

THE CONTENT OF HISTORY WILL BE POETRY

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*I do go in circles, in fact [I] believe that only if one does does one finally
suck up the vertu in anything.*

- Charles Olson

During the last few weeks I've swerved from here to there within Olson's *The Special View of History*. Find out for yourself Find out for yourself Find out Find out for yourself Find out for yourself for yourself for yourself Find out for yourself Find out for yourself Find out find out Find out yourself Yourself yourself Find yourself Where ever you are Where ever you are.

If it's true as the tantrics believe that "sound, as a vibration of undifferentiated intelligence, is the catalyst that sets into motion the unfolding of the manifest cosmos" then most certainly as poets we are participating in the creation and destruction with every word we write and speak. Olson lectures to his classes at Black Mountain: "Suddenly, kosmos is history," is "mythology" is "inside a human being" is "personal experience" is "discrete and continuous" "and . . . each one of us, a conceivable creator." It's easy enough. With all the circles and multiples, we just "lean in a direction which produces a result which is called success."

We begin leaning through our breath, in our body, in our place. Olson writes in "Projective Verse." "If he stays inside himself, if he is contained within his nature as he is participant in the larger force, he will be able to listen, and his hearing through himself will give him secrets objects share." Participant in the larger force. Participant in the larger field. Participant with the secrets objects share. Here I begin thinking of the Yoga Sutras, the Gita, the Upanishads. Stillness. Witness. Presence. Breathing as part of the whole breathing. Poetry as mythology as history as the story of the "I" in the larger field.

Olson had no need for the armor of a unitary, diachronic, rational history. We poets are historians. "Then he, if he chooses to speak from these roots, works in that area where nature has given him size, projective size." Whitman size. Maximus mythic Olson. If we begin here, Olson implies, many changes will occur in the poem and in the lived life. Robert Duncan in the introduction of *The Special View*: "I don't mean he wanted things to happen in his classes. He wanted things to happen in them spiritually. . . Charles wanted to produce a new and redeemed man. This is actually Charles' alchemy." That's clear when I re-read his essays. Even though Olson didn't wear zen loafers or formally practice yoga, he was a-leaning-into yogi-zen-poet teacher.

In "Human Universe" Olson talks about the losses we have experienced because we live in a "generalizing time" and are fastened too tightly to Western logic, classification and description. Like Fenollosa and Pound, he directs us "back to hieroglyphs or to ideograms to right the balance." As if we can unwind the narrative of our language and thinking, getting back as close as possible to the actual factual mythological presence. "If there is any absolute," he writes, "it is never more than this one, you, this instant, in action." In this place. Right here. The sound of the refrigerator, the padded clicking of the keyboard, the sound of the announcer for the Wildcat's football game.

I take a break and bike through the University of Arizona campus, a maze of beer tents, semi-

trucks, marching bands and cheerleaders. Today it's a little bit like a war rally or a republican convention without demonstrators and riot police. "I cannot begin to indicate what history is," Olson writes, "if the dimension of fact as the place of the cluster of belief isn't understood to be the heart of it." The sun glistening on the windows of the optical science building. I'm coasting under a banner inviting students to the Tohono O'odham casino on Nogales Highway. The Tucson mountains up ahead. Keep moving and circling away and back into the sound of men crashing against each other. Bulls and chariots.

In *The Special View* Olson takes us on a journey through Western logic and then he rolls it all together—Aristotle, Plato, Hegel—and sends them out to sea. We are left with THE ONE forever in motion and our own possibilities of living our art and living our history in our lives and our art, "If you stick to the other position." "I am alive, I am doing this, this is such and such . . . [the error of the ideal. . . the error of the real. . . the old history]. You'll be merely a vertical which is a digit, and whether you like it or not, ultimately barren and objectionable."

I get off the bike and walk through the crowd, a newcomer from Detroit and New York City. The nomadic Apache were new here in the 17th century, the Spaniards too, then the gold miners, the health seekers and so on. Constantly on the move, seeking, conquering, creating, destroying. I inhale thought back into my body, breathing the same air as the cheerleaders and the fighter planes passing overhead. Artemis with her arrows. No, Mother Kali with her tongues of fire and her unruly hair. The \$4 million Predator war planes can easily be broken down and transported around the world. Broken down. Broken down. Break 'em down. Bring 'em down.

By history I mean to know, to really know. The rhyme is still 'mystery'. We can't stand it. Nothing must be left undone. We have to run up against the wall. There is nothing which happens to us which we don't have the right to know what the ___ ___ goes on. Even to know that which one can't know.

The problem is that we are separated from that which is in fact the most familiar. The loosening of the old place. Get closer. Allow for the unknown uncertain. History without straining toward fact and reason. One perception after another. Break apart the diachronic this, and then that, and then that. The top of a large volcano detaches and slides over about twenty miles southwest of here, making a new mountain range and then this valley appears. A valley is a good place, too, for a fort or a presidio. One can see the Apache for miles in all directions. Legendary strength and resistance. Mythic power and vengeance. Poverty, despair and a desire to live. Two fighter jets zoom overhead heading back to Davis-Monthan Air Force base.

Before the university was built in the late 1800's, this land was most likely just a scruffy desert field. No water so no native villages. Mostly prickly pear and creosote. A mountain view of a cluster of buildings the same shade as the ground and then off in the distance Old Main and the orphanage. Professor Forbes took the mule trolley out to the university for his new job and then he got out with his suitcase, he smacked the mule on his ass and sent the trolley back to town. Then came the USA, 48th, money, the railroad and the car, roads, highways, airports, military contracts, snowbirds, traffic jams and real estate deals.

"They say there is a gold mountain not far to the southwest."

Olson redefines history with a silent "h": I + story. Be in the energy of the lived life, the present, the possible. Inquire, look, seek, re-enact. "One does also want to know what did happen, I mean now. Or just five minutes ago. Or right now as it is happening . . . HIMagination . . . By history I mean to know, to really know." The student union is 405,000 square feet with 14 restaurants. I squeeze in a corner with a croissant and a tea. Olson writes, "Spectatorism crowds out participation as the condition of culture."

Ra ra ra. We love our school. Do you know how many people are out here? How exciting it is. The energy level so high. Whose gonna win? U of A where the women are hotter, the weather is better and the beer is colder. Localism. Nationalism. And I'm a spectator, too. I watch you watch them.

With a pair of cotton gloves, I look through some photographs of old Tucson. Huts and squat adobe buildings with barefoot dark skinned people. Near the Presidio, some big Spanish style houses. In one a lady in a long dress is sitting on the porch in the shade with her face hidden under the brim of her hat and the shelter of the porch. She looks away from the camera.

Coasting through Sam Hughes, where I live, I wonder, who was Sam? A name on a school and a sign in a neighborhood. . . . Back to the Historical Society library, out to Fort Lowell. . . A self-educated man. A gold rush merchant, Welsh immigrant, father of fifteen. Worked in a cotton factory, on a dairy farm, on a steam boat, in a bakery, as a cook on a wagon train, in a hotel making gingerbread and pies, struck it rich in California, traded his harness for some grains, made money hand over fist, came into Tucson with TB before the railroad arrived. A hard working free enterpriser arrives at the walled-in-town, an outpost set up to guard against the nomadic-unwilling-to-give-up Apache and after some years he helped start the first public school.

At Norton and Hawthorne Streets, I unlock my bike from a fence and then I hear an odd chirping sound. A complaint. A cry. I look up and on the top of the telephone pole, a falcon is holding a little sparrow like bird in his claws and he's pecking away, pulling out its feathers and tossing them down, digging into its breast.

One day, Hughes' wife, Atanacia Santa Cruz, was sitting on their porch on Main Street doing needlework when an Apache came by and asked for the needlework. She gave it to him because she was afraid. It was a violent time, says the historian. Then the next day the Apache came back and gave her a turkey. She never left town because she was afraid. Married at twelve, she lived to eighty-four. Now on the spot where their house stood, there's a row of garden apartments.

The Florence Tribune, 1894: "Since the white men came and built the big canals and acequias, we have no water for our crops . . . my wife and children were hungry and I must steal or they must starve. . . Do with me what you will. I have spoken." The O'odham farmer looks away from the Judge.

A death here and there, a horse stolen, a wagon held up, cattle stolen, an Apache with a gold tooth. There's a meeting in Tucson and Sam Hughes, Adjutant General of the Territory of Arizona, provides the arms and ammunition for a mob that then takes care of what they think is a problem out at Camp Grant near Aravaipa Creek. In 1871 in the first light of morning on the sabbath, creeping over the ridge, they kill over 100 sleeping women, children and elders, ravishing and mutilating. "People started crying and the children were howling." Twenty-eight children taken into captivity, slavery and servitude. Good bike paths and an arc of palm trees leading into and through the university. *I live in Sam Hughes*. Good for real estate value, too. At home on the tv, news of mass killings in Iraq and Afghanistan, terrorism and torture, news of a hurricane, news about the football game, news about Sarah Palin. *She's just like us*, a student says, winking at me. We pack our guns. Murder for murder. Exterminate. Like nests of rattlesnakes. Rape for rape. War to end war. Don't look forward or back. Torture to end terrorism. The British celebrated the fall of Rome with mob football. To get out of hand. The Wildcats made it a 34-9 game just five seconds into the final quarter, holding the Toledo rockets sacked, fumbled, intercepted, passing time . . .

"My hobby was to make a town," Sam said when he was an old man. He was known for his fondness for children. "Those were the dark days. . . We had to fight it out."

Lieutenant Whitman: "I found quite a number of women shot while asleep beside their bundles of hay, which they had collected to bring in on that morning." Captain William Kness: "They were industrious, the women particularly." Acting Assistant Surgeon for the US Army, C.B. Briesly: "The best-looking of the squaws were lying in such a position, and from the appearance of the genital organs and of their wounds, there can be no doubt that they were ravished and then shot." Nineteen minutes of deliberation. Not guilty. Not guilty. Mayor. Alderman. Adjutant General.

At Campbell and River, I'm about to make a left. There's a traffic jam with cars backed up all the way to Speedway. I look up and a man is standing in the median. He's about my age with gray hair and a band around his forehead, wearing an old pair of levis and a plaid shirt. He's holding a cup and a sign "Native American." I look at him and we make eye contact. Then he moves down the median and away from my eyes.

Olson: "I see man's greatest achievement in this childish accomplishment—that he damn well can, and does, destroy, destroy, destroy energy every day."

Stjuk-shon, at the foot of the dark mountain a spring and an O'odham village. The Santa Cruz used to flow year round. Now Tucson spreads out across the desert under the ever-present 350 days of sunlight. Just a two-day ride by horse to Camp Grant and Aravaipa Creek. Persistent drought. The water table steadily dropping. But nonetheless let's excavate in the Santa Ritas, let's build a pit copper mine and send a pipeline of water there. Pollution. Money. Money. Millions of gallons. Let's print an extra 700 billion trillion dollars and give it directly to Blackwater so they can carry on the great work of our frontier men.

Colonization: "The spreading of a species into a new habitat."

I bike between the mountains. The clean dry desert air. The sound of a siren. I like living here. At the poetry center we talk about memory and *écriture féminine*. Then I drive over to Trader Joe's for groceries. A few miles from the roaming mountain lions and rattlesnakes and the city is like most other cities in America, one strip mall after another. In the valley between the mountains the ghosts of the Aravaipa women wander, carrying bundles of hay to trade for calico and food. Prisoners of war. Collateral damage. Creosote. Mesquite. Cholla. Prickly Pear. Saguaro. Take First Avenue up through the foothills, past the houses with their desert gardens, climb up the path at dusk and look out over the valley at the twinkling electric lights. The moon as round and present as it was one hundred and thirty years ago. Close your eyes and listen to horses and footsteps and a baby whimpering. "Tell it. Tell it. Tell it."

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well known to almost every member of the Society of Arizona Pioneers" (207).]

Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonh. (Oral Histories) "Sally Ewing Dosela", "Old Lahn", and "Bi Ja Gush Kai Ye." Reprinted in "Western Apache Oral Histories and Traditions of the Camp Grant Massacre." The American Indian Quarterly 27.3, 2003. [Bi Ja Gush Kai Ye was one of the few women to escape.]

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