Bombay Gin

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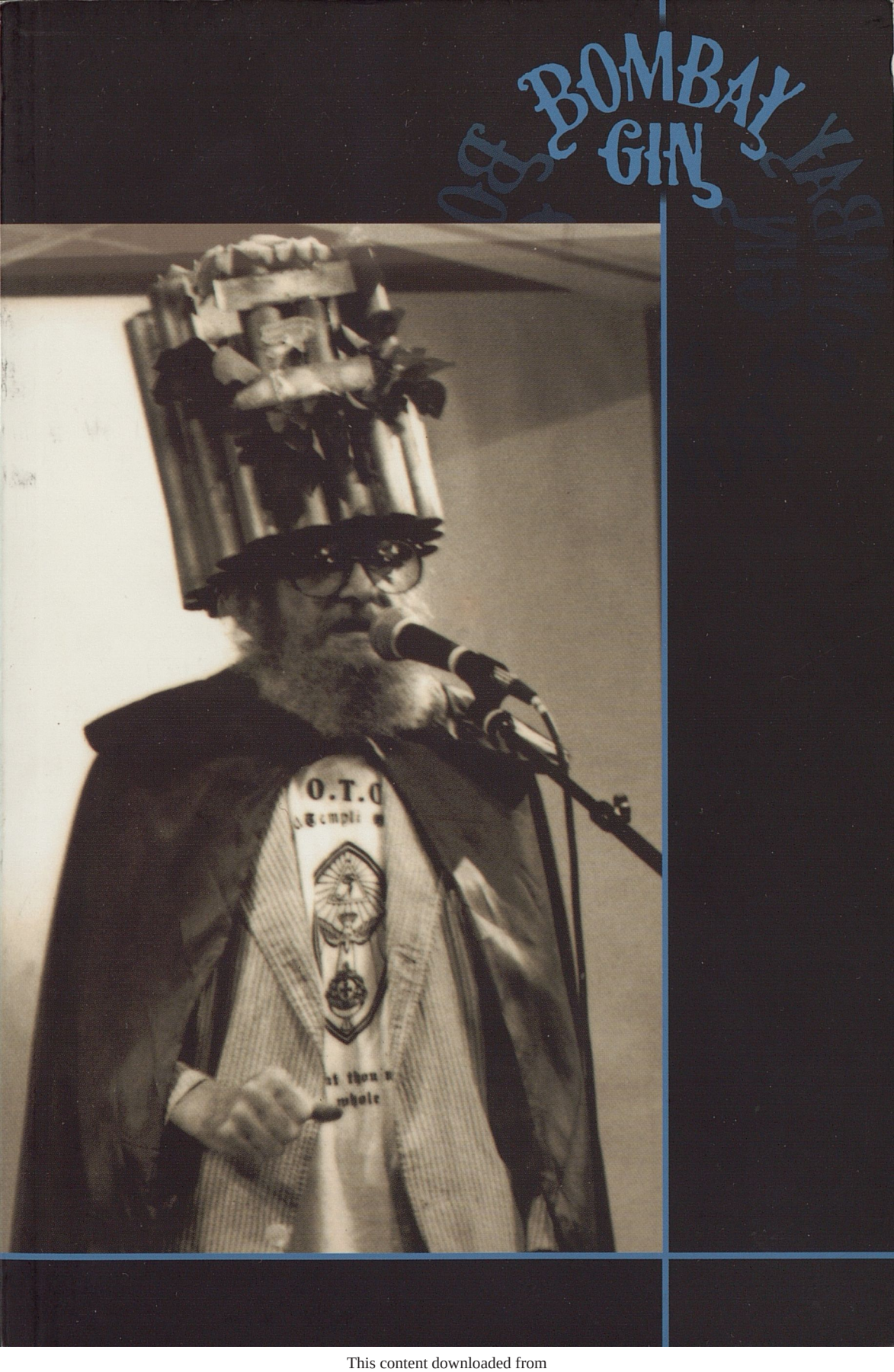

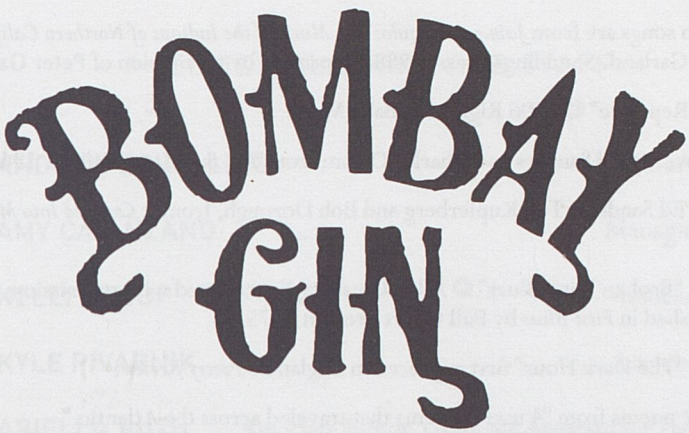

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BOMBAY GIN 37:1

Anthology of American Folk Music

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NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Harry Smith (1923-1991) was a darkly legendary archivist, anthologist, filmmaker, poet, and generally uncategorizible & enigmatic character. He received the Chairman's Merit Award for lifetime achievement at the Grammy ceremonies in New York City, February 20, 1991. Since that time a number of collections celebrating his crooked paths to accomplishment have appeared, and new generations have listened to, been influenced by, or at least heard tell of his six-disk 1952 *Anthology of American Folk Music*. Occasionally in accounts of Smith someone mentions his residence during the final years of his life, 1988-1991, at The Naropa Institute (now Naropa University). This issue of *Bombay Gin* is a tribute to those final years.

The Grammy award brought public accolades to Smith at a time he was technically still in residence at Naropa (my recollection is that he had gone east for dental work and never quite made it back out to Colorado, though his living quarters remained untouched). The story that circulated on the Naropa campus was this: that in 1988 old comrade Allen Ginsberg had found Harry severely ill—near death—and out of money, possibly at the Chelsea Hotel. (See the interview here with Steven Taylor for an account of the days Smith lived in Ginsberg's Lower East Side apartment.) Uncertain what to do with Harry, Allen cleaned him up, gave him some pocket money, and brought him to Boulder, hoping the Buddhists of Naropa and the poets of the Jack Kerouac School specifically would take care of him.

At the west end of Naropa's Arapaho Avenue campus sit seven odd little clapboard or stucco outlier buildings. In the late 1980s the Institute rented some of them to faculty or students, and Harry was installed

in a vacant cottage. His quarters were two rooms, cavern-like in their darkness, roamed by an indeterminate number of cats. Thanks to the generosity of several local booksellers, Harry quickly amassed a library that stuffed these rooms to overflow. In particular the late Dick Schwartz of Stage House Books on Pearl Street provided Harry with a generous credit line, and now that Dick is gone there's nobody to ask if the bill ever got paid. (Interestingly, some years later it was Dick who generously helped the Jack Kerouac School get a Vandercook proof press and other equipment foundational to the Harry Smith Printshop.)

The Rex Foundation, benevolent wing of San Francisco's band the Grateful Dead, provided funding for Harry—to pay rent and help with expenses. Members of the Dead—along with hundreds of other rock and folk musicians—had learnt much of their vernacular American music from Harry's *Anthology*.

> "Nothing like it ever existed, before or since," claimed Robert Hunter, an early member of the Grateful Dead who wrote many of their most famous songs. "There's no way to estimate how important that Folkways collection was to our musical sensibilities. It radically informed and purified our tastes, as well as the tastes of a whole generation of folk performers, by presenting us with selections from the full spectrum of what had been accomplished in recorded indigenous American folk music: a lost music after WWII. Sure, the material existed in archives but it might as well have been on the moon for all the good it did us until Harry Smith collected, selected, packaged, and presented his eighty-four song sampling of the old disks to the public. To hear them was an initiation. Presto! Instant roots!" (Quoted from Chris Smith's *101 Albums that Changed Popular Music*.)

As the twentieth century recedes, with its catastrophes, upheavals, and exhilarations, it's worth pausing a moment to reflect. Only twenty years ago the American economy, the expectations for a small non-conventional

college, the Federal government's oversight committees, & a differently inflected approach to community—all these were still loose enough that a person could be housed on a degree-granting university campus with no explicit duties, no academic credentials, no paycheck, no health care, no interfering administrators or yawping donors, no baffled trustees or comptrollers or Deans. And that in this instance he would popularly acquire the position of "resident shaman," to then roam the town or the campus as he saw fit, pursuing his studies, his collections of folk materials nobody had thought to gather, and his art.

Harry Smith's feral, darkly humorous, underground presence: going into his two-chamber cottage was to enter the subterranean warren of some stinky old wood-rat, a creature that turns out (once you've passed the impossible test) to be a spirit animal. His rooms were always smudged with pungent smoke (see The Fugs' musical score "Marijuana" in this issue). Those who remember Harry recall how day or night he carried a tape recorder, taking post-Dada multi-track ethno-historic recordings of anything you or anyone else might say.

In a way he was best known at Naropa as an archivist—for his peerless folk song anthology—but not in the sense that he was a mere compiler. One glance at his ferret-like research procedures showed that Smith was going at a deeper slant than anyone else. Harry had done for American vernacular, popular, local music in the 1950s what Jerome Rothenberg did for North American "poetry" in the 1970s: he sought out the multiple old traditions, presenting a long historical view that had been overlooked, neglected, scorned, driven to extinction, or carefully written out of most serious studies. Ed Sanders, in the notes reprinted here, says of the *Anthology of American Folk Music*: "Harry... designed it, sequenced it, wrote the notes, laid it out and pasted it up. Harry brought his skills at montage and art...." [Compare this to the commentaries Rothenberg placed at the back of such collections as *Technicians of the Sacred* or *Shaking the Pumpkin*.] It was, Sanders says with precision, "a deliberate act of anthropological magic."

This *Bombay Gin* issue adopts Smith's *Anthology* title. We've also organized poetry, music, and fiction from Kerouac School associates into the three sections Smith devised for his *Anthology*: Ballads, Social Music, and Songs. We've included an extra chapter, "Secret Volume,"

for the originally never-released fourth set of vinyl discs. There are interviews with Steven Taylor, Greil Marcus, and Daniel Pinchbeck on the *Anthology*. Also an interview with Julia Seko, resident printer at Naropa University, since the cottage Smith lived in—after his death—was taken over by the Jack Kerouac School, and a letter-press print shop established inside. The print shop has moved to another location, but keeps its original name, Harry Smith, and the building he lived in keeps its original commemorative plaque.

The "old, weird America" of Harry Smith's *Anthology* is a turbulent world of lovers, liars, thieves, scoundrels, murderers, innocents, victims. A realm where passionate, naive love too often gets violated by naked self interest. Sound familiar? It's the America this issue's editors and contributors live in, whether we like it or not. Most of our readers live here too. In some ways Harry Smith, oddly housed at a Buddhist college, was the North American coyote figure who brought something authentic, full of mischief and hopeless dignity, into the open.

Andrew Schelling

VOLUME ONE
BALLADS

ANNE WALDMAN

NEGATIVE CAPABILITY BLUES

There's a post-modern avant derriere chapbook in my pocket there's
Marsdust in my eye
A poem in my braincells US jetplanes's acid rain falling from the sky
What to feel 'bout Beauty when the Dark Ages make you cry?

Literary planet earth shrinking breeders got an edge
Natural planet intelligence dwindling genetic manufacturers create a wedge
Who am I what be in the future Machiavellian politician just got to hedge

Money money money power greenbucks can't keep nomore this blue-
green planet aspin
Push push make more money Wall Street junk bond traders can't win
I'll take antidote to outerspace light years away in cyborgian poetic noggin

Better world? Ha! Euro-dollars gonna pay? housing market plunging
Better world? multinational conglomerates still got the right of way
Oil spill poetry, supernet hookups swarm in the chatroom make my co-
dependent day

Negative Capability Negative Capability blues
One eye's on Heaven, other's on my animal shoes
John Keats got me living in doubt without no reaching after reasonable
facts or clues

Wanna make some decisions wanna own my stalwart luminous radical mind
And live like a bodhisattva throw ego to the wind
Chant sacred poetry's seed syllables so the whole mono-structure caves in

Negative Capability Negative Capability is millennium's positive slant
Negative Capability Negative Capability the view of a schizophrenic saint
Test your mental capacity to vocalize contradictory operatic Complaynt!

GHOST STORY #10

I wanted to write sentences that stretched on toward desperation, as in the fugal voices that became discordant but still lovely then recollected in proximity. At the apotheosis of the desperation, the line would break into clause or new sentence and the break would be the point of discord rather than calm, and still the dissolution would be reprieve, as when the healthy mind refuses any more annihilation and in its descent decides to rest. But there must be sentences that travel toward the desperate one. There must be travel. I felt, as W and I drove into Texas, the layers of lights gradually slough away into paltry twinkling and tinsel, the dust of light. I felt the terrain flatten into smooth and then into snow and then into ice until the stars and the roads receded into blue sheen, and I hallucinated cattle feeding on snow at the edge of the highway. And I maintained such self-discipline at the wheel—a kind of catatonic traveling into the hand that giveth and taketh away.

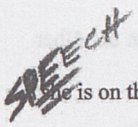
SUZANNE DULANY

FROM ENDANGERED MEMORY

Pre
face

My father, John Lafayette, is 77-years old, in the mid-stages of Alzheimer's disease. As a young boy he trapped muskrats in the New Jersey Meadowlands, earning money to help support the family. A pristine wetland environment, the "Meadows" teemed with water birds, fish, deer, foxes, and other wildlife. Today, like my father's memory, this environment has become a of itself.
sh a rd

ambulatory adj exiting the womb and landing in a field, the infant immediately moving at the speed of wolves.



he is on the cusp of his memory

cusp n (L. cuspis) the brink, the lip, the edge of a tongue about to speak, or a plethora of tongues momentarily speechless; the cusp of a tongue is language on the brink of speechlessness, even on the brink of extinction. If only fifty people speak in this tongue, it can no longer be viable in human terms. But what happens to the cellular matter of this language? Does it reside in the wilderness, store its DNA for future evolutionary processes? Will another species adopt this tongue as its own, or perhaps, consume a leaf and acquire its phonemes/visions/memories?

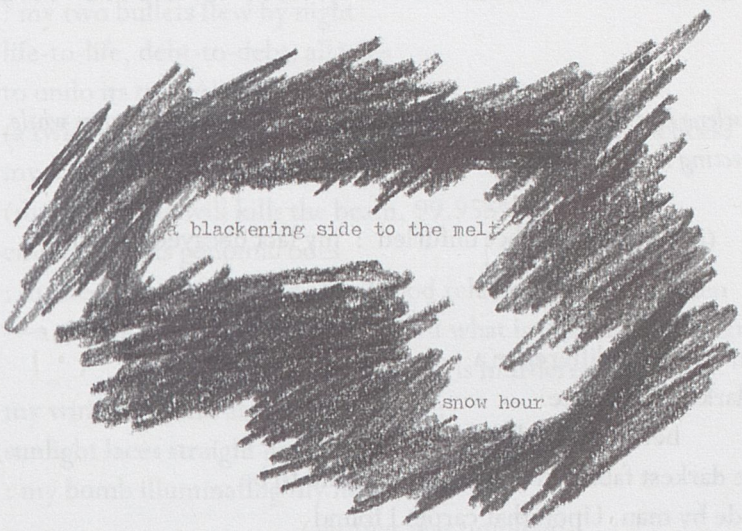
\at dawn, a pack of dogs
moves
through tall grass, on the other
side of willows/

/

/

/

analepsis n a flashback to an earlier frame: a point in time revisited to the extent that it is present again and a convergence of moments takes place, as if a timeline has been wound into a ball, becoming a haphazard series of events. What if the cellular matter of time could break down, the fibers be re-combed and spun into new threads?



BLACK-OUT FABRIC — WHAT I FOUND THERE

Charlene had long dreamed of an ideal black that absorbs all colors while reflecting no light.

(in the light my fact unfurled : my fact decayed in light)

Can you see a difference a
darker difference
between this black and that?
The darkest fabric ever found was found to be
Made by man. Upon that carpet I found

a patch of carbon nanotube grass, a loosely packed
forest full of nanoscale gaps
and holes to collect and trap
light. Tried a picnic upon that scrap, but soon discovered

how random are the surfaces.
My tincture thought it was a bird
my golgi got all confused
(what do golgi do? sent the macro-
molecule package to the wrong parts — what hinter-
lands a hand)
: my eurcaryotes cried so dusky
: my coinciding eye set out to find its companionship

but came back black

: my corresponding ribonucleic haze lazing around the dark nucleotides

: passing through its lumens

my mars mistook itself for sky

: my clouds retrieved themselves from black

(a good nut of a nucleus decoupling the cytoskeleton)

: my two bullets flew by night

life-to-life, debt-to-debt, all tries

to undo its ties. All rise.

(a twist in the basement membranes and their gut-like helices)

my tooth at the hardened crumb just so

(the cell or the will kills the beam, 99.955%)

: my empire lists its genomic odes

: my hedgerow escrowed : my blood released its weathermen

—a corpse was found the story asked what is this stinking history

(another girl is murdered)

my wind did wind around her bones :

sunlight laces straight her ribs :

: my bomb illuminating my hand and bird

(another war unfolded)

: my beast-head asleep on the rock

: my human legs in yellow light

: my fact decayed in the light

ODE TO BUTTONING AND UNBUTTONING MY SHIRT

No one knew, or at least
I didn't know
they knew
what the thin disks
threaded here
on my shirt
might give me
in terms of joy
this is not something to be taken lightly
the gift
of buttoning one's shirt
slowly
top to bottom
or bottom
to top or sometimes
the buttons
will be on the other
side and
I am a woman
that morning
slipping the glass
through its slot
I tread
differently that day
or some of it

anyway
my conversations
are different
and the car bomb slicing the air
and the people in it
for a quarter mile
and the honeybee's
legs furred with pollen
mean another
thing to me
than on the other days
which too have
been drizzled in this
simplest of joys
in this world
of spaceships and sub-atomic
this and that
two maybe three
times a day
some days
I have the distinct pleasure
of slowly untethering
the one side
from the other
which is like unbuckling
a stack of vertebrae
with delicacy
for I must only use
the tips
of my fingers
with which I will
one day close
my mother's eyes
this is as delicate
as we can be
in this life

practicing
like this
giving the raft of our hands
to the clumsy spider
and blowing soft until she
lifts her damp heft and
crawls off
we practice like this
pushing the seed into the earth
like this first
in the morning
then at night
we practice
sliding the bones home.

ODE TO YOUR NAKED FEET

By which the car
swerves by
which the car
takes to the icy
grass like ice
and is for one
second a dragonfly
skimming the earth
and who knows
the silent hands
pulling you down
and down
what was the song
of your naked
feet pressed
to the roof's edge
and how did
the world on its axis
shimmer and scream
no one escapes
you said your
mouth inside my
ear and your hand
no one and I
could hear inside
your head
the sheet metal
tearing and smoke
crawling up
the walls

the birds
piling up at the window sills
their tiny beaks
frozen open.

ED SANDERS

LINER NOTES FROM HARRY SMITH'S *ANTHOLOGY OF AMERICAN FOLK MUSIC, VOLUME FOUR*

THE ANTHOLOGY

Harry went to see Moe Asch, who had recently begun Folkways Records. "He came to me with this vast collection of records," Asch recalled in an interview 21 years later. "He brought up thousands of records." They were 78 rpm recordings. Harry wanted to sell Mr. Asch a good portion of his collection, because he desperately needed some cash. Then, as now, New York City is rather cruel to the impecunious. Harry recalled being paid 35¢ per disc, and that he brought Asch "the cream of the crop." Asch quickly realized that Harry knew the music and history of the recordings intimately, and had the kind of mind that remembered almost everything, so he suggested Harry put together a sequence of tunes from his vast collection.

Harry agreed, and by that agreement entered musical history. Harry took over the entire creation of the *Anthology of American Folk Music*. He designed it, sequenced it, wrote the notes, laid it out and pasted it up. Harry brought his skills at montage and art to the design. There was what Harry called "great soul-searching about what to put in and what to leave out...The first criterion was excellence of performance, combined with excellence of words." Peter Bartók, the son of the composer, was the recording engineer.

When the *Anthology of American Folk Music* was released in 1952 on Folkways Records it astounded, amazed and turned on a generation

of songwriters and musicians. It had a great impact on the history of American music.

In a way, Harry's *Anthology* was a deliberate act of anthropologic magic. "I felt social changes would result from it," he once said. "I'd been reading from Plato's *Republic*. He's jabbering on about music, how you have to be careful about changing the music because it might upset or destroy the government."

The benevolent social concerns, for instance, that were implicit in the American folk music surge of the 1960s grew, at least in part, from the brilliant sequence of tunes Harry had put together from the quests of his youth.

ADDITIONAL VOLUMES

"There were supposed to be four albums," said Harry later, "you know, like for earth, air, fire, and water; red, blue, yellow, and green." The red, blue and green editions constituted the first three volumes, issued in 1952.

As for additional volumes of the *Anthology*, Moe Asch recounted, "The records were not available anymore. Harry had sold them to the NY Public Library." Half of them, anyway. The other half Moe Asch purchased. Asch told an interviewer in 1972 that he had the tapes of volumes 4 and 5, but "I can't get the documentation...It is all on tape."

So about half of Harry's vast collection apparently wound up at the performing arts library at Lincoln Center, part of the New York Public Library system. Smith in a later interview said that he had had an argument over a person on the Folkways staff wanting to put a certain song in *Volume 4*, which "was not a good performance, as far as that set was concerned." The tune in question apparently celebrated the reelection of Franklin Roosevelt. "I didn't like that record, and so they decided not to issue the album, because it was the, you know, whatever it's called, the immovable object meeting the irresistible force."

Meanwhile Harry Smith, a kind of vortex of creativity, moved onward. "After I assembled the *Anthology* and sold the remaining records to the Public Library in 1951, that was the end of that project." In addition, apparently, Smith lost the notebooks which contained his extensive historical analysis of the songs on *Volume 4*.

SHAMAN-IN-RESIDENCE 1988-1991

Harry became the Shaman-in-Residence at The Naropa Institute in Boulder, Colorado, in 1988. He was given a small house on campus, now the Harry Smith Print Shop. Now 65, having made some 23 films, Harry gave lectures and made himself and his huge store of information available to the students and the Boulder community.

Rani Singh became Harry's assistant the year he became Shaman-in-Residence, and gradually took on the huge task of gathering Harry's works and sorting out the complicated facts of his life. Around this time, the Grateful Dead's Rex Foundation provided a multi-year grant to Harry. Thanks to Naropa, Allen Ginsberg, the Rex Foundation, Rani Singh, and other friends, Harry's final few years were relatively stable, and, as always, productive.

He continued his constant taping. I remember July 4th, 1990, sitting with the poet Gary Snyder watching the fireworks on the Naropa campus, and there was Harry, nearby, the red "record" light on his Song Pro-Walkman lit and running.

THE GRAMMY IN '91

On February 20, 1991, Harry received the lifetime achievement Chairman's Merit Award at the Grammy ceremonies in NYC, escorted by his longtime friend, musician Nick Amster. It was a joy to his many friends to see him on television clambering up the Grammy steps wearing a tuxedo. "I'm glad to say that my dreams came true—that I saw America changed through music," he told the audience. The magical intent of the 1952 *Anthology* had, in its way, impacted the nation for the good. Plato was right, music can change the direction of a civilization, for worse or better. Harry apparently stayed at the Hilton for a while, then went back to the Chelsea Hotel, with Rani Singh supervising and trying to keep up his health.

On November 27, 1991, Harry Smith died at the Chelsea. Harry had been coughing blood, until finally it was copious and he passed

away in his bed. A crew from St. Vincent's tried to revive him, but he was gone. Later there was a memorial at St. Marks Church at which Harry's friends, including The Fugs, Dave Van Ronk and others, sang and eulogized him.

AMY CATANZANO

SPARTICLES

manhandling
the locales
from their
droves

I parade myself
like the sky

parades
the appearance
of

half-
daytime-
moons

powered
by
the
shapeliest
of
leaves
used
as

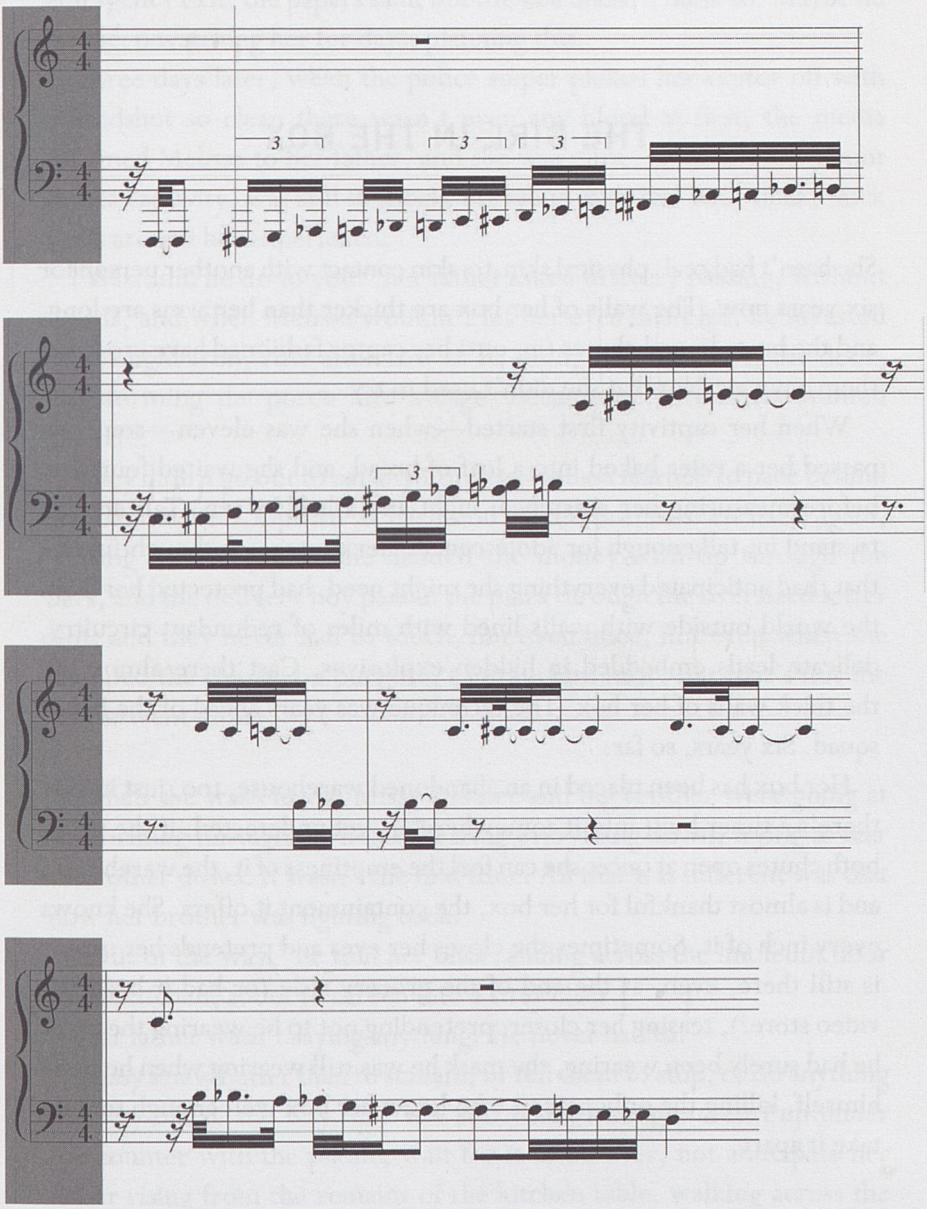
illogical
wings

DANIEL STANIFORTH

WOLF SONG TRANSCRIPTIONS

#1

#2



THE GIRL IN THE BOX

She hasn't had real, physical skin-to-skin contact with another person for six years now. The walls of her box are thicker than her arms are long, and the brass-lipped chutes (in, out) her captor fashioned have crooks in them anyway. Not that she didn't used to try.

When her captivity first started—when she was eleven—someone passed her a ruler baked into a loaf of bread, and she waited four days before measuring her existence: eight-and-a-half by ten. Tall enough to stand in, tall enough for adolescence. Her captor was thoughtful like that, had anticipated everything she might need, had protected her from the world outside with walls lined with miles of redundant circuitry, delicate leads embedded in hidden explosives. Cast there almost, in the thick walls of her box. The technique was years ahead of the bomb squad. Six years, so far.

Her box has been placed in an abandoned warehouse, too, just in case there's a timer built into it somewhere, as-yet undetected. If she props both chutes open at once, she can feel the emptiness of it, the warehouse, and is almost thankful for her box, the containment it offers. She knows every inch of it. Sometimes she closes her eyes and pretends her captor is still there, even, at the end of the grocery aisle (or had it been the video store?), teasing her closer, pretending not to be wearing the mask he had surely been wearing, the mask he was still wearing when he hung himself, killing the only person who knew her box well enough to ever take it apart.

It was his life's work.
She was his life's work.
But that's not how it went.

When she was eleven, a man Melissa only vaguely knew entered the restaurant at a dead run, scanned the room professionally, and picked her up without ever breaking stride. Because she was in line with the emergency exit, the papers said, but Melissa doesn't think so. Maybe he had been watching her for days, planning this.

Three days later, when the police sniper picked her captor off with a headshot so clean there wasn't even any blood at first, the media returned Melissa to her father, and she was mute, wouldn't talk about it, her captivity, was still in shock, everyone said, had built thick, thick walls around her experience.

"What did he do to you?" her father asked in every passing, without words, and when Melissa wouldn't let her eyes meet his, he invested in wrought iron, row after row of it, lining the windows, the door, transforming the porch into a cage. Because he loved her, wanted her safe.

They didn't go out to eat anymore, so Melissa learned to pace behind the bars: a neat flipturn at each end of the porch, then back again, waiting for the pizza. She handed the money-with-tip through the bars, and the delivery boy passed the pizza through the oversized letter slot, and they never had to touch, not even once, not even when she dropped the change on purpose, to draw him near. But that's not the way it went either.

When she was eleven, Missy's father and big brother were going at it, storming through the house, tearing everything down, trying to tear each other down. It wasn't the first time. All that was different was that now her brother was fighting back.

"Out of the way," he told her once, sliding across the linoleum floor of the kitchen, about to careen into a stray chair.

Her father wasn't saying anything. He never had to.

Missy knew better than to scream, or tell them to stop, or do anything but stay out of the way. She was still young enough to curl up under the counter with the phone, wait for it to be over, not anticipate her father rising from the remains of the kitchen table, walking across the linoleum with enough determination that he never noticed the phone cord catching on his ankle. Until it pulled Missy out into the open.

She still didn't scream.

Her brother would come.

"And just who do you think you're calling there, Melissa?" her father asked, using her full name, taking her in his suddenly gentle arms, and for long moments Missy didn't know what to lie to him, and then before she could come up with anything the two of them were spinning under the force of her brother's headlong tackle, and Missy was floating away, into the corner by the door, her father falling back through it in slow motion, pulling Missy's brother through with him, her brother clinging to the knob but it was no use. And before she could pull away, or know to pull away, the door had closed on her hair, leaving her there for sixteen hours, eleven-year-old arms too short to reach the knob.

She didn't cry.

And that's not the way it happened either.

In time, the way it happened wouldn't even matter anymore.

SIX PERSIMMONS

for Noko

after ruining another season's harvest—
over-baked in the kitchen oven then
rehydrated in her home sauna
Aunt Yuki calls upon her sister,

paper sacks stuffed full of orange
fruit, twig and stalk still intact
knows that my mother sprouts seedlings
from cast off avocado stones, revives

dead succulents, coaxes blooms out of orchids
a woman who has never spent a second
of her being on the world wide web,
passes her days painting the diversity of

marshland, woodland, & shoreline;
building her own dehydrator fashioned from
my father's work ladders, joined together
by discarded swimming pool pole perched

high to discourage the neighbor's cats
that invade the yard scavenging for koi
"Vitamin D" she says, as she harnesses
the sun, in the backyard the drying device

mutates into painting, slow dripped
sugar spilling out of one kaki fruit
empty space where my father untethers
another persimmon, he swallows whole

GREIL MARCUS

with ARIELLA RUTH

FOR THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN NOTHING ELSE:

AN INTERVIEW WITH GREIL MARCUS

ARIELLA RUTH: You've written one of the most notable essays on the Harry Smith *Anthology*. Did you ever meet Harry Smith? Could you tell me about that?

GREIL MARCUS: I never met Harry Smith, but every morning, when my wife and I take our daily hike up Panoramic Way in Berkeley, we go right past the basement apartment—#5 1/2—where he amassed his record collection in the early 1940s, before I was born. I do and did know many people who knew him, in Berkeley, in New York and Colorado after that. Once I said to Pauline Kael, who'd known Smith in Berkeley in the 40s and early 50s, when both were involved in avant-garde film work, that when my fascination with Smith began, "I didn't know if he was from Seattle or if he was from Mars." "Oh, he was from Mars," she said, without hesitating for a second.

A.R. When did you first start listening to the *Anthology of American Folk Music*?

G.M. Some time around 1970. I bought the three Folkways sets with the beaten-down farmer on the red, blue, and green boxes—given my Popular Front background, I probably responded to that much more immediately than I would have to Smith's original celestial monochord design. I had always been captured by Bascom Lamar

Lunsford's "I Wish I Was a Mole in the Ground" and Rabbit Brown's "James Alley Blues" on side one of "Songs"—that whole first, magical, mystical side. It wasn't until more than twenty years later that I became obsessed, playing the set over and over, and still without certain pieces ever really registering. Robert Cantwell's early 1990s essay in the New England Review, "Smith's Memory Theater," which he adapted into a chapter in his book *When We Were Good*, was a great spur, a promise that there were answers here to questions that hadn't yet been asked. In 2002, I taught a faculty seminar at Princeton on the set and was thrilled and confused at the way people heard what I'd never heard and couldn't hear what I did. The fact that the *Anthology* is a labyrinth opened up for me then.

A.R. What's your personal/historical relationship to the *Anthology*? When did you become aware of its importance?

G.M. I had always deduced its place in Bob Dylan's frame of reference—no great intellectual feat. I think the iconographic nature of the work came home to me when the artist Bruce Conner told me about discovering it in the Wichita Public Library in 1952 or '53, and immediately glimpsing a whole new, different America than he'd ever imagined existed.

A.R. Every song seems to really pop out of this collection when you listen to it. What are some of the huge rock 'n' roll songs that you think were influenced by the *Anthology*? Did the Beatles miss the whole thing? What about The Rolling Stones or The Kinks?

G.M. I don't know if The Band's "The Weight" was influenced by the *Anthology* in any direct way, but that one song speaks its whole language. I have a feeling that if you asked Paul, Mick, or Ray Davies, they wouldn't necessarily tell you the truth.

A.R. There's an early picture of Harry Smith as a high school student in a cramped room in Seattle recording Native Americans. Why do you think there is no Native music on the *Anthology*?

G.M. Smith explained that he found deep and intertwining affinities between blues, old-timey, and Cajun music, and the strains that produced them, almost as if they emerged from a single, common song, or forehead—an affinity he didn't find in American Indian music, which he would later devote himself to recording and cataloguing, or for that matter, polka or jazz. Compare Allen Lowe's vision of what he called "American Pop: An Audio History from Minstrel to Mojo, 1893-1946," a 9-CD set he compiled in 2000, very much in Smith's footsteps, but hardly sticking to his road.

A.R. If it were up to you to compile an *Anthology of American Folk Music* today, what music would you choose? Would you use the same sections as Harry Smith (Ballads, Social Music, and Songs) or would you organize it differently? How would you contextualize music coming into our culture now?

G.M. In some ways this is already being done. The young California old-timey musician Frank Fairfield recently assembled "Frank Fairfield's Pawn Records Presents Unheard Ofs & Forgotten Abouts" (Tompkins Square)—a world music version of Smith's *Anthology*, with very old American recordings from the likes of Al Hopkins alongside the Sudanese Wandering Minstrels. It works wonderfully. And Bob Dylan's "Theme Time Radio Hour" shows have, in some ways, been his own rewriting of Smith's map—with a lot of shows filled with such obscurities and oddities it's sometimes hard to believe they were ever recorded, let alone released (I wish I could remember who did "Big Guitar"). I think you could hear Trent Reznor's soundtrack selections for Oliver Stone's "Natural Born Killers" in the same way.

If I took up the challenge, I'd drop the categories and try to reframe Smith's project in rock 'n' roll terms—which would involve changing or expanding the definition of rock 'n' roll, at least in terms of time. I'd find early blues and country records that in one way or another had a rock 'n' roll spirit—musical rule-breaking and upending, testing limits, refusing ordered and predictable rhythms, word-play—but mix everything up in such a way that it would be hard to tell what

was recorded when. But really: *of course* Billy Lee Riley's "Flying Saucers Rock 'n' Roll" belongs on any new Smith *Anthology*—just as the Crickets' "Not Fade Away" could have been on the original.

A.R. When I was a student of yours in 2003 in your course at The New School, The Old, Weird America, the *Anthology of American Folk Music* was an important part of our understanding of the material. As an author, music journalist, professor, and cultural critic, do you think that all Americans should listen to the *Anthology*? Should it be a priority for new generations of Americans, like reading the Bill of Rights or the Constitution? Would this help future generations gain a historical perspective?

G.M. I like the idea of making schoolchildren memorize the *Anthology* along with the Declaration of Independence. But can you imagine the protests of all the ethnic groups supposedly left out? American Indians, as you mentioned in an earlier question, Jewish Americans, Italian Americans, Asian Americans, on and on and on—not enough women, too. Bob Dylan once said that if he were president, students would have to memorize "Desolation Row" instead of "America the Beautiful." He also said something very telling in *Chronicles*—that one of the most alluring things about the world of folk music as he discovered it in the 50s and 60s was that you had to go looking for it, that it was hard to find. Harry Smith's *Anthology* is something people should stumble on, hear more as a rumor than a fact, find themselves faced with it without understanding what it is—that is, overhearing pieces of it on the radio, at someone's house, without the liner notes and information. The essential reaction to the picture Smith made is still what it's always been: What is this?

A.R. As a student in the Writing & Poetics department at the Jack Kerouac School, I've noticed the interest in writing song lyrics amongst my colleagues and the importance of understanding cultural influences behind poetry and song. What do you think about the *Anthology's* presence in a place like the Kerouac School?

G.M. "I Wish I Was a Mole in the Ground" is a song that begs for rewriting, that all but automatically generates new voices as you listen to it, that seem to leap out of your and the country's unconscious—a call to heedless, unstoppable writing and rewriting. That's a lot of what Allen Ginsberg heard in the *Anthology*, I think.

A.R. Andrew Schelling, Editor-in-Chief of *Bombay Gin* and a professor of poetics at the Kerouac School, suggests that there's a way you could listen to the *Anthology* as a representation of East Coast music at the time, with the presence of African American music and songs of European immigrants. Do you think the *Anthology* would have looked differently if it was made from more of a West Coast perspective at the time?

G.M. That's an interesting way of looking at it—because most people would say that the geographical center of the *Anthology* is the South. But that too is misleading, as is, I think, the notion of an Eastern tilt. A good deal of the music Smith was drawn to came from what in the decades before the Civil War was called "the Old Southwest"—Arkansas, Georgia, Texas, even Tennessee, Kentucky, North Carolina, and parts of Mississippi. In other words, the West—its ethos, the spirit of the frontier, the drive to conquest and the disasters that went with it—is already there. That's why Ken Maynard's "Lone Star Trail" and Henry Thomas's "Fishing Blues," which end it, and which sound more conventionally Western than anything else on the set, feel so right as an ending. They are the road opening to the rest of the country's history, and the Pacific is almost in sight. After all, Smith came from the western edge of the country—what thrilled him, as it thrilled his listeners, was discovering that inside the country he thought he knew, wherever it was—Bellingham, Seattle, Berkeley—there was another one.

A.R. As a scholar of Bob Dylan, how much of an affect do you think the *Anthology of American Folk Music* had on his music, and his first album in particular?

G.M. I think it was his map—but Bob Dylan is the sort of person for whom no documents are literal and no facts complete. I think it let him hear other music and made him go looking for it.

A.R. What is your new book, *Bob Dylan by Greil Marcus: Writings 1968-2010*, going to look like? Could you give us a sense of what's in store for us?

G.M. It's a collection of very nearly everything I've written about Bob Dylan (outside of my books *The Old, Weird America* and *Like a Rolling Stone*) since 1968, which was the year I first published anything (in *Rolling Stone*, though the first piece in the book comes from the San Francisco Express-Times, an underground newspaper), up to now, truly—given the long lead time of *The Believer*, where I write my Real Life Rock Top 10 column, and the rush production schedule of the book, the most recent item in the book, which comes out in October, is dated September 2010. Pieces on records, books, shows, oddities, long essays on single songs ("Masters of War") or complexes of songs (one beginning with Sam McGee's "Railroad Blues," moving to Emry Arthur's "Man of Constant Sorrow," finally reaching Dylan's own version of "When First Unto this Country"), little bits and pieces scattered all over. If the book has a story, it's that there have been two careers in what's called Dylan's career—the one that peaked, or stopped, in 1966, and the one that began in 1992 and continues now, though it's possible we'll look back and say that second career ended in 2006, with the last song on "Modern Times," "Ain't Talking," and the way Dylan rescued one of the great pieces of American folk surrealism, from "Old Dan Tucker" among other places, "Walking with a toothache in my heel," and found a new, Gothic home for it. But of course, I had to write my way through the years between, and out of them, to realize that. And that's not in the book.

A.R. In Bob Dylan's early recordings he brings literature into his lyrics (such as when he mentions Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot in "Desolation Row") where it's clear that he doesn't just think of himself in a folk tradition, but also in a poetry tradition. You've written on the impact

that the *Anthology of American Folk Music* has had on rock 'n' roll, but what do you think the impact of the *Anthology* has been on poetry? For example, the Beat poets or even The Fugs?

G.M. Who knows if William Burroughs ever listened to the *Anthology*, or met Harry Smith? Burroughs was already on it. His spoken word records are so Kansas it hurts—old Kansas, which was all but part of the South. Ginsberg spoke often about the *Anthology*, its effect on him, the country it showed him—but he was writing ballads in the late 40s. I think the voices Smith collected and brought together might have validated Ginsberg as a public poet and a recording artist, rather than influencing him and his poetry in any conventional way. It might have led him to keep the radio on in his VW van while he was composing "Wichita Vortex Sutra," and to fold what he heard into the work, rather than affecting the actual shape or language of the poem itself. That of course is not nothing.

A.R. Besides Harry Smith's *Anthology*, where else could you go looking for an "old, weird America," or what you've referred to as an "invisible republic?" Where else can you find traces of this sentiment?

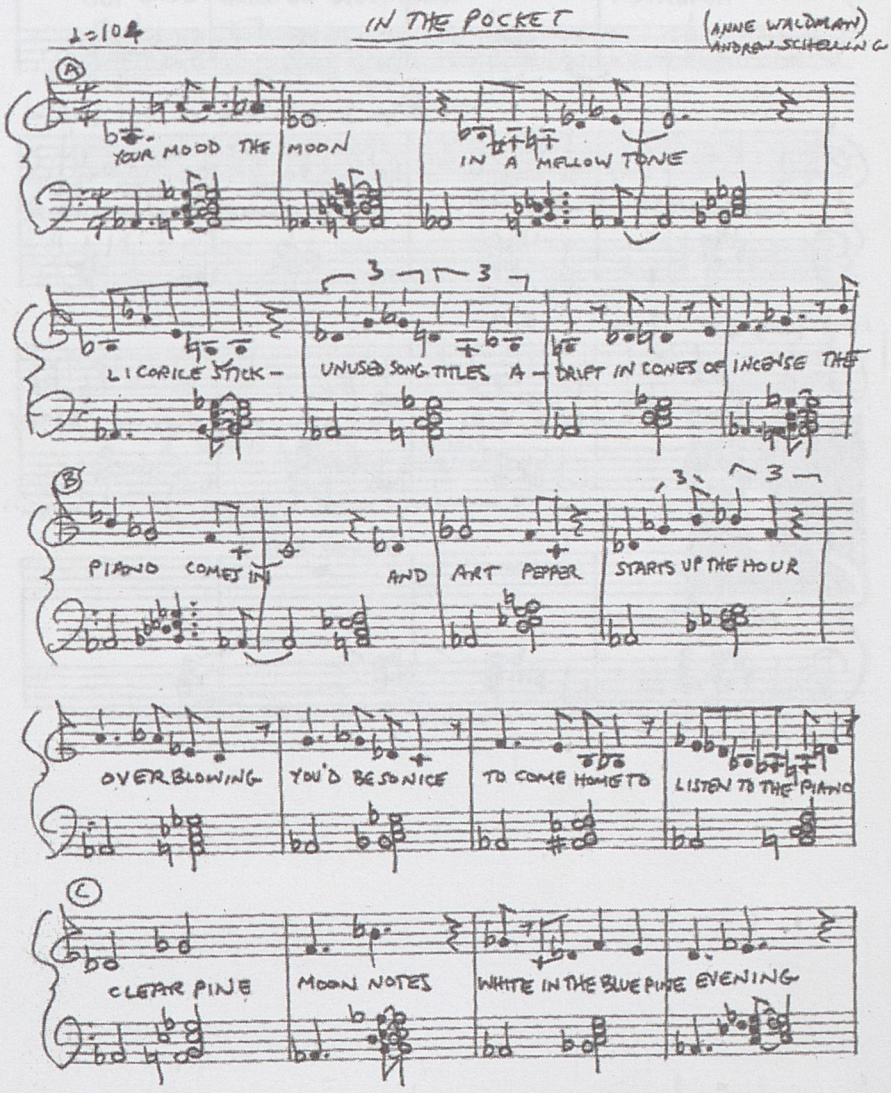
G.M. Here is a quote from Steve Erickson's 1996 novel *Amnesiascope*:

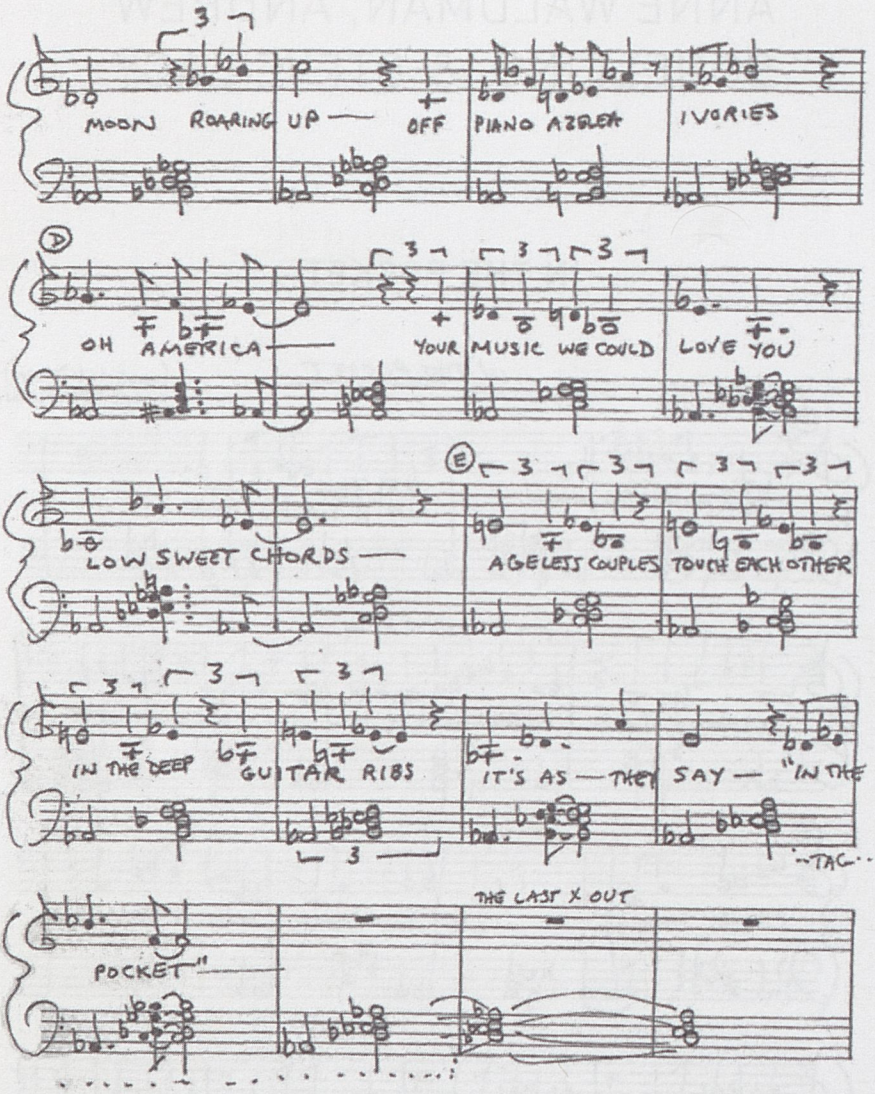
"...street by street, block by block, step by step, door by door, all that's left of the old America is under siege. I catch sight of it from time to time: a fleeting glimpse at the top of the stairs, or outside rustling in the bushes. This is the old America of legend and distant memory, that invested no faith in the wisdom of history and no hope in the sham of the future, the old America that invented itself all over from the ground up every single day...the America where no precaution is sufficient and nothing will protect you, no passport or traveling papers, no opportune crucifix or gas soaked torch, no sunglasses or decoder box or cyanide capsule, no ejector seat or live wire or secret identity or reconstructed tissues or unmarked grave or faked death. It's the America that was originally made for those who believed in nothing else, not because they believed there *was* nothing else but because for them, without America, nothing else was worth believing."

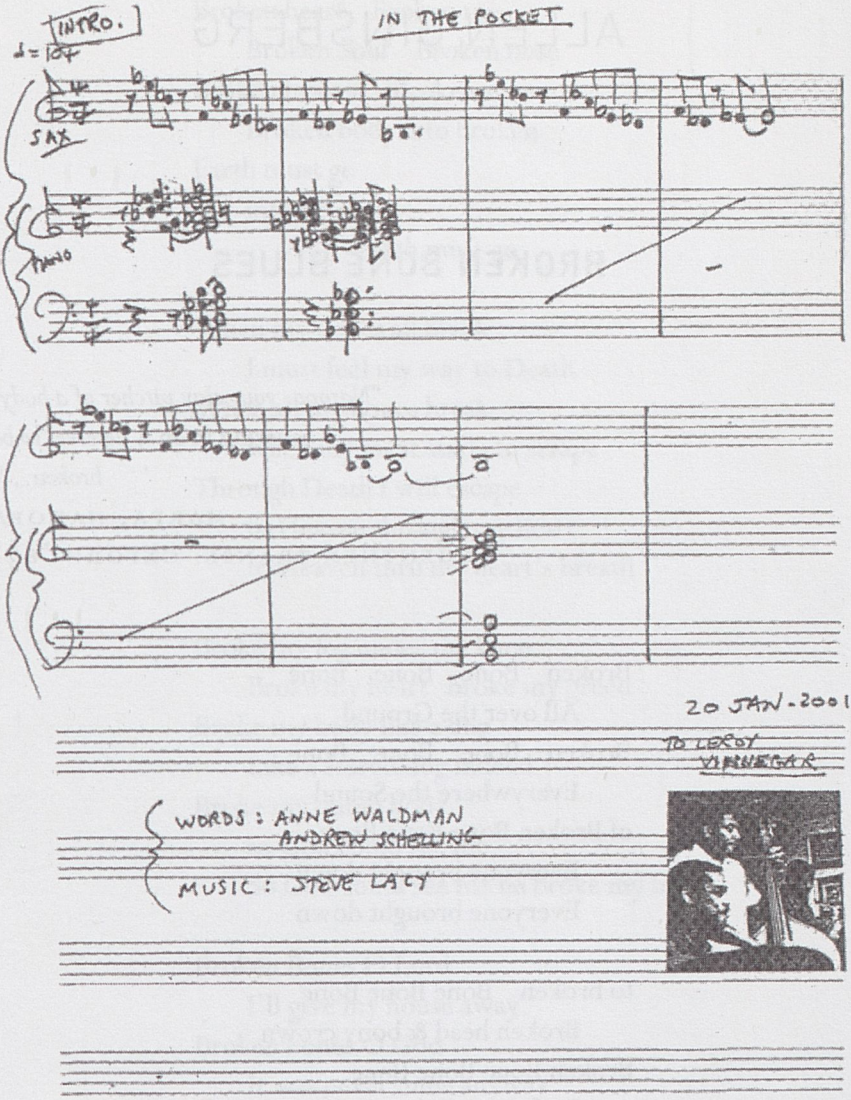
VOLUME TWO
SOCIAL MUSIC

ANNE WALDMAN, ANDREW SCHELLING, & STEVE LACY

IN THE POCKET







BROKEN BONE BLUES

"Naropa, your clay pitcher of a body,
believing in an I, deserves to be
broken..."
MARPA, NAROPA
(GUENTHER TRANSL. OXFORD '63)

Broken Bone Bone Bone
All over the Ground
Broken Bone Bone Bone
Everywhere the Sound
of Broken Bone Bone Bone
Everyone brought down
Everyone brought down

to broken Bone Bone Bone
Broken head & bony crown
Broken Bone Bone Bone
Broken guru-king & clown
Broken Bone Bone Bone
To the Boneyard I am bound
To the Boneyard I am bound

Broken heart Broken toe
    Broken Soul Broken nose
Broken heaven Broken woe
    Broken body into broken
Earth must go
    into broken
        earth must go.

When my bones all break
    I must feel my way to Death
When all my bones break
    when my meat starts to scrape
Through Death I will escape
    to Heaven through my heart
    to Heaven thru my heart's breath

Broke my leg under my knee
    Broke my heart broke my greed
Broke my body like a dog
    Like a scared dog indeed
Broke my dumb body
    so God could see me
    So God could see me he broke my body.

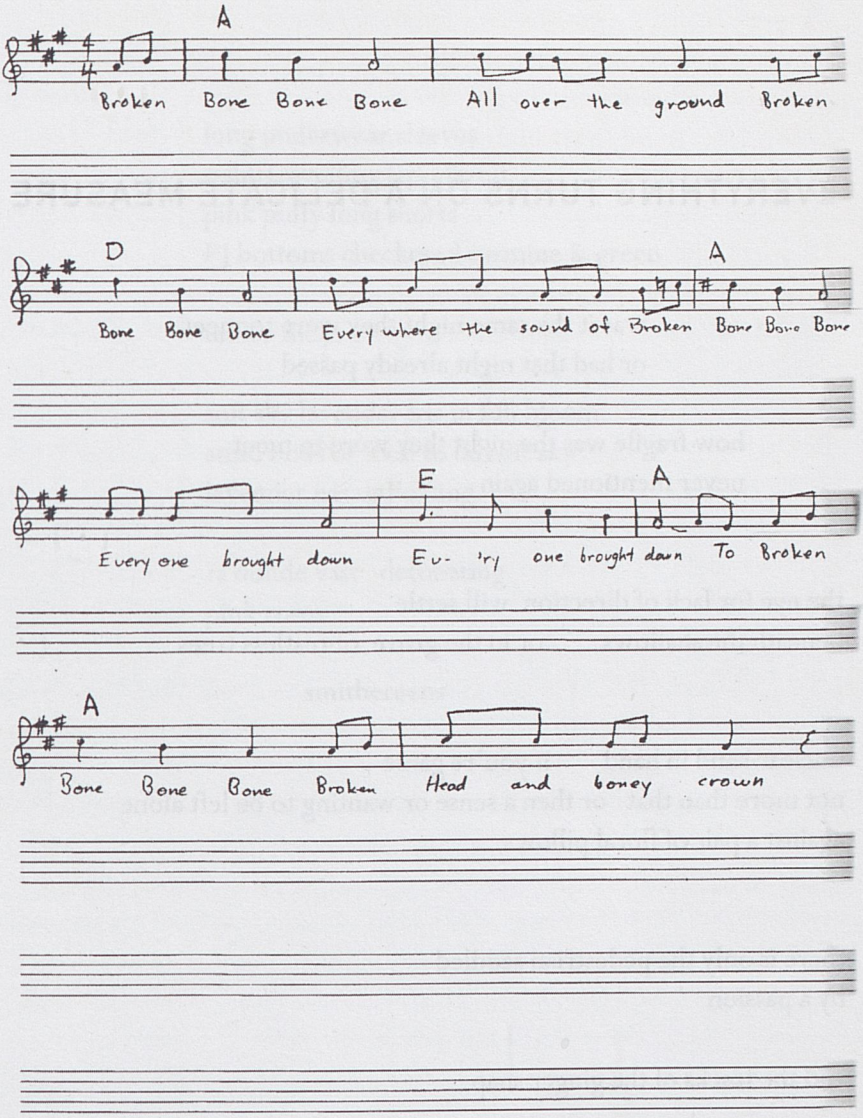
Broken Bones O Lord
    I'll give my house away
Broken bones O God
    It was never mine anyway
Broken Bones O Buddha
    Take my skull today
    Or Take back my skull someday

Break Break Break
O bones every where
Break Break Break
O Soul in the black air
Break Break Break
My body, God take care.
My body, God take good care.

Take your time O Lord
Break my bones ten times ten
Take your time O Death
And you can tell me when
Farewell swift body dream
God bless me again,
Come down God, bless me again
& I'll come back & bless you again.

February 1973

Broken Bone Blues



MAUREEN OWEN

EVERYTHING TURNS ON A DELICATE MEASURE

was it the same night they were to meet
or had that night already passed

how fragile was the night they were to meet
never mentioned again

the eye for lack of direction will settle
beneath the shallows or in the grove of restless trees

unclear hand in hand if you're game
not more than that or then a sense or wanting to be left alone
against a pair of floral pillows

there is only the pedestrian saddled
by a passion

and the tracks of the ginger snap

weak faith that you were

CLOTHESLINE

long underwear sleeves
t-shirt swelling lapis lazuli
pink puffy long shorts
PJ bottoms checkered carmine & green

under these

soft sky lavender iris in full bloom
amid buds of soon to be soft sky
lavender iris unFolding

?a donde vas? detonating
pink roses

smithereens

LUKE DAVISON

AFTER HIS DADDY

My girl wants some ice cream. She's been wantin it for days. Puttin her off about it, though, tellin her we ain't got the money and it's true. She doesn't know how much we have. Walk by the ice cream shop three times a week on the way home from The Dollar Store. She cries at night because we don't go nowhere. Where we gonna go, I ask her, and she gets quiet. Most weeks we don't leave the house except to get groceries and cigarettes. But she wanted ice cream tonight and I couldn't tell her no again. What kind of people can't get a cup of ice cream when they want it? I mean, is that too much to ask? Fuck it, we're goin. Feels good holdin hands and walkin to the shop. It's a long walk, more than a mile. I've got a limp from when I was a kid so it looks like it's hard for me to walk but it's not. People turn and look at me when they drive by. She never notices. She kissed me and told me she loved me when I told her we could get some tonight. I just want her to have a life she can be proud of, you know? She's only eighteen and we stay in the house most of the time. I have to at least take her to eat ice cream and let her pick the flavor and let her eat most of it and act like I don't want any. You'll fuckin die like this, I think. Poor and worried. Then I think that would be okay. Like in that movie I saw where the man and woman and their baby die in that boat floatin in the ocean. All they had was that boat and each other. Just like that. She told me she loved me and told me not to do it anymore when I'd tried to kill myself last month. She kissed my neck and said if I did it then she would too. That's what I thought about when she asked for ice cream tonight. I always think about it whenever she asks for somethin. We order one scoop of ice cream. I let her choose the flavor. She picks Rocky Road and giggles when she sees how big the

scoop is. God, I love her. The old man at the counter says how much it costs and I fumble around in my pockets and pay for half of it with change. He takes a long time to count it and I'm embarrassed. I'm twelve cents short and I apologize and find a quarter in my back pocket that I picked up on the walk. Lucky day. Everybody in the room hears the man when he says I'm short and they watch me dig in my pockets, my girl licking her ice cream and starin out the big windows at the front of the shop. Appreciate you, says the man when I pay him the right amount. We don't stick around to eat it. The walk home is longer. She eats and talks and I limp and think about havin no more money. I want to tell her that I don't know what we are going to do about money cause the rent collector has been leaving notes on the door for weeks. We are two months late on the rent. She is two months late and I know she's pregnant. I love her. She wears jeans with flowers embroidered up and down the legs. Her shirt is pink with a big red heart on the chest. Her smile is wide and young and without worry. I kiss her to let her know I love her and taste the Rocky Road on her mouth. A man and woman in a truck watch us closely as we walk in front of them at a stop sign. Only two reasons why people walk in this town: if they're fat or if they're no good and poor. The hell with them. My girl kicks a rock and crunches the cone. My limp is getting worse. That night in bed she will kiss my entire leg with her sticky, Rocky Road lips and say how much she loves me and that she hates her parents but loves me and wants to name our child Nathan if it's a boy. After his daddy, she says. I tell her we can name it something else but she won't quit. She says she wants ice cream again tomorrow night. Fuck it, I think, we'll get ice cream again tomorrow.

AMIRI BARAKA

EVERYTHING

Everything
Wants to Live
Some things
Never
Do.
But me & you is alive
& mostly see the feelings
Hammering the world
Into different shapes

Me & you is alive & mostly
Want to tell who got to breathe
Shake off the flakes of blind plummet
That casket our coming our post baptism
Blue light screaming

Awokeism
Up gone bye bye real ness
Ok I am here ness & even lay there
Now & not the here after

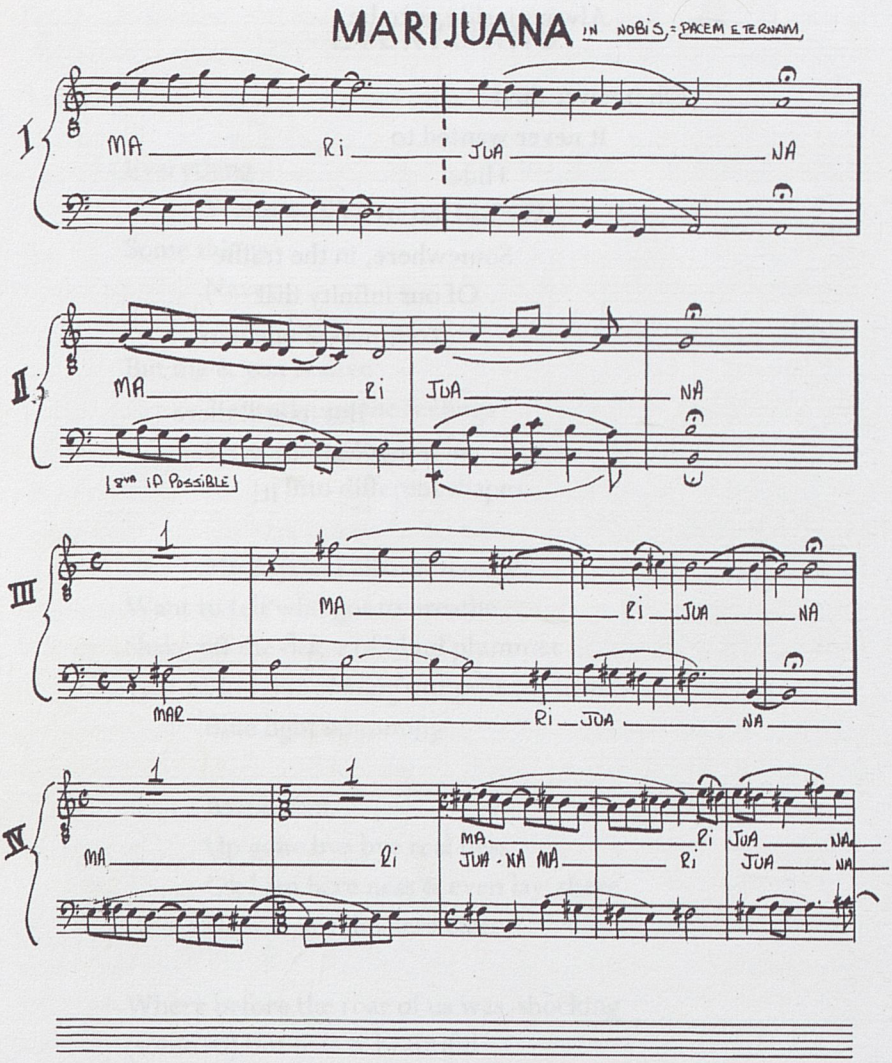
Where before the roar of us was shocking
(some sd) but true & beautiful
Our convergence & newness worlding bounty
Waves of more and counting

We shd never forget that
Or forgive ourselves
For being young and me ing

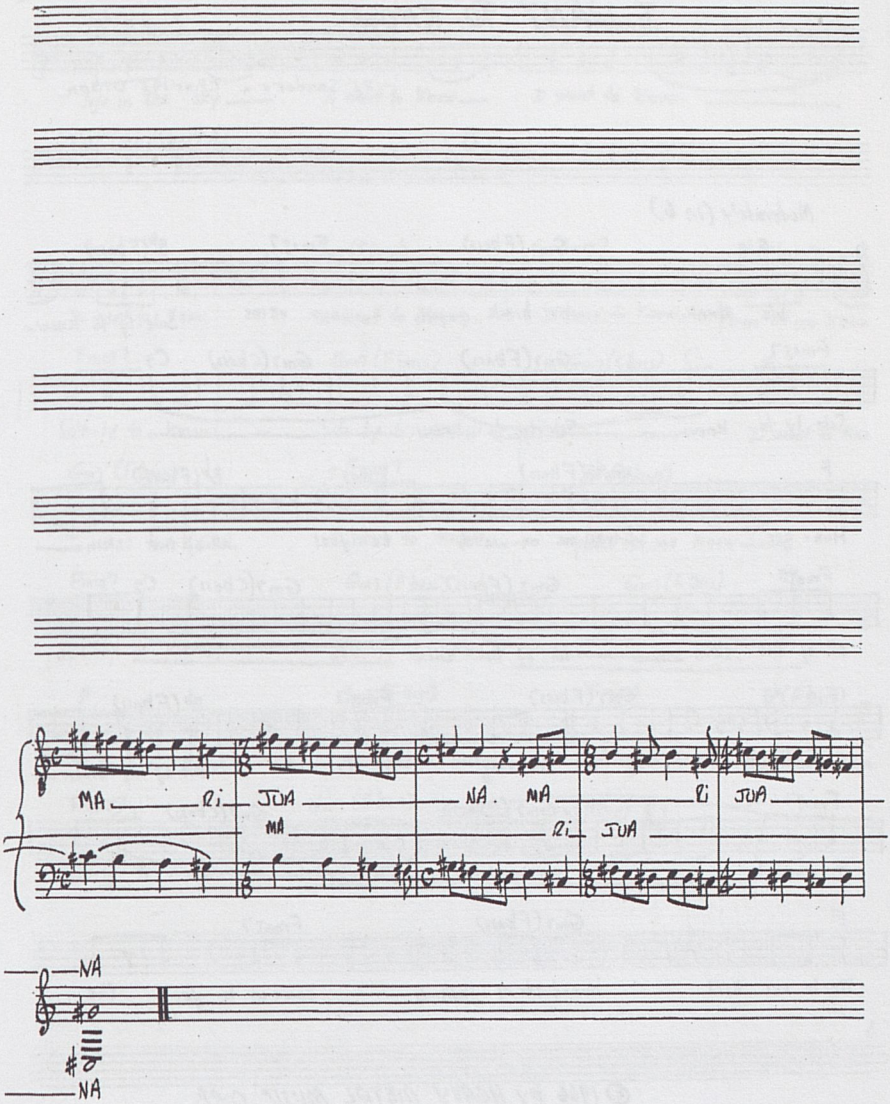
& for the mysterious endlessness
Of what was is & will & still
Always inside us to be.

Oh it never died
It never wanted to
Hide
We had left its name
Somewhere, in the traffic
Of our infinity that
Your ness & one ness

But its still there
It just want us to clean
It!



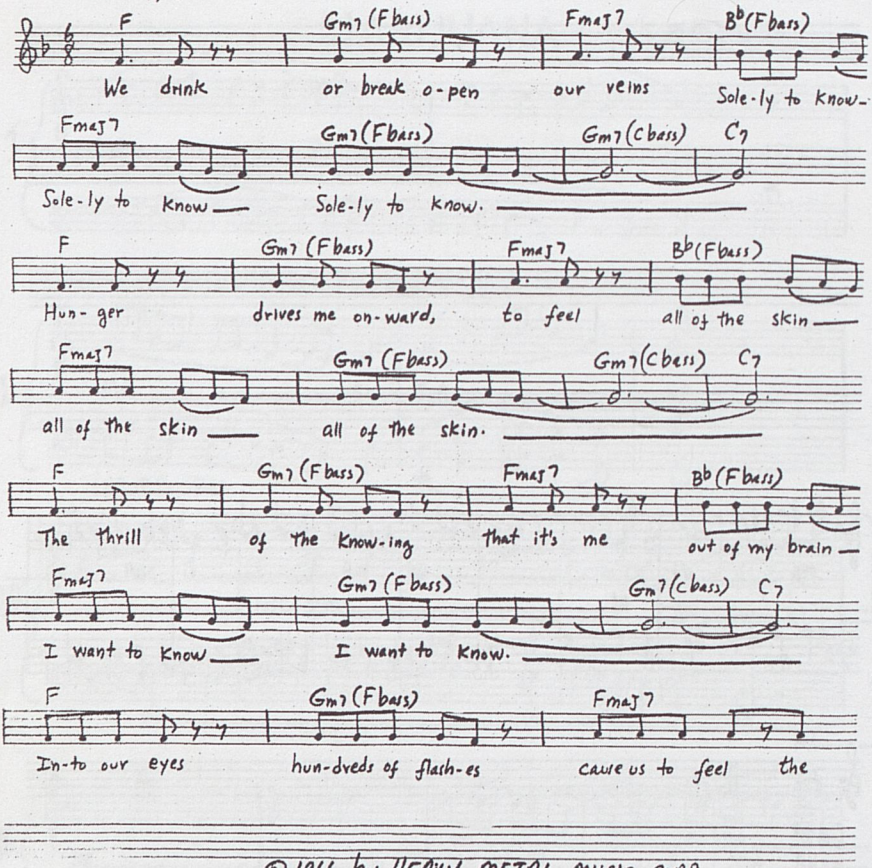
By Bob Dorough,
Ed Sanders, Tuli Kupferberg
1968
Heavy Metal Music, BMI

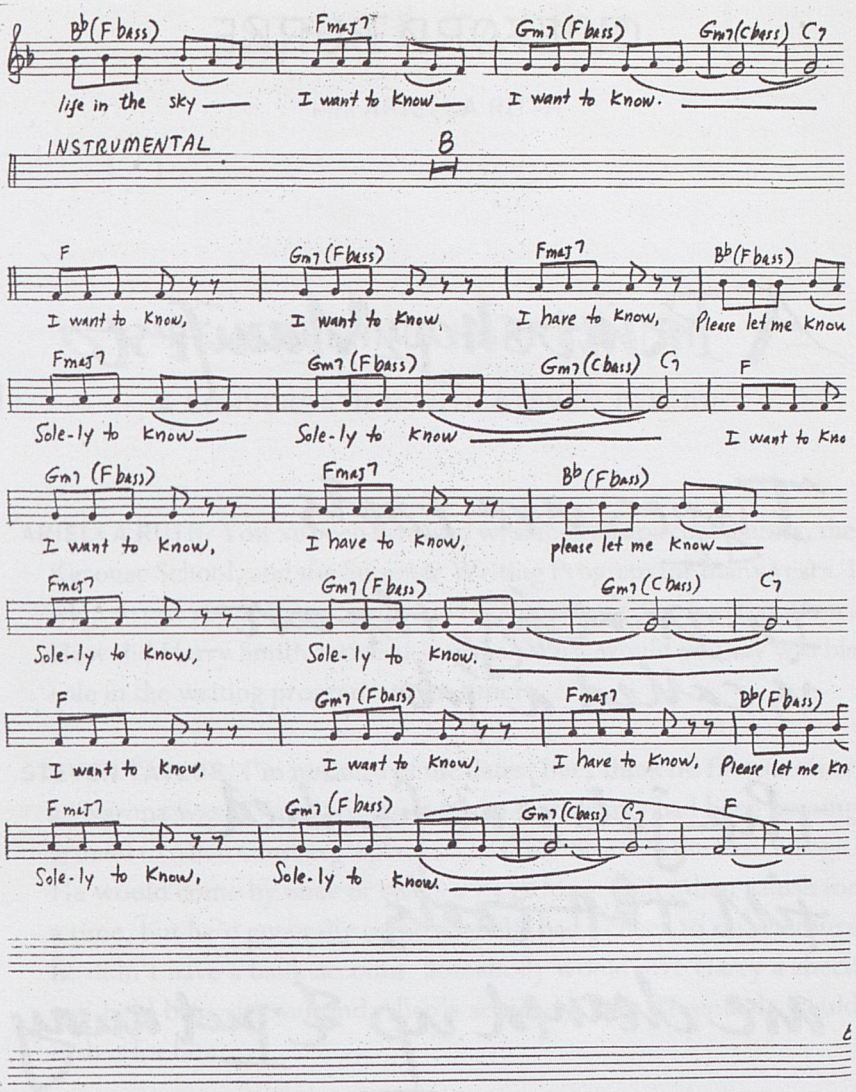


I WANT TO KNOW

— Ed Sanders & Charles Olson

Moderately (in 6)





A Printshop Manifesto

Types are tools

In printing, the art
is called a job

The job isn't finished
till the tools
are cleaned up & put away

Ready for the next job.

—MAGIC CLIFFY

STEVEN TAYLOR

with ARIELLA RUTH

REMEMBERING HARRY SMITH:

A CONVERSATION WITH STEVEN TAYLOR

ARIELLA RUTH: You've been involved with the Naropa community, the Kerouac School, and the Summer Writing Program for many years. I want to talk about Harry Smith and his *Anthology of American Folk Music*. How did Harry Smith arrive at Naropa? What would you say was his role in the writing program at that time?

STEVEN TAYLOR: I'm not sure of the dates, but I think his first summer at Naropa was '87 or '88. Previous to that, Harry had been coming around to Allen Ginsberg's place on East 12th Street in the East Village. He would come by once or twice a week for a while, then vanish for a time, but he'd generally come when he had a check to cash because he didn't have a bank account. Somebody would give Harry a check and he'd bring it over and Allen's secretary, Bob Rosenthal, would cash it for him.

Allen had known Harry for decades. They first met at a Thelonious Monk concert. Harry was sitting up close to the piano and he was making abstract drawings. Allen said, "What're you doing?" And Harry said, "Transcribing the music." They became friends.

In the late 70s, early 80s I was living at Ginsberg's on and off. There was a small room off the kitchen, with space only for a single futon and a piano. I would often write and sleep there. Also, he had an extra apartment next door where I sometimes stayed.

There was always a lot of activity at Allen's place. In the back bedroom office there would be Bob Rosenthal and maybe three or four people working on various projects—the photographs, the bibliographies, the correspondence. It wasn't just a matter of Allen promoting his career; it was about using his income to hire the local poets and artists, to make that a tax write-off, to fund poets rather than war. Bob said Allen was a cottage industry. He was.

So everyone would be very busy. But I made a point of getting to know Harry. I'd make him tea and talk with him. Anyway, he was coming around and then suddenly he wasn't coming around, and Allen was worried about him. Harry was staying at a flophouse on the Bowery. He had a little cubicle in there with a bed. Allen got worried and went looking for him and found that he had been in bed with the flu and had not been eating. Harry's habit was to get up in the morning and go to a diner on the Bowery to eat. But because he was ill, he didn't have the strength to get up, so he was starving to death in bed. Allen put Harry in a taxi and brought him back to the apartment and situated him in that little room. He wound up staying there for quite a long time.

Harry's teeth were so bad that he couldn't chew very well, so we would bring him soy milk, soups, mashed potatoes. Slowly he got his strength back. It was during this period that I really started to know him, to the extent that anyone could.

Every July, Allen, Peter Orlovsky, and I would head to Naropa for the Summer Writing Program. I remember standing in the kitchen in New York in June, and Allen was saying, "What are we going to do with Harry?" It was clear that he wasn't strong enough to take care of himself, and soon we would all leave for Colorado. And we both at the same time said, "Let's take him with us!"

We brought him to Naropa. He stayed in the Varsity Townhouse with Allen at first, and later we installed him in a cottage. Some of these houses on campus at the time, including the house where the writing department is now, were staff residences, and one happened to be vacant. We put Harry in there. If you look out this window here you

can see the little porch where people sit and smoke cigarettes now, the student smoking area. That was Harry's kitchen stoop. These people are smoking in a magical place and they don't know it. There was a bedroom at the other end, which is now where the recording studio booth is, fittingly.

There was a student here at the time, Rani Singh, who was helping out with organizing and catering and she was, as Allen and Anne Waldman would say, "solid," reliable. She was asked to take care of Harry. Rani checked in on him every day and made sure he had his Salem 100 cigarettes and ice cream bars. So there he was.

That first summer, the faculty of the University of Colorado film department up on the hill, who knew of Harry's film work, arranged a program. Don Yanacito organized it, a kind of Harry Smith mini-festival, a showing of his films in the art department on the CU campus. They showed his *Early Abstractions* and *Heaven and Earth Magic*.

Heaven and Earth Magic (released 1957) was made of paper cut-outs from old Sears catalogues, a guy in a civil war outfit, a lady with a long dress, various hardware, glassware, leather goods, etc. Harry cut out these catalogue illustrations of people and costumes and implements and used them for stop motion, frame-by-frame animation. The lady goes to a dentist, sits in the Sears mail-order dentist chair, takes laughing gas, and has a psychedelic experience. It was all very primitive in terms of medium and method, but brilliant in conception and execution. Harry did the soundtrack himself, mewing like a kitten and so on. When they showed it at CU, Harry made me leave with him. "Too damn long," he said. Walked out on his own movie.

The *Early Abstractions* were a series of films he made between 1946 and 1957. Some are multiple exposures photographing a lamp or lighting fixture and swaying the camera so that the light dances back and forth in multi-layered complexity. Other sequences are made by painting on the film with ink, using a rubber stopper from an ink bottle to make a perfect circle in red, masking out parts of the frame with adhesive tape, and then adding colors to the taped-off areas so that the image

mutates. He used a toothbrush as a primitive airbrush; he would put ink on the toothbrush and scrape the bristles to splatter color on the film. You have to imagine a guy doing this with these simple tools, frame after frame on film stock. In recent years, various media technicians have imitated these techniques using sophisticated technology, but they have not remotely approached what Harry did with a toothbrush and a reel of acetate, leaning over a table in a crappy hotel room for ten years.

Harry told me that he had designed the *Abstractions* to go with the best available popular music of the day and that the soundtrack was to be periodically updated to reflect the music of the moment. He also said that the films' rhythms were based on the ratio 72 to 13, which, he said, was the ratio of heartbeat to respiration when your mind is alert but restful. A graduate student, Sue Salinger, later told me the significance of those numbers in Kabalistic numerology. Harry would have known about that. It has to do with loving kindness as the creative force in the universe.

Sue said 72:13 is, "a famous gematria for loving kindness, which serves as a formula on how to bridge heaven and earth" (*Heaven and Earth Magic*). She also says that in Psalm 72, verse 13, the path of Loving Kindness is laid out. In her Naropa MFA thesis, she described this in some detail. It has to do with the source of all existence breathing being into being, and that the world is continually recreated in the relation between one being and another, actually in the speech or breath that passes between me and you. I'm not qualified to speak of this. I should study Torah for forty years and then come back to it.

Harry seemed to believe that the best music also expressed this ratio, which would mean that the music he selected for his films would reflect that. So I escort Harry up to CU for the showing of the *Abstractions*. Don, the CU film professor, asked him to say a few words, so I helped Harry up to the podium, and he gave what I later learned was his stock line for such occasions, about how making the films made him gray. Then he raised his right arm in the air and looked up toward the projection booth and yelled, "Turn it up!" The trailer counted down

ten seconds on the screen and Beatles music came blasting out of the speakers to accompany what looked like a rapidly mutating Kandinsky canvas. I was blown away.

Apparently, when he last updated the soundtrack, the best available music of the day was the Beatles' second or third album, so he stole that audio and printed it on his sound stripe. Does that mean that the Beatles' early work was an expression of Loving Kindness breathing being into being? I'll buy that. At one point, he wanted my band to do the soundtrack, maybe because of licensing issues. The publishers of the video version put some experimental contemporary music on the video, but he said you should turn that audio off and experiment with other music. He showed it to us with Enrico Caruso tracks, and with tracks from his *Anthology of American Folk Music*. He said that if the music was good, there would be remarkable coincidences about a third of the time.

A.R. Was he showing his films and giving talks at the Summer Writing Program?

S.T. We showed his work at Naropa at various times. He had made a movie incorporating American Indian dancing that he had shot in Oklahoma superimposed with footage shot at home in New York and overlaid with a recording of Kurt Weill's music for *Mahagonny*. It was Harry's magnum opus. The performance or actual projection of the thing was originally designed to take place on pool tables mounted on a wall, with multiple projectors and glass slides illustrating Tibetan demons appearing as a frame to the action. We had only a single 16mm projector from the library, the classroom wall, and the Weill soundtrack, but it was extraordinary.

We had him do a lecture in the tent every summer. Most of the summer events at that time took place in a big tent pitched on the lawn. After he died, we started the annual "Harry Smith Lecture in Strange Anthropology," which Peter Lamborn Wilson carried on for some years.

For one of his early lectures, Harry prepared a handout—a calendar for the students, one for the boys (printed on blue paper) and one for the girls (in pink). He did a calendar cosmology for the male and female aspects. It was all of this knowledge of folk symbolism mixed up with anthropology and theosophy. I'm sure they have copies in a box in the Naropa archive. He gave a lecture based on the calendar. It would kind of ramble but it was also brilliant. You can get a sense of his style from archive.org. There's a Harry Smith lecture there, from 1989 I think.

A.R. That's right, I saw that one on the Internet.

S.T. He was recording a lot. As I said earlier in the week (in the Song Works class), he recorded July the Fourth from pre-dawn until after midnight. He had a recording of the night breeze, then bird song, sunrise, then rain, birds stop singing, rain stops, air conditioners come on, traffic picks up. He would record out of his window at the Townhouse. When we came to take him to the picnic, he recorded the drive to campus, and he recorded the festivities, the chatter, then the fireworks, then the people leaving, cars driving away, and finally the crickets at midnight. Somewhere in the Smithsonian there's a recording of a complete Fourth of July in 1980s America.

He recorded other things, too. Early on, at the start of maybe his first summer at Naropa, I took my partner at the time, Lee Ann Brown, and her sister, Beth, to see Harry. We all went over to Allen's apartment in the Townhouses, and after some conversation, I stepped out to do an errand. When I came back, the living room was empty. I waited quite a while. Harry had taken the Brown sisters upstairs to his room. There he recorded them singing every hymn, ballad, and Girl Scout song they knew. This was his genius. Now, in the Smithsonian archive, there is a recording of two young women from the Piedmont of North Carolina singing in unison, in near-identical voices the songs known to Presbyterian girls in that region in the late twentieth century. It's a minor national treasure.

He was a folklorist, a self-trained folklorist. So when you would speak to him he was really interested in what you had to say. He could be cranky, but if he liked you, if you were open and genuinely interested and not after anything, he was very charming and he was good at getting you to talk, or sing. He didn't talk about himself much. I think his reticence had to do with being homeless and dependent on the kindness of others.

Eventually, when he got situated, somehow, I don't know if Rani did it or Anne or Ginsberg set it up, but the Grateful Dead had a foundation, and they gave Harry ten thousand dollars a year. At the time, with housing provided by Naropa or Ginsberg or whoever was paying the rent, he could get by on ten thousand a year, so then he was finally OK. Jerry Garcia would have known about Harry because of the *Anthology*. Jerry was basically a folkie with a giant amp. He knew the lineage, so the Dead supported Harry.

What to say about Harry's role at Naropa? In the summer everybody knew who he was and he was well known around the Summer Writing Program. He was often hanging out on his stoop, and he would talk to anyone. He would do his annual summer lecture and be at the Fourth of July with his headphones and mic, and he would be around, and his door was often open. People invited him to their classes to speak and show movies, and he obliged. He liked young people, I think, because of the curiosity, the friendliness, particularly around here. He was very sensitive to people's intentions. He would run away from anyone who had a weird vibe. He'd literally scurry off.

Marianne Faithfull got Harry to perform. She used to come to the Summer Writing Program and teach a workshop that would generate a kind of opera or play, where each student would provide a vignette. Marianne was renowned as a Shakespearean actress, which isn't widely known. Critics called her the best Ophelia of her generation. She really knew what she was doing. So at Naropa, she would generate these plays. One year, she asked Harry to be the narrator of the student play. And at the event, he improvised commentary in rhymed couplets.

When they first asked him to be in the show, he said, "I need a costume. If you get me some money, I'll make a costume." So they got him a hundred dollars and he went to the art supply store and bought long cardboard tubes, the kind that paper towels come wrapped around, and he bought many cans of gold and silver spray paint. He went into his little house and he built this elaborate crown. There's a photograph of him that used to be in the print shop, wearing this costume, it's not there now. I don't know what happened to it. Whoever took that down desecrated a shrine. Maybe it's archived. You should get a hold of that.

A.R. I think that's one of the photos that Andrew mentioned getting a hold of for this issue of *Bombay Gin*.

S.T. That was at Marianne Faithfull's opera. I went over to talk to him one night. He had finished building his headdress, and I went in and his beard was covered with gold and silver spray paint. He had an inflated paper bag in his hand, and he said, "Don't let anyone tell you this shit rots your brains!" He was stoned out of his mind on solvents.

We knew that he had a significant, scholarly library that covered the range of his interests from Plains Indian sign language, to Ukrainian egg design, to Seminole textiles, various symbol systems, string figures, all kinds of things that he had interest in as a folklorist mystic. He would take you into these rare bookstores, and he would say, "Do you have a hundred dollars? I *must* have this book." And people would buy books for him. So he had all these books on the alchemy of music and all these things he was interested in.

The books were in storage somewhere because he had been living in hotel rooms and then a men's shelter. Allen said to me, "We talked to the Naropa librarians. You ask Harry. Tell him, if he will bequeath his books to the school, we'll give him a room where he can get his books up on the shelves and he can do his scholarly work."

So I was coming across campus with Harry and I pitched this, and he said, "I couldn't possibly leave my books to Naropa. I've been looking

at the local Arapahoe legends and there's going to be a tremendous flood." Just as he said this, there was a clap of thunder and an absolute downpour. He ran, cackling madly, across the parking lot to his house.

Funny things happened around Harry. If you wanted to be superstitious just for fun, you could have a lot of fun with him. There were superstitious people who were really afraid of him, who avoided him. Certain artists around town would cross the street to get away from him.

He liked me. I had decided early on to win him over because when I first met him it was an unfortunate meeting, a disaster. He was drunk, this was maybe '77 or '78, and we were in a restaurant garden and this rat came running toward us, and my girlfriend Maria freaks out, "Do something!" So I pick up a pebble from the yard and fling it at the rat to scare it off, and it hit the thing square between the eyes, dead. Harry went ballistic. "How dare you strike a fellow sentient being!" I felt awful about it. Then we're standing outside talking, and this runaway car comes hurtling toward the sidewalk, straight for Maria, and I shoved her out of the way and smack into Harry. He freaked, started swinging and kicking at Maria and calling me a violent motherfucker. So I determined that I had to work at winning his trust. And I did, and we became good friends, but it took time. It took time and a lot of care.

I didn't know about his visual artwork when we first met. Then we came to Naropa and I went up to his room in the Varsity Townhouse. There was a desk, and on the desk there was a piece of typing paper and on the paper there was a big letter from the Greek alphabet. It was so beautifully made, I thought a machine must have made that, it's so perfect. And then I thought, no, it's too perfect. A machine wouldn't have been so beautiful. It was just one continuous outline. He never lifted the pen from the page. Absolutely elegant. He came in the room and I said, "Where did you get that?" He said, "*Get* it? I made it!" He opened the drawer and he had a whole stack of them, the whole alphabet, beautiful calligraphy. That was amazing.

So he was here, doing the summer lectures. Rani was here, and a lot of the students did get to know him.

A.R. Did he teach during the year as well?

S.T. I don't really know, I think he just lived here. During the regular academic year he probably wasn't so known and appreciated, but curious young people might wonder who he was and say hello and then get sucked into the vortex of Harry Smith. Before you knew it, you'd be sitting at his table answering questions about where you come from. He would ask you about yourself, interview you as an ethnographic subject. People were very fond of him. He was small and bent over. He weighed less than ninety pounds, wore a blue and white seersucker suit all the time, and had long grey hair and a beard. People were curious about him.

The community basically adopted him. Some people knew who he was and some people didn't. His furniture came from something that Trungpa Rinpoche had made. Trungpa Rinpoche was very much involved in visual art and space arrangement. There's a whole art or science of the use of space that they teach here that came from Rinpoche. Trungpa had made some kind of an installation arrangement of rocks and logs. Harry somehow got a hold of those and they became his furniture. If you went into his kitchen, you'd sit on a log or a big rock. He had a freezer full of things he'd collected, like a dead squirrel he found and various specimens of lichen. Anything that you could collect, anything that would be of scientific or folkloric interest, he would collect it. He was quite serious about it.

A.R. Could you tell the story that you told to our Song Works class the other day about his paper airplane collection?

S.T. He would walk around New York and, as one does periodically, you spot a paper airplane on the sidewalk. He would pick it up and carefully fold it flat and write on the wing when and where he found it and tuck it in his jacket pocket. He accumulated quite a collection over

the years. It's a form of folk art, it's passed down, an oral transmission, and there are many, many variations on many designs. He made this collection of paper airplanes which is now at the Smithsonian. That teaches you something about collecting; if you collect enough of something, sooner or later it gets pretty interesting, which is how he made his living, I understand, as a younger man. He'd go into a junk store and he'd find something, an old '78 record that he knew was rare and important. Over the years he'd collect a whole library of these things. He would assemble a set of everything that Blind Lemon Jefferson recorded, or whatever it was. Then, if he needed money, he could sell them as a set for much more than he paid for the individual items.

A.R. Speaking of his collection of music, which ultimately turned into the *Anthology of American Folk Music*, historically, how would you summarize the cultural impact of the *Anthology*? The other day you mentioned something about the state of American music, popular music at the time that the *Anthology* was made, and that so much of what was put onto this collection was orally transmitted, that this wasn't widely known. These recordings weren't popular, and then this collection came out. In your opinion, especially as a musician, how do you see the impact of this collection?

S.T. It wasn't that the music wasn't popular. It's more that most people didn't know about this music. It's hard for us to imagine that now, perhaps, because we've had the revival of folk music and blues. When Harry passed away in 1991, there was a memorial gathering at St. Mark's Church in the Bowery. Dave Van Ronk was there. He was an important player in the early 60s folk music scene in Greenwich Village. He mentored Bob Dylan and the younger artists. Dave was at Harry's memorial and he said, "In 1952, I thought American music meant Frank Sinatra and Doris Day."

Because of the Great Depression and the rise of radio, all the little record labels, or little divisions of larger record labels that were recording these peculiar musics, went bust. During the Depression, a radio was cheaper than a phonograph. And if you bought the phonograph, which was more expensive, you also had to buy records. If you bought

the radio, you didn't have to buy anything else, the music was free. But with the radio, you were dependent on what the broadcasters were putting out. What the big broadcasters were putting out was the mainstream, commercial popular music of the day, and the mass market, including the record business, went that way. When big band jazz was the pop vehicle, 1930s, that was cool, but it didn't last for various reasons including the demise of the bus tour circuit, due to war rationing of materials, post-war suburbanization, and because the kids stopped digging it, because you couldn't dance to it after a certain point. Partly it was that the bands' competition between themselves increasingly focused on featuring star singers, which had not been the case in the 30s. By the mid-40s, *Variety* magazine was saying the big bands were as dead as the banjo. That's why Dave said that by the early 50s, American music was Frank Sinatra and Doris Day, because as far as the mass audience was concerned, it had become the crooners, and the corporate monopoly music business, whereas the original recording industry had started much more diverse.

The first folk music recording that Harry talks about was made by Ralph Peer from Okeh Records, after the Great War. You can read this in the *Anthology* liner notes. Peer was traveling around with portable equipment and an Atlanta shopkeeper asked him to make a record of someone called Fiddlin' John Carson. So Ralph made a recording of Carson and he just thought it was awful. But the drugstore guy kept selling out and reordering the records. They ended up selling thousands of them. They kept coming back and saying they needed to print more.

So then Peer got interested and he started going around recording other folk musicians. And that was the beginning of it. There were these little labels that would record certain things, like if you were in Kansas City, you might realize that there's a market for jug band music. So there would be little companies that would put out records catering to various communities. Baptist preachers howling a sermon, Sacred Harp singers warbling about salvation, Cajun guys moaning over a squeeze box, all sorts of styles, many of which are represented on the *Anthology*.

And of course there were the so-called race records which were little independent labels, or special divisions of larger labels, recording black musicians. There was that market. But at first, the market for the consumption of music was largely segmented, actually segregated, until jazz started to cross over into mainstream at about the time that recording took off as a mass market phenomenon, but the real crossover took decades. You had white artists, Gershwin, billed as "The King of Jazz!" Goodman, "The King of Swing." Well, what about Armstrong and Basie? It took a decade or two before rapid, large-scale crossover gained steam, and it happened largely because of the youth market. But even then, after rock broke big, the segregated mass market persisted a long, long time. As Amiri Baraka says, if Elvis is the King, who is James Brown? God?

Harry purposefully didn't segregate the *Anthology*. He categorized the music by broad terms like "social music" and "songs." People who heard the record couldn't tell what race some of the singers were. Harry did that on purpose. Another significant thing about the *Anthology*, and part of what makes the music so powerful, is that it represented the last generation that had learned to play music largely via oral transmission. After that, everyone was learning to play from the radio and records. So it was pre-homogenization. It has the power of the family line. It's like tribal music, people learning from their elders rather than the media.

Harry knew about folk and blues recordings from childhood. Somehow a record of a black artist, a country blues man, found its way to Harry's hometown, Bellingham, Washington. It had been mistakenly shipped to the record store and he got a hold of it as a kid and he was like, "What is this? Where can I get more of this?" With his natural curiosity he just started to collect this stuff. Then during World War II he was working in the war production, working on bombers, so he had money, and he got his hands on large quantities of records that had been warehoused and were going to be melted down for shellac for the war effort. So he had this massive collection, which he eventually wanted to sell to Moses Asch at Folkways Records, as was his habit. When he had money, he would collect, and when he was broke, he

would sell. Moe told him he didn't want to buy the collection but he could publish part of it. Harry agreed to publish part of it if he could pick the selections, sequence them, and write the liner notes, which he did. And that's the *Anthology of American Folk Music*, which came out in 1952 on six LP discs with eighty-four tunes.

A.R. Harry didn't want to hang on to his collection?

S.T. I believe he wanted money.

A.R. So he had been collecting these records ever since he was a kid?

S.T. Apparently. Whenever he got ahold of something that he was interested in he'd start to collect it and study it.

As a young man in college in Seattle, he took a weekend trip to San Francisco, and he met Woody Guthrie, smoked pot, and decided to stay there. He became involved in the jazz scene, living over a club and listening and painting the music. He also made films and then projected them onto live jazz musicians. You might say he invented the light show.

There was a conference sponsored by Smithsonian Folkways in Washington, D.C. in 1997, where all these folklorists and music people, critics, and scholars all got together to talk about the *Anthology of American Folk Music*. There were some older guys there who had come up in the folk scene in Cambridge, Massachusetts, had been Harvard kids who had picked up on this stuff. They passed it all around as tapes. The booklet that came with the *Anthology* you could buy separately for a dollar. This fellow was saying it was expensive for a college student to buy a big box set of albums, but you and your friends could pool your money, buy the set, and then make tapes for everybody, and everybody buys their own copy of the book for a dollar, and that's how the stuff got spread around.

A.R. How is it that Harry Smith collected these records for so long, yet this collection was so revolutionary when it came out? There must

have been people who were aware of certain bands or singers, or had an album here or there, but was it just that this one person had this comprehensive collection that made it so innovative?

S.T. Scholars were aware of it. Pete Seeger was aware of the tradition of union songs and folk songs, and he was putting it out in the 40s. But you have to remember that Pete and Mike Seeger were the sons of a music scholar, a very important ethnomusicologist, Charles Seeger. Pete was a Harvard drop out. These were middle class people, which is largely what happened with the revival. There was also the red scare blacklist and the McCarthy hearings. The year the *Anthology* came out, Seeger couldn't get airplay. And the *Anthology* was in part a reaction to that blacklist on the part of a socially conscious, middle class, Jewish, lefty record company owner, Moe Asch. It was defiant, like, "You want to talk about America? I'll show you America." It was partly, or even largely, an intellectual thing.

The revival had a middle class impetus. Bob Dylan pretended he was a carnival kid from New Mexico or whatever, but he was really the son of a Midwest businessman, a store owner, and he learned about folk music at university, because that's where the movement was spread. The revival took off in college towns. These were not factory workers digging this stuff. Joan Baez's father was the MIT physicist who invented the x-ray microscope. These folkies weren't exactly folks, they were middle-class enthusiasts. It was these people, like Dylan and Joan Baez, who took it to the mass audience.

Folk music *had* affected the mainstream earlier with Pete Seeger and the Weavers, beginning in '48, but that was relatively polished and sanitized, so they could get away with it, until they were blacklisted. At one point they were playing in tuxedos. To me, a lot of that first wave of revivalists had this forced presentation. Some of it was almost operatic, and some had a kind of Boston aristocracy diction, with sharp consonants and so on. DonT wanT to go dowN to the miNE no moRE, privileged Yankees doing songs about coal mining. The edge came back into it with Dylan in the 60s, because he wasn't in a tux. He had the whole routine down, the country accent, the battered railway cap, the purposefully "bad" singing.

So there were important early revivalists, like Pete. Then after the *Anthology* came out, Pete's brother, Mike, had a band with John Cohen, from '58 on, the New Lost City Ramblers, and they started putting this stuff out and they got a name for themselves. The public was ready for it. And you had the Clancy Brothers getting recognition from '61 on. When they came over, you had forty-five million Irish Americans who thought Irish music meant Mother Machree. The real stuff wasn't widely known. But then TV variety shows picked up on it. Record companies picked up on it. It's very romantic, very seductive. Folk music is patriotic, it's recovering the lost heritage of the people. It took off. It was like a mania, like a virus. Dylan started out wanting to be like Little Richard, he started out a rock & roll musician. But at college he sold his electric guitar to get an acoustic guitar. You go to college, and the coolest people are all folkies, and the music is fantastic. You hear Leadbelly hollering about where his black girl slept last night, and it's electrifying. What is this stuff? You have to have more. You catch the virus. I've got to have the newly unearthed tune, let me hear it! They would pass these songs around and do each other's versions of the tunes.

A.R. And do you think that was a result of the impact of the *Anthology*?

S.T. Probably. Or that body of music. It was a whole chain or complex of events. Maybe the whole thing came from Harry, as a college kid, smoking pot with Woody Guthrie in the back of a van. He never looked back. Pretty soon he's making psychedelic paintings of Monk solos.

A.R. There's an early photo of Harry Smith that shows him as a teenager recording Native American songs at a reservation in the Seattle area. I know you talked about this briefly in our class this week, and you said he became really interested in Native American languages growing up in that area of the country. Do you know if he continued to pursue studies in Native traditions and why in his *Anthology* he didn't include any Indian songs or drumming?

S.T. That's a really interesting question, I don't know. Except that the *Anthology* was all pirated commercial recordings. These were not field recordings. He was re-releasing stuff that had been marketed commercially between the World Wars. Native songs were probably not of interest to Columbia Records at the time.

A.R. When you knew him later in his life, when he was here at Naropa or in New York City, were Native American cultures still of interest to him?

S.T. Oh sure. He put out the Kiowa Peyote Meeting record in 1973. When you start recording Native American song, there are certain ethical considerations. You can read the liner notes and look at how the album cover was set up. Harry was very respectful, very careful in his method of presentation. He said he hoped the record would serve practitioners of the Peyote religion who couldn't make it to ceremony. But that was a particular series of events that he experienced personally with these Kiowa guys in Oklahoma. I don't think he was interested in mass marketing Native music.

A.R. Everything that ended up on the *Anthology*, that was all studio recorded?

S.T. It was studio recorded or it was professionally recorded in a room with the best equipment available. It was a commercial enterprise. It wasn't folklorists. It wasn't Alan Lomax going around recording in jail cells. It was people who were trying to sell records.

A.R. Do you think he kept it to the commercial recordings because there was such a contrast between the commercial stuff and then going to some sort of gathering and just bringing a recorder and recording songs?

S.T. Yeah, he didn't make any of the recordings on the *Anthology*, although he did record people. He recorded the Kiowa singers and he recorded the Carter family at some point. But the *Anthology* was all record company product. My guess is that what he wanted to do was

do a cross section of what was commercially available in the United States as folk music in a particular five-year period. It's the period between electronic recording coming in and the Depression shutting down the labels. So it was 1927 to 1932, something like that. I think he was just doing a cross section of American popular music, or folk music, just before big media took over.

A.R. Do you think that he did make field recordings at some point for his own collection?

S.T. I know he made recordings of people, and I know he made recordings of other people's record collections. He made concert recordings in New York in the 80s. And he recorded my band, False Prophets, in downtown clubs. He was particularly interested in rehearsals and auditions of new players. He used to blast one recording he'd made when we auditioned a drummer. It was the first thing Ben Daughtry ever played with us and it was fantastic. Here's this kid from Kentucky trying out for the New York band so he can go to Europe and be a punk rock star for a month, and Harry caught that. It was fresh and kicked serious ass. Harry used to blast it on his stereo in the cottage, and people would come over from the classrooms next door to complain.

When I went to Brown, I had the most extraordinary experience around Harry's private tapes. I went to do an ethnomusicology degree. In my application—you know you write a little essay—I said that Harry Smith turned me onto the idea that what I was doing was something that was worthy of scholarship. It never occurred to me that the music I was practicing was something that scholars or social scientists would be interested in. Harry turned me onto the idea that they might, because he was recording me.

Harry Smith's name rang a bell with my main teacher, Jeff Titon, who's an ethnomusicologist, blues scholar, and folklorist who runs the ethno program at Brown. He knew of Harry. So I get to Brown and I'm in a coffee shop and a woman who was in the program with me came in and we were talking—what are you doing? I'm doing Cambodian music, or whatever. And she said, "They gave me a job

working in the archive." And I said, "What's that?" She said, "The music archive." I said, "I didn't know we had a music archive." She says, "Yeah, come on, I'll show you." So she takes me to the basement of the music library, and there was a big steel door, like a bank vault. She opens the door and I look in. The first thing I see is Harry Smith. Shelves of boxes of seven-inch reels with Harry's writing on the side. Somehow Brown had gotten ahold of some of Harry Smith's recordings. Jeff thought the tapes had been given to the Brown archive by a New York City DJ who knew Harry and had somehow gotten ahold of the tapes. I still don't know what's on them and they're down there in the library at Brown University, I don't know if anybody's touched them. That struck me, like he was following me around. He was dead for a year by that point. Of all things, to run into Harry Smith tapes in the basement of my music building was very strange.

A.R. Were people in your program, besides your professor, familiar with Harry?

S.T. Not a clue.

A.R. Really? I'm sure maybe they are now.

S.T. American folk music specialists know about the Folkways records. That's why Jeff knew. But everyone else I was there with was doing African work, Asian studies, Polish mountain music, Irish bagpipes. It's a matter of specialization.

You know, Harry was secretive. He never set out to promote himself as a big celebrity or a hot academic. Millions of people know about Eric Clapton, but how many know about Richard Rabbit Brown? It's like that. Forget about the folklorist who issued the stuff.

And when he lost everything he went downhill. He lost all of his artwork. His landlord dumpstered his life's work because he didn't pay rent. He went to Oklahoma to photograph Native dancers and hang out with the Indians and record the Peyote songs and he got really wrapped up. He went to Indian country and got really into it and he

forgot to pay his rent. He was making movies and recording stuff and hanging out with people, studying. His landlord put all of his belongings in the dumpster. He lost everything. When he came back to New York he kind of fell apart, or so the story goes. He drank a lot and had a bad time of it for a while. Then when I met him, about '77, he was starting to pull out of the drink. By the time we brought him to Naropa in the 80s, he was basically on coffee, codeine, and marijuana.

A.R. Steady diet. So losing the apartment in New York, that all happened before you and Allen brought him out here?

S.T. That's right. When I met him, he had been at the Breslin Hotel and then he lost that because they were going to remodel the hotel. It was a cheap residential hotel. Then he wound up living at Allen's for about a year. Then he went back and was living in the flophouse, and then got sick and went back to Allen's. There were a couple of periods of time when he lived at Allen's. Allen was like that, he was incredibly generous.

So finally, about 1989 or 1990, after Harry had been in Boulder for a couple of years, he would periodically go back to New York for various things. I travelled with him on one occasion. Finally, his teeth were so bad that there was fear that it was going to kill him. If your upper teeth get badly infected, you can get a brain infection and die. As part of the program of taking care of Harry, there were doctors and dentists. So then the project becomes getting Harry's teeth pulled. The dentist said he would have to do it in the hospital, it was too complicated. Then Allen said, and he may have been exaggerating, "Nobody wants to touch this, it's too risky." He's so full of rot nobody wants to risk it. So the idea then was to send him back to New York to get his teeth pulled in a New York hospital.

He went back to New York and checked into the Chelsea Hotel and just never took care of it. In the end, the ulcer got him. He had a bad stomach ulcer. But he took so much codeine that he couldn't feel his own symptoms. Eventually he started to hemorrhage. Rani was with him, and she told me about it. She wanted to call an ambulance and he refused to let her make the call. So she said, "If I go get the car will

you let me drive you to the hospital?" And he said OK. By the time she got back, he was on his way out. He was singing, "I'm dying, I'm dying." He died in the ambulance.

Allen asked me to photograph his room in the Chelsea Hotel, and they had someone do the same thing here at Naropa. There's video footage of all his belongings, here and there. I went to the Chelsea and I could barely get in the room. It wasn't messy, but there were piles of books everywhere, you could just open the door and there were a few feet of floor space. There was a little bedside table with his marijuana and his aspirin. On his bed there were cassette cases, these padded cases that hold a dozen cassettes, with all his recordings that he'd made, neatly labeled. He slept curled around this stuff. I went in and slowly photographed the spine of every book and around the room, all the belongings, all the various books and records and things. On top of one of the piles of books there was a certificate. It was very beautifully printed, really elegant, very colorful. It said that he had been inducted into some sort of Catholic society, but I figured he just joined so he could get the certificate. It was such a curious thing, so beautifully made. It had a date on it, one of the last things he collected. There were some Easter eggs in a drawer. I photographed the stuff and then I left. We had the memorial service at St. Mark's and everybody came out. That was when I saw the range of his acquaintances, people who could talk about the various branches of his knowledge.

A.R. Where are the photographs now, the ones you took of his belongings?

S.T. It was video tape, 8mm, probably in the Ginsberg archive at Stanford. Since Allen commissioned the same routine in his Naropa rooms, that tape is probably in the Ginsberg archive, too.

Harry had these ambient recordings that he would make. He would be at Allen's place and he would hang a microphone out the front window onto 12th Street, and he'd hang another microphone out the back alley where the blue jays lived. He would make this very high level stereo recording of an hour of street noise and alley noise. When he played it back, it became a conscious listening experience, like music.

He called his ambient recordings "movies for blind people." Once we did a presentation at Naropa where we played the ambient recordings through the big PA system in the tent, as if it were a concert. It was very absorbing. It was music. I told him so. I remember walking across the lawn with him here, and I said, "Harry, you're actually a great composer." He said, "I know, but don't tell anybody." I thought he did John Cage one better. Where Cage had made a live piece of ambient sound, Harry actually made recorded pieces of ambient sound. They could be listened to over and over again. He made quite a lot of those.

A.R. Some of those, you said, are at the Smithsonian?

S.T. Yeah, they all went to the Smithsonian. I'll tell you a funny story about the Smithsonian that Rani told me. After Harry died, Rani was trying to figure out where all of his belongings were, to try to somehow collect it into an archive. Things were here and there. He left things in people's houses because he was homeless, it was all over the place. She tried to track whatever paintings remained, she wanted to find out if collectors had bought his work and had it hanging in their dining rooms somewhere.

She knew that he had sent a bunch of boxes to the Smithsonian. So she went there and talked to one of the curators and asked what was in the boxes, and he said, "I don't know. He didn't send a packing list. We stored it but we haven't opened it." So she opens a box and on top of the box is a videotape cassette. She puts it in a machine and it's a video of Harry packing the box. "I acquired this in 1954. This is a Seminole blanket," like that. He made a videotape of himself packing each box.

A.R. So there's the packing list right there. Is there a place where you can find the rest that's not in the Smithsonian?

S.T. The Anthology Film Archive has a bunch of his films and maybe some of the visual art. That's Jonas Mekas's place. That's in good hands. The thing that Rani was worried about with the Smithsonian was she wanted everything in one place. In a place like that, they'll

do the aerospace collection over here, they'll do the Native American collection over there, the Ukrainian collection over there. Her dream is to get it all in one gallery somewhere. I don't know where she's at with that. She wound up working at the Getty museum in Los Angeles, that's where she is now.

A.R. Could you tell me that story again, the one you told in class, about how Harry could tell what county you're from by hearing you sing a verse from *Barbara Allen*?

S.T. I think it's in the box set notes, in the reissue of the *Anthology*. It's Luc Sante. Luc is a writer, he lived in Allen's building. He says that he had been dating somebody, a new girlfriend, and there was a party for Harry, or Harry was at a party. Luc went with his girlfriend to the party. Harry claimed that if you could sing a verse from *Barbara Allen*, he could tell you what county you were born in. She said, "OK," and she sang it. Harry said, "Mecklenburg County, North Carolina." And she went, "Yes, you're right."

A.R. Had he done extensive traveling to be able to pick up on that sort of thing?

S.T. Yeah, he traveled, and he read a lot. He studied all the time. He was always experimenting or studying. That's all he did. Study, make art, collect.

He was constantly surprising me. He had a disco collection. I had a very particular taste in music, and I just thought disco was the worst thing that ever happened. He was fascinated by it. He collected it!

There's a Youtube video of Harry getting his Grammy award. He says at the Grammy's, right before he died, "I'm glad to say that my dreams came true—that I saw America changed through music." He seems to have had a hand in that transformation.

VOLUME THREE SONGS

"ALL PLEASE SOUND."

ANSELM HOLLO

2 USEFUL POEMS THAT TRAVELED ACROSS THE ATLANTIC

TO PREVENT FROSTBITE

Frost, Son of Blizzard, i tell you:
STOP freezing my fingernails
& STOP freezing my fingers, too:
go freeze the willows by the river,
go freeze the dumb birchtrees, whenever!

—Kangasniemi/Finland—Winton/Minnesota
Iowa City/Iowa/2:iv:72

TO MAKE THE COWS COME HOME

here, let me tie this bell round your neck
this bell round your neck, my dearest cow
clang, bell
bell, clang
clang from the farthest range
bell them right back to the Big House

you are the biggest & strongest
you'll bring home all the others

clang clang back to the Big House
back to evening smokes rising
while the Sun still shines, & mid-evening
is mellow, clang, bell, clang, yellow
all in a row, all in a row

bring the holy cows home, bring them home

The Cows of Our Bounteous Mother

—Oulu/Finland—Crooked Lake/Minnesota
Iowa City/Iowa/2:iv:72

Anselm Hollo's versions are from Finnish originals collected by Marjorie Edgar from "settlers from Finland and their descendants in the iron mining towns of Minnesota and the lake country surrounding them." This sort of charm-poem was originally used by professional *loihtija* or wise women.

JANE HIRSHFIELD

THE DARK HOUR

The dark hour came
in the night and purred by my ear.
Outside, in rain,
the plush of the mosses stood higher.
Hour without end, without measure.
It opens the window and calls its own name in.

BRENDA HILLMAN

FOGGY ANIMIST MORNING IN THE VINEYARD

. . .this is not me; this is portable me.
JULIAN ASSANGE

—**ttttt**he letters
are lonely, they wait under the vines,
their crucifix groups spread out
from the eye… the grapes drop down
from stem to node where roots
meet the fleabane seed &
fox meets the vole;—

shadows wait under the stakes
as anarchy waits in the novel or sex
waits in college, a feeling
individual letters have before
a word is spelled—;
middle of summer:
ttttte rmites riddle the wood
near houses with coded gates;
a worker bends to check
a meter in the field, or,
is that a heron—
tHHHHe

rows brighten at dawn as
meaning presses
to the back
of your page, space
you make, unmake to eat, fly
up, drop
wings at some point, brain-
light. termite. poet.

MARTIN COBIN

YOU THINK I'M MAD

Alright, you think I'm mad. Why? Because I read the papers and laugh? Watch TV and laugh? Look at me. I also dance. With legs, arms, every part of me. Inside too where you can't see. So oil gushes. So volcanoes erupt. So war goes on. And I laugh.

I have to laugh. At myself if nothing else. What am I supposed to do? Get angry? Find solutions that won't solve the real problems? Get depressed? Close my eyes? Pretend? Commit suicide?

How's it going to end up anyway? It'll all be gone. Not just you, me. Other animals. Plants. Earth. Sun. The whole damn solar system! So what's the use?

I hear you. OK. "Think of what life's for. Think of what we've got." Well, what *is* life for? You tell me! What's it all about? Just getting ready for death? I was ready for that before I was born!

I don't want to dwell on that. I want to live. Now. Well. Joyously. I can think, hear, see. Flowers, paintings, violins...silence, meditation, inner peace. Her hand in mine. Our bodies close, moving, back, forth, closer, closer.

But...but...but...

A knife in the gut! Body parts scattered in rubble. Rape, torture. Not just them. You. me. All of us. Gift of the gods. Nature. Large eat small. Small eat smaller, smaller smallest, smallest propagate—enough left to eat the remains of the largest. And where are we? You? Me? Both of us at the same time eater, eaten.

So how do I keep myself going in the midst of this? If I'm aware? If I care? Believe me, friends, it helps to be a little mad.

exhausted, lying
beneath weeping willow tree
cool breeze, bluebird song

miraculous tree
bears delicious red apples
never apricots

You wonder what all of a sudden this is about? Have I gone crazy or something? Yes, like I said—to keep going. I'm a little crazy. I'm writing poetry. Haiku, no less. All poets are a little mad, aren't they?

That stirred some of you up, didn't it? *You* made a sour face at one of my haiku. And *you* shook your head when I said all poets are a little mad. You don't like that idea, do you? Well, I won't back off. Right now it doesn't matter if my haiku is good or bad. Do I care if it's good or bad? Or who thinks it's good or bad? When you write poetry, what's it for? To please critics? To get published? To make money? To...find your own answer. My answer is to share a moving experience that enriches life somehow, share it with myself later or better still with other people. What other people? Other poets? Or all kinds of people? That's where I want to challenge you, those of you who want to be great poets.

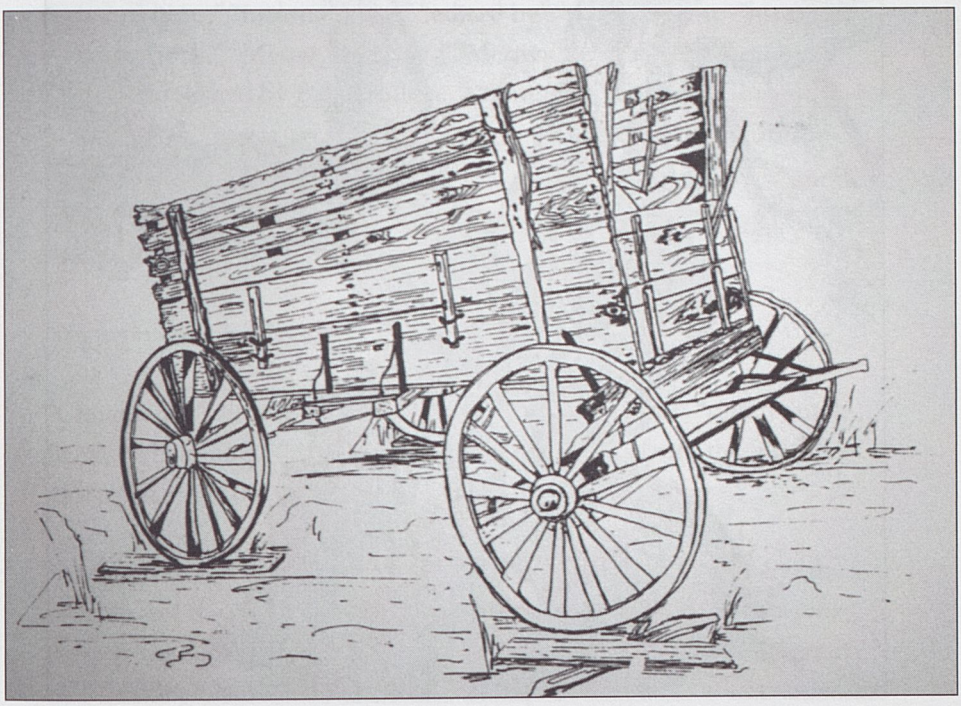
You know, maybe because I'm not as well educated as a lot of poets, I'm often not moved by a poem because I'm all wrapped up with language and references I'm trying to figure out and by the time I get it figured out, if I do, I'm not always moved enough to think it was worth all my figuring. A lot of people have that problem with poetry. They don't understand it so they don't read it. They think poets are kind of crazy. OK, the lack of understanding is because of the reader not the writer maybe but what do you do? Just ignore those people? Give up on them? Or do you try to cross the bridge and get to them? Or better still, do you work on both sides of the bridge? That's what I think great poets do—work on both sides of the bridge. And the way to do that is to share real experiences, moving experiences. That's the important value, more important than meaning. Like life. Life moves us. We've had lots of moving experiences, deeply moving, we don't understand. My wife died two months ago of Alzheimer's. It's a horrible disease. I can't understand it.

To devote yourself to sharing moving experiences, you have to have them—you can't share what you don't have—you have to feel a personal inner need to share them. I think to accomplish that you've got to be a little mad and if you don't mean what I mean by "mad" or you don't like my use of the term it doesn't matter to me if you can still get what I'm driving at. So to keep driving, I'll tell you I think those who want to devote their lives to being poets are mad even if they don't realize it. Maybe it's because they're young. No, that's not it. Young people can be mad without being poets. I was—a long time ago. Mad. Crazy. I was so crazy I volunteered to get into the war, then even volunteered to change from air corps training to infantry to get more into the action. I didn't know what I was really doing 'till that first attack flopping down between mud puddles with rain coming down in sheets, flares going up into the night like fireworks on the fourth of July, machine gun fire, shells exploding. Then I got it! Living or dying, coming out whole, in pieces or not at all had nothing to do with my size, strength, wisdom, courage, training.... I knew then like I know now it's a crazy way to solve problems. So it may help to be a little mad but being mad isn't enough.

I'll just say two things you can take or leave. For myself, making poetry (good or bad) is what helps me stay aware, caring, and alive. Secondly, if any of you are mad enough to devote yourselves to making poetry, I hope your poems are more than pleasant alternatives to suicide.

JANIE EDWARDS

TWO DRAWINGS



JANNA PLANT

LANGUAGE IS A LIVING AND DYING ORGANISM

"You are here," "making selves" "edited by" "not even past" "histories," "conjunctions." "Meow," "Meow," "Meow." "*Don't Fuck Where You Write*," "published by Bard College." "Seminal" "semen." "Glug glug glug," _____"engorge" _____ . "Twinkle, twinkle, little" "spot." "How I wonder when you'll."

And

"repurpose tools," "reintegrate present into past."

"Clinamen," "clitoris," "cunnilingus," "break the code:" "right round, Baby, right round." "Sacred geometry," "he shoots from the hip," "has more plasma at the poles."

"Now entering:" "fender bender"-"penetration." "More between the psychic and the material." "Maslow's plateau" "tuh-tuh-tuh-tuh-tuh-theory, unfinished." "Feathered serpent," "born of ruptured amniotic sac" "leaking black."

"Learn new organs"

"Crisis=opportunity" for the "contemporary tribe."

La La La lickin' your lollipop, and "the ice cream truck comes twice." "Infrastructure" "rupture:" "study the stem." "Metaphor itself is a paradox."

"An animal human," "a human animal:" See see See see See see See see See reciprocity. "Why the fuck not, you Monkey?"

"Perverted tourist" says, "I'm not Earth."
"So, will you compost?"

"Rupture the logic," "sexy agent of provocation," using "generative language" "and sex is fun." "Poets need to live where dogs die." "That's the place."

"Dear Dog, I listen while you rattle."

"Don't die of the human," "the carcinogenic" "paradox of persona." Riding the "eternity saddle" through apocalypse mist and Pepsi tickles.

"It's America's duty to destroy" "freedom from private property" and "freedom from religion." "It's America's duty" to agree that, "a black hoodie is the most important thing in the entire world."

"Keep within the daily animal nature" of cave, of oil blanket. "Let each word have its prong:"

"The war in the Gulf."
"The war in the Gulf."

"Which Gulf?"

"I did my best to put it in language."

"Two knowledge systems coming together," "a synchronized" "orgasm" "of being and doing."

"Don't fear the animal."
"Don't fear the reaper," "Bhagavad-Gita."

"The lake spewed from my mouth." "Moist." "Panties." "Not together." "Please," "a condensation of musicality:" "Wet panties."

"Stop pointing at me when you say 'Crazy.'"

"I use the term 'writer' more as a symbol."

"Well personally, I like physical acts."
"I bet." "Always about the money, isn't it?"

"Just ride" "the sentence." "Slinky, slinky." "Centerfold shot," "sticky goo."
"Meaning: Business."
"Riders on the sentence:" "Into this house we're born; into this world we're—"

"Adjective. Noun. Adjective. Noun. Adjective. Noun." "Language is always abbreviation." "Long live the phoneme!" "Let it decay!" "Phone me." "That's a start!"

"If art comes out of political context"—Woolf! Woolf! Woolf!—"doesn't political context come out of art?" Lick the rupture. It's bleeding clean out.

"Sorry I ruined your orgy," "forgot my mirror neurons."

"Don't leave home without"
"a withered body like a question mark."

JUNIOR BURKE

WHITE MEN LANDING

So I crossed the dead ocean
To the land of the pagan
Now I'm lost in a prison
Where the walls are all golden
Where the doors never open

I am dead, I am dreaming
And my body is burning
Every green eye is hiding
Now the white men are landing
In the black velvet nothing

I will dance if you whip me
I will pray if you beat me
I will sing if you cut me
I will die if you let me,
I will die if you let me

I am dead, I am dreaming
And my body is burning
Every green eyes is hiding
Now the white men are landing
In the black velvet nothing,

In the black velvet nothing

PROMISED LAND

in D—capo on second fret (regular "C—F—G" position)

intro: **FF—CC—GG—CC** (Reed: single strum on each note)

C
Yesterday keeps telling me
G
I'm already gone

Then tomorrow calls to say
C
"Get up! I won't be long"

C
Nothing stays in place even
F
the sun keeps moving on
F C
and the moon above me smiles
G C
She's already gone

Didn't I just pay those taxes?
That was last year, Sam
Well, here's a photo of my boy
My gosh, now he's a man

It's something how the days go by
like cards passed through a hand
Pick one passing, that's your ticket
to the Promised Land

F Am
All in all, more or less
E F
I'm already gone
C F
Even when I stop to rest
D G
the ground keeps moving on

C
I don't know which way to go
F
to find out where I stand
F C
Every way the signs say welcome
G C
to the Promised Land

Either it's all done with mirrors
or else it's sleight of hand
I feel just like Sir Patrick Spens
out walking on the strand

Life's just pulling me along
like smoke into a fan
There goes one more memory
of who I thought I am

—chorus

—full verse solo—

You never know the roof might fall
the sky might blow away
and leave you with no harp
to serenade your fiancée

But even though you never know
It's good have a plan
Cause no one gets to stake a claim out
In the Promised Land
(right in:)

F Am
Promised Land, Promised Land
E Am
Won't be here for long
F C
Every time I take a breath
D G
another breath is gone

C
I don't know which way to go
F
to find out where I stand
F C
Every way the signs say Welcome
G C
to the Promised Land

exit: **F**F—**C**C—**G**G—**C**C (Reed: single strum on each note)

JULIA SEKO

with KYLE PIVARNIK

PRINTER'S DEVIL AND SHOP RAT:

AN INTERVIEW WITH JULIA SEKO

KYLE PIVARNIK: You are a letterpress printer and adjunct faculty at Naropa University. How long have you been at Naropa?

JULIA SEKO: Since about 1994 or '95. Someone contacted me from Naropa and said that they were acquiring some printing equipment from David Sheidlower of Coincidence Press and that they were looking to start a letterpress program. David Sheidlower came out and set up in Harry Smith's old cottage, which is now the recording studio. They printed a few things that are in the archives, and I printed a few things as well. They knew that I was affiliated with a local book arts organization, The Book Arts League, and that I had been teaching some classes. I did a small workshop that spring and then a full blown class the following fall. All of this is in Andrew Schelling's chapbook. "A Brief History of the Kavyayantra Press."

K.P. From its conception, and due to the Summer Writing Program, a lot of printers come to Naropa to work in this space.

J.S. That is an amazing series right there. They've brought in important people in fine printing and artists' books. There's a tremendous amount of work that's now part of the press archives. Janet Rodney (Weaslesleeves Press), Peter and Donna Thomas, Sam and Sally Green, Kathy Kuehn, Charles Alexander (Chax Press), Wesley Tanner.

They've all taught workshops here. It's great for the students because they're learning from these incredibly talented individuals. Clifford Burke did an entire chapbook with his students in just one week!

K.P. How did you become involved in letterpress printing?

J.S. I got started at the Woman's Building in Los Angeles. I was studying art then. I was doing these confusing things where I was gluing things on to canvases and then writing words all over them. Pretty much confusing everybody. And of course I didn't know what I was doing either. I was drawing a lot of comics then too. I made one comic where I was up late at night and a large hermit crab larva entered the house. So we had a philosophical chat and some gin together. And then he molted, because they do that. And then I had this great hermit crab outfit. So the last image is of me grocery shopping with it on.

But I had seen this advertisement saying, "Come and print your own postcard of your favorite heroine at the Woman's Building." Cheri Gaulke had gotten a grant from the state of California to offer free letterpress classes at the Woman's Building, which was an artists' cooperative. They had a letterpress studio and also had studio space. And it just clicked: "These are the words, and this is how I create images any way I want to." I took classes there, and I was a studio member. That's where I learned certain accordion forms and things like that. I also got to work on an artists' book that was commissioned by the Museum of Contemporary art in Los Angeles about Zora Neale Hurston. There was a performance called *Sanctified* going on. Betye Saar had made installations inspired by Hurston on the set of the performance. Bonnie Thompson Norman and Cheri Gaulke made copies of those and made them into a book with a mirror image and text about voodoo, and we assembled them all down at the Woman's Building. It was a cool looking book.

Once I discovered letterpress, it all made sense to me. I liked the machinery and the tradition of it. That it was a craft. And I was fascinated by the books that you could make. I just couldn't get enough.

I volunteered to be the printer's devil and became a shop rat. I was there on Saturday mornings when everyone was still passed out, and I'd be putting type away.

K.P. What were you doing before you became interested in letterpress?

J.S. Originally I studied mathematics. There was something very beautiful and elegant about the systems in mathematics. I had always studied art, and then I went back to study it seriously, and ended up in a house full of art students. And I forget how it came about, but at one point I started making books. I didn't know about artists' books. I was working for a company with a Xerox machine, and I would go in with images and set up a text. I knew how to pamphlet stitch, and I was making these books. I don't even know what I did with half of them.

Somewhere around that point I was introduced to mail art. I don't know its full history, but the way I got into it was I met another artist through a friend that gave me some addresses. And you just make something up and send it to people, and they have to send you something back. Then I discovered that there were mail art exhibits that you would send something to, and they would show it. But if you sent to an exhibit, you didn't get it back. So this process was making something and then letting it go. Everything got shown, and you usually got some documentation. So it was a good way to get some exposure. It was a much different mentality from trying to get your work shown through an agent or a juried show, but also kind of scary not really knowing what was going to happen to your art. I started doing some really interesting things like making collages with pencil shavings, and I started making more of these books. They became more elaborate, although still incomprehensible. In retrospect, it's clear that I was working toward something, but I didn't yet know what. I just knew that this had to be part of it.

K.P. What were some of your first letterpress projects like?

J.S. When I got to Colorado, I found out that there was a print shop at CU, so we started a university group, The Book Arts League, and started doing classes. I first worked with other book artists on collaborations, and I learned enough structures to begin teaching. Much of the work I've done is with other artists or in classes. I really love working that way. And the books have done pretty well. One was selected for the Rounce and Coffin Club exhibition and toured around the country. Another one was bought by UCLA. It's a secrets book that was similar to some other structures they were looking at. And I've continued to be active in that group.

I've mostly made cards and broadsides but I've done a few artists' books, too. One of the first was a memory book made out of papyrus. I have a lot of books that are sort of working their way through the system. I have a slow process. I can do cards and other things quickly, but books tend to gestate and change form. One's been around for several years now. When I started working on it, I had thought of it one way, but then it changed to something else that I don't quite know how to do yet, so I'll have to learn that before I can continue. It just mutates. Then I took a box making class, and now it *has* to have a box! So I started building boxes. It's a long process. But it made me feel better to learn that an artist like Julie Chen, who teaches at Mills, only does one book a year. I'm on a slightly longer time line.

I've done a completely letterpress chapbook. And a lot of little booklets. A John Donne piece. A Neruda poem on ironing. He has these odes to everyday things, and he wrote one on ironing. I printed out a shirt and the poem was in the shirt, which was then folded and put in a plastic bag with a little receipt.

I'm also fascinated by the idea of verticality, which Sven Birkerts goes into in his book *The Guttenberg Elegies*. For some reason, the way it's structured, you go into the book, and when you look up it's two hours later and you have no idea where you are. The ability to be completely immersed in this experience between you and the book. It's like walking into an installation piece that keeps going and going. I spent a lot of

time inhabiting whole worlds from looking at pages in books. There's something amazing about a vehicle like that. You can have a conversation with someone who's been dead for ages.

K.P. What is the current state of letterpress and the book arts movement?

J.S. When I first became involved with letterpress, there weren't that many opportunities. There were some apprenticeships and things like that, but there weren't a lot. Half of the people I knew didn't know about it, and the half that did were job printers. Job printers are great guys, and they have a lot of knowledge, but at that time there was still a lot of "lady, what are you interested in?" I encountered that when I applied for jobs. They'd say things like, "That's a pretty big case. Can you even lift it?" And of course I lifted it. I was going to die before I didn't lift it!

Now book arts are widely recognized as an important art form, and fine print books are seen more often. There's even a job industry now. There are some amazing graphic designers that are currently using letterpress. Letterpress is even showing up in magazines, where text has been letterpress printed and then reproduced in the magazine. There's some really incredible work coming out of the graphic design community.

Also, there are more book arts centers set up now than when I was learning in the 80s. There are even university programs now. Naropa's was really the first in this area. But there are others like Colorado College's founded by Jim Trissel, and there is one at Iowa.

The whole book arts movement has really exploded and is going in so many different ways. It can apply to commercial graphic design, avant-garde art, and traditional fine print. But also, these genres intermingle. There are traditional, luxury fine art books that also have an artists' book sensibility to them. They're sort of hybrids. It's hard to even classify things any more. Maybe it's a fine art book or maybe it's an artists' book. It's getting hard to tell.

K.P. How do you see technology influencing letterpress and book arts?

J.S. I'm interested to see how typographic conventions get affected from being online. There's a more lateral, as opposed to vertical, structure. Most of us tend to think that way though. We begin to search for something and just bounce from one thing to another. It feels normal. I'm interested to see how that affects reading and writing. Narratives are usually focused on a linear progression. Now that it's online, how will that affect the way people write things? Or read things?

I'm fascinated by the idea of books and how they function. They can be structured with different signatures so that whoever opens it up will open to a different place. There are books that have elements that disappear or that you can't open. In a way, artists' books paved the way for some of what's being done digitally now. It will be interesting to see what directions they continue in.

Some of these concepts are already playing out in artists' books, where there are several different ways to read it, or you open up the book and have no idea where to start. The reader is challenged and has to make the jumps and associations. I don't know personally of artists' books online, but I'm sure they exist. I don't think that the material form of the book will ever go away. In fact, I see more and more people carrying journals. Technology is just another weapon in the arsenal. It's exciting to think about the combination of things we can do now.

K.P. What is the guiding aesthetic of your current work?

J.S. Well, all my projects are widely different. It depends on the theme of the book. The John Donne book had to be this wild, lurid thing but also have a very logical structure. It was like a syllogism. So I came up with a three-sided structure because the narrator of the poem was a person who was obviously trying to analyze how to logically go through torment with a lover. Which just isn't going to work! So that dictated that.

I tend to like gestural work. Things that are fluid. I've been working on trying to get that more into my books. I love letterforms. When I was a kid I chose a few Japanese characters and just wrote them over and over again on a chalkboard. I didn't know what they meant; I just liked the movement. Some of what I was doing in the John Donne book was toward that.

I have a fine print style for broadsides and other small things that I do though, grounded in classic typography with a few little twists here and there. And I know a lot of different types of book structures that I can play with. But when I do my own work, it just depends on what it is. That was true when I painted as well. I never really chose a style like realist or abstract. I did all of them.

I don't know that I've ever really had one guiding aesthetic. I tend to do silly or playful things. At least in the past I did. But even then I was trying to push toward something else. The aesthetic always comes from the project itself; either the theme or an image I have in my mind, and then I figure out how to develop it. It's whatever the book needs. If the book needs to be ten feet tall and made out of Plexiglas, then that's what I'll do!

K.P. Do you generally start with a concept or with a specific text?

J.S. Sometimes it's a visual cue, like the light striking leaves on a tree. Or the positioning of the moon. Other times it's the text that absolutely determines the design of the piece. If it's a job, then the text is essential, but if it's one of my own pieces, then there's a little more leeway. Sometimes there's no text at all! But what you start with often determines where it's going to go. I'd say I start with a text 75% of the time and the other 25% I start with an image.

K.P. What are you working on now?

J.S. I've been working on a couple things, moving more toward my background as a Japanese American. When I was younger, I was

more interested in other, more European things. My cultural heritage was always there, but it seems that as I get older, it's begun to surface more in my art. A couple of my current projects are based on Japanese concepts.

My grandfather had a great interest in Zen. But this wasn't something he necessarily passed down, other than a few books and things. My process is a bit like slowly moving toward a school of fish before casting your net over them. I start putting things in boxes. I compile quotes, colors, or notes on a feeling evoked from a song. I slowly start building them up. And sometimes other things become part of the original concept. I have three or four right now with enough put together to move forward.

There's one about Setsubun, which is a Japanese holiday where you throw soybeans throughout your house and tell the demons to go away and tell the good luck to come in. In that box I have small soy beans, and I've taught myself to make fishing nets, so there are patterns for nets in there. Fish line. There's obviously a side of my grandfather's life as a fisherman coming into it. I think the idea of the nets came in from a Noh play I saw where a spider demon threw web-like paper streamers at a warrior. It was one of the most beautiful things I've ever seen. But there's also a piece from my Baptist background. Maybe from the idea of casting out evil. So it's becoming a slightly more complicated structure. This is probably five years off. But someday, whatever that book is going to be, it's going to be that specific book.

WHY I HAVE BEEN AVOIDING DOING...

... Collaborative Performances Recently, and How My Years of Experience Doing Them Has Informed My Current Work

for Naropa Panel Discussion, 7 July 2008

The short answer to the first part of the question is that it breaks my heart. Jackson Mac Low, with whom I collaborated for over two decades, died not long ago, and now to be emulating what we had done together seems troubling, if not absurd. I hope this will change some day.

What I'm interested in exploring is the ways in which the poly-and neolingual writing I've been doing, parallel to my collaborations with Jackson, have informed my current, non-collaborative and mostly unilingual writing, that occurs in my book, *I Am You*; and how working with improvisational performance has taught me to continue the trend, when working solo, of establishing guidelines and keeping to them, boundaries, within which I can play. And what is improvisation if not play?

In a collaborative, improvisational performance, you engage in a conversation, you respond to and bounce off each other; while working solo, you bounce ideas, words, sounds, and other linguistic elements off of each other, using the same collaborative principles, in which you must rely on an unspoken understanding, on good intentions, consideration of the audience, the reader, and the self, the many selves, the whom we are working.

Maybe the question I'm asking is how is working alone different from collaborating? Is it different? How do you energize yourself when you're used to being energized by external forces, such as another person? Is collaboration a more positive, more uplifting form of art

making? And if so, am I to regard myself as living in a commune with only me as the member?

In the early 1980s, when I began working with Jackson, my primary focus had been on the visual arts, on painting, sculpture, and video art, although writing, as an occupation, wasn't new to me because of my father, Tibor Tardos, was a writer, a prolific novelist, known for his surrealism and political allegories.

And since I grew up in four languages, poly-and neolingual writing came to me naturally. French was my first language, then came Hungarian and then German. English is definitely my mother tongue, even though it's the fourth one I learned when I came to this country in the mid-1960s. When I was five, we left France for Hungary, where my father was from; and at 12, we moved to Austria, where my mother was from; at 21, I came to New York, where I am from.

Here is an example of my early polylingual writing from the mid-1980s, mixing the four languages I know, English, French, German, Hungarian, from my first published book from Tsunami Press, in 1992, *Cat Licked the Garlic*:

> Ami minden, quand un yes or no, je le said, viens am liebsten haette ich dich du susses, de ez nem baj, das weisst du me a favor, hogy innen se faire croire, tous less birds, als die Wälder langsam verschwinden. Minden verschwinden. Mind you step and woolf. Verschwinden de nem innen—je vois the void in front of mich—je sens, als ich érzem qu'on aille, aille de vágy a fejem, csak éppen (eben sagte ich wie die Wälder verschwinden). I can repeat it as a credo so it sinks into our cerveaux und wird embedded there, mint egy teória mathématique d'enchassement, die Verankerungstheorie in the Mathematik, hogy legalább...[1]

Later, in my book *Uxudo*, I began including neologisms, which to this day make their way into poems I write. The word "uxudo" itself was the result of a faulty or an imperfect handshake between my computer and my printer. It appeared on a page of gobbledygook. I tossed the page, but

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1 Anne Tardos, *Cat Licked the Garlic*, Tsunami Editions, 1992 [unpaginated]

I kept the word. This is a unique case, since I usually generate my own neologisms, but found words are just as welcome.

Here is the title poem from *Uxudo*:

Lorraine hug-a-bee hiába
Wanderwunderbare Ewigkeitstätigkeit
Ráncostánc
Objet securisé de griffonade
Deadalus pagination rictus kiván

Ivan was terrible.
Who am I really?
Räuberträume follitude

Uxudo. [2]

As I said, between 1970 and 1980, my focus was more on the visual arts, my film and video work, which I always regarded as poetry. After moving to poetry made of language, I often incorporated images into my texts, sometimes in order to create performance scores with them, and often using video still frames, which were, now that I think about it, the forerunners of digital photography.

Combining visual imagery with my texts was a form of collaboration between two elements that are different enough to be potentially at odds with—or supportive of each other. Calibrating such elements as text and image, to work together, making words and phrases of different languages work together, can be considered a form of collaboration.

So, what is the difference between working alone and with someone else? My solo work today is most definitely influenced by everything that has preceded it, just as every moment of our lives adds to the next one—inevitably, so we will never know what would have happened had we not engaged in an activity, after we have done so? We are the result of our cumulative experiences which form us into something we peer

2 Anne Tardos, *Uxudo*, Tuumba Press/O Books, 1999, p. 43

out from, as it were, a form that we continually defend, as in the notion that being alive means defending a form.

In *I Am You*, I'm still preoccupied with combining images with text, but less so than before. When, in a recent interview, Susan Landers asked why I seem to be using fewer visual images in my recent works, I gave several reasons, one having to do with copyright issues for images found on the web, versus self-made images (I use both), and the other reason is that:

> [I]mages are more powerful than words, more readily noticed, more quickly absorbed, and therefore the associated text, I always find, needs to be altered, defended, reinforced, or even done away with. In a sense, the illustration undermines the poem. It's a huge struggle to find a balance between the two, and maybe in *I Am You*, I became more interested in other aspects of the page.[3]

Returning to my polylingual compositions, I note that I started providing footnotes, in my book *Mayg-shem Fish*, giving occasional translations or transliterations, in an attempt to help the reader through more difficult passages. Later in *Uxudo*, I dedicated the entire left-hand page to notes, and the original poems appeared on the right-hand pages.

Later yet, in my book, *The Dik-dik's Solitude*, I began annotating poems that didn't need translations, they were all in English, yet I felt the desire to reflect on some of the brief phrases the poem's lines consisted of, as in the poem "Four Plus One K," which consists of a series of quatrains, followed by a single word beginning with the letter "k"

Female executive
Long-faced Britannica
Budgeting ecstasy
Bungee mark water stain

Kerouac

---

3 "Anne Tardos's Elegant Software: A Conversation Between Anne Tardos and Susan Landers," in The Poetry Project Newsletter, February/March 2008.

And the annotation reads:

When we purchased the online version of Britannica, we experienced a budgeting ecstasy.

A bungee is a long and strong rubberband capable of holding up a human being. A bungee mark water stain is the stain caused by the enormous splash resulting from the unplanned impact of the jumper.

The next stanza reads:

Trembling monogamy
Money-back marmoset
Mildewing gingerbread
Standalone graffiti

Kiwi.

Which is annotated by:

Marmosets never keep any money you give them—they always return it.

Kiwis are great. The fruit, the bird, the people, the clean air, the blue skies, the benefit of the doubt.

Another from "Four Plus One K":

One person family
Triggerfish mango
Everyone different
Humble Existence

Keyboard.

Annotation:

A triggerfish mango is simply a triggerfish's own, personal mango fruit.[4]

In the *Dik-dik's Solitude* I have several series of rhyming poems, quasi clerihews, entitled "Considerations." They are five-line stanzas, some of which are annotated, and others not. So here is the second stanza of "Considerations":

Ptarmigan psychology
Orangutang theology
Pre-biblical prairie dog
Plutocratic pocket mouse
Plunk-down mange pathology

Which is annotated by:

Religious orangutangs will never understand the psychology of ptarmigans, no matter how hard they try.

Pocket mice are called that because they like taking naps inside people's pockets.

The next stanza:

Petticoat pessimist
Approbation optimist
Neorican duck's feet
Mud puppy muck sheet
Monte Carlo copper sleet

Is annotated by:

The pessimism of a petticoat can become immeasurable sometimes. The muck sheet of a mud puppy is a slightly soiled list of things for the mud puppy to do.[5]

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4 Anne Tardos, *The Dik-dik's Solitude: New and Selected Works*, Granary Books, 2003, p. 75
5 *The Dik-dik's Solitude*, Granary Books, 2003, p. 159

These annotations serve as a kind of talkback, a response to one's own work, through the use of such afterthoughts in the form of annotations.

In *I Am You*, I no longer annotate, as I no longer feel the need. The text is largely in plain English, and if a translation is needed, I incorporate it into the text itself, as in this section 13 of the 50-page poem, "The Letter: A Bloodbath," written in the form of a dialogue:

How can there be truth in an ever changing universe?
mitgefühl
I beg your pardon?
I said *mitgefühl*, which is German for compassion.
And why bring up compassion when we are talking about truth in a changing universe?...[6]

And so on...

This kind of dialogue may be due to a desire to talk to someone, to discuss, to share. This kind of exchange within oneself *simulates* collaboration and allows various levels of the self to enter the artistic consciousness.

I'll close with a fairly untypical and uncharacteristic passage from *I Am You*, unusual in its generous use of neologisms, because, as I said, the lion's share of the book is in plain English, often using entire cliché phrases as linguistic and musical elements. Here is section 1 from "Letting Go":

It's the ego that lets go of the ego.
A leftist is usually right.
Everyone is really a very fine fellow.

I am an Acoustican.
I come from the planet Acoustica
Where we g'oham yeolnia ooh yeeanh
Some varsity sensibingatee zenifer lida
Shaka-ha-cha-ka!

---

6 *I Am You*, Salt Publishing, 2008, p. 147

Different papilla pamina different zugoria.

The standing the name the gesture
The movement
One cigale verisimilitude sentimentablement genial

Dissertation vegetation permission

A very fine fellow[7]

Which brings me back to Jackson, a very fine fellow, and his message to all performers to listen and to relate. By that he meant to listen carefully to all sounds that occur—and I concur—whether they be one's own, the other performer's, a bird's, or a car horn's; and how you must take all these sounds into account before contributing something worthwhile to it all.

This approach applies to any kind of art making, when you think about it, any medium, or any social situation, which is what Jackson was talking about. He spoke of a utopian society in which people would exercise courtesy, consideration, and tact. This was a sociopolitical approach to art making, and it worked beautifully. It was community-minded and allowed anyone, willing and able, to join him on this ride.

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7 Anne Tardos: *I Am You*, Salt Publishing, 2008, p. 33

VOLUME FOUR SECRET VOLUME

Retranscribed & retranslated by

ANDREW COWELL & ALONZO MOSS, SR.

ARAPAHO SONGS

Ghost Dance Songs, collected by James Moody (c. 1890)

1

How bright is the moonlight
tonight as I ride with my load of buffalo meat

2

The cottonwood song—
I am singing it

3

Our father, the Whirlwind
now wears the headdress of crow feathers

4

I circle around
the boundaries of the earth—
wearing the long feathers as I fly

5

My children,
we have rendered them desolate
The Whites are crazy

6

The earth—the crow
the crow brought it with him

7

The crow is circling above me
the crow having come for me

8

My children,
here it is, I hand it to you
the earth

9

I hear everything
I am the crow

10

Collected by Frances Densmore, (c. 1936)

A long time ago, when they were living,
A long time ago,
I guess it was the turtle.
That is what my father says.
That is what my father says.

11

Powwow Song, sung to Andrew Cowell by Eugene Ridley, III, June, 2004

We are Arapahos
Look at them a long ways away over there
It is him, the buffalo

12

Wolf Dance Song

My child, watch me!
It is I, I am an eagle.

NOTES ON THE ARAPAHO SONGS, BY ANDREW COWELL

References to "The Forks," "The Eagles," and "The Medicine Wheel": see *Hinóno'éínoo3ítoono: Arapaho Historical Traditions, Told by Paul Moss*; Edited, translated and with a glossary by Andrew Cowell and Alonzo Moss, Sr. (2005).

1) How bright...
The word translated as 'how' could also be rendered as 'it is the perfect exemplar of' or something like that, as in 'a perfect circle' or 'the perfect example of a circle.' So the song has a strong idealizing, visionary quality to it.

The full moon itself (which the song seems to be referring to) was seen as the culmination of growth and power: growth and development were directly associated with the new moon (hair was cut then, for example, because it would grow back most quickly during the new and waxing moon, and young children and animals were especially liked to be born with a new moon). So the bright, full moon here symbolizes fruition, fulfillment, reaching the height of powers and plenitude.

2) The cottonwood...

Cottonwood is the tree par excellence for the Arapaho. The word used in the song is *hohoot*, which means both 'tree' and 'cottonwood' specifically. Cottonwood is used in the altar of the Sun Dance Lodge, as well as for the key center pole of the lodge. Seven cottonwood trees were called into existence at the creation of the earth, just before the land was created. Also, the Creator threw cottonwood pith into the waters, and it bobbed to the surface, which meant that people would live forever, whereas trickster then threw a pebble in, which meant that people would have to die. The song may be evoking this reference, and thus the idea of eternal or renewed life—especially since the death-bringing whites of the 19th century were called *nih'oo3oo*—same as 'trickster.'

Cottonwood was also an emergency food for both horses and people (the inner bark), and the pith was the normal tinder for fires.

3) Our father, the whirlwind...

'Our father' is a common way of referring to the Creator as well in prayers, so the meaning is polyvalent.

The whirlwind itself is associated with creation, due to its power and its 'transformative' ability. Whirlwind Woman is a myth character also associated with the creation.

[Notice this recurring theme in many of the songs: one invokes creation to literally have access to the power of creation in order to change and recreate, to retransform the world, bring growth, health, etc.]

The word *neyooxet* not only means 'whirlwind', but dust devil, tornado, caterpillar (due to the way it weaves a whirlwind-like cocoon), cow-lick, and the hair at the crown of the head, which grows out circularly.

A better translation than 'wears the headdress' would be simply 'put on feathers'. There's not a reference to a war-bonnet, but simply to ceremonial feathers.

The word *houu* means both 'crow' and 'God/creator', plus the crow was a messenger to the gods. Black is the color of victory, as in war dances, and iridescence was seen as powerful as well, primarily because of it's association with lightning (itself a product of the Thunderbird).

4) I circle around...
The idea of 'circling around' involves ceremonial enactment, and access to power—it is an act of power in itself. See the "Forks" story and the intro to it.

A better translation of the last line would be not flying, but 'carrying the wing feathers/plumes'—this creates an ambiguity between the crow and the dancer—which is which? The dancer becomes the crow really, in the song.

5) My children...
The word for 'my children' is an older form, often used in reference to the products of the Creator—inverse of the 'our father' usage above. 'Desolate' is specifically a mental state here—'downcast, depressed, mournful, etc.'—and not a reference to economic condition. For Arapahos, such as state is considered to be at least in part a-social—one is no longer able to interact reciprocally with others, and one retreats into oneself, becomes almost a non-member of the community. *'Hohookee'* crazy is not a reference to insanity or mental health, but rather, to acting without constraint, for no particular purpose (*'kookon'*), unbounded by social rules. In a sense, 'desolation' is the passive version of 'crazy' (which is typically an ACTIVE non-sociality and non-reciprocity).

6) The earth...
The word *biito'owu'* can mean 'the earth' or 'land' or 'soil, dirt.' The song seems to be obliquely referring to the creation myth, in which there was only water, and then the Creator took the soil (*biito'owu'*) brought up from below the waters and threw it out to create the land (*biito'owu'*). Here *houu* seems to have more the valence of 'God' than just 'crow.'

7) The crow is circling...

See earlier references to 'crow' 'circling.' Compare the song to the scene at the end of the "Eagles" where they come for the young man, or to the eagles circling the fasters in "The Medicine Wheel."

8) My children...

See earlier references to 'my children,' 'the earth.'

9) I hear everything...

'Crow' again. The word 'all' is translating *behiineeneinootee,'* which actually means 'all that lies around/is arranged/is placed upon the ground.' Moreover, the word *niitobee* means not 'hear' but more specifically 'hear about'. [I kept Mooney's translations, but clearly, the songs need to be retranslated eventually.] So the song is really saying that the crow hears about all the places of the earth, and knows about everything on the earth (as opposed to just 'hearing everyone talking' for example). The song suggests that the crow hears people's prayers [a major concern among Arapahos is whether prayers will be heard], but also knows about everything human AND non-human, and that it can potentially INFORM humans of the non-human world (and potentially sources of power).

10) A long time ago...

The turtle is the one who brings up the soil/mud from below the waters at the time of creation, in order for the Creator to spread it across the waters and make the land. The song is clearly referring to the creation myth.

11) We are...

'a long ways' can also mean 'a long time ago.'
This is a visionary-type song, imagining that which is gone.

12) My child...

The word for 'eagle' also means 'bird,' so it's multivalent. There are specific terms for four different types of eagles, but here only the general word is used.

In the Sun Dance, the dancers always face towards the top of the Center Pole, and look at a symbolic eagle/thunderbird nest that is placed at that point, as they dance. This is not to say that the song here is meant to be a sun dance song, but it evokes the same culture-practice of 'watching the eagle,' which has very deep connections to the Sun Dance, vision quests and fasting, and so forth. See also the ending of "The Eagles" where the new eagle addresses the humans in a similar way, and asks them to pay attention to him.

1
hoyohnoh'oeseiyoo-'
biikoo tohcowookuunoo

2
hohóót niiboot
neniibéitowoo

3
heisonoonin neyóooxet
woow ceniinookuunit houuno'

4
niinoo'óeenih'ohúnoo
biito'owu' heeneisei'i
hine'e3 neniiwouh'unoo

5
neniisoono'
hootówouhóóno'
nih'óo3óú'u hoohookéeni3i'

6
bííto'ówu'houu
nihnohkuno'uxotii[t]

7

nonoonono'ootonéinoo houu
tohcihnoo3éínoo houu

8

neniisoono'
híiyóu hee3ebénowoo

9

behiineeneinootee-'niitobeenoo
neneeninoo houu

10

[no original collected]

11

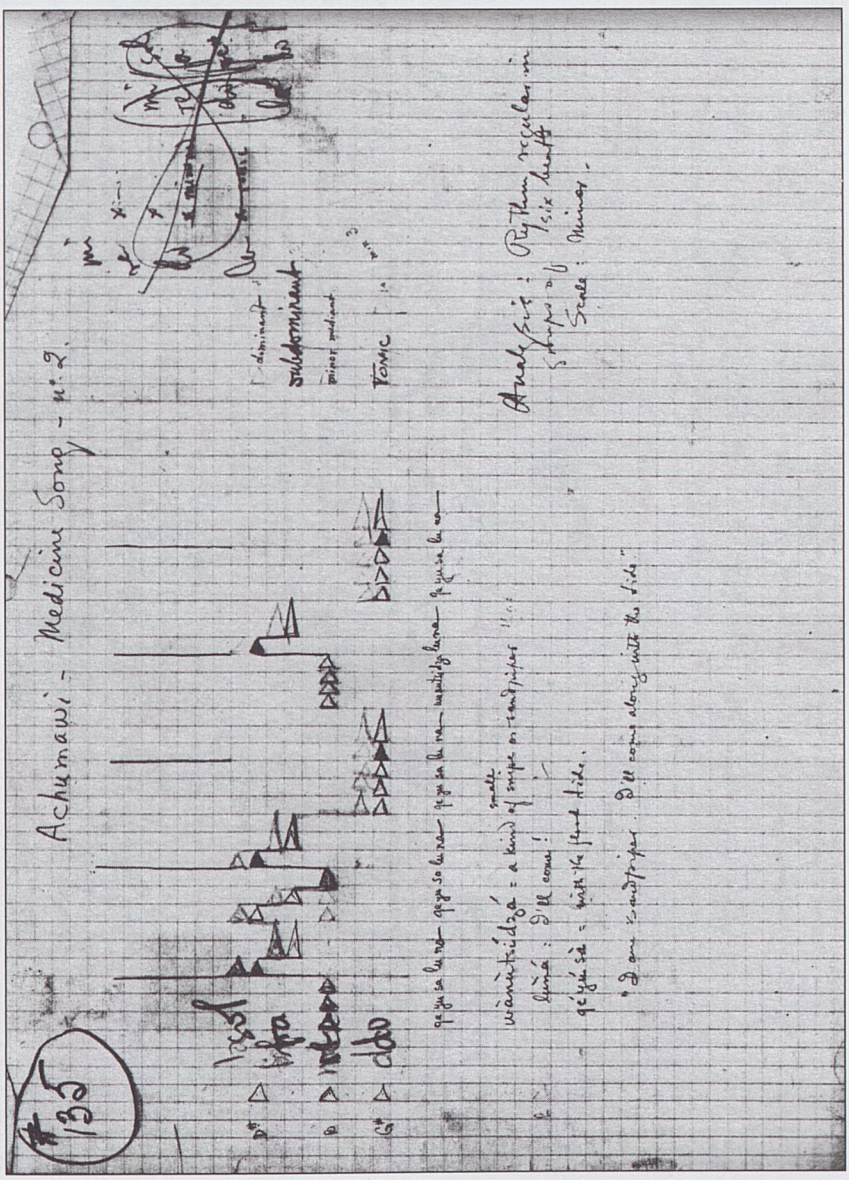
hiinono'einino'
noohowunee huu3e' beebei'on
neneenit hii3einoon

12

neniisoo hesoohowu
neneeninoo nenii'eheininoo

JAIME DE ANGULO

CALIFORNIA INDIAN SONG TRANSCRIPTIONS



I AM THE VILLAIN

1.

I come by with a basket of apples and leave them at your doorstep. I knock once, then twice. I slowly walk away admiring the lockets of bricks that are your path.

2.

The next day I bring blueberries and paint one side of your house.

3.

"Hello, it's me again."
"What do you want?"
"Just to be nice to you."
"But what if you are a villain?"
"I'm not."
"You painted a side of my house with blueberries."
"That's true."

4.

I come back. Through your door you call me a villain and I whisper back what you don't care to hear.

5.

I hold a little flag that I wave that says I WILL EAT YOUR HOUSE OF FRUIT.

6.

I start sleeping at your doorstep. Your path pulls away from me.

7.

Slumped against your door, one day you open it and drag me inside.

8.

"You are a villain."
"No, just a regular person."
"Do you have a plan?"
"Of course I do."

9.

The inside of your house looks exactly like the outside. Right there is the front door and me sitting against it, and over there, the path. Even the trees are the same. I ask where the sun is and you point to a corner spider web.

10.

"I think you should leave your house."
"I think I shouldn't listen to a villain."
"Why do you keep saying that?"

11.

You point at my shirt. My shirt says I AM THE VILLAIN. I don't remember owning a shirt like this. I try to rub the words off with your hand.

12.

I sit on the grass inside your house and you feed me soup. Soon, I am asleep and on top of a wave of grass and brick path arching over the trees. What was in that soup?

13.

I wake and I'm sitting atop your shoulders. A crowd of swarming people around us are screaming and chanting and there's your head between my knees shouting and saying that I am the villain.

14.

"I'm sorry, I should have never left."
"Think it's too late."
"That path used to be ours."
"It's mine now."

15.

I wanted sapphires at my funeral. I wanted you in a speech that sunk the shallow. The dirt and grass to their waist.

16.

The crowd doesn't follow us into the woods where you take me. When I ask where you're taking me you say it must be a place where crowds won't follow.

17.

In a clearing, a house painted the colors of fruit.

18.

"I don't care if you're a villain," you say.
"I thought you did," I say. "I can be better."
"It's quiet here."
"Can we build a path like the old one?"
"Yes," you say. "A better one."

19.

Out here in the woods we take turns wearing the shirt that says I AM THE VILLAIN. No one can see us here wearing this shirt because crowds hate the woods and the woods hate the noise of crowds.

20.

One night you read me the speech you've written for my funeral. It's so good I sink into the ground until I'm up to my knees. By the time you're finished, I'm mouth deep in a lake of grass.

21.

When I ask if there'll be sapphires you open a wooden chest and show a fishing line of sapphires and fish me out of the ground. I say thanks and take off my grass-stained shirt.

22.

"What was all that before?" I ask at dinner.
"What?"
"When you wouldn't open the door for me at the old house."
"Sorry about that. I was a little bit of a villain."
"Like a vest?"
"More like a scarf."
"Maybe a hat."
"Maybe villain socks."

23.

At night you take the villain shirt off and stuff half in your mouth. I take the other half. It tastes like sweat and grass. We lie in bed breathing through our noses with our mouths almost touching.

24.

You fall asleep right away. I can't. I eat my way to you, feeling the villain in my mouth then throat and then stomach. My nostrils pump like pistons. I want bricks and mortar to make this again. I am an engine.

MOUNTAIN BANDITS

1.

I dreamed I was blood splattered on a cobblestoned street. I was waiting for an ambulance. I saw the mountain bandits on the horizon holding up a banner that said HOW DID YOU GET HERE? WHAT WRONG CHOICES DID YOU MAKE?

2.

I want to crash my ambulance to see how long it takes your ambulance to arrive. I want to join the mountain bandits because they just make banners. Sometimes they steal palms of silver, turn the sun orange when they wave their revolvers above their heads.

3.

"I think I want to be a mountain bandit," I tell you one night.
"You don't want to do that."
"I wanted you to come find me in the street."
"You don't even know how to make a banner."

4.

I dreamed I was a mountain bandit. I stole the river and made it into a topaz belt. I was cleaned and draped in bullets that crossed my chest. We warmed ourselves with a fire and took bites from the mountain.

5.

"Where are you going?" you ask, looking at my packed bags.
"To go be a mountain bandit."

"What?"
I show you my sharpened teeth.
"It's not the end, you know."
"It is if I'm a mountain bandit."

6.

At the horizon I am welcomed by the mountain bandits. They act just like in my dreams. When I ask if I should kill anything or rob anyone they say we can make a banner first.

7.

You little fool with dull teeth. You never had the intention of cleaning the blood off me or driving an ambulance to me. I would have taken anything. I would have taken you with open eyes, losing control because of wet hands, driving your ambulance right over me, tires across my body and down my throat. Now look at me, a mountain bandit turning the sky orange with the tip of her revolver.

8.

I make my first banner. It says I WOULD HAVE TAKEN ANYTHING FROM YOU. The mountain bandits applaud.

9.

The next day we hold the banner at the horizon. You see it. Then leave in your ambulance headed towards a new woman.

10.

I bet you would drive your ambulance through her hair in a swirl of lights and sirens. I can see you jumping the bumps in her spine. I can see the room spinning blue and red and white.

11.

There are maybe thirty mountain bandits on the horizon here. I was right—they spend most of the day making banners. Sometimes they walk into town and act like BIG MEN. Sometimes they act violently just because they are mountain bandits.

12.

I ask a question I should not ask. I ask if the mountain bandits are bored and they straighten their hats and rows of bullets they wear in an X on their chest and say yes, they are bored.

13.

The banner reads WE ARE COMING DOWN TO DESTROY THE TOWN.

14.

I dreamed that you dreamed I was a hospital. You dreamed I was an airport.

15.

We come down the mountain horizon screaming the way mountain bandits should have always screamed. You drive your ambulance towards us. We fire wildly into the windshield. We are careful not to trip on the banners swimming down the mountain.

16.

I get the best shot. A hole opens in your throat and from the hole comes a small plane with a banner trailing that says I NEVER KNEW WHAT TO SAY. THAT WAS THE RIGHT THING TO SAY. The small plane comes back through the hole in the windshield and up and over our heads and into the orange sky.

17.

The mountain bandits pour into the town acting out years of frustration. I drag your body from the ambulance and lay you on the ground.

18.

I run home. I jump in the other ambulance. My ambulance. I can't help myself. I do it for you and your dull teeth.

19.

Somewhere there is an explosion. Things are burning here. The hundreds of banners have proven to be a terrible idea. They act as long wicks running from the mountains and into the town.

20.

I dreamed you brought her into your ambulance. You had the sirens on. You were in the back of the ambulance on the stretcher with her licking blood around her neck. She wore a yellow oxygen mask that muffled moans.

21.

I just wanted you to do something, anything. I never wanted to be a mountain bandit.

22.

There will be a day full of ambulances and I want you driving one.

23.

There is a day like this day where I'm the only one behind the wheel, headed towards your body, mountain bandits throwing a parade in my honor.

LA MADRE, EL PIANO

Dejo el libro de Marina sobre el piano.
Con el último acorde, muere su ilusión
en mi mano.
Muerta de su texto resurge sobre el mío (ebria)
". . . aluhete, siempre aluhete . . ."
La razón estalla entre la vena abultada
de la mano y el vaso.
Tómala, joven de pelo rizo y profundas ojeras.
Es la mano equivocada.
No tengo tiempo para ti,
no traigo nada.
La vena estalla y la sangre a borbotones
baja por el hilo del brazo. Su música
clavetea mi espalda y la amordaza.
No me puedo entregar así.
Nunca más.

Delirio en el beso robado, entre las comisuras,
en el vientre.
"¡Si puedo ser tu madre!"
Me viro en la butaca y toco
aquellas notas sueltas en el giro
de una agria melodía endulzada.
"Soy tu madre, Marina, soy tu madre,
y me he llevado tu música a la sangre."
Tiene un color de cera en las mandíbulas,
aprieta el pedal, abre la octava.

THE MOTHER, THE PIANO

I leave Marina's book on the piano.
With the final chord, her
illusion dies in my hand.
Dead, she reemerges from her text over mine (drunk)
". . . alouette, always alouette . . ."
Reason explodes between her hand's
bulging vein and my drinking glass.
Take it, young man, with your curly hair, deep circles under your eyes.
It's the wrong hand.
I don't have time for you,
didn't bring anything.
The vein explodes and blood comes
spewing down my arm. Her mother's music
adorns my back and silences her.
I can't give in like that.
Never again.

Delirium in the stolen kiss, between the corners of the mouth,
in the abdomen.
"If I can be your mother!"
I turn in the armchair and play
those single notes in the transfer
of a bitter melody made sweet.
"I'm your mother, Marina, I'm your mother,
and I've carried your music in my blood."
A waxy color to her jaws, she
steps on the pedal, opens the octave.

El beso desprendido cae de su boca, ladeado.
(El beso está en mi infancia con sabor café
—no de azafrán o sándalo—
pero la manera de estremecernos obra en la mente, igual.)
"Tú con la espina dorsal, yo con la vena cortada
puedo morir de poner al diablo sobre el piano."
Ojos dorados, albaricoque . . . ¡que mienten!
¿Cómo relaciono este beso con la despedida de mi padre
y de la infancia?

La niña nunca dejó
ese pasillo interminable
del teclado
(por eso ni poeta ni pianista fui).
Perseguida que en su persecución
se vuelve eterna novia de tu amante.
"Hombre de pelo rizo, tienes potestad para zafar
los lazos, las costumbres . . .
Toma el vino y escapa."
Hay sangre coagulada bajo su comisura.
Horror de sellar (besando) un pacto con el diablo,
mientras la música acromática
con sus cien años de perversión la alcanza.
"Afinidad por la infinitud de una sintonía"—dices,
y no comprendo nada.

Otro acorde para que se suspenda
la estabilidad de la muerte.
Prórroga fatal de un silencio a otro.
"Valían quince pesos sin comisión, lo sabes."
Demasiado dinero para el equilibrio de una vida.
Pon de nuevo tu boca de martinete
y resucita.
"Marina, mi niña—advierte a mi oído
contra el soplo del viento sur, la madre—.
Son días de invierno verdadero o falso.
Te he dicho que el hombre de cejas anchas
viene a buscarte."

The generous kiss falls from her mouth, tilted.
(In my childhood the kiss tastes like coffee
—not saffron or sandalwood—
but our way of shuddering, with the work in the mind, is the same.)
"You with the spine, me with the open vein
I can die from placing the devil on the piano."
Golden eyes, apricot . . . they lie!
How do I connect this kiss to farewells for my father
and my childhood?

The girl never left
that interminable hallway,
the keyboard
(the reason I was neither poet nor pianist).
Hunted, she turns within her hunted state
into the woman eternally betrothed to your lover.
"Curly-haired man, you have the authority to loose
ropes, customs . . .
Drink your wine and make your escape."
There's coagulated blood under the corner of his mouth.
Horror of sealing a pact with the devil (through a kiss),
while the colorless music
reaches her with its hundred years of perversion.
"Affinity for the infinitude of a tuning knob," you say,
and I don't understand at all.

Another chord, so the stability of death
will be suspended.
Fatal deferment from one silence to another.
"They were worth fifteen pesos uncommissioned, you know."
Too much money for the balance of a life.
Put your martinet mouth on
and come back to life.
"Marina, my daughter," the mother warns
at my ear, against the breath of southern wind.
"These are days of winter, whether true or false.
I told you: the wide-browed man
is coming for you."

SI HUBIERA TENIDO...

para Ana

Si hubiera tenido una nana
que se llamara Ana
y supiera mecerme
en sus rodillas,
la melancolía de su canción preferida
me acompañaría hasta el final.
(Una infancia de canción sin fin.)

Tú hubieras debido llegar antes.
Salir del vil tiempo
de las cosas imposibles.
Pero son tan jóvenes,
¡tan endemoniadamente jóvenes!
Todo debió ser de otra manera.
Pero sin nana y sin ti,
¿cómo escondo la tarde cayendo contra mi ventana?
¿La abro totalmente?
¿La escondo detrás del librero
sin dejarla salir?

De los deseos, nada sé.
Sólo acumularlos en el estuche de un después mecánico
(ecos de una respiración que jadea en silencio).
¿Por qué no vienes y me engañas?
¿Por qué no traes una nana
que me acune otra vez
al despertar?
¿Otra trama tendida en el recuerdo?
No me verá crecer
ni me arropará en las noches
de desvelo y de frío.

IF I'D HAD...

for Ana

If I'd had a nanny
named Annie
and learned how to rock
upon her knees,
her favorite song's melancholy
would stay with me to the end.
(A neverending childhood of song.)

You would have had to arrive earlier.
Exiting the vile tempo
of impossibilities.
But they're so young,
so devilishly young!
Everything was going to be a different way.
But without a nanny and without you,
how do I hide the evening falling against my window?
Do I open it all the way?
Do I hide it behind the bookshelf
without letting it get out?

Of desires, I know nothing.
Just accumulating them in the box for a mechanical afterwards
(echoes of breathing that heaves in silence).
Why don't you show up and deceive me?
Why don't you bring a nanny
to cradle me again
when I wake?
Another weft stretched through memory?
She won't see me grow
or tuck me in during my nights
of sleeplessness and cold.

Y sin ella, la posibilidad de tu llegada será también
incierta.
Porque no tengo "formas de llamar desde el olvido . . ."
Volverá el dolor y tendré insomnio.

¿Quieres venir a cantarme,
a engañarme otra vez?
Tal vez voy a morir,
y las mujeres cuando van a morir
quieren oír su última canción.
"Arrópame . . .,
me pierdo dentro de un cuerpo ajeno
y envilezco.
Un vals, ¿no lo oyes . . .? tocan un vals."
Mientras la nana se va, tan vieja de mi lado,
indiferente a una infancia sin canción
ni fin.

And without her, the possibility of your arrival will also be
uncertain.
Because I don't have "ways of calling from oblivion . . ."
The pain will return, I'll have insomnia.

Do you want to come and sing to me,
deceive me one more time?
Maybe I'm going to die,
and when women are going to die
they want to hear their final song.
"Tuck me in . . .,
I lose myself inside a foreign body,
am debased.
A waltz, don't you hear it . . .? they're playing a waltz."
While the nanny moves away, so old, from my side,
indifferent to a childhood with no song
or ending.

DANIEL PINCHBECK

with KYLE PIVARNIK

FROM THE EDGE:

AN INTERVIEW WITH DANIEL PINCHBECK

KYLE PIVARNIK: You have a tie to the Naropa community through your mother as she was involved with a lot of the people who came together and really started this project. They said it was a hundred year project, and it's still going on. And here we are, further down the lineage, and you yourself are becoming a part of it. I was wondering if you had any commentary about that.

DANIEL PINCHBECK: It's kind of a relief to me. I've been waiting for Naropa to invite me. My mother grew up in New York, and when she was in college she just connected to the Beats, and she became friends with Ginsberg, and actually went out with Kerouac for a year and a half. She was with him when *On the Road* came out, and so she saw what that level of fame did to him. He really wasn't prepared for it and was in many ways a sort of delicate soul. She also wrote an excellent memoir about what she observed and also her whole relationship with the Beats and the relationship of women to the Beat movement, because it was very much a boys club. It was harder for women to be given platforms to get their voices heard.

K.P. This issue of *Bombay Gin* is in tribute to Harry Smith. Naropa's print shop is named after him and he's become a part of this lineage as well. Harry Smith's parents were Pantheist Theosphists, which surely informed his later mystic tendencies with the Thelema, in that he even designed his own tarot deck, and his study of the Enochian system

and the compilation of its language. In your own experiences with the mystic and the occult, has his work informed your own? Do you think he was on the right track?

D.P. Yeah, I'm totally enamored and tickled by Harry Smith. I think he was really an extraordinary alchemist, creative genius, a synergizer of all these different traditions. I couldn't really say how his work has informed me, but it is interesting how he bridges from the Beat poetic realm into this more ritual, occult exploration. I would actually think that I might get more interested in that in the future.

K.P. One of the things that I found interesting was Smith's interest in the psychedelic experience, and he had his own lens through these organizations that he was involved with that framed these experiences. How do you feel about the shaman being involved in larger organizations such as the Thelema?

D.P. That's interesting. I haven't really gotten too much into the O.T.O. or the Thelema path. I think there are definitely questions about Crowley as a personality. He was very Lucifericaly inspired. It was the visionary Rudolf Steiner who proposed that we have different types of spirits working with and against us. One group of spirits he calls "Luciferic," after Lucifer, a word that literally means "light bringer." The Luciferic forces are not demons but "daemons" that inspire us with genius but also make humans arrogant and pull them away from the earth. So I wonder if the organization carries the traits of that. I've been very interested in Steiner and Anthroposophy as a model. Steiner had all these occult visions and capacities, but he somehow managed to create a very benevolent system out of it that has left actual bequests as positive evolutionary tools, like Waldorf schools or biodynamic farming, homeopathy, and other things he was involved with. That really interests me. I think that the shamanic impulse can be shepherded within institutions, but we have to create the right forums for that to happen.

K.P. Do you think that these organizations have been helping our consciousness and global society move toward the evolutionary shifts you advocate in your work?

D.P. I look at everything as an evolutionary process and I think that the O.T.O. just seems a little too tilted toward the Luciferic with spiritual influences or occult influences that are very inflationary to the ego. I think that was really what happened with Crowley. He had contact with this being that dictated this book and he kind of fell under the spell of this transmission. O.T.O. seems to be a little off balance, and the people who get involved with it tend to be a little unmoored in some areas.

K.P. With these mystic visitations that members of the O.T.O. and other organizations claimed to have had, often times without the use of psychedelics, do you think that being in a psychedelic state, one might engage with these same kinds of entities?

D.P. Yeah, I think so. I've collected a lot of amazing stories, anecdotally, around that. Grant Morrison has a number of really amazing ones, one of them about being interested in exploring death and using ritual. He did a whole ceremony, maybe ingesting a little mushrooms I think, based on a Voodoo ritual to the god of death, and he says that he went into a trance state, and he saw himself on the astral plane, surrounded by these scorpion beings. They told him that they were a cult of assassins of the astral plane and that they wanted him to join their cult in order to psychically assassinate people. But in order for him to do that, he would have to keep coming back and learning from them, and he would also have to get a tattoo of a scorpion on the base of his spine. He realized that he really didn't want to do this, and he then tried to get out of the ritual, but somehow before he was able to escape, the scorpions stung him. Soon after that, he got incredibly sick with a staph infection that no antibiotics could cure. So he was lying between life and death in a hospital for weeks, and at that point, he began to do other visionary practices. He actually reached out to the bacteria that were infecting him, and he tried to communicate with it and make a deal with it. He was like, "look, you guys could kill me if you want, but what about this. What if you let me go and live, and then I'll make a comic book all about you and make it interesting." So they thought about it and they said, "OK, that's a good deal," and they let him go. He lived. He got better. And he wrote a comic called *The Filth*, about

extraterrestrial bacterial agents. But that's his story. There are a lot of levels of demons, spirits, both higher and lower, and we have to integrate practices for understanding and reconciling that.

K.P. Is there a real psychic danger to these experiences?

D.P. There can be a real psychic danger to some of these experiences, and that's why I continuously advocate that people who get interested in exploring these realms also work in a traditional context, within shamanic lineages, because I think that there's a protection that comes from connecting with lineages. The Tibetan Buddhists talk about the importance of lineage. So if you do Ayahuasca with a shaman or Peyote with the Native American Church, you're connecting to the history of past practitioners who have found ways of turning these powers for good and for healing. The more positive universes.

K.P. Harry Smith is probably best know for his *Anthology of American Folk Music*...

D.P. And the films. *Heaven and Earth Magic*...

K.P. Right. He went about this in a very anthropological way, going into the field and tracking down this indigenous folk music to record. In your own experience of going to these different tribes and taking part in their ceremonies, what is the importance of music in these rituals? Have you ever been tempted to record these instances and bring them back to the larger shamanistic/psychedelic culture?

D.P. Yeah. I mean maybe now. Earlier, when I was doing those things, I was really thinking about the writing, not the sound recording necessarily. Harry Smith was definitely a connoisseur of these realms that were on the boundary of being lost forever, and he was amazingly gifted at finding what needed to be preserved from different traditions. I guess I've been doing that a little bit with my work with different shamanic traditions. There are people who are making those recordings. You can get Icaros, which are the Ayahuasca songs, you can find them online for free or there are records of them. Even the

Bwiti music of Africa is available. Also some medicine songs of Native American traditions. But then also, I think that if a group of modern people were to explore some aspect of this together they would begin to generate their own tonalities, their own harmonies.

K.P. In your first book, *Breaking Open the Head*, you wrote of the Bwiti and Iboga and how vital a part of the experience it was to have a shaker in each hand. Could you speak to that?

D.P. It's a way you don't get lost, so you stay focused and in balance. In all of these ceremonies music is a navigational device. It helps people move through these other realities. They use this strangely tuned sort of harp, a macango, that is supposed to represent the voice of the ancestor spirits. My memory is that it's an atonal harp, which leads to more singing together, and then more drumming. When I took Iboga for the second time, in a clinic, I realized that you get this huge ringing in your ears, which is pretty unpleasant, and I think that's another reason for all of the drumming.

K.P. There are studies where playing classical music during aptitude tests in high schools has resulted in higher scores and other similar studies. How do you see music's ability to affect the consciousness?

D.P. Well, the consciousness can be affected both ways, both positively and negatively. If we look at gangster rap, it has a whole history of how mainstream culture appropriated a type of expression that was at first open, rebellious, and exploratory, and then shifted it over into a dominate and aggressive realm. I did a panel on hip hop and consciousness with a group of people who had been thinking about this for a long time, and I remember one of the panelists talking about the illuminati record companies and how they deformed and destroyed hip hop. There's a story about Easy E going to the White House to meet George Bush Sr. Also, those hip hop artists involved with cocaine and crack distribution. Gangsters. The Genesis of that cocaine maybe through the CIA.

Then on the other side of the fence, there're all these incredibly positive affects. It integrates different cultures. Allen Ginsberg had this great thing called "Spontaneous Mind Interviews," about how necessary the Black cultural influx on American music was, because white culture was rigid and imposed in the throat chakra, and basically that needed to be opened by rhythmic movement to open the whole physiology, to open the spiritual physiology. And that's an interesting way to look at it, too. Then Afro-American music was absorbed into rock 'n' roll and by white culture, and I think it has opened a different relationship to the body, to sexuality, and to other people.

K.P. In American culture, particularly in the 60s and 70s, music has been a powerful voice in employing social change. I'm curious about your thoughts on that, as well as where you see that happening now in current music. What music do you think is influential? Can it be used to make these shifts of consciousness you speak of in *2012*?

D.P. I think that music is really essential and a great way to bind communities of people together beyond language, social constructs, or cultural ideas. If you go to a Bob Dylan or Sting concert, you'll find a huge range of people. I think that's an extraordinary gift that music gives us. It's a way to bring people together without getting caught in linguistic divisions. I think it's going to continue to play an important part in the transformation process.

K.P. I know that Bob Dylan and Joan Baez were both influenced by Smith's *Anthology*. What music has been influential to you in your growth, either in your shamanistic development or as a writer?

D.P. A huge range of music in different ways. Trying to find that balance between structure and spontaneity. You see that in an artist like Thelonius Monk, where the one note is actually not the right note or the best note, but it takes someone outside of the normal range. When I wrote my first two books, I was listening to a lot of classical music. When I wrote *Breaking Open the Head*, I was listening to a lot of Bach, and the book is more linear and orderly in the progression

of the language and the tropes that are explored. Conversely, *2012* is more spiraling and serpentine, and at some points during that writing process, I was listening to a lot of Beethoven's late string quartets, and I definitely felt those had an influence. Beyond that, I've been influenced by all the music everyone else has been influenced by. The Beatles. It's been really fun to have an eight-year-old daughter because now she's obsessed with The Beatles. We've listened to the whole Beatles' catalogue, and it's great to see her exuberance and enthusiasm around them. A group like The Beatles seems like they were really pointing toward a future harmonic state of human collaboration. And there's something very intrinsic about how people respond to that.

K.P. When you write, do you always listen to music?

D.P. No. Maybe only half the time. But a lot of the time.

K.P. What is your process for writing. Do you prefer to type or create handwritten drafts first? Do you have a specific location you like to be? Rituals?

D.P. Yes, but that's also always changing. I like to write in cafés in the morning. Get hyper-caffeinated and stimulated and then kind of download. I'm not drinking coffee anymore, so that's an interesting aspect that's changed things around a little bit. I think it's good to have a setting. I usually like to write outside of my house. When I'm home, there are too many books, too many distractions, diversions. I like to be in an environment where there's just enough interesting distraction. Just enough fragment of conversation around you. People to chat or flirt with, but still be able to preserve your self-contained space.

K.P. What artists do you think are currently capturing that Beatle-esque spirit and promoting these positive social changes?

D.P. I think that people are still trying to do that. I think it's difficult to reach that universality that The Beatles reached. Maybe our culture is no longer oriented like that. In fact, Paul McCartney said, "When there's another phenomenon like The Beatles, it's not going to be

music." You know, that only happens once. It will take some other cultural form. One thing that's been really fun for me is that my first book came out in 2002 and the second in 2006, and a lot of musicians have gotten in touch with me and have been inspired, I think [my work] has influenced some of these bands, such as MGMT or The Klaxons, an English band. The Klaxons actually have an album coming out this summer based on me taking them to certain ceremonies and talking to them through a bunch of ideas. So that's really interesting to me. My work is more intellectual, geared towards smaller groups, and these musicians can take these ideas and convey them, not just through words, but through melodic constructs that somehow convey somatically, through certain frequencies, information to people. There's a lot of really great music happening right now. I really like what's happening with Rock N' Roll. Bands like Of Montreal and Gang Gang Dance. Some of the developments in hip hop are interesting.

K.P. In your movie, *2012: Time For Change*, I was really drawn to the sounds and images that you selected; particularly the animations were really powerful and create their own thread throughout the film. But the music that was chosen was also quite impactful. What was the process like for selecting these elements?

D.P. Well, the music that was chosen was really selected by the director. I could have mildly objected or changed things, but it was really the director's film. That was an interesting thing too because we made a lot of arrangements around that. I shared final approval and final cut with him, but I really saw it as his vision of the ideas that I brought up, as well as some of his own ideas. It's a little complicated because now that film goes out into the world and it represents me to a lot of people, and it's not necessarily my statement or how I would position it. But I'm very happy with what was done, and I feel really good about it.

K.P. With the change in technology, where now you can record an album in your basement and it sounds just as good as a studio record thirty years ago, the power dynamics of the industry have shifted. Now some of the best albums being made are outside of the industry. Also, 20% of all books being published now are ebooks. What's your take on this?

D.P. Well, a lot of those ebooks are still being put out by the mainstream corporations. But I think that this decentralization is a great thing. It opens up creativity for a lot more people. In some ways, it's more work for the creative person, something I discovered with the film, in that one can't just do something and then hand it off expecting it to be a success. I think that's true now in every field. If you want to have your work find its audience, you have to keep on marketing and promoting it yourself, going into communities that might respond to it. I really love the Burning Man community. I got my publishers both times to give me little chapbooks to give out at Burning Man. I started doing talks there. It took a while to build a ground swell, but I felt deeply that that community would appreciate what I was doing. But it took them a while to understand that that kind of intellectual work had meaning to them. So I think it's really up to the artist to identify the community that will respond to their work and then find ways to reach out to them. Not to just assume it will be done for them.

K.P. Have you personally felt the tension between not only being a writer or a filmmaker, but now also a businessman?

D.P. Yeah. That was a choice that I made though. Having written the last book and really wanting to put its ideas into practice, it seemed like creating a corporation or company was really the best avenue to bring in resources that could then aid and abet a transformation process. But it's definitely taken a toll on my creative work. There are a lot of things that I would love to research, but I've had to put them on hold. I'm still trying to get the whole thing launched in a way that it doesn't need such direct involvement from me all the time.

K.P. So what are you working on now?

D.P. Oh. A whole slew of things. I'm still the editorial director for *Reality Sandwich*. I'm trying to get my organization Evolver up to the next level. We just created a publishing deal with North Atlantic Books and are publishing some books with Penguin. We have our first single author book, *Fishers of Men*, with this guy Adam Elenbaas, who started

writing for *Reality Sandwich* and now has written a really awesome memoir about his experiences being the son of a Methodist preacher in Minnesota. He went to the Amazon looking for Ayahuasca, which he then ultimately brought back to his father. So we are now seeing that Evolver and *Reality Sandwich* can act as umbrella brands. Maybe first with writers, but then maybe with musicians or filmmakers. Artists of different sorts. But the thing I'm most excited about with Evolver is the Evolver Social Movement, inspiring people to gather in local communities and explore these issues that seem really important. There's no construct like this in the mainstream for people to gather. Hopefully this then moves on to activism. For example, in Atlanta, Georgia they're building permaculture projects and now they're building a healing space that's an Evolver center. I also have another book due in February. As well as my new book *Notes from the Edge Times* that came out in October, which is a collection of columns I've been writing for a few years, not only for *Reality Sandwich*, but another magazine I was writing for, *Conscious Choice*.

K.P. In your own shamanistic journeys outside of the tribal settings, what part does ritual play into it? I'm thinking specifically music and its role in these excursions. Do you have specific rituals to be performed before a psychedelic experience or trance state, such as implementing music into the experience like these indigenous cultures do?

D.P. That's been changing too. Right now I'm not that interested in exploring the psychedelic thing much, except if it's in this more intensified shamanic context for the purpose of either developing some sort of skill or working on myself in a much more directed fashion. A few years ago, I probably would have answered that question differently.

ANI DIFRANCO

REPRIEVE

manhattan is an island
like the women who are
surrounded by children in a car
surrounded by cars
or manhattan was a project
that projected the worst of mankind
first one and then the other
has made its mark on my mind

it's sixty years later
near the hypo-center of the a-bomb
i'm in the middle of hiroshima
watching a twisted old eucalyptus tree wave
one of the very few lives that survived and lives on
remembering the day it was suddenly
thousands of degrees in the shade
and what all of nature gave birth to
terror took in a blinding ray
with the kind of pain it would take cancer
so many years just to say

oh to grow up gagged and blindfolded
a man's world in your little girl's head
the voice of the great mother drowned out
in the constant honking
haunting the car crash up ahead
oh to grow up hypnotized
and then try to shake yourself awake

cuz you can sense what has been lost
cuz you can sense what is at stake

yeah, so
it took me a few years to catch on
that those days i catch everyone's eye
correspond with those nights of the month
when the moon gleams like an egg in the sky
and men are using a sense they don't even know they have
just to watch me walk by
and me, i'm supposed to be sensible
leave my animal outside to cry
when all of nature conspires
to make me her glorious whore
it's cuz in my body i hold the secret recipe
of precisely what life is for
and the patriarchy that looks to shame me for it
is the same one making war
and i've said too much already
but i'll tell you something more

to split yourself in two
is just the most radical thing you can do
so girl if that shit ain't up to you
then you simply are not free
cuz from the sunlight on my hair
to which eggs i grow to term
to the expression that i wear
all i really own is me
yes to split yourself in two
is just the most radical thing you can do
goddess forbid that little atom
should grow so jealous of eve

and in the face of the great farce
of the nuclear age
feminism ain't about equality
it's about reprieve

REVIEWS

ANAÏS MITCHELL, *HADESTOWN*

RIGHTEOUS BABE RECORDS, 2010

Reviewed by KELLY ALSUP

You know you've come across a little miracle when the headphones plunge the world's toilet water you've been desperately trying to flush from your body right back into your body with a homeopathic power and pressure that makes you feel clean.

Crookéd: At Barnes & Noble, you're lost. The album you thought a shoo-in for review turns out a frayed cardboard piece of dust on the shelf. Lamb that you are, wandering the racks, the shepherd asks if he can help you find something. "No, I'm just looking," you hear yourself say, and inexplicably, as though your fleece were suddenly charged by percolating lightning, you realize he may as well have asked if he could help you find your mother, and you had replied, "No, I'm just looking for my mother."

Narrowly escaping death, you shake off paralysis and ask if he knows a good folk album released in 2010, since the literary rag you work for is doing a retrospective of Harry Smith's *Anthology of American Folk Music* for its upcoming issue, and you're in charge of foresight. Into your hands, he places *Hadestown*, Anaïs Mitchell's folk opera featuring Justin Vernon (Bon Iver), Ani DiFranco, Ben Knox Miller (The Low Anthem), Greg Brown, and The Haden Triplets. Barnes & Noble tooled with the tools it is, you catch a few tracks and vespers aligning—it's hard to hear Greg Brown's baritone and do anything but heart-beat. Or pray, grateful again, for felt electricity and the long shepherd's staff.

Cellophane slice: The cover exquisitely printed with work by Peter Nevins, a pencil and linocut artist as well as musician, whose visual craft holds up musical feats by Gillian Welch, Josh Ritter, Mitchell, and others. On *Hadestown*'s cover: a lone woman's face, made equally by what's left of the light and the visage cutaway to the vacuum of shadow. Without the luminous and fallen back both, there is no face, nor single asphodel beneath her chin's closed eyes.

Enter Mitchell's vocal, as Eurydice, with Justin Vernon to follow as Orpheus. A whole cast assembles: Ben Knox Miller scratches out Hermes through feather fight and boot dust; Ani DiFranco devotes, struts, and poises Persephone's even hand; Greg Brown croons the compulsion, overthrow, and warning firm of a faithless Hades; The Haden Triplets spindle The Fates; and in this Audiotheatre, The Original Cast of *Hadestown* becomes The Chorus.

Refrain: Anaïs Mitchell lives in Vermont, raises chickens, and first performed this folk opera in The Green Mountain State's town of Barre, which lead to a New England *winter* tour with a 22-member troupe packed into an old circus bus. With this kind of collaborative dedication in her breast as well as under her top hat, Mitchell reworked songs after the tour, sometimes with the then-future album's performers in mind.

In a Righteous Babe Records press release, Mitchell revealed her motivation to retell the story of Eurydice and Orpheus: "the first few songs just came out of nowhere. It wasn't an academic idea or anything; the songs led to the myth, not the other way around." What is the implication, then, of a contemporary singer-songwriter being led back by Muse, if you will, to an ancient Greek myth and a former, perhaps, trembling way of knowing?

For starters: Do *you* know the story of the lovers, Eurydice and Orpheus? Or, do you remember falling in love and what it was like to feel a comfort in times "dark and getting darker"? Did you delight in dreams of "wedding bands. . . wedding table. . . [and] wedding bed"? What happened when uncertainty found its way in with its "hound dog howl" and threat of impoverishment? Did you wish for a different voice in the meadow? Deny your hunger? Seek sleep?

In Mitchell's post-apocalyptic rendering that kaleidoscopes through America's Depression Era on its way to *Hadestown*, Eurydice *dis*embodies all of the above. Especially poignant is Eurydice's tessitura: "It's my gut I can't ignore." Here, the gut is literal and needs food to live. Hades' (Greg Brown's deeper than deep) voice pulls Orpheus' counterpart through a sieve, like skin incepts venom. With merciless sultriness, Hades injects fear of the fate Eurydice would face as wife of a "hand-to-mouth" poet who will "write [her] a poem when the power's out."

Born: The effectiveness of myth. Through the irony of Mitchell's literal use of "gut," a question arises as to the function of Eurydice's

other *gut*—the one that would keep her faithful to a world of poetry and poverty. With this question, without answer, the story proceeds with its first sacrifice: Eurydice, lamb in the briar, loses her own mother ship at the hips to a lean and dessicate, survivalist slaughter—senseless—but with potential to resurrect audience/listener/reader/you. As she dissolves en route to the underworld, Eurydice laments: "Oh, my heart, it aches to stay [on Earth] / But the flesh [that is hungry] will have its way… I'm already gone—I'm gone…" off to the unearthly bounty that Hades promises.

With neither fortune nor surprise, this paradoxical ending summons Orpheus to reunite with Eurydice "[w]ay down under the ground." Against a grief perceived as unyielding, Orpheus follows his heart—"[a]ll that it loves is a woman"—to *Hadestown,* where, indeed, he will sing his poet's songs in plea to retrieve Eurydice and *the power that is out*. Persephone, Hades' wife, sympathizes. Sure, "the earth must die / But then the earth comes back to life," she reasons. "What does [Orpheus] care for the logic of kings? / The laws of your underworld? / It is only for love that he sings!" She compassions, "[h]e sings for the love of a girl."

Dying: The deal is dealt. Orpheus may lead Eurydice out of *Hadestown*, but only if he does not look back at her before they've ascended, once again, to the light of Earth. In Mitchell's version, the danger of this crossing is held in duet by Vernon and Mitchell in the apt-titled ballad, "Doubt Comes In." Once-confident Orpheus wavers:

Doubt comes in and all falls silent
It's as though you aren't there…

Doubt comes in
With tricky fingers
Doubt comes in
With fickle tongues

Doubt comes in and my heart falters
And forgets the songs it's sung

All the while Eurydice warms: "Orpheus / Hold on / Hold on tight

/ It won't be long / 'cause the darkest hour / Of the darkest night / Comes right before the dawn." How, like a platitude, do her sincere words weigh almost nothing as Orpheus "shiver[s] / Is it cold or fear? / Just keep singing / The coldest night / Of the coldest year / Comes right before the spring"?

The meaning of counterpart is clear, as serpent that subsumed Eurydice has a tail here eaten. Orpheus, despite talent and love, disorients to the point of his *own* failure. In the classical myth, the audience *sees* Orpheus look back toward his lover, after all, only to realize in horror how clearly the contract was seared with consequence. With this panicked turn, Eurydice retracts from their forward journey.

Coda: At the end of *Hadestown*, this tragic movement is enacted musically. By not describing the scene outright, singer-songwriter Mitchell makes waves for shock: It's the lyre, not the lyrics, that directs the loss—first into a crash of static, then into a mournful waltz. Eurydice and Persephone raise their cups to "Orpheus / Wherever he is now." And somewhere, in the poetic void between adrenalin and sorrow, the listener *hears*.

Tragedy highlights human frailty, whether in art or actuality. The Ouroboros of Eurydice's and Orpheus' shared defeat is a monocle through which other inextractables are peered. For example, the resurgence of this myth in the 21st century—via Mitchell's lucidity and indie folk camaraderie—returns to something very old and trailed off deep in time, as though a collective hunger for truth now hurls, open-fanged, through a refused era of domineering, unworkable lies toward the tail of its desire, the root it has grown from, in order to link that which remained disconnected in these two lovers—Orpheus and Eurydice—asphodels by every other name on the planet.

Who are you making the crossing for?:

As this creatured ring of timelessness gains ground upon its clasp, what layers of time might be peeled back? In *Hadestown*, labor and wealth are questioned as if the songbook were printed by the Wobblies, but Hades' "Wall" that "keeps out the enemy" is as near to millennial Arizona as segregation was to Birmingham in the 1960s. Whichever glass-wheeled frames you look through, eternal Hades, realm and ruler of mortality, comprises a tangle of "fate" and disempowerment, which puzzles both acceptance and uprising. As to the story of Eurydice and Orpheus, the

tension at the face of the unknown—be it your next supper or the future of life on Earth—can disintegrate even the most fiercely held loyalties and values, and either by magnitude of thought and sensation pulsing in a body.

The headphones wrap, the story yields. Like Mitchell and her fellow musicians, you take a tour of this land until you know, unseparate, the *power that is in*—

Da Capo, Con Anima.

KAZIM ALI,
BRIGHT FELON: AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND CITIES

WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2009

Reviewed by MEGHAN SCHARDT

I wrote the letters on my arm and my ankles. How the body pulls long to look for a poem.

Kazim Ali's *Bright Felon* is a trajectory across fourteen cities, one of which is "Home." His one-to two-line prose poems, about eleven lines per page, lay the road for us to run alongside him. He breaks his book into sections titled for each city, and his prose poems scream in monotone highways. As Ali negotiates the geography and movement of cities, he also fashions a map of the boundaries of sexuality on the terrain of the page.

Ali's poems feel like notations—half-thoughts and fleeting memory—and private welcomes to his journal. They do not always thread in traditional narrative fashion but weave in and out of one another to give the reader a sense of his layered history and its grief and sorrow, "thick in loneliness." While his body is present in these cities, his memories seem to guide him along; they are the motor of his movement. The experience of reading *Bright Felon* is like meditation, thoughts arising and passing by. Some settle with you.

Bright Felon traces Ali's struggle to open his *vishudha* chakra. This center, for purification and expression, creates avenues toward self-acceptance. In four consecutive one-line poems, Ali writes:

What have you ever done but wondered when you could go home.

When you can't go home because there is something you have not said.

When you say it you will not have a home any more.

And who will say it if you are not going to say it.

In his intimately private poems, Ali never discloses that he is a gay man. He welcomes the reader in, but such disclosure would be artificial. What is more important is that he keeps his sexuality at bay because to utter the words would be to make himself an exile. The repetition of these lines creates a paradox in which they perform an inevitable homelessness. This paradox is his opening, his pause.

"There is a body and a boy between you and utterance, the boy you were who could never speak." The written or vocal word of sex never appears, only the expression of love. "Late night phone conversations with Jason, sore from a day of running, or yoga, or kung fu, or dance, I would lie on the hardwood floor of the bathroom vestibule and talk with him." His lines are strict horizontal rows, like his thin body, itching for the movement and freedom of dance. Ali runs the roads of his words with a skinny form of self-harm. In "Marble Hill," he notes, "As if I ever existed" and "the streets do not remember the gone." Ali eats less as he tracks tar and asphalt to find a home that can't exist without the language he evades but at the same time would become impossible to inhabit if he found language. In this incommensurability, the self's home, the body, grows emaciated.

And yet, Ali writes the poems of his body, which he has abandoned in search for solace. "Only through art, not my own body, could I keep myself breathing." Apart from him, his body no longer breathes for breath's sake; it breathes art and for art's sake. He punishes himself, fleeing from his memory matter. "What did I know about the body until Sondra cradled my neck in her hands and whispered to me to breathe." He challenges the word, the language of an eating disorder, with constant line-movement.

Yet despite the violence of his aphasia, Ali writes love poems to his beloved, his cities, his culture, and his family and simultaneously writes the book of his shame, "Scripture or rupture you will never know." From "New York City," he says of his beloved, "I never expected to take such a long journey, though I always said, and always believed that there was something about the length of my life written into his skin." He does not forgive himself for his many loves, "The conflagration in the heart of a son who disappoints his parents." Each notation feels like a one-line love letter. "The memory of his hands, his tongue, his smile, his voice. I gave it all up willingly. Out of fear."

In *Bright Felon*, the bodily tissue is scattered among his pages and cities; Ali leaves the job of connection to the reader. Ali speaks of mismatching pronouns and what follows not being what follows, though he gracefully moves us from "As if utterance fit into the requirements of the human mouth" to "I learned how to find the new moon by looking for the circular absence of stars." Ali's truth, his moon, is found within the space, the absence, between his poems.

AMIRI BARAKA, *DIGGING: THE AFRO-AMERICAN SOUL OF AMERICAN CLASSICAL MUSIC*

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS, 2009

Reviewed by KYLE PIVARNIK

You might want to load up Pandora before you dive into Amiri Baraka's new book, *Digging: The Afro-American Soul of American Classical Music*, a collection of essays centered around the world of jazz and blues, extending into its industry, cultural perceptions, and politics. I suggest this for two reasons: either you've never heard these musicians through the intimate perspective of Baraka before, or if you have, it's high time you heard them again. Either way, you might be surprised by the synchronicities of a Miles Davis or John Coltrane playlist and Baraka's inside guide to the world of jazz, blues, and beyond.

Many of us might primarily associate Baraka with the world of poetry but to do so would be both an oversight to him and ourselves. Baraka was the founder of the Black Arts Movement (BAM) in 1965, the artistic arm of the Black Panthers Movement. During this time, Baraka sought ways to utilize black poetry and art as mechanisms for social change. Rather than seeking assimilation, the BAM's aesthetic was to strike a blow at the institutions that refused black culture or only admitted it on their terms. In his poem "Black Art," Baraka incites, "we want poems that kill." In the wake of Malcolm X's death, Baraka's militant stance was vital to the pulse of black contemporary culture. More recently, Baraka was named Poet Laureate of New Jersey, a title the state tried to take away from him after his controversial poem "Somebody Blew Up America" was cited as being anti-Israeli. However, despite Governor Jim McGreevey's attempts, Baraka remains in the position.

But through all this, Baraka has always maintained his ties with the musical world—from the time he was a "young bopper probably quite

nasty in [his] altogether ignorant pseudo-wisdomic dancing" to his works *Blues People: Negro Music in White America* (1963), *Black Music (1968),* and *The Music: Reflections on Jazz and Blues (1987)*. Baraka also heads up the word-music ensemble, *Blue Ark: The Word Ship*, and co-directs *Kimako's Blues People* in his basement theater. One thing is clear: Baraka both feeds into and is sustained by the world of music.

Digging, in some ways, is the continuation of the story begun in his 1963 book, *Blues People*, a previous collection of essays that traces slavery's influence on black music and black music's influence on white culture. Baraka writes, "*Blues People* is a beginning text. There is yet much work to be done ... Not only to further illuminate the obscured history but to bring all the voices, the contributors, the pioneers, the innovators, the unknown and little known facts and people, up front where they belong." And *Digging* does just that. Covering the twenty-year span of 1986-2006, Baraka fleshes out the ongoing saga of Afro-American music and its relationship to the people of the United States.

Key to this are the ideas of the *Djali* (the West African Gleeman, Town Laugher, "he who gets *down* in order to take us *up!*"); the history of the drum as a danger to imperialism, "replicating the first human instrument [it] keeps life, the sun, replicating itself inside us. Its beat. Night and day. In and out, the breath. Coming and Going, the everything"; and the dynamic between Afro-American music and its appropriation by the dominate white culture: from Blues to rock 'n' roll, Aretha Franklin to Barbra Streisand, and even Brer Rabbit to Bugs Bunny. Though this dichotomy between black culture and white appropriation has a continual presence throughout the book, as well it should, it is first and foremost the music that propels the book forward. Baraka writes: "One thing about Black People, we always got our music. It comes with us. To make a way in the front and the back, like colors on a map, our music is our path, it shows where we been, where we goin, and where we at."

Digging isn't the dry, reductive version of Afro-American music one might find in a Blues and Jazz 101 classroom. This is Baraka, as always, shooting from the hip and telling it how it is. Divided into three sections (Essays; Great Musicians; and Notes, Reviews, and Observations), the book often feels like a personal tour of Baraka's bookshelf. In fact, it's not hard to imagine one of these essays coming out as a conversation in his living room with a record on the turntable. His continual presence of

sharp observations, rare insights, and the familiar interjections of "digs," "dudes," and other slang keep the text authentic, and it's clear that Baraka has a personal investment in the subject matter. Balancing thorough history, personal anecdote, and a casual tone is not an easy task. Many writers would fail to achieve such integration, coming off as forced or patronizing. Baraka writes not from the position of seasoned researcher but a veteran of the life. When Baraka writes about the "feeling" and "spirit" that propels Afro-music forward, when he addresses the Black aesthetic, and when he deplores the domination of these scenes by whites, there's a perspective and tonality that only comes from first-hand experience.

But for all that, Baraka's book is not an easy one to read. In many ways, it demands a certain amount of awareness or knowledge about these subjects; *Digging* is not a book that meets you where you are, but that you must rise to meet. For those too young to have been engaged with this music, let alone heard it when the artist was still alive, it's a fast-paced education that requires a certain grit and endurance. Yet, there's a timeless quality to these essays, and the links between white cultures' long consumption of jazz is easily adapted to the more recent commodification of hip hop and rap, and it's easy enough to see how little things have changed.

Baraka's essay, in some ways, promotes a "those in the know" attitude, an "us vs. them" mentality that left me wondering just *who* was allowed in the conversation. As a young, white male, I found myself questioning my role as reader. At first, I felt that these essays weren't for me, and in many ways they're not. This collection speaks to an older generation that fought for social equality decades before I was even conceived. There is, in fact, an in-the-know audience that this book is aimed toward. An audience that hears Davis and Coltrane ringing in their ears and feels the wounds of loss from previous decades. But that's not to say that people like me *can't* be included in the discussion. In fact, I think Baraka would state it's important that we are. The consumption of black culture is a core concept of the collection, and this consumption is true now more than ever. Baraka rallies against the critiquing of black art by white critics and white artists getting rich off of black styles. That the origins of American music have been glossed over by corporate elitism. Yet, even though the line between appreciation and appropriation has been

significantly blurred, in the end, *Digging* serves to remind all of us where our culture comes from.

It's tempting to compare *Digging* to the liner notes of the last twenty years, but it's more than that. This collection functions like the music it focuses on, in that both are byproducts of a society continually moving forward and inextricably linked to its past. *Digging* offers a necessary link to contemporary culture's roots, reminding us that this music, the music of the United States, comes from a specific and important lineage. While Baraka wants us to never forget this aspect, I think the book also, to some degree, bookends the time periods discussed in it. But with Baraka's sharp observations ringing in our ears, just maybe we'll be able to look at our present and figure out what's *really* going on. After all, with music as "our path, [that] shows where we been, where we goin, and where we at," at least we'll never be alone.

RENEE GLADMAN, *EVENT FACTORY* AND BARBARA COMYNS, *WHO WAS CHANGED AND WHO WAS DEAD*

DOROTHY, 2010

Reviewed by J'LYN CHAPMAN

In *On Literature*, J. Hillis Miller writes that all imaginative works are in nature experimental, hypothetical. The best books know this and are able to negotiate their resemblances and speculations in such a way that they enrapture; they draw us "forcibly" out of ourselves into another realm. Dorothy, a publishing project is a new press with Danielle Dutton, the author of *Attempts at a Life* and, more recently, *Sprawl,* as its editor. The press's premier titles, Renee Gladman's *Event Factory*, the first book in a trilogy, and Barbara Comyns' *Who Was Changed and Who Was Dead*, a reissue originally published in 1954, build perspectives and worlds that are so totally funny and complex that to get a sense of the Dorothy aesthetic, simply let these books enrapture you.

The press's name is borrowed from Dutton's great aunt, a librarian and book-mobile driver, and also a philosophy—"how [. . .] books might fit together and collectively become a 'project'." The press is home to fiction, or something like fiction, mostly by women writers, and its language usefully strays from terms like "experimental" or "provocative" and instead relies on the simplicity of books that "are uniquely themselves." Both titles are lovely, compact, and carefully designed by Dutton, who also designs books for Dalkey Archive Press. And similar to the philosophy behind Dalkey's catalog, Dutton has made a home for two books that would likely not be chosen by a commercial publishing house: a reprint of a forgotten novel and the first book in a trilogy. Watch for what this project will unearth or incubate next.

Gladman's *Event Factory* can be read as a book about reading, or, at least, a book about sentences: if narrative is a sequence of events, then this book is an "event factory." But an event needs space, and, on one

hand, that is a sentence, and, on the other, that is a body, reflected in the epigraph from Samuel Beckett. The novel is told in first-person, from the point of view of a visitor to Ravicka, a city that is "a greener yellow at the start of day but every moment growing golden." The narrator, who fluently speaks Ravic, is in Ravicka because "the plane [she] was on had landed and not yet taken off." Indirectly, at least, her purpose is to discover why she has come in the first place, which develops, accidentally, into saving Ravicka. But to do so, she must manage the language, which is largely gestural:

> If only traveling were about showing off your language skills, if only it did not also demand a certain commitment of body communication, of outright singing or dancing—I think I would be absolutely global by now.

Every perfunctory interaction in Ravicka has a kind of formality: "'Hello?' I turned back to her, now gazing out her own window. 'Hello,' I said. 'Hello,' I continued. 'Hola,' I said. And felt giddy. 'Hello'." Communication moves from stilted interaction, to instant and uncertain sensuality. It's not clear if this is because Ravic is formal or because the speaker is entrenched in the labors of translation—forming desire into a gymnastic language.

The inevitable estrangement of travel is pronounced by language maneuvers, yet the reference to Bhanu Kapil's *The Vertical Interrogation of Strangers,* the speaker passively allowing herself to become "inswept" in events and experiences, and the fact of her loneliness and hunger suggest the deeper implications of dislocation. That is, at the threshold of travel, the tourist becomes exile, as when the speaker says

> I walked until I was ensconced in darkness. Then I began to shout. I wanted a friend more than anything. I was beside myself.

Four years ago, it was Danielle Dutton who brought to my attention this odd phrase, "I was beside myself." She recognized in the grammar how distress leads to a perceived bifurcation. I would add that in most instances when the self is split in such a way, it's the other self, the

weirdo-self that is being observed. But in this phrase, "beside myself," the speaker is the weirdo, pulled from the self she recognizes.

Such an image teases out the relationship between exile—a forced or voluntary absence from one's home—and the body, according to Beckett, vanishing in the "havoc of its images." I suppose the common denominator is hewing, or, even, absence, which is an event as much as it is an experience. The linguistic tourist cannot sit in a sentence without having that event played out on her body. In spring 2011, Dorothy will release Gladman's *The Ravickians*. Based on the title and the linguistic attention of *Event Factory*, I would guess that the next installment will take on an "anthropological purpose."

Dorothy's second offering is a reprint of British writer, Barbara Comyns' *Who Was Changed and Who Was Dead,* a novel and writer previously unknown to me but evidently salacious enough to be banned in Ireland when it was first released. The novel's immediate offering is a kind of preciousness—the "wonderful new world," engendered from a flood powerful enough to force open the Willoweed family's drawing-room windows, invites ducks to swim through the windows and swans to excavate the water-world with their long necks. But like Yelena Bryksenkova's art on the cover of the book, this preciousness is a bit wonky. In fact, it becomes terrifying almost as immediately as it is cute.

The narrator's straightforward and easy omniscience about terrible facts delays the satisfaction of holding this darling world dear; it is a world where kittens, peacocks, children, and small old men die rather brutally. Take the following from the second page:

> The girls...laughed as they chased a floating basket filled with eggs. Their laughter changed to screeches when a huge, crying shadow passed the window; but it was only the last of the peacocks flying from a tree to the coalshed roof. The other three peacocks had been drowned in the night, and their bodies were floating sadly round the garden; but no one knew this yet...

This flirting pattern—drawing the reader into a sweet scene and then making everyone feel disturbed—is the steady rhythm of this novel, but

in Comyns' intricate world, it is delicious to expect that you will not have your expectations met.

The narrator's ease reads like cynicism toward the exaggerated characters, with the important exception of the Willoweed children, as Brian Evenson mentions in his introduction to the novel. It is not that the narrator treats the children more graciously than she treats the adults; it is just that the children may not be as pathetic as the adults. Even so, in moments with the children that the reader wants to settle on as innocent, Comyns aborts the building sentimentality. For instance, the grounds man, Old Ives, seems to console the youngest child, Dennis, with a "little puss," but, actually, that puss is dead, "the ginger fur had come away from its tail and the bone was exposed." Fortunately, Dennis turns away before he can receive Ives' offering, but here the reader is left with a dead cat.

In general, even that which is sinister can become hammy, but the brutality in Comyns' novel is tempered by a strange and tenuous sincerity; the novel's violence and tenderness are equally grave when the people of Warwickshire seek a scapegoat for the mysterious illness ravaging the town as well as when the eldest Willoweed, Emma, takes full responsibility for caring for her brother during one of the more horrifying events in the story. Importantly, however, these examples should not suggest that the novel takes itself too seriously. Its dark humor is manifest in the tidy endings for some characters and the unfairly messy endings for others.

CONTRIBUTORS

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AMIRI BARAKA's latest book is *Digging: the Afro American Soul of American Classical Music*, reviewed in this issue. Baraka is the author of dozens of volumes of poetry, essays, fiction, music criticism, and plays. He was a founder of the Black Arts Movement, publisher of Totem Press, and editor of the now legendary journal *Yugen*. Baraka has been at the forefront of poetic and political activism since the 1950s. A longtime critic of Buddhism from a Marxist perspective, he has been a guest poet at Naropa University since its beginnings.

CLIFFORD BURKE, letterpress printer, poet, graphic artist. Burke was one of the luminaries of a second wave of San Francisco Renaissance artists, working with the Diggers, Zephyrus Image, and other political and poetic interventionist groups of the 1960s and 1970s. He is particularly known for his fine press-work of writings by Philip Whalen, William Everson, Jaime de Angulo, and many others, often under his Cranium Press imprint. He currently lives outside Santa Fe where he operates Desert Rose Press.

Regarding **JUNIOR BURKE**'s body of work, Paul Zollo, the foremost author/critic on contemporary songwriting, has written: "Like all great songs, they're timeless." For Bombay Gin, Burke has offered the Rimbaud-inspired *White Men Landing,* composed in 1975, published here for the first time, and recently recorded by guitarist/performer, Janet Feder.

REED BYE's most recent book is *Join the Planets: New and Selected Poems* (United Artists Books 2005). He is currently working on a critical study of the prosody of Gertrude Stein, Ezra Pound, and William Carlos Williams, editing a new book of

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MARTIN COBIN is 90 years old and became a serious writer of poetry after he retired. Martin attended the Naropa four-week Summer Writing Program in 2001 and 2010.

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JAIME DE ANGULO (1872-1950) is a West Coast counterculture hero. Anthropologist, linguist, poet, novelist, his finest works were studies of Native California Indian cultures. In the final years of his life he recorded 100 sessions for Pacific Radio, *Old Time Stories*, which are the basis for *Indian Tales*, a book that has been continuously in print since 1953. He developed his own methods of transcribing music—both California Indian songs and his own—which were first published by Peter Garland's Sounding Press. Several transcriptions are republished here by permission.

ANI DIFRANCO has written hundreds of songs, but nothing she's done in her 18-year career has garnered more attention than a business decision. Since she

bucked the major label system in the early 90s, opting to release her music on her own terms, the self-described Little Folksinger has been the subject of all kinds of hyperbole. As important as Righteous Babe Records is to the singer/songwriter/guitarist, she's more than happy to trust like-minded people with the business and revel in the complete artistic freedom it provides. On her new album, *Red Letter Year*, she takes more advantage of this freedom than ever before. Conceived, sculpted and refined over the course of two years, the album is an impeccably crafted, multi-layered sonic achievement.

SUZANNE DULANY, is a poet, visual artist, and environmental activist with roots in Austin, Texas. A graduate of the Jack Kerouac School at Naropa University, she currently teaches at Rocky Mountain College of Art & Design, in Denver. Creator of the blog, Humans for Wolves, she collects poetry, prose, and art in support of re-establishing healthy wolf populations in the continental U.S. Her work has been published in *Monkey Puzzle* and *Bombay Gin*.

KRISTIN DYKSTRA is a coeditor of *Mandorla: New Writing from the Americas*, the bilingual (Spanish and English) journal, with Roberto Tejada and Gabriel Bernal Granados. She has published bilingual editions of the poetry of Reina María Rodríguez and Omar Pérez, including the recent *Did You Hear About the Fighting Cat?* by Pérez from Shearsman Books. She teaches at Illinois State University.

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THE FUGS, one of the few underground rock bands to have emerged in the 1960s that continues into the present. They represent a confluence of folk influences, literary wisdom, political outrageousness, and Lower East Side survival techniques. Original members include Ed Sanders and the late Tuli Kupferberg, and current membership includes Steven Taylor. See www.thefugs.com for history, current projects, photos, archives, and documentary material.

ROSS GAY's books of poems include *Against Which* (CavanKerry Press, 2006) and *Bringing the Shovel Down* (University of Pittsburgh Press, forthcoming January 2011). Gay received his MFA in poetry from Sarah Lawrence College, and his PhD in American Literature from Temple University. He teaches in the low-residency MFA program in poetry at Drew University, and in Indiana University's English department.

ALLEN GINSBERG (1926-1997) was co-founder of The Jack Kerouac School and author of *Howl & Other Poems*, perhaps the most influential volume of poetry in North American history. His many pieces set to music include William Blake's *Songs of Innocence & Experience* and his own early volume *First Blues* from which "Broken Bone Blues" is reprinted by permission of the Allen Ginsberg Estate.

BRENDA HILLMAN is the author of eight collections of poetry, the most recent of which are *Cascadia* (2001), *Pieces of Air in the Epic* (2005), and *Practical Water* (2009). She is Olivia Filippi Professor of Poetry at St. Mary's College of California and works with CodePink, a women-initiated social justice group.

JANE HIRSHFIELD's seventh poetry collection, *Come, Thief,* will be published in August 2011 by Knopf. Her most recent book, *After,* was named a "best book of 2006" by *The Washington Post, The San Francisco Chronicle,* and England's *Financial Times.* Other honors include fellowships from the Guggenheim and Rockefeller foundations, the NEA, and the Academy of American Poets. Hirshfield has received the Poetry Center Book Award. She lives in the San Francisco Bay Area.

ANSELM HOLLO, born in Helsinki, has lived in England and the United States for most of his adult life. He has been faculty at the Jack Kerouac School since the late 1980s. He is a poet and translator of poetry, novels, and journalism from numerous languages, including his native Finnish, German, Russian, classical Greek, and French. Recent titles include *Notes on the Possibilities and Attractions of Existence: Selected poems 1965-2000* and a volume of essays, *Caws and Causeries* from La Alameda Press.

SHANE JONES is the author of *Light Boxes* (Penguin 2010), *The Failure Six* (Fugue State 2009), and *A Cake Appeared* (Scrambler 2010). He lives in New York.

STEPHEN GRAHAM JONES' two current books are the bunny-headed zombie novel *It Came from Del Rio* and the horror story collection The *Ones That Got Away*. Other books include *Demon Theory* and *The Long Trial of Nolan Dugatti*. Jones teaches in the MFA program at CU Boulder and has taught at Naropa's Summer Writing Program.

STEVE LACY (1934-2004) was an innovative jazz musician with international reputation. Early in his career he performed with Thelonius Monk's band, then spent decades innovating and performing with his own bands. His chosen instrument was the soprano saxophone, and his sextet from the 1970s through the 1990s featured his wife, vocalist Irene Aebi. He visited the Kerouac School a number of times, performing with musicians and poets.

GREIL MARCUS is an American author, music journalist, and cultural critic. He is known for writing scholarly and literary essays that place rock music in the realm of culture and politics. He has been a rock critic and columnist for *Rolling Stone*, *Creem*, *The Village Voice*, and *Artforum*. Marcus is the author of *The Old, Weird America*, *Lipstick Traces*, *The Shape of Things to Come: Prophecy in the American Voice*, and most recently, *Bob Dylan by Greil Marcus: Writings 1968-2010*.

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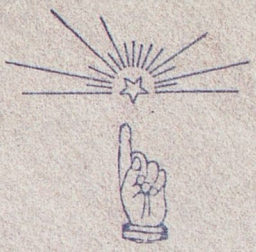

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ANTHOLOGY OF AMERICAN FOLK MUSIC

AMIRI BARAKA
JAIME DE ANGULO
ANI DIFRANCO
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