

The Origin of Species and Other Poems

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The cosmos is natural selection
and some chance
(there'd be no evolution
if everything were chance
or if there were no chance)

We are so alike
variations on the same theme
our head is from the worm
or "we are all modified sharks"
the digestive process of an elephant
identical to that of a bacteria
the teeth with which I eat a lobster
are like those of the lobster

Insect bird reptile lily Einstein
since every transition is slow
every species appears without transition
but the whole of life is a single life
and in it there is a single Incarnation

The same DNA in common
with all the animals
and our hands and feet
of amphibious fish and reptile
all emerged from the Big Bang
cosmos not finished yet
and every day is the Big Bang
the creation-evolution continues
traveling further and further away from nothing

a handful of cells go towards
being a bird that flies

Darwin in the 600 pages
of *The Origin of Species*
speaks of the modifications
of species not the origin
the origin is a mystery
that of the tiny fragile life
in the immensity of dead worlds

Does a special species with
a special destiny exist?

Destiny that is God-evolution
a God who abandoned eternity
and has entered time
and is future?

The infinite future called God
a God who is the God of novelty
the infinite novelty of evolution
evolution against the status quo
that bankers desire so much

Life emerged on land
and began to walk
slippery fish
leaning on fins
like crutches
from the aquatic limit
to the limitless air
when a well dries
it survives
walking to another well
and the fins became paws

The great mystery of life
all sharing the same origin
and that such different bodies
should come from a single cell
all species relatives
from orchids to earthworms
bacteria gradually dinosaurs
then the dinosaur became bird
also our mollusk ancestor
There is only one animal

Evolution unites us all
the living and the dead
Darwin discovered it
(that we come from a single cell)
that is we are interlinked
if one rises from the dead
we all rise from the dead

GAZING AT THE STARS WITH MARTÍ

The moon like a rugby ball.

At 8 a.m. over the Alps.

All that You touch is so beautiful!

What does the earth look like from the moon?

The astronaut replied:—"Fragile."

Neither can you see any division of nations.

And the sun: its white light in the black sky.

From purely chemical reactions

intelligent life here transpired.

Could there be others like this on other planets? With bodies?

Where might evolution have already taken them?

Some could be merely interstellar cloud.

Or intelligent beings composed only of radiation.

Which in our lexis we might call angels.

We're not thinking of Hollywood films.

The meeting would be another step in evolution.

Extraterrestrials and terrestrials.

Then it wouldn't be change but transformation.

After the meeting nothing but a case of working together.

Children from the same womb of the Big Bang.

<SB>

<P>Three hundred light years away?

Three thousand light years?

The "conversation" is not easy.

The most powerful transmission

would be a faint murmur across the Galaxy.

Hoping they'll be merciful with us.

Although still no signs of civilization in the neighborhood.

But Lucretius had already thought:

other earths must exist in the heavens with people and animals.

Why not? Billions of human planets in the Galaxy

In the USSR it was Leninist dogma.

What impact on our art?

What would another intelligent species be like?

Dyson fears a technology run amok.

And what if all the universe's extraterrestrials, us included,

are trying to build a better universe,

a new universe?

The formula is:

All united but each one is one.

And according to Bohm

all things touch,

all connected with all

and all is instantaneous.

The separation is apparent.

This is the most important gift

of quantum physics, almost
like a science fiction story.
There are no separate particles
says Bohm.
Science fiction taken seriously.

A child on deck gazing at the stars
and sitting beside him Jose Martí.
Later, in his nineties, he recorded Martí's words
for Cintio Vitier.
"Do you think it was made for us to contemplate it
briefly? Don't you think
my boy, that there has to be something greater than us?
Do you realize
what it represents and that we down here
we're part of it?
Well just so as you know that it wasn't made to amuse us
and we have obligations towards what's been created."

Now Wheeler asks
what use is a universe without consciousness of that universe.
And adds that the universe is so big
because it couldn't be any other way.
And Barrow:
Our existence is the cause of the universe's structure.
That's very mysterious physics.
That physical conditions could produce man, fine.
But that man could produce the physical conditions
so he could appear later in the future?

The universe had to create observers of itself."

A child on deck gazing at the stars
and sitting beside him Jose Martí.

TRAVELING ON A BUS THROUGH THE UNITED STATES

Many years ago from a bus in Virginia or Alabama

I saw

a pink girl, in blue pants

standing on a ladder, picking apples

(her mother calling her from inside)

and another girl, her sister, blue pants

painting the porch of the house white

—And they gazed at the bus as it went by and accelerated.

Time has gone by like the Greyhound bus

but they've remained, despite the years, the paint

fresh on the porch

the brush dripping

the hand on the apple, their gazes

many years ago, one morning, Virginia or Alabama

forget which state.

ON THE BANKS OF THE OHIO IN KENTUCKY

Kentucky is a second paradise, said Daniel Boone.
He went in search of Kentucky traveling out west,
and from a hilltop he saw the plains of Kentucky,
the buffalo grazing as on cattle farms
and the silent Ohio through the broad flatlands
bordering Kentucky . . .

(and which now smells of phenol).

Forest Grove Prairie Village Park Forest Deer Park
frontier names!
are now the names of suburban condominiums.

Buses cross the prairies where the buffalo roamed.

Where the pioneer of the frontier once camped
as he migrated in a canoe towards the Missouri river
with his carbine and tomahawk and his beaver traps,
following the beavers
the sound of lawnmowers now resounds,
the tinkle of highballs, laughter, the raucous radio,
shouts from the games of croquet and volleyball
and the dull thud of the baseball in the glove.
From an open window a hi-fi blares
and, with the smell of barbecued meats, wafts in the night.

All was still . . .

—writes Daniel Boone—

I lit a fire by a spring
To roast the loin of a deer I'd killed.
The wolves howled all night long . . .

And now all the sewers spew industrial waste,
chemical substances into the Ohio.
Household detergents have killed the fish
and the Ohio smells of phenol . . .

THE EAGLE

I saw the Bald Eagle, the American Eagle,
in the heart of Oregon. Immense prairies of sage grass
that only the buffalo can digest, not cattle,
Which is why they are deserted.

Neither buffalo nor Indians.

In the distance the mesas as though machine-cut.
In the rickety pickup with Alberto, an ornithologist,
we watched as it attacked a Peregrine in flight
that dropped what it was carrying, "maybe mouse or something."
Down it swooped to where the food had fallen.
Looking from side to side, its breast puffed out, shoulders hunched,
sharp profile, ferocious
just as it is on the coin,
and rapidly it flew off with what it had stolen from the poor Peregrine.
The American Eagle

THE PLACE CALLED “HARMONY”

He was traveling slowly in case he got there too early
and she was traveling fast because she was going to be late.

He was traveling along one highway and she along another
and the two cars collided at the intersection
of the two highways (the place called “Harmony”).

The police said the probability of an accident was
“a million to one,”
because the two highways were very wide at that spot
and the drivers of the two vehicles
had to have seen each other perfectly
“unless the two of them had been distracted
thinking about the place they were both heading . . .”

But the police didn’t know that he and she had made a date
and that the two cars that collided were heading for the same place.
The coincidence was greater than the police knew:
Neither one in a million nor one in a billion
but one in an infinity of probabilities
or rather there was no coincidence or probability
and what happened couldn’t have been any other way:
he and she had made a date
and they’d synchronized their watches
and they were too punctual on the date.

That is all.

APALKA

Only in summer, in the brief summer, is it accessible.
Descending the river Coco from the last Miskito settlement
downstream about five marine miles to the left
a narrow river emerges called the Caño de Apalka.
If you ascend this river they say you reach a lagoon
and then another lagoon
and then the mysterious lagoon of Apalka.
(You arrive at an endless plain, full of colors
orchids and toucans, like in the cinema or in some dream
and in the middle of this plain: a lagoon.)
Voices apparently of people are heard on its edges
and right in the center of the deep waters.
According to what the oldest Indians tell
who heard the elders of their tribe tell
many many years ago
pirates ascended the Patuca river
and entered via a secret stream to the final lagoon
to divide their booty in this hideaway
and they fought over the booty and all perished.
You can still see, or can maybe see, the masts and rigging
tangled beneath lianas and reeds
and between rotten trunks, indistinguishable from the trunks
the rotten hulls, a jumble, surrounded by water lilies.
The Indians of the Coco never venture into the mysterious lagoon
afraid of the voices that are heard on its edges.
since the spirits of the dastardly souls still watch over the booty
and are fighting still
and you hear the cries (like toucans) and gunshots
and at night you hear the dragging of chains, like raising anchors.
Sometimes the thrash of an alligator
fighting with another alligator . . .
The occasional fin cutting the calm waters of the lagoon:
a shark that entered like the pirates through the Pituca
or perhaps a swordfish.
When the wet season arrives the Apalka lagoon is no more
and the plain is no more
there's just a lake as far as the horizon
obliterated the place where the Apalka lagoon exists
with galleons laden with silver and gold and pearls
and the skeletons of pirates
everything, skeletons and treasure, sunken in the mud.
But maybe there's a moon, and the infinite lagoon
that no one from the Coco visits
becomes (on the wind the irate voices of pirates)
by the light of the moon of the Atlantic night, a
lugubrious lagoon of silver coins.

CELL PHONE

You talk on your cell phone
and talk and talk
and laugh into your cell phone
never knowing how it was made
and much less how it works
but what does that matter
 trouble is you don't know
 just as I didn't
 that many people die in the Congo
 thousands upon thousands
 for that cellphone
 they die in the Congo
in its mountains there is coltan
 (besides gold and diamonds)
used for cell phone
condensers
 for the control of the minerals
 multinational corporations
 wage this unending war
 5 million dead in 15 years
and they don't want it to be known
 country of immense wealth
 with poverty-stricken population
80% of the world's coltan
reserves are in the Congo
the coltan has lain there for
three thousand million years
 Nokia, Motorola, Compaq, Sony
 buy the coltan
 the Pentagon too, the New York
 Times corporation too
 and they don't want it to be known
nor do they want the war to stop
so as to carry on grabbing the coltan
children of 7 to 10 years extract the coltan
 because their tiny bodies
 fit into the tiny holes
 for 25 cents a day
and loads of children die
due to the coltan powder
or hammering the rock
that collapses on top of them
 The New York Times too
 that doesn't want it to be known
 and that's how it remains unknown
 this organized crime
 of the multinationals

the Bible identifies
truth and justice
and love and the truth
the importance of the truth then
that will set us free
also the truth about coltan
coltan inside your cell phone
on which you talk and talk
and laugh into your cell phone