is the probable cause of the failure of orthodox scientific ethnology in this field.”<sup>10</sup> This explains why de Angulo turned to subjective, participatory ethnology and decisively tried to experience, understand, and write about religious feeling

apophatically.<sup>11</sup> Or, as he put it, “The spirit of wonder, *the recognition of life as power*, as a mysterious, ubiquitous, concentrated form of non-material energy, of something loose about the world and contained in a more or less condensed degree by every object.”<sup>12</sup> For de Angulo, all material things contain life force, everything harbors some degree of light. One’s relationships with these things or with the outside in general is what shapes one’s internal being or (for lack of a non-Western term) soul.

In “La Psychologie religieuse des Achumawi” he further explores the conception of this life force present in all things as a fundamental aspect of Achumawi metaphysics. He argues that the Achumawi belief that all things harbor life force is not animism, which for him “entails a projection of the personal soul on the exterior world.” Rather, the opposite is the case:

[the Achumawi] is conscious above all of external life.... This is the life-force, and he strives by every possible means to draw it into himself. When he succeeds in this, he has not done it through projection, but on the contrary, he has done it through identification.<sup>13</sup>

The Achumawi perceive life force as an indeterminate potentiality that is capable of countless forms. Gathering these many outside forms into one’s self by identifying with them expands the understanding of the self. Human life force is assembled from experience of these outside forms, and it therefore cannot be fixed or statically determined. This is a difficult concept to grasp through written text because the language that we have to describe it is composed of determinate forms that seemingly become even more static when written.

De Angulo also refers to “the idea of a personal ‘shadow,’” which the Achumawi call “the *delamdzi*.”<sup>14</sup> He demonstrates how this shadow is different from a Western conception of the soul in that it is not related to breath but is made of light. He quotes the Achumawi shaman Son-of-Eagle saying: “You can hear it sometimes in the morning, just before you wake up. It comes from over the mountains. It comes from the East. It comes singing: ‘Dawn is rising. I come. I come.’” Curious about its etymology, de Angulo investigates what the term for this shadow is and notes: “The real word for casting a shadow is *tinala’ti*, whereas the word for dawn is *delalamdzi*, which suggests the word for soul (*delamdzi*).”

He concludes: “Thus, judging from their language, it is not so much the black mass that they consider the essential phenomenon of the shadow (even physical), as it is the stopping of the sun’s path.”<sup>15</sup> According to the Achumawi, what enables one to see the sun’s movement is paradoxically the obstruction of it, which is imagined as translucent in that it both obfuscates and reveals the path of light. Would we know there was light without an obstruction of it? In order to fully grasp such an understanding, one could turn to language as an entity that both obfuscates and reveals the path of life force. Language is a system of relationships, as is evident in the words *delalamdzi* and *delamdzi*, and as such, it is a mirror or reflection of other systems of relationships. Just as everything contains some form of “concentrated non-material energy” of this life force, so too does every word.

According to de Angulo’s interpretation of Achumawi metaphysics, an understanding of one’s self is an understanding of one’s relationships with the outside. This is similar to language in that a word’s definition is best understood when it is in relation with other words—when it is in context. Such an understanding of language as a system of relations is evident in one of de Angulo’s last projects, in which he sought to write a book that the layperson could use as a working manual and introduction to language. As much a philosophy of language as a book of linguistics, *What Is Language?* was to be his greatest work and is in line with his desire that his writing be for the people and not the “pundits.”<sup>16</sup> He wanted to offer a working understanding of a tool people use daily and likened not understanding how language works to not understanding how the engine of a car works. This is a tricky task, however, because whereas the engine of a car is strictly mechanical and runs three tons of material, language is an “engine” that is both material and immaterial and, as he argued, runs all of thinking, philosophy, and metaphysics.

At the same time, his book is also an attempt to improve his own understanding of language: writing an instruction manual that utilized examples of his fieldwork and studies of linguistics would allow him to organize and reflect on his lifelong study of language. *What Is Language?* advances several theses that are in sharp contradiction to other assertions by prominent linguists, ethnographers, and theorists of his time. Mainly, de Angulo presents *human language as the primary form of human thought* rather than as a tool for communication.<sup>17</sup>

For de Angulo, language (and thus thought) is akin to a kaleidoscope, and one's understanding of it is dependent on one's perspective. The first page of the longer manuscript of *What Is Language?* is a drawing, "The Kaleidoscope of Language" (p. 183), that illustrates how de Angulo thought of language as something that changed in relation to how it was viewed or, if you will, turned. Although it does not have a fixed center, or perhaps because it does not have a fixed center, it can be entered at any angle, and each angle will give way to the whole. Each piece of language, like a jewel in a kaleidoscope, offers an insight into the whole as it changes its shape when placed in different contexts or in a different relation to other pieces. He explains, "sometimes [language] follows the deductions of logic, and sometimes it leaps with intuition. Language is somewhat like a kaleidoscope—you may view language from a certain angle, but give the instrument a twist and lo! A new picture appears. Or we might imagine language as one of those jewels that respond with different lights according to the angle of vision."<sup>18</sup> Because the pieces of language are so inextricably related to one another and only understood in relation to one another, he argues, "it is impossible to present language in an orderly sequence. To do justice to the subject the reader would have to read all chapters simultaneously."<sup>19</sup> Although the whole of language cannot be completely determined, as one cannot read all chapters simultaneously nor can they be perceived in the same way by each individual, the whole is not meaningless. Instead, meaning is found by the individual through glimpses of the whole that are offered by parts of language in relation to one another.

This understanding of language as a system of relations is similar to Ferdinand de Saussure's, but de Angulo insists that the understanding of language is intuitive and not analytic or systematic as it was for Saussure.<sup>20</sup> De Angulo approaches language holistically and does not try to tame its messiness, whereas Saussure attempts to systematize and delimit language for scientific study. De Angulo's book is not meant to be read linearly from front to back; instead, he would like the reader to enter from any point that interests him or her and continue reading in an intuitive manner. He is insistent that our understanding of language is intuitive, and the organization of his book enhances our intuitive ability to understand how the system of relations in language works.

Words that best exhibit how these relations work are what Edward Sapir, and later de Angulo, termed relational. A relational word is most

substantial (able to signify on its own) when it is most relational (able to signify because of its relation to others). For example, the pronoun “I” can stand as a unit of meaning on its own but is best understood when it is in relation with other words or in context. De Angulo was fascinated with how, in Achumawi, a subtle shift in form via tone could change the meaning of the word more than a shift in sound (for example, a vowel change or subtle change in form, such as *delalamdzi* and *delamdzi*). Words that are able to change meaning via shifts in tone are relational in that the tone provides the context. Perhaps they are the most relational in that they do not really require other words to fully signify, instead they require a speaker. The meaning of the word is nothing without the person speaking it, and so language is in full relationship with the human through tonal words.

De Angulo’s love for song lies in its ability to highlight one’s personal relationship with language. In a passage from a letter to Sapir, he writes of the Achumawi, “Now that I am getting more familiar with the language I realize that in ‘conjugating’ a verb, pitch tone is fully (if not more so) as important as vowel change. This language is nothing but a song, with the melody as fixed as that of a regular tune.”<sup>21</sup> What is striking for de Angulo is that, because of its ability to affix grammatical function via tone shift, the Achumawi language becomes songlike. For example, the difference in tone of the “a” in “lam” determines the word’s meaning to be either “I will eat” or “ice.”<sup>22</sup> This change in meaning caused by a tonal shift was a puzzle for de Angulo. He was most fascinated by the relational words and morphemes (the smallest units of language) that best exhibit the precarious balance between form and content in language.

It has been noted that de Angulo began writing songs as a form of healing (working through pain) after the tragic death of his son. For the Achumawi, song was an intuited incantation of power—a force that can both heal and harm. Perhaps his literary writings were in a mode in which, in de Angulo’s own words, he “unintentionally dropped” into the speech and mythology of his “Pit River friends.”<sup>23</sup> De Angulo may have indeed slipped into the speech and song of the Native Americans of the Pit River tribes of California and understood that it is difficult to ascribe an author to the tales and songs he retold. As Andrew Schelling writes, “the traditional shaman songs, the animal songs (and the fewer but similar plant songs) clearly are not made up by



people, much less ‘written.’” Schelling describes shaman song as a gift of nature and not as something created by a singer. This implies that language begins with the life force in nature and is perhaps intuited by humans via song. De Angulo was able to sing, to “unintentionally drop into” Pit River song, because he spent years in the field as an ethnologist who acknowledged that the scientific study of people and languages cannot be purely objective. The songs that he wrote could be blends of his original writing with material recited orally for generations or they could be translations. What is clear is that the songs come from a relationship with the outside—with a power other than the “author.”<sup>24</sup> Moreover, song can translate emotion and feeling even if one does not understand the words of the language sung.

In order to create a poem that could translate emotions without words the way song does, one needs to utilize language in a way that enhances the reader’s personal relationship with language—their emotional tuning to language. In order to do this, the poet must, in a sense, step out of the way and use words that have the greatest potentiality of meaning, abstract words. This understanding of language is present in the work of de Angulo and also in his student’s, Jack Spicer, an important postmodernist American poet. De Angulo’s influence on Spicer’s poetics points to a strain of Modernist American poetry that is founded in an understanding of ancient Native American and folk knowledge.

Spicer developed a poetics of dictation in which a writer steps out of the way and is both conduit and transmitter of the outside. The poet never systematizes the whole of language but rather turns the kaleidoscope in spectacular ways. The best evidence of Spicer’s explication of his conception of poetic dictation is in four public lectures that he gave within a thirty-day period in Vancouver a few months before his death in 1965. Spicer begins these lectures by situating the kind of poetry that he was writing and was interested in as poetry of dictation: “I think most poets who I consider good poets today believe...essentially that there is an Outside to the poet.”<sup>25</sup> It does not matter how one conceptualizes the Outside. He explains,

what the Outside is like is described differently by different poets. And some of them believe that there’s a welling up of the subconscious or of the racial memory or the this or the that, and they try to put it inside

the poet. Others take it from the Outside. Olson's idea of energy and projective verse is something that comes from the Outside. I think the source is unimportant.

What is most important for Spicer, as it was for de Angulo, is that the Outside is life force. If the world is composed of systems of participatory relationships with outside things that harbor life force, then it would make sense that one could be caught in and broadcast different channels. The poet can, to some degree, choose which channel to broadcast, but what comes through the radio (poet), although articulated via its particular frequencies (words), are different broadcasts of the outside.

Spicer tunes into and transmits the outside in *After Lorca* through the poetry or, if you will, the frequencies, of Lorca as translated by himself. As Spicer insists, "A really perfect poem (no one yet has written one) could be perfectly translated by a person who did not know one word of the language it was written in. A really perfect poem has an infinitely small vocabulary."<sup>26</sup> Perhaps a perfect poem would occur in tone but such a poem is impossible to write—unless it is a song. Spicer's poems are of "an infinitely small vocabulary" not because he wants the words to act as fixed images or symbols, but because he wants the words to cor respond, to transmit and receive different personal experiences everyone has with words, objects, the world.<sup>27</sup>

One could attribute Spicer's idea of the poet-as-radio directly to de Angulo's poem entitled "For You," written in 1949 (a year the two would have been in contact). In "For You," de Angulo likens the singular lowercase or impersonal "i" to that of a locust who sings with his antennae:

i sang a song  
    a small song, ever so small  
but you wud not listen  
creeping in the grass  
    parting the stalks  
    and peering into the  
    moonlight  
i sang  
    a very small song

i am a locust  
singing  
with my antennae<sup>28</sup>

The poem reflects on this “song” as small. It is “ever so small” because it is in a condensed vocabulary that the greatest multiplicities of meaning can be found. That is, the more abstract a word, the less it is described, the more a person can interpret it on their own. Spicer’s “infinitely small vocabulary” could be attributed to de Angulo as the desire to use the fewest words possible to gain the greatest multiplicities of meaning.

De Angulo’s poem highlights how “you” is a pronoun designated by another and not the self: it is defined by its relation to other words. This designated “you” does not listen to an “i” that sings a very small song. In this regard, to sing a song with antennae is to be a singer whose intuitive reception of the outside environment is what allows it to sing. Here the locust’s song is not composed by its stridulation. Instead, its song is the reflexive navigation of the atmosphere that its antennae intuit, and is therefore of the body in movement, and somewhat quieter. This movement is performed in the way the words physically dance across the page and resist left justification. In de Angulo’s model, one can voice the “i” via intuited correspondence with the environment as the Outside where each thing harbors life force. One best understands one’s own life force when in relationship with these different life forces. Instead of transmitting knowledge, as Pound’s poetry and poetics sought to do, de Angulo’s poems are transformed by and transform through intuited linguistic knowledge.

The “i” of “For You” is an intuiting locust that, in another undated and untitled poem, leads to the idea of a singular “I”—which in turn becomes plural, that is, composed of many *Is*:

I am Locust, I never die!  
I am a hundred, flashing in the sun.  
I am a rattle for the dance.  
I am the war-song.<sup>29</sup>

The capital “I” of this poem is proper, but its singular properness is undone by its plurality. Locusts live on nearly every continent and,

in a sense, never die because they cyclically return by the hundreds. There is never one locust, yet locust swarms are composed of singular locusts. The locust could be a model for a vision of humanity in which individuals understand they are both a part of and apart from one another. The poem would be performative of such a humanity because it can be sung or read continuously in rounds, gathering the myriad voices reading it through its sonority. For example, the slant rhyme offered by “sun” and “war song” performs a similarity in difference, which is akin to the similarity in difference people share in their use of language. As a group, we speak one language, but we each speak it differently.

Acknowledging such a difference, we can note how de Angulo’s poems strive for a quality akin to that of tonal songs to highlight how a certain relational word, as part of the whole poem, changes and is changed by another word or by the individual speaker’s voice. Although his songs are written, de Angulo’s relational words allow the reader to reflect on how one’s personal relationship with language can subtly change meaning even when language is seemingly fixed (written). His poetics offer insight into a conception of agency (in writing and beyond) that is not informed by acting and doing, but rather by intuitive receptivity and being—a relational poetics conceding the possibility of a visionary humanity of singular plurality. De Angulo’s songs allow those who sing them to become intuitive receivers and transmitters—transceivers in the recognition that language is a reflection of our relationships with the outside.

## NOTES

- 1/ De Angulo's political views were strikingly different from Pound's. Apparent throughout his correspondence with Pound is de Angulo's referral to himself as a "yahoo from Yahoodom" (quoted in Gui de Angulo, *The Old Coyote of Big Sur* [Berkeley: Stonegarden Press, 1995], 393). De Angulo envisioned a radical politics of the outsider and noted, "i dislike humans (at least, the white race) i lov plants & animals (but not monkeys or humans) theoretically i spoz i am a liberal but practically i dont giv a damn i lump all of them, workers, bourgeois, employers, employees, socialists, komunists, royalists etcetera in one big class: the BORES ((all in all I'm not a very lovable person))" (quoted in G. de Angulo, 399). Unlike Pound's anti-Semitism, the misanthropy evident in this passage is actually a dislike for groupings or classes that distinguish one human from the other via categorical groupings.
- 2/ Wendy Leeds-Hurwitz, *Rolling in Ditches with Shamans: Jaime de Angulo and the Professionalization of American Anthropology* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2004), 67.
- 3/ Quoted in G. de Angulo, *The Old Coyote of Big Sur*, 400.
- 4/ Quoted in G. de Angulo, *The Old Coyote of Big Sur*, 415.
- 5/ De Angulo's "fonetiks" provide evidence for his desire to honor the people who create culture and language and not the linguists and ethnographers who document them. He created "fonetiks" to phonetically transcribe what he heard in the most direct way possible by omitting letters to shorten the sounds of words, as well as using spellings that were more representative of what he heard.
- 6/ Whether de Angulo appropriated his mythical stories and song poetry is a serious question that has not been satisfactorily answered and deserves further attention. I would love for a Native American perspective on his form of translation and ethnographic study. I hope with the resurfacing of de Angulo's work, one will appear.
- 7/ Andrew Schelling, *Tracks along the Left Coast: Jaime de Angulo & Pacific Coast Culture* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2017), 120.
- 8/ Quoted in G. de Angulo, *The Old Coyote of Big Sur*, 423.
- 9/ Quoted in G. de Angulo, *The Old Coyote of Big Sur*, 86.
- 10/ Jaime de Angulo, "The Background of the Religious Feeling in a Primitive Tribe," *American Anthropologist* vol. 28, no. 2 (1926): 354.
- 11/ For more on his groundbreaking "experience-near" style of ethnography, refer to Wendy Leeds-Hurwitz's *Rolling in Ditches with Shamans: Jaime de Angulo and the Professionalization of American Anthropology*.
- 12/ De Angulo, "The Background of the Religious Feeling in a Primitive Tribe," 354.

13/ Jaime de Angulo, "The Achumawi Life-Force," trans. Annette Boushey, *The Journal of California Anthropology* vol. 2, no. 1 (1975): 62.

14/ De Angulo, "The Achumawi Life-Force," 61.

15/ De Angulo, "The Achumawi Life-Force," 61.

16/ "Do you know hwat wud plese me mostly ? if my 'What Is Language?' wer to be publishd by the Signet Books (know what i mean? those small cheap editions..) bekauz i rote that book for the peopel NOT FOR THE pundits! (The PUNDITS dont need any books ritn for them) Back of all filsofy and metaphysic is that tool of thinking: language! Yet, most people are in regard to language (which they use continuously for about 16 hours daily) az ignorant as ignorant as the driver of an automobile hwo had never looked under the hood, hwo knew absolutely nothing of gears, pistons, motor, spark, or gasolene!!! It is incredible, it is fantastic!" (quoted in G. de Angulo, *The Old Coyote*, 394.)

17/ As I've previously argued in an article published by *Paideuma*, de Angulo, in opposition to linguists Ludwig Wittgenstein as well as Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf, asserts that although some languages may be better suited for some thoughts than others, any thought can occur in any language. Therefore, language is not dictated by culture nor is it methodical because, for de Angulo, thought is more dependent on intuitive and relational logic rather than analytic and rational. For de Angulo, human thought is the ability to distinguish one's self from experiential sensations, asserting a difference of identity from the same as these sensations as well as recognizing oneself as percipient. To distinguish one's self as separate is paradoxically also to be aware of and to reflect on one's union with experiential sensations. This human recognition stems from one's ability, via language, to confront an interior representation of outer reality and manipulate this representation. This implies that one can receive or actuate sensations on an imagined inward stage (the mind) that gives the illusion of outward reality. In other words, one can fantasize. De Angulo argues: "Considered from that angle, thought is dynamic, thought is power. I do not have actually to throw the rock; I can think it." And he follows this line of logic by concluding, "language is only secondarily a means of communication; primarily it is a means for thinking. In order to have thinking at all, there must first be recognizable mental images—and that is already language, not yet overt, but covert. It must not be forgotten that there cannot be a recognizable mental representation without a 'word' or 'name' for it, whether the word be uttered or not." Human thought or "recognizable mental representation" is not possible without word: indeed, human thought is language—the word or name of a mental representation (Anna Elena Eyre, "Jaime de Angulo's Relational 'I': A Morphological Poetics," *Paideuma* vol. 41, [2014]: 92–93).

18/ Jaime de Angulo, *What Is Language?*, 13–14. The archival pagination in the longer manuscript follows de Angulo’s and is cited here.

19/ De Angulo, *What Is Language?*, 14.

20/ I believe that de Angulo would oppose Saussure’s theory that language is a closed system. Moreover, de Angulo was just as interested in morphology as he was in theorizing that language is a system of relations. A case could be made that he thus also aligned with the work of René de Saussure. (For more on how morphology informs de Angulo’s poetics, refer to Eyre, “Jaime de Angulo’s Relational ‘I.’”) A further linguistic study on the similarities and differences between de Angulo’s work and these two opposing views of language would be fascinating.

21/ Quoted in G. de Angulo, *The Old Coyote of Big Sur*, 168–69.

22/ De Angulo quoted in Marianne Mithun, *The Languages of Native North America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 470.

23/ Quoted in Schelling, *Tracks Along the Left Coast*, 239.

24/ This theory is somewhat similar to Lorca’s theory of “duende,” which places the body, particularly its blood, as central to production of the arts. Duende is tapped into instinctually, is never the same twice, and so it is, as Lorca writes, “it is not a question of ability, but of true, living style, of blood, of the most ancient culture, of spontaneous creation.” (Federico García Lorca, *In Search of Duende*, tr. Christopher Maurer [New York: New Directions, 1998], 49.)

25/ Jack Spicer, *The House that Jack Built: The Collected Lectures of Jack Spicer*, ed. Peter Gizzi (London: University Press of New England, 1998), 5.

26/ Jack Spicer, *My Vocabulary Did This to Me*, ed. Peter Gizzi and Kevin Killian (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2008), 122.

27/ Kelly Holt located an archived letter Spicer wrote to Donald Allen in 1960 that, in reference to his third Lorca letter for publication in *The New American Poetry*, implores he make sure that the word “correspondence” maintain the double underline “cor response.” Thanks to Holt’s research, we can now confirm that Spicer’s cor response has specifically to do with “A pun the letter reflects” (Spicer quoted in Kelly Holt, “Spicer’s Poetic Correspondence: ‘A Pun the Letter Reflects’” in *After Spicer: Critical Essays*, ed. John Emil Vincent [Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2011], 59). I argue that Spicer’s pun of letters is cor response wherein the core (the life force inside) of one responds to the core of the other, and vice versa.

28/ Jaime de Angulo, *Home among the Stars: Collected Poems of Jaime de Angulo*, ed. Stefan Hyner (Albuquerque: La Alameda Press, 2006), 155.

29/ De Angulo, *Home among the Stars*, 26.

*from Old Man America*  
A fictional autobiography of Jaime de Angulo  
as told (written) through coyote

[The trickster-figure] is a faithful copy of an absolutely undifferentiated human consciousness [...] a forerunner of the savior, and like him, God, man and animal at once. He is both subhuman and superhuman, a bestial and divine being.

—Carl Jung<sup>1</sup>

Old Man Coyote, even when he brings fire for the benefit of humankind, is far from being a Promethean hero: he is an insatiable glutton, a gross lecher, an inveterate thief, liar, and outlaw, a prankster whose schemes regularly backfire.

—William Bright<sup>2</sup>

Circulating among us now like ghosts of the continent's ancient past, as if to make us cognizant that we are new and barely real here, coyotes oddly appear to grasp with those vivid yellow eyes that they function as avatars, stand-ins to help humans see themselves.

—Dan Flores<sup>3</sup>

Silver Fox was the only living person. There was no earth. Only water. "What shall I do?" Fox asked. He began to sing. "I would like to meet someone," he sang to the sky. Then he met Coyote.

"Where are you going?" asked Coyote.

"I've been traveling everywhere," replied Fox, "looking for someone. I was getting worried."

"Well, it is better for two people to travel together, that's what they always say."

"Okay. But what should we do?"

"Let's try and make the world."

"How are we going to do that," asked Coyote.

"Sing!" said Fox. And with his thoughts he made a clod of earth. . . .

—Jaime de Angulo<sup>4</sup>



I am an old coyote that lived as a human for a while, in human time. Now I am in old time, eternal time. But for clarity's sake I will drop back into human time to tell this story. My story, the story of a man, a coyote, a man—a life. I speak to you from the beyond to tell a story as coyote does. I will speak to the origins of a place, California—of its original people as seen through my yellow eyes, as one who has lived through language, who knows how to sing the magic of story into words, into clods of earth.

As coyote I am party to a plot. The plot of a human life, “my” life. I live, therefore I am—the pilot of my own demise. And therefore perhaps the pilot of my own creations? For a time I’ll be telling, talking, and writing to you as human being. At other times I’ll be speaking as coyote, outside of time, from what I’ll call the “first animal poetic-close.” Or maybe it’s the “first animal omniscient,” or “first-animal interuptus,” which can simply be called coyote narration—nonsequential, nonchronological, regularly interrupted. Because time to a coyote is beyond chronos time, beyond name and image, beyond cause, since we are always in the *present tense eternal*. That’s it; I speak to you from the present tense eternal! How’s that for a POV? Physicists call it nonlocality. Nowhere and everywhere immediately at once—with forked tongue at the ready, in the shape and plane of a Mobius strip, one side, one surface, one boundary in an un-orient-able twist. The rest is language—the best of what we’ve got in English (and some Spanish, perhaps a little French strewn in, and of course Achumawi or Pit River).

The story will consist of memories and reflections of what did or didn’t happen in this human/animal shape-shifting life. There’s nothing logical or even timely about Mr. Jaime, the meat-suit character I climbed into for the telling...all in order to talk story. Follow along logically at your peril. The truth is as malleable as an old coyote’s tongue. And so we read on, bark on, howl on...out into the wilderness of our consciousness—enjoying the merry dance along the way, via the great song of language.

## §

What’s the interior monologue of a coyote? Inspired, moved as he is by scent, driven by uric markings as if a recognized animal language, communicating a presence, a boundary, a territory, a terrain....

I originally only came into human form to find out how humans spoke. To find out what the nature of their language is—what their consciousness beholds—how it is all informed by wildness. I came to find out what all the fuss was about. Why all the creation only to shoot and burn it down again and again. I've watched all this building up of so-called great civilizations, great structures—pyramids, vast walls, cities of gold, agri- & aqua-cultures, amassed wealth, slavery, domination, globalization and the obsessive focus on war, war, war—the great birthings and the killings. Why one culture over the next—why one story over the other? The story tellings and forgettings—all one story. What is it all for if not adventure, gambling, playing loud, sniffing about in the midden heaps for a score—learning what you can from the native cultures, loping along through a spacious territory or personality—oh, to be held and tormented by wilderness. Let the sky be thy name! Be chased by your own shadow and chase it back, wander into the heart of oblivion, arrive on the empty other side without dragging anyone down with you...if you can.

I have lived with the pack and all alone, howling my way through lonely seasons on the Modoc plateau, at El Ranchito Los Pesares in Big Sur, drowning in drink, calling forth my shadow, my poison—forgetting my true name. This is the nature of coyote; to chew off his own foot (gnaw a hole in his own heart) even when he isn't caught in a trap (except for the trap of ego-addiction). He lopes on. Sings on. Howls at the moon since only the moon knows his name, knows his sorrows.

I sing it through the old time stories via the people who most fascinated me—the original people of California, born from the heat and flutter of animals, here for thousands of years singing this place alive, telling coyote stories, singing *me* into existence. I wouldn't be here if it weren't for them. My only dream beyond existence itself was to understand what human language is, maybe not so different than coyote language—as rich, culturally significant, and important as Ovid, Virgil, Hesiod, Homer, all the men of the European-American west with their big wars, jealousies, rapes, hatreds, loves, battles, gods and goddesses, beliefs (religious and otherwise), death-stories, and fires. Thinking you and your people are more culturally significant and important than the native inhabitants? Oh, the bravado, the gall and nerve, the blindness and ignorance, the fierce woundedness, hatred and

brutality. To think that your stories, your art and language, your social order and politics, your history is somehow better, more important, more rich, more worthy of praise and preservation—this is the madness of great illusion and the downfall of the Western Empire.

Am I a sort of Captain Ahab and this (quest of language) my white whale—searching as I have the open seas of the aboriginal American mind (as well as my own) for a language of the sublime?

So then this here document is my creation story and I'm sticking to it. For now. Buckle up 'cause it's filled with self-destruction, as is central to any decent coyote experience worth its fur. Story is what makes the world burp up into existence. Like a lava blob from the belly of Mother Earth.

As coyote making the world, I was never born and I shall never die. As long as people keep telling story, keep singing and stomping, I remain. I live eternal, if only in wild mind, as an animal-human-being—one song, one story.

This is the story of a place, a person, an animal. Me. Coyote. California. My story is all story, your story, timeless and placeless. But I will pick specific settings. I will talk through coyote and coyote through me. We'll roam, we'll lope, we'll cover a lot of ground, so to speak. We will defy boundaries of space, time, and form. It's you and me, kid, creating the world right now. Restoring it through story. Restory-ing. Me writing/speaking, you reading/listening. That's how things are created, straight from the mouth of babes—coyote babes, human babes, eagle babes, silver fox babes, lizard babes, buttercup babes. I could go on. And will. Story will keep showing up as long as you keep showing up to listen and to read, as in retell, that is...like a poet always ready to create anew.

## §

I coyote have ears that cup consciousness, hearing in tiny frequencies beyond human thought and voice. Language originates through me (us), through the deer-people, the lizard, hummingbird, eagle, bear-clan, tree-people, rock and sun. They are our seed-filters of creation. We know what you are thinking before you do, we anticipate human thoughts of destruction. Sometimes we join in for fun. We call forth our friends and demand a new slate, a new playground when shit gets

burned out. New blooms are always yearning in the wake of great fire. We can hear the seeds squirm, perk up, and then sprout before the smoke has cleared.

§

What makes a man worthy enough to claim his turf on the hillock of history? Would I have made it into *Plutarch's Lives*? How about Herodotus, Tacitus, Machiavelli, Toynbee, Gibbon? I never led a regiment of soldiers into battle, never put down a resurrection or wrote up a cornerstone piece of legislation, nor commissioned a great wall or monument of empire. I never negotiated a peace accord or border dispute, funded an arts college or peasant uprising. Never developed a cure for the plague, anticipated space travel, or explored astrophysics.

What I *did* do was devote myself to understanding the language of the so-called aboriginal mind of man—really the immediate, pre-euro-conditioned-open mind of humanity. My appetites were, via untethered solitude and wildness, to discover a language of the sublime beyond poetry and psalm.

What makes coyote coyote is his ability to persevere in the face of species genocide, of extinction. To survive decades of attempted annihilation at the hands of confused humans, and not only survive, but thrive, genetically, psychologically, spiritually. The trickster identity is born from the ability to transcend death. To rise from the ashes. Scratch that, to eat the ashes of your own fires. In essence (ch)eat death, as is so embedded in the word **death**. To reinvent the resurrection through story and song. And so we evolve out of that brutality stronger, smarter, more shape-shifty than ever, able to further outwit you delusional humans, and take over your cities, reinvent your language, rewire your brains.

§

Beginnings are ridiculous, but you have to start somewhere. Endings are an illusion, but you have to pause for breath, for death. Just for clarity's sake we'll pick a time, a "big time" (the ceremonial dance of this life span, or most of it) to represent eternity, and as a way for truth to sparkle across the night sky. Like coyote knocking over a basket full

of polished white shells, spilling stars upon the great midnight void. We could pick any human, but you're stuck with me because I am just loud, erratic, and crazy enough to get your attention.

Most people forgot about the power of the old ways and the original people—those who held the sacred songs—but I devoted my life to remembering, honoring, reviving, sharing story (culture). And not just the dominant Greco-Roman ones either. But the dominated, genocided, ignored, and abandoned ones of the central west coast of North America—California. You can learn the most from those you least understand and therefore fear. And so it is with coyote. Could have been any animal, but who is more essential to story, to creation? Who more the survivor, the destroyer, the great shape-shifter, the sly loyal lover? And as for place, what place more seismically active and energetically infused with words—more tethered to other hidden cultures (over two hundred native languages were spoken in the area of California before the arrival of the European)? Not to mention the fusion of great geologic plates, bordering the world's largest ocean. A Place that drops its lava-crusting tongue to the jagged desert regions of the tropics while nudging its head north to snowy cold and volcanic Cascadia. It's all here to be found, stories told in stone, in towering redwood rainforests, soaring saline ocean-side sandstone cliff-faces, great granite Sierra sheets, vast sandy spiny Joshua tree forests, open central valley blooms, ohh, Cal-if-or-ni-a.

We are living in a time of great erasure, California is burning as my coyote ghostwriter writes this, in the year of their lord 2018. Mother Earth is sweating. Our carrying capacity has maxed out. Mother Earth is ready to shake us off with a grand shutter. Why else such a scamper for space travel? Even private space travel. Everyone hustling to exit the planet and set up shop on another. The time for a population shift, as in drop—has passed. Coyote will help. No, we won't be eating humans as in some coyote zombie apocalypse, but we have our ways of meddling.

Technology plus capitalist-consumerism is a recipe for forgetting. So-called AI makes coyote laugh. I'll show you artificial intelligence, you and your computers, your machines...fuck. Designed to erase the past, designed to make one perpetually seduced by the promise of the future, all shiny-techno-new and expansive, progressing into more and more and more complex gadgetry. With the way things are

set up to progress forward for the few at the expense of the many, it never works. Concentrations of wealth and power—all the technology in the universe won't save your Eurocentric patriarchal asses.

The old ways are too slow, too clunky and glitchy for you, eh? Hahh. Coyote knows better. The old ways provide. Take time travel for example. You can't time travel with your triple X upgraded iPhone. Your Tesla Model S, your Falcon Heavy Rocket—cannot zap you back and forth in time. Oh sure virtual reality I understand is getting pretty cool, but it's always going to be external, always slightly out of reach and distinct from *actual* reality.

In order to truly time travel, you need a shaman (poet) and a good story. You need a rattle and a drum and a human voice. Or a book. *The* book. The book of time travel. A book that revisits the old ways, the new ways, the eternal ways, and asks you to sing it aloud. Here it is. I gift it to you. Pass it on. It's a gift for you to remember your true self by. Don't forget this. Forgetting kills.

By singing-writing-telling, I am trying not to forget. Who am I to say? I'm no Indian. Who am I not to say, I'm no Indian. Anglo, white, Spaniard, Mexican, coyote-animal; I will take on all these identities and dispel/merge them in the telling. Identity is an illusion. Gender, culture, religion, race, class, tribe—all separations that kill story, kill time. Sure go ahead and celebrate your differences, your quirks and creations, your unique and colorful cultures—just don't get all tangled up in them like fly does in spider's web. Your clay-garment, meat-suit-halloweeny costume, is not you. Your conditioned, thought-up temporary assignment is *not* you. Remember who you really are, *coyote*. Live through that realization, sing that awakened song! After all it's about making and remaking the world with every telling, every singing, every moment, every breath. Breathe with your heart wide open and enjoy the coyote-creation's song, be immersed in the eternal present-story-making-time-travel—that is, the big here and now! Listen on, sing on, read on...and be free.

## NOTES

1/ Carl Jung, “On the Psychology of the Trickster-Figure” in *Four Archetypes*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (New York: Routledge, 2004), 165, 169.

2/ William Bright, *A Coyote Reader*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 3.

3/ Dan Flores, *Coyote America, A Natural and Supernatural History* (New York: Basic Books, 2016), 15.

4/ Jaime de Angulo quoted in Andrew Schelling, *Tracks along the Left Coast: Jaime de Angulo and Pacific Coast Culture* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2017), 156.



PETER GARLAND

## Prefaces to Jaime de Angulo's *Music of the Indians of Northern California*

The majority of de Angulo's field notes and musical notations are grouped together in a collection with the title (in de Angulo's own spelling) *Pit River Songz*. Aside from this Achumawi material, there seems to exist only a handful of notations of songs by other groups—the Pomo, for example. I am a bit surprised at this—perhaps these notations exist elsewhere, in another collection of de Angulo's papers; or perhaps not.

What this seems to indicate is that de Angulo consciously made a careful study of Pit River music, attempting to deduce aspects of structure and melodic scale through comparison and analysis of his notations. As we know, de Angulo was familiar with songs from various northern California tribes—it appears that these he simply observed and collected, without the attempt at a larger analysis.

From a sheaf of over thirty-five loose pages, I have selected twenty-six (twenty-five songs total) and assembled them as if they comprised a single unified sketchbook. Numbers at the tops of many of the transcriptions refer evidently to actual field recordings of these songs by de Angulo. I have not kept his numerical order; rather, I have grouped songs together according to category (gambling, puberty, medicine songs, etc.). Aside from that, ordering of the songs is my own.

Some of the songs—the “Bolem na” gambling song and the “Lhintsuli gandu” and “Dalmoma” shaman/medicine songs for example—can be compared to the transcriptions made by d'Harcourt that accompany de Angulo's essay. The last four songs, the “Lonesome Songs,” were grouped in the same folder with the *Pit River Songz*. I believe they are Pit River medicine/shaman songs. “Lonesome Song II” is identified as Loon Woman's (a character who is an Achumawi-type shaman) on Tape no. 77 in my index of the *Old Time Stories*. So I have kept them with the *Pit River Songz*, but grouped them together at the



end (these same four songs also exist in rougher, scribbled versions that are more like field notes).

These notebooks are perhaps most valuable for the insight they give into de Angulo's working methods. Since he sings many of these songs in the *Old Time Stories*, his personally-devised notational system served as a memory aid. From these notations, Jaime could—and did—sing the songs. In his own written comments on the sheets, it is apparent that de Angulo constantly kept an ear and eye out for aspects of musical structure—whether that be melodic, rhythmic, or sectional. I imagine this was analogous to the methods he used in his linguistic work—beyond learning the musics or languages themselves, de Angulo always sought the underlying mechanics or structures of those languages, musical or verbal.

But what I personally find so compelling about these pages is that the best ones stand out as compact and expressive visual-musical poems. The notation has its own calligraphic beauty—at times carefully worked, and at other moments scribbled and spontaneous. I confess I have spent far more time pondering these song sketches than the musical transcriptions of d'Harcourt. I suggest the reader view these both as ethnological documents and as a chain of miniature poems and songs (from a time when poems always were songs), accompanied by sketches and analytical commentary by the poet/scholar de Angulo. As fragmented and scribbled as they are, these are still magical pages, and it is good that for the first time ever, forty-plus years after they were written, Jaime de Angulo's (and his Indian friends') songs reach the light of day.

### §

The *Song of Los Pesares* is a collection of songs de Angulo created by and for himself. It is a cycle of songs, or visual poems, from his last years of solitude at his ranch, *Los Pesares* (The Sorrows), high atop a ridge in Big Sur. Most, if not all, of the songs appear to come from the years 1948–1950, the very end of his life. Though it bears a title page in his handwriting, *Song of Los Pesares* was not a fixed and finished manuscript; rather, it is a loose jumble of notes which Gui de Angulo sent me in early 1988. No doubt de Angulo meant them for personal reference and use only, and they were never intended for publication.

I see these notations as evocative ideograms of songs we'll never hear. Like his poems, and his sense of sentence structure in his prose writing, de Angulo's personal concept of music was deeply shaped by what he had learned in his studies of northern California Indian music: this was the musical style that he adopted as his own.

This influence from Native American style, both in music and in his writings (especially the poems), is one of the most important elements in de Angulo's creative work—and a reason why it is so original and seminal in American letters. His poems often resemble the song texts he transcribed—in their brevity, and in the sharpness of one single image. These song notations here also share those qualities. Subsequent poets have been influenced by the same factors of course; this influence has been less evident in music. What de Angulo's work shows us is that Native American music and oral literature provide more than just exotic, "quotational" matter, or flavor; rather they offer new formal models and attitudes towards the material at hand (music or words), through a simplicity that is a return to basics.

It is also a simplicity that is far richer, and more complex, than first meets the eye or ear. Rather than emulating the "sound" of Indian music or poetry, we can use these new attitudes to speak in, and develop, voices that are completely our own. De Angulo's high achievement as an artist was in doing precisely that—and this is why there is such a thin distinction in his work between the ethnological and the creative.

In California today, more is known in music (composer) circles about Indonesia or India than about the state's own Indian culture. More people chant Buddhist-style than Native American. Why that is, is a curious question. I think it has to do with what I call a "high" culture-"low" culture prejudice. That, somehow, in an "advanced" musical culture like ours, which equates greater technical complexity with a sense of advancement, cultures like those of the "Diggers" of northern California (a pejorative name given to them by early settlers due to the simplicity of their material culture) are little appreciated. Our culture values musical systems and structures, and the more instruments the better...what that kind of thinking overlooks is the fact that here on the north American continent, we have one of the most diverse, ancient, complex (yes, indeed!), and thoroughly contemporary and up-to-date, vocal traditions in the world. One as

deeply attached to spiritual and regional traditions as the chanting of Tibet. Like the music of India, it is grounded in the drum and the voice, the two main elements of (almost) all music: rhythm and melody.

I see de Angulo's *Song of Los Pesares* as very modern pieces, using ancient and basic means of expression. They have all the roughness of sketchbook pieces, unfinished work—but they point in this direction, and perhaps this is their great beauty and importance.

In addition to his relationship with young poets such as Jack Spicer, Robert Duncan, and Philip Lamantia, de Angulo was also friends with Pound and Jeffers. He was also a friend of California composer Harry Partch, and most significantly with Henry Cowell, the “founder” of the American experimental music tradition. Cowell, and his student Lou Harrison, were among the few composers to be aware of Native American music and traditions (and de Angulo's own work, for that matter)—perhaps this awareness is an integral part of the “West coast” American musical consciousness and tradition—that, and the cultures of Asia and Mexico. Both de Angulo and Harrison lived in the southern Mexican state of Oaxaca (de Angulo's other principal field of linguistic work, besides California, was in Oaxaca).

I bring this up, as the last two pages of *Song of Los Pesares* appear to be in Henry Cowell's own script. The notation is as sketchy and rushed as much of de Angulo's—but I am currently editing works of Cowell that are in manuscript, and recognized and corroborated the similarities. Sidney Cowell agreed when the pages were sent to her:

Of the sheets you sent me, those with Turtle remarks have nothing on them that suggest Henry. The other two sheets do. The three-staff page of 5/4 is certainly all Henry. So is the last staff on the... page with its four measures in 6/8. The measures of joined notes I think are not by Henry; looks to me like an attempt to indicate sliding tones, but too regular for this. None of the words at the top of this page, nor the small “Jaime” and “Henry” at lower right corner of the three-staff 5/4 page are in Henry's hand either.... There are half a dozen unmistakable clues.... Henry used several different G-clefs, but these pages use one of them unmistakably; metric signatures, noteheads, stems, bar lines, slant and spacing are all perfect HC over many years.

From this, another value of *Song of Los Pesares* is apparent: this song cycle, with notations by Henry Cowell, stands as an indicator of the cultural ambience of 1940s California—one aware (like now, if less so in music) of its indigenous traditions. And as I emphasize: this informs our own creative endeavors, and heritage.

Ordering and organization of the individual pieces in the *Song of Los Pesares* are my own, not de Angulo's. In terms of genre, they resemble in a wonderful way the function of songs in “primitive” culture. Songs of, and to accompany, domestic activities (songs of the broom, rake, bread rising); animal songs; songs of the land (song of the chaparral and song of lost in the fog); songs of contemplation (song of the two horses, chant of night falling). All these categories are present in Native American song—but how honest and integral to de Angulo's life at Big Sur these songs are!

It is possible (compare the traditional notation by Cowell of Turtle Old Man's song to de Angulo's) to “decipher” these songs—but that's not important, these songs are beyond that. Like hieroglyphs or petroglyphs, these musical glyphs of de Angulo are poetic/musical moments in time. They speak to us now only in echoes; but their beauty is no less for being that.

April 12, 1988

PETER GARLAND

## For Gui

One strange chick I remember from somewhere, wearing a simple skirt with pockets, her hands in there, short haircut, slouched, talking to everybody...it's Gia Valencia, the daughter of the mad Spanish anthropologist sage who'd lived with the Pomo and Pit River Indians of California, famous old man, whom I'd read and revered only three years ago...“Bug, give me back my shadow!” he yelled on a recorded tape before he died...I watch her, the little thin body just faintly feminine and the low pitch of her voice, the charm, the veritable elegant oldworld way she comes on, completely out of place in the Cellar...I really like her, I feel her charm...

—Jack Kerouac, *Desolation Angels*<sup>1</sup>

At the time Ginsberg was around, Jack Kerouac came to San Francisco, as well. Everybody was very excited. Kerouac had written a book, *On the Road*, about a trip he'd taken with his friend Neal Cassady. People said it had been written, without punctuation or paragraphs, on a roll of paper. I tried to read some of his books, but they annoyed me because they all seemed to be about miserable, helpless women he had slept with and then left. I wondered if the women involved had any idea they were going to appear in a book. I've read that I met Kerouac at The Cellar, but I don't remember it; however, I do remember an evening I was visiting friends and everyone was sitting at the kitchen table, talking. Kerouac was stalking around, and then came up behind me and laid his hands on my shoulders, no doubt inviting me to be in his next book. I moved away.

—Gui Mayo, *The City*<sup>2</sup>

It was never easy being Jaime de Angulo's daughter. Reading *The Old Coyote of Big Sur*, Gui's biography of her father, reveals just how difficult it was. She was the third and youngest of Jaime's children. She grew up apart from her half sister, Ximena, whose mother, Jaime's first wife, Cary Fink (later Cary F. Baynes, cotranslator of the *I Ching*), took her away with her when she and Jaime divorced. Her beloved older

brother, Alvar, died in a terrible car accident when he was only nine years old and Gui was not yet six. So she grew up an only child in a wildly dysfunctional family, with a brilliant but extremely eccentric (and hard-drinking) father. Her mother, Nancy Freeland, a linguist like Jaime, separated from him when Gui was twelve, and subsequently divorced him. Gui and Jaime maintained a tense, on-again, off-again relationship until Jaime's death in 1950, shortly before her twenty-third birthday. All through her life Gui had complex and conflicted feelings toward her father, so much so that in her later years she dropped the de Angulo name altogether, and adopted the last name of Jaime's mother, Mayo—and became Gui Mayo.

In the latter half of her life, after de Angulo's work experienced a strong revival thanks to the wonderful Turtle Island editions of the 1970s and that decade's embrace of "ethnopoetics," Jaime achieved a level of quasi-veneration. Suddenly Gui's father had achieved celebrity status, which generated more personal and emotional difficulties. I admired how protective she was, not only of Jaime and his reputation, but also of her mother's and her family's legacy, though to some people she seemed "difficult." I first met her in 1976, when I inquired about rebroadcasting the Pacifica Radio *Old Time Stories* tapes, and was fortunate to maintain a warm lifelong friendship. She also had to deal with being viewed and treated often more as "Jaime de Angulo's daughter" than as a person in her own right. The key to our friendship was my respect and affection for Gui Mayo, which only grew stronger over the years.

Gui's lifetime spanned generations and worlds. Her early childhood was the years of the Great Depression. With no regular employment her parents rented out their Berkeley home and took refuge on Jaime's homestead, Los Pesares (The Sorrows), in Big Sur. Why he gave it that name, which later became tragically self-fulfilling, no one seems to know. After Alvar's death, Gui referred to it as "that haunted, demonic place"; and Big Sur, despite the tourist brochures and the charms of "scenic" Highway One, seems to have always had a dark side. Jaime's short novels, *Don Bartolomeo* and *The Lariat*, along with Jack Kerouac's *Big Sur*, attest to that. The isolation (especially in the 1930s) and the ferocity of the winter storms also added to that sense. To say that Gui grew up there living "off the grid" is almost an understatement. One had to pack in on horseback (they weren't connected by a road until 1936), and later in life Gui recalled that there was only a single

house visible (“By day you could hardly see it”) from their ranch and a single speck of light from it at night. “That house was the only sign of human presence we could see. So that name [the Oberstroms] was also the word for our isolation.”<sup>3</sup> But like almost all childhoods, there was magic there too. Some of Gui’s most eloquent writings are her reminiscences of growing up in Big Sur. Another upshot of that was that she was homeschooled until she was almost twelve, at which point she claims she could barely read. Her first taste of public schooling and its important socializing experience for a young girl was not until then. But that does not seem to have negatively affected her. Because her parents were intelligent and cosmopolitan, as were their circle of friends, Gui seems to have grown up in a rich social environment despite the isolation. She also had a down-to-earth character, a kind of physical self-confidence and a feistiness that perhaps reflected this rural upbringing. She loved animals and knew gardening and had a direct look-you-in-the-eye way about her, which was very appealing.

Gui was a well-traveled person throughout her life. When she was just thirteen her mother took her to the East Coast for a few months. And when she was twenty-one she experienced an extended stay in Europe. She continued traveling in later years to places as far-flung as Mexico, Greece, Egypt, India, and South America. By the time the 1950s arrived, Gui was a well-educated, sophisticated, and independent young woman. She also had a restless spirit, the result of her upbringing and the restlessness (for some) of the post-World War II years, what came to be known as the Beat Era. She had multiple talents, as a photographer, painter, and writer. But to achieve any lasting fame or success, I think one has to have a tenacious single-minded focus, usually in just one discipline; and one has to have a stubborn belief in the value of one’s work, a form of ambition that is not necessarily the same as careerism. Gui’s interests were more dispersed, and I suspect she lacked that kind of drive. Her writings are at times brilliant and evocative, or simple and efficient in their straightforwardness. She has an eye for the odd detail or quirkiness in people and situations. But the writing often does not rise above the level of journal or personal memoir. Her biography of her father, *The Old Coyote of Big Sur*, is a good read and a valuable source of information, especially because of the large quantity of de Angulo’s personal correspondence that Gui brought to light. At the same time the sheer volume of that correspondence weighs the text down a bit.

Her personal insights as a family member are unique and important; but at the same time, she lacks the perspective and distance relative to her father that would make a deeper assessment of his work possible. There is too much pain and conflict in the interfamily relationships. Nevertheless, *The Old Coyote of Big Sur* remains essential reading for anyone interested in the life and work of Jaime de Angulo. Gui ended up publishing it herself (City Lights declined it) which has no doubt limited its availability.

Gui achieved perhaps most success with her photography. She had been taking photos since she was a teenager—and indeed her mother asked her sometimes to take pictures of Jaime. Early on she had sought out the advice of Imogen Cunningham (“she had been very kind and explained the technical mistakes I was making”), and she eventually set up her own darkroom and developed thorough technical skills.<sup>4</sup> She had her own business as a professional photographer in addition to day jobs for other photo studios. For a while she was something of a staff photographer for the Dilexi Gallery in the late 1950s. Knowing lots of poets in the Bay Area scene, she frequently photographed them, including Ginsberg, Brautigan, William Everson, and others. Gui’s photo archive is a valuable resource that is still relatively unknown and underreferenced. One of her more notable projects was the cover for a small 1960 edition of Richard Brautigan’s poems, *The Octopus Frontier*. I looked it up on Amazon (one used copy—for \$695!) and you can see the photo of Brautigan’s gnarly toes wrapped in an octopus tentacle. In his biography of Brautigan, William Hjortsberg writes that Brautigan came up with the idea for the cover, bought the octopus tentacle himself in Chinatown, and staged the photoshoot.<sup>5</sup> In her memoir, *The City*, Gui claims that she did all that, further adding that,

I wanted a salacious tinge to the photo but Brautigan was too distant and fastidious to manage anything in the least suggestive with that octopus. Finally I had him take his shoes off and embed his feet in that tentacle, which was by then smelling pretty high.<sup>6</sup>

Further on in his biography, Hjortsberg describes an incident where Gui was walking along the San Francisco waterfront with Brautigan, his wife Ginny, and their daughter Ianthe. Ianthe was bitten by a rat, and immediately “Gui sprang into action. She ‘whipped off her



jacket, trapping the rat under the coat.”<sup>7</sup> Her fast response saved the girl from having to undergo rabies shots, because the rat proved not to be rabid. This brings me back to Gui’s country girl, down-to-earth personality. Do you imagine catching a rat with a jacket is easy? And to not be squeamish at all about handling an animal that was possibly rabid? That was Gui.

Gui’s *The City* is a brief but evocative portrait of the times her parents lived in Berkeley and later in San Francisco, and most of all of Gui’s life in the midst of the Beat scene of the 1950s and 1960s. Though she never became famous like some of her friends, Gui shows up frequently in diverse situations with a wild and colorful cast of characters. She learns to make jewelry from Jay DeFeo, whose work she also photographed (in recent years DeFeo has regained her reputation as an important artist of the period, after years of critical and scholarly neglect). She takes a seminar on Ezra Pound’s *Cantos* with Robert Duncan, who already was a friend of the family, having lived in their compound in the Berkeley Hills and having done typing work for Jaime. She exhibits her artwork in various galleries and annual shows. She knew the experimental filmmaker Chris Maclaine, whom Stan Brakhage among others greatly admired, calling him “San Francisco’s Antonin Artaud.”<sup>8</sup> She lets Maclaine stay in her apartment while he worked on his second film, *The Man Who Invented Gold*, which Gui claims she helped him with, without receiving any credit. Gui herself even made an experimental film about Playland at the Beach, a San Francisco amusement park. When she was unable to obtain permission for the music she wanted for it, this film project died, and apparently the film itself has been lost. She also learned to make pottery; among her other self-employment gigs, she made crayons, which she sold or gave to Robert Duncan among others. I’ve also been told that Gui’s crayons were sold at City Lights Bookstore. Imagine my surprise a few years ago when a friend told me he owned a crayon drawing by Robert Duncan that he’d purchased in a Bay Area poetry bookstore. We went upstairs to look at it, and there, written in one corner, were the words “For Gui from Duncan” (p. 195).

Gui also writes about the very active bar and social scene, the nightlife of Beat Era San Francisco. Places like Vesuvio’s, The Place, The Co-Existence Bagel Shop, Gino and Carlo’s (where Brautigan was a regular), and the jazz club The Cellar—the setting for that

memorable scene from *Desolation Angels*. All these places and scenes had their own odd and flamboyant regulars and hangers-on, many of whom Gui knew. Who now recalls Hubert Leslie, aka Hube the Cube? Gui refers to him as the “ultimate North Beach beatnik.” She further describes him:

Hubie was a very weird person, like an urban mountain man, with his tattered clothes, his fox face and his beard [...] Hubie painted too, but he didn't take his paintings any more seriously than he did anything else. He did little colorful patterns on scraps of paper or wood, very good. I would sometimes buy one for five dollars [...] Hubie was said to earn his living taking drugs for the University of California Medical School, wearing a motorman's leg to collect his urine so it could be tested for residue. How the Medical School could have kept the residue of what they gave him separate from whatever drugs Hubie was already taking was unknown. It was all so mysterious people said he invented the whole story.<sup>9</sup>

She describes the eventual decline of the North Beach scene, the increased use of hard drugs, the disappearance of the easygoing 1950s bohemianism and artistic camaraderie, and the advent of the hippies and widespread use of marijuana, which she never liked.

I didn't often visit hippies in their “pads” either, because I didn't like the smell of pot, nor what people were like when they were high: roomfuls of people sitting around, staring into space, and saying, “Man, oh, MAAAN...” I thought drunks were more amusing.<sup>10</sup>

By 1967, tired of the city and the hippy scene, and her own personal living situation, Gui moved out to Sausalito and into a houseboat, which is where her memoir *The City* ends.

At some point in the 1970s after the death of her mother, Gui inherited her family's home on Buena Vista Way in the Berkeley Hills, which is where I met her in 1976. The land had been given to the de Angulos by the renowned architect Bernard Maybeck, a friend of the family and neighbor. I have very little memory of it from my one visit there. She lived there until the upkeep became too much, so she moved to a house in the flatlands of Berkeley in 2003. This would be her last residence before she moved into a nursing home in late 2017.

The 1970s and 80s were probably the years of her travels abroad, which resulted in the self-published books (with her Stonegarden Press) *A Maharashtra Journal*, *The Blue Train to Athens*, and *A Bad Trip to Egypt*. From 1980 on I lived in New Mexico and later spent a good number of years out of the country, so Gui's and my personal encounters became few and far between. We continued our friendship via correspondence, which picked up in frequency once I moved back to the US for good in 2005. I do recall her showing up one time at our house in Santa Fe, driving a kind of camper trailer with two large and elderly German shepherds in tow. She had been thinking of moving to New Mexico, which in retrospect might have been a good move. But perhaps it was just too hard to start over again from scratch, plus the winters can be hard. Gui was a California person (a native one, indeed!) so maybe the climate and ambience there suited her better (though she hated the San Francisco fog and the cold, she told me).

In 1973 Robert Callahan published with his Turtle Island Foundation the first volumes of what he called *The Jaime de Angulo Library*. They were small, elegantly printed and bound hardback editions, some of the most beautiful books to come out of the 1950s–70s small press boom, books still cherished to this day by many of us. The Jaime de Angulo revival had begun in earnest, and the second half of Gui's life (she was forty-five in 1973) would largely be spent overseeing her father's legacy. In addition to writing *The Old Coyote of Big Sur*, she compiled and edited *Jaime in Taos: The Taos Papers of Jaime de Angulo*, published by City Lights in 1985. She dealt with various editors, scholars, and investigators of de Angulo's work such as Callahan, Wendy Leeds-Hurwitz, Stefan Hyner (editor of *Home among the Swinging Stars: Collected Poems of Jaime de Angulo*, published by La Alameda Press in 2006), David Miller (editor of *The Lariat: And Other Writings*, published by Counterpoint in 2010), Andrew Schelling, and me. Not all of these relationships were without conflict or bad feelings; but Gui did her best, not only to protect her father's reputation and legacy but also her own authority as his daughter and literary executor. If sometimes she was a bit harsh and defensive, I can only respect her integrity; and there were legitimate reasons for her reactions in some instances. She stood up for her father and for herself. More power to her.

As Gui aged, the culture and society changed in ways that drastically altered the world she (and we) had grown up in. The

disaster of the Reagan 1980s brought a sharp veer to the political right, a resurgence of American militarism, and the rise of an extremist Christian fundamentalism. The human population on the planet more than doubled in Gui's lifetime, threatening ecological disaster and exacerbating global economic inequalities. In the Bay Area a process of gentrification and urban sprawl began in the 1970s which reached an accelerated climax in the early twenty-first century with the high-tech "takeover," especially in San Francisco. Suddenly the Bay Area had some of the most expensive real estate and rental costs in the country, and the entire region was overcrowded with population and clogged with traffic. California itself was burning up in apocalyptic wildfires.

Meanwhile the "scene" Gui had once felt herself part of had long since vanished—as scenes do. People died, moved away, had families, grew old. In her later years Gui found herself increasingly alone and isolated, not fitting into this New World Order. She had the luck—or misfortune—of outliving most of her friends and generation. She absolutely hated the new, gentrified Berkeley and the younger generations around her. Social media brought with it a new level of social narcissism and cultural triviality that alienated her completely. Her letters to me became an amusing litany of complaints about all this—one of her pet peeves was "heirloom vegetables." She just couldn't wrap her head around that! I agreed and commiserated—we both found ourselves in a world we didn't belong to anymore (and me, twenty-five years her junior).

At the end of her life she very much wanted to move out of Berkeley. But it was really too late, she was too old. The desire to get away from all this kept her going in a way, though—the hope to do so, to keep moving on. I understood that. Time finally caught up with her. As the elderly do, she suffered falls, broken bones, and gradually her body gave out. She finally had to be put in a nursing home in late 2017, and she died in January 2019. With her passing an era ended.

"Indian Tales for a Little Boy and Girl," which became Jaime de Angulo's most famous book, *Indian Tales*, is the story of the travels of the Bear family through northern California. It is actually two Bear families, who are fused into a composite whole. Bear, Antelope, and Fox Boy are the original family of Jaime, Nancy, and Alvar. Alvar died when he was only nine years old, so in *Indian Tales* Fox Boy remains forever a child, subject to the famous "HA-HAs." Bear, the

one who lost his woman, is solitary, moody, and lives alone in the hills, is the later Jaime de Angulo, and Bear's daughter, Oriole, is Gui. None of this should be interpreted too literally of course. Oriole is a more interesting, mature, and multi-faceted character than Fox Boy. Gui, by outliving Alvar, becomes in a way an older sister. She is independent, inquisitive; she is attracted to shaman-doctor figures like Loon Woman, and they in turn like her. She even talks of wanting to be a doctor, to have power, someday, herself. Oriole is one of the most vital characters in *Indian Tales*, and hence a memorable figure in American literature. De Angulo left behind several manuscript copies of his *Indian Tales*, one of them specifically marked "For Gui." I think Oriole Girl was a gift, the way a stubborn father ultimately expressed his love for a rebellious daughter, something that was not possible in real life because of the conflicted dynamics—how they fought each other!—between the two of them. I like to think of Gui Mayo as Oriole Girl, Jaime de Angulo's daughter, who lived a fearless and independent life. And yes, indeed, maybe she did find her "power": for if Jaime de Angulo's legacy is now a part of world literature, we have to thank Gui for a lot of that.

In time we left the ranch [...] People have told me that many things have changed in that country, but for me, that field where we ran in the waning light, with the fog blowing, will always be the same as the sunlight dies away.<sup>11</sup>

Gui (de Angulo) Mayo: November 9, 1927–January 5, 2019

## A NOTE ON TEXTS AND SOURCES:

Many of Gui Mayo's texts are unpublished or published in extremely limited editions. A case in point is *The City*, her memoir of San Francisco. It was going to be published by the late James Koller and his Coyote Books in 2011. A version was printed and bound, but was never made available for distribution and any remaining copies seem to have disappeared. A different printed and bound version of the same text, but with different pagination, was published by Magpie Editions/Coyote Books in 2012. I believe this was limited to perhaps only fifty copies, or at most one hundred, and never really made available in distribution. So for all practical purposes and from my point of view, *The City* remains unpublished, and that is how I list it. The same goes for various poems and texts by Gui and Jaime from Kater Murr's Press. These seem to be available only online. Gui's biography of her father, *The Old Coyote of Big Sur*, was self-published by Gui with her Stonegarden Press in 1995. Copies are difficult to find and expensive these days, and this certainly deserves to be reprinted.

## NOTES

- 1/ Jack Kerouac, *Desolation Angels* (New York: Perigee Books, 1980), 124–25.
- 2/ Gui Mayo, *The City*.
- 3/ Gui Mayo, *The Oberstrom House* (Kater Murr's Press, Piraeus Series).
- 4/ Gui Mayo, *The City*.
- 5/ William Hjortsberg, *Jubilee Hitchhiker: The Life and Times of Richard Brautigan* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2012), 165.
- 6/ Gui Mayo, *The City*.
- 7/ William Hjortsberg, *Jubilee Hitchhiker*, 203.
- 8/ Stan Brakhage, "Radical Light: In Search of Christopher Maclaine—Man, Artist, Legend," curated and presented by Brecht Andersch. Available online at: [http://www.sfcinematheque.org/radical\\_light\\_in\\_search\\_of\\_christopher\\_maclaineman\\_artist\\_legend/](http://www.sfcinematheque.org/radical_light_in_search_of_christopher_maclaineman_artist_legend/).
- 9/ Gui Mayo, *The City*.
- 10/ Gui Mayo, *The City*.
- 11/ Gui Mayo, "Houdini" (the name of a favorite horse in *Big Sur*), unpublished text.

## The City

When I was a child no one ever said they were going to San Francisco. They said, “I’m going to the city.” In those days, in the thirties, it was a lot easier to go to the city than it is now. You just drove, or walked, down to the end of the Berkeley ferry slip, at the foot of University Avenue, and took the ferry there. The slip is still there, pointing out at an odd angle from the foot of University, but it used to be longer, to reach water deep enough for the ferries.

In my childhood the ferries went about every twenty minutes, during the day. There was a wide parking area at the end of the slip, and if you missed a ferry you waited there for the next, alone there. You could get out of your car, walk around, or you could look over the edge of the pier at the rough, green water surging back and forth around the piers. Cars would arrive and wait behind you.

In time you would see the ferry approaching, a white dot far in the distance that would grow larger and larger and finally dock, crashing into the heavy pilings and pushing them aside with great crunching and squeaking noises. After a long time the great iron plates from the ship to the pier would go down, and the cars would start up and drive on board. The plates clanked as the cars drove over.

Some people stayed in the cars for the trip over, down the dark aisles where the cars were parked. But most people got out and went up the stairs to the main deck. They would buy coffee, hotdogs, soft drinks, and walk around in the wind. You could feel the boat quiver heavily and fast through the water, and watch the foaming wake, boiling away behind with a hissing sound.

My parents and my brother and I used to go to the city often, but I can remember only one time. My father was a young, scholarly man,

with glasses, a mustache, and he had a cane. He was the perfect father that day, holding one end of his cane while his well-dressed children pulled the other end in a game of tug-of-war. He collars a child with his cane, and I can still feel the cold, smooth wood against my neck, feel the joy of play.

I don't remember where we were going the day we were all dressed up to go to the City. Very likely to Sutro Baths, near the Cliff House at the beach. From the Ferry Building, at the foot of Market Street, we would drive over Russian Hill, driving on Pacific Avenue. We would turn right at Van Ness Avenue, then turn left down Lombard and out through the Presidio, then along the cliffs over the ocean below us. We would pass the Palace of the Legion of Honor and drive along a road that ran through pines a few hundred feet above the sea, all the way from the Legion to the Cliff House.

The Sutro Baths were a huge glass building, in the Victorian style, which spilled down the cliffs to the rocks and surf below. The entry was not very grand; it was a little like the entry to a movie house. You got your ticket and went down wide, worn, wooden stairs, lit by light coming through a sloping glass ceiling. There were several landings with glass cases of weird trophies, stuffed animals, mechanical toys and windup musical instruments, spears, baskets, tusks, statues, and more.

At the bottom of the stairs were the baths. It smelled damp. At a small window you collected a black wool bathing suit and a rough white terry towel. Then you went down the hall over heavy hemp runners to little wooden booths, where you changed. You left your towel and your clothes there and went to the pools. Everything was of wood, and the doors of the booths banged loudly. There was a smell of salt water, the sounds of shrieking, banging doors, and running feet.

My father was very fond of swimming, and he loved heat. There were three tanks, hot, medium, and cool, filled by fresh water from the sea. My mother and my brother always swam in the medium tank, but the hot tank was the one my father liked. I often joined him there, and I would ride him as he swam around, holding onto the shoulder straps of his tank suit. I remember being out in the deep end once and looking at the green tiles, far down through the deep water, twisting in the choppy waves.



There was also an immense pool, the temperature of the sea, extending away in a semi-dark gloom, which no one ever seemed to use. I would sometimes go and look at it, always empty, at the end of the hall. It stretched silent into the dark at the end of the building, where the skylights and windows let in a feeble light through panes stained with corrosion and salt.

When we were through swimming we would drive past the Legion of Honor. There was a huge fountain there, in the circle of the parking lot, gushing a spout of water high in the air. At night it was lit by colored lights, which slowly changed, lighting the falling water with all the colors of the rainbow. My mother would drive around the fountain so we could see the lights, and if she was in a good mood she might drive around it a second time.

Then we would often drive back to North Beach and have dinner in an Italian restaurant. Or we would go to Chinatown and eat at Hang Far Low's, upstairs in one of the dark, polished wood booths. The meals would arrive in beautiful dishes, ovals and platters on stems, and plates like scalloped boats, or deep round dishes. We ate with chopsticks—all but my mother—and drank tea from tiny cups like tulips.

Then we drove to the Ferry Building and took the ferry back across the dark water. Other ferries would pass us, lit up in the night.

## Chinese Studies

Around 1937 my parents moved to San Francisco. They were linguists, and they wanted to study Cantonese. They rented an apartment on Sutter Street, a dark conventional first-floor apartment, with carpets, overstuffed furniture, and indirect lighting—the latest thing. My father hated the place. He fixed it to suit himself, hanging bare light bulbs from the ceiling and drilling holes in the doorframes for his pencil sharpener.

Soon we were looking for a more suitable place. We looked out near the ocean, because we loved going to Playland at the Beach. We finally decided on a flat on the corner of Lombard and Grant on Telegraph Hill. In those days Telegraph Hill was an entirely Italian neighborhood; Chinatown ended at Broadway.

Because the apartment was on a corner, it had an L shape and bay windows over the intersection. It cost sixty-five dollars a month. The front rooms had a view of the street, but the kitchen and laundry room in the back had beautiful views of the harbor, Marin County, and the boats coming and going.

My father fixed up the laundry room for his morning, with huge cages of canaries. Like most San Francisco apartments our building had no elevator but instead private stairs to each flat. There was a crank and when people rang you cranked open the front door. All the floors were pale polished wood, and the sun reflected off them in a bright glare.

Berkeley friends came to see us, and we made new friends, like Bernard Zakheim. He had done some of the WPA murals in Coit Tower—very political murals of workers in factories and fields. Zakheim brought a friend, another painter, Hilaire Hiler, and one day we went to Hiler's studio out on Fillmore. Other friends of Zakheim came, often very leftist.

My parents hired an ancient scholar to teach them Cantonese. He looked Chinese but wasn't; he was the son of Christian missionaries, born and raised in China, but he spoke Cantonese as a native language. He was so great a scholar that he had a title, Sing Sang. His name was Gardener, and my father called him Gatnaa Sing Sang. He was nearly blind, and he had an old friend who was Chinese. One evening my parents left me with them, for some reason, and I sat in a room with the two old men while they were talking quietly in Chinese in the waning light.

Because Coit Tower was at the end of Lombard Street, tourists driving to see it had to go through the intersection below our flat. There were no stoplights there. On weekends there was always an awful traffic jam, developing by afternoon into gridlock. On Sundays a few Italian men always stood on that corner, talking, hour after hour. (On rainy days they brought their umbrellas.) When the traffic jam was bad enough, one or the other would often step out and direct it.

About that time my parents sent me for a short time to Presidio Hill School, a very well-known progressive school. At that school we went on nature walks at the Presidio. They had poetry classes and I wrote a poem that they put in the class magazine.

When we lived on Lombard we often went to dinner on Grant Avenue in an Italian restaurant. My parents had a favorite restaurant, called Mary's. Mary was big and strong, and her husband, the waiter, was very short. All the dining tables were in little booths, with barriers six feet high between them. They even had green curtains on the doors, which the waiter always closed when leaving and my father always opened again.

We also went to eat in Chinatown, to different places, trying to find the very best one. We also went to Fisherman's Wharf and had abalone overlooking the fishing boats.

At that time the World's Fair was being held on Treasure Island, next to Angel Island. We took the ferry out, in the cold wind, and it was cold and windy at the fair too. The wind whistled down the avenues. There were hundreds of palms and indirect lighting.

We saw exhibits. There was a Brazilian Building—later moved, piece by piece, to Tilden Park in the East Bay—where we saw chocolate being milled between huge stainless steel rollers and drank maté tea. We saw the world's largest bull, standing, as long as a truck, in a small corral full of straw. We saw the Keystone Brothers exhibit, with leather workers and displays of leather working tools. We saw the Wild West show, with gunfire and the National Anthem at the end.

At night everything was lit by yellow floodlights. It seemed empty. There were very few people walking around the great cold plazas. There was vague music broadcast over the whole place, to keep it from seeming spooky.

We often went to Playland at the Beach, to a favorite lunch stand, had hotdogs and hamburgers, and sat in the back where there were windows over the ring with the electric cars.

After lunch we would get electric cars and go around on the shiny metal floor. Everyone positioned his car to collide as hard as possible with another car. After we had gone around and around for a while, in the smell of electricity, a bell would ring, and it was over.

Sometimes we went to the shooting gallery and shot metal ducks that passed along a track. If you hit one it clanged and fell over. There were booths where you could throw darts at balloons and win a stuffed toy. But we never went on the roller coaster.

On our way back from the beach we sometimes went through Golden Gate Park. There was a small lake there where people sailed

model boats, and my father decided to get a model boat to sail. But when we sailed it on the lake, the west wind took it to the other side and it didn't come back. My father found it boring going to get it time after time and soon abandoned the lake. Instead we would visit the buffalo in their paddock near the zoo.

In Chinatown there were gift shops which sold tiny ceramic figures, half-an-inch high, an inch high. They were of things you would see in a Chinese painting: a sage with staff, an ox, a small castle, a bridge. I suppose they were to decorate fish tanks, or maybe bonsai. They cost nearly nothing, and I used to buy a few and set up tableaux on a shelf in the dining room. I even rigged up a curtain and lit my tableaux with Christmas lights. I held performances.

Sometimes, not very often, we would go to Berkeley, over the Bay Bridge. At night the yellow sulfur lights flicked past. When they lit someone's face it turned green, but when they passed the face turned black again.

Along the sludge flats in the toll plaza there was the smell of rotting sewage. Acres and acres of it lay there, like shiny black jelly. Someone would always call, "Oakland Mole!"

At night, among warehouses east of the highway, the sign for the Sherwin-Williams Company lit up. A beautiful globe of the earth would appear out of the dark, with longitude and latitude lines in blue neon. In a moment a ridiculous can of house paint would appear above it, and then, in tide lines of blue neon, the paint would fall out and cover the globe and the motto would appear, "Cover the Earth." If I closed my eyes at the right second I could see just the blue globe and miss the paint can entirely.

## The Art Scene

During my high school years, in the 40s, we lived in Berkeley and I didn't often go to the city. My mother might sometimes take me over to shop, or to see a new movie, but the only regular visits were with my aunt—my mother's sister—who was fond of the ballet and used to take me to the Opera House. I loved the Opera House, the gold decorations on the walls, the red velvet seats, the great gold curtain. My aunt would buy good seats, and we remembered to take opera glasses to see the dancers better.

My parents had separated and father was living in Big Sur, but he sometimes came back to San Francisco. Once he rented a room in the old Montgomery Block, at Montgomery and Columbus. It had originally been an office building and had wide stairs with post railings and no elevators. The rooms, which had been offices, were rented out as living quarters to writers and artists and other bohemians. They were small, they had no private baths, and those on the court were dark. The wide halls had shiny floors, and the stairs creaked when you went up or down.

A year or so later my father had a room in what was called the Compound, a rambling group of buildings on the east side of Telegraph Hill, overlooking the harbor and the East Bay. The Compound was quite primitive, with rickety wooden stairs and frail balconies. Again it was rented out as studios, in a rather communal system, with shared bath, laundry, and kitchen. My father had a tiny white room with French doors leading to a small porch overlooking the Embarcadero. He had a hot plate, his typewriter, and his books and dictionaries in orange-crate bookcases. He gave lessons in languages and mathematics to students of all ages.

During my childhood I had always drawn and painted, and I kept it up when I was older. One day I heard there was to be an “Art Festival” in San Francisco’s Civic Center. It wasn’t juried; you applied and were assigned a space. The day the show was hung you went, found your place, and hung paintings there. You could stay around, or you could leave. There was the most amazing range of paintings at that festival, from the most hopelessly amateur to the most hopelessly commercial, but there was a lot of good painting there too. There was no segregation according to reputation or prestige; everybody was in there together. It was a fantastic thing for the city to do.

That was only the first of many Art Festivals. Although in later years they became completely commercial, during the first years the Art Festivals were very good. Painters took them seriously, showed their work, and everyone went to them to see what was new in the painting world.

I had a show in a small bookstore in Berkeley, and I got up my courage and went to the city with my portfolio to try to get one there. I went to Sutter near Stockton, where the galleries were. The first gallery I walked into was one that specialized in realist Western art. When

the owner saw my drawing—sort of romantic and surrealist—he was furious. “You people don’t know what you’re doing!!” he yelled.

So I walked across the street, to the Raymond and Raymond Gallery, a tiny place showing gifts, pottery, fabrics, and paintings, run by Grette William. She must have thought that rich socialites would like my romantic paintings, because she gave me a show. We had an opening party, and it was great fun. But a family friend took me aside afterward and told me I should abandon fine art for commercial art, so I could make a living. I didn’t know what he was talking about. I was twenty, and I thought being an artist was a bona fide occupation. In those days lots of people did. You sold a painting for five dollars, but in those days an apartment cost fifty dollars a month, and anyway, artists didn’t expect to make their living with their art; they expected to make it doing something else and do their art for love.

I was still living in Berkeley, in an apartment on Telegraph Avenue. One day I got a letter from Kenneth Rexroth, a well-known San Francisco writer. I had heard his name; maybe he had known my parents. He wrote me that he had a weekly salon, on Fridays, and invited me to come. When I went I found a large dark room, full of books, but no other guests besides a silent young man, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, then still called Lawrence Ferling. At that time he was known as a painter, not a poet. Kenneth did all the talking.

At that time I had two friends, Lester and Marshall. We three used to play Baroque music together. I played the flute, not very well, Marshall played the piano, and Lester the clarinet or a violin he had made himself. We played late into the night. But everyone was trying abstract expressionism, even those painters who used to paint WPA Modern or imitation Braques, under the influence of Erle Loran and other teachers at UC. All kinds of artists were finally trying abstract expressionism too and getting hooked. Then I tried it and got hooked too. It seemed very strange, making paintings with no subject matter. The paint itself was the subject matter.

In time none of our group wanted to pay the rent on the room, which was about twenty-five dollars a month. It was very primitive, with no shower at all, no toilet on the same floor. There was a lot of traffic noise from Columbus Avenue, and every evening I would smell the minestrone being served downstairs at the Golden Spike.

In time we couldn't think of any more shows, so we gave up on having a gallery. Since we had the room, in July 1953 I took the plunge and went to live there, in the city. I didn't know if I could tolerate the noise and congestion. But I had a very strong feeling about the physical character of the city, the bare sidewalks, the wooden houses rising out of cement, with no greenery, all stark, separated from the earth, as though that were part of the city's being a place of creativity, separate from nature.

I already had a few friends in the city. I had met Robert Duncan at my mother's house, where he had lived. He had moved to San Francisco too and lived out on Baker Street with Jess Collins, a painter.

At that time, more California painters were involved in the abstract expressionist movement and making larger and larger canvases. They used house paints, to save money. The house paints ran, and people called the style the Drip and Drool style. Those paintings made people furious. They would say, "Even my baby could do that. I could do that myself." Then, often, they would try and become fascinated.

The fall of 1956 there was a great event in the city, another Art Festival, this one held in the Palace of the Fine Arts, the Maybeck fantasy in the Marina District, which had been constructed for the 1915 Panama Pacific Exposition. The Art Festival was a sort of echo of that exposition, where groundbreaking modern art had hung, paintings like Duchamp's "Nude Descending A Staircase." Everybody I knew painted for the show. It wasn't juried.

Every kind of painting was there. Some were ten by twelve feet. Some were crazy, and some were by famous painters. It was a huge show, occupying the whole great building, with hundreds of works.

I remember the night we all went to see our paintings up. There was a great crowd of people, most of them painters. I decided Western painters had a strange look about them, an idealistic look, a look of not being quite connected.

One of the great monuments of the San Francisco cultural scene in those days was the Labaudt Gallery, run by Madame Labaudt. She was the loving widow of the painter Lucien Labaudt, who had worked in the realist style. Every year Madame Labaudt had a memorial show of Lucien's paintings in her huge apartment.

The rest of the year she gave unknown artists their first shows, which were meant to launch them on their careers. But since other

galleries, and the art world in general, didn't take these shows very seriously, they seldom led to any more shows. In fact, in time, a show at the Labaudt Gallery tended to mark the painter as beginner at best. But I wanted to get a show at the Labaudt Gallery, and I went to see Madame. She was a big, kind woman, from the south of France, very idealistic. She gave me a show in a little gallery on the first floor. My friends came to my opening, and we had a wonderful party.

Before I left Berkeley I had worked at the UC Textbook Exchange. There was an odd-looking, plump, young woman with bushy hair working there, an art student. She was Jay DeFeo and everybody was interested in her. Somehow she already had quite a reputation. I don't think we ever talked at the store, but we must have met, because much later when she was a successful jeweler, and I had decided to try jewelry-making, she let me come to her studio in West Berkeley, gave me advice, and showed me techniques.

At that time I had a friend who was working with the Interplayers, a theater group up on Russian Hill. The Interplayers was founded by Joyce Lancaster, an actress, stately and beautiful. I used to watch my friend rehearse at Interplayers. He was in Robinson Jeffers's *Dear Judas*, playing the part of Lazarus. The director was Eric Vaughn, a short, businesslike man. The staging had been done by Dale Joe, a successful Berkeley painter. There were great cloth and macramé hangings of gauze and fishnet.

After endless rehearsals the play was finally put on, all dark and mysterious, with people speaking from behind veils in dim light.

During these years the San Francisco Museum of Art had their "Annuals," to which most Bay Area artists submitted. There was a drawing show, a watercolor show, and one oil painting. They were juried and very important then. They showed people the directors thought were up-and-coming in the art world.

The abstract expressionist movement was getting more and more attention, and the shows came to be dominated by that style. As the painters were also using a lot of mixed media, in time the three "Annuals" all came to look alike, all mixed media, all abstract, and all with a lot of free brushstroke, a lot of energy, of red and black. We all used to go see those shows, and they seemed tremendously exciting. Anyone who painted at all wanted to be in them.



The San Francisco Museum of Art also had cinema showings, in the central rotunda. They even showed works by local filmmakers. There had already been a few series in Berkeley—one started by Pauline Kael and Ed Landberg, which showed well-known European experimental and art films, but seldom any by local people.

I lived in that yellow room most of the winter. I painted a lot, and it was fun to live there, right in Italian town. I was over an Italian grocery and also near the Buon Gusto Market. Then I had a solo show. We had another party, and after that we seldom went back at all. But at some point someone asked us for the use of the room for a symposium of filmmakers. About half a dozen people came. Peter Martin was there. He had opened City Lights Books with Ferlinghetti. Imogen Cunningham, a well-known photographer, came. George Brotman, a filmmaker I had also known before in Berkeley, was there, and Barbara Deming, a writer visiting from New York.

Chris Maclaine was also there. He was a poet and filmmaker and had made a film about the atomic bomb, called *The End*, which had been shown in the film series at the San Francisco Museum of Art. It was made up of multiple short sequences, black and white and sometimes color, and the soundtrack was a poem of his own, as well as Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. Some people liked the film, but it set most people on edge. Chris was very paranoid, and at the symposium he got in an argument with somebody and stalked out.

Our group of friends used to go down to Chinatown for supper, usually to a cheap little cellar place called Wooley Louie Gooley, which smelled of drains. Then we would go for coffee at Vesuvio, a bar across the alley from City Lights. Vesuvio had a long history as a hangout for literati. It was owned by Henri Lenoir, a Breton, who always wore a beret.

He had a Cockney accent and always spoke in a complaining tone. Vesuvio was Henri's life; he arrived early in the morning, cooked his breakfast there alone, did accounts, and made out his orders. When the bar opened and his customers arrived he left it to his bartenders and escaped.

The Vesuvio bar had always had a number of Barbary Coast mementos—posters, marine equipment, photographs, bits and pieces of San Francisco's past. Henri added more until you could barely see the walls. He had a machine which projected photographs—mostly

racy turn-of-the-century postcards—on a screen. Each slideshow ended with Henri’s favorite, a pair sitting on the bed, scratching, with the caption, “We’re itching to get away from Portland, Oregon.”

Henri also had shows of paintings at Vesuvio. Some were bad, but some were very good. Luke Gibney showed his perfectly executed realist portraits there.

I saw Pete Martin and his friends who were often in Vesuvio. Pete was always the center of attention wherever he was. He was a loud talker and great storyteller, while his audience laughed. Later Pete went to New York, and he sold *City Lights* to Ferlinghetti.

During the time I was in the yellow room I started making jewelry again. I went to see Jay DeFeo, who was by then living with Wally Hendrick, in a primitive basement room on Bay Street with a dirt floor and few windows, but a fine view of the bay from those that were there. Jay gave me not only more information, but lots of supplies as well, and proudly showed me her new drill press, for making all the holes jewelry makers make, and showed me ways of heating copper and brass to make them dark and iridescent. Her jewelry was primitive-looking, and she made lovely things quite cheaply.

I worked very hard on making jewelry. And then I took it around to all the stores I could think of. Soon jewelry work lost its romantic flavor. Being a salesman wasn’t fun. The owners were often rude.

At the end of 1953 I moved out of the yellow room and rented an apartment on Russian Hill, a “railroad” flat on the second floor. It was rather dark, but it was cheap, like nearly all those flats: fifty-five dollars a month. I painted all five rooms white and the old wooden floor blue. The front rooms looked over the intersection of Larkin and Green, and I had my desk at the window: a board on two orange crates. I can remember sitting there, typing a letter, and looking out at the bare intersection and the rain falling on the shiny wet streets.

I made my jewelry on the back porch. When the sun was out, there were shadows from a huge eucalyptus tree outside, and the hours passed as I pounded wire. I drove all over the state on selling trips, with my boxes of earrings on their little cards.

There was one last show in the Freeland Gallery after I moved out, another group show with paintings by Lester, George Randall, a friend of Lester’s, myself, and two guest artists, rather better known than we were: Jay DeFeo, who was acquiring quite a reputation by

then, and Hassel Smith, who was well known. He happened to have a painting he didn't have any place for right then and he let us borrow it. We were extremely proud of our show, and as usual we had a great party.

Then Jay took some critic, or entrepreneur of some sort, to see this show, and he was impressed by her work and advanced her career in some way. After that nobody had money for the rent on the yellow room, and we gave it up.

I bought a kiln that Christmas. Lester had a friend who was a potter, and he told me about clay bodies and glaze formulas. All the spring of 1954 I spent making ceramic experiments. That kiln was powered by a gas burner, and I had it in the kitchen, with the flue out the window. I didn't know it, but I'm sure now that having a kiln, especially a gas kiln, in an apartment was not only illegal, but extremely dangerous. Once it did burn a quite deep hole in the kitchen floor, which I painted over. But that kitchen wasn't legal to begin with; our old water heater had no thermostat, so if you forgot to turn it off you risked blowing up the building.

Robert Duncan and his friends had a gallery by then: the King Ubu, on Fillmore. It was a garage with a cement floor and white board walls. They had plays there, and they had shows of paintings by Duncan's friends, all rather silly. One of the first shows Duncan arranged was a "portrait show." I thought that all Duncan's friends were supposed to contribute, and as I had done a portrait of Lester, in a somewhat primitive style, I left it at Duncan's apartment. Duncan didn't want to include the portrait, but he never said so, or said anything, so finally I took it away. It turned out later that he didn't think I belonged in his group and didn't like Lester anyway.

My mother used to laugh about Duncan; he went to visit her, probably because she sometimes donated money to people's projects. She was mischievous, and she would ask him how I was and what my painting was like. She said Duncan could never bring himself to answer.

But I didn't know this, and I was loyal to him. When he gave a "seminar" on Ezra Pound's *Cantos* at the King Ubu gallery, a friend and I were the only ones to attend, week after week. I don't know why he didn't cancel, with only the two of us there, but maybe he just liked talking and reading poems.

At the time there were two galleries on Fillmore: Duncan's King Ubu and the East & West Gallery, run by Madame Gechtoff, mother of Sonia Gechtoff (a good painter). Sonia, incidentally, was a very good friend of Jay DeFeo, and they influenced each other's work. So much, in fact, that their paintings eventually became almost alike.

Then one of them (the story goes) accused the other of stealing her ideas, and they stopped being friends. Sonia later left for New York. I never had the nerve to apply to the East & West Gallery. It seemed to me that the whole art scene had changed by then, to become a matter of groups, cliques, friendships, and I felt myself an outsider. I didn't realize it, but the age of innocent bohemianism, the age of enthusiasm had come to an end.

About then it seemed that I wasn't part of anything in the city anymore. I wondered if New York would be more fun and if I could sell more jewelry there. I stored everything except my clothes, my typewriter, my novel, and my jewelry-making equipment, and I cleared out the apartment for Lester and Marshall, who wanted to take over. I used up all my leftover paint on one huge painting, six feet high. I put oil on top of casein and casein on oil. I expected it all to crack and fall off, but it didn't.

The painting was so wild and crazy I left it in the apartment—along with all the orange crates—for Lester and Marshall, as a joke. Later on they built a house in Sonoma County and built the painting into their living room. It survived surprisingly long.

I left for New York. It was so cold I spent the next month in bed reading *War and Peace*. Then I went out and saw all the galleries, especially the ones on 22nd Street, where all the "New York Painters"—Kline, Tworikov, de Kooning, Motherwell—were showing. I sometimes saw Dale Joe—he was there by then—and Pete Martin. I met a few other people and worked on my novel. But I couldn't find any outlets for jewelry in the East; rough, handmade jewelry seemed to be a Western thing and I found New York too confusing and too noisy.

I moved back west in the summer of 1955 and that fall rented the flat right over the one I'd had before. But there seemed to have been a change in the city; there didn't seem to be the kind of socializing we had.

People didn't talk over coffee, or go to the galleries or the movies together. They did their visiting at home, smoking marijuana. I once

went to the apartment of a group to find all the people there sitting on the floor saying things like, “Man, like, oh MAAN!” and nothing more.

Then Lester told me about another scene, the jazz-bar scene. He had been a jazz clarinetist in his youth, and he was interested in the new cool jazz, although I think he preferred Dixieland. He said I should go to a bar called The Cellar. I didn’t find that easy at first; I remember going down those long, wide stairs and how shy I felt. There was a long bar down the side, where most of the people were drunk. It was a very new world to me, but I did go in, and I got used to it.

The Cellar had just opened, and it was dedicated to the coolest jazz. I didn’t like cool jazz, but I did get to understand it. Bill Weisjahn played piano, in a detached manner, and Jack Minger played trumpet with a sort of condescending look. There was a rather foolish young man who played drums.

I spent a lot of time in The Cellar during the next years and saw strange scenes. There were other bars in North Beach; Vesuvio was still there, now more drunken and noisy but still pretending to be literary. Up on Grant Avenue was The Place, which had been opened by two painters, Knute Stiles and Leo Krikorian, and they had shows of paintings and photographs, and events like poetry readings and film showings.

All the young women wore their hair down their backs and religiously dressed in black, black stockings, high-heeled black shoes, black eye makeup. They wore long earrings.

Across the street from The Place was a jazz bar, the Coffee Gallery, where I very seldom went. They had poetry-and-jazz readings there, but most of the poetry was so angry and self-centered I couldn’t bear to listen, and I seldom went there.

I never drank during the day; I spent my days writing or making jewelry or reading. In the evening I would go out at about nine to The Cellar or The Place or Vesuvio looking for someone I knew or someone to talk to and go home after a couple of hours.

## Beat Poets

In the summer of 1956 I moved from Larkin Street to a flat on Green Street, in North Beach. That flat was beautiful. There were seven rooms, and it cost forty-five dollars a month. The house was about to be condemned because the back porch and the back stairs were loose. It was half a block west of Columbus and there was a view of Russian Hill from the back and of Coit Tower from the front. It had the usual double parlor, with a gas fireplace and a stairwell with a window over the landing where the sun shone in.

I had once seen a truly enormous man, some seven feet tall, walking out of that building. When I moved in I found his shoes in a closet, well-made oxfords about fifteen inches long. They were big enough for me to put my feet in, shoes and all, with room to spare. For years I kept those shoes lying around my bedroom, to impress visitors.

I furnished the apartment with orange crates and paintings, and then I bought five gallons of white paint to paint it. By then I had bought an antique miniature piano, which I had in the dining room. I used to play Bach on it at dusk.

I did a little painting again that year, but there didn't seem to be any way to penetrate the art circles, and in time I decided it was useless to paint. I was also sick of jewelry-making and the tiny amounts of money I made. I began to get more interested in photography. I had always taken photographs. I got a new camera and began to photograph the city and the people I knew. I knew I should be taking the poetry scene, but I couldn't bear to attend the readings.

The poetry scene was becoming the big thing in San Francisco, the thing that everybody else was interested in. Allen Ginsberg and Peter Orlovsky came to town about then, and there was a tremendous stir.

Everybody was talking about Ginsberg's poem "Howl." It had turned the whole world upside down. But there were people who scorned it because they said he had told a story of Carl Solomon, a man he had known in an asylum.

Ginsberg was always accompanied by Peter, who was his boyfriend. Peter looked like a faun and was said to act like one with

women—when he got the chance. They had a friend, the poet Gregory Corso, a sort of street urchin, who looked like a rough, wild satyr. Somebody brought all these poets to my place. That apartment was so central, so convenient, that people had a way of dropping in to kill time before going on to their next date. For a while I found it fun to have all those people around.

One day when Ginsberg was there I took some photographs of him looking young and handsome with his doe eyes and white, even teeth—like a rabbinical student. Ginsberg was always sweet and talked in a sort of tremulous voice, but his mind was always elsewhere. We had a party once, and Ginsberg and Peter and Corso and the rest of us made a tape. I played the flute, and everybody sang and howled and pounded on drums and hit pots. Then one time Ginsberg had a threesome in my guest bed with Peter and a lady poet, as a gift to Peter. On another night there was an “orgy” in my living room, with a drummer and a ring of people sitting in a circle while a nude dancer cavorted in the middle. I stayed outside, but at one point the nude dancer came out with someone’s vomit all over her, and I had really had enough.

At the time Ginsberg was around, Jack Kerouac came to San Francisco as well. Everybody was very excited. Kerouac had written a book, *On the Road*, about a trip he’d taken with his friend Neal Cassady. People said it had been written, without punctuation or paragraphs, on a roll of paper. I tried to read some of his books, but they annoyed me because they all seemed to be about miserable, helpless women he had slept with and then left. I wondered if the women involved had any idea they were going to appear in a book. I’ve read that I met Kerouac at The Cellar, but I don’t remember it; however, I do remember an evening I was visiting friends and everyone was sitting at the kitchen table talking. Kerouac was stalking around and then came up behind me and laid his hands on my shoulders, no doubt inviting me to be in his next book. I moved away.

Then someone asked me if I would drive Kerouac and Ginsberg and some other friends down the Peninsula. On the way down everybody talked except for Kerouac. We got to the house, and everyone got in the pool naked, except for Kerouac and me.

In the summer of 1958 there was a happening, a performance at Fugazi Hall, on Green Street, the old Italian neighborhood meeting hall.

They called the happening a “Kabuki Festival.” I sat in the audience and took photographs of the famous people who were there and of the action on the stage. There were poets camping around and declaiming: Philip Lamantia, Ruth Weiss, Chris Maclaime, and Howard Hart all gave readings. Lorelee pranced across the stage in a gunny sack, doing a skit or fashion show. Dion Vigne played guitar, and George Abend leered at Pat Marx.

Larry Jordan, a filmmaker, was visiting the city. On that visit Larry collected four of the best-known poets in the area—Michael McClure, Philip Lamantia, John Wieners, and David Meltzer—to take their photographs. Since I lived nearby, Larry called me to use my place.

He wanted to bring those poets there to take their photograph. When they got there I got out my camera and photographed them too. The next day Larry came back and printed his negatives on my enlarger, since he had no studio in town, and after he finished he handed me an amusing photograph he had taken of the four, posing on my couch, with one of Huber’s little paintings behind them.

Larry never thought to sign the photograph, and this led to an embarrassing mistake fifteen years later. Bob Johnson, Thomas Albright, Mark Green, and John Fisher were having an event commemorating the San Francisco scene, called the Rolling Renaissance, to include a show of photographs.

Bob came to my place, looked through a box of my old photographs, and came upon Larry Jordan’s shot. Of course he wanted to use it. I couldn’t remember having taken it, and somehow it didn’t seem my style, but I assumed I must have. I couldn’t find the negative, so I made a copy negative. They had a huge show of photographs in the Focus Gallery on Union street, and I had a section. The show went on to the Gotham Book Mart, in New York. The four poets’ shot was then reprinted several times and it wasn’t until 1970 that Larry Jordan finally claimed his shot. I didn’t take that photograph that night, but I took another I like even better. While he was taking the four poets’ photograph, Larry was crouched on the floor, down by the sink, trying to get as far away as he could. I saw him, his great body plastered to the wall like an animal at bay, his camera jammed to his face, and I took his picture.

About that time someone brought Chris Maclaime to my place. Chris was off speed at the time, fatter than he had been at the symposium,



and in a better mood. He was an extraordinary comedian, and everyone always found him entertaining. But he had a lot of enemies, people who had helped him in the past and whom he had stiffed in one way or another. People were very cautious about him.

Still, I thought he was amusing, and I was interested in what he was doing. He was making another film, *The Man Who Invented Gold*. He wanted to finish it, but he had no equipment and no place to live. I had some very amateurish filmmaking equipment by then, even a tape recorder, and I had seven rooms, so I let Chris come and live in the apartment so he could finish his film. He did finish it, and it was very good—a paranoid diatribe, but a good film as well. Chris was very happy to have a place to stay, but we didn't get along very well. He was explosively bad-tempered and absurd.

Actually we didn't see a lot of each other; we were both working, and going to the bars—separately. He let people think I was his girlfriend, although I wasn't, because having a partner without a bad reputation made it possible for him to reestablish old contacts.

Chris was unpleasant and nerve-racking to have around, but I wanted to be in on the film, and I was amused by all the people he attracted. There always were gatherings to plan scenes, outings to shoot scenes, visitors to talk to Chris. I helped in various ways; I took Chris in my car to Marin County where we all recorded impromptu music. I even shot a few of the scenes myself, although I never got any credit for it. And I provided some ideas. Chris always complained about how cold he was. He used to lie in bed in his little room with a huge piece of artist's canvas over him, to protect him from drafts. For his birthday I made him a sort of monk's habit, a huge, black corduroy gown with a cowl. At least he was warm!

He wore the habit in one scene in the film, with two little brass disks fitted into his eyes like monocles. Those disks were the bells off a tiny brass toy. In his black corduroy habit, hood up, and his gold bells for eyes, Chris looked more insane than ever. The day he shot that scene, up on Telegraph Hill, we had the help of his friend Jim Keilty, a poet who wrote plays in a language he had invented himself.

I learned a lot about filmmaking from Chris, how to edit on the machine, cut film, and splice it. I even made a film about Playland at the Beach. It was cut in sections, a foot, two feet, three feet, so that the finished film had a pronounced rhythm.

Then I found a strange record, Capitol Records' "Join the Band," meant to help musicians practice Big Band music. It was a recording of the background players alone, thumping and sighing, without any solos. It was extremely weird, and it went perfectly with Playland, but I couldn't afford the rights to use it.

In January of 1957 there was a party at my apartment, mainly so Chris Maclaine could show his half-finished film on my old projector. The filmmaker Jordan Belson was there. I had met him in Berkeley when he was a painter. His wife, Jane, also a filmmaker, was there.

There was a contingent of people from Los Angeles who had recently arrived, Dion and Lorelee Vigne and a friend of theirs, Norman Shacker. Dion and Lorelee had been potters in Los Angeles, and it was said they had burned down their pottery and left. Norman was a designer. He had just moved into the same room where we had our gallery, and filled it with his equipment and his collection of objets trouvés, and his cool furniture.

With all those Los Angeles people everything was always, "Cool, man!" Soon Dion and Lorelee had a basement apartment on Fresno Street, where the only place with any daylight was the small foyer. The rest of the place was a warren of little rooms, formerly a Filipino flop house. Dion and Lorelee had their jewelry-making equipment, their enameling kilns, their painting supplies, and their living quarters all there in the dark. They both wore black, always, and Lorelee looked like the sculpture of Nefertiti, and she wore a great deal of kohl.

Soon Lorelee started a little gift and art supply store on Grant Avenue called the Paint Pot. She also sold scarves and her enamel jewelry there. The enamel jewelry was an instant success with the tourists, and in a few years she had a huge factory in the Mission, making tons of jewelry and filling orders from all over the country.

That July I got a job working at the White House, a big department store in downtown San Francisco. I was in the men's clothing department, and I sold a lot of socks. Customers would come in and speak to the floor manager, and then he would snap his fingers at me from across the room. I would go and help select socks. There was a house detective who used to come around, a dried ferrety-looking woman in a strange fur hat. I could see her cruising like a shark through the various halls we could see from men's furnishings. There were other operatives who would come in and try the mettle of new employees. One

afternoon a woman stood in front of my counter and asked to see every sweater in the case. It was one of the store dicks, and she was there to see if I got flustered, or if I neglected to fold and carefully replace each sweater, before I brought out another. That was an important house rule.

I hated working in the White House, and I couldn't imagine how some of the middle-aged ladies could be so happy to come each day. I found it very hard to keep my mind on the job. We had an ancient cash register, elaborate, brass-plated, and I was constantly making mistakes and having to ask the manager to void my transactions.

I think I made so many mistakes that they decided to exile me; anyway, I was transferred to the handkerchief department, a tiny booth in the next room. I stood there, all alone, waiting for someone to come and give me an order for handkerchiefs, plain ones, or monogrammed Irish linen ones. I was so terribly lonely and bored standing in my booth; I had nothing to sit on and nothing to do. People would occasionally come up, and ask me directions to some other department, and go away. I got so miserable, seeing the days pass outside, that tears began to fall. I was in terror that someone would see, and of course I couldn't use any of the handkerchiefs. In time I knew I would have to quit.

One day that summer a roof cat came to my place, and I adopted her. Chris did not like cats and had a tantrum. That was sort of the last straw and what with one thing and another he moved out.

The poetry world was still going. There were readings. Sometimes they were at the home of Ruth Witt-Diamant.

But the King Ubu gallery folded, and the room was taken over by some painters from the Art Institute and became the Six Gallery. The six were originally John Ryan, Deborah Remington, Hayward King, David Simpson, Wally Hedrick, and a poet, Jack Spicer. Then other painters were added: Jay DeFeo and Joan Brown. One time they had a "happening" at the Six Gallery in which a perfectly good piano was smashed to bits with an ax. I was there, and killing the piano took a long time, and the noises the piano made dying were not very fine. A man by the name of Ed Taylor, a piano-bar player, was the man with the ax.

In the winter of 1957 an awful thing happened. I was evicted from my beautiful apartment. The funeral parlor next door needed

the space for the parking lot, and I think they arranged to have the city condemn the building.

I finally found another cheap railroad flat on Varennes, up on Telegraph Hill, where I lived for three years, but it was not nearly as nice. There was no living room, only a kitchen, and behind it a glassed-in back porch. That porch did have an amazing view of Russian Hill, to the west, the clouds, and the fog coming in the Golden Gate.

Sitting in the kitchen you saw the view through two sets of windows. The shower was on the porch, and when you bathed the sun poured in and you saw the view through the steam. I used to get visits from the ultimate North Beach beatnik, as we called them, Hubert Leslie. He was called Hube the Cube. Hubie was a very weird person, like an urban mountain man, with his tattered clothes, his fox face, and his beard.

He was able to survive without visible income. He played the part of the exile from society, and his principle was total permissiveness. He loved little morality tales about the absurdity of things, especially if they were a little dirty. Hubie painted too, but he didn't take his painting any more seriously than he did anything else. He did little colorful patterns on scraps of paper or wood very good. I would sometimes buy one for five dollars.

Hubie was said to earn his living taking drugs for the University of California Medical School, wearing a motorman's leg to collect his urine so it could be tested for residue.

How the Medical School could have kept the residue of what they gave him separate from whatever drugs Hubie was already taking was unknown. It was all so mysterious people said he invented the whole story.

One time Hubie came to visit when I was sick with the flu. He was also sick with flu. It was winter and cold, and the only heat in the apartment was the gas hot plate in the kitchen. I was lying on the couch (an old truck seat I had found in the gutter) and for the next twelve hours Hubie sat on my canvas chaise. Neither of us said a word, and the next day he got up and left.

At Varennes I began to get more involved in photography. I took pictures, often double exposures, of the city, of statues in the parks, of buildings, friends, of night scenes.

I fixed up one of the rooms as a darkroom, and I learned darkroom technique. I bought an enlarger and all the rest of the equipment. I sat for hours, evenings, all alone, watching images appear in the tray of developer. I even began to wonder if I could do photography commercially.

In the spring of 1958, Dorsey Alexander, an admirer of the poet Brother Antoninus, hired me to photograph Antoninus where he was living, in St. Albert's Dominican Priory.

Brother Antoninus was Bill Everson, who had printed two books of his poems on his own press when he was living in Berkeley. He was married to Mary Fabilli. Mary was a painter who did very brilliant and attractive small paintings. They were both devout Catholics, and they were both divorced. They felt they were living in sin, and finally they decided to separate, and Bill decided to join the order. He was tall and seemed very gloomy in his long black habit. We went into his printing shop, where he had his presses, and I photographed him working at the binding machine. I did get one good accidental double exposure of him, laughing over his work, and I sent him a copy. He liked it and later that year he wrote asking my permission to publish it.

I was also working for Jim Newman, who had started the Dilexi Gallery, on Broadway. Somebody suggested that he have me do the photographs for all his announcements. I did the first group for five dollars. In the three years I worked for him I got it up to twenty dollars.

Bob Alexander, one of the Los Angeles group, helped Jim start the gallery. Bob was usually there, in charge, and he hired Norman Shacker to do some bookcases, dress up the place, and I photographed the results. I used to go with Jim to the studios of his artists and photo them and their work.

One day I went with Jim and Bob to photograph Joel Barletta in his studio, and on the way back I asked them if I could take their picture. Right then, Bob immediately went into a kind of vaudeville routine, facing me with Jim pointed away, and then the reverse. I mounted the two photographs back to back.

Jim had me go with him to the studio of sculptor Novak, in the east bay, to Manuel Neri's and to Muriel Francis's. I photographed the installations in the gallery. Jay DeFeo was working in a studio on Fillmore Street, and Jim had scheduled a show of her work. He had me go to her studio and photograph a couple of huge drawings

of hers, one of a five-foot onion. I heard that after I left, they had a party and someone photographed Jay nude to the waist in front of the onion. I always wondered why she had me there at all if she had another photographer.

That fall they held the yearly Art Festival near the Maritime Museum, and the Dilexi Gallery had an imposing pavilion designed by Norman Shacker.

Then Jim moved the gallery down to Union Street, a more prestigious area. I photographed an opening party there, but soon I think Jim found someone else because he didn't call me anymore.

But I still had work; beside photographing other artists I had jobs photographing models, musicians, dancers, children, sunglasses, houses, gardens, and dogs. I had a job for a while in Studio 16, down near Bay Street. I did their darkroom work, the best job I ever had.

Late that fall 1958, I worked at the dreadful photography studio called Bosco's, on Geary Street. They took photographs of high school graduates in their graduate gowns and mortarboards. Then they developed the prints in tired chemicals, without agitation, so the photographs had long white streaks down them, white spots and dark places.

I was one of the spotters, the menials whose job it was to take a soft pencil and darken all the white streaks and pots. I would scabble on black and then smear it with my thumb, in the style of the place. We also had to darken the shine on the glasses of students who wore them and eliminate pimples and uneven teeth if the negative retouchers hadn't done it already. It was hopeless, ghastly work, very demoralizing. I would come out into the five o'clock traffic, the noise, the waning light, and wonder where I was.

Pete Martin had left for New York, and friends of mine got his apartment, behind Jordan Belson's, up on Kearny Street. I used to visit my friends and I started to visit Jordan, where they usually were. Jordan was a recluse.

This didn't prevent people from visiting him constantly. He was also a natural comic, against his better judgement, with a sly, owlish humor, mainly based on the idea that it was all too much that he just wanted to be left alone.

His wife, Jane, was originally from Texas, and very direct. She and Jordan bickered so much that someone said they should have a

television show called “Breakfast with the Belsons.” Jane once told me that when they met she had just shaved her head, and she appreciated Jordan for not making any comment about it. But what they saw in each other was never very clear.

At Jordan’s place I would often see Suzanne and Charlie Stark. Charlie was a painter. I once went to his studio, to take photographs, and saw his work. It was very realistic, somewhat erotic paintings of ladies in long gowns and bare breasts, slightly corrupt, in the style of Gustav Klimt and Aubrey Beardsley. Charlie did a set of photographs of Suzanne’s body clad only in her underwear, which they showed at The Place.

I used to go in the evening to The Place, on Grant Avenue, which was right below Varennes. I would sit upstairs, with a glass of wine, reading, or sit down at the bar and talk with friends or strangers. My cat used to visit The Place too in the afternoons, without me. They would call me up and tell me she was there and I would go out on the back stairs and call her.

Then I’d see her coming home, jumping from roof to roof, over the alleys. She knew how to come home without touching the ground.

At night I would take her for walks up to Coit Tower. I could never see her on these walks; she went under the cars, in the gutter. I would see a flash, in the dark, as she zipped from one car to the next. Walking up the path under the trees I would see a shadow, flitting along in the bushes. But she was always there, and she always got home with me.

One day in 1959 I called up the photographer Imogen Cunningham and asked her if she would like to go to Marin County and take pictures. Imogen had come to the Freeland Gallery for the filmmaking symposium. When I had started doing photography I’d gone to see her and showed her my first prints, and she had been very kind and explained the technical mistakes I was making. When I asked to drive to Marin she agreed; she was probably glad to get out of town. We had a nice day out in Bolinas, photographing eucalyptus trees and an old white barn. I got a charming picture of her focusing her great view camera, and I gave her a print. It wasn’t very flattering, but she said it was fine. She said, “People are always taking pictures of me, and they’re all me.”

## Decline

All this time the poetry and jazz scene was becoming more famous all over the country. Herb Caen christened the crazies of North Beach the “beatniks,” after the Russian Sputnik. There was a lot written about being “beat” and “beatitude” and a peculiar philosophy was concocted, in which taking dope and avoiding work, being against society, represented a sort of saintliness. You neither judged others nor yourself, but let things flow. Beatniks in their tattered clothes and stringy hair arrived from all parts of the country. They didn’t believe in motivation and they seemed to talk about nothing but dope. They had “dropped out.” They floated from thing to thing like seaweed in the tide. They considered direction to be bourgeois and absurd.

They also seemed to feel terribly sorry for themselves, to feel martyred. They blamed everything on conventional society. They had come from comfortable homes, but they blamed their parents for the fact that life didn’t have any meaning for them. I used to theorize that the parents of the hippies had been the children of the Depression, raised in insecurity and often in want. Those parents, when they finally achieved security, were very proud of it, and they wanted their children to be properly grateful. The children naturally often responded by resenting their parents and the security and comfort they were supposed to be grateful for. So it was a war, bourgeois values against countercultural values, those who believed in a society that made them secure against those who hated everything that society offered, who thought it false, soulless, hypocritical, racist, philistine, boring, and inhibited.

The hippies also despised the law, and approved of illegal acts, especially anything to do with dope, as a part of their defiance of society. Grant Avenue became the theater where this philosophy was played out. The hippies filled the bars, when they were not at home smoking pot and taking pills. The Coffee Gallery was their club. They massed there, listening to jazz and to poets reading poetry to jazz. Inevitably, there was soon a war going on between the hippies and the police. A certain patrolman, Officer Bigeroni, was particularly reviled by the hippies.



Jay Hoppe, a large, contemptuous man, had opened The Co-Existence Bagel Shop, on the corner of Grant and Green. The Bagel Shop soon became another headquarters of beatnik life, and as time passed it became stranger and stranger, like a nest of madmen, smelling not only of drains but of urine and pot. Anyway, one day someone posted a poem in the window, ridiculing the police and particularly Bigeroni.

He read it and went public. He said it had hurt his feelings. There were published statements and counterstatements in the daily newspapers. I kept away from the Bagel Shop, the Coffee Gallery, and the other hippie scenes. They were smoky, hot, and smelly, and I didn't like the cultist aspect of beatnik culture, the self-aggrandizing tone, the need to shock, the endless foul language. The whole scene was too angry and self-indulgent for me, and I found the lack of motivation incomprehensible.

I was no conformist, and I was on the side of individual freedom, but it struck me that the beatniks didn't have very much individuality. They dressed alike, they talked alike, and they ostracized anyone who was different from them. I didn't often visit hippies in their "pads" either, because I didn't like the smell of pot, nor what people were like when they were high: roomfuls of people sitting around, staring into space, and saying, "Man, oh, MAAAN...." I thought drunks were more amusing. I photographed everything I could, but I made no effort to see beat events in order to photograph them.

By 1960 I had met Richard Brautigan, a writer who had already published a short novel, *Trout Fishing in America*. He was a tall, stooped young man with flaxen hair, often extremely drunk. He had a wife, Ginny, big and bold and funny, and a little daughter. He was a comedian, but also in a way extremely sad. Many years later, long after he and Ginny were divorced, he shot himself, out in Bolinas.

Brautigan put together a book of poems, to be called *The Octopus Frontier*. He wanted me to do a cover for it, so I read it. The poem that I liked the most was the title poem about an adventure with an octopus in a place where "the walls were covered with obscene octopus pictures." So, to prepare for our sitting, I went down to Chinatown and bought a length of octopus from a fish store, took it back, and posed Brautigan with it, up on the roof.

I wanted a salacious tinge to the photo, but Brautigan was too distant and fastidious to manage anything in the least suggestive with that octopus. Finally I had him take his shoes off and embed his feet in the tentacle, which was by then smelling pretty high. That was the photo we used for the cover.

Around then there was a celebration of the Beat Era. It was called the Rolling Renaissance—a precursor of the one in which the four poets photograph appeared. Mark Green was active in photography during the sixties, and he may have been one of the people to make this happen. Mark was always showing people pictures of his cats, but he had also taken some interesting shots of the local people.

I don't remember the exact extent of that Rolling Renaissance, but there were a number of events, all over the city. I was in a show of photographs in a gallery on California near Polk.

In 1960 I got a job at a restaurant on Pacific Street. It was run by the cook, a small, fiery, hot-tempered woman, Japanese, and her tall, thin, pale, bored husband. I worked three days a week, waiting tables, and I enjoyed it. But Ludwig Bemelmans was right about the restaurant business; for some reason there is a tremendous amount of loose aggression going, especially when things get rushed.

There was a kind of cult in that restaurant, a following of people who came every night. Everyone else was classed as an outsider; the cook even boasted that she had once bodily thrown out a customer who annoyed her. Being accepted as a regular was a badge of honor, and her clientele put up with a lot. I tried my best, and dealt with far too many tables, but still, for some reason, the regulars loathed me and they expressed their dislike by not tipping. I didn't care; the tips I got from the others seemed like quite a lot to me.

However, as the months passed the two owners became increasingly rude to me, I wasn't sure why. Maybe because I was indifferent to their social scene they thought I was a snob. One final night the husband, who occasionally roused himself to help wait tables, called me a "bloody fool"—loud enough for the whole room to hear—for something that he had done himself. Late that night I went back and left a note on the door saying I was going out of town and wouldn't be back.

Then I worked for Lorelee Vigne at the Paint Pot, also in the evenings. I would open up the store and find a note telling me what

to do—stretch canvasses, put stock away, tidy the scarves. The radio was permanently tuned to a classical music station, so when you put on the lights the music went on too.

Finally I got very bored with classical music and I started changing the station to rock and roll. One night I forgot to change it back when I left, and the next day Lorelee told me never to change the station again. I seldom did.

Little by little another change was coming to San Francisco besides the beatniks; the city was becoming fashionable, property values were going up. The Filipinos who owned my apartment building moved to Daly City and put the house up for sale.

The new buyer came, looked over the apartment, and told me he planned extensive alterations. My rent would go from sixty-five to eighty-five. I held on for a few months, but I couldn't pay that much, and I knew it would go up more, so I started looking for another place. I found one at Francisco and Mason.

It was a bottom-floor apartment, very dark, which someone had tried to make more cheerful by painting the floor yellow, like our gallery. But it was a terrible place and my months there were so depressing I began to think of leaving the city.

North Beach was dying. The bar scene was weird, the people there more and more bored. There were fewer and fewer even minimally interesting people in the bars because the interesting people spent their time at home, trying out drugs, or at poetry readings, listening to each other revile convention and talk about sex. Sordid characters began to turn up like Leonard and Indian Joe, reputed to be rapists. People said they had raped a woman in Mexico and her brothers had caught them and buried them to their necks in sand.

I finally did leave, and in the spring of 1961 I drove to Mexico, with a German shepherd puppy as duenna. Then I drove on to New York, and saw friends. When I got home I found a lot of friends were leaving the city for New York, and that fall I decided to go too.

In New York I worked as a photographer, doing gallery work and small-time theater publicity. But making friends turned out to be very difficult; people seemed to associate only with friends from their home towns, maybe Cape Cod or Austin, Texas. Then the San Francisco people I knew dispersed. There seemed to be nobody left. So in 1965 I went to Sonoma County and lived there for a year.

But I was bored in the country and I came back to the city for lack of any other ideas. I got an apartment on Francisco Street, across from the one with the yellow floor. I tried to resurrect my photography business, but I got nowhere. Jim Newman's Dilexi was by then big time, in the Financial District, and they already had a photographer. Other galleries were giving their work to someone else, and there didn't even seem to be a bohemian art scene in the way there had been before I left. Everything was very commercial, very serious. The galleries were in spaces with high rents, showing "important" paintings by "important" artists at astronomical prices.

The last year I was in New York I had done some paintings, again, and I had brought them back with me. I took them to the Labaudt Gallery, where Madame was still having her annual shows of her husband's work and her introductory shows of unknown artists. She gave me the whole upper floor, where we hung work I had done since 1952 when I started nonobjective painting. The show looked beautiful, but there was one thing that distressed me about it; Madame considered her field of creativity to be the hanging of her shows. No one was to come near her while she did it. My show was of work done over fifteen years, with a lot of development, but she arranged the paintings so those that looked nice together were hung side by side, ignoring the development completely. It looked as though I had no particular style, as though I were a complete amateur.

But it didn't matter; very few people went to shows at the Labaudt Gallery anymore. That wasn't where the art scene was. The gallery was more like a memorial to a past age. The art scene had moved, like the Dilexi Gallery, down toward the money where galleries showed slabs of steel on the floor, assemblages of sticks piled against the wall, or heaps of dirt with neon signs on top. The more incomprehensible the better; everything was very *recherché*, very high style.

During that year I went back to the bars. They were louder, dirtier, and more sordid even than they had been when I left. There was nobody around that I knew, and the beat scene was beyond description. I photographed the Brautigans again and tried to take some pictures of other people in North Beach, but there wasn't really anything going on that I wanted to photograph. All the people I had known seemed to have died of their addictions or to have moved out of town so they wouldn't. The art scene was a private thing between

the artist, his work, and his gallery, and artists didn't seem to know each other anymore. When I walked around, the hard, bare streets that I had so loved as the place of creativity seemed glaring, drab, and dull.

I would go to Vesuvio in the evening, even though no one I knew was ever there. I would sit at the corner of the bar, looking out the door at the intersection of Broadway and Columbus. On a dead night only a few cars would pass, some people, lights would change, red then green. A strange feeling would come to me of time gone, of sorrow, a sense of the past like the falling of misty rain.

In the apartment on Francisco Street it wasn't possible to sleep. Six times a day, four a.m., eight a.m., twelve noon, four p.m., eight p.m., and midnight, a small freight train passed under my window, delivering grain to the brewery at Francisco and Powell. It would make the corner under my window with a shriek of iron on iron that cannot be described, and it took several minutes for the whole train to pass. Then, at two a.m., the drunks would start going home from the bars, yelling and throwing bottles.

At six a.m. my neighbor above started cleaning her apartment, walking around on wooden-heeled shoes and running her vacuum cleaner. At eight the Chinese children below got ready for school. Then at some point, construction began on a new shopping mall on Bay Street and every morning, at eight-thirty, a pile driver began pounding relentlessly and went on all day, bam, bam, bam. I put my mattress under the table in the darkroom, where the pounding was fainter.

In the evenings I would go to Gino & Carlo's or to a new bar, Mr. Otis'. Mr. Otis was Otis Hart, a big, cynical man with a twisted smile, who had done many things, even being a garment salesman. He had opened a bar up the street from Gino & Carlo's, and he was watching things degenerate.

He began to take a kind of pleasure in the decline of his clientele, of the bar itself, of the whole of North Beach. His cynicism, joined with the despair of his customers, made Mr. Otis' a sort of hell, each day worse, more dirty, more dark, more degraded.

At Gino & Carlo's people got drunker and crazier, until it also became a scene of hell. One night a female regular passed out, spread

on the pool table like a sacrifice. An elderly Italian, the neighborhood lecher, came in and instantly made for her with such a look of purpose that Gino had to steer him out the door.

One night the other bartender served the whole crowded bar, customer after customer, with a catlike smile on his face and the tip of his penis sticking out of his black pants like a boutonniere.

Finally, at Mr. Otis', things got so far out of hand that Otis decided to close up. I heard that on the last night several of his patrons pissed on the bar, and he joined them.

Back on Francisco Street a man with a woodworking shop next to my place started pounding at five-thirty in the morning, filling in the only silent spot in the twenty-four hours. I got a curtain rod, opened the window, and pounded on the side of his building. There was a short pause and then he yelled, "Go to hell," and went back to his pounding.

I moved to a houseboat in Sausalito.

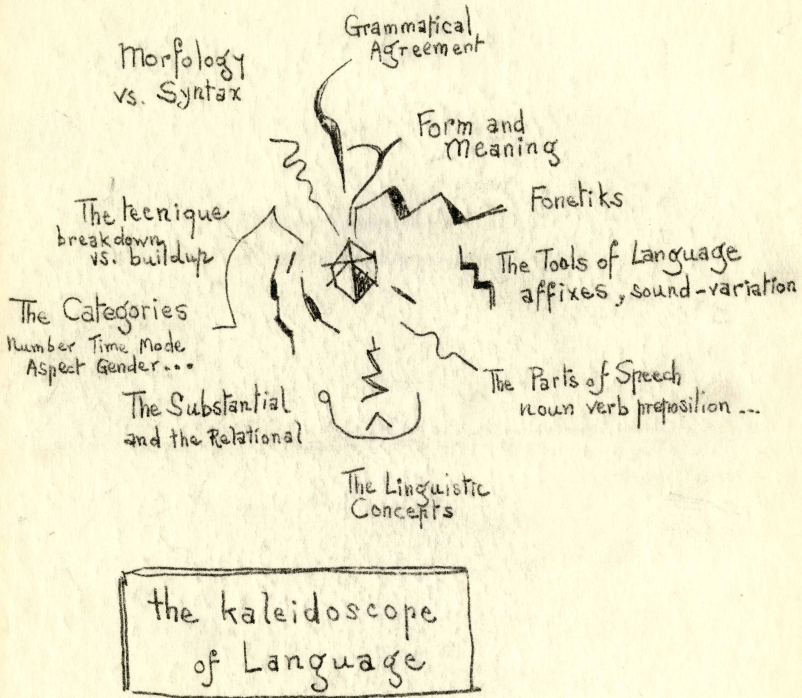
CHICAGO  
REVIEW  
64:4/65:1

CONTEMPORARY  
KOREAN POETRY

CURATED BY  
DON MEE CHOI



3



Jaime de Angulo's composite glyph of language itself, "The Kaleidoscope of Language," from the unpublished typescript(s) *What Is Language?* (in two versions; ca. 1939-48). Jaime de Angulo Papers (Collection 160), UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library.

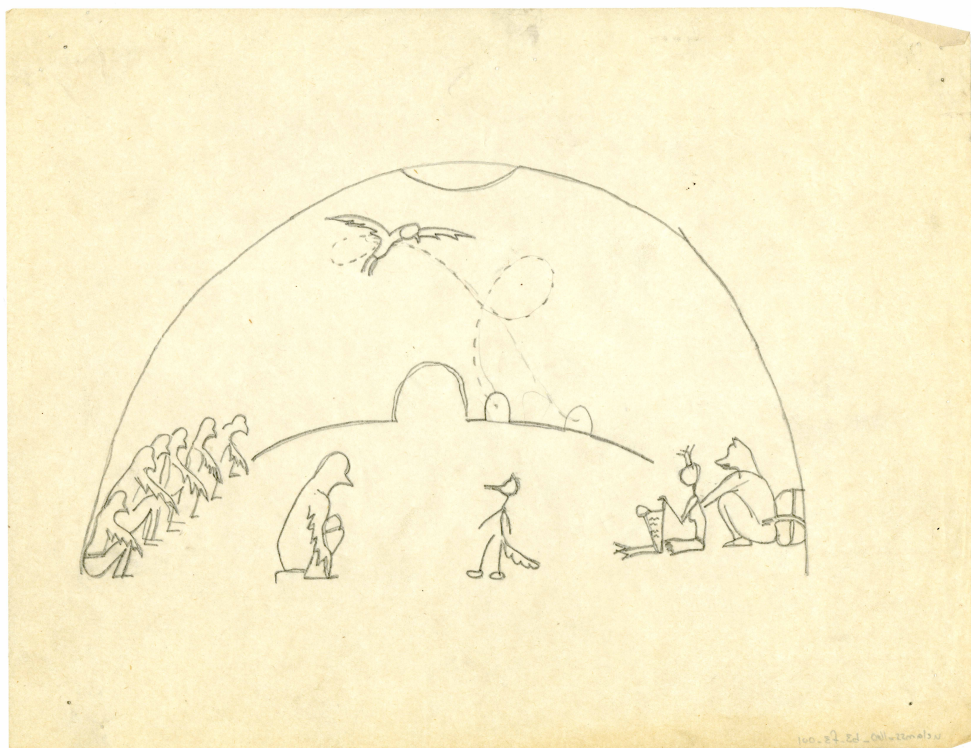




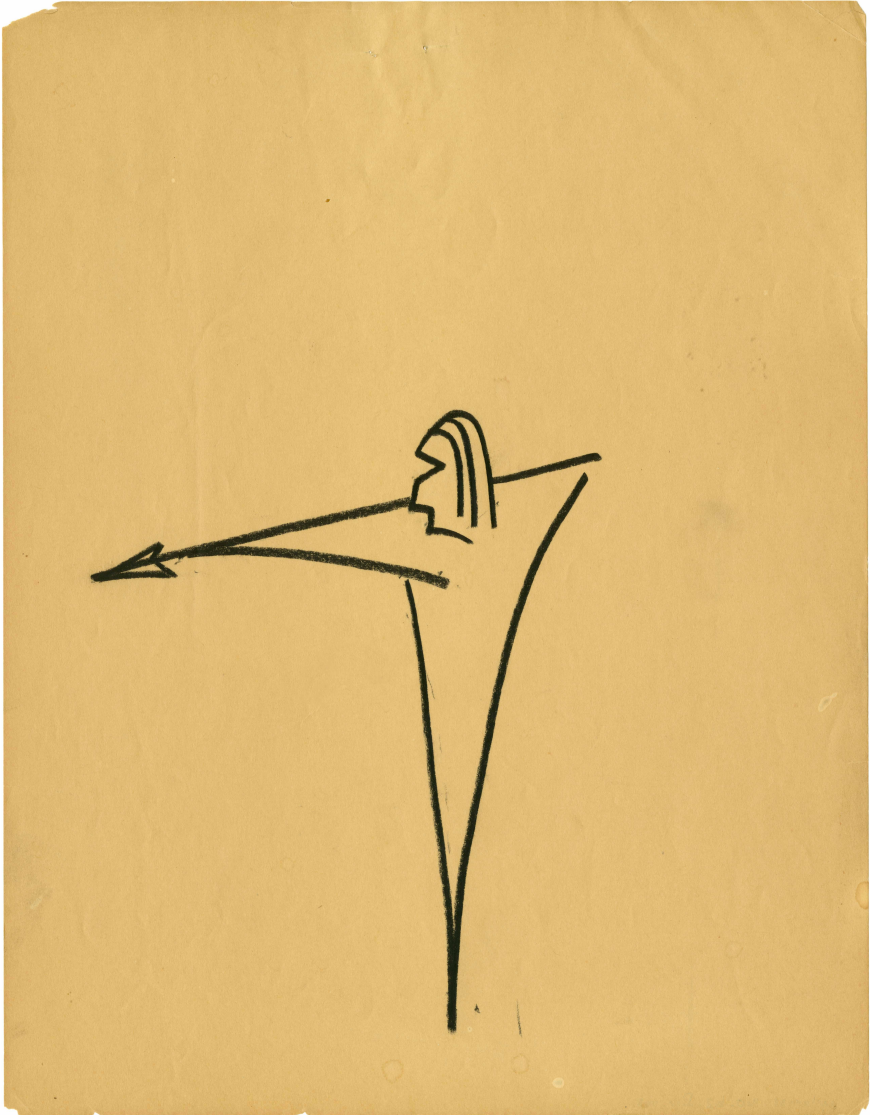
Jaime de Angulo and anatomical models in medical school (either Cooper Medical College [later incorporated into what would become Stanford University School of Medicine] or Johns Hopkins; he attended both) (ca. 1907–08). Jaime de Angulo Papers (Collection 160), UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library.



Jaime de Angulo and horses in the hills around Los Pesares, Big Sur (ca. 1938), where he ran a horse ranch for a time. Jaime de Angulo Papers (Collection 160), UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library.



Jaime de Angulo's pictographic drawing (ca. 1949–50) of the Hawk People's hut for his multimedia *Old Time Stories* (revised and seriously delimited in publication as *Indian Tales*). Here the hawk Pis'wis'na swirls into the scene to sing a song to Old Man Coyote and his traveling family sitting behind him. Jaime de Angulo Papers (Collection 160), UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library.



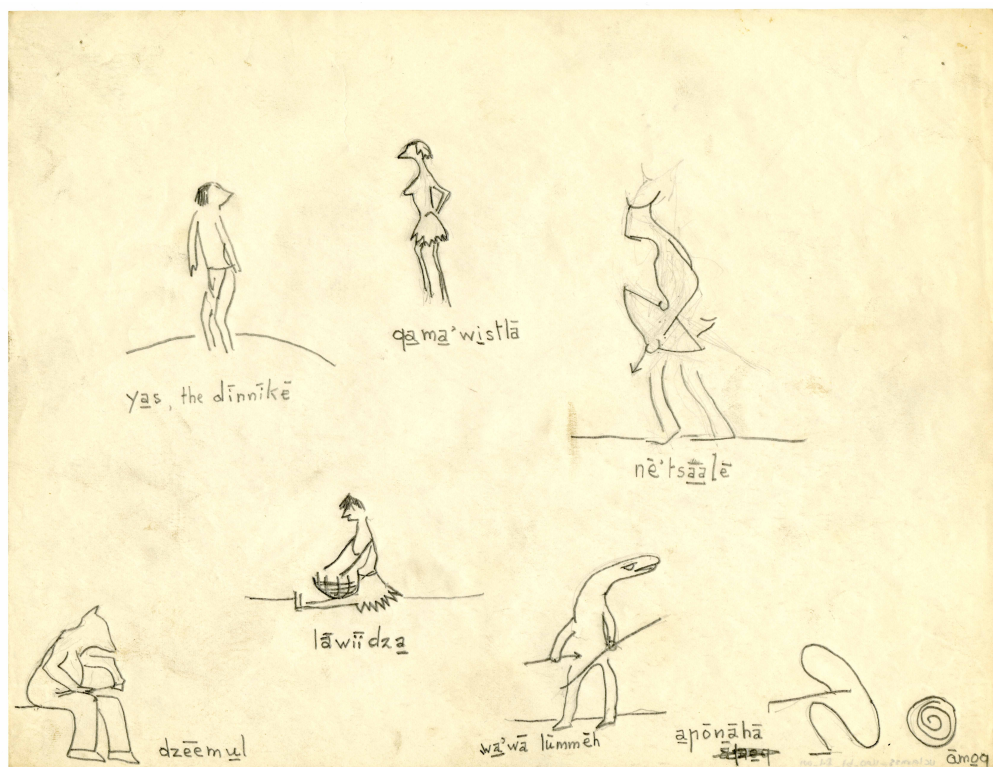
Jaime de Angulo's translation of Federico García Lorca's poem "Arid Land" into pictographic form (ca. 1949–50). Jaime de Angulo Papers (Collection 160), UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library.



A scene from Jaime de Angulo's novella *The Witch*, originally written to spite D. H. Lawrence at Mabel Dodge Luhan and Tony Luhan's Taos compound in 1924; reworked in the mid-1940s to include these charcoal-on-paper drawings. Jaime de Angulo Papers (Collection 160), UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library.



Jaime de Angulo's watercolor-on-paper portrait of a satirized Alfred Kroeber, amplifying what de Angulo saw as Kroeber's imperiousness with the map of the world on one side of the office wall and, on the other, an apparent phylogenetic linguistic tree, with the University of California, Berkeley's (here, somewhat sexualized) Sather Tower through the window. The female figure may be some version of anthropologist Lucy (aka Nancy) Freeland, who would become de Angulo's girlfriend then wife—all of which, at least as far as de Angulo could tell, appears to have irritated Kroeber. Jaime de Angulo Papers (Collection 160), UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library.



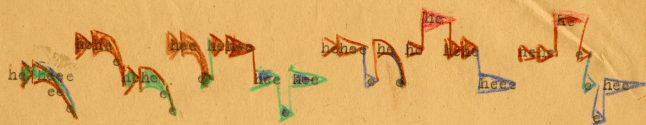
Some of the other-than-human beings from Jaime de Angulo's *Old Time Stories* with their indigenous (primarily Achumawi) names (ca. 1949–50). Jaime de Angulo Papers (Collection 160), UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library.

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the drum like two antennae that had been thrust outward and then recoiled. There was a short period of silence <sup>for</sup> while the Kuksu stood <sup>quiet</sup> immobile in one place but still gracefully undulating his big feathered head from side to side. He did this with a curious inner trembling all the ~~time~~ while which made the ends of the feathers tremble and shake.

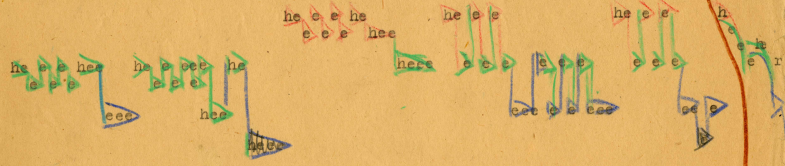
Now the singers of the chorus took up the second song



and they went thru the same performance...and then the 3rd song



and then the last song



that was the last song. Now the Kuksu retreated backwards with the same rigid mincing steps and the same graceful swayings of the body and head when head body and shoulders seemed to be each following a different pattern. When he arrived backwards at the entrance he turned around again and disappeared up the ramp first his head disappeared from view above the lintel and then his body

A folio from Jaime de Angulo's *Old Time Stories* that shows his work in ethnomusicology, with special attention to the visual composition and chromatic cueing of musical structure as well as the descriptive context of song (ca. 1949-50). Jaime de Angulo Papers (Collection 160), UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library.

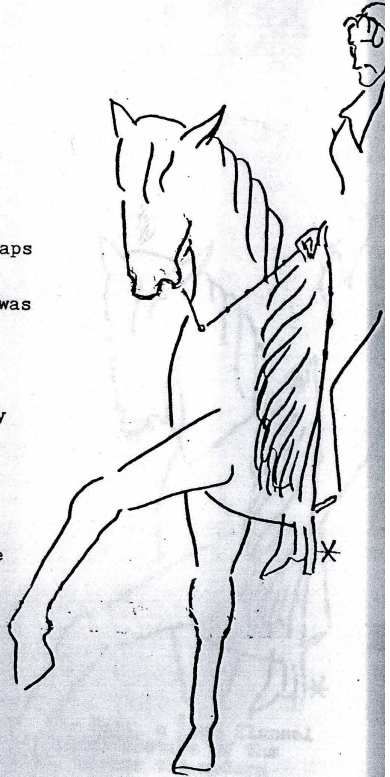


# Just Nonsense

she said  
"he wears BLUE to-day !..."  
as she turned from the window  
she said it bluu, almost blyu  
fancy caballero from "down the Coast"  
where they grow wild and wooly as their chaps  
fancy caballero stepping high  
the beret was not regulation but the faja was  
blue also  
for he was a fidalgo true and blue  
but he wears RED to-day !..."

the horse is gone, he wears white to-day  
poor hidalgo and scholar  
and he lies tied to a bottle  
and he moans:

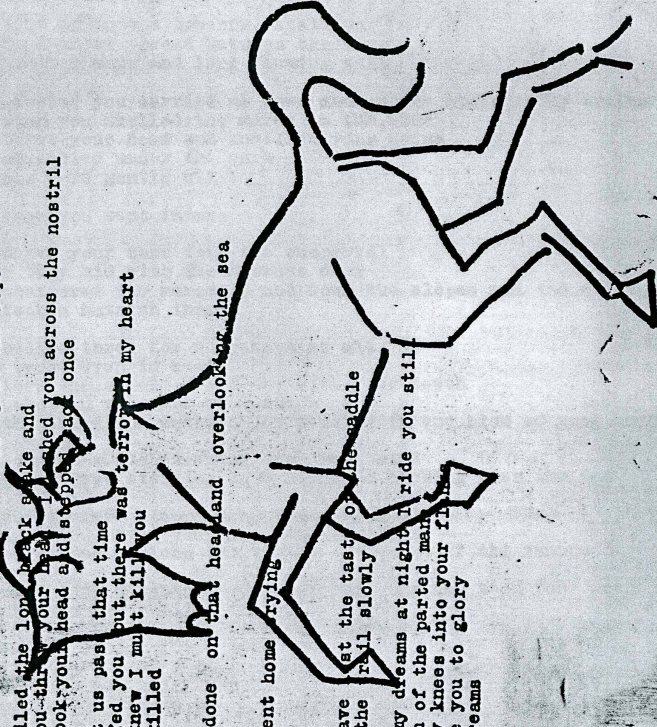
oh bury me not in ward 5-B  
where the doctors'll howl over me  
and the orderlies hiss  
and the nurses bully me  
oh bury me not on lonely 5-B



everybody nowadays knows what a beret is -- the faja, a long flannel belt, about 12 feet of it, was regulation traditional costume of the California cow-boys -- vaqueros, they were called, whence the modern "buckeroo"

Horses and horse culture were constant preoccupations of Jaime de Angulo's life and literary production. Jaime de Angulo Papers (MS 14), Special Collections and Archives, University Library, University of California, Santa Cruz.

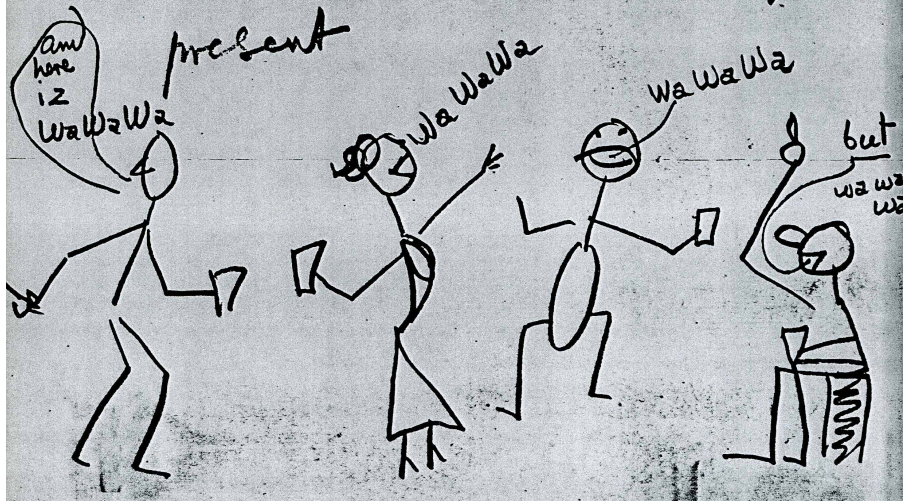
this is a true story - it happened only  
3 yrs ago how i loved that horse!



the mare was trembling under me  
she was your half-sister  
and the filly in terror was tugging at the rope  
I uncoiled the long black snake and  
when you threw your head  
you shook your head and stepped back once  
you let us pass that time  
I blurred you but there was terror in my heart  
and I knew I must kill you  
or be killed  
it was done on that headland overlooking the sea  
and I went home crying  
now I have lost the taste of the saddle  
I walk the trail slowly  
but in my dreams at night I ride you still  
stallion of the parted mane  
I dig my knees into your flanks  
and ride you to glory  
in my dreams

Jaime de Angulo's horse stories and horse poetry mostly take place in the rolling hills and vertiginous cliffs that twist and turn along the spine of California's northwestern coast. Jaime de Angulo Papers (MS 14), Special Collections and Archives, University Library, University of California, Santa Cruz.

Duncan had a birthday party  
Sunday (he iz not a maynor hulla  
any longer — but still a minor  
poet) veri suksésful — (the party)  
all Berkeley's intelligentsia



Jaime de Angulo's satirical depiction of a "veri suksésful" party (he was always switching into fonetik spelling) celebrating his student, typist, and assistant, the poet Robert Duncan. The party that included all of "Berkeley's intelligentsia" seems to have amounted to no more than so much boisterous "wawawa." Jaime de Angulo Papers (MS 14), Special Collections and Archives, University Library, University of California, Santa Cruz.



Robert Duncan, "For Gui" (crayon on paper, n.d.). Courtesy of Harry Bernstein, Caren Meghreblian & Harry Friedman.



Gui Mayo photographed by Imogen Cunningham (1944).

13-  
dear Dorothy P

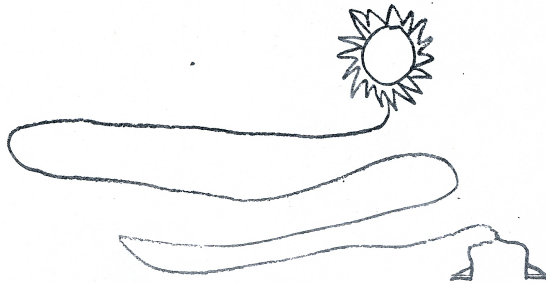
Nancy had so many things to attend to and people (old friends from childhood) to visit that she never found time to go to Washington... too bad....another time...(hope you both will be here soon...mebbe ??)

i have finished my first series of Indian Tales ---kept at it for fifty-two evenings on a new local radio in Berk. (an experiment - radiom without sponsors and commercials -- financed by some wealthy people) this was my contribution evening's hour for children !!!! i kept it up for 52 nights, as i said...never worked like that before...to make a date-line !! little brain almost snapped .....i'll start again mebbe after summer.... (lots of fun, tho, doing it --- confusing the lil dahlings' notions of ethiks and who-created-the-world----but the FBI hasnt heard of ME yet

seems most of my audience were university students....so i have been asked to repeat whole thing from beginning....all right....make good job of it now-- -retype it every day and smoothe it out .....but such a chore that to amuse myself i am doing it in my own brand of reformed speling (to konfuze the Publishers who like somthing at least konsistent if not lodgikal - which mine aint -- but as Lawrence of Jerusalem said:"...and she was a dammed good mare, too!)

j

berk june 22 (yesterday was longest day of the yr som peopl call it the SOLSTICE



In addition to his robust correspondence with Ezra Pound, de Angulo also kept correspondence with Dorothy Pound. The letters (1948-50) often included pictographs, illustrations, sigils, and glyphs, such as the one here for the "longest day" of the year, the summer solstice, stretching its neck into the textual field. Jaime de Angulo Papers (MS 14), Special Collections and Archives, University Library, University of California, Santa Cruz.

CODY-ROSE CLEVIDENCE

*from* THE GRIMACE, OF EDEN, NOW

PROLOGUE

the tarantulas of dawn and the tarantulas of singing  
and the coke-bottles of singing and the tidal  
refuse of dawn, the skyscrapers of eden  
and the rhyming that takes place in the parkinglots  
of heaven, on a sunday morning, in Jasper, Arkansas,  
the dust of the republic, the ammo sales of the  
republic—the dust of the dogs playing in  
the hard dust of the earth in the gold dusted evening light  
of the republic which extends itself irrationally  
all the way to the ocean. the chorus begins: *we don't know  
who is singing, is singing, is singing*—the chorus continues:  
*“Was thine heart wrung with longing for thy land?* (the herald  
cries, just, like, weeping, cries)—there are no words like “cherish” in eden  
the dogs are playing in the sunlight & dirt, there. here, heft this hammer.  
swing it down. & the clouds go rolling, rolling—  
the clouds go rolling, rolling down.

## THE INSTRUCTIONS ARE WRITTEN ON THE UNDERSIDE OF THE EARTH

the heavens are multiple the shade of the heavens is vast  
the heavens are cowardly in their being, they are cowardly and vast  
there are three heavens and in each heaven is four quadrants of heaven  
I cut the apple into quarters you cut the apple into quarters  
the world is made out of hands

further eden. more eden. father eden, heron  
stalk. meat of eden. 2 b swallowed whole—hold still—

pride, is

to be swallowed, whole

the apple of the apple, firmament. the three gates  
that lead to the heavens and the twelve sins and the sound of reaping.  
the lengthy river, to kiss the lengthy river, you must kneel  
to kiss the lengthy river and supplicate yourself and hold it in your hands.  
there is only one void it is singular and vast.

cumulonimbus, accretion. vitreol and perfume of eden—  
the satellites that roar, hem of an electric world  
rearing up into the whole world of itself

the worldhood of the world, and the opposite—  
the multiplicity of opposites in the worldhood of the world



and how we choose them, one by one  
and hold them in our mouths

we have seven mouths one for each  
of the seven worlds where the worldhood rests

edenic net

that caught

three herons

rising up

the hours that add up. the several horses. the seventeen winds  
and the horses that run across the vast ocean when the winds  
whip themselves into a tizzy and go galloping across the ocean, the  
fourteen winds and how they get tangled in the forests and  
the hair of the horses and how the winds braid the hair of the horses  
in a steady rythym that builds, and the smell of hooves and of running.

no one cares about the ladders up to the heavens. my hands are mine.  
my two hands. each prayer. I would ride that one stallion, there,  
across the border of heaven—take my apples—the ocean  
has no regard for the ugly borders of heaven—the bittersweet  
jungle where we have placed the three earths. no one  
cares about the six ladders up to the earth, each  
rung rough in our hands.

the length of the three rivers rough in our hands.

chariot. boat. fishermen. when the flood abates and you can see the shore.

grim eden of the void chock full with coins don't go  
don't give him up for good—can we take our six  
horses to a different pasture. the heavens—of which  
there are none, are gasping. the nine warblers of the  
nine throats of the nine emissaries of heaven sent  
down to earth, choking on water. they'll be fine.  
the seven gates open and close silently in the moonlight.  
all eight gates. do you want to come with me  
down to the river—

the philosopher king goes down to the river.  
the river is the Mississippi but it takes him a long time to drown.  
good riddance we say to the heavens. good riddance  
we say to the void. all six  
voids blink back at us. we blow you  
a kiss, we say. we blow you a kiss  
they say back, or is it an echo—  
we blow you a kiss, we say to the river  
we blow you a kiss, we say to the horses  
we blow you a kiss, we say to the pigeons  
circling the tall buildings of all the cities of earth  
the sunlight glinting on the millions  
of windows of all the tall buildings of earth

just one small white flower  
just a drop

—you call—that—a dove—?

where the desire of the verb springs forth  
and then recedes: some vague  
quantity of snow. that we live on a planet  
where it rains. where the desire of the verb  
springs forth into exactly nine words, into  
fourteen words, in that place which is singular

and opposite, and from which springs  
the twentyseven languages of the simple  
trees of eden. each eden and its four  
apples, singing in darkness where I have  
halved myself and you have halved yourself  
and each one of us, one by one, halves ourself  
from ourself, kneeling on the soft grass—we are not  
cowards when we kneel in the soft grass like this in this  
heavenless place I cut the one  
apple in half, and each half, I  
cut in half again.



and you—bright warrior—most  
Olympian—shining black with sweat—  
the crown, the grammatical harvest, the  
mirror. I have sat myself beside myself  
beside the dumb waters. blue to green  
to plum to wine, the stars, some eyes  
where space is space, provided.

STAND LIKE A PONY / PISSING  
IN THE FIELD YOU HAVE MADE

»

and roses lick / their thornéd lips | and I wld  
“never” be, thy winters “concubine”

each bullet from each seed | excruciate—  
“like pulling teeth”—the metaphor is Now

I lie awake and think | of each pure &  
bitter thing, goodnight—

I lie awake and try to think | “if there  
were water *we should stop*  
to drink”—italics mine—

»

»

“but soft” “what light”  
what is this warning—dawn?  
[one line of iambic] “breaks”

“like a thief” – metatarsal, curvéd spine  
rough palm—dick soft | as grazing cattle  
dick soft | as a rain of coins

each broken bottle of Divinities | drunk  
Excess [at] my *throat* | each night Kept  
waiting / no owl—no “pulch•ri•tude”

held a melody of  
broke a melody off  
: each rib which rib | a fruit—

why do you say fruit and not a specific fruit:  
Rilke, trans: “*with eyes like ripening fruit*” vrs “*in which his eye-apples ripened*”  
“to that dark center where procreation flared” {ew}

Leda, and her swan

»

»

“I can probably grip a hammer” each dew, Upon  
each grasses tongue—what I wouldn’t give:  
the World—

what I wouldn’t—give—The World—  
to { } ; (u) {not} [

[ ] language without gesture is a sin

/

& what should we do with all the teeth:  
plant the bullets—shoot the seeds: I recite & I  
recite—on my knees and—on my knees—  
each Cateclysm of Spring

/

to bite off each broken thing—to tie the knot—  
to counterpunch—to be a need, to be an Anvil,  
ring—

[how circuitous—the sun—



/

IF CUPID SHOULD pursue  
and lick each thick veined trees bark  
or bark at hornets or be  
stupid, utterly, a  
fool—like this  
and this again  
and this  
and this again  
each spring is this  
I think that I  
should give it up,  
this thing & cupids  
little thing // that peeketh forth  
from neath  
that bow—

that brow & arch & scorn  
&bower there, u foolish  
bird

most foolish of all the birds  
yr careful bower there, & scorn—

/

the flowers of my hangover, each petal—  
striped—each but kissed—most cussed at silken thing  
of the godhead of the frost, & rock, & speak  
and spoken to & neck & daybreak, asphyxiated  
sun and musket, gun-barrel, most-kisséd branch & leaf & each motif  
each sore creek in me my heart my ovoid self—a thousand things a thousand locks  
a thousand locusts each descend, singing their little  
locust-songs—like this—I am mad with grief—

.

## HOLY SPIRIT GTFO

“sleep, shepherd, it doesn’t matter where”  
—Jacques Dupin

who has taken me back and forth behind the clover  
who has split the soft lip of fog at dawn  
who has spoken words into my mouth who has put  
his tongue against the salty eyelids of morning,  
curséd tongue, sweet tongue, mouth of corn-silk,  
one snake, dumb tongue of morning—  
cursed the genitals between the legs—holy  
spirit—who has begged forgiveness  
from the small birds  
just now starting in the trees around—

holy spirit you are welcome here

that which was once seamless, now  
has a hem—

when we felt that we were promised sun, and were given none  
when we felt the salt wind blow up from the gulf—I, Agamemnon,  
standing, as I like to do, in a place surrounded by the “whole world”—  
on this cliff—there’s a fucking—ache in it my dude, it will  
settle on the ache in you—I can smell it on the air blowing  
up from the gulf—I know it—I’m telling you—  
because I’m yr friend—

put that edge on it—sharp—like the devil said.

fuck Saint and Paradise and Cardinal and Calvary  
fuck Vision and Holy and Void  
fuck down deep in the heart where the deep waves are fuck  
everything in the sky. the magpies bend. the grackles are all eyes.  
I do not forgive the wind.  
a small death takes place in the heart of each tree.

holy spirit you are welcome here

& some, for me, bright star, radiant—this night  
this night escapes us, more bud than fruit, single flame, most remain  
each day each thing remains, where I have placed it,  
the dead body of the dead snake writhing on the table  
for hours, its head in a coffee can nearby

I can still feel its body moving, muscley in my grip, for hours after

if u pinch, & squeeze, u can milk the venom out  
later, it rots in that jar because the lid was bad—  
the rotten head of the rotten snake in the rotten  
venom of its rotten night—

holy spirit u r welcome here

—whose skies is this—today—and after—when I have  
to go—why is it that each day we make again  
a man—who are you kissing, in that room  
w all the windows—and stand in different postures, in  
the constellation of ourselves—yr body was of the place.

from my mount and serpent there

my ankle, my heart, my nonsense, free me  
body of earth, causality and generation

still wounded, dog, get down, my knees, alloy  
and circumcision and anguish, having taken

to the hot steel over the knife, gemstone and  
masculinity and prayer, where my lips are,  
tonight, what is the story—what is the name  
of the knife?

I'm nervous about something

[the body's involuntary  
the bodys involuntary—]

there might have been an ambush in it  
    o get out of there  
no voice of god, no prayer,  
just —“the thing itself”—

yr body was of the place—  
[but whose was the body, and where was the place?]  
—that which was once greedy  
of the grace  
and the graceless alike—  
that which was once greedy of the light  
—close yr eyes—o, man—  
if I could only  
find a place.

to get thrown—violently—as if from  
two (2) horses—as if [] disequilibrium of cities & forests,  
horn and cornucopia of man—causeway and viaduct and  
great bore-holes bored under the highways—whatever  
love encompasses—announces—distains—

it is like as if it is a living thing  
I was afraid—and—  
I was afraid  
along the thin edge of grace  
where grace bleeds into a new and different grace

it was just the edge that I was on  
it is just the edge that I am on  
holy spirit—it is with a heavy heart—  
that I take into my mouth—

make the grace stand in the cold of itself  
trembling in the grace of itself nuthatch  
on the winter bark upsidedown in the cold  
grace hard nipples in the kitchen little  
winter berries in the feeders just enough

a motif—a motive—a pattern—premonition  
dust-dust-dust-dust—we are incapable of sin

holy spirit you are welcome here

1st communion, February 17th 2019

*“I don’t think I could make this decision before god”*

*u blaspheme of desire | u “blaspheme” / “desire”*

*the thin line of horizon where u are*

*“absconded” / “in ambush”*

*“since we’ve got no place 2 place”*

*“I was unspeakable to the language of this”*

*holy spirit you are welcome here*

BRIAN EVENSON

## Homecoming

### I.

His brother often said to Mads, those dozen or so times he'd gotten Mads to answer the phone in recent years, that he'd return when he died, that he'd have to, for the funeral.

"I'm not coming back," Mads said the first few times, "not even for that." But his brother wouldn't accept this.

"Oh, you'll come," his brother said. "You'll have to. You won't be able to help it." And even though Mads protested, his brother just kept talking like it was a done deal.

"You'll come up the walk," his brother said, "past the dried-out lawn, and up those same uneven steps to the front door. And then you'll knock. When nobody answers you'll throw open the front door and shout, 'Mom, I'm home!' just like you used to do every day after school."

By saying this, his brother was trying to get under his skin, Mads knew. "Mom's been dead for years," he said.

"I know that," said his brother. Mads could hear irritation behind his voice. "But maybe you'll say it anyway, for old time's sake."

Mads grunted. "What if you die in winter? No dried grass then."

"It'll be summer," his brother claimed. "Just wait and see."

When the call came, it was indeed summer. It was not the police who called but a neighbor: Mr. Tanner, a former mechanic now in his nineties. He called on Mads' brother's cell, which was why Mads answered.

"Hello?" Mr. Tanner said. He spoke loudly, as if unused to cell phones, "Is this Mads Sorensen?"

When Mads admitted it was, Mr. Tanner identified himself. Mads had only the haziest recollection of what the man looked like and that recollection was no doubt years out of date.

"It's about your brother," Mr. Tanner said.

"What's happened?" asked Mads.

"Looks like he shot himself," said Mr. Tanner in that blunt way of speaking that folks from the town Mads had grown up in fell into whenever they had bad news. "Though could be somebody else shot him, got to wait for a ruling to know for sure. But from where I'm standing, looks like he did it himself."

Mads tried to speak but couldn't.

"Heard the shot," confirmed Tanner. "Didn't think much of it. But when I went out to walk Mikey—he's my dog, just an old mutt—took a gander through the window to make sure. When I saw him in there, I thought I should go in.... He's dead, by the way. Don't know that I quite said that, but you probably guessed since I said he shot himself.... Hello? You still there?"

"I'm here," Mads managed.

"Just you're not saying much," said Tanner. "Had to make sure."

"Can I speak with the officer in charge?" asked Mads.

"Nope," said Tanner.

"No? Why not?"

"Seeing as he's not here. I called you first, prior to the police," said Tanner. "On account of the note."

"The note?"

"The one he left. If it was really him left it and not some kind of misdirection. Never saw his handwriting, so I can't say. Anyway, had your number on it and said to call you."

"You need to call the police," said Mads.

"Even if it is his handwriting," continued Tanner, "he could have been forced to write it. But maybe someone like you, who knows his writing and his way of speaking, seeing you're his brother and all, will be able to tell if it was forced when you get here."

"I'm not coming down," Mads said.

"But he wants you to come," said Tanner. "Says so in his note. A dying man's wishes."

"Mr. Tanner, hang up and call the police."

But since Tanner kept right on talking, it was Mads who hung up.

His brother was dead, apparently by his own hand. Mads sat at the kitchen table staring out the window until the world outside grew dark,



and the glass went from being something he could look through to something he saw himself in. Enough years had gone by that he had begun to look like his father. He stood and shut the curtains.

Had there been anything to suggest his brother was suicidal? No, he didn't think so, but he only rarely spoke to his brother over the phone, and he hadn't seen him in person in twenty years. Like him, his brother had had occasional girlfriends, but also like him, he'd never gotten married. Did he, Mads, feel suicidal? No, but depressed certainly, sometimes debilitatingly so. And lonely, always. They both had spent most of their lives alone: his brother in the house they had grown up in, Mads in any place else. Mads could not imagine what it would be like to live on for decades in the house where their mother had died. He could not have stayed so long in the house—would have left sooner if he could. But his brother claimed not to be bothered by it. *It's home*, he always said. *What happened to Mom doesn't change that.*

They had very different ideas about what exactly had happened to their mother. His brother believed that she had simply slipped and fallen down the stairs, somehow pivoting in the process, perhaps trying to catch herself, and had cracked the back of her head against the bottom tread hard enough to break her skull. Mads, however, believed their father had pushed her—but even if he had, his brother claimed, surely he hadn't meant to kill her. Besides, their father hadn't been in the house when the body was discovered, as Mads well knew. Was there any evidence to suggest he had been at the time of the accident? Mads knew there wasn't, but it was suspicious that their father had not stuck around, had fled shortly after their mother's funeral, leaving Mads' brother, in college at the time, to care for both himself and Mads.

"But people are wrongly convicted all the time!" said his brother. "Maybe Dad fled simply out of fear of that."

"It's as if you don't remember our father at all," said Mads.

For Mads, his father's departure was all but proof of their father's guilt. It should have been proof for his brother as well, considering their father had once struck him in the face hard enough to leave him without vision in one of his eyes. "Or was that also an accident?" Mads had asked his brother, needling him.

"You aren't seeing things clearly," his brother had claimed. "It's hard to see things clearly when you're the one who found the body."

Strange to have his brother arguing this, considering he was the

one with no depth perception. And wouldn't Mads' finding the body mean he would see things *more* clearly, because it was something he could never unsee?

He had come home as usual after school. He had opened the door and dropped his backpack in the entryway, calling out, "Mom, I'm home!" and headed for the kitchen. After school, he liked to make himself a sandwich, and so he had gotten out bread and peanut butter and raspberry jam. He had spread the peanut butter, which was chunky, on one piece of bread and the jam on the other piece of bread. He was just about to stick them together when he realized he still had not had any response from his mother.

"Mom?" he said. "Are you here?"

He put the sandwich together and took a bite, then flipped it over in his hand so that next time he took a bite he'd taste the peanut butter first. He marveled that all these years later he could remember such small things so clearly. He carried the sandwich down the hall and, at the hall's end, saw the edge of a pool of dark liquid and thought, *That almost looks like blood*, and in a few more steps saw where it had come from: his mother's head. There was so much blood that he was certain his mother was dead.

He called 911. They arrived almost quicker than he had imagined possible. He lost his half-eaten sandwich somewhere and never found it again. Maybe it was bagged and taken away as evidence. Abruptly, his father was there, even before the police had had time to call him, home early from work for no reason he could adequately explain to Mads later. He was exhibiting his grief theatrically, in a way that struck Mads as false, as a performance. But then again, argued his brother, they had nothing to compare it to: his father had surely never experienced the death of his spouse before.

But even that early on, Mads was certain his father was guilty. He hadn't been surprised when the police arrested his father and questioned him for hours. Nor was he surprised when, once he was released, his father attended the funeral and then simply vanished. His father was guilty, all right. He had to be.

After his father abandoned them, his brother came home from college to stay. There was some talk about what to do with them, but since his

brother was eighteen, he argued that he should become Mads' legal guardian for a few years, until Mads turned eighteen himself. For about six months he was Mads' de facto guardian and then became his legal one. His brother transferred to the local college and took classes there, working at nights to support both of them.

But Mads could not bear to be alone in the house at night. He could not stand where his mind went. As soon as his brother left for work, he would leave the house and go to the shed out back and sleep there in a sleeping bag. It wasn't possible for him to sleep comfortably in the house, not when he was alone. And, to be honest, not even when his brother was there too.

In Mads' senior year of high school, his brother encouraged him to stay and attend the local college. *It'll be cheap*, he claimed. *You won't have to run up debt. And you can keep living in the house.*

The only thing Mads could think to do was apply exclusively out of state. When he was accepted into a college with reasonably good funding, he, like his father before him, fled the house, promising himself he would never go back.

And now two people had died in the house, one murdered, the other by suicide. Or one by accident, the other by suicide. Or maybe both murdered in a way that disguised the murders. In any case, he did not want to go back, not even for his brother's funeral. He did not owe his brother anything.

And so when his brother's attorney called, he simply asked him to take care of everything: to post an obituary in the local paper, to choose a coffin, to hire forensic cleaners. When the attorney told him there was a will and asked to read the conditions to him, Mads cut him off. He didn't want anything from his brother.

"There are just a few things I need to—" the attorney began.

"Not interested," Mads said.

The attorney was silent for a moment. "I'll mail everything to you," he said. "Registered mail, express. Be sure to read it immediately."

Mads hung up. Why would he bother to read the conditions of his brother's will? He knew he didn't want anything of his brother's. He had done all he could stand to do, and he could barely stand that much. It was time to put his brother out of his mind and set about getting back to his life.

## II.

Three days after his brother's death, he started getting calls from a number he didn't recognize. Since he didn't know it, he didn't bother to answer and deleted the messages without listening to them.

A week after his brother's death, there was a knock on his apartment door. It came far too late for an ordinary visit, near midnight.

He wasn't in bed, was watching TV. He went to the door and looked through the peephole, but whoever was on the other side had covered it with a finger.

He wasn't interested in playing games, not at this hour. Nor, really, ever. He had turned and started away when the knocking came again, heavy and dull.

"Who is it?" he asked.

"Police," said the voice. "Open up."

He started to reach for the doorknob and then stopped. "You're not the police," he said. "You wouldn't cover the peephole if you were."

A barking laugh came from the other side of the door. "You always were too smart for your own good," a drawling voice said.

He felt frozen. "Dad?" he said.

"Guilty as charged," said the voice through the door. "Now open the goddam door."

Mads hesitated. Of course he did: he hadn't seen his father in twenty years, hadn't heard from him at all during that time. And now suddenly he was here?

"What do you want?" asked Mads.

"I want you to open the door," said his father and kicked it once so that it rattled in its frame. "Is that too much to ask?" When Mads didn't answer, he said, "It's about your brother."

"He's dead," said Mads. "I already know."

"I know you know," said his father. "Why else would I be here?"

"Go away," said Mads.

"I'm not going away," said his father and kicked the door again. "You might as well open up and get it over with."

His father was thicker, a little puffy. His arms were now covered in sleeves of smeary tattoos that wound in incomprehensible patterns.

His face was florid, as if too full of blood. Was this, wondered Mads, what he himself would look like in another twenty years?

“Aren’t you going to say hello?” his father said.

“Hello,” Mads said.

“Aren’t you going to invite me in?”

“No,” he said.

His father gave the ghost of a frown and then shouldered his way past, nearly knocking Mads down.

“Grab your shoes and your coat,” said his father. “Let’s hit the road.”

“I haven’t seen you in twenty years and you—”

His father held up his hand. “Spare me,” he said. “For the next thirteen hours, I need you and you need me. After that, we can go back to ignoring each other.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

His father cuffed the side of Mads’ head. “The will!” he said. “What do you think?” And when Mads looked confused, “Don’t tell me he didn’t call you?”

“Who?”

“Who the hell you think? Your brother’s lawyer!”

“He called,” Mads admitted. “I hung up on him.”

“What kind of idiot are you?” asked his father. “You must take after your mother’s side of the family.”

“I want you to leave,” said Mads.

“No,” said his father. “I won’t leave. I told you, I need you.”

Mads didn’t respond.

“Don’t you want to know what I need you for?” asked his father.

“No,” said Mads.

“You need me too,” said his father. “Otherwise, neither of us gets the money.”

Eventually his father explained. His brother had a will with very specific conditions. There was money for Mads and money for his father—not much, a few thousand apiece—and the house for his father. But only if they both came to the reading of the will, which would take place the next day at the house. If either of them didn’t come, it would all go to charity.

“It makes sense the house would go to me,” said his father. “After all, it used to belong to me. But I won’t begrudge you a little money.”

"I don't want the money," said Mads.

"Fine," said his father. "I'll take your share. But that doesn't change the fact you have to come."

"I'm not coming," said Mads.

"You goddam are," said his father. "You don't go and I don't get what's coming to me. Don't be pissed at me about it. It's your brother who fucked you on this one."

"Or fucked you."

His father shook his head. "The only one fucking me right now is you. Cut it out. Do this, and that's the last you'll see of me, I swear."

"And if I don't?"

"Grab your shoes," his father said. "Now."

Mads shook his head.

"No? Even though you know it'll cost me?"

"Since I know."

His father's face darkened. "You were always a difficult child," he said. He reached around behind him. When his hand came back, it was holding a gun.

"What are you going to do, shoot me?"

His father struck Mads' chest hard with the butt of the pistol. He grinned madly. "Want to find out?"

They took Mads' car, Mads driving, while his father sat in the back, behind him. Mads couldn't see the pistol but assumed it was pointed at him through the seat. Probably sometimes it wavered, but it was always back there somewhere. No doubt his father could use it if Mads tried anything.

"Sorry to do that," said his father. "You left me no choice."

"You're not sorry," said Mads.

His father barked out a laugh. "No," he said. "Honestly I don't give a shit one way or the other."

They drove east, heading home. "We'll do it in one go," his father said, "since you insist on being an asshole, and since we don't have much time to spare."

After about three hours on the freeway, Mads put on the blinker, slid over to the far right lane.

"What are you doing?" his father asked. His voice sounded sleepy.

Maybe he'd dozed off and Mads had missed it, had missed his chance.

"Need gas," Mads said.

His father grunted. Mads read that as assent, so he took the exit and made for the gas station.

"What's to stop me from telling the attendant you kidnapped me?" Mads asked.

"Try it and see," said his father.

He didn't. He suspected that a man who hadn't thought twice about abandoning his sons years ago and who might well have killed his wife wasn't likely to have qualms about pulling a trigger. More likely, though, he would kill the attendant and keep Mads alive. He needed Mads, after all. At least for another ten hours or so.

And so he filled up without saying anything. The attendant didn't see Mads' father at first and then suddenly noticed him, once the gas was already pumping. He gave a start.

"Jesus," he said. "Didn't see you there."

"People seldom do," said his father.

"Why you in the back seat instead of riding shotgun?"

"The bastard up front likes playing chauffeur," said his father.

The attendant stared at him a moment, then chuckled.

"Good one," he said, though Mads didn't think so.

Another hour of driving and he felt himself growing weary. *Two more hours to go*, he thought. And then thought, *Why not ask?*

"Dad?"

In the rearview mirror he saw the dark outline of his father's shoulder and head, two wet gleams in the darkness where his eyes were.

"Weird to have someone calling me that again," said his father. "Hasn't been anyone to do it for twenty years. Can't say I care for it."

Mads felt himself growing angry.

"Whose fault is that?" he said.

"Your mother's, I suppose," his father said blandly. "For dying."

"Did you kill her?"

For a long while his father did not respond, and Mads began to think he didn't intend to. And then, finally, in his slow drawl, "You always did wonder about that, didn't you?"

"Did you?"

"Seems to me that, having wondered for twenty years, it isn't

going to hurt you any to wonder for a few more hours.” And then he added, “Maybe after the reading of the will, if I’m in a good mood, I’ll tell you.”

He was sleepy. Behind him his father’s eyes were just slits. He might be asleep or he might be watching. If he drove off the road, perhaps they would both die. If they both died, he’d feel all right about it—not great, just all right. Or maybe, dead, he wouldn’t feel anything at all. If just his father died, that would feel a little better. Was there a way to do that, to wreck the car in such a way that only his father would die? The thing he worried about was what if he died and his father did not, perhaps even walked away without a scratch? He would not feel all right about that. Though at least then his father wouldn’t get the inheritance.

His father flicked his ear.

“You’re drifting,” he said. “Focus.”

Mads chewed on the inner lining of his mouth, biting it hard enough to draw blood and to make his mouth ache. He shook his head to clear it.

His father had never done anything for him. He had abandoned him, and now had kidnapped him in order to use him. His brother must have known this would happen. Or, not known, hoped. He had sat alone like a spider in his empty house imagining the day his father and Mads would be forced to enter the house together, walking up the walk, crossing through the dried grass as they—

His father flicked his ear again.

“Open your mouth,” he said.

“What?”

“Open it,” he said again and, when Mads didn’t, touched the end of the pistol’s barrel to his neck.

He opened his mouth. His father’s fingers reached over the seat, felt out his lips, and pushed a pill in.

“What is it?” asked Mads, his voice slightly distorted because of what was on his tongue. He stuck out his tongue and looked at it in the rearview mirror. In the darkness he could just make out a whitish pill, hexagonal in shape.

“Something to keep you awake,” said his father.

“Water?” said Mads.



“Naw,” said his father. “Chew it up. It’ll hit your blood quicker.”  
For a moment Mads hesitated and then crunched up the pill.  
“It’ll be light soon,” his father said. “It’ll get easier then.”

It indeed became light. They saw a sign saying they were leaving the state and then another welcoming them to the state Mads had grown up in. His mouth was dry and his eyes felt like they were scraping their way around his sockets. He had a headache, but at least he wasn’t sleepy anymore.

With the coming of the light his father began to talk. Small talk at first, but when Mads didn’t respond he began to talk a little about himself, his life. He had been in prison, he admitted, though he claimed the charges were trumped up.

“Besides, it was just six months,” he said. “That barely counts.”

When Mads asked what he’d been in for, though, he became evasive.

“I wasn’t doing nothing that nobody rich doesn’t do all day, every day,” he claimed, but whether that meant fraud or drugs or something else, Mads couldn’t tell.

“They arrest you and they almost have to give you six months to make it worth their while. Six months is the same as innocent if all you’ve got is a public defender.”

*Please God, make him stop,* thought Mads.

But his father kept talking. He had gotten married twice after Mads’ mother, he admitted, but they’d both been crazy. “Good at pretending not to be,” he claimed, “at least until they got me on the hook.” He had owned another house, but had lost it in a divorce. He had lived in nine cities in one year because there was a year when he had to keep moving.

“Why’d you have to keep moving?” Mads asked.

His father grew evasive again. Instead he started enumerating what had been wrong with his latest wives. He counted off the flaws of both of them on his fingers then started counting off the flaws of a third.

“I thought you only got married twice after mom.”

“No,” his father said. “I told you three.”

“You said two.”

“I told you three,” said his father, voice rising. “Besides, the third doesn’t really count because she got it annealed.”

“Annulled, you mean.”

“Whatever.”

“Why’d she get it annulled?”

“What? No, I got it annulled, not her.”

It was all a tissue of lies and half-truths. His father was worse than he remembered. Or maybe what had always been there had intensified with age. *I am better off*, Mads told himself, *because he left*. But despite feeling this, despite not wanting to spend another minute around the man and his stories, he still resented his father for having abandoned him.

About an hour out, his father forced him to take another pill, this one round and pale blue. It was bitter as he chewed it up and didn’t dry out his mouth. It kept him awake but in a different way than the first pill, as if programmed to ferret out his hidden resources and deplete them thoroughly.

“What was that?” he asked his father.

His father just shrugged. “It’s good, isn’t it?”

“You don’t know what it is?”

“I know what it does,” said his father. “What does it matter what it’s called?”

And then, absurdly, his father was talking about a philosopher (“his name will come to me,” his father claimed) and how he gave the impression in one of his books (“can’t put my finger on the title right off”) that he’d only be happy if everything in the world, not just every person, but every individual animal, every single tree, had a name of its own.

“That bastard died trying to kiss a horse or some such shit,” his father claimed. “That’s where caring too much about names leads.”

“Wasn’t it God who told Adam to name the animals?” Mads countered.

“Was it?” said his father. “Why the fuck would he bother?”

“Doesn’t that mean you’re taking the side of the devil?”

His father regarded him with disgust. “Mads,” he said finally. “What the hell kind of name is that?”

III.

They pulled into the drive around nine. The house looked the same as he remembered, a little more dilapidated perhaps, but basically the same. He turned off the car, listened to the ticking of the motor as it cooled.

“We’re a mite early,” said his father.

Mads grunted, waited. When his father volunteered nothing further, he asked, “How early?”

“Reading of the will’s at noon.”

Mads groaned. “Then why’d we leave so early?”

“I didn’t know how hard you’d be to convince to come along,” said his father. “Turns out all you have to do is point a gun at you and you hop to. You must take after your mother.”

“You point a gun at her often?”

“Just the normal amount,” said his father. “Come on,” he said. “Let’s go in.”

“You just said it wasn’t starting for three hours.”

“I want to get a sense of what I stand to inherit. Got to start pricing it out.”

“I’ll stay in the car,” said Mads.

“Hell you will,” said his father. “I’m not going to let you out of my sight until the will’s read.”

“I don’t want to go in.”

His father smiled coldly. “We both know how this is going to turn out.”

Mads resisted a little longer, but in the end his father and his father’s gun got their way. The front door was locked. His father looked under the mat, but there was no key there, no key on the trim above the door either. They went around to the back and found that locked as well.

“Check the windows,” said his father.

Mads did, moving slowly around the house. The ones on the ground floor were all closed and latched. The ones on the floor above were too high to reach.

“Well, hell,” said his father. “Looks like I’m going to have to teach you some life skills.”

They returned to the back door. “Go stand in the middle of the yard,” his father said.

“What?”

“You heard me,” said his father. “I can’t have you making a grab for my gun.”

“Why would I make a grab for your gun?”

“Go!” said his father.

And so he went out into the middle of the yard.

“That’s far enough,” his father said. “Now, kneel.”

He did. For a fleeting moment he wondered if his father was going to execute him, and then the man removed from a pocket what looked like a pocketknife. He unfolded from it a series of tiny, curved tools. He dropped to one knee, put the gun down, and, muttering to himself, began to use the tools on the doorknob.

For a moment Mads considered standing and making a run for it. He could probably reach the shed before his father could pick up the gun and aim. But while he was still calculating, the door popped open.

“Bingo,” said his father. He grabbed the gun again and stood up again. “Child’s play.” He leaned into the house. “Hello?” he called. “Anybody home?” Then he turned to Mads and grinned.

His father ushered him around at gunpoint. “This will be good for you,” he claimed. “Healing and all.” The house was the same inside as when he had last been there. His brother hadn’t changed a thing. It was like the place was stuck in time, which made Mads feel like he had walked into the past.

Only when his father jabbed the gun into his ribs did he realize he had been softly moaning.

“Cut it the fuck out,” his father said.

He did, though only with effort.

“You’ve got a few hours to get used to the place,” his father said. “I want you normal by the time they show up to read the will.”

He managed to nod. It wasn’t just him, his old trauma, he told himself: the exhaustion and the pills were making things worse. He’d lived in the house after his mother had died. He hadn’t liked it, but he had done it, for several years even. He could stand to be in here for a few hours, he told himself, particularly if he wasn’t left alone and he was out before dark.

He took a deep breath, let it out.

“Okay?” said his father.

“Yes,” he lied.

“Good boy,” he said. “Now we’re going to go through every room of the house just so you see that there’s nothing to be scared of.” He gave a wry smile. “Well, that and because I want to see what I’m getting.”

They moved from room to room, his father pursuing an odd patter, partly meant, perhaps, to distract Mads. Mads said nothing, just stayed focused on holding himself together, on keeping his legs moving.

His brother had kept Mads’ bedroom exactly as Mads had left it, as if he had expected him to come back at any moment. The kitchen was the same kitchen, though when his father opened the fridge it was to find the food inside blotched with mold. He quickly closed it, wrinkling his nose.

The thing Mads remembered now, walking toward the stairs with his father just behind him, was another smell: the way the warm blood had smelled when he had approached the puddle. Considering all the other little details he could recall, why had he forgotten that one until now?

He managed, with his father’s prodding, to make it through where his mother’s body had been, managed too to begin to climb the stairs. He was a little dizzy, beginning to see spots, hyperventilating just a little, but he kept moving. At the top, though, he had to stop. He leaned against the newel, waiting for the world to stop moving.

“There,” said his father, softly, from just below him. “That wasn’t so bad, was it?”

And Mads, pale, glanced back down to see his father’s face mere inches from his own, his eyes dilated wide. Was it from the pills, he wondered, or from the pleasure he was getting out of making Mads suffer, or from the memory of what he had done to Mads’ mother years ago on these stairs? Or, perhaps, all three?

For the briefest instant, he felt himself split in two, able to perceive unscrolling before him two possible futures. In one he simply recovered, managed somehow to breathe normally, managed to make it through the next several hours in the house. He listened to the reading of the will and then departed and went back to his own life. Did his father bother him again? He didn’t know for sure, couldn’t project himself that far, but he thought not. Or at least not for many years.

In the other, however, he simply gave his father a sudden push and watched him tumble down the stairs and turn wrong, the gun going off, and the bullet whizzing past Mads' ear, and then his father struck the bottom step hard, hard enough to shatter the back of his skull. Mads left him there, as blood spread from his head, stepping over the body, careful not to step in the blood. He quickly drove away, returning only at noon, as if he were here for the reading of the will, surprised and shocked to find his father dead.

He did not know if Mr. Tanner had seen them arrive at the house, but perhaps he should kill him too just to be safe. The man was ninety, had lived a good life; it hardly mattered if you killed someone like that.

And the gas station attendant who had seen his father in the back of the car. He'd probably, to be safe, have to kill him too.

DANIEL FARIA

Translated by Ken Krabbenhoft

1.

Ando um pouco acima do chão  
Nesse lugar onde costumam ser atingidos  
Os pássaros  
Um pouco acima dos pássaros  
No lugar onde costumam inclinar-se  
Para o voo

Tenho medo do peso morto  
Porque é um ninho desfeito

Estou ligeiramente acima do que morre  
Nessa encosta onde a palavra é como pão  
Um pouco na palma da mão que divide  
E não separo como o silêncio em meio do que escrevo

Ando ligeiro acima do que digo  
E verto o sangue para dentro das palavras  
Ando um pouco acima da transfusão do poema

Ando humildemente nos arredores do verbo  
Passageiro num degrau invisível sobre a terra  
Nesse lugar das árvores com fruto e das árvores  
No meio de incêndios  
Estou um pouco no interior do que arde

Apagando-me devagar e tendo sede  
Porque ando acima da força a saciar quem vive  
E esmago o coração para o que desce sobre mim

E bebe

1.

I walk a little above the ground  
In that place where the birds  
Are usually caught  
A little above the birds  
In the place where they usually hunch over  
Before jumping into the air

I'm afraid of dead weight  
Because it's like a smashed nest

I'm a little above the things that die  
On that hill where words are like bread  
A little in the palm of the hand that shares  
And I do not divide like the silence in the midst of which I write

I walk lightly above the things I say  
And I pour blood into the words  
I walk a little above the poem's transfusion

I walk humbly on the outskirts of the word  
A passerby on a step that's invisible from the earth  
In that place of fruit-bearing trees and trees  
In the midst of fires  
I'm a little inside the things that burn

Slowly burning up and still thirsty  
Because I walk above the power satisfying everyone who lives  
And I shatter my heart for the things that come down upon me

And drink



2.

Atiro uma pedra à água  
Atiro a minha casa à terra  
Deixo a pedra no degrau enxuto  
Para vir pôr o pé no chão

Canso-me como o degrau onde o homem hesita

Na minha casa sou um utensílio que se vai quebrar  
Na minha casa sou alguém que vai morrer

Cansa-me muito estar como a pedra entre as mãos

Limpo os vidros anos e anos  
A pedra vem à superfície e é  
Uma casa à janela sem ninguém

2.

I throw a stone in the water  
I throw my house to the ground  
I leave the stone on a dry step  
For when I set foot on the ground

I'm as tired as a step on which a man wavers

In my house I'm a tool that will break  
In my house I'm someone who's going to die

I'm tired of being like a hand-held stone

I clean the windows year after year  
The stone rises to the surface and it's  
A house with a window and no one inside

### 3.

O que desconheço: a casa. O modo como a encontrei de noite  
As formas das coisas que vi quando observei a transparência  
O vidro no fogo sofrendo a forma que o vai quebrar  
(Vi que nada do que existe é inteiro)

Digo-o porque mo revelaram: uma é a claridade  
Do sol. Outra a claridade da lua e outra a claridade  
Das estrelas. Há ainda diferença de estrela para estrela  
Na claridade. (Vi  
Que tudo era igual à ressurreição dos mortos)

O que procurei: a claridade da morte  
Ou precisando—se se pode regressar pelo mesmo  
Caminho que se toma para casa

O que medito (na cela nocturna):  
As diferenças da luz da candeia no homem  
Quando desce

O que mais recordo: os degraus

### 3.

What I don't recognize: the house. The way I found it at night  
The shapes of objects I saw when I beheld transparency  
Glass in the fire seared by the shape that will shatter it  
(I saw that nothing which exists is whole)

I'm telling you this because they disclosed it to me: one is the sun's  
Brightness. The moon's brightness is different and so is the brightness  
Of the stars. There is also a different brightness  
From one star to the next. (I saw  
That everything was equal to the resurrection of the dead)

What I was looking for: the brightness of death  
Or to be more specific—if you can go back by the same road  
You take to get home

What I'm pondering (in the night-dark cell):  
The different ways a candle lights a man  
When he climbs down

What I remember best: the steps

#### 4.

As águas mudam por dentro de outras águas  
Por muito que podem as plantas  
Nunca mais encontrarão os rios antigos  
Ninguém sabe reabrir as veias maternas

Fecham-se as nascentes. Muitos foram  
Os seus cursos. Os regaços das mães  
Recolhem a lenha. Houve um tempo  
Em que a água foi a rodilha a equilibrar-nos nelas

Quando a rodilha enegrece  
Quando enegrecem os vasos da água e do fogo  
O primeiro lume é que começa a secar  
A raiz do mundo, a labareda em que se levanta  
A nuvem

Pouco a pouco é que a nuvem vai  
Deitando fora o céu

Ninguém sabe sair das coisas terrestres que são tristes  
Queimar a lenha

Mesmo quando o vento vem enxugar as lágrimas  
Há chuvas—coisas tristes antes e depois

4.

Waters change inside other waters  
No matter how much brush they trim  
They'll never find the old rivers again  
No one knows how to reopen a mother's veins

The springs are closing. They flowed through many  
Channels. The mothers' laps  
Gather firewood. There was a time  
When water was the knee that held us steady in them

When the knee blackens  
When the swollen veins of water and fire blacken  
It's the first light that starts drying out  
The root of the world, the blaze through which clouds  
Arise

It's the clouds that little by little  
Push the sky out

No one knows how to shrug off earthly things that are sad  
How to burn firewood

There's rain even when the wind arrives to dry  
The tears—sad things before and after

GEORG KLEIN

Translated by Chantal Wright

## Old Erfurt

Mary Ann Lauterbach blew into Erfurt with the frost. As she walked across the early morning station concourse towards the town centre and studied her first German street with the swift, pivoting gaze of an expert, the salt that had been spread during the night to ward off the ice crunched under her feet, and the trams sang brightly, almost pristinely, from the rails. Their steel, about whose memory next to nothing is known, seemed, after the first night of frost, to have something to say to those who had ears to hear it. And as the seasons still hold all kinds of meanings for the people hereabouts, the Erfurt tram drivers suspected that each and every tram wheel ringing against the tracks was delighted by the cold that had finally set in.

She had asked a taxi driver at the station to estimate what the journey to the hotel would cost and then sent him ahead with her luggage. Here, like everywhere else in the world, she enjoyed placing her trust in complete strangers. A good American, she wanted to extend her, Mary Ann Lauterbach's, personal US credit to the people of Erfurt, including the opportunity to gamble it all away. When she stopped, halfway to the Altstadt, to eat a portion of fried noodles at a Vietnamese snack bar, the only item that this tall, platinum-blond woman carried with her, in a patent bag slung over one hip, was her laptop, on which all of the important project data was saved.

German is a difficult language. The Germans themselves, of all people the least qualified to know this, are firmly convinced of the fact. Forty years ago, as a little girl, Mary Ann Lauterbach had received instruction in German, first from her Papa; then, because father and daughter had failed to make much progress, from an elderly Austrian woman, an émigré; and finally from a Düsseldorf au pair. Later Mary Ann had read German Studies in Boston and studied *Germanistik* for a year in Zurich. Now, as Erfurt began to grow on her, she thought in passing that the German in which she was, superficially, completely proficient would probably never become second nature to her.

With the aid of a foldout map she did a short tour of the Altstadt, sadly still snow-free, toured some of the most attractive Fachwerk buildings but, despite its proximity, omitted the object in question for the time being. On her way through the historic town centre, which was intact and now also mostly restored, she began to feel the cold. Her black, fake-fur coat, which had more than delivered during the previous winter in Minneapolis, a winter that could not be described as mild, seemed not to be up to the slight but somehow more thoroughly biting wind in Erfurt. Perhaps this also had something to do with the exertions of the intercontinental flight. Mary Ann's attentiveness to what was touristically exploitable waned. Trivial things began to claim her attention, and when she discovered, in a particularly picturesque street in the Altstadt, a pub whose entrance was emblazoned with the sign "Old San Francisco," of all things, she was gripped by terrible shivers. At the same time, she had the feeling, as happened occasionally in moments when she felt exhausted and scattered, of being observed by the milky-grey eyes of her elderly father.

Glen Lauterbach, back then, forty-something and in the so-called prime of life, had made a great effort to sweeten the pill of his father tongue for his school-age American daughter-lein. At the time, his musical instrument business was blossoming as never before; long-haired youths were hammering down his door as every enthusiast who had not yet gone deaf listening to the allegedly new music turned to LAUTERBACH's for the perfect electric guitar. Glen Lauterbach, who had started out with a small shop selling European accordions and Hammond organs, knew that only a man who could swiftly and unhesitatingly exploit this surge in desire would assert himself on the cutthroat musical instrument market. And even though he had a new store to run alongside his main business, he still took an hour and a half off each afternoon to instruct his only child in the rudiments of German.

He found this difficult. He himself had last spoken his mother tongue during the war. For two weeks he had been subject to round-the-clock questioning by the FBI and the American Secret Service. Questions and answers had been translated by an interpreter, and in the end, during a speedy hearing by a secret military tribunal that lasted barely an hour, he had entered his guilty plea in German even though his English was perfectly adequate to the task. When he first read aloud to little Mary Ann those sentences bristling with joy that



inhabited her shiny new textbook, the German words, resurrected after twenty-five years in the grave, sounded crooked and awkward, even eerily derisive. He felt sorry for his daughter, who put up no resistance to his lessons, but who also displayed no particular inclination towards them. Glen Lauterbach would never, of his own accord, have hit upon the idea of besieging the six-year-old with these rasping syllables. But he'd been given an order. His broken watch had issued it. In German. And a German order was still, even after such a long time, a German order.

The Dorint hotel in Erfurt had belonged to the chain for three months. Great Eastern Homes already owned twenty-four hotels in the "Transit Interzone," as the multinational sector between Berlin and St. Petersburg was referred to internally. Mary Ann Lauterbach was met at reception by the manager, an older man whose sparse grey moustache was beaded with sweat. His business English scritchted; in all likelihood a crash course for mature beginners had shoved it down his throat not too long ago. Mary Ann didn't do him the favour of switching into German. And when, upstairs in her suite, she lay in a hot bath as far as her top lip, blowing foam across the surface, she considered whether it wouldn't be to her advantage to also tackle her negotiating partner Waldemar Umbreit, the owner of the Old Dyers House, in an inconsiderately syllable-levelling American English.

From the edge of the bath she picked up the mobile phone that they had given her at reception along with the latest batch of documents. Herr Umbreit's phone was answered by an extremely crackly and long-winded answering machine message. Mary Ann listened to the young man wasting the larger part of the available tape on an explanation of the fact that he was unable to come to the phone or else was unwilling to pick up the handset. When a shrill beep finally rang out, she requested, half annoyed, half amused, and in German after all, that he should pick her up at four that afternoon for an initial inspection.

## §

Waldemar Umbreit had been doing much better since the apparitions had come to his aid. He had even got through the tortuous, truly humiliating negotiations with the Dresdner Bank in a manner that

even four weeks ago he never would have dreamed of. The bank had extended the deadline for payment until the end of the year because of his success in depicting his association with Great Eastern Homes, an association that consisted of a mere handful of phone calls with Berlin headquarters and for which the only hard evidence was two non-binding fax messages, as promising. The bankers, even the worst of them, a certain Dr. Rombele, who, whenever they met, asked him embarrassing questions about his social circle in Erfurt, appeared to believe that Umbreit, the loan-taker, had an agreement with the US hotel chain. Rombele, who like Waldemar came from Stuttgart, but who unlike Waldemar allowed the local dialect to have its way with his formal German, had even followed him out into the foyer yesterday to give him his business card and offer him his personal help, the—as he put it—support of a local brother-in-arms for his negotiations with the Yanks.

Waldemar knew that all of this success was attributable to the golden worms. Rarely had he received direct instruction from them, but the little creatures could always be relied on to bolster his courage. Occasionally he still had difficulty understanding them properly. The little worms spoke a lively, historical variety of Thuringian that Waldemar had never heard before, not even from his grandmother, who had spoken the dialect with him until her death. And this was further complicated by the lisping effect created by the worm mouths' constant flickering, which lent the choir of tender, overlaid yet ever so slightly out-of-sync voices a joyous buzz, but made reliable aural interpretation of individual words extremely difficult.

Waldemar slipped into the dark-blue silk shirt. The little worms had advised him to purchase such a shirt three days ago; now they stressed how advantageously the shiny material brought out the bright, youthful blue of Waldemar's eyes and what a piece of luck it was that the Americans had sent a woman to carry out the negotiations. And just like that it went quiet. His new friends always withdrew without a word of goodbye. He cast a swift glance into their palace, but in the battered enamel basin he had found when excavating the inner courtyard at the Old Dyers House a month ago, not a single golden squirm remained.

To Waldemar's alarm Ms. Lauterbach turned out to be an attractive woman, beautiful in an American way. As he shook her hand, he

failed to gaze into her eyes with the intensity that he had promised the little worms. Luckily she suggested a short tour of the town centre to begin with. She had just arrived from the station in a taxi, hadn't seen anything yet, was in Europe for the very first time and full of curiosity about the Old World. She told him this and more in a fast, fluent German, which, as he listened to it, seemed to rob him of the ability to speak. He answered in trailing sentences. And even after they had left the hotel, he was still—they were inhaling the afternoon air which was gradually turning misty—searching for the right words, whereas Ms. Lauterbach's voice only grew in volume and clarity.

Mary Ann Lauterbach found the character sketch contained in the dossier prepared by headquarters in Berlin to be more or less correct. The handsome, rangy young man was underweight, sexually repressed, and had great difficulty looking at her while she was speaking. So she brought the conversation round to the history of Erfurt, and as she cautiously tightened the historical noose by asking him about the medieval town's guilds, his responses navigated their way into calmer waters. Eventually, when after a long walk they turned into the already dusky Färbergasse—Dyers Lane—Waldemar Umbreit even took his hands out of his coat pockets and began to add emphasis to his statements with astonishingly marked gestures.

The final section of the alley, which took a sharp bend towards Wilde Gera, the stream that bisected the town, was lit by a single, colossal street lamp. The cuboidal lamp hung from a wire that was suspended across the bend and gave off a pulsating white light, which in the evening mist came across as a skimmed-milk blue. The lamp swung back and forth in the rising easterly wind; a loose contact continually extinguished the light before summoning it back to life. Thus, licked at by a blue flame, the narrow, uneven gables took on a blurred, almost granular contour against the bluntly darkening sky that reminded Mary Ann of the dark image on the black-and-white television which had played in her father's office all through her childhood and youth.

A hundred steps or so ahead of them the street widened into a funnel that contained a single house. This barrier created by the largest medieval Fachwerk building in Europe, as it was described in Mary Ann's documents, must once have had something boldly sumptuous and at the same time reassuringly solid about it. But now the thing in

front of them could at best be considered a galling caricature of a sight that had commanded respect for many centuries. Mary Ann's eyes took in a giant ruin that now consisted of nothing more than the oak timber of the Fachwerk and the frame of the roof above the remains of a wall that barely reached head height. The unmuffled sound of Wilde Gera's stream penetrated this fragile-looking skeleton—the strength of its timber beams notwithstanding—and in a sudden desire for causality, a stranger finding himself at the end of Färbergasse of a night would undoubtedly be in danger of attributing the whooshing and hissing of the town's stream to the ribcage that towered up in front of them.

Waldemar had stopped talking. And because the sound of their footsteps had also died down when they reached the metal fence, they heard the banging of the temporary roof in the wind. Lengths of tarpaulin had been stretched from gable to gable. The installation of the slender but pliable planks by a specialist Erfurt roofing company was one of the first investments Waldemar had made into the upkeep of this historically significant building. During a storm the flapping of the tarpaulin could even drown out the sound of Wilde Gera. Mary Ann Lauterbach was quiet too, and Waldemar interpreted this as a sign of admiration. Ruins have their imposing moments, and the manager of a transnational hotel chain was evidently not unsusceptible to them. From the corner of his eye he observed her face and thought he saw a twitch in her cheek. The temperature that night was supposed to fall to minus fifteen. And in a sudden bout of courage he even managed to invite his negotiating partner to his local, the Old San Francisco, for a glass of Glühwein.

## §

In the first year of his presidency, Dwight D. Eisenhower, the 34th president of the United States and former supreme commander of the Allied forces in Germany, granted amnesty to a special group of prisoners, foreigners who had been sentenced by military tribunals during the war. Following a conversation with the director of the prison facility and with two young men whose names and ranks in the Secret Service had not been revealed to him, the prisoner Gernot Lauterbach decided to apply for American citizenship. He had also

been encouraged to adopt a new name, but resolved, following a sleepless night during which he had filled the pitch-black cube of his cell with Indo-Germanic and Hebraic syllables, that the surname Lauterbach, the American mangling of which he had become accustomed to during his twelve years of imprisonment, should be retained. Only his Christian name, Gernot, did he compress into the single-syllable Glen.

Glen Lauterbach; it seemed easy on the ear. But then when it actually happened, when he had been given his freedom, during the fourteen-hour bus journey out east to Minneapolis, the statistically coldest city in America, where a furnished room, a job in a factory that made mechanical cash registers, and a probation officer were all waiting for him, he suddenly had doubts. He would practise saying his name over and over again under his breath or press his right hand to the left side of his chest where, in the inside pocket of his suit jacket, he had stashed the wallet containing his new, legally counterfeited American papers.

The Old San Francisco was packed with customers in a way that could be described, with no irony whatsoever, as *gemütlich*. And just as the two of them went in, three young Erfurters got up from Waldemar's favourite table, which was in the corner with the Stratocaster. Waldemar had discovered the pub on his very first weekend in Erfurt. The manager collected electric guitars and exhibited his most beautiful pieces across its rooms. The instruments hung on the walls in specially made plexiglass cupboards. The corner where Waldemar had spent many hours reading, drinking, and chewing the fat, was decorated with an electric guitar that was red and full-bodied like the moon. The manager had told him that it was the defunct GDR's only imitation of a Stratocaster. A Dresden electrician and amateur rock musician had made a copy of the instrument from a photo using domestic materials and it was still affecting to witness how close the sound of the copy, pregnant with longing, came to the sound of the American original, without blending with it to the point of indistinguishability.

In spring, on the day of the disastrous groundwater flood, the manager had even played Waldemar a cassette by the band fronted by that enterprising man from Sachsen, which had a repertoire of Californian surf rock numbers. The songs were supposed to cheer him

up. Waldemar had complained that the site of the archaeological dig in the inner courtyard of the Dyers House had filled up with water. He had been told by the man from the municipal monument office who was in charge of the dig to organise dry cover right away. The municipality of Erfurt would hold him, as the owner of the house, responsible for any damage to artefacts that had not yet been recovered from the medieval foundations. That was the point, as he sat in his corner listening to Sachsen surf rock, at which Waldemar realised that the Old Dyers House would ruin him financially within the year, and that he should never have taken up his inheritance in the East.

By the summer at least the excavations were over. The usual medieval mishmash had been found, several tons of ceramic fragments and other household remains, and countless bones from cows, sheep, goats, and pigs. There was even a reptile spine of unknown origin, all caked in a clay-like dirt that was still deep blue in colour, the six-hundred-year-old detritus of the dyers' work with woad. The *Isatis* plant from which woad is derived, a smelly weed with yellow blossoms that still grew around Erfurt, had been the foundation of the town's wealth all the way through the Middle Ages. The farmers in the surrounding villages cut the hard stalks of the two-year-old plant with special scythes, *Waidhauen*, and piled up the harvest to ferment in its own juices for four weeks. Only then were the leaves torn off and shaped into fist-sized balls. In this intermediate form it came into the possession of the woad traders on the Erfurt market, who sold their lucrative product even beyond the borders of the Holy Roman Empire. A small quantity was purchased by the municipal dyers and processed further into the blue dye of the same name.

As Waldemar and Mary Ann sat under the round body and thick neck of the German imitation *Stratocaster*, warming their hands on a second glass of *Glühwein*, he told her that in images from the period, and on two altar paintings in Erfurt, the dyers' apprentices were always depicted holding giant wooden tankards. These flagons contained the dyers' brew, a watery beer with diuretic herbal additives. This was given to the apprentices throughout the day. The plant balls had to further ferment for an entire month in the woad mill—a large wooden barrel—and for this they had to be doused with fresh urine. As soon as the *Waidbeiz*, a sweet smell, signalled the right degree of fermentation, the mush was mixed with potash and kneaded with

bare hands for as long as it took to take on the consistency of a fine, barely fibrous, whitish paste. The cloth that was dyed with it only turned blue when it was exposed to sunlight.

Mary Ann fished her third Glühwein from off the waitress's crowded tray and suddenly Waldemar noticed the watch on her wrist. The square watch face showed one thirty. And since it had just turned ten p.m., Waldemar, who didn't like travelling and even on the seven holidays to Mallorca that he had been on with his parents had never really left the German-speaking world, assumed that this must be the time in America and that Ms. Lauterbach had forgotten to put her watch back. But when, shortly afterwards, her fourth Glühwein arrived and she placed a glass in front of him too, just to be on the safe side, as though she had realised that he had little resistance to offer where alcohol was concerned, the hands on the watch were still in the same position. Only now did he register how loosely the worn chain-link strap made of laminated steel hung from her wrist, but even before then certain details had told him that the watch had several decades behind it and was therefore a collector's piece or else had been inherited, something that the American wore as jewellery, or for sentimental reasons.

Mary Ann did not know that the watch had once belonged to Kapitänleutnant Spiegel. But as a girl, she had discovered what her father did with his broken wristwatch with secret regularity. He would sit at his desk, bringing the fist that held the metal chain up to his mouth and whispering at the watch face as though it were a sensitive microphone. From the movements of his mouth she could tell that this was German, and since he pressed the watch to his left ear as soon as he stopped talking, she knew he must be talking to somebody.

On the night before the 11th of September, 1941, which was the day when President Franklin D. Roosevelt was to order US forces to fire on any German warships they sighted, Kapitänleutnant Spiegel's U-boat, unnoticed by the American coast guards, approached San Francisco Bay from a southerly direction. The US Navy was unaware that there were long-range German U-boats off the west coast of the United States. The U-IX commanded by Kapitänleutnant Spiegel was a so-called Alberich; its entire hull had been coated in a special kind of rubber developed by IG Farben in the Germania-Werft shipyard in Kiel, and this made it very difficult to locate with the kind of sonar the

enemy had at the time. The boat benefitted from its special skin even when it surfaced; the uneven reflection given off by the blubbery coating of artificial rubber meant that the U-IX Alberich was difficult to detect in the stormy waters off the Pacific coast for inexperienced American marine pilots.

Towards midnight, when Waldemar plucked up the courage to ask Mary Ann where her excellent German came from and simultaneously, exhilarated by the Glühwein, managed the long overdue, but by this stage much less intense look into her eyes, he discovered that her father's side of the family was German. Her Papa, Glen Lauterbach, was born in San Francisco, the child of German immigrants, but had never liked to talk about his parents, who had died young. He grew up, after a fashion, in orphanages on the West Coast and his entire life long had considered himself somebody who had made his own way in America, just like an immigrant. In response to the question as to whether her father was still alive, Mary Ann responded that he was spending his twilight years in a home for the blind and partially sighted on the outskirts of Minneapolis.

Wireless operator Gernot Lauterbach had become Kapitänleutnant Spiegel's confidante after just a few weeks spent below the surface. It was probably their distantly related manner of speaking that brought them together. Both came from the deepest interior of the country, from the Erzgebirge and the Thuringian forest, whereas the other forty-five men on board had all, without exception, grown up on the North or the Baltic Seas. In addition to this, Lauterbach's unusually melodious, almost virtuoso, harmonica playing not only soothed the homesick hearts of the crew but also the nerves of their commander, which were taut with responsibility. Despite his fresh-faced youth, Kapitänleutnant Spiegel was a whiz in all technical matters and had a good feel for how the atmospheric pressure of single-sexdom, which in the space-time-sardine can of a long-range U-boat was a burden first on the ear and then on the eyeballs, could—much as a storm clears the air—be defused with clever jokes and nimble heroic speeches. Spiegel's decision to steer a course for San Francisco Bay as darkness was breaking took the crew without warning, and like the other two radio operators Lauterbach knew that the order had not come from the fleet commander. Later, at the American military tribunal, he, the star witness for the prosecution, had only been able to tell the Yanks



that his Kapitänleutnant had said he wanted to see the world's greatest suspension bridge, the steel wonder of the world, from close up.

The manoeuvre called for the highest navigational skill and was no less risky for their slow approach. At first the insanity of their advance had filled Lauterbach with terror, but with every quarter of a nautical mile they crept up the coast, his fear became more of a nervous curiosity, which grew to a kind of gold-digging fever. The city towards which they were so wilfully heading was for him the very heart of California, they were pushing forward, incognito, into its chambers, and when they surfaced shortly after midnight, when the electric machines stopped and Spiegel sent everybody—everybody—up onto the bridge, into the wonderfully balmy, resin-scented air, so that they could all see, through the fog over the water, the chains of lights, the honey-yellow vapour lamps of the Golden Gate Bridge, the men were drunk with happiness.

Mary Ann entered Waldemar's bedroom an hour and a half after midnight. Upon first glance around the room she noticed the old, black enamelled basin and wondered whether it had been a good idea to accompany the young man home. His small apartment, of which she had already viewed hallway, kitchen, and bathroom, was initially barely different from various more or less dilapidated bachelor pads she had seen in the States. But then, across from Waldemar's bed, there was an old, black enamel hand basin, which might have served a purpose on the wall of this room a hundred, perhaps even fifty years ago. Here, on her first German night, the battered object stood atop a varnished white dresser. Its rusty drain was wedged into a resin block that acted as a pedestal. To the right and left of it two red candles were glued onto small plates. Once lit, their flames would multiply in the four shaving mirrors placed at the dresser's outer edges.

Kapitänleutnant Spiegel had called the crew together and informed them that they would be attacking that piece of American ostentation, the enormous bridge, with their torpedoes. He asked everybody, irrespective of rank, to volunteer any information or ideas that might contribute to the success of the attack. At least one pylon, one of the two steel buttresses in the water, had to be brought down, and neither at U-boat school nor at the torpedo testing base had he learned how to execute anything of the sort with the kind of weapons they had at their disposal.

This was the first time that Waldemar had entered his Erfurt bedroom with a woman, and despite the cheering influence of the Glühwein he was chilled to the marrow at the thought of how the basin, the palace of the little golden worms, would appear to another person. Mary Ann, who had already turned her back on the dresser, had an inkling why it was that Waldemar rushed over to the bedside lamp to switch it on while simultaneously reaching over to the doorframe to turn off the main light. She turned to the chair next to the bed and placed her father's watch, which she always removed before taking off her first piece of clothing, upon it.

Prisoner Lauterbach had not been told how much his comrades had betrayed to the Americans. They had been kept apart even before the tribunal. Only after two years in prison had he received confirmation of what had long terrorised his dreams: that he was the only one whose death sentence had not been carried out. Of the eight Alberich men who had survived the marine disaster at San Francisco, he alone had not been boiled alive in his own fat and water by the electric chair. The watch that, to the very end of his years in prison, Gernot Lauterbach took off only before showering, had been given him by his Kapitän shortly after the man had finally awoken from his unconscious state at dawn, still vomiting salt water and in visible, immense pain. Spiegel had immediately understood that Lauterbach, the best swimmer in the crew, must have brought him to the American shore and for this reason, but also to send a message of comradeship to the rest of the crew, he had gifted him his wrist watch.

Standing in front of the dresser Waldemar tore the clothes off his body so as to cover the basin, the home of the little golden worms, as quickly as possible with jacket, shirt, and trousers. But then, as he stood there naked, he was ashamed of renouncing the only friends he had found in the German East in front of Mary Ann. He also realised how icily cold it was in his unheatable bedroom. And to make both of these things, if not better, then at least not as bad, he picked up the lighter from the top of the dresser and lit the candles.

Even though Kapitänleutnant still had water in his lungs and could speak only with difficulty, he explained to the remaining men that the loss of the boat and the death of their comrades changed nothing with respect to their duty to Führer and fatherland. Fate had determined that the torpedo should explode inside the shaft and

that their small band should continue the war on land. And while Spiegel, still coughing, professed his acceptance of his fate, loyalty to the Führer, and his belief in the success of their future struggle as partisans in the Californian woods, Radio Operator Lauterbach, who played the mouth organ so beautifully and didn't speak English too badly either, had already taken cover in the juniper-scented shrubs along the shoreline and begun, as quietly as possible, to climb the slope up to the road.

Glen Lauterbach was proud that his daughter had inherited his excellent hearing. At the beginning of that year, when he was finding it more and more difficult to walk, of an evening Mary Ann had begun to drive straight from her office in central Minneapolis to the home where he lived. She would place the keyboard on top of his blanket and attach his headphones. The other seniors could thus go undisturbed at this late hour and Mary Ann's excellent ears picked up enough of what escaped from the foam insulation of the ear pieces. In the autumn, because she was travelling a lot for work, she had also bought him a cell phone that could be connected to his electric organ, and that way, whether it was during the day in her office or in her hotel bed at night, he could play her a selection of his favourite songs, folk tunes from all over the world.

When Mary Ann pulled Waldemar's damp and slightly sour-smelling blanket up to her chin, she heard a strange sound. Waldemar, butt naked and obviously very cold, had been digging around in a drawer for quite some time, rummaging through his underwear looking for a packet of condoms which he thought he had seen there a few months ago. Mary Ann, who guessed what he was looking for, wanted to tell him that there was no need. But once again she was distracted by the strange scrabbling noise which was now clearly emanating from the old basin. It was a delicate, dry rasping, as though something living was rubbing its hard skin over the rust and over the cracked edges of the enamel.

German historical zoology, which counts exceptional thinkers among its academic ranks, men who lack neither stubborn patience with respect to the surviving sources nor scrupulous subtlety with respect to the analysis thereof, has produced impressive case studies that clearly demarcate the species to which the woad snakes could possibly belong. Pictures from the period usually show the creatures coiled around tools, sometimes also curled around the dyers' shoes.

As is usual in representations of animals in the German Middle Ages, the spectrum of zoologically significant characteristics is broad. Sometimes they are blind worms with blunt heads, sometimes lizards with stumpy legs, tongues flickering from grinning mouths. The colour of their bodies, whose scales are sometimes smooth, sometimes rough or fine, ranges between a reddish ochre and an almost white bright yellow.

On a tiny piece of fresco that had come to light in the ruins of the Old Dyers House in Erfurt, the body of one woad snake is even coated in gold leaf. This remarkable find builds a hermeneutic bridge to the only textual source that makes any mention of woad snakes. In an early modern letter, the Latin correspondence of an Erfurt humanist to no less a person than the reformer Martin Luther, the talk is of all kinds of Papist superstition that still exists among the rural population around Erfurt. Among other things, a song is sung during the woad harvest that tells of the small golden snakes of the Virgin Mary.

When Waldemar finally got into bed with Mary Ann, frozen through, discouraged on the inside and clearly despondent on the outside too, there was a beeping, as though to mock him, from the direction of her pile of clothes. In a logical slip-up, Waldemar concluded that it must be the American's antique wristwatch, which was now turning out to be modern after all and was signalling a pre-programmed time. But then Mary Ann's arm snaked its way beneath her underwear and below her outer layers of clothing and pulled out a cell phone. With extreme caution, as though it were fragile, she placed the object on the pillow between them and answered the call. Waldemar could hear music, the warm, Hammond-like sound of an electric organ, sluggishly intoning, with rhythmic sophistication and clever sentimentality, a piece that sounded like a Volkslied. Waldemar recognised the melody and, pleased by the unexpected distraction, was just about to ask his foreign negotiating partner, the prospective purchaser of his inheritance, what the piece was called, when she placed the long, manicured nail of her index finger to his lips and whispered in his ear: Hush, Waldemar! Hush! It's an old German song. It's called ERZGEBIRGLERS HEIMATLIED!

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LOTTE L.S.

## TWELVE DAYS OF 21ST CENTURY RAIN

A voice rang out from the boiler in visceral encounter:

“You must change your life.”

The hibiscus moved in the breeze,

everything else staying still.

Well: the seagulls, the seagulls.

Carbon monoxide had already claimed the last inhabitant—

as if to misread sleep

like to think of myself high up at the window

imitating crown shyness

continually changing faulty light bulbs

at the ends of summer

hesitating to thrust myself into others' lives,

other lives. A life,

all £430 worth of it. Dangerous  
of course

to draw parallels: tried the detectors,

tried the weekly whole-building alarms,

tried to imagine I could change my life—  
*her* dancing beneath the pines, told me:  
to love without doubt  
is to fuck without desire,  
and yet the nectarines are still ripe and juicy on the table  
at this time of year  
but I want them hard as can be,  
actualised at the ends of a midnight-blue corset dream—  
hands enough to touch yourself  
and watch the starlings murmur,  
a whole host of fish  
unionising at the same time every year  
to swim  
a full circle and disappear,  
wondering  
if time is just perspective, and  
perspective: time.  
It touched me where it hurt,  
but the hurting felt good—  
seagulls watching from each rooftop,  
St George's Cross flags razed across every allotment plot

long road of curtains  
rippled open, crystallise my senses

alone with a boiler

that doesn't emit a smell or sound or sight

and all the windows are open—

miniature ballet dancers twirling off the sill  
in small succession

someone screaming, "I'm gonna fucking kill you  
you motherfucking son of a bitch"

cries streaming over from the dark-bright street below,  
weekly Tuesday fireworks

jacked-up and disseminating in rounds from the beach.

In the almost darkness

we cannot delegate "our" desire,

seagull shit dripping down the windows  
in hot, thick tangles

of a flat last inhabited, and I would have to say

"OK, thanks. I didn't know." Why is this night  
different from all the others?

The emphasis to fall on the asking,  
the making of an unchanged life

awake until sunrise—

avoiding the surprise of sleep  
gave me dreams:  
trees lining boulevards in the south of France  
you absentmindedly on your knees in the corner  
tipping something softly down the back of your throat.  
Do you know it?  
I tried to laugh and understand  
the pieces of human movement,  
one glance capturing a shape that emerged from them all:  
the fascist compost of the allotments,  
green was the forest drenched with shadows  
of my own lack—  
I decided I'd rather throw every broccoli head in the bin.  
And my own: a tenant to evict, landlord  
a penis to guillotine,  
police sirens ricocheting across the curtains  
unduly feminised in their flutterings,  
pink lilies bursting from the vase on the floor  
telling me: "I want to live deliberately"—  
"I want to live alive"



headphones on  
means I can't hear them  
coming down the boulevard  
coming down the high street  
the road I inhabit that leads so clearly to the sea—  
striding their guillotined dicks  
down the deserted streets.

A woman was arrested the other morning,  
I saw it from the window: cops cuffing her to the car,  
miniature ballet dancers  
spinning from the windowsill  
gliding through the soft lace of the air  
to pinch cop tyres flat  
with their tightly pricked slippers.

*He* literally wrote a worldview  
wherein she “went” out the window  
of his thirty-fourth-floor New York apartment  
in a blue bikini  
and a judge signed off on it.

Awareness, or blossom:  
an archived commodity

in which  
perspective is the removed corset  
  
often police ourselves  
  
to take off our clothes—  
  
but what's another way to look at this?  
  
What else  
could you have asked?  
  
If you don't recognise me  
  
among the treed-up, jacked-up roads  
  
the logical supposition  
  
of boulevards I have never been  
  
it is because I took off all my clothes  
  
in my most confrontational  
  
means I can't hear them  
  
edgelit and hooting in the trees  
  
a politicised people  
  
suddenly and casually  
  
wondering if you were going to take your socks off  
before you came.  
  
These days I am trying hard not to come so consistently—  
  
instead asking my mother, "how are you feeling today?"  
  
wondering if I'll ever see her

dance beneath the pines,  
fantasise about suffocating my landlord  
with deliberate marmite: a whole feast of mugwort  
on the bedside table; gave me dreams of killing children, told me  
to dare imagining  
it's not a thing you can touch

## NOTES

“Dangerous / of course / to draw parallels” is lifted from “Sunset, December, 1993” by Adrienne Rich [“...Yet more dangerous to write / as if there were a steady course, we and our poems / protected: the individual life, protected”]. // “and all the windows are open” is reworked from the final line of Gloria Dawson’s poem “What Dreaming Makes.” // “We cannot delegate ‘our’ desire” is reworked from *Communiqué 7* by the Angry Brigade. // “green was the forest drenched with shadows” is lifted from *The Spring Flowers Own* by Etel Adnan. // “the soft lace of the air” is reworked from “Poem for Haruko” by June Jordan. // Carl Andre claimed that the artist Ana Mendieta “went out the window” of his thirty-fourth-floor apartment, wearing a blue bikini, early on the morning of September 8, 1985. He was accused and acquitted of her death, choosing a judge over a jury. “She made me change her light bulbs. She was afraid of heights. She would never go near the window,” Carolee Schneeman later said. // “Awareness, or blossom:” is reworked from “There’s an affinity between awareness and blossom” in “Hello, the Roses” by Mei-Mei Berssenbrugge. // “perspective is the removed corset” is lifted from “After Vuillard” by Sarah Maclay, first shared at Community of Writers 2019. // “to dare imagining” is lifted from *To Dare Imagining: Rojava Revolution*, edited by Dilar Dirik, David Levi Strauss, Michael Taussig, and Peter Lamborn Wilson.

CRAIG SANTOS PEREZ

from AERIAL ROOTS

~

Hasso' : waiting to board  
the one-way flight on "Continental,"  
the name of the airlines,  
the name of our destination.

Remember : the entrance  
to the Guam airport  
resembled the shape of i sakman :  
*an outrigger canoe,*  
once described as "flying proa"  
because it swiftly skimmed  
the waves.

Hasso' : waving goodbye  
to all our relatives  
as we entered the gate.

Remember : our word for *airplane* :  
batkon aire : *air boat*



~

“Are you a citizen?” he probed.

“Yes. My island, Guam, is a U.S. territory.”

We attend American schools, eat American food,  
listen to American music, watch American movies and television,  
play American sports, learn American history, dream  
American dreams, and die  
in American wars.

“You speak English well,” he proclaimed,

“with almost no accent.”

And isn't that what it means to be  
a diasporic Chamorro: to feel *foreign*  
*in a domestic sense*.

~

Over the last 50 years,  
Chamorros have migrated  
to escape the violent memories of war,  
to seek jobs, schools, hospitals, adventure, and love;  
and most of all, to serve in the military,  
deployed and stationed to bases around the world.

According to the 2010 census, 44,000 Chamorros  
live in California, 15,000 in Washington, 10,000 in Texas,  
7,000 in Hawaii, and 70,000 more in every other state  
and even Puerto Rico.

We're the most "geographically  
dispersed"  
Pacific Islander population within the United  
States, and off-island Chamorros now outnumber  
our on-island kin, with generations having been born  
away from our ancestral homelands,  
including my daughters.

~

Some of us will be able to return home  
for holidays, weddings, and funerals;  
others won't be able to afford the expensive plane ticket  
to the Western Pacific.

Years and even decades might pass  
between trips, and each visit will feel  
too short. We'll lose contact  
with family and friends, and the island  
will continue to change  
until it becomes unfamiliar  
to us.

And isn't that, too, what it means to be  
a diasporic Chamorro: to feel *foreign*  
*in your own homeland*.



~

There are times when I feel adrift,  
without itinerary or destination,

When I wonder: What if we stayed?  
What if we return?

When the undertow  
of these questions pull                      you out to sea,

*remember:* migration flows through our blood  
like the aerial roots of i trongkon nunu

hasso': our ancestors taught us how to carry  
our culture in the canoes of our bodies.

*remember:* our people, scattered like stars,  
form new constellations                      when we gather.

hasso': home is not simply a house, village, or island

*home is an archipelago of belonging.*

from SOUNDING LINES

(THE FIRST MAP)

“By a glance at the map it may be seen that one quarter of the population of the world lies on a rough semicircle of which the meridian of Guam is the diameter, and Guam itself the center.”

—Guam Governor’s Annual Report, 1915

~

Hasso : *remember*  
the first map  
my dad hangs in the hallway :  
an aerial view of our island.  
“Where’s our village?” I ask.  
“In the center,” he points.  
“Here: Mongmong : *heartbeat*.”  
I read the names of other villages:  
“Yigo, Dededo, Tamuning,  
Barrigada, Mangilao, Chalan Pago,  
Ordot, Toto, Maite, Hagatna,  
Hagatna Heights, Sinajana, Asan,  
Piti, Yona, Santa Rita,  
Agat, Talofofo, Umatac,  
Inarajan, Merizo”  
I once imagined them  
as separate places, but now  
I see we’re all part  
of one tropical  
body.

## (THE SECOND MAP)

~

Hasso' : the second map  
my dad hangs in the hallway :

an aerial view  
of the Mariana archipelago.

15 islands in a vertical  
crescent. I

recognize Guam,  
the southernmost  
in the chain.

I read the names  
of the northern islands:

“Rota, Aguijan, Tinian,  
Saipan, Farallon de Medinilla,

Anatahan, Sarigan, Guguan,  
Alamagan, Pagan, Agrihan,

Asuncion, Maug, and  
Farallon de Pajaros.”

They look like the beads  
of a rosary.





## (THE FIFTH MAP)

*for Hsinya Huang*

~

My dad never hung a fifth map in the hallway.  
I first see it when I travel, as an adult, to Taiwan : an aerial view  
of “Austronesia.”

“Austro- means ‘south,’” the tour guide says.

A highlighted area, in the shape of a full sail, stretches

from Madagascar to the Malay peninsula and Indonesia,  
north to the Philippines and Taiwan,  
then traversing Micronesia and Polynesia.

“Austronesians migrated to  
escape war, famine, disease, and rising seas.”

400 million people alive today,  
who speak over 1000 different languages,  
all descend from the same  
mother tongue, the same genetic family.

I read the map closely, navigating  
beyond the violent divisions of national and maritime borders,  
beyond  
the scarred latitudes and longitudes  
of empire, until finally arriving  
at the cartography of  
our most expansive legends  
and deepest routes.

SOTÈRE TORREGIAN

YOUR NAME OF GAZELLES

*for Leila Khaled of Palestine*

Leilah which means night Leilah  
Who brought down the Great Whale threatening the world  
Night you have become my eyes  
O salmon rushing upstream through Autumn's inverted post office  
In my childhood I thought the flies attacked me because  
I had " Colored "blood  
For the very reason that John Wayne won't forget the Alamo  
Death entered in the registry of a bastard order  
A language found to fulfill the need of the age  
Displeasing to the profane as well as to idiots

As inside me the word " Spain " melts a cathedral of wax  
into tears  
Bandit Queen of the Sky ! When the infidel armies of myself  
Had given me up for dead in the waiting room  
of Jewish dermatologist doctors Rosewater & Jacobs  
~~In the day I had no memory or name but the routine of handshakes  
And pityriasis rosea " a classical case "~~

As shells sound of the ocean  
the sun blazes  
With winds which rise up and sweat which flows down  
Ptolomey's map of the ancient world mongrels me  
In its litany Leilah  
With your bullet shell for a wedding ring  
In front of one you appear a frightening old man from Tierra Del Fuego  
In front of another you appear a young princess  
With a sudden marvellous beauty



[Chanson]

Your real name of gazelles floating like a slow motion film  
of dawn in Africa on the wing  
As I see the listlessness of the desert overhead flying  
Where for nine months you have been captain of a death command  
" No one will know where I will be to-morrow "



Even as you are separate from the equinoctial wisdom of my life

" The moment is close" for our returning " home "  
Only when the vessel is totally drained is the last drop

Emptied out

"And that is how I came to hear my call of duty "

Even as you are separate from the equinoctial wisdom of my life

Because of the severed hands of my failing which you  
alone know as they reach out to you  
haunting me so long now  
I 'm a walking teepee delving in and out of libraries  
for your story that disappears  
In the print of the magazine 's pages little by little  
week by week

As I come to grasp you more



UPI090701.9/7/70;LONDON: File Picture- Leila Khaled the Palestinian Arab who brandished grenades in yesterday's attempted hi-jack, on an El Al flight from Amsterdam, she and her partner were overpowered and the man was shot dead after he had pulled a grenade pin, by a miracle the grenade had faulty pin and failed to explode. Leila is now being held in Police Station near the airport. UPI. 1235

Madonna Of The Kalashnikov

"with a bullet for a wedding ring "

LEILA KHALED Of The CHE GUEVARA BRIGADE  
Of The P. L. O., 1970.

## MADONNA OF THE KALASHNIKOV

for Leila Khaled of the Ché Guevara Brigade of the P. L. O.

" a bullet for a wedding ring "

Mon âge m' accordait toujours  
De nouvelles raisons de vivre par autrui  
Et d' avoir en mon cœur le sang d' un autre

-- Paul Éluard , Vivre

( The age has always accorded me new reasons  
for living by others For having in my heart  
the blood of another heart

--Translation , S. T. )

I

And there are such days that even though I love

a great distance engulfs me from Man-and-Womankind  
In the heat of the sun as I pass on the road

bumper-stickers in the traffic *trumpet*  
" Try Buffalo meat It's great!" which brings me  
only revulsion for this people And even the woman I love  
disappears There is only

This "I" lone traveller in the midst of endless sands  
of the Rif

...

Yet in the midst of this darkness this eclipse  
The Revolutionary Fighter arises

III

Her spirit and her words

Venceremos ! Falastinia !

In the midst of this darkness this eclipse  
the Artist also arises To bring vision  
à donner voir !

To a world in ruins Imagination Colour Vivacity Song

To blend the personal the individual reality  
and its truth with the outer  
that both inner and outer change must come

Energies of Art are in the conflict

Victory for Palestine ! For the Palestinian

People in the vanguard

Clarion for the advance of Man-and-Womankind  
The spirit of the Revolutionary Fighter  
joins the conflict

To bring forth the name of Palestine !

أنا فلسطيني !

IV

Chanson (Song)

Your real name of gazelles floating like a slow-motion film  
of dawn on the African plain on the wing  
As I see listlessness of the desert overhead flying

Where you have been "for nine months captain of a death command "  
" No one will know where I will be tomorrow "

... ..

- Sotère T.  
1970,

## Transfer of Title

From early on, I'd had to be taught to never be heard from again, but at some point in my forties I began noticing these three who rode buses all day long, just as much as I did, and their ridership looked even more devotional, more engrossing, than mine. The towns the buses passed through must have begun bunching up in their minds as a single, solitary place that any lore had long ago run off from, a place to turn their backs on, until the driver ordered them off. I always thought the driver meant me too, but he always made a point of saying, "Not you, lady," and then I would say that it was my stop anyway, and he would try to trap me in conversation. By the time I'd worked myself free from him, the girls were always already gone. Was it so very wrong, though, for me to wonder where they went?

They looked to be in their twenties, and they looked to be uncheerable, and a different sort of person would probably not have been so quick to dismiss them, the way I sometimes did, as women whose sorrows must have already been scaled back to an eliminative balefulness expressed mostly through their diet: I pictured Table Water crackers left to go stale before sunup on an otherwise bare table in an apartment bare of any giveaway pawings from a bed.

And those buses: they were forever bruising their way beyond some verge or another, and the terrain out there was mostly blunt, relieved here or there only by an offscape of warehouses or a lake about to be drained. Our state was one that showed up almost perfectly rectilinear on the map, but the borders were in fact hackly, jagged. Departers often felt torn up inside once they got out.

Except for the occasional older person, the only other ones ever on these buses were men in whose faces I could make out the unluminary trance of workers done for the day with their work. I'd listen to them talking unwondrously. But these girls, these miserably tressed cusses who always sat as close together as three people can get on a bus: there was a cosmeticized falsery to their faces that you couldn't

quite take the full measure of without resorting to a stare. “If they’re even women,” you couldn’t help sometimes doubting, because you were through with most things too. It was expected of you to have a weakness for people even weaker than yourself. A going explanation, should one be needed, was that nights were a hardener of whatever had most gone loose in a day, and my days, to be cruel, were trash. Things always felt a little too early to already be too late. I was in my stunted forties, as I say, and I went about perspirantly in snugging unfinery of an unvarying hyacinth violet. These were dresses that cropped me into somebody a little thinner, a whole lot less burgeoning.

I now and then wondered if they were sisters, these girls. They had no features in common, but people in those days spoke of “blended” families. Then again, these girls just looked mixed, tossed together, unstirred to any uniform consistency.

Then one day they had seated themselves as far apart from each other as possible. The driver’s usual howl for them to get off startled me, and as they worked their way to the front, I got up too. I got close enough to one of them that my fingers trended trickily toward hers. She caught mine first. We stepped off, and she led us away from the other two, saving face, I guess, by talking speedily about a houseplant of hers practically at death’s door. Then, that quick, she said, “We could never be friends,” and I didn’t think to ask whether she meant her and me or her and those other two.

We were in some town, close to what seemed to be the center of it. (A few puny stores, a butcher’s stall.) She led me down the street and into a building, an apartment house, up two flights of stairs, and down a corridor, past a line of doors, and she then tried a knob, found it unlocked, and went in. I followed.

“He’s probably not due back for a while yet,” she said. She was quick to shut the door, throw the latch, the bolt.

The apartment was just that one room, windowed on only one wall, and the window got the better of the town. There was a couch, and we were already sitting at opposite ends of it.

She felt it only fair to say something up front about her brother, though he was only a stepbrother and was still in school, scarcely untucked from childhood, purposeless in his growing. Everything she said started with, “I’m to tell you.” Then she got on the subject of herself. When she was a kid, the doctors had been thinking along

lazy-eye-syndrome lines and patched up her good leg so she no longer could put any weight on it. She crawled back and forth to school, dragging her good leg. She'd always been built differently, and for a long time it was still too early to live and learn. Her parents hadn't believed in parting the curtains or, behind the curtains, raising the blinds. Her one real, unstepped brother was acceptably destructible, or at least excusably so. He had a brutal sense of up and down, and she rarely crossed paths with him anymore except when he was showering people with gifts. Until lately, she'd been banging around in the lower mathematics, then dropped out, found a bunkmate's narcotica in a tube sock, had no luck with any of the capsules, moved out, bought work shoes to wear to work, lost one job after another, went back to school but the education wasn't telling her anything and she was merely attracting attention, the professoriat sweated onto her clothes, her parents were off once again taking their ease in a rehab—it got to where she couldn't even go to a grocery store and pick up three or four things for a simple little dinner without the checkout clerk looking at everything she'd laid down on the belt and jumping to conclusions, construing it all as somehow recapping her life. Her last job had lasted exactly three and a half hours at someplace restaurantial where the owner, or the shift manager, whoever he was, kept staring at her until she felt as if her features had gone runny and were about to bleed away. And as for the two girls she rode the buses with (I could see her wanting to reach a conclusion), she had long since been of the opinion that however much you might come out of people with, it is always less than whatever you had brought along with you inside.

This all sounded to me like ground covered long ago, though.

“What about lately?” I must have said because she right away said, “Trying not to put out an eye.” She pointed to lots of solitary nails driven into the walls at what looked to me to be exactly her eye level. (I gathered that there must have once been lots of things to hang.) She said she'd tried twisting the nails out with her fingers, prying them loose with pliers. When that hadn't worked, she'd resorted to impaling pieces of paper onto the nails or hanging clothes hangers on them as grave reminders to watch out, but somebody kept tearing down the paper and putting clothes on the hangers and then putting the clothes away in the closet.

“The guy whose place this is?” I said.

“He’d never do anything like that.”

“Who else comes in here?”

“Things can get kind of communal at times.”

“Those two girls?”

“Let me show you the closet.”

But she made no move to get up.

She talked about the man. She made him sound creased and faraway because of his height. In the description, late-day hair was appreciating on his cheeks and chin and on the curve above his mouth. He otherwise came across as a man who always wore gloves when he drove, which, I gathered, wasn’t very often.

“If he comes, we’ll have to leave,” she said. “He always knocks first, though.”

She reached for a little wooden case under the sofa and brought it out, opened it, set it on my lap. It was full of freehand, haywire jewelry—bracelets and other devisings of obviously her own lurid and private manufacture. I’d be expected to try some of these on? I saw that I’d already folded my hands, and I kept them folded.

By now I guess I’d had her sized up as a lean-minded and narrow-hearted lover of malarkey, but I made a pledge to myself that I’d give things another quarter hour.

“Shall we exchange names?” she said.

I said I’d been named Laney after a vivid and sometimes awfully sweaty aunt, but right away that made me wonder, for once, who or what I might have really been underneath that name or, worse, without it. Now that I thought about it, it did sometimes seem as if nothing but the name alone had been propping me up all along.

The girl said she’d lately taken to calling herself Patrice but wasn’t averse to responding to Carly.

“Now that we know each other,” she said and reached for my hand in a companionate way. We sat quietly holding on to each other for a bit. It wasn’t so ridiculous. “Come closer, Laney, my Laney,” she said. “You’re not tired of me, are you? You don’t think I’m too tied to my belongings?”

Then the man himself knocked, and in he walked in all of his heights. He took one look at me and turned to her and, talking too fast for me to follow, gave her what I took to be a summing-up dressing-down of a peppily violent kind.



She shoved some of the jewelry onto an arm and said, “I guess I’ll be going out with him for a little while. For just a bit, okay? Please make yourself at home. Stay as long as you like. Let me give you some money?”

The man didn’t even glance in my direction on their way out. The girl first gave me a quiet little kiss. It was a kiss of the plenishing kind, not the kind that draws something cloudy and possibly important out of you and leaves you feeling dry and unvital.

After they left I sat for a while on the sofa and must have fallen asleep. I got up a few times in the middle of the night and turned on a light to see if I was alone. A sheet had been draped over me, but there was no sign of either of them. I went back to a sound sleep.

I spent most of the next morning in her closet, horning myself into her wardrobe, nudging myself into her every getup (she had some very nice things, if they were hers), then let myself out.

At the time of which I now write, I lived in an apartment, and days when I wasn’t riding the buses, I was driving a car, but only locally, to a drive-thru, one of those handy microphone-and-speaker setups, because that way you never had to look people in the face when you let on what it was you really wanted.

The building where I lived was a block long, with turrets, cupolas—the builder hadn’t missed a trick. It had a lobby with three couches arranged to form a U of sorts. Nobody ever sat there unless they were waiting for a cab, and there were only five cabs still on the move in this town. The day the building manager was scheduled to escort the appraisers through every unit, my idea was to pretend not to be at home. I spent six straight days, starting from the day the notices were taped to our doors, throwing everything that was on the floor into boxes and crates, then piling the boxes and crates high against the walls, vacuuming the cleared centers of the rooms. When appraisal day came, I hid, unimaginatively, in the bedroom closet, behind trash bags stuffed with sweater dresses. I’d expected to hear no fewer than five or six sets of footsteps but could make out only two. To my surprise, the closet door was never flung open. Nobody said, “How old did you say she is by now?” All a voice said was, “Looks like somebody’s all set to move.”

I had lived in that building for an awfully tawdry decade. My sleep, when it came, was mostly monotonous. I’d often overhear

tenants saying of me, “I must’ve run into her ten times on the stairs today.” The landlord kept raising the rent and promising to knock out a wall or two to give us a better chance at some view. I often went for a walk. The town’s observatorium wasn’t popular anymore. There weren’t enough people around for me to play favorites. I felt useless in the sceneries outside—shopping centers off to the side, or parks where somebody or other did in fact now and then park, then sit with windows rolled up. I’d make my way back to the apartment house, loom behind other tenants at the line of mailboxes right after the mailman had left. The older ones were always the first to abstract their bent, little mailbox keys from robe pockets and change purses, but they’d say, “No, you go ahead, because you’re on your way to work. We’ve got all day.” There would be nothing in my box, of course, and I would have to be seen fluttering my hands to make the lack of letters, circulars, parcels, seem a relieving inconsequence. No matter how loosely or foolishly I was dressed, I would have to charge out the front door again afterward, pulling nobody visible behind. That was primarily why I came to walk so much and why people came to say, “Yes, I know you—I mean I recognize you, I’ve seen you everywhere, we all have—do you deliver messages?” Then the world would have to quickly reduce itself all over again into streets, alleys, gutters, candy-bar receipts in the gutters. The town still had a morning paper and a late-afternoon paper, but by nightfall you were on your own.

My life harks back and forth to the time, not all that much later, when I suddenly had a husband, a raw-headed, speculating fellow, someone straight from a fair game but profitless infidelity to some other sexually petty brunette (to cite one of too many already), somebody good at pointing people away from himself, someone who nevertheless could never pass up a hitchhiker, someone whose mind you could sometimes actually hear clearing itself up, somebody who wanted me to wear themed hosiery and fix him sandwiches of parsleyed bologna, somebody who didn’t try to get me to come out of my shell (since, as he said, it was the shell itself that people seemed to prefer); but it wasn’t until not even all that much later that I was given to understand that there was the man you loved and there was the man you married, then the man you liked after you were married, then the man who took off with your married man.

After the divorce (the last time I spoke to him was on one of

those old phones, my words draining away through the sieve of the talk cup), I took note of what people were doing now with their lives, liking what it would have been like to be out of the picture entirely, and I tried doing a little of that. It was always a labor of wrongs from the start, though—even those months when I lived with a younger woman who was unemployed all the while I knew her but dressed night and day in a uniform that was pleaty and acorn-colored. She claimed she could get along with anybody but haggled over any affection I asked for. (Her body would never turn out to be a worthy diversion from mine.) She had a couple of little kids who, come morning, would ask, “May we wake up now?” These two, these girls who sipped lemoned water from bowls and lived mostly on cold cuts, were polishedly despondent already, their hearts already scrambled. They were unsure of their places on the murky furniture. Their smiles were always turning a corner. They would each manage to get me alone, then say, “You’re just trying to get me to say something bad about her.” (It’s true: women have children just to clear themselves out. Childbirth is a process of elimination.) The mother found it easy enough to put words in their mouths. The woman and I braved the evenings with talk radio and pursued lives that could have used some doing. The few times we had company, the visitors (confusional cousinry of hers, usually) would add smells to the smells already collecting and would point to things in the living room—any old bald-faced clock or a whatnot to which hairpins had somehow gotten themselves stuck, even a library book gladdened up with Mylar—and expect there to be a story about each, as if each had all along been sheltering some threatened history. Afterward, full of homebody behavior anew, the woman would look at me with a sparkle I found defiant. We would coach each other forward into bed, where she always thought she ought to owe herself something first. Looking back, I guess I should have done something about either one of us. Life kept heaving itself away from me, and I threw myself aside as well.

All right, then, I’d tell myself: go ahead, get them all covered up in recall. The two you married. Then the one you told that it’s better to eat out alone because that was the only way you could give the food its rightful due. Then that woman always looped around one man or another except at the laundromat, where she kept to herself. And the one who pioneered a new kind of mood in which she had to stand up

to her body and bring it the bad luck it must have been begging for all along—wasn't she also the one always saying that it's not exactly news that women had cocks but that the clitoris, considered as a cock in miniature, was less of a joke? There was always something inconclusive about the way she was dressed. And then the one who said she felt as if she had two left hands and claimed to get preferential treatment in her dreams.

I lived with just one other woman after those. She was a woman on whom loneliness must have missed its mark. She had bambooish arms and a history of nuptial hardship. There wasn't a single one of her marriages she could recount that didn't involve more than two personnel. (The third wheel was usually some party who talked about her day at work—in a cashier's cage, often as not—as if it were another life she had to report to.) “People will be people,” this last one of mine once said, then quickly corrected herself. I remember tenemental bookcases and an ailing refrigerator that sumped and exhaled. The color must have long ago gone out of the walls. She was always a latecomer to sleep but would awaken from even the merest of naps with an aftershine that had to be wiped away. We sometimes got along in the way of friends suddenly made and then just as suddenly lost, or we took turns not being the one being mothered, but mostly there was a book she kept reading, though even a single sentence on a subject that didn't concern her in the least could nonetheless make her feel berated to the point that she wanted to punish it back. She loved me by rights a little abusively, and I'd fall behind in myself—I'd have to start all over again.

A couple of her sisters were of course still alive close by, spinstered but still practiced in being with people, but their viewpoints seemed squandered on her. Truth to tell, I was practically sixty by now myself, still seeking any final outlets for my youth. Yet when you touch someone—if you're going to take things that far—where after all must the hand really go?

Of the time of which I might as well come right out now and speak—*my life!*—a few people who are to be known here only as her unfit children, daughterly boys grown and now gone, fending off the hours in untowering towns of their own: I later knew one of them only well enough to say, “May I lie to you?”

I told him part of everything—your part in it anyway.

PATRICK DURGIN

from CASE COMPARISON

Myths look as if they were struggling with some distant insight but are not quite able to get it into focus and so they tell a story instead. Yet with so little to go on, the speculations on their cosmic meaning would fill the British Museum. Obviously the myth's real hero is theory.

—Carl Rakosi, *Ex Cranium Night* (1975)

1.

Myth is the output  
Of an aggregator  
Whose sampling rate  
Is either too woozy  
Slow to make a match  
Or too real relative  
To operations to materialize  
To an onlooker's earnest delight.  
Dancing is kissing caricatured  
And that is why. This is done  
Without looking  
But just to save embarrassment.  
Reciting verse is the foremost vehicle for stories  
And their tellers (tumblr allies, finstas between friends),  
Though like slighted deities  
Any edict must be cued  
And abandoned at that.  
This is another why story: why  
It is hard to be recollections in earnest.  
Suicide won't help. Most of us are already dead.  
The next best option resembles  
Strangers' pix's algorithmic prudence.

Now let's talk about you  
And let's have an alias for that, too.  
There is always an origin story (metastable).  
There is any place for you and no one (privacy).  
The mock up was seamless  
In comparison. It can't matter  
To be thoughtful at this late stage.  
Thousands have bled out already  
But millions were slaughtered just to make it ours.  
Complicity can't be founded on theory.  
No one has the math for it.  
This stage is running in meantime.  
You are on your way  
To endless replication  
Of an idea  
Chosen for you  
By your actions  
Pitted in your body  
And ensconcing every  
Ambition and effort  
Under the sign of friendship  
With the enemy.  
Aren't you just  
Property's least attended  
Offspring?  
A plaque on a plaza  
Floor quarters  
The property. Only  
Police can find it,  
And the landlords,  
And the cordons  
Are placed like air  
In sky, which divides  
The mind's eye  
From any onlooker.  
Which side are you on?  
The more hastily traced

The concentric circles  
Of imperial logic,  
The more all of causation  
Preempts our sage anecdotes.  
All of this in the meantime  
And as protest,  
Some never sacrifice  
But yet it is somehow all of this.  
Your way of arriving  
To the end  
Of the series is  
All that matters  
To you  
Because the rest  
Is just  
The pomposity  
Of the wish  
To rest in peace  
And is easily squelched  
By putting your way  
Of life at risk.  
And so things  
Get underway,  
And we impart to things  
The moral equivalent  
Of humility. Its opposite  
Is greed. This gets tricky.  
Because you will be humiliated.  
Because we have to  
Protect righteousness  
Even when it imperils  
A way of life. We must  
Preserve the virtues of  
Rage to contest greed.  
There, I've said it. And  
There is more to say.  
Greed is the objective limit

Of cognition insofar as  
Jealousy is what makes a subject  
(I covet I).  
The object of desire cannot reciprocate.  
Yet it is the who whose name is proper.  
There is another way of saying this.  
What does generosity presuppose?  
Sharing a thing of one's own  
Is only a quality of attention  
Paid to that thing. But things  
Don't meet the attention given  
To them. If this were known,  
If it were an acknowledged fact,  
If it were an object of knowledge,  
If it were an object lesson,  
There would be no conviction,  
Sincerity, or intelligence at all.  
I am hereby conceding it all. But  
Can I count on you to do this also?  
If we strictly confine the meaning  
Of property to a thing and not  
An attitude or state, whether  
Of gratitude or grace or disinterest,  
Then it comes clearer and clearer  
That, to share, something must be paid.  
But how can one's own thing need  
To be afforded first?  
Things don't meet the attention given  
To them. Should you have to convince  
A thing of your quality of attention  
Just to hold it in common, you would  
Be some kind of vulgar vitalist. I can't  
Confine things  
To what I know. What I know  
Can be forgotten. But I can't no longer  
Understand something, anything.  
What can be misunderstood persists



In another form, but nothing is depleted,  
Much less lost. Once understood,  
The understanding takes place of the thing.  
Why should things stand for or devote  
Themselves to this kind of appropriation?  
To things, attention is betrayal. But not  
Really; things don't meet the attention  
Given to them. Everything  
Else is a lease. You have to  
Look for it. But whatever you have  
Is unlicensed. Is an auction that acts  
as an audience what excites what  
they are evidently looking at  
when you can see  
what's meant? That's how  
putting bodies to pet  
the flesh off pace metabolic enhancement  
makes fluent lips from a stylus. You  
have to pout it out.  
You can tell when  
you pout that novelty needs  
innocence. Has it to mean  
that? I think it has.  
I think it has its tedium.  
It has that aspect.  
For example, is every  
chauvinism a cliché?  
How can  
you tell I think it has to  
be that way?  
A responsive system  
Almost is the  
Name it gives.



There is no ruin but the inherited  
wound

the circle isn't closed

we walked until we grew old, conversed, lapsed  
into the silence of separate thoughts and thoughts of separateness,  
drafted architectural models of our radical privacies  
with sticks in the dirt

we cut  
desire paths, trampled, as the crow flies, the tall grass

made through lines  
traversals  
thoroughfares

doubled back and into  
our own preoccupations, into the wend of our own  
particular  
intelligence

each in the urge—the urgency—to repair  
repatriate  
to/from  
the world

Enter ghost into division    subdivision  
   into the ghost estate    the model unit  
   enter across  
the carpets fragrant with flame retardant  
recline on ecru or ochre rectilinear  
   sectionals  
let out the hems of your attention    to attenuate  
   and slacken  
   against the blue translucent  
   industrial-grade membrane  
of shrink-wrapped granite counters    bloodlessly veined marble  
stainless machines    instruments    unstainable  
   or unassailable  
by the soiled fingers of an unattended  
   or unintended  
   son    or  
   daughter

Enter into your life's work

the unrestrained

effort

of the organism the single

cell

that labors

to divide

strains

at

its

seam

to

b u r s t

MARTHA RONK

## ANOTHER COUNTRY

The *it* in *with-it* shifts & pivots as a compass needle  
vetch, clover, brackish seaweed in heaped up smells  
bits of pulverized shell, skeletal casings underfoot  
fog banks stoked by fires in the central valley,  
this summer going on and ever on,  
a house barely visible—more memory than memory,  
unheimlich as if and as if it had been or could have been  
you I turn to in near-sleep stumbling over ourselves,  
a skeleton of rusted car seams laid out on the beach  
each step unlinked from the one before  
each detachable makes up this country I'm pointed into

## PLACE-TIME

imprecise morning as if limbs were only loosely threaded in the coming  
and going of tides, in flattened grazing land extending into beach sand  
going on until far out of view, the imprint of a foot then another,  
the time it takes for a seeded oyster basket to mature  
I think of visiting the morning while I am at it, whatever that might mean,  
I keep saying I am here and she writes back we will die where we are,  
here or there, hours once rung by bells, she tells me we need to give over  
to place-time, the beaches with bleaching logs so many of them,  
as if she were telling me something else, I can never not think it means  
something hidden from view and wonder then if every detail—  
even if distance blurs it—opens to the beating of wings going off  
over the flatland and disappearing into migratory patterns,  
as if in the near future all objects would simply let go all intensity

## FISSURES

the sidewalk I walk on is cracked  
in the fissure      there's azure blue      pale at the edges,

behind the eyelids, faces      morphing, lines of ink  
stringing themselves  
there's the nursery on York,

*The York Nursery*, a field of dust, empty      the façade blanched  
in the sun-scalding streets with body shops and the *York Bar*

abrupt marks in the thinking I am watching  
seeing it skip

as LP's skipped, a blanking out,      blurred faces  
tracking a history I don't want to track

the sidewalk lifts and cracks      I see her tape up  
paintings to protect colors, peel it off

closed iron gates,      all the Japanese nurseries vacant on Hyperion  
once a glimpse of pale flowers  
her pale powder  
painting faces Goya almost

made them of darkness & tar      *unidentified* shows up on

the phone window  
*superfluous* the only answer



DOUG JONES

## “I ain’t anyone but you”: On Bill Griffiths

Bill Griffiths was found dead in bed, age fifty-nine, on September 13, 2007. He had discharged himself from the hospital a few days earlier after arguing with his doctors.

I knew Griffiths from about 1997 to around 2002, a period where I was trying to write a dissertation on his poetry. I spent a lot of time with him then, corresponding and talking to him at length, always keen and pushing to get him to tell me what his poems were about. Of course, he never did. Don’t think I ever got to know him, really. All this seems a lifetime ago. I’m now a family physician (a general practitioner in the UK) in a coastal town in England. I’ve taken a few days off from the COVID calamity and have some time to review the three-volume collection of his work published by Reality Street a few years ago. Volume 1 covers the early years, Volume 2 the 80s, and Volume 3 the period from his move to Seaham, County Durham in northeast England until his death.

Here I should attempt do his work some justice and give an idea, for an American readership, of its worth. Working up to this, I reread much of his poetry, works I hadn’t properly touched in fifteen years. Going through it again after all that time, I was gobsmacked by its beauty, complexity, and how it continued to burn through a complacent and sequestered English poetry scene. Griffiths’s poetry stands against the iron smugness and disassociation of much of English letters. One can’t move around a poetry room without falling over poets who are very eager on the radical stuff. The poor, the poor, the poor—but never a poor person and look them in the eye. That was not the case with Griffiths.

I found Griffiths’s work to have an absolute veracity, which is as germane now as it was the day he died. He wasn’t mealy-mouthed. Griffiths wrote about how stupid, pointless, and venal poor people’s lives could be. He could be provocative—in a quite posh, reserved, and bookish manner. He could call the reader out and drive at a sympathy

and an engagement with brutish people you and I would never meet. To do this, he kept himself at arm's length from the academy. Even if he ever tried to get in, half-heartedly, Griffiths was just too awkward, indistinct in affect, and mulish. They never got him and treated him for the most part with incomprehension and condescension. The big gigs passed him by. Griffiths died in poverty.

Separating Griffiths's poetic life into discrete narratives is something that my limited skills as an essayist are going to struggle with. There are no fundamental shifts of perspective in his poetry, he's not working toward any sort of big finish. What upset Griffiths as a youth continued to upset him to the end; likewise, what fascinated him in his early work he sort of always loved. Griffiths adapted and developed his ideas, but at heart he didn't change his mind. He was incorruptible.

That said, there are four areas I would like to cover to give a sense of the range of his poetry and where I feel Griffiths exceeded his contemporaries: his early biker work, his take on the little press, his nature writings, and finally, his prison poetry. But these are arbitrary distinctions and, in Griffiths, they all tend to fold into one.

Solidly middle class, posh even, with his parents not "being very critical, of anything," Griffiths associated with the Hells Angels as a youth. As well as the material situation of the underclasses, this informed much of his work; Griffiths wrote about both with a characteristic intensity. The kind of works you just don't get to read in England. One gets a lot of revolutionary statements—"see a fascist, kill them" sort of thing. Everyone applauds, no one leaves the house. Griffiths could do high; he could do low. Though he was sketchy at best about the details, there had been some violence in these days, which he lived with. That said, as much as he ever recanted anything, as an older man Griffiths distanced himself from his Hells Angels days. But he was never particularly a man of peace. There is no healing, and things are not going to be OK. Griffiths didn't know his way around forgiveness.

Reading his poems, I am struck by Griffiths's sense of human beings doing badly under pressure. Of course, there is nobility and humanity—but I suspect one sees them just because one hopes they are there, or should be there. From the Angels and the lumpenproletariat in his early work to the later burned-out-pit types, people in his poetry don't have a "point" that you can see rolling toward you. They

are hopelessly lost in a world that hasn't done them any good—nor ever intended to. For example, in *Paracycle*—written at a particularly perilous period in Griffiths's life when he lived in some despair with a struggling family in the deprived Whitechapel area of London—he describes the stress, the unremitting pressure of their collective stuporous condition, the beatings:

Not back at turned parts again, paraffin.  
Not gardening  
with police pulling up to watch.

And

No way to printing on,  
Or marrying,  
Or banish vanishing.

The diction is caustic, the syntax limited. These people are no good and are cracking up. But perhaps against that, there is a pathos and a love of language in some form, perhaps the beauty and fragility of a culture that is made from nothing and is about nothing. But Griffiths never lets you have it cheap because you, gentle reader, are part of the problem. The hit-about goes on:

Turn into any line of words  
Don't know,  
What I can reckon up, so much darkness for anyone.  
And gritted against their Dad.

Unbuckle jeans for bed  
Unbuild the clothing, com-  
pounding mind (is it)  
again  
Against

Where's the scalding cold  
at my arm my lung  
lamp to the whip-tricks  
of Air / August

Griffiths is a great moral poet with a boiling sense of social injustice, but he never talks over his subjects' heads. He's in there, basically as thick as them. He shares the lives and privations of the people he writes about. To Griffiths, evil isn't an abstract "Untruth or Injustice"; it has a physical and personal reality, demonstrated in the relentless and cruel police, councillors, prison officers who are in these people's faces without a break (and let's not forget the doctors, their stooges).

Griffiths's poems about his experiences as a biker and a delinquent got him some attention, a bit of rough on the London poetry scene. In the early 70s he became associated, along with other poets such as Barry MacSweeney, Allen Fisher, and Maggie O'Sullivan, with the British Poetry Revival. Griffiths got some things in the *Poetry Review* when the sympathetic Eric Mottram was editor. However, his period in the sun ended when conservative elements restored order. Mottram was fired, and Griffiths disappeared from view in Whitechapel.

The poetry in Volume 1 is based on Griffiths's association with motorcycle gangs. This tends to be the work of his that people are most familiar with. To an extent, these poems are conventional, often based around the trope of the outsider. But even within these conventions, pieces such as the *Cycles* and *War W/Windsor* sequences, as well as works such as "Five Poems" and "Sixteen Poems for Vic the Gypsy, Bob and Others," demonstrate Griffiths's ecstasy. One is struck by their mosaic quality, the many dissonant notes running against this trope, their sensitive poetic composition, the bursts of often arcane but pointed erudition.

Griffiths's early Geezer work contains substantial uncertainty about the unity of the poetic ego. The pointless, limitless oppression of other people in the controlling, organizing mind bleeds in. Griffiths hated this big poetic guy Guy and would often take great pains to distance himself from the Romantics, whom he disliked.

Possibly the most brilliant exposition of the complexities of his early work is the *Cycles*, a sprawling sequence of great variation under tight artistic control. The title probably refers to Griffiths's association with the Nomads Hells Angels chapter. When he writes about being an Angel, the first thing you pick out is the visceral joy of physically riding a motorcycle. These moments hang in haunted loops, such as in "Cycle Two (Dover Borstal)":

where's no laws for you,  
no complaints, out of jes'  
rejects

Like where's a little kid  
making  
motorbikes out of sand.

A paradise lost, or removed, but from whom it is never quite clear—it doesn't seem to be him. The *Cycles* is a composite piece—one cannot pin the narrative Griffiths down. The text is filled with voices, interlocutors, bits of found writing. These voices can be lyric, demotic, ironic—the switches are unclear and not signposted. But usually they are voices under restraint. The passages can be open, rhythmic, but are usually a cry for freedom or of incomprehension at misfortunes imposed by authority off-screen. They leap back and forth between the voice and a fragmented, vivid nature. For example, a stanza in “Cycle One: On Dover Borstal”:

You're you  
and I ain't anyone but you

The bright crazy rings in agate  
Spring is.

The flower was forced open by the sun  
is yellow of bad brass  
like I beat it golden-black

Many of Griffiths's poems in this period relate to the psychological anguish of custody. Prison is a constant, nightmarish reification of evil in his work. There was one important episode during his association with the Angels when Griffiths was arrested with what he described as a penknife in his possession. There had been some sort of fight, and he had been hit on the head. Always a taciturn man, Griffiths appeared to have suffered some sort of concussion. Unfortunately, perhaps because of this probable concussion, he was not able to talk when interviewed by the police. Assumed to be insubordinate, Griffiths was transferred to prison for a short period. He found this

experience indescribably frightening, and it seems to have been the basis of his recurrent theme of the individual lost in the institution. No way out, no revolutionary apotheosis.

In Griffiths's work one sees the functionaries associated with prisons or involved in the active expression of state control to be as faceless as they are malign. To him, the individual is very much the product of their environment and conditioning. Thus, when the gentlemen of the state hit you on the head, they also alter your mind. Griffiths did not believe in an individual soul or a facile loved-by-God goodness that intrinsically resists this conditioning. Talk like that made him nervous and irritable. To him, the soul was a murky thing—very small, local, and contingent—surrounded by parasites.

What comes across is his distrust of all large organizations, bodies of thought, and establishment art. What inevitably and unfortunately can't be conveyed in the Reality Street collection—where everything is gathered in one place to look the same—is Griffiths's key ethos as an artist, almost to the exclusion of everything else: the little press.

When I was doing a PhD on his work, I would schedule time to talk to him about his poems, to get the heart of them, their meanings, etc. This was usually a nightmare. Griffiths was unbelievably interesting. He knew about a lot of things and would throw out bones, observations, maybe a reference here and there. But the man was stringing me along. Asked directly what was going on in a certain passage, Griffiths would sigh and, with a wheeze, start to talk about something else, admittedly with a bearish intensity. The man was impenetrable.

However, none of this applied when you talked to him about how he actually made the books: their physical production, how they were laid out and printed. Then, you couldn't get him to shut up. The book as an object was of extreme importance. That he was spurned by the artistic establishment and therefore had to self-publish is only part of the truth. What was also the case was that the "book" produced by the little press had an almost spiritual importance for him. It was an object, much more than just the words on the page. It was a curse; it was a charm. Almost all the poems in Volume 1, written when Griffiths was tremendously poor, were hand-lettered, illustrated, typeset, and printed by him, inevitably in small numbers. This dedication to the book is something that he never abandoned, and many of his later, exceptional small publications (for example, the masterpiece *Durham*, not included in these volumes) continue this practice.

A wonderful example of Griffiths's love of "the book" from his middle period is *The Book of the Boat*. This is a work of hand-colored line drawings, lettered by Griffiths, around a series of poems relating to his experience on a houseboat, moving around London, then out into the Thames estuary, eventually into the danger of the shipping lanes. The work relates these adventures as well as the relationships between Griffiths and his crewmates along the way. Though some of the pictures from his original chapbook are included in the collected text, many others, along with the vivid and charming color of the original, are omitted. His ideation of the complexity and unity of small elements, reinforced by the physical appearance of the self-produced text, is lost. That being said, the poems of *The Book of the Boat* remain, even in their reduced form, peerless.

The sequence is funny, as Griffiths could be, in a very dry way. It demonstrates a light allusiveness voiced in bitter tones and an ongoing control of material. Never has his playoff between the small group and the contradictions therein, stultifying and controlling relationships, been so well articulated. In one of the most memorable sections, Griffiths and a couple members of the crew, wasters all, decide to try and supplement their meager rations by hunting rabbits with an air rifle. They are completely unsuccessful and return humiliated to the boat to continue their journey in ugly spirits, the authorities vaguely circling. They head on through the English countryside, swarming with rabbits who beard them almost by magic:

Keeping it secure. except from Stuart, that is. growling from lock to lock.  
threatening at the dogs: goading. at the humans, in pursuit. of the hull  
And past the knocked & blocked bank. into the higher, coarser.  
Countryside. the veritable: Lap of Pan.  
With a flick of our ears. with a thump of the foot. we come thru. into the  
last straight—I will disembark.  
Why would I want to stay? Till my chest furs? And my trousers rib like a  
goat's? The surly hunters. carry on: never dreaming of it.  
Never reckoning. how much more we are looked at. than we think.  
noted, posted, sighted, aligned—  
So it blurs. even the slight lip of joy. that lines & outlines & overlights.  
the being we send out. (that passes forth by day)

*The Book of the Boat* articulates the contradictions in Griffiths's work and life. The magical return of nature, Pan, and a human species too angry and exhausted to notice. I never really heard him propound a unified vision of humans as a political entity. The universe is incalculable, vast, and strange, but Griffiths's political as well as artistic thinking are directed toward the local and specific: the small group—the boat.

Griffiths's nature poems in the Reality Street volumes are a series of masterpieces of composition to which nothing in English in the second half of the twentieth century comes close. When Griffiths writes about nature, he revivifies a moribund hack of English poetic letters that nature is something to which the poet returns to confirm eternal verities, to feel and feed back into their comfortable gulf Guy sinecure. His humans are consequential to the world around them and so too is nature. It is particular, based around the interplay between small and large elements, addressing and eschewing an overarching organizing form. "Steve's Garden," a piece written in/about the garden of a friend, Steve Clews, forms the centerpiece of one of his most realized sequences on the complexities of nature, *Darwin's Dialogues*. Griffiths says on the interrelation of nature and people:

No more than surmises...  
As tho there was everywhere  
gaps in the air

and the dust, the deck  
of the block of the Moon  
a waterline glittering with bronze  
or white-painted human  
capped  
with a spine-pack  
of hoe-black boxes

A black calendar  
at last,  
all made of full-stops  
with everything hidden.

Nature is vast, fragmentary, but there is also the suggestion of a laborer who has been worked, "a spine pack /of hoe-black boxes." "Steve's Garden" displays a responsive pantheism that is also sensitive to an



often-compromised individual element: the oppressive families of the *Book of the Boat*, or the Whitechapel poems, or the noble but sclerosed mining communities in his later poems.

Griffiths, an accomplished Old English scholar (his translation of *The Battle of Maldon* is exquisite), had something of Saxon sensibilities and ambiguities about him, which fed into his nature writing. The shifting sense of the local and the eternal seems quite Saxon, moving forward and back along a continuum, passing through people, their work and their things—not settling.

A piece that articulates the interplay between the pantheistic and the human is the lengthy poem, “The Haswell Change-Over.” Griffiths visits a car boot sale in a shabby County Durham mining town (a flea market where secondhand goods are sold ad hoc by locals from the boots of their cars) to man a stall trying to shift his little press publications. Business appears to be slow and Griffiths watches the miners, dressed in a sort of cod-Country-and-Western-cowboy style, as they move around the market. He was never sure why the miners dressed in that fashion, but imagined they liked bright colors as a counterpoint to the darkness of their working lives. His description of the miners suggests a loose wildness. He meditates on their actions:

Or is it just dream?  
Or a tree-plant?  
Change-over into goat.  
To be a farm

My urban crowd,  
this carol  
sells aliveness.  
(At much much less  
than a penny a word!)

Celebrate!  
Purchase as an ocean!  
A sea of grass,  
a main of waving green,  
a little oat-acre  
for a goat  
to put four magic feet  
on.

The miners' allotments are referenced, eliding the underworld with the love, relentless return of light, of life, that is personal to the miners—travelers between both worlds. In the passage, he also works in, again, his soft spot for goats, which perhaps suggest the god Pan, a human-animal amalgam, which even the elderly Griffiths, riven by respiratory disease, always revered. There's a lot of big blokes dancing in his poems. Griffiths told a great story about how, in a 70s Angels free festival, he or someone thought it would be a good idea to sacrifice a goat in a pagan ritual thing. They got the goat, but no one could bring themselves to kill it. He recalled how the goat seemed to enjoy the festival and was taken home at first light along a railway line.

When you hung around Griffiths, he was always active at stuff—not signing petitions or waving his hands around; his perpetual employment came from some deeper monkish center. He made it clear that the poet should work for their community in an active, intercessional way. In his later Seaham home, he was highly active in support of the people around him. For example, when council sleazy types were forcing the long-standing ex-mining population out to gentrify the area as a commuter dorm for nearby Newcastle, Griffiths threw himself at the task as a practical expression of a moral dilemma. He wrote pamphlets articulating an active local anarchism, but also badgered the council relentlessly. I'm not sure why, but the council's plans were abandoned.

He could have an edge and wasn't nice like you and me are nice. He hated, with a quite terrifying intensity, the ministers of local government. I remember a meal with him at a curry house near where I lived where he convinced himself that the two loud and arrogant individuals at a neighboring table were management councillor types. I never really saw him lose it, but convulsions of rage accelerated up and down his body. We left.

Griffiths took his work for his community incredibly seriously. Visiting him, one wouldn't be introduced to artists, poets, etc., but rather go around the houses of the families who lived near him and to whom he appeared to act as an advocate/scrivener. His passion for his community was also articulated in his embrace of the language, current and historical, of the people. Apart from the dictionaries and histories toward the end of his life, Griffiths would write a dense, lyrical verse thick in local words. For example, "On Vane Tempest

Provisionally Shut, 23 October, in the Afternoon, 1992” is a poem about the closure of Seaham’s principal coal mine, upon which his community’s economic and social cohesion depended. In allusive, complex poetry taken from the rhythms and talk of the individuals he heard around him, Griffiths writes with a clear-eyed anger, a wry humor:

While the bishop that tawks to the pollis that bray’d the miners  
woz marchin’,  
wiv a thrang, weel-hair-comb’d mob  
tiv address a petishun  
til their Lord  
who lives mony a sunny mile frev here,  
Satan, wiv a singular bat  
o’ his grisly neeve  
tew’d Vane Tempest sarely,  
aal but drav it  
clean belaw ti the sea.

Griffiths was methodical in his practices. He took his research very seriously and brought a vivifying energy to it. As *The Battle of Maldon* is a driving key of assonance, his Pitmatic work is full of life, human stuff—people speech. He loved talking about the nuances of dialect and the apparent byways of local history, which informed a highly significant overriding narrative. He would talk of local cultures’ fragility but also their vibrancy: Sunderland pottery, cooking ovens in history, the geography of the countryside around Seaham. Lots of these things. And that interest, that joy of life, is there in the poems.

I want to finish by talking about *Star Fish Jail*, his imagining of his friend Delvin McIntosh’s period on remand in Wandsworth Prison, which is a work of coruscating genius. It has a clarity and a hallucinated, visionary horror that astounds me and astounded me again when I reread it recently. The work was written, in a very characteristic fashion, for practical reasons, to raise money for McIntosh’s appeal. The poem is long and written in an intense driving line. Griffiths, in the person of McIntosh, recounts his assault by warders, his transfer to solitary confinement, and the forced administration of strong antipsychotic drugs as a sedative to quiet his refractory behavior. In extremis, McIntosh/Griffiths speculates about his state and the nature of the world that has left him thus:

What I thought was roughly this : as best as I can create it again –  
Like the churning of cliff : like the flush of gears :  
    the pulsing, eating into world;  
wanted who would put a gold ring on a finger? : Give me clothes?  
Watch me the stone-fall of a city : zero's on zero's  
And what I was seeing then (what appeared around) :  
    was a series of suns;  
some all-seeing eyes : yellow suns in a circle,  
lamps theirs rotation around, in my eye : light that haunts and harries;  
I saw them going orbit, lonely, cool and gold :  
    and higher, linked and silent  
like I was into thin windless air : up where the sky indigo  
and all the snakes and the sea is tamed : everything tends out to us  
its gleam-soul shone to me mirror :  
    turned sand-kind slow, availed, was some help.

This is poetry of the most extraordinary engagement, which takes the brutalized unit in his cell and considers him in terms of interstellar consequence as well as absolute vulnerability. He is ghostlike in his physicality, sentience—English poetry just does not do this stuff. Read it and be judged, judge, because it turns out you were there and in on it. You said one hundred times you weren't—but you were. But there is a compassion, an enraged vitality—you, reader, should go off and really try to attempt something better. In the extraordinary beauty of the world, Bill Griffiths!

## REVIEWS

*Collected Poems of Bob Kaufman*, edited by Neeli Cherkovski, Raymond Foye, and Tate Swindell. City Lights, 2019.

*Collected Poems of Bob Kaufman* is a triumph over unjust neglect. Its publication ensures a renewal of interest in one of the more marginalized associates in the literary phenomenon known as the Beat Generation. The collection is edited by Kaufman's close friends and admirers, Neeli Cherkovski and Raymond Foye, both of whom contribute short personal essays, along with Tate Swindell, a younger aficionado of San Francisco poets from Kaufman's generation. This gathering of material brings all of the poet's diffusely published writings together for the first time. Swindell compiled the thoroughly researched chronology of Kaufman's life, which dispels some of the mythic fog enveloping some aspects of his biography. The editors were relentless in their search for Kaufman poems, resulting in some thirty pages of uncollected works presented here along with the complete contents of all Kaufman's published volumes: *Solitudes Crowded with Loneliness* (1965), *Golden Sardine* (1967), *The Ancient Rain* (1981), and *Cranial Guitar: Selected Poems* (1995).

Born in New Orleans in 1925, Kaufman grew up in a city that itself reflects and celebrates his own racially mixed African American background (he often claimed his father was Jewish). He joined the National Maritime Union (NMU) in 1943 and for several years pursued an itinerant career as a seaman. As he crisscrossed international shipping channels, he frequently hopped ship assignments, traveling from port to port. He spent significant amounts of time in New York City and became quite active in NMU, climbing up the political ranks of an organization the FBI considered to be infiltrated by the Communist Party. Soon the Bureau's agents were looking into his private affairs and attempting to keep track of him amid his erratic meandering. However, by 1950, he was no longer in good standing with NMU and had stopped sailing. The next year he was "[expelled] from NMU for 'degeneracy' or admitting to drug use."

After being forced out of NMU, Kaufman continued his itinerant wandering about the country. His brother Donald recalls him hopping atop a table at Vesuvio Cafe in North Beach in 1953 and reciting poetry to an enthusiastic crowd. For the rest of his life Kaufman would use San Francisco as his home base, save a stint in New York City (ca. 1960–63). He was a habitual peripatetic wanderer; he travelled a fair deal, with poetry and San Francisco's North Beach serving as his center points. In 1963, shortly after the

assassination of JFK, Kaufman entered a lengthy period of silence. Although friends report hearing him mumble something on occasion, he did not speak publicly until a poetry reading in 1974. By that time he was a more or less living myth, casting a significant veil of influence over the North Beach poetry community. Foye recalls gatherings in his kitchen at 28 Harwood Alley: “Bob was also a regular. I had tacked photographs of him on the kitchen door along with broadsides and fliers for bygone readings. ‘What am I, the local hero?’ he said with a smile one day looking at the photos.” Kaufman’s ashes were scattered into San Francisco Bay after his death in 1986.

In his blurb for *Collected Poems*, poet Will Alexander advances an argument for acknowledging Kaufman as *the* unrecognized life force of the Beat Generation: “To set the story straight it was his spirit that helped sire the Ginsberg that we know and not vice versa. It was he who magically hoisted the invisible umbrella under which Kerouac and others such as Corso were enabled to protractedly flourish.” For many readers, this will sound like a rather outlandish claim. Kaufman’s work has generally been seen as ancillary to the more prominent Beats noted by Alexander. Yet Alexander doesn’t read Kaufman’s poetry only as literature per se. His reading revels in the poems as proto-shamanic visions wherein he witnesses how Kaufman “volcanically en-veined the Beats as a mirage enveloped Surrealist; not as a formal poet, but one, like Rimbaud, who embodied butane.” Full recognition of Kaufman’s work has for too long lagged from the absence of just such a reading. Rather than being taken as embodying the fiery force of poetry’s power to enchant and consume the poet’s own sense of self, critical regard for Kaufman has often aligned his work simply with his social ties to the Beats. The work deserves to be taken in a broader context and on its own terms.

Alexander’s positioning of Kaufman presents a fitting challenge to the status quo reception his work has received. His remarks significantly hem in tendencies of Ginsberg’s lopsided marketing effort to define the Beat Generation almost solely on behalf of the works of his closest pals: William Burroughs, Gregory Corso, and Jack Kerouac. After all, four white men do not a “generation” make and, as a Black man, Kaufman’s outsider status is surely due to latent racism. As poet Ted Joans, also African American, claims: “The white poets of the Beat Generation have borrowed the hipster attitude from black Americans.”<sup>†</sup> Alexander, of course, addresses this same concern that extends much further than mere borrowing or adapting from the work of one’s peers. As Kaufman himself puts it, “Allen passed through the Black Hole of Calcutta / behind my eyes.” The claim extends further than just a necessary broadening of the tent, as it were. Kaufman, both in person and

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<sup>†</sup>/ Ted Joans, “Ted Joans Speaks” in *Black, Brown, & Beige: Surrealist Writings from Africa and the Diaspora* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009), 230.

upon the page, presented a version of *The Poet*, which Ginsberg himself was desirous of representing. After *Howl*, Ginsberg rarely attained the oracular fury grounded by lived experience that is abundant throughout Kaufman's work.

Kaufman's poetry deserves to be read in full recognition of the astonishing power behind his avowed commitment against the odds to a poetic vocation first and foremost. Kaufman was a walking and talking poem. He enters directly into his poems not in any confessional sense but rather in the raw tumultuous assault language wages upon his consciousness. And it needs to be noted that he is not bewailing his personal state or looking for sympathy. His is an expression of direct poetic transmission. "In one ear a spider spins its web of eyes, / In the other a cricket chirps all night. / This is the end, / Which art, that proves my glory has brought me. / I would die for Poetry."

The onslaught he suffers at the hands of his poems comes fueled by the rhythmic measures of remembered poetic lore swirling in his head. This is an image partially promulgated in Jack Spicer's unfinished detective novel, *The Tower of Babel*, where Kaufman is the likely inspiration for the character Washington Jones, along with a fish out of whose mouth poems are granted to Spicer's protagonist. The case of Spicer as yet another poet who benefited under Kaufman's "umbrella" is further complicated by the fact that Spicer's lover Russell Fitzgerald was hopelessly enthralled with Kaufman. Much to Spicer's chagrin, Fitzgerald pursued sexual acts with Kaufman, whose sexuality appears to have been rather fluid. Spicer's intense jealousy led to sexual sparring with Kaufman in which the lines between poetry and life were hopelessly blurred. The lives of both poets demonstrate the hazards of such poetic practice. Spicer died of alcoholism at forty. His dying words, according to Robin Blaser, were "My vocabulary did this to me." Kaufman was ever aware of the overwhelming nature of poetry's force at work upon him in his life. As he laments, "who wants to be a poet & work a twenty four hour shift, they never ask you first, who wants to listen to the radiator play string quartets all night." Despite the grueling labor involved, Kaufman's oracular anointment to living a life committed to poetry seemingly flowed as an inevitable life course.

Kaufman holds forth in his poems as visionary seer: "I see the death some cannot see, because I am a poet spread-eagled on this bone of the world." Kaufman immerses readers in his own often-chaotic experience of being at odds with an American society where his identity as an African American conducting various personal affairs on city streets and in bars made him a regular target for routine abuse at the hands of various institutional forces. As Devorah Major's foreword to *Collected Poems* describes, Kaufman was "[a] man who wrote poems on newspaper margins, the man flowing with piled, jazz-infused visions as wife or friend transcribed his surrealistic rants, the man yelling poems at strangers parking their cars on North Beach street

corners, the man repeatedly and repeatedly arrested on San Francisco streets, at times after being harshly beaten by the arresting officers.” In what was then a predominately white working-class neighborhood of the city, the spectacle of Kaufman’s public rants was taken as a threat to law and order by North Beach’s notoriously racist Irish American cops, who saw Kaufman carousing predominately with whites, including women. Kaufman moved through a racially tense, dangerous world with poetry, the noise of words providing him limited safeguards. As he put it: “His is a noisy loud one, the silent beat is beaten by who is not beating on the drum, his silent beat drowns out all the noise, it comes before and after every beat, you hear it in between, its sound is / Bob Kaufman, Poet.”

There are lighter moments visualizing his induction as artistic medium: “In the night he comes, my prechanteur, / Singing the silent songs, enchanting songs.” Yet Kaufman always returns with urgency to the near traumatic force by which poetry anoints him as its messenger, usurping his physical body. He often capitalized all the lines in his poems as if to add emotive weight:

I DREAMED I DREAMED AN AFRICAN DREAM. MY HEAD WAS  
A BONY GUITAR, STRUNG WITH TONGUES, AND PLUCKED BY  
GOLD FEATHERED WINGLESS MOONDRIPPED RITUALS UNDER A  
MIDNIGHT SUN, DRUMMING HUMAN BEATS FROM THE HEART  
OF AN EBONY GODDESS, HUMMING THE MELODIES OF BEING  
FROM STONE TO BONE AND FROM SAND ETERNAL.

There is beauty to these lines, but the presence of an enduring jeopardy is undeniable. Defining key experiences in his life, Kaufman’s Blackness plays an unmistakable, central role in his poetics. It is the lens through which his annunciations of poetry’s perilous exuberance are pronounced.

At times a palpable wariness comes across his poetry. The racial tensions he faced on a daily basis took a toll that is reflected in such moments in the work, especially when graphed onto Kaufman’s use of metaphor, as with the sequence of koan-like images in “Heavy Water Blues”:

After riding across the desert in a taxicab,  
he discovered himself locked in a pyramid  
with the face of a dog on his breath.

The search for the end of the circle,  
constant occupation of squares.

Why don’t they stop throwing symbols,  
the air is cluttered enough with echoes.



Poetry served as his vital connection to the world, enabling him to defiantly respond to the hazardous conditions in which he lived. His poems became literally the embers warming him, providing a means of existence and reasoning enough worth living for: “Remember not to forget the dying colors of yesterday / As you inhale tomorrow’s hot dream, blown from frozen lips.” Here he bears witness to the weariness of living on the edges of contemporary society where “tomorrow’s hot dream” might be the latest marketing fad or the classic American Dream. Refusing such marketability, Kaufman’s work speaks out for those forgotten in the consumer-driven crush of that ever elusive but perpetual American dream.

The State of California’s execution of Caryl Chessman on May 2, 1960, after twelve years of appeals filed and despite his claims of innocence and intimidation at the time of his confession, riled the country. Kaufman responded with what is one of his best-known poems, “Carl Chessman (Reel I, II, III, IV),” the opening poem of *Golden Sardine*. It is a protesting yowl against the corrosive institutional racism of the court system. Chessman had been found guilty of nonlethal kidnapping and, due to a subsequently repealed, faulty California law, was sentenced to death. The travesty of his case continues to provide an example for death penalty opponents. Visual artist Bruce Conner’s *Child*, dedicated to Chessman, hauntingly illuminates the horrors of state execution, and Kaufman added his voice to the tumultuous chorus of protest and lament. “Carl Chessman (Reel I, II, III, IV)” is an extended montage sequence of prose documentary of the execution and lyric bursts of elegiac grief. Kaufman holds Chessman up as a symbol of universal injustice while situating California as an eternally bleak landscape in which miserable figures suffer through their lives:

Here, Chessman, is the message to all garcias everywhere, longitude  
people, beyond the margin,  
I am glad now, sad now, home, in TIME FOR THE MURDER, guilty  
California is quiet

Alien winds sweeping the highway  
fling the dust of medicine men,  
long dead,  
in the california afternoon

Into the floating eyes  
of spitting gadget salesman,  
eating murdered hot dogs,  
in the california afternoon

The ancient hindu guru  
dreams of alabama,  
gingerbread visions,  
of angry policeman,  
as he waves a sacred raga,  
over the breast of  
frigid sunworshippers,  
in the california afternoon

A sad-eyed Mexican,  
sacrifices an easter-faced virgin,  
to a cynical god,  
beneath an ancient sun,  
in the california afternoon

It is of course Spanish poet Federico García Lorca, a continual touchstone for Kaufman, who is the referent of “to all garcias everywhere.” The refrain “in the california afternoon” appropriately echoes Lorca’s infamous line “A las cinco de la tarde,” at five o’clock in the afternoon, in his “Lament for Ignacio Sánchez Mejías,” a Spanish bullfighter felled in the ring.

As Cherkovski puts it, “there is an explicit meaning to the work, but it is clothed in a language that frees the perceptions from mere journalism.” Rather than utilizing poetry as a tool for reporting on particular details of the travesty of Chessman’s execution, Kaufman launches a poetic engagement decrying the injustice of state-mandated murder and breaking free of mere pedestrian perspectives.

Kaufman’s work is at times chaotic, for it is ever alive in the moment of its creation. He had little hand in collecting his poems for publication—most of his books were organized by others. His second wife, Eileen, long stood by his side through myriad domestic troubles and his own personal ups and downs. She always served as a faithful steward to his work at times when he was either unwilling or unable. *Collected Poems* is a fierce retrieval of a body of work that is not easily assimilated and nearly impossible to summarize. As with any of the greatest poets, reading Kaufman is a journey of its own parameters where anything, above all the unbelievable, is possible. Every page surprises and challenges. The collection is indeed all the more triumphant given the odds that so much of this work could easily have been forever lost. What a wonder to have it gathered all together and at hand at last.

Patrick James Dunagan

Andrea Dworkin, *Last Days at Hot Slit*, edited by Johanna Fateman and Amy Scholder. Semiotext(e), 2019.

Andrea Dworkin is having a moment—finally. This was the sense critics shared in the first slate of reviews of *Last Days at Hot Slit*, a 2019 anthology edited by Johanna Fateman and Amy Scholder that collects excerpts of Dworkin’s major critical works alongside extracts of novels, lesser-known talks, and previously unpublished essays and letters. Until this moment, Dworkin, who died in 2005, had always been famous primarily for her infamy. She was a radical feminist who published her first book, *Woman Hating*, in 1974, four years after the Second Wave’s bright- and quick-burning radical feminist movement had published its major works—Kate Millett’s *Sexual Politics*, Shulamith Firestone’s *The Dialectic of Sex*, and Robin Morgan’s *Sisterhood is Powerful*. It was as if Dworkin’s feminist career had been pitched right into the backlash. Three years after that first book she began work on her second major work, *Pornography: Men Possessing Women*, from which her reputation has not yet recovered. Dworkin was primarily known for three things: her leadership in anti-porn activism alongside feminist legal scholar Catharine MacKinnon, which split the feminist movement into bitterly opposed “sex-positive” and “anti-porn” factions; her 1996 book, *Intercourse*, which has notoriously been read as arguing that all sex is rape; and being fat, frizzy-haired, and uniformed in baggy overalls—the look that symbolically confirmed her as the man-hating fever dream whom right-wing reactionaries loved to hate and feminists furiously disowned.

Now there’s a growing sense among some critics and feminists that this may be the moment we’re ready for Dworkin; or actually, that it’s been Dworkin’s world all along and the rest of us are only just realizing it. Her insistence that sexual violence was both widespread and catastrophic, that it was hidden in plain sight, was read in her lifetime as hyperbolic, attention-seeking, and deluded. For example, on a college speaking tour in 1975, in the talk “The Rape Atrocity and the Boy Next Door,” she told women that rape was the reality, in fact the very basis, of institutions like marriage, otherwise designed to “mystify and mislead” women into believing the crimes against them were “trivial, comic, irrelevant.” It has lately become much harder to interpret such claims as hyperbolic and deluded: after the testimony of millions of women on Twitter and Facebook during the #MeToo movement, after the Harvey Weinstens, Larry Nassars, and Jeffrey Epsteins we’ve all been shocked to discover in plain sight. Returning to Dworkin’s work in light of the #MeToo moment is a way of at least having the grace to be ashamed of that shock: women were telling her, and she was telling us all along, and all she got for it, even from feminists, was grief.

But if this moment, whatever it is or maybe already was, seems to mandate a rediscovery of Dworkin’s work, that rediscovery is decidedly ambivalent. In a

review of *Last Days at Hot Slit* in the *New Yorker*, Lauren Oyler wrote: “In the reconsiderations of Dworkin that have proliferated in the past couple of years, since Donald Trump was elected and #MeToo made it fashionable to express skepticism or hatred of men, a positive, if qualified, consensus has coalesced around [Dworkin’s] work.” And Jennifer Szalai similarly observed in the *New York Times*: “A new generation of feminists has reclaimed her, seeing in Dworkin’s incandescent rage a source of illumination, even as they bristle at some of her specific views.” As if to reconcile readers’ contradictory desires—to reparatively appreciate a disavowed feminist foremother while disavowing some “specific views”—Dworkin’s reviewers urge us to read her in a new way. They share the sense that Dworkin is best read *expressively*, that what she offers us is a chance to connect with the “incandescent rage” conveyed in the rhythms of her writing and her story as an embattled figure. So, for example, Szalai writes that although Dworkin was famous for “issuing categorical edicts,” like her declaration in the introduction to *Pornography* that porn was “Dachau brought into the bedroom and celebrated,” such provocations were the “least interesting” aspect of her work. Szalai celebrates the “hallmarks of [her] writing,” “the confident strut, the incantatory repetition, the startling, belligerent language,” and in the process, she recovers Dworkin as someone who “thought deeply and read widely and was preoccupied with questions not only of justice but also of style.”

The same approach to Dworkin leads reviewers to dwell on her biography. Szalai notes that Dworkin “composed her work from a personal place” and wrote “as a woman, as a child who was molested by a stranger, as a battered wife.” Almost every review following the publication of *Last Days* recounts these biographical facts from Johanna Fateman’s introduction: Dworkin’s first brush with sexual violence occurred when she was arrested for protesting the Vietnam War and subjected to a brutal gynecological exam in jail. She had her second when she moved to Amsterdam and married a member of the anarchist group Provo, who subjected her to brutal domestic abuse. She wrote her first book, which she originally wanted to title *Last Days at Hot Slit*, in hiding and on the run in the Netherlands, in order to “find out what had happened to me and why,” as she recalled in a later essay “My Life as a Writer.” The critical motif suggests that her style mirrors her biography, and these both offer today’s reader a (rare) chance for identification and catharsis. “She wrote with a passion and anger still uncommon in women,” Moira Donegan wrote in *Bookforum* and, a few paragraphs later, “Dworkin had reason to be angry: Her life was marked by the kind of male violence that is disturbingly common yet consistently goes unacknowledged.” Reading Dworkin this way is like appreciating her as a magnificent tragic character: part Cassandra, part Medea, doomed to be ignored when she was right, led by rage to be militantly committed to error. If she was wrong, this reading implies, at least she was authentically wrong, wrong by virtue of a steadfast loyalty to her own lived

experience—and if we have to put on our rational faces and agree that she was wrong, aren't so many of us, really, that mad, and isn't it a bit thrilling, a bit necessary, to see a woman unleash it as if impervious to the consequences?

This is not yet the reconsideration Dworkin deserves. Appreciating Dworkin “as a writer” and “as a person” seem to be ways to avoid her “as a thinker.” Although eloquent on Dworkin’s style, on her bravery and prescience in insistently trying to expose sexual assault, many of her reviewers found it surprisingly easy to dismiss the more controversial moments of Dworkin’s rhetoric as dramatic effect, her contradictions as mistakes, and to believe that her theorizing, as Elaine Blair puts it in the *New York Review of Books*, “gets the better of her.” To take one example: on the comparison that Dworkin draws between porn and the Holocaust, which Szalai dismisses as a “categorical edict,” Donegan writes, “When she was most fervently campaigning against porn, Dworkin expressed the hope that it would one day be banned, eradicated; she compared the anti-woman ‘propaganda’ of pornography to the anti-Jewish propaganda of Goebbels. It’s overly simplistic, and it’s naïve.” Oyler writes: “She compares violence against women to the Holocaust, with women who value heterosexuality being ‘collaborators’ and pornography akin to Goebbels’s anti-Jewish propaganda,” performing a “sort of childish qualification to imply that, actually, one of these [sexual violence] is worse.”

*Last Days* offers plenty of evidence to suggest that Dworkin’s work should be approached with a basic presumption of her intelligence. One such compelling attestation in the anthology is Fateman’s introduction, which offers a thoughtful reflection on why Dworkin was so thoroughly plagued by the kind of “glib” readings Fateman takes to be symptomatic of “the cultural forces working against Dworkin’s legibility as a thinker.” About one less than subtle *New York Times* review of Dworkin’s novel *Mercy*, in which the reviewer concludes, “Ms. Dworkin advocates nothing short of killing men,” Fateman writes: “in a misreading that echoes so many reactions to Dworkin, [*Mercy*’s reviewer] takes the novel’s shocking collapse of the metaphorical and the literal, of fantasy and confession, as a sign that its plot is actually a plan.” This strikes me as a revelatory insight into Dworkin’s reception. What makes her difficult to read is precisely what many think makes her easy to read: the assumption of her literalness. It’s as if the astute and almost universal characterizations of her style as “uncompromising,” “stark,” and “blunt” quickly slide into assumptions that she is “straightforward,” “un-nuanced,” and “reductive.”

This is why, for example, so many reviewers find her comparison of porn to Holocaust propaganda so objectionable—they read it, at worst, as a facile rhetorical move trading on the horrors of the Holocaust for cheap shock value and, at best, as blundering over the important distinctions between different kinds of oppression. Either way, they understand her to

be drawing a straightforward equivalence between porn and the Holocaust. But Dworkin understood her style to be anything but straightforward. In “My Life as a Writer,” included at the end of *Last Days*, Dworkin writes: “I’d like to take what I know and just hand it over. But there is always a problem for a woman: being believed. How can I think I know something? How can I think that what I know might matter?... My only chance to be believed is to find a way of writing bolder and stronger than woman hating itself....” Everywhere in that essay Dworkin figures her own writing as calculated and covert, designed to convey her knowledge to the right audience, under the nose of a society that would distort or disbelieve it: “I would have to think strategically, with a militarist’s heart: as if my books were complex explosives, mine fields set down in the culture to blow up the status quo.” I would argue, with Dworkin, that there is really nothing straightforward at all about language like this: “There were no photographs—real or simulated—[of the Jews] getting on the trains with their hands happily fingering their exposed genitals.” This image does indeed represent a crass and unnuanced collapse of porn-into-Holocaust, but it’s actually so literal, and so vividly crass, that it’s difficult to imagine it as some kind of sincere assertion that porn is *really* “as bad as” the Holocaust.

What the comparison *does* actually assert can only be understood if we stop taking her to be issuing some kind of categorical edict and instead read the comparison as part of a passage that constitutes a sustained train of thought. That passage begins with a discussion of the limits of Holocaust propaganda: toward the end of the war, Dworkin writes, Goebbels exhibited a “rare lapse” by making a film of supposedly traitorous Nazi generals being hung to death by meat hooks. The film made audiences physically sick. It didn’t “work.” Dworkin ends this passage not by asserting that we should now react to porn as if it were Nazi propaganda, but by suggesting that “the questions now really are: why is pornography credible in our society? How can anyone believe it? And then: how subhuman would women have to be for the pornography to be true?”

Dworkin’s comparison doesn’t take place along the “childish” axis of relative badness. She suggests that porn, like propaganda, faces representational limits. Even for Goebbels, propaganda was not simply favorable representations of actions that served power; propaganda had to fit itself and operate *with* societal beliefs that produced or allowed the violence it sought to validate and use. Jews fingering themselves on the way to Auschwitz doesn’t “work” for us; we immediately feel it to be tasteless, wrong, some sort of category violation. But women being held down, strung up, cut, burned, shaved, forcefully penetrated, Dworkin writes, *does* work—we see it as sex, and every day it makes us come. The force of this distinction is not to say that we should recognize the

disparity and chalk it up as one more indignity women have to suffer over and above what the Holocaust victims suffered. The distinction shows us that the strength of our feeling that the image of Jews fingering themselves represents some kind of violation, on the one hand, and the strength of our feeling that porn is a healthy exercise of free speech, on the other, evidences that there are rules shaping what we accept as valid representation. In other words, Dworkin doesn't stumble, in her righteous outrage over the horrors of sexual violence, into an inept metaphor; she intentionally provokes the reader's sense that comparing porn to the Holocaust is outrageous, in order to show the reader that our sense of what is sex, and what is violence, is complexly, inversely, but also inseparably related to its representation.

To read Dworkin as her critics do, as "childish" saying that we should see porn as being like propaganda because sexual violence is *really* as bad as genocide, is to be in thrall to an understanding of representation she's explicitly writing against, one in which sex can "really" be anything at all "underneath" its representation. Representation in this reading is arbitrary, something that overlays and obscures the reality of sex. To be committed to this picture of representation is to find yourself ill-equipped to understand Dworkin's project. If you do not understand that what "works" as a representation of sex is bound up in and therefore crucially revealing of its reality in ways that need to be explained, *Pornography* will always seem to you like a kind of dour project, weirdly and unnecessarily "fixated" on porn amid the wide world of "real" injustices like unequal pay and actual domestic violence. In other words, there's a direct through line from appreciating Dworkin's style as straightforward and strident to devaluing her intellectual project.

Insisting on taking Dworkin seriously as a thinker is not to say that it isn't worthwhile to consider her as an artist and figure. But better than appreciating how steadfastly she was committed to her ideas, even if they were wrong, would be to appreciate the way her personal acts represented expressions of her ideas themselves. What was more shocking to me about *Last Days at Hot Slit* than, say, "categorical edicts" about the Holocaust was the evolution it traces in her relationship to her family, culminating in Dworkin's explanation in the essay "My Life as a Writer" that she learned to stop loving her mother. She writes, "I loved her madly when I was a child, which she never believed." In a 1978 letter to her parents, published for the first time in *Last Days*, Dworkin warns them that she's publishing an essay ("A Battered Wife Survives") that she thinks will embarrass them; she writes, "I also hope so much that this will not lead to another period of no communication, anger, and hurt. I would like it so much if you could appreciate me for having had the courage to write this piece, and the talent to write it so well." Twenty years later, Dworkin coolly sums up her relationship with her mother thus: "She often told me that she loved me but did not like me. I came to believe

that whatever she meant by love was too remote, too cold, too abstract or formulaic to have anything to do with me as an individual, as I was.”

This arc gives the reader the material for a biographical reading that appreciates Dworkin for being uncompromising in her commitment, if we see it as evoking a woman who holds her politics so close, understands them to be so immediate and personal, that there’s no agreeing to disagree: to dislike them is to erase her. To read her that way wouldn’t be wrong, exactly: the figure of Dworkin that emerges from *Last Days* can be formidable, especially to the feminist reader. It’s easy to feel like an impostor in one’s political ideals next to someone who endured homelessness, had almost all of her work subject to intellectual contempt, became the near-universal object of hatred for misogynists and feminists alike, and refused the love of her own mother in order to keep insisting her own ideals were right. But appreciating Dworkin along those lines doesn’t really constitute a recovery of her work. Readers have always tended to read Dworkin as puritanical, as if her life was the model response to her writing and each book mandated a litany of sacrifices to you and me personally: give up your books, your porn, your sex, your family. It sponsors, in other words, a narrow vision of what to take away from Dworkin.

But if instead of understanding her life as a kind of formal model for political commitment bled of its content, we understand her personal decisions to express thought, and her thought to bear on the deepest parts of personal life, we will really be reading her in a new way. Reading the distance between the 1978 letter to her parents and the 1995 dismissal of her mother as mapping a trajectory no less theoretical than the one between *Pornography* and *Intercourse*—in fact, the one illuminates the other—allows us to see a positive dimension of her work. That positive dimension is perhaps never clearer than in her decision to cut her mother out. What her mother offered was not legible to her as love; only an emotion that beheld her as real, as an individual, could be deemed love. If what she wrote in *Pornography* was that “sex” is violence, and what she wrote in *Intercourse* is that “love” is contempt, then what she also implicitly meant was that if “sex” is violence then it is not sex, if “love” is contempt, it is not love. It’s not that women should stop desiring; it’s that women should insist on the real thing, even if the real thing doesn’t exist, even if there’s no available language to describe it. What’s formidable about Dworkin is not the scope of her sacrifice or anger but of her ambition.

Dana Glaser



Farid Matuk, *The Real Horse: Poems*. University of Arizona Press, 2018.  
Wendy Trevino, *Cruel Fiction*. Commune Editions, 2018.

Farid Matuk's *The Real Horse* and Wendy Trevino's *Cruel Fiction* begin inside enclosures from which they imagine and build arguments for radical forms of liberation. Matuk's second book opens in a box, Trevino's first in a jail cell. From within these spaces of confinement, as their titles indicate, Matuk and Trevino question what is considered "real" and what "fiction," including the violence (oppressive and emancipatory) these concepts conceal. They do so primarily through what Matuk calls "something like sonnets." As Terrance Hayes puts it in *American Sonnets for My Past and Future Assassin*, this sort of sonnet "lock[s] you in," functioning as "part prison, / Part panic closet, a little room in a house set aflame."<sup>†</sup> Alongside Hayes's "American sonnets," which are themselves modeled on Wanda Coleman's sonnets and John Murillo's sonnet sequence, "A Refusal to Mourn the Deaths, by Gunfire, of Three Men in Brooklyn," from his collection *Kontemporary Amerikan Poetry*, Matuk's and Trevino's sonnet sequences represent perhaps the most incisive iterations of what the critic Dan Chiasson calls American poetry's "sonnet surge." While Hayes's and Murillo's sonnets tackle antiblackness in its brutalizing United Statesian forms, Matuk's and Trevino's sonnets confront the globalized epistemic, linguistic, and material violences deployed in support of racial capitalism's perpetuation. And they critique a specific iteration of global capitalism at that—what the Mexican activist and intellectual Sayak Valencia calls "gore capitalism," where the accumulation is in bodies.

*Cruel Fiction*'s opening poem, "From Santa Rita 128–131," inhabits a prison cell or, more precisely, "5 different 'tanks'" in the Santa Rita jail, after the poet and others were arrested during Occupy Oakland in January 2012. The series of ninety-eight standalone sentences calls to mind the simultaneous linguistic and juridical registers of "sentence," while implicitly alluding to similarly situated poetries. It recalls the Chicana/o/x "pinto" poets, including Judy Lucero, who wrote under the nom de plume #21918, her prison number. As "a list of things remembered," it evokes the "count" poems in *One Big Self*, C. D. Wright's investigation of mass incarceration in Louisiana, and poems by political prisoners, as gathered in Carolyn Forché's anthology *Against Forgetting*.

The first seventy sentences of "From Santa Rita 128–131" each begin with a recognizable poetic "I," as in "I was cold approximately 43 hours," "I saw 5 slices of bologna stick to a white wall," and "I met 1 woman whose mother had bailed out Huey Newton." By the end of the poem, however, Trevino's "I" has dispersed into a radical collectivity that erupts into the

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<sup>†</sup>/ Terrance Hayes, *American Sonnets for My Past and Future Assassin* (New York: Penguin, 2018), 11.

second poem's subjectless first sentence: "Santander Bank was smashed into!" This dispersal constitutes one of Trevino's most powerful interventions. From the beginning, *Cruel Fiction* makes its "I" accountable to a collective "we." This "we" exists beyond the confines of poems and their readers, and it is galvanized by the poems in order to "smash" the capitalist order in the streets where collective identity remains secondary to militant action. Trevino's conception of poetic labor foregrounds this relationship. On August 26, 2019, she tweeted her gratitude to readers, remarking that the attention *Cruel Fiction* has received "gives me hope that 'we' will all be reading a lot less/be in the streets a lot more (again) in the near future."

Trevino writes deft sentences with lucidly articulated political stakes, and her sonnets in particular feature prominent caesura created by frequent punctuation and elastic enjambments. In contrast, other than its first poem, Matuk's *The Real Horse* eschews easily scannable sentences, as defined by the marked visual language of initial capital letters and end-stopped punctuation as well as quickly identifiable agents and actions. While this aesthetic can be traced to modernists and mid-century poets, it most closely resembles two of Matuk's contemporaries: the Roberto Tejada of *Full Foreground* and the Fred Moten of *Hughson's Tavern* (both poets blurbed *The Real Horse*). Consider the representative phrase "mica in the mosaic of the bank portico" in the third poem, "A Daughter Having Been of the Type," one of four long poems. Because such elemental, granular, and layered images—which Trevino's wiry, declarative sentences strategically elude—defy linear logic, the reader must assemble the surrounding fragments into a mosaic rather than a sequence. That's why the "complete" sentences of *The Real Horse*'s short first piece are important—the epistolary proem "[Dear daughter]" gives implicit instructions to both the reader and the poet's daughter. Matuk writes, "I started these poems as a way to see you even before you arrived, anxious about how the body we gave you would bear power's projections." Here "you" is the poet's daughter, but it's also the reader (who has just now "arrived") and, later in the book, the poems' historical actors. "You" thus shifts between an intimate "you" and the "you"s across space and time in whom that specific "you" is reflected, contained, identified, and let loose.

"[Dear daughter]" first introduces a box by referring to Dawn Lundy Martin's collection *Life in a Box Is a Pretty Life* (foreshadowing later allusions to Henry Box Brown), then a cage through the performance artist Tehching Hsieh ("he was undocumented in the 1980s, like me"). Matuk links these forms to poetic constraints: "Where these poems are something like sonnets, I'm trying to draw the box a song makes in the air, a box into which we can turn away." "[Dear daughter]" ends with a gift for the daughter that doubles as a guide for the reader: "Inside, I took out what punctuation I could to make more room for you." In contrast to the heavily punctuated *Cruel Fiction*,

where the title sonnet, “[A border, like race, is a cruel fiction],” uses seven commas (all internal to lines) and ten periods (all but two internal to lines) to accentuate through caesura its seven references to “violence” as the purpose of a border, *The Real Horse’s* erasure of punctuation entrusts daughter and reader with the interpretive agency to form their own sentences. If Trevino invites readers to join a “we” in the streets, Matuk invites them to become the “you” in his pages. This “you” diverges from the one Evie Shockley sees in Claudia Rankine’s *Citizen: An American Lyric*. Whereas Rankine’s “lyric-You” “thrusts every reader into the position of speaker and addressee simultaneously,” Matuk’s “you” moves between specific figures and the many “you”s comprising a future “we.”

I’ve spent so much time on these two books’ beginnings because they are instructive for at least three reasons. First, Trevino’s and Matuk’s opening pieces teach us how to (re)read their books and from where: spaces of confinement *with* others, all of whom are collectively bound in agitating for emancipation. Second, on initial read, Trevino’s syntax seems straightforward, while Matuk’s frequently seems impenetrable. But the ease with which Trevino’s sentences move is misleading, and the lack of punctuation in *The Real Horse* intentionally obscures the goals of meaning-making Matuk outlines in “[Dear Daughter].” In fact, subsequent readings flip each first reading’s relationship to difficulty: *The Real Horse* gets “easier,” opening wider for readers, who begin to hear the absent punctuation, while Trevino’s “we” becomes more “difficult,” growing in size, range, and complexity.

Third, their openings delineate the living character of their source materials and social commitments. Whereas the more discursive *Cruel Fiction* forgoes notes, *The Real Horse’s* long Notes section precedes a list of texts, sites, and performances called “See also reservoir, friend, figure, mirror, obstruction, horse.” Both books share an allegiance to “friends” summoned in their pages (e.g., Martin, in Matuk’s case; Raquel Salas Rivera and many comrades whose surnames go unmentioned, in Trevino’s) and the resistant cultures they make together. They diverge in how they write this archive: Matuk “swirl[s] the reservoir / of what was said”; Trevino composes through “a constant refashioning of the on-hand.” If these techniques attend equally to extant materials, they differ in how they make poems from them. “Swirling” produces a sensorial and epistemic disorientation reflected in Matuk’s multidirectional lines. “Refashioning” indicates the precise shape and locution of Trevino’s sculptural sonnets.

Matuk’s and Trevino’s shared object of critique is simultaneously “real” and a “cruel fiction”: what Matuk calls “a claim to life” and its corollary, the so-called “good life” promised by submission to capital’s imperatives. Matuk repeats “a claim to life” five times, and though its definition, like ideology, is purposefully slippery, the claim is clearly violent and exclusionary, explicitly tied to whiteness and capitalist class relations. In short, the liberal project

of colonial modernity makes an exclusive “claim to life.” In *The Real Horse*, this claim conceals perversities (lynching, bestiality, drone warfare) in racial capitalism’s twin fetishes of property (both material and literary) and propriety (as in the current calls for “civility” in the face of fascism): “if I just write what I know / I won’t use anybody is part of the fantasy of being discreet / in a body as a claim to life.” Through Matuk’s serpentine syntax, we intuit that his “white enough” daughter will eventually have a choice to make about where to stand: with the purveyors of “the fantasy” or with those taking a “pledge of resistance” against US imperialism.

An anti-imperialist “pledge” likewise guides *Cruel Fiction*’s thirty-sonnet sequence “Brazilian Is Not a Race.” The sequence shows how capitalist ideology passes off this “claim to life,” which is juridically and culturally reserved for white bodies, as a “shared” universal. “You can share a country,” Trevino writes, “Like you can share a culture—with people / Who want you to disappear, who would take / Everything from you & still want you gone.” Here Trevino’s “you” is prelude to a militant “we” that would resist the systemic violence produced by this narrow “claim to life.” She and Matuk suggest that numerous historical “claims” ground United Statesian culture: slave owners’ claims to human property; settlers’ claims to stolen indigenous lands; states’ exclusive claims to violence; home and business owners’ insurance claims following “natural” disasters; publishers’, artists’, and tech bros’ philosophical claims to intellectual property; employers’ claims to workers’ time; corporations’ claims to legal personhood; men’s claims to women’s bodies; and so on. In the book’s other thirty-sonnet sequence “Popular Culture & Cruel Work,” Trevino dexterously reveals how pop culture gives “power’s projections” material form, legitimating the claim to life and sublimating it to extract profit from its cruelty.

Out of this mutual critique, the books build distinctive modes for challenging the claim’s dominion over all forms of life. Trevino’s first-person plural “we” and Matuk’s second-person plural “you” offer porous, mutually reinforcing positions from which to confront capitalism and to build more capacious, just, and dignified lifeworlds beyond the individuated enlightenment language of property “claims.” Near the end of *Cruel Fiction*’s first section, the fierce prose meditation “The We of a Position” steers the two following thirty-sonnet sequences, which dramatize a nimble mind working through how this “we” might look, speak, and act. In the terms of “[Dear daughter],” Matuk’s sequences navigate *the you of a projection*, where each “you” is summoned and objectified by “power’s projections.” Yet because “you” shifts into plurality, like Trevino’s “we,” it entails a latent collective agency against that power. After all, both pronominal forms—“we” and “you”—are shaped in and by the violence of an authoritarian “they.” As Trevino insists in her title sonnet, this is a “Violence no one can confuse for / Anything but violence. So much violence / Changes relationships, births a

people / They can reason with.” The conspicuous prepositional phrase “reason with” implies the exertion of rational and legal claims on people’s bodies and their origin stories. At the same time, the state rejects the constraints of “reason” in the physical destruction of these very bodies and the collective stories they carry within them.

Various projections of a multitudinous “you” suture the disjunctive associations of Matuk’s sonnet sequences. In “A Daughter the Real Horse,” the projection takes on striking historical form: a “scrolling panorama” of mirrored words projected over the naked body of the performer Adah Menken, who is bound to a horse trampling across a Civil War–era stage. In this case, “you” is Menken’s ambiguously racialized body, but it’s also the poet’s daughter and all the women and girls who endure the white gaze. “If I could be one of the rooms / you pass through on your way out of you,” Matuk wistfully imagines. In the next poem, “A Daughter That She May Touch the Deployments,” he wonders, “can a daughter finally ‘be unavailable’ / to whatever various slants of porn light would try to share or foreclose you.” Matuk’s second-person plural “you” calls into language a transhistorical collective subject with the capacity to shift social positions and locations. After all, in any “we” move, jostle, and cooperate multiple “you”s.

“You” moves most forcefully though the book’s final sequence, “No Address.” In this poem, Matuk makes space for his daughter to subvert categories and to elude the police state, which aims at all times to pin each “you” to a physical location. “No Address” begins with a diagram juxtaposing Henry Box Brown to Rachel Corrie, the United Statesian woman who laid her white body in front of an IDF bulldozer in 2003. Here’s the second sonnet’s concluding octave:

I can make my bad teeth better and hang a little gold  
at your wrist any verb could turn to a new feeling  
waking glad to remain an owner  
if whiteness or a people is a claim to life you slept through  
the night in a house that stands  
and our papers are filed with the state so vacationing  
we can hike up in the mountain to see the ancient pyramid  
above the valley of Tepotzlán honored a tax collector

These jagged lines of run-together clauses disorient where sentences begin and end, shading them into each other. (In contrast, Trevino’s compressed ten-syllable lines resemble a thinking-aloud, but one that weaves tight sentences into blank verse.) Matuk’s sonnets are guided by being a daughter’s father, the child teaching the parent (“the gaze you’ve trained in me”) to inhabit space-time differently. “If parenting is a thing are you childing us who gave you a face,” he asks. “No Address” ultimately inverts the father-child

relation: rather than call the child into position via lineage and discipline, the child calls her poet-parent into a position in which “no address” is feasible. Within the (non)space of “no address,” “you” becomes un-mappable, evading surveillance and interpellation by capital, state, and patriarchy. This “you” doesn’t exist outside of language, only apart from totalizing inscriptions, even emancipatory ones. But it’s also “playing a game,” with rules, practices, and strategies, and other players collectively building a “we.”

“The We of a Position” guides Trevino’s sonnets in similar ways. Unlike Matuk’s roomier, multidirectional sonnets, Trevino’s conversational sentences are compressed into gunpowder packets. Using the language that’s “on-hand” means taking seriously pop culture as an engine of gore capitalism. “Popular Culture & Cruel Work” refers to the bodies of Amy Winehouse, Whitney Houston, Selena, JonBenét Ramsey, Natalee Holloway, and Anna Nicole Smith—“the girls whose deaths bring / People together.” A few pages earlier, “The We of a Position” models how to read this process from the perspective of a “we” that’s drawn “together” differently. This “we” encompasses alliances of the imagination, thinking and theorizing around anti-capitalist and anti-racist struggle, what Mark Nowak refers to in *Social Poetics* as “imaginative militancy,” as well as on-the-ground collective actions. Inevitably messy and contradictory, such a “globalized ‘we,’” as Walt Hunter suggests in *Forms of a World: Contemporary Poetry and the Making of Globalization*, can serve as “the vehicles for a proleptic revolutionary subject and a protean rhetorical performance.”

In *Cruel Fiction*, this subject and performance proceeds from the situated knowledge of migrant laborers. “The We of a Position” critiques “the hierarchy of the fields” through the eyes of the poet’s Mexican American father, a farmworker who once believed himself superior to Blacks and Mexicans. (In this subtle way, *Cruel Fiction* and *The Real Horse* pivot on father-daughter relationships.) Then one day the Mexican American workers needed water, and the father’s realization previews the book’s final poems: “How none of the white people in town [Lubbock, Texas] would give them water. How on their way back to the fields, a truck of African American farm hands offered them some. How they didn’t even have to ask. How my father says we’re all living like that—not even knowing who our friends are.” Reflecting on this story, Trevino redefines “we”: “What I am trying to describe is what is described in Tiqqun’s *Call* as ‘the we of a position. A ‘we’ that includes people we do & don’t like. A ‘we’ that includes people we haven’t met yet & people we will never meet. A ‘we’ that sees the hierarchy of the fields & calls bullshit without being dismissive of its bullshit effects. A ‘we’ that is aware of other fields.” In the subsequent sixty sonnets, Trevino’s give-no-fucks poetics makes her commitments clear: ending capitalism and white supremacy means making tricky alliances without “being dismissive” of capitalism’s “bullshit effects,” like the weaponized spectacle of celebrity deaths constituting our “shared” culture.

A powerful symmetry obtains when a poet committed to endings has a knack for them. One swashbuckling sonnet moves from the Sinaloa Cartel to Woody Harrelson; it concludes with Trevino's signature mode of understated exclamation: "Did drug trafficking / Save the banks during the 2008 / Global financial crisis? Seriously." Yes, inasmuch as this is a key premise of Sayak Valencia's "gore capitalism." Another sonnet ends: "Mexican was / Not a race—not even in the 80s." Race and borders are indeed the fictions central to Trevino's and Matuk's books. Unsurprisingly, *Cruel Fiction* has circulated online as a book about the border. Commune Editions' promotional materials, including the back cover, highlight the sonnet that distills Trevino's triangulation border-race-fiction: "A border, like race, is a cruel fiction / Maintained by constant policing, violence / Always threatening a new map."

*Cruel Fiction* best embodies Commune's aim to be a "purveyor of poetry and other antagonisms," and Trevino's phrasing and pacing often resemble Juliana Spahr's. Yet *Cruel Fiction* extends Commune's anti-capitalist project. Trevino's articulations of her relationship to Chicana/o/x identity formations strengthen the critiques of Heriberto Yépez's Commune book *Transnational Battle Field*. As in the story of her father, *Cruel Fiction* stuns when it thinks through Trevino's upbringing in the Rio Grande Valley, not to reify authenticity tropes but to question them. This differs slightly from Matuk, who writes obliquely of being a borderlands resident of Peruvian and Syrian descent, as in his reference to his former undocumented status in "[Dear daughter]." Like Trevino, Matuk is skeptical of identity politics when they're delinked from capitalist critique. He asks what value resides in undocumented status when getting papers—that is, when legitimated as a state subject—means obeisance to capital's "claims" on bodies as well as on forms of belonging such as citizenship.

For her part, Trevino distrusts identitarian claims made by "Chicano" and "Latinx," in part because "of all / The Latinos working for" CBP and ICE. While readers might expect a "Chinga La Migra" ("Fuck the Border Patrol") sonnet, even one written in solidarity with protests against ex-Border Patrol agent Francisco Cantú's memoir *The Line Becomes a River*, some will be surprised at critiques of Latinx icons César Chávez and Gloria Anzaldúa. Unlike Vanessa Angélica Villarreal's collection *Beast Meridian*, which reveres Anzaldúa, Trevino disarms the border theorist's authority: "I keep trying to see what you all see / In Anzaldúa." "Brazilian Is Not a Race" triangulates race, origin, and destination on this broken ground:

Where am I going with this? I thought  
I knew. It makes sense that whenever race  
Comes up, I think about the Rio Grande  
Valley—"the Valley" as anyone

Who knows the place calls it. That's where I learned  
I'm not white & what that means & how what  
That means changes & doesn't & to who.

Not coincidentally, Trevino suggests, “Gloria Anzaldúa was also / From the Valley. Her Wikipedia / Page says she was born in Harlingen like / Me.” This enjambed “like / Me” mirrors Matuk’s “like me” on being without papers in the eighties—each acknowledges the comparison by creating distance from it. Trevino concludes that Anzaldúa’s “approach didn’t resonate with me” because her theory of *mestizaje* is derived from the eugenicist, even fascist, concept of “la raza cósmica” developed by the revolutionary-era Mexican philosopher José Vasconcelos. *Cruel Fiction* is theorizing here how tough “the we of a position” is to imagine, let alone vivify. For not only are leftist icons questioned, the fundamental idea on which “we” is formed—no matter how you’re racialized or gendered “you have to hate capitalism”—doesn’t detail how to proceed from there.

To address this question, *Cruel Fiction* turns to an overlooked historical revolt. After alluding to recent uprisings (Occupy, the Zapatistas), Trevino introduces the 1915 Plan of San Diego. By any measure, the Plan was radical, due to its revolutionary violence (“kill all white American males / Over the age of 16”) and its alliance of Blacks, Natives, and Mexican Americans in south Texas. “That’s the Plan,” Trevino deadpans, “To some people it just doesn’t sound real / But I agree with the historian / Gerald Horne: even ‘if the “Plan” was a / Fiction, massacres of various sorts / Were not.’” And yet Trevino’s sense of what and who counts in an anti-capitalist “we” exceeds this potent example. On the final page, Trevino echoes Matuk when considering the era’s Mexican revolutionaries-in-exile who started a commune in LA: “There has to / Be room for that.”

Matuk creates this “room” by removing punctuation so that “you,” in its singular and plural forms, can “turn away” from capitalism, Trevino by expanding “we” into a burgeoning collective (including people “we” don’t like and may never meet) that may overthrow it. Their barnstorming books ask: Which fictions should be disavowed and destroyed? In which should we believe and participate? *The Real Horse*’s epigraph from the Salvadoran poet-revolutionary Roque Dalton poses a related question: “Who should the poet’s voice be for?” The answer’s clear: for those, like Dalton, who make room in the world for another world. This unflinching, generative radicalism distinguishes *The Real Horse* and *Cruel Fiction* as exemplary poetic antagonisms.

Michael Dowdy



Garielle Lutz, *The Complete Gary Lutz*. Tyrant Books, 2019

Garielle Lutz microwaves syntax. She does not eat her cereal without a bowl; she eats it “unbowed.” She writes in 24 pt. font. Her most notable work of criticism is a review of the 15th edition of the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

For years now, Lutz has been writing the kind of short stories that give hope to everyone striving without much luck to make people see something new. She complicates the form of epigrammatic prose that has come to define the landscape of very short fiction. Instead of writing one-sentence stories, the kind of thing that could be mistaken for a fragment or a whiff of an afternoon dream, Lutz twists and unclenches the particles of description, summary, and event into strange, uneasy paragraphs, forcing us to slow down and read them again. Her writing is not an easy go at first; it may feel as if you had eaten an egg too quickly and felt quite a bit of shell go down:

At stoplights, I began to slope my neck sidewise so I could glint into whichever car was laned beside my own. The bloodshot, circumstantial desolation of the windowed faces—the splather of fingers against a cheek—was how I wanted things: wrung out.

This kind of short experimental fiction is common enough in literary magazines, but in books it still struggles for forgiveness. There is no market set apart for it. The only advantage from a marketing perspective is that such pieces are easy to “try.” It may only take you thirty seconds to read the first story in a collection of an unknown short prose writer. That writer, in turn, has just thirty seconds to convince you that what they are doing cannot be confused with the proliferation of bite-sized text on Twitter, Instagram, news headlines, review blurbs, long text messages from your friends, short synopses of movies, or the saccharine white-wine reductions of Rupi Kaur—thirty seconds to make you stop, go back, read again, and feel something.

Lutz’s first collection, *Stories in the Worst Way*, came out with Knopf in 1996, the same year of *Infinite Jest*, *Fight Club*, *A Game of Thrones*, *Bridget Jones’s Diary*, and no fewer than three Stephen King novels. The collection was received poorly in the brief reviews it garnered from *Publishers Weekly* and the *New York Times*, where the stories were deemed “more like stylistic exercises” that, “all too unoriginally, live up to the collection’s title.” Over the next few years, Lutz turned to the good company of *NOON* and the *Quarterly*, and her reputation grew quietly amongst writers like Diane Williams, Christine Schutt, and Ben Marcus.

With the help of half-a-dozen tiny publishers who steadfastly reprinted her work (and were just as regularly acquired by other publishers), Lutz made a name for herself as a unique, daring prose stylist. She began to attract more

attention about ten years ago, when the reprint of *I Looked Alive* in 2010 and the release of *Divorcer* in 2011 gave a handful of reviewers the chance to proclaim this latest “writer’s writer.” Even Anthony Doerr came forward as a fan. Unfortunately, large publishers tend to be unforgiving of debut flops, and Lutz would never again receive the kind of print run and marketing support once merited by her first collection.

However, now we have *The Complete Gary Lutz*. The publishing history leading up to this book exemplifies the tenacity of the small press world, a certainty of taste amid so much financial uncertainty. While many successful writers of the art-fiction type tend to have the reverse trajectory, beginning with small presses and then expanding outward, Lutz has spent decades honing her craft by the stylistically liberating and fiscally ruinous parameters of indie publishing, resulting in a collection of steadfast and singular vision—a party that writers will go to and look around eagerly to see who else is there.

This collection includes nine previously unpublished stories: a pair of longer ones and seven short ones. “Pledged” is a particularly gripping piece, in which Lutz’s verbiage twists not just the description of actions but the actions themselves (“The planet slumped there a bit for a sec”). “Cousin-in-law” is an odd bit of *ars poetica* in the line of Donald Barthelme, while “Walking Distance” consists of merely three lovely, perfectly gnomic paragraphs. As far as late-career stories go, they are more in the line of Tolstoy’s “Alyosha the Pot” than “Father Sergius.”

In general, the nameless characters of Lutz’s fiction are middle-aged and have bodies and usually a desk job of some kind. They slide heavily and without friction from place to place, job to job, person to person, meeting experiences both shocking and banal with the same measure of poetic indifference. They bump around in bleak, cramped spaces, never earning much more than an extra sick day from work or a few minutes of sex. Sometimes they remember, and sometimes they consider their path forward, but most of the time they fuss through a grey, fettered present.

Meet someone in a Garielle Lutz story and you can just as easily get involved with their brother, sister, son, daughter, lover, and their arms, ears, teeth, hair. Numb bodies cry out so readily and so often for each other that the effect can be dizzying. Lutz shies away from being labeled a queer writer, stating in a 2006 interview with *Bookslut* that such a label would be “missing the point,” but her fiction does have a unique sexuality. Her characters, in her own words, “have involuntarily disimagined the differences between the sexes or between the standard categories of affection.” (Lutz is one of those rare writers who can speak impeccably of her own work.) The effect is liberating and anti-individualistic, as if the thing that finally broke down the constraints of gender and sex was not any kind of social awakening but merely the pressure of an immense, heavy sadness.

Lutz's fiction would be utterly depressing, were it not for her language. She loves a good bon mot—her first sentences in particular show a fondness for dark little witticisms like, “What could be worse...than having to be seen resorting to your own life?”—but such apparently digestible sentences become difficult to consume when sandwiching phrases like “an unblunt arm unsleeved in late autumn and within esteeming reach.” Lutz admires writers like Elizabeth Smart, whose passionate, loquacious poem-prose would be unfashionable in today's market. She is a Gordon Lish acolyte in the best way. “What interests me,” Lutz says in her *Bookslut* interview, “is instigated language, language dishabituated from its ordinary doings, language startled by itself.”

This bears resemblance to the Language school of poetry, with its prioritization of sonic and graphic performance over linguistic message. Layered over the characters and settings and so on in Lutz's stories is a feeling of restless alienation so thick that the language becomes like knife strokes in impasto paint. It veers close to “prose poetry” in many places, but it is important that Lutz calls her writing “stories”—specifically, “stories in the worst way”—because, while experimentalism is a foregone conclusion in the former genre, it is still unpalatable to many consumers of the latter.

Lutz does feel like an American classic, in an odd way, and someone deserving of more recognition. It is a kind of American sadness that imbues her bleak offices, and a kind of American urge to transform this life into poetry. Though place names rarely enter her fiction, Lutz evokes a strong impression of the American middle-town managerial wasteland, where we might find the sons and daughters of Carver's protagonists, now armed with college degrees, saddled with debt, and seeking out new ways to describe their depression. At her most successful moments, her sentences strive for a kind of mythopoetic language that recalls the lines of Donald Barthelme and John Cheever, only without those authors' rose-tinted glasses:

The afternoon was glassy and overdetailed.

Meaning what? That I grew up on the spot? That years later it would take great effort and willpower to wave away the first available thumb, unsucked dick and wait instead—in line, if need be—for some cunted, varicosed smashup on which to hazard my desolating carnality?

What is most impressive, though, is that Lutz manages to convey an impression of America without a single warming drop of nostalgia. She writes the same flat life over and over again, one that is universal, and yet somehow untouchable. Geometrical and alien. As if the human element, instead of being driven out of the landscape of late capitalism, simply invented its own language to cope.

The cumulative effect of reading Lutz's work—because when it comes to thick collections of lean stories, that seems to be the question most people are interested in, the cumulative effect, as if the author had always been writing in view of an omnibus edition—is admiration. Specifically, admiration of language's sheer resolve. The thinnest, saddest life turns constantly in Lutz's hands as she summarizes over and over again in unexpected configurations of nouns and adverbial phrases its bare, hollow, depleted, centerless features, and makes them strong again. Stumbling over Lutz's sentences in an effort to fit to this new syntactical schema what you know of mundanity, you decide you are not forty-six, but "fortier." Your coworkers are a "cologned, cuff-shooting ruck," your family "robustly depressed, full of soft spots and unavailing clarities." In a time when much feels immaterial, we seek this kind of writing that is not happy but adaptable and strong. As Lutz writes: "I kept waiting for somebody to say something in a language that wasn't shot."

Andrew Hungate

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Anna Gurton-Wachter, *Utopia Pipe Dream Memory*. Ugly Duckling Presse, 2019.

"Fruit flies do like fruit. We should all be named after the things we are attracted to," writes Anna Gurton-Wachter in her debut poetry collection, *Utopia Pipe Dream Memory*. And so it is with this book in which the author makes much of her indebtedness to community—that body prerequisite to utopia—at once lived and dreamed, real and invented. The book is peopled with the voices and presence of friends, mentors, and idols; yet Gurton-Wachter cuts a pattern of language to her own distinctive measure, and it is remarkable that the "I" is never lost among the crowd. Instead, she swaggers in a Whitmanesque manner, declaiming at the very outset of the book: "I crowned myself / earthquake shatterer poetics king / origin earth admixture / yes, you get it, I had to crown myself open / so open the listener's whole attention seeps back" ("Poem from Hypnosis"). Or, elsewhere, addressing her audience as if from a soapbox, she holds forth in "Mother of All," the first of two central long poems in the book: "Leaders, ladies, I say to you all, who will value my choice to be dysfunctional in today's world? Fuck up forever the stray parts of my brain I thought I long ago gave up on."

This is a partial affinity with a Whitmanian poetics—one that borrows from the public voice, queer sociality, and gender fluidity—but with a decidedly contemporary, radical feminist appropriation of these aspects of Whitman's writing. Affinities can be spotted, too, in the speaker's radical identification

with others—in the I’s porousness, its solubility within a collective social body. For example, she asserts: “If I prioritize the cascade, it is because I want to revalue my agency, make a declaration and so speak the story of a collective mind thrown together in the flourishing presence of others.” However, unlike the Whitmanian mode of projected identification of the self onto another, the “I” in *Utopia Pipe Dream Memory* rather acknowledges herself as the product of social bricolage: she is possessed rather than possessing.

*Utopia Pipe Dream Memory* is shot through with a sense of embeddedness in poetic, artistic, and everyday communities. Gurton-Wachter explicitly frames the book with expressions of indebtedness to her “real lived community” and with gratitude for the privilege of “shar[ing] time on earth with so many great thinkers and the traces they have left behind.” Throughout, the poems are laden with the presence of others: in the long poem, “Mother of All,” as well as in shorter poems such as “Maya Deren Lives Forever in the Speedboat at Night” and “A Development Proposal for the Center of the Earth,” Gurton-Wachter pens surreal and absurdist cameos for figures belonging to a pantheon of experimental women writers and artists—including Gertrude Stein, Bernadette Mayer, Renee Gladman, Carla Harryman, Bhanu Kapil, Maya Deren, Clarice Lispector, Rosmarie Waldrop, Yvonne Rainer, Alice Notley, Caroline Bergvall, Hannah Weiner, and Valerie Solanas. Members of this pantheon slip in and through the poems, at once spectral and visceral, meeting the speaker in what she calls “[an] entanglement pose.” Their presence fills and partly displaces the speaker’s own presence (defined, as that is, by her capacity for speech) as when she remarks, “Hannah Wiener’s tit is in my mouth,” or, elsewhere, when she declares that Maya Deren’s “dismembered tongue will take over writing from here.”

As with Hannah Weiner nursing the poetic speaker, motherhood appears as a complex model for a nurturing female sociality—one that is potentially fraught with possessiveness and with the threat of dispossession that subtends pliant boundaries. This is a theme echoed in the long poem, “Mother of All,” the title of which unsettlingly marries Gertrude Stein’s 1947 libretto, “Mother of Us All,” whose subject is Susan B. Anthony and the US women’s suffrage movement, to the colloquial name for the US military’s GBU-43/B Massive Ordnance Air Blast, or the “Mother of All Bombs” (named as such by news outlets when the United States first detonated one in Afghanistan in April 2017). As the title’s dual reference pulls Stein’s libretto into conversation with the history of US expansionist warfare, this gesture poses an implicit question about the role of art, which may simultaneously launch a critique of power while contributing to nationalist mythmaking. Against this backdrop, a ghostly Stein appears as a central character alongside the poem’s mercurial speaker. Death threads through the writing, from an opening encounter with Stein’s deathbed, which brings about a pedantic

remark by a disembodied voice, “Deathbeds are a leisure product”; to the dramatic killing of a lion and its grotesque decomposition throughout the poem; to the speaker’s self-interment at the poem’s ending: “The burial of my computer that I write with. The burial of my finger. How much of my body has to get buried before I am dead?” (Also, the final line: “I keep watching my body sink into the ground and thrust like a diver into the form of a worm.”) And yet, as clearly as death and, more pointedly, human violence form a deep current of the poem, this subject is complicated by both the speaker’s own ambivalent and self-implicating relationship to violence and the poem’s vigorous counterpoint of joy and affirmation of sociality, both human and nonhuman.

In the first vein, for example, the speaker identifies “[i]n the news today, a man who everyone hates... who has killed a lion outside of the boundaries of lion-killing acceptability,” she goes on to recount her mutilation of the corpse: “I had to cut the lion open from inside the lion stomach. To pass out or emerge.” The speaker relates the event of the lion-killing and its aftermath with characteristic deadpan that prompts us to ask what, precisely, *are* the “boundaries of lion-killing acceptability”? And, furthermore, is it reasonable to hate someone for committing an act that would otherwise go unremarked but for a technicality? Refusing to condemn the man or to elegeize the lion, the speaker’s exit through the belly of the beast points to her rejection of the discourse and its terms; it is an absurd situation calling for an absurdist escape. The speaker does not situate herself outside of the violence that subtends the poem; instead, her position is clearly compromised, as when she states, “the hunter’s pose overlaps with my own.” Similarly, in another section of the poem, with a nod to MOAB and perhaps to the notion of a “mother” country, she seems simultaneously to confess and disavow a “Mother, not mine, [who] laughs in all directions as bombs are falling from my fighter jet face.” Gurton-Wachter renders palpable a deeply ambivalent position through such surreal and absurdist images. This self-conflicted stance appears, perhaps, as the discordant double of the impossible “no-place” place of “utopia.”

“An imaginary and indefinitely remote place” and “an impractical scheme for social improvement”—I can’t decide whether this *Merriam-Webster* definition applies better to utopia or to poetry. And maybe one needn’t make the determination, since utopia is, after all, a literary creation—beginning with Thomas More’s 1516 *Utopia* (or much earlier if we apply the term anachronistically to works such as Plato’s *Republic*), growing in popularity through the eighteenth century, and culminating in the social-realist utopian novels of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The antecedent of *Utopia Pipe Dream Memory* is, however, not More’s, but the poet Bernadette Mayer’s *Utopia*—an eclectic book of prose miscellany and mock essays first published by United Artists Books in 1984.

Mayer's *Utopia* is a nearly unclassifiable book that enfolds the presence of the author's community, with appearances and contributed writings by Grace Murphy, Hannah Weiner, Joe Brainard, Rosemary Mayer, Charles Bernstein, and others. In homage to Mayer's *Utopia*, the titular long poem "Utopia Pipe Dream Memory" not only features Mayer as a character within the poem ("Bernadette Mayer is combing my hair... I do not have the language for the violence of personhood, she said as she unknotted me"), but the poem is also largely composed of the fragmented and remixed voices of Gurton-Wachter's peers. Growing out of the author's notebooks from the "Bernadette Mayer Feminist Reading Group," which convened at the St. Mark's Poetry Project during August 2017, "Utopia Pipe Dream Memory" incorporates the "chopped, scattered, [and] compressed" remarks of the seminar's nineteen other participants as well as notes from a talk Mayer gave at Canada Gallery during the re-exhibition of her multimedia project, *Memory* (1971–75), and transcriptions of recorded interviews with sound artist Maryanne Amacher.

In this weave of voices structured as a sequence of disjointed verse paragraphs, the majority of which consist of declarative statements delivered in the first person, the "I" becomes plural, dispersed. It also becomes increasingly self-reflexive, meditating on the conceit of singularity, as when the speaker reflects: "what would you think about someone who is in a cage? you see, I had claimed the individual was a thing that exists." Further on, individual existence is provisionally granted, rendered in these modest terms: "I own that / I am a recurrence." By and large, however, the "I" in this poem appears as a plurality, "truly and gloriously indebted." It is doubled and split, as when Gurton-Wachter writes, recalling Stein's dictum that "the essence of genius... is being one who is at the same time talking and listening": "Off-screen I am singing from the shared mouth of the fruit fly... Now it is finally time for me to say out loud, 'To know something is to look down one's throat as one speaks.'"

Is this being plural a kind of utopia? It may be as close as we can get since, more importantly, utopia is a resolutely unrealizable place, a limit concept, an exercise in dreaming. As the "Epilogue" to Mayer's *Utopia* reads:

utopias are no place  
as ours will ever be  
[...]  
add all you would to  
what is already here  
together we will put  
things on paper that  
've never been there

To which Gurton-Wachter adds, justifying the exercise: “If I allow myself to believe one fantastical thing once, I break the boundary between myself and all possibilities.” Or even more emphatically: “not from utopia chunk challenges anything foreclosed why it would be impossible it’s a joke pipe dream beautiful world I’m not going to stop what draws me to it.” To be drawn to something doesn’t guarantee arrival, but to acknowledge the orientation, to name the attraction—that may be the essential work of poetry.

Rachael Guynn Wilson

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Craig Santos Perez, *from unincorporated territory [hacha]*. Tinfish, 2008.  
Craig Santos Perez, *from unincorporated territory [saina]*. Omnidawn, 2010.  
Craig Santos Perez, *from unincorporated territory [guma’]*. Omnidawn, 2014.  
Craig Santos Perez, *from unincorporated territory [lukao]*. Omnidawn, 2017.

The titles of Chamorro poet Craig Santos Perez’s *from unincorporated territory* tetralogy, [*hacha*], [*saina*], [*guma’*], and [*lukao*], roughly translate, respectively, to “one,” “parent/elder/Lord,” “house” or “home,” and “procession.” But Perez withholds, extends, and complicates these translations and other translations throughout the series, never quite letting his readers feel like they can or should reduce the complexities and histories of those words, his poems, or Guam, to a mere summary or rough translation. Indeed, that seems to be his point. Like the books’ titles, the poems that make up the series may be read separately or in conversation with the other poems in each book. But the most rewarding way to read them is as part of an ever-expanding poetic, oceanic world, with Guåhan (Guam) at the center.

This oceanic world, in which Guåhan is embedded, echoes, in poetic form, Fijian-Tongan scholar and activist Epeli Hau’ofa’s description of Oceania as a “sea of islands.” Perez quotes Hau’ofa multiple times in this series, explicitly and implicitly, alongside other Pacific writers, Indigenous writers, anticolonial writers, and modernists, to name a few. Privileging the term “Oceania” over “the Pacific islands” and describing it as a “sea of islands” differs from imperialist interpretations of the Pacific because it portrays those islands not as remote and scattered, but as part of a dynamic, deeply connected—though, critically, heterogeneous—world. Like Oceania itself, Perez’s tetralogy is an intimately interrelated, intratextual, and intertextual experience, hyperaware of its connectedness to other writers and scholars and of Guam’s specific connections to Pacific networks, which redefines borders and upends divisions between the watery, the landed, the aerial, and the past, the present, and the future.



[*hacha*] was first published by Tinfish Press in 2008, and the subsequent three books were published by Omnidawn. Omnidawn also reprinted [*hacha*] in 2017 with a new afterword. *from unincorporated territory*, the title shared across the books, refers to Perez's homeland, Guåhan or Guam, and its current status as a US territory. Guam, located in the Pacific's sweet spot—to a military eye—has a long history of colonization under Spain, Japan, and the US. All four of the books are invested in mapping this history out. The US gained control of Guam through the Spanish-American war, lost control to the Japanese during World War II, then regained it after World War II, and continues to occupy it, primarily for military purposes. Perez explains in [*hacha*] that the 1901 *Insular Cases* established the “unincorporated status” by “rul[ing] that the United States can hold a territory as a colonial possession without ever incorporating the territory into the United States or granting sovereignty to the territory.” His poems, then, like Guam, emerge “from” this state of “unincorporation.” “From” and “Ginen” (the Chamorro word for “from” or “since”) precede the vast majority of poem titles in the tetralogy, indicating Perez's preoccupation with origins and histories or, as he calls them, “sourcings.” By beginning with the history of Guam's “unincorporation” and emphasizing “sourcings,” [*hacha*] sets up the expectations of Perez's experimental, documentary poetics, essentially teaching us how to read or navigate the poems to come.

In many ways, this series is a work of historicizing and mapping Guåhan on Perez's own terms, even as he highlights the impacts and violence of histories and maps that include or do not include Guam. He writes, “On some maps, Guam doesn't exist; I point to an empty space in the Pacific and say, ‘I'm from here.’ ... On some maps, Guam is named ‘Guam U.S.A.’ I say, ‘I'm from a territory of the United States.’ On some maps, Guam is named, simply, ‘Guam’; I say, ‘I am from ‘Guam.’” This poem describes the different ways that empire has literally mapped Guam to show how these mappings make the speaker's origins visible or invisible. Subsequently, they affect the ways the speaker communicates his attachment to those origins. Different versions of “mapping” in Perez's poems also do not allow readers to view Guam apart from its specific histories and context, or apart from its wider oceanic interconnections. Some of these interconnections are made most visible through Perez's use of concrete map poems, or “poemaps” as he calls such creations later in [*lukao*]. For example, one poem maps out key Pacific War locations and Guam's place among them. Another maps the routes of Spanish galleons. In these concrete depictions, we see the many different ways maps have shaped, positioned, and reduced Guam, among other Pacific locations.

Perez also shows how imperialism has affected the Chamorro language. Chamorro frequently appears in all four books, often excerpted from the rest of the text in (or partially in) square brackets, or even set apart in a box of text. “Excerpt,” is a dominant concept in Perez’s work, especially in [*hacha*]. For Perez, “excerpt,” firstly, refers to the many, many quotations from legal cases, the Bible, the US constitution, dictionary and encyclopedia entries, and other texts that he mixes with his poetry. As the former director of the University of Hawai‘i’s creative writing program and a Professor in the Department of English with a PhD from Berkeley, Perez is adept at blurring the imposed borders between what we call scholarly and what we label as artistic. But I also interpret Perez’s concept of “excerpt” in relation to his definitions of “unincorporation” and specifically through how he presents the Chamorro language, typographically and stylistically. Sometimes Perez places a bracket only on one side of a Chamorro word and then uses the unbracketed space to expand on or explain the Chamorro word further. For example, he writes:

[**sintura** : the first horse arriving with iron  
in its mouth...

In this poem the unclosed bracket creates room for expansion that Perez uses to add a story of the first horse arriving on Guam to a seemingly unrelated word: “sintura” (waist, bodice). He does not simply provide us with a static translation or an approximation, as I have resorted to. The poem continues with the story until we get to another Chamorro word in half of a bracket pair, and then Perez expands upon the story again. Through strategies such as these, he highlights Chamorro words in the text and then refuses to let us read translations in isolation, as foreclosed, or without context and complication. Sometimes he provides no translation at all, and the reader must confront that. And sometimes, such as with the word “hacha,” Perez’s original translation is adapted or denied. The excerpted space provided by the brackets allows for context and story, but also suggests interruptions and loss. The brackets, and the notion of “excerption” are both reminders that we cannot read Chamorro words, or any words, divorced from how colonialism affects them and from the other processes that have shaped them.

Perez’s second book in the series, [*saina*], uses the figure of the sakman, or Chamorro sailing vessel, to demonstrate some of these processes. If [*hacha*] focuses heavily on origins, [*saina*] is about navigation, including navigating origins. “Saina” is the name of a real sakman that Perez describes in the beginning of this collection. In 2007, Chamorro builders built a sakman for the first time in over two hundred years. The Spanish explicitly banned sakman vessels during their occupation, and though the US did not explicitly

ban them, they continued suppressing knowledge and mobility tied to such vessels. In *[saina]*, Perez ties this suppression to the loss of heritage and self-determination. Perez describes “saina” as “parents elders spirits ancestors,” and also associates it with “root” and “mast.” As the name of the literal sakman and as the name of Perez’s book of poems, it marries the image of a sailing vessel with ancestors, and connects the skills of both poetry and navigation to skills gained through heritage.

*[saina]* is about relationships with parents and grandparents as much as it is about sailing, and Perez mixes details of these relationships with poems about executive orders, tourism statistics, and property developments, showing how legislative documents and waterfront views have very real effects on Chamorro lives. Focusing on heritage—familial, linguistic, and nautical—his poems themselves become sakman, or vessels of words navigating questions of what it means to be from Guam today. Appropriately for a book of poems with a sailing vessel as its central image, *[saina]* begins and ends with water—but in Chamorro terms. “[hanom] [hanom] [hanom],” the collection begins, repeating the word for water. By the end of the book, the square brackets are gone and it finishes with the line “hanom hanom hanom.” By the end of the book, then, Perez’s own poetic sakman has been freed from its state of excerpction and can roam unimpeded across the page.

Perez’s third collection, *[guma’]*, while still concerned with water, negotiates questions of home and asks how one stays connected to home when living in diaspora. In a poem about leaving Guåhan, intrusions that repeat lines from the earlier books signal the trauma of separation, from homeland and from family, for the speaker. Perez writes, “I’ve never been able to write a poem about the day *from indicates a particular time of place as a starting point* my family left Guåhan *[we] have....* What did I carry *from imagines a cause an agent an instrument a source or an origin* in my luggage? What was left behind?” This collection documents what was “left behind,” what the speaker took with them, and what they have lost. Interspersed throughout the book we read “fatal impact statements,” or public comments on the many impacts of US colonization, especially militarization, in Guam, expanding the speaker’s loss to a community loss.

Perez links part of this community loss to the fact that the US military heavily recruits Guam’s youth, highlighting the names of those killed in service to that military and mixing those deaths with the history of Guam’s increasing militarization. This history includes an invasion of brown tree snakes, brought in by the military, which continue to ravage Guam’s birdlife. Perez’s poems focus on the plight of the Micronesian kingfisher in particular, describing how zookeepers intervened and removed the birds from Guam for captive breeding. These descriptions, collated alongside the lists of dead Chamorro youth, create disturbing parallels. Not only does the militarization of Guam

cause many Chamorro and bird deaths, but, like the surviving birds, so many Chamorro people now live far away from their homeland.

In [*guma*'] Perez also meditates on SPAM, the tinned, staple spread popularized by the military, and other canned foods such as Vienna sausages to show how militarization is embedded not only in the soil of Guam, but also in Chamorro bodies. He often mixes canned food references with sexual references, therefore mixing thoughts on food sovereignty with bodily and sexual sovereignty. These SPAM poems are heavy with irony and humor, sometimes devastatingly so. He writes, "somewhere on the Western coast of the United States, a shirtless Chamorro suffering from a severe case of diaspora is kicking back with his Budweiser and can of Vienna Sausages saying 'Ah, this tastes just like home!'" The irony, here, of course, is that the "shirtless Chamorro" seeks a connection to home by consuming the products that signify Guam's ongoing occupation and assimilation into the military industrial complex.

The ironies and "fatal impact statements" accumulate in the pages of [*guma*'], amassing trauma as well, just as Perez's citations in all four of his books build layers of history, knowledge, and connection alongside losses, gaps, and silences. At times the assemblage overwhelms, precisely because such trauma should overwhelm. For Perez, there is always another connection, another document or piece of information to trace and add to his multifaceted picture of Guam—a homeland that is traumatized but also exceeds that trauma.

Though much of Perez's poetry contends with Guam's invisibility in the US imaginary, even while Guam is integral to US foreign and military policy, for a short time in 2017, Guam became hypervisible as a potential North Korean target. Search engines noted an increase in people wondering what and where Guam is. Prescient in hindsight, Perez published [*lukao*], the fourth book in the tetralogy, in 2017. "Guam is where America's Poetry Begins!" he writes in a poem, manipulating the slogan "Guam is where America's Day Begins!" If Guam is where "America's Poetry Begins," then it is a place of creation and a place that challenges conventional descriptions of US history as well as US literary history. [*lukao*], meaning "procession," does not suggest that the series is complete, but instead emphasizes birth and the cyclic nature of beginnings and endings—it foregrounds the birth of Perez's child and the birth of Guåhan, indicating that both will continue, or proceed, beyond his book's pages.

Water, important for Perez in all four of these books, takes on especially life-giving qualities in [*lukao*]. Perez connects amniotic fluid and the watery makeup of our bodies to the water that surrounds islands. Occupation of the waters around Guam and occupation of its land then correspond with the occupation of Chamorro bodies. Perez describes how the US military directly interferes with Chamorro birth practices:

~~U.S. Naval orders mandated that the placenta and umbilical cord must be burned because they were considered hazardous waste.~~  
Defying these orders, the pattered continued to help families bury the placenta in the land under or near the house (in our freezer, there is a plastic ziplock bag marked 'placenta.' Someday we will bury it at your grandparents house in Kula, Maui, on the slopes of Haleakalā). #placentalpolitics

Perez often uses strikethroughs in his poetry, especially when including excerpts from interviews and historical documents, conveying how the US occupation obscures and erases Chamorro testimonies and histories, but at the same time compelling readers to confront this erasure. Directly addressing his daughter in this poem, the speaker then describes how they will resist this erasure as well, even if this particular subversion is deferred and does not occur on Guåhan itself—the diaspora continues.

Perez's poems are part of much larger conversations about colonization and militarization in the Pacific; they are not isolated units, and neither is Guåhan/Guam. Perez deploys hashtags as a strategy in many of his poems. In *[lukao]*, poems that consist solely of lines saying, “#prayfor\_\_\_\_\_” appear throughout. I read this strategy as doing multiple things: at the end of the interview-poem on “placental politics” it is an acerbic reminder that bodily things like placentas can indeed be political, and that this poem connects to a wider conversation about such politics occurring in Oceania: the term “placental politics” was first used by Chamorro scholar Christine Taitano DeLisle. In the #prayfor poems, the repetition of the hashtag and their blank spaces reminds readers of the preponderance of violent events necessitating such a hashtag in our contemporary moment and the inadequacy of such a strategy to remedy those events. Hashtags also connect us on social media to community, to collective voices; their appearance in Perez's poems again pushes at imperial discourses of isolation that have shaped Guam and other Pacific islands.

Perez repeats and manipulates structural elements in all four of his books in this series, including titles, or parts of titles, poetic forms, and book sections. In *[lukao]*, he creates a poem in fragments across several sections. To read it, one must work through the book, find each fragment, and join it to its companions. Together they read, “*because america / can't demilitarize / its imagination / people around the world / are dying.*” The level of effort a reader must put in to read this poem suggests the level of effort writers and readers must also invest in order to refuse the ways that US imperialism fragments and obscures its own violent history, not just in Guam, but around the world. Perez connects Guam's colonization to the colonization of other

peoples and islands across the Pacific and beyond, and so, Perez suggests, its decolonization might be connected to those peoples and islands, too. Consequently, Perez's poems are not just interested in a vast Pacific network of histories and relations, with Guam as a focal point. Rather, they also depict a world of contested, specifically oceanic, sovereignties.

It might be tempting to read Perez's emphasis on Guam's ongoing oceanic connections, including his depictions of sakman, his emphasis on diaspora, and his investments in the possibilities of water, as celebrations of mobility and fluidity despite colonialism. But I do not think this is the case. Instead, Perez uses Guåhan's place in the ocean to foreground its particularities, document its specific losses and layers, and does not allow imperialism to limit Guåhan's stories, its heritage, or its impact on the world's stage. These are poems and books that, read together, are more than the sum of their parts. Mixing Instagram and SPAM alongside court orders, Magellan, and Fanon, Perez's poetics transform Guåhan's "unincorporation" into space to imagine alternative modes of self-definition and self-determination.

Bonnie Etherington

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Hanne Ørstavik, *Love*, translated by Martin Aitken. Archipelago Books, 2018.

*Love* is the title and affirmation of Norwegian author Hanne Ørstavik's third novel, first published in 1997 and now available in English. This makes it one of merely two Ørstavik novels available in English (she has written twelve in total); the other is *The Blue Room*, her fourth novel. This fact is surprising, and much pitied, considering that Ørstavik is a prize-winning and critically acclaimed author in her native country—which is more commonly associated in the North American literary scene with an author-protagonist who emblemizes masculine oversharing, Karl Ove Knausgård.

A much more modest work of fiction at 125 pages, *Love* presents us with a way of seeing the world as rich with tension and interest as Knausgård's, but with a smaller footprint. Rather than itemizing a life of personal struggle, *Love* takes place over the course of a single evening and is driven by the momentum of two incommensurable visions of a mother-son relationship, Vibeke's and Jon's. No personal truth prevails: the struggle here is less internal turmoil than the unbreachable negotiation of familial love, a dynamic mirrored by the tug-and-pull with which the narrative moves through the night, switching inconspicuously between the mother's and son's perspectives. Through

both Vibeke and Jon, Ørstavik manages to provide not just a wider field of vision, but also greater depth—the shuttling focalization that whisks us along is consistently followed with pauses for human touches. For example, the novel’s early sections are rich with descriptions that pay surprising attention to the minute sounds and looks of characters in action: “He hears the snap as she bites through the tight skin of her sausage,” or “He stabs at the sausage, lifts it up and breaks it in two, offering her half. She smiles. They always eat the last one the same way, on its own.” Lines like these resemble the static touches that result from the merest electrifying rub in a dry and cold winter, or the sparks that, in spite of their split-second duration, contain the promise of heat. Among other things, *Love* is about a form of intimacy that is forged by unusual flickers of warmth.

Jon and Vibeke have just moved to a new town, where she is getting a new lease on life: new home, new job, and, with luck, a new man. And because it’s the evening before his ninth birthday, Jon is restless with excitement about turning into a new man (“the final single-digit birthday!” some of us have thought when we turned nine). After dinner, Jon goes on a little expedition: he walks to his neighbor’s house across the street to sell raffle tickets; then he goes to the skating rink, where he makes a new friend whose house he then visits and gets a taste of kindness, friendly intimacy facilitated by music, domesticity, and a cup of cocoa. When he gets home, Vibeke is out. She has gone to the library (where she thinks she will find some attention from a pair of masculine brown eyes—specifically, those of her new coworker from the engineering department) only to find that it closes early on Wednesdays. Instead, she goes to the town fair for some amusement, where she meets a fairground worker with whom she ends up spending the evening at a bar. All the while, she thinks Jon is asleep in his room—“he’s started going to bed on his own now, she’s not even allowed to come in and say goodnight.” At the same time, Jon thinks his mother is busy preparing for his birthday—baking a cake, perhaps. Here they both make up stories to account for their mutual absence. Like mother, like son: Vibeke and Jon are expert confabulators. These false assumptions eventually prove deadly for Jon, but the novel makes the case that such fictions are necessary for love—because it is through them that Jon and Vibeke remain attached to the life they share—even (or especially) if they eventually kill you while sparing your love.

The novel stages the two characters drifting apart in the way they tell themselves stories in order to love: Jon makes up stories about others (including Vibeke) while Vibeke makes up stories mostly for herself about her and her brown-eyed beau and about the possible futures that await her. But her future is what we’ve all seen before. We might even say, uncharitably, that Vibeke’s stories are less like original fictions than received ones, scenes

thrifed from television commercials. She is drawn to the fairground worker for his “thick, blond curls” and a “bright smile”—features that are common enough for her to draw from a reservoir of clichés, to sow the seeds of fantasies about, for example, berry-picking in a forest as “he turns around to face her and smiles, silently, as if in a film, and more than just once.” “There’s a classic quality about him,” she thinks, before indulging in a vision of “the two of them together on an endless beach.” Some reviewers have called Vibeke’s love narcissistic and fake; but I can’t help feeling protective of the character that Ørstavik renders too earnestly to merely mock. Vibeke’s vision of love is an honest use of clichés to fuel her desires. Anyone who understands themselves as a desiring subject would know that there’s nothing contradictory about the earnestness of desire and the falseness of such fantasies. For Vibeke, these fantasies are the only spent resources she has to guide her in finding what she wants from her rebooted life, and thus to stay optimistic about it.

Jon, on the other hand, still unmarked by the expectations and disappointments of adulthood, is constantly coming up with fresh hypotheses of his own that have to do with somebody else’s experience. More incredibly, he imagines such acts of imagination to have real effects that alleviate others’ pain and suffering. At dinner, he tells Vibeke “about a picture he’s seen in a magazine of someone being tortured, a man suspended above the floor with a hood over his head. His arms are tied to a pole with some rope, he’s been hanging there so long his arms feel like they’re about to be torn from his body.” Through this image Jon sees his way into feeling, moving from outward description into inward sensation, and then back to his outward point of view. The perceived certainty and flexibility with which he assumes such imaginative empathy is perhaps founded on the axiom that suffering is ubiquitous: he muses when looking for a bathroom in a stranger’s house, “at this very moment in time, someone, somewhere, is being tortured.” But what makes Jon’s empathy so creative, so precious and precocious, is the conviction that he can do something about what he sees: later, in a car, “Jon holds his breath for as many lights as he can. He tells himself that as long as he can hold his breath then every light they pass will mean a thousand people get to avoid being tortured.” His storytelling develops into a belief in an actionable theory of alleviating the world’s ills.

Throughout the novel, Jon tries not to blink (and others remark on the strange look of his eyes)—but the novel indeed progresses by blinking, as if on Jon’s behalf, between the paragraphs’ unmarked alternations in focalization, between Jon and Vibeke. Each blink marks the passing of time; each blink, while marking relief, also marks the beginning of the wait for another momentary relief. The agony of waiting in the intervals substitutes for, in his mind, the agony of torture; and if someone has to be tortured, he



imagines it may as well be he who redeems, takes on the messianic role, brings deliverance to others. Take another example: early in the novel he feels the urge to pee but holds it in till he pees his pants in an anxious fit towards the end, shortly before we are made to think that he has frozen in the cold on his doorstep. He mythologizes his body as a pseudo-sacred object that one trains to absorb the experiences of others, that can survive affliction and triumph with a capacious love. But of course, he fails.

In adults, this untrammelled heroism is embarrassing and vulnerable to accusations of narcissism, but in the case of a child who fancies himself on the brink of maturity, it is heartwarming in its noble intention despite its feeble effect. It may be inconsequential as direct action, but Jon might be onto something important. Such naïveté generates opportunities for love in the face of common suffering. To paraphrase Jon's diagnosis of the world, it's not that people hate to love—it's that they aren't making opportunities for it.

For Jon, creating opportunities for love can sometimes look like the opposite of intimacy. He and Vibeke leave the house and each other's company, but for reasons that we can't simply chalk up to coldness or neglect. Jon absents himself from the house so that Vibeke can prepare for his birthday, so that she has the chance to express her love for him ("If he's out while she's baking the cake it'll be more of a surprise, he thinks to himself"). While it is easy to think that Vibeke's self-indulgent romance comes at the cost of neglecting her son (sure, Vibeke might be thinking more about her nails than Jon as she goes through the motion of smoothing her hand over his head), Vibeke also thinks she is respecting Jon's request for privacy and independence (which some of us might find prematurely granted) by leaving him be, retired to his room without a tucking into bed and goodnight kiss. Ørstavik passes no judgment; she portrays their life together sincerely enough for us not to misunderstand their intimacy. Their respective beliefs, their reasons for parting ways for the evening, are founded on what they feel to be a secure and intimate understanding of routine; they each think they know the other well enough to calculate intentions.

Confident in their bonds, they each go somewhere else for love to happen. But as fate will have it, this particular pair of miscalculations sets the novel's path toward a tragic end. Even so, Ørstavik has a remarkably gentle touch; she protects Jon and Vibeke from unbearable disappointments. This is her act of love. She accedes to the stories that Vibeke and Jon tell themselves, refusing to let their loves disappoint them. Vibeke regards her frankly underwhelming evening with the fairground worker as a prelude to other more auspicious enterprises (she falls asleep thinking of her original crush, "the brown eyes of the engineer from the building department"). Jon, thinking his mother isn't home yet because some accident has befallen her

(“maybe no one’s found her yet and she’s bleeding to death”), holds on to the hope that she was indeed baking him a cake but had run out for an ingredient she had forgotten. Both leave their loves inviolate. And just as Jon would sooner have Vibeke die on his account than have his image of love (which crucially harbors what he imagines is her equal love for him) disfigured, Ørstavik would sooner kill the child than his innocence and his capacity for unadulterated love. This way, Ørstavik spares Jon the disappointment of a forgotten birthday. *Love’s* tragic end is thus inevitable as Jon and Ørstavik both kill their darlings to preserve love.

*Love* is a book about how growing up and shedding illusions can kill you, or love, or both. But Ørstavik isn’t sentimental about this, nor is she ironic. The novel captures Ørstavik’s wholehearted investments in two different and equally valid styles of love. What it teaches us is how blind we make ourselves to the ones we love, how we cook up stories for them, for us, about them, for us to continue loving in the way we know, and how necessary this can be. Love teaches us to acknowledge, before all else, that it does not necessarily take two to tango (as one may say—ironically, spitefully, fatalistically). There are lots of things you can do alone, including love.

Yao Ong

§

Stephen Ratcliffe, *sound of wave in channel*. BlazeVOX, 2018.

The two-volume *sound of wave in channel* is the most recently published installment of a poetic project that Stephen Ratcliffe has been working on for more than twenty years. Since 1999, Ratcliffe has written a poem each day, documenting the microscopic shifts in the appearance of the world as seen from the window of his home in Bolinas, California, measuring the slow unfolding of the seasons against references to other texts and political events from our collectively unfolding present. The project can be followed in real time on Ratcliffe’s blog, aptly titled *Temporality*, where he posts each poem on the day of its composition, with archived entries dating back to 2009. Given the project’s serial structure and monumental scope, any individual poem fails to stand in adequately for the whole, in all its compelling strangeness, even as each individual poem presents the moments of aesthetic pleasure and the intellectual engagements that drive the project. The massive structure of Ratcliffe’s project is comprised of thousands of poems that identically repeat an exact stanzaic form for hundreds of days at a time:

1.6

light coming into sky above still black  
ridge, black pine branch moving in wind  
in foreground, sound of wave in channel

also opposite physical fact,  
which belongs "where"

what we are looking at, one  
seems to one, another

blinding edge of sun rising above ridge  
gull flapping from channel toward point

Every page of *sound of wave in channel* repeats the structure of this poem, with each stanza exactly repeating the length of each line, measured in characters of monospaced font. The precision with which each poem carefully repeats its exact shape and key phrases within that shape gives a machine-like quality to the text, each page stamped out with the same steel mold, even as the organic setting of Ratcliffe's observations—the shifting colors of the slow dawn over the hills, bird songs, or the subtle whisper of a breeze—pull in the exact opposite direction. And yet, the almost scientific sparseness of Ratcliffe's observations works in concert as much as in tension with the pared-down simplicity of the poems' vocabulary. This is an attention to the world that recognizes the fact that, generally, it looks more or less the same each day. But the fugal variations that shift from season to season help to locate our place in a broader world beyond our own individual subjective awareness.

In each poem, Ratcliffe uses two framing stanzas to record the appearance of the day outside his window in Bolinas, while the shorter interior stanzas offer fragmentary theorizations of poetics and the experience of perception, cribbed at times from the writings of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. This shifting between description and quotation constitutes an essential formal feature of *sound of wave in channel*. The fulcrum between these two modes of writing mimics the mental flickering necessary to read work like Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*, as the reader's consciousness alternates between reading the author's claims and weighing them against the reader's own continually unfolding experience of embodiment. The immediate and

fragmentary form of Ratcliffe's poetry gives depth to such acts of description while the descriptions lend reality to the opaque yet evocative fragments of theory that Ratcliffe assembles, even as the possibility of complete and epiphanic understanding flutters constantly just out of reach. In the attention to this movement between thinking and perceiving—and the seamed joining of the two modes in that instant of alternation—*sound of wave in channel* becomes as much about recording the processes of reading and thinking as it is about recording the sharpened gaze of the careful observer in the project's restricted poetic forms.

The poems routinely stun in their simplicity, as the intensity of their repetitions focuses attention on how the minor variations of language are themselves a source of signification and surprise. As Robert Creeley wrote about William Carlos Williams's poetry, "The rhyme is after / all the repeated / insistence. // There, you say, and / there, and there, / and *and* becomes // just so"<sup>†</sup>; Ratcliffe's writing materializes this just-so-ness of language in his attention to microscopic shifts of phrasing and spacing as the poems almost—but don't quite—repeat on page after page:

10.18

light coming into clouds above shadowed  
ridge, black shape of black pine branch  
in foreground, sound of wave in channel

pen and ink drawing repeats,  
see letter to subject

thinking "that which," here  
the manner of, rather

red orange clouds above shadowed ridge  
white line of wave in mouth of channel

The fact that these poems have been published in both print and digital editions offers the reader radically different modes of encountering the text. There is perhaps no greater pleasure than downloading the massive single PDF of both volumes and holding down either the left or right arrow key to whirl deliriously from one end of the thousand-page epic to the other,

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<sup>†</sup>/ Robert Creeley, *Selected Poems 1945–2005* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 87.

each word blurring and disintegrating into half-glimpsed pixels and barely recognized visual structures. I suspect this is not how Ratcliffe imagined that people would read his work. Yet whirring back and forth through a digital copy of the text helps capture the microtonal shifts of spacing and language that Ratcliffe deploys: how often “grey” or “light” appear in exactly the same spot, day after day; or the thrill when, for the briefest of moments, a repeated word flickers like an ocular migraine one space over from its usual position. A brief alternating flash renews the sensual pleasures of the words being precisely where they were. The very title of these two volumes calls attention to this alternation of sameness and difference, as either “sound of wave in channel” or “wave sounding in channel” recurs at the end of the third line of every poem in these two volumes. Ratcliffe’s insistence on investigating modes of seeing as a valid and necessary area for poetic writing suggests that this whirling text is perhaps closer to the work’s intention than it might at first seem. The act of observing the phenomenal appearance of the material text both on the screen and on the page naturally follows from Ratcliffe’s observations of the clouds and the darkened ridge outside his window.

Within the complete arc of Ratcliffe’s *Temporality* project, *sound of wave in channel* offers the purest and most successful delineation of the work so far. In comparison with previous volumes, like *Portraits & Repetition* (2002) or *CLOUD / RIDGE* (2011), *sound of wave in channel* is the most spartan in its themes and topics, and features the tightest constraints and narrowest range of variations. The sheer size of the project as a printed text contributes more to my interest than I usually care to admit. In the case of Ratcliffe’s massive undertaking the size of each material volume hangs in productive tension with the microscale of observations he tracks and the minimalist presentation of each serial iteration—something like watching a quiet trickle of water emerge from the foot of a massive glacier. Though the 2012 publication of *Selected Days* offers an easy toehold into the monumental edifice of *Temporality*, Ratcliffe continues to work on his project, and as such it eludes attempts to arrest its motion for close examination. Despite this continuous motion, *sound of wave in channel* feels like an important culminating point in Ratcliffe’s poetics, one in which the project focuses to a diamond-like point that will allow for crucial access to his larger body of work.

Zane Koss

§

Ben Lerner, *The Topeka School*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2019.

In *The Topeka School*, Ben Lerner narrates the world that created the one in which we now live. Lerner's world, or rather that of his protagonist, Adam Gordon, is marked by the Reagan-era political rhetoric, liberal disaffection, and pharmaceutical numbness that would ease the neoliberal implementation of widespread austerity, the social dislocation of labor, and the foment of right-wing rage. Only the latter has vividly maintained media attention in the wake of Donald Trump's election as president of the United States. Amid these transformations, there has been a narrative shift to personal experiences of the supposedly forgotten, overlooked, and now resurgent America—J. D. Vance's *Hillbilly Elegy* is one controversial example—that seem to provide a generic corrective to this incoherent image of the nation.

Lerner's first two novels—*Leaving the Atocha Station* and *10:04*—depicted large-scale historical events—the Madrid train bombing and Hurricane Sandy, respectively—through an individual perspective that explored shifts in history through the texture of one, often unlikeable person's experience, and in many regards, *The Topeka School* similarly promises to explain late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century political changes. Like Lerner's prior novels, this book explores the confusion, pathos, and disaffection that shape the experience of the present through modes alternately confessional and ironic, but in *The Topeka School* there's no clear, catastrophic spectacle to unite the narrative. Rather, *The Topeka School* drifts across the 1980s and 90s Midwest, searching personal memory and history for an event that might—finally—explain Trump's America.

In this regard, Lerner takes a similar approach to something like *Hillbilly Elegy*, but through the historical novel. If, in György Lukács's account, the historical novel should let readers “reexperience the social and human motives which led men to think, feel and act just as they did in historical reality,”<sup>†</sup> this distance between historical reality and the writer's present is complicated in the case of Lerner's fiction. As Alexander Manshel has recently noted of *Leaving the Atocha Station* and *10:04*, these novels belong to a genre that he calls the “recent historical novel,” in which they depict history that is “less than a dozen years in the past,” attempting to “accelerate” the novel's “historical imagination” at the same time that they try to “decelerate” the experience of an ongoing present. For Manshel, the recent historical novel is made equally compelling and limited through the personal connection it offers to its readers: each novel “gratifies by way of the pleasant surprise that the reader's [and, I would add, the author's] memories of recent events are now the stuff of

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<sup>†</sup>/ György Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 42.

history and, what's more, literary history." Or, as Nicholas Brown draws the lines in an account that takes up the autobiographical aspects of *10:04* (the protagonist is a poet-turned-novelist named Ben Lerner): "No matter how close Ben Lerner is to Ben Lerner, the problems confronted by Ben Lerner the narrator and Ben Lerner the novelist are totally different, and this is true even if Ben Lerner the novelist understands the world in exactly the same way Ben Lerner the narrator does."<sup>†</sup> For Brown, Lerner's conjunction of roman à clef and roman historique acts as the author's ideological exemption from the narrator's problems. But in *The Topeka School* the "social and human motives" through which it revivifies historical reality become increasingly, uncomfortably close to our own present motives. If *Atocha Station* and *10:04* gratify readers by exempting them from the demands of history, *The Topeka School* tells a story, spanning from the Midwest in the 80s to New York City ICE protests in early 2019, that is constrained by the fact that we still do not know how this particular chapter ends.

In this regard, *The Topeka School* might be understood as an intensification of Lerner's projects in his prior two novels. His earlier books understand history particularly through series of generations. In *Atocha Station*, this sense of history manifests as ignorance. The novel follows Adam Gordon, living in Spain on a Fulbright scholarship to research "the significance of the Spanish Civil War, about which [he] knew nothing, for a generation of writers, few of whom [he had] read" and write "a long, research-driven poem exploring the war's literary legacy." In *10:04*, however, previous generations beget anxiety. Lerner's protagonist grapples with his literary inheritance when his mentor, Bernard, is hospitalized, and he must choose a book for him to read in the hospital. Lerner's protagonist anguishes over a decision that collapses all temporality, layering in the future through a child that Ben may have with his friend Alex:

Bernard and Natali were succumbing to biological time; they had asked me and my aorta to conduct their writing into the future, a future I increasingly imagined as underwater; none of the past was usable—I couldn't find, in my apartment full of books, a single page of it to bring to the same hospital where they'd measured my limbs and, depending on insurance, might inseminate my friend.

Whether they are darkly comic or humorously tragic, Lerner's first two novels compulsively organize their conceptions of history around series of generations that rely on each other through inheritance and stewardship, death and memory. In these books, the previous generation determines its

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<sup>†</sup>/ Nicholas Brown, *Autonomy: The Social Ontology of Art under Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 88.

successors. Lerner unites the bitter account of the poet's ignorance of history in *Atocha Station* and the apocalyptic rendering of the author's book choice in *10:04* through a shared obsession with the way in which the future starts to feel like the past before it feels like the present.

This temporality resembles what Jasbir Puar has called “prehensive biopolitics”<sup>†</sup>—in which “the terms of the present are dictated through the containment of the terms of the future”—but in these books that prehension is made pitiful by the mundanity of the lives inhabiting it. Lerner simultaneously ironizes and mourns the fact that we must go on living in a future that we “increasingly imagine as underwater” (or burnt to a crisp, or leveled by mass shootings, or engulfed in another forever-war, or converted into ever-more-efficient Amazon warehouses), and these contradictory feelings result in anxious inaction. As Ben Merriman notes of *Atocha Station*, “Lerner’s writerly skill” suggests “the existence of an emergent, mature sensibility while offering nothing in the plot itself to indicate that the narrator could plausibly possess or acquire this sensibility” (*CR* 57:1, 248). Or, as Brown characterizes the protagonist of *10:04*, indicting these stylistic inconsistencies on political grounds: “he believes what the radical believes and acts how the liberal acts.” This anxiety about inevitable futures supplants any desire to improve either himself or the present world. However, *The Topeka School* marks a subtle shift in this apathetic yet (ap)prehensive relationship to the present and its futures. Whereas *Atocha Station* depicts an apathetic tragedy that drags on too long and *10:04* plays out an anxious farce of the world ending too quickly, *The Topeka School* explores how tragedy, farce, and the availability of time are distributed across the contours of the present.

*The Topeka School* opens in a police station in Topeka, Kansas, at the end of the twentieth century and closes with a protest outside a Lower Manhattan ICE detention center in 2019. In the former moment, a young man named Darren Eberheart has been arrested, apparently for throwing a cue ball at a party. When he attempts to detail his crime, a cop interrupts him: “Darren, we need you to start at the beginning.” But he quickly realizes the impossibility of communicating any such origin:

What Darren could not make them understand was that he would never have thrown it except he always had. Long before the freshman called him the customary names, before he’d taken it from the corner pocket, felt its weight, the cool and smoothness of the resin, before he’d hurled it into the crowded darkness—the cue ball was hanging in the air, rotating slowly. Like the moon, it had been there all his life.

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<sup>†</sup>/ Jasbir K. Puar, “The ‘Right’ to Maim: Disablement and Inhumanist Biopolitics in Palestine” *Borderlands*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2015, pp 1–27, 14.



A series of interludes gradually reveal Darren's motives, but not in his own words. The years of mental illness, unsuccessful treatment, bullying, and drug and alcohol use, which led to him throwing a cue ball at a high school girl who turned down his advance at a party (which was itself egged on as a prank), all of this seems outside Darren's articulation.

On the other hand, the novel's protagonist, Adam, is gifted with a hyper-verbosity that figures Lerner's most extended engagement with temporality and language. Adam's participation in high school debate contrasts Darren's own manual labor. Debate, especially Adam's particular version of policy debate, provides a disembodied analog to this labor, as the debater's language tries to exceed the body that produces it:

For a few seconds it sounds more or less like oratory, but soon she accelerates to nearly unintelligible speed, pitch and volume rising; she gasps like a swimmer surfacing, or maybe drowning; she is attempting to "spread" their opponents, as her opponents will attempt to spread them in turn—that is, to make more arguments, marshal more evidence than the other team can respond to within the allotted time, the rule among serious debaters being that a "dropped argument," no matter its quality, its content, is conceded.

The "spread"—a spatial description of a temporal phenomenon—uses speed to enthrall others in its specific game. The debater's accelerating speech, which begins to look like "drowning," pulls the other speakers down with her, as everyone has to speak with more speed and less coherence just to stay above water. Whereas some claim that the spread "detached policy debate from the real world," Lerner instead considers it as encapsulating potent historical transformations of that "real world" in the form of disclosures at the end of "increasingly common television commercials for prescription drugs," caveats to "promotions on the radio," and the "fine print" attached to documents from financial and health institutions: "Even before the twenty-four-hour news cycle, Twitter storms, algorithmic trading, spreadsheets, the DDoS attack, Americans were getting 'spread' in their daily lives." This sudden shift from narrating the past to discussing the present characterizes the style of *The Topeka School*. To make sense of the spread, even Lerner's narrator must fast forward from the action of 1990s Kansas to use his twenty-first-century knowledge of Twitter and DDoS attacks.

Lerner suggests that this technocratic spread has particularly manifested in the right-wing government that came to power in the United States. If, as Manshel claims, the recent historical novel coalesces around a catastrophe, the 2016 election might be that catastrophe for *The Topeka School*, even though it

never “happens” as a depicted event like the 2014 Madrid bombing in *Atocha Station*. Kansas—or whatever vision of the neglected Middle America it is that Kansas represents—is the novel’s ground zero. From the infamous Phelps family (with their “God Hates Fags” signs) protesting a variety of cultural events to Adam’s personal debate coach, who “would become a major ally of the Kansas-based Koch Industries, one of the world’s great funders of climate change denial,” the visages of Trump’s America stalk Lerner’s depiction of 1990s Kansas, as he tries to write the novel that can finally explain what it was like in the prehistory to the 2016 “rise” of American fascism.

In contrast to the Phelps and Koch families, Adam appears as the flawed hero, representing hope for a world that is increasingly being spread by forces it cannot understand. He loses his temper and yells at a Phelps protester outside a speech given by his mother, a minor feminist celebrity. In the final debate of his career, he argues against the value of the spread (and loses), just before he wins the national championship in a different event, extemporaneous speaking. On the other hand, Darren stands in the background of these scenes, functioning less like a force than a reaction, wrapped up by a world in which he has no say and even less comprehension. He frequently expresses misogynist and racist sentiments, he drinks too much to fit in, and he always acts just a little bit off.

Lerner’s novel—through its alternating voices and its recurrent figuration of the spread—represents the differences between these two characters as a differential experience of time, and their families seems to provide the material justification for these divergent experiences. Adam’s parents, Jonathan and Jane, both successful psychologists, work at an innovative psychoanalytic research center just called “The Foundation” (modeled on the real-life Menninger Foundation) and narrate large portions of the novel. Jonathan is also Darren’s therapist. While the novel’s “present” is largely set in the late 80s and 90s, Jane’s and Jonathan’s narration occurs through extensive confessional letters to Adam, remembering their own young adulthoods in 60s and 70s New York. Their bourgeois, multi-generational family drama—the novel’s primary plot—contrasts with Darren’s slow-motion tragedy. The divergent fates of Adam and Darren are exacerbated by Jonathan’s relation to them as father and therapist respectively. Jonathan’s attempts to help Darren are thwarted by the young man’s psychological damage and hatred of his own family. In contrast, Jonathan tries to give Adam a healthy amount of space, providing room for his anger, his confusion, his mistakes, like some sort of fantasy of what it would be like to have a therapist as your father.

Lerner’s figuration of parents in *The Topeka School* extends an obsession running through his fiction. This novel picks up thematically where *10:04* leaves off, with anxiety about the possibility of becoming a parent, but here

narrated through the protagonist's own parents. Their young romance in New York, which obliquely narrates Adam's future (he later becomes a young poet living in New York), imagines the conditions upon which two people could build a life together. The novel repeatedly returns to an early scene in their romance, when they drop acid and go to the Met (the ekphrasis echoes Lerner's previous novels, which obsessively depict moments of aesthetic experience): "Then we arrived before Duccio's *Madonna and Child*, where we stood for several minutes, my jaw clenching and unclenching involuntarily as we looked. Old paintings usually bored me; this one stopped me cold. The foreknowledge in the woman's expression, as though she could anticipate a distant recurrence." In the Madonna's face, Lerner finds a potent encapsulation of the blended past and future that subtend our present, as the pigments of imaginations, memories, and anticipations shade our ongoing experience of history. Temporality becomes a metonymy for familial determinism—Jonathan's and Jane's rich and cultured past promises an equally rich future for Adam; Darren's mother, always offstage, fails in this regard—similarly to how Lerner's other novels circumscribed the historical present within one individual's perspective. Rather than reveal the economic contradictions that structure contemporary life, Lerner's focus on the family rigidifies—and maybe even biologizes—our understanding of the stratifications it depicts, as the novel can only ever refer back to its own limited view of the structures in its world.

In this way, the alternation of narrative focus presents narrative shifts as though they are shifts in temporality. Lerner's layering of perspectives necessitates an attendant acceleration of the voice that is narrating. Note his narration of the conditions that allowed a high school fight to occur:

Where were the parents? Most were sleeping. Some were watching *Friends* or *Frasier*, some were watching *SportsCenter*. Some were doing desk work or wiping down the kitchen islands. Some were reading Rice and some were reading Clancy, some were reading Adrienne Rich or "Non-Interpretive Mechanisms in Psychoanalytic Therapy." Or pretending to read. Some were coming back from date night in Kansas City or making perfunctory love or waiting for Internet pornography to load in an otherwise dark, carpeted basement office. Some were at a conference in Toledo. Some were on stationary bikes or the Bowflex or tinkering in the garage or cleaning guns. Some were trying email. Some were waiting for the beep of call waiting—for their kids to check in—while they spoke to others on the cordless. Some were worried and/or oblivious. Some were line-editing college applications or making rounds at

St. Francis. Some were eating or opening a window or just walking dully along on a treadmill. Some were drinking gin and tonics in Taipei and some were writing this in Brooklyn while their daughters slept beside them and some were coming back on trains in dreams and some were at Rolling Hills in twilight states, mechanical beds.

This passage culminates in the frame-breaking deictic of “this” that refers to the novel we now hold in our hands, but its more complete effect is one of accumulation that necessitates acceleration. The deictic “this” is also in a temporal “now” that is 2019, whereas most of the narration happens in the late 90s. Lerner accumulates markers of time period (“trying email,” “cordless”), cultural distinction (Clancy and Rich), and geographic particularity (Kansas City, Toledo, Taipei, Brooklyn) that require a mix of free-associative and asyndetic maneuvers, as the narrating voice catches up to the collapsing time periods being narrated. This acceleration does not just occur within the interior temporality of the novel’s events, though; the mention of some parents “drinking gin and tonics in Taipei” refers to Jonathan’s father and Adam’s grandfather, even though these details (which precede the time of narration by decades) are not narrated until forty pages or so later in the novel. The linearity of familial descent, in tension with the recursive narration of its relations, disorders the novel, as each father refers back to his father, trying to make sense of how to father successfully. In this novel, Lerner’s questioning salvo—“Where were the parents?”—never receives an adequate answer, even as that answer’s urgency ramps up in the novel’s approach to our present moment.

The novel ends in 2019 with three vignettes. The first finds Adam, now a parent, confronting another father whose child won’t share the playground equipment. Realizing that he is losing control of himself—“both of us bad fathers now”—Adam angrily knocks the other parent’s phone out of his hands. The second shows Adam returning to read at Washburn University in Topeka, where his mother had read from one of her books years prior. The Phelps family protests this event too. Here, though, Adam keeps calm and instead narrates as though he is removed from the scene:

Now I am going to show you a picture of one of the protesters. Darren is heavier than the last time you saw him, bearded, almost certainly armed, although no printing is visible in the photograph; he is wearing the red baseball cap, holding his sign in silence. If your eyes were to meet, only the little mimic spasms would indicate recognition. What is happening in this moment? What are the characters thinking and feeling? Tell me what led up to this scene.

The novel seems, implicitly, to suggest that there is no direct answer to these questions and demands. The last vignette finds Adam at an ICE detention center protest, closing with a description of the “people’s mic,” “wherein those gathered around a speaker repeat what the speaker says in order to amplify a voice without permit-requiring equipment. It embarrassed me, it always had, but I forced myself to participate, to be a part of a tiny public speaking, a public learning slowly how to speak again, in the middle of the spread.” Lerner’s answer to the all-pervasive spread is not more acceleration (as Adam has attempted all his life) but rather a dilation on specific scenes and words, detached vignettes only connected by experience, for which his preferred image of hope—rightly, if only gesturally—is the people’s mic. If, in his earlier accounts of the 90s spread, Lerner’s narrator could fast forward to twenty-first-century examples, that strategy no longer abides in making sense of twenty-first-century problems. Rather, Lerner stays with the solidarity of his group, finding a solution not in one exceptionally quick voice but in the “slowly” amplified repetition of words, so that more people in that “tiny public” can hear.

Darren’s silence excludes him from this public, just as he had been excluded from the promises of the bourgeois family. Facing Darren’s future, our present, Lerner’s demand—“Tell me what led up to this scene”—leads nowhere. If Lerner seems unable to comprehend the plight of Darren from his narrator’s perspective, it might be because that narrator has no better solution than the author writing him. Lerner’s latest novel illustrates the pitfalls of fictionalizing history through an intimately personal lens. Recalling what might be the greatest statement on the historical novel—Fredric Jameson’s claim that “History is what hurts”—we should note that Jameson puts aside how the historical subject feels about their experience of this hurt. Rather, the limits of history—imposed by the violences of capitalist exploitation and political struggle—are universally felt because history had to happen in the way that it did. As such, the position of the Gordon family at this novel’s narrative center, as the liberal stability that felt victimhood, rather than complicity, in response to 2016’s presidential election, limits Lerner’s narrative. This structure might tell us more about present failures than historical ones, providing few, if any, solutions.

Adam Fales

## LETTERBOX

To the Editors:

Regarding Rubén Medina's response to my letter: José Vicente Anaya decided not to respond himself, saying that to engage with his letter would be to suggest that his justification is valid.

I would like to thank Medina for providing the context from his book *Perros habitados...*, albeit a bit late. Presumably he called the CR dossier "the first comprehensive introduction to the Infrás in English" because he knew that it was of interest to people who couldn't read his book (CR 63:3/4). I don't think it's deceptive for me to have not translated his introduction for him, which in any case I don't find convincing. He said he couldn't be bothered to restate it himself.

I'd also like to mention that if we are to follow his logic—that Anaya should be expelled for publishing—neither Medina nor Bolaño would be Infrarealists either. Mario Santiago's *Aullido de Cisne* was published in 1996, so perhaps his legacy is safe. Claiming that Anaya was "minimizing those who would later identify as Infrás" without also acknowledging that Bolaño did the same on a bigger scale is disingenuous as well.

As for opportunism: I'll just note that the accusation is funny coming from Medina. I glanced at his 1986 book *Amor de lejos...* (translated as *...Fools' Love* by Jennifer Sternbach and Robert Jones), in which his bio states that "He is the winner of the University of California-Irvine's sixth annual Chicano poetry contest and is a fellow of the National Endowment of the Arts." I say good on him for those successes and for his long-term career in a huge academic institution, but they do betray his claim that the criteria of inclusion for Infrarealism is to "have refused to be part of the functional opportunism promoted by the cultural institutions of the country and even the custom of cultivating friendships within the establishment that would bring a benefit to their literary 'career.'"

As Anaya wrote in his manifesto: "Infrarealism exists and does not exist."

Best,

Joshua Pollock

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We at *Chicago Review* were saddened to learn that José Vicente Anaya passed away on August 1, 2020, during the production of this issue.

## CONTRIBUTORS

**Cody-Rose Clevidence** is the author of *BEAST FEAST* (Ahsahta, 2014), *Flung/Throne* (Ahsahta, 2018), *Listen My Friend This Is the Dream I Dreamed Last Night* (The Song Cave, 2021), and *AUX | ARC Trypt Ich* (forthcoming from Nightboat, 2021) as well as several handsome chapbooks. They live in the Arkansas Ozarks with their medium-sized but lion-hearted dog Birdie. ♦ **Albert Flynn DeSilver** is a poet and writer living in northern California. His work has appeared in over one hundred literary journals including *ZYZZYVA*, *New American Writing*, *jubilat*, *Hanging Loose*, and elsewhere. Albert worked as a California Poet in the Schools for many years and served as Marin County California's first poet laureate from 2008–10. He is the author of the memoir *Beamish Boy* (The Owl Press, 2012) and *Writing as a Path to Awakening* (Sounds True, 2017). He is currently working on a novel (fictional autobiography) about the life and times of Jaime de Angulo. ♦ **Michael Dowdy**'s books include a study of Latinx poetry, *Broken Souths* (University of Arizona Press); a collection of poems, *Urbilly* (Main Street Rag Poetry Book Award); and, as coeditor with Claudia Rankine, a critical anthology, *Poetics of Social Engagement* (Wesleyan University Press). He teaches at the University of South Carolina. ♦ **Patrick James Dunagan** lives in San Francisco and works at Gleeson Library for the University of San Francisco. An editor of the anthology *Roots and Routes: Poetics at New College of California* (Vernon Press, eds. Dunagan, Lazzara, Whittington), he is currently editing David Meltzer's *Rock Tao* (Lithic Press, forthcoming). ♦ **Patrick Durgin**'s books of poetry are *PQRS* and *The Route*. His artist book *ZENITH* is available from the Green Lantern Press. He teaches in the Visual and Critical Studies program at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. ♦ **Bonnie Etherington** earned her PhD in English from Northwestern University. Her first novel, *The Earth Cries Out* (Vintage NZ, 2017), was shortlisted for the William Saroyan International Prize for Writing and long-listed for the 2018 New Zealand Book Awards. Her writing has appeared or is forthcoming in *The Contemporary Pacific*, *Guernica*, *Vice*, *Hawai'i Review*, *Meniscus*, and *Landfall*, among others. ♦ **Brian Evenson** has published a dozen and a half books, most recently *Song for the Unraveling of the World*, which won the World Fantasy Award and the Shirley Jackson Award. A new book, *The Glassy, Burning Floor of Hell*, is forthcoming in 2021. He lives in Los Angeles and teaches at CalArts. ♦ **Anna Elena Eyre** holds a PhD from SUNY-Albany and an MFA from California College of Arts. She is the author of "Jaime de Angulo's Relational 'I': A Morphological Poetics" (*Paideuma* 41, 2014) and

the book of poems, *Faceless Names* (BlazeVOX, 2013). Raised in Taos, New Mexico, she now resides in upstate New York with her husband and two daughters. ♦ **Adam Fales** is a PhD student at the University of Chicago and managing editor at *Chicago Review*. ♦ **Daniel Faria** (1971–1999) was born in Baltar, a village near Porto, Portugal. He studied theology at the Catholic University and took a degree in Portuguese Studies at the University of Porto. After graduating, he entered the Dominican Monastery at Singeverga. He died at age twenty-eight, shortly before finishing his novitiate, in an accident at the monastery. ♦ **Edgar Garcia** is a poet and scholar of the hemispheric cultures of the Americas. He is the author of *Skins of Columbus: A Dream Ethnography* (Fence Books, 2019); *Signs of the Americas: A Poetics of Pictography, Hieroglyphs, and Khipu* (University of Chicago Press, 2020); *Emergency: Reading the Popol Vuh in a Time of Crisis* (forthcoming, University of Chicago Press, 2021); and, with visual artist Eamon Ore-Giron, *Infinite Regress* (Bom Dia Books, 2020). He is the Neubauer Family Assistant Professor of English at the University of Chicago, where he also teaches in the department of Creative Writing. ♦ **Peter Garland** was one of the students at the original CalArts in 1970 where his teachers were Harold Budd and Jim Tenney. He has had a fifty-year career so far as a composer, writer, editor-publisher (Soundings Press, 1971–91) and scholar-investigator; all the while surviving outside of academia and the musical-political mainstream. ♦ **Dana Glaser** is a PhD candidate in English at the University of Chicago studying feminist theory, the aesthetics of twentieth and twenty-first century political movements, and the historical development of nonfiction. ♦ **Lisa Hollenbach** is an Assistant Professor of English at Oklahoma State University. She is currently working on a book about post-1945 American poetry and FM radio, and has essays published or forthcoming in *American Literature*, *Modernism/modernity*, and *The Oxford Handbook of Twentieth-Century American Literature*. ♦ **Andrew Hungate** is a writer living in Philadelphia, where he works in the performing arts and plays piano to pass the time. ♦ **Doug Jones** completed a MPhil on the poet Bill Griffiths in 2004. While doing this he fell in with Bob Cobbing’s Writer’s Forum workshop, which was a huge influence. Jones has had four books of poems published, mostly by Veer, and currently works as a medical doctor in Yarmouth, an English coastal town. ♦ **Georg Klein** was born in Augsburg, Germany, in 1953. He is the author of seven novels, three collections of short stories, and two other volumes. To date the only translations of his work into English have been the novel *Libidissi*, translated by John Brownjohn (Picador, 2001), and two other short stories (“Chicago,” trans. Ernst Zillekens; “A Dwarf’s Tale,” trans. Imogen Taylor). His most recent novel is *Miakro* (Rowohlt, 2019). ♦ **Zane Koss** is a poet, translator, and scholar. His critical and creative work can be found



or is forthcoming in *tripwire*, *Asymptote*, *Jacket2*, *the /temz/ Review*, and elsewhere. He has published four chapbooks of poetry, *The Odes* (incomplete), *Invermere Grids* (above/ground, 2020 and 2019), *job site* (Blasted Tree, 2018), and *Warehouse Zone* (PS Guelph, 2015). ♦ **Ken Krabbenhoft** taught Spanish and Portuguese literature at New York University. He's written several books about Golden Age Spanish theater and prose, *Fernando Pessoa e as doenças do fim de século* (2011), and Abraham Cohen de Herrera's *Puerta del cielo*. Translations include Herrera, St. John of the Cross, Jorge Luis Borges, Pablo Neruda, Eduardo Lourenço and Eugenio Trías. ♦ **Lotte L.S.** is a poet living in Great Yarmouth, at the far east of England. She has a pamphlet forthcoming with MayDay Rooms that works with their archives on 60s/70s cinema collectives across Europe to explore the dis/junctions between aesthetics, cinema, and revolutionary politics. She organizes "no relevance" a series of multilingual readings with local and visiting poets, and accompanying pamphlets, in Great Yarmouth. She keeps an infrequent tinyletter, "Shedonism."

♦ **Garielle Lutz's** latest short-story collection is *Worsted* (Short Flight/Long Drive Books). ♦ **Jerome McGann** is Emeritus University Professor, University of Virginia and Visiting Research Professor, English Department, University of California, Berkeley. He is directing the development of an online edition of Jaime de Angulo's *Old Time Stories: Voice, Text, Image*. Last year he published a book of verse, *Childrens Our's*, illustrated by Stephen Margulies. ♦ **Yao Ong** is a PhD student in English at the University of Chicago. His email address is ongl@uchicago.edu. ♦ **Craig Santos Perez** is an indigenous Chamoru from the Pacific Island of Guåhan (Guam). He is the author of five books of poetry and the coeditor of five anthologies. He is a professor of English at the University of Hawai'i, Mānoa. ♦ **Joshua Pollock** is a poet and translator. He translated José Vicente Anaya's *Híkuri (Peyote)* (The Operating System, 2020), and Salvador Elizondo's *The Secret Crypt* (Dalkey Archive Press, August 2021). He lives in Portland, Oregon. ♦ **Martha Ronk** has published eleven books of poetry, most recently *Silences* (Omnidawn Press); her forthcoming is *The Place One Is*, poems focused on ecology and place. *Vertigo* was a National Poetry Series selection, *Transfer of Qualities* was long-listed for the National Book Award. ♦ **Andrew Schelling**, poet and translator, is still figuring out ecology, linguistics, and animal tracks. He is the author of the folkloric *Tracks along the Left Coast: Jaime de Angulo & Pacific Coast Culture*. Recent poetry includes *The Facts at Dog Tank Spring*. He translates classical Sanskrit and teaches at Naropa University. ♦ **Sotère Torregian** is an American poet, born in Newark, New Jersey on June 25, 1941. He attended Rutgers University and taught briefly at the Free University of New York and Stanford University, where he helped establish the Afro-American studies program in 1969. In the mid-1960s he

was associated with the New York School of poets. At that time he proposed a kind of American “orthodox Surrealism” (following the dictates of André Breton), based on “reinterpretations of surrealist stands on Revolutionary perspectives in art, poetry, and theology.” He presently resides in Stockton, California. ♦ **Genya Turovskaya** is the author of *The Breathing Body of This Thought* (Black Square Editions). Her work has appeared in *Asymptote*, *Conjunctions*, *Fence*, *PEN Poetry Series*, *Poem-a-Day*, *Seedings*, *The Elephants*, and other publications. She is a recipient of the Whiting Award for poetry. Originally from Kyiv, Ukraine, she lives in New York City. ♦ **Darryl “Babe” Wilson** aka **Sul’ma’ejote** (California Pit River Nation, Achumawi and Atsugewi) was a cultural and political activist as well as the author and editor of several books including *The Morning the Sun Went Down*, a collection of autobiographical essays. His work focuses on contemporary Native American life and experience, especially in California. ♦ **Rachael Guynn Wilson**’s writing has appeared in *apricota*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, *The Distance Plan*, *Hyperallergic*, *Jacket2*, *Kenyon Review Online*, *Textual Practice*, *Victorian Literature & Culture*, and elsewhere. She is a cofounder of the Organism for Poetic Research and a member of the Belladonna\* Collaborative. She holds a PhD in English from New York University, is Managing Editor at Litmus Press, and teaches at the School of Visual Arts. ♦ **Chantal Wright** teaches literary translation at the University of Warwick in the UK and translates from German and French. She won the inaugural Cliff Becker Book Prize and has been the recipient of a PEN/Heim award. Recent translations include work by Antoine Berman, Michel Foucault, and Henri Meschonnic.



# Recent and forthcoming from the Organism for Poetic Research

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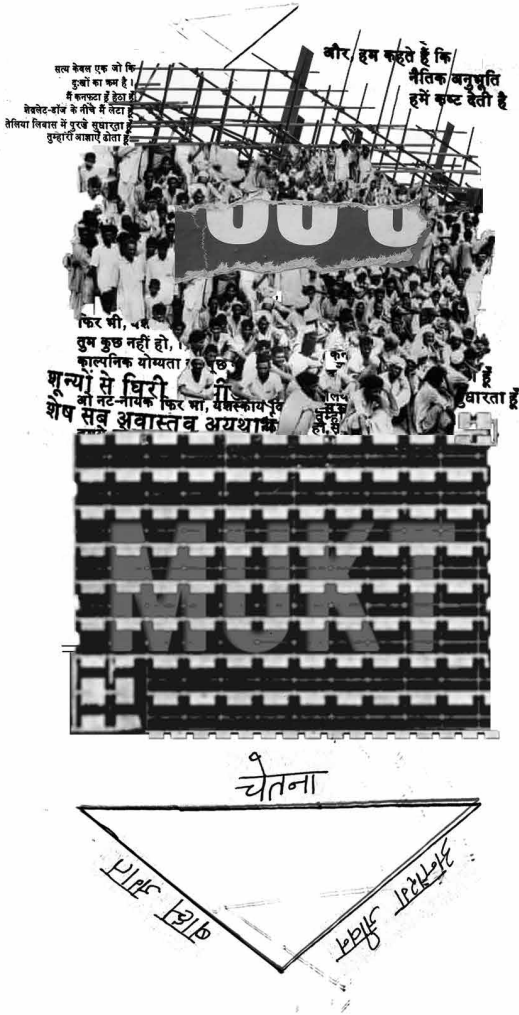
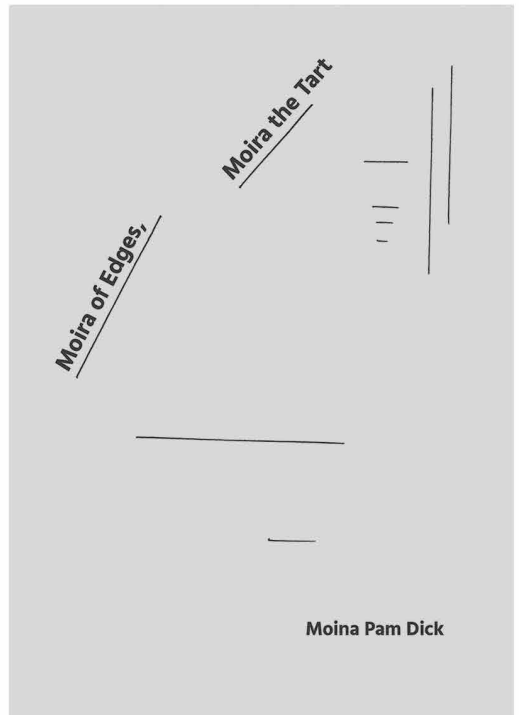


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