

Jerome Rothenberg, from A Seneca Journal  
SALAMANCA A PROPHECY

(1)

a city on  
a turtle's back  
a longhouse  
/  
was like Jerusalem  
's temple resting  
on a whale

(2)

impossible to bring it all  
together

Seneca Nation  
Salamanca, New York  
21.ii.74

*for Gary Gordon*

in dream  
 the beavers come to  
 Harry Watt  
 "a child could  
 "speak  
 "communication  
 "were standing in a row  
 "they said I would not  
 "harm them  
 "would not ever  
 "after  
 "hunted mink  
 "& badger  
 "but the beavers were  
 "my friends  
 "& helped me

so his story began & I knew it also hearing what he  
 said hearing I knew it was with me from before my time  
 & knew it as a memory of my own grandfathers  
 not as hunters in the woods but on the edge of old world  
 forests men & women walked by on the way to markets  
 public baths went berrying in summer chased by wolves in  
 winter past the huts where mushrooms hung to dry the  
 old women of the woods lived heavy in grey dresses  
 chin hairs bristling into gentile beards their own familiar  
 dogs & cats beside them had the master of the good name  
 learned from these the speech of animals this is  
 the secret all men have retained that greater language of  
 what biological fellowhood will open to us once  
 again

ethology the visions  
 of McClure & Chomsky all

the speakers of deep tongues point  
a route this generation  
will be privileged to assume  
a universal speech  
in which the kingdoms of the world  
are one  
the kingdoms of the world are one

---

what is it to be a beaver truly  
when I think of it I think  
of water water on a body  
wholly hair  
I think of beaver hats  
& beaver movies  
I think of a new birth into  
beaver life  
the beaver in the poem of the Baal Shem  
is being born  
he is the generative part of man  
the cock in hair  
that low intelligence erupting  
changes what we are  
the soft becoming  
hard the cold one  
hot  
red tongue of beaver in a nest  
of fur  
by a sudden metamorphosis  
a fluid world  
becoming  
anything the mind can think  
the mind is thinking  
entering the fluid bottom stream  
of sex transformed  
the Baal Shem leaves the light of Torah  
& becomes

any old animal inside  
the sacred wood

---

& I am now living in  
a place called Bucktooth once  
its Indian name  
the name of a small man (the book says  
“he was only 4 feet tall  
“& had a single tooth  
“they found his skeleton  
“a single tooth  
“that fell out when they crossed  
“the Allegany  
“belt buckle bore his mark  
“the grandsons made a coffin  
“they buried him  
“back where his fathers were)  
& only 4 feet tall he must 've been  
“one of them little fellers”  
pygmies of this place  
or leprechauns who own  
the Dark Dance  
no self-respecting Indian would be  
that small or say  
that by that tooth he was  
a beaver I would call  
Old Beaver Tooth  
being myself a Beaver  
by adoption  
as my wife & child are Herons  
also by adoption  
we adopt these titles  
we go home with them  
what is this membership we have  
adopted grinning  
in the mirror my face

is changing to  
a mask Floyd John once showed me  
had a single tooth  
if I could make my face a mask  
I'd be Old Bucktooth  
Beaver once again old founder  
of a town we all can live in hoping  
that no other  
Duke of Salamanca comes  
to sponsor a new railroad  
beavers & blue heron  
can't live near  
but hide from in the silence of  
some lousy cave

---

not a sweet beast he is power  
not a sweet man he is like a muscle tightened waiting to crack  
down & break  
a skull maybe splintering the jaw & making  
the teeth like his own an almost non-existent row the ghost  
tooth  
in the center shining is a mirror we can see ourselves  
down to the farthest tunnel winding among  
shining leaves & flowers words & tiny melodies  
the colors make  
or if the dream begins with  
silence in the foot itself  
that silence stirs  
it is a dance vibrating at center of each isolated  
nerve reminds him of the song  
he wants to sing when  
dying  
& if the beaver sings it to him now it means  
an easy death

---

just as the birth was easy  
beaver life began in  
water was a pound of bones & fur  
sure instinct to the mark  
sent out his tongue  
into the left rear nipple sucked  
sweet yellow sticky milk  
his mudder gave him  
“slurp” sez Old Bucktooth Beaver  
“now I must try a swim around”  
he’s only an hour old & talking  
swimming paddling around her tits  
in noonday sun reclining  
top of the lodge will learn  
not to let tail get dry but dribble  
sweet clarifying smell from nether  
hole all creatures hanker  
for a whiff of  
smears it on his hands &  
dabs the fur so comfortable  
& sweet this is the beaver’s life  
(sez Old Man Beaver)  
think I might chew a little wood  
—just loves to chew & fart—  
“pleasures are simple  
“in this world the trick’s  
“to find a tree & let the sun flash  
“on my orange tooth  
“tree chips fly all day  
“& I will stop never  
“until the tree shall come to earth  
“& never stop though it may crush me  
“the film across my eye shall turn to fog  
“old ones call dying

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but not without a fight  
(sez Beaver) Otter stalks him  
“most cunning raids my tunnels  
“kicks in my sweetened  
“mudpatties steaming still hot with my  
“fragrance stuffs  
“oil drops & stones up  
“ ’s rectum (cries)  
Me King Otter! Lick Me!  
the Great Mask of Otter filling  
Beaver Man’s dreams  
makes tracks in his corn mush  
pearly grains of hominy  
under the otter’s claws  
otter piss splatters  
’s corn soup  
“sands soft waves of nausea across  
“my cerebellum o sly dance of  
“otters on harvest nights full moon  
“suspended atop an alder pole  
delights Old Beaver Man gathers  
descendants around him  
he stands on the water  
slaps it  
hard with his tail (sez)  
“Old Enemy  
“Otter  
“in the name of Longhouse the Great  
“Rabbinical Council  
“of elders mystical  
“mammals the longbeards of  
‘Zion America  
“I have lived my last under the earth  
“into a new sun I skitter  
“tribal triumphant (sez Beaver)  
“I chew off your balls  
“I survives

(song #1)

\*OLD\*MAN\*BEAVER'S\*BLESSING\*SONG\*  
\*all\*i\*want\*'s\*a\*good\*5ç\*seegar\*  
\*heeheeHOHOheeheeHOHOheeheeHOHO\*  
\*all\*i\*want\*'s\*a\*good\*5ç\*seegar\*  
\*heeheeHOHOheeheeHOHOheeheeHOHO\*  
\*all\*i\*want\*'s\*a\*good\*5ç\*seegar\*  
\*heeheeHOHOheeheeHOHOheeheeHOHO\*  
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\*heeheeHOHOheeheeHOHOheeheeHOHO\*  
\*all\*i\*want\*'s\*a\*good\*5ç\*seegar\*  
\*heeheeHOHOheeheeHOHOheeheeHOHO\*  
\*all\*i\*want\*'s\*a\*good\*5ç\*seegar\*  
\*heeheeHOHOheeheeHOHOheeheeHOHO\*  
\*OLD\*MAN\*BEAVER'S\*BLESSING\*SONG\*

A man who was a crow was traveling. He didn't know where he had come from or which way he was going. As he moved along he kept on thinking: "How did I come to be alive? Where did I come from? Where am I going?"

# STIRRING THE ASHES

sun bear

moon buffalo

THE BEAR ROBE

had no claws

THE BUFFALO ROBE

was headless

# THE BIG HEADS

husk shoes  
husk belt  
husk crown  
bear snout

THE BIG HEADS SEND A MESSAGE:

HELLO STAY CLEAN DONT BE CONFUSED  
DON'T STEP ON THINGS WHEN MOVING (signed  
YOUR UNCLES

## THE BEAR

his paw up  
to the sun

## THE BUFFALO

head crowned  
with flowers

(1) Pawnee

(2) Oto

## BEAR DANCE

snort  
snort  
berries

## BUFFALO DANCE

sniff  
sniff  
mush