

"Not to Creation or Destruction but to Truth": Robert Duncan, Kenneth Anger, and the Conversation between Film and Poetry

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Aesthetic values characterized in part by serial form, liberatory depictions of male queerness, and an allegiance to or engagement with hermetic magic practices are generally recognized as part of Robert Duncan's overall poetics. This essay is a modest attempt to situate those poetics within the context of Robert Duncan's decades-long friendship with filmmaker Kenneth Anger. I write this primarily because no published work has as yet investigated the possibility that "New American" or "Underground" Cinema¹ had an effect on Duncan's work, despite the fact of Duncan's well-known interactions with filmmakers including Anger, Stan Brakhage, James Broughton, and others.

Indeed, the two published monographs that focus on Duncan's work (Peter O'Leary's *Gnostic Contagion* and Mark Jacob's *Robert Duncan*) do not at any point discuss the fact of Anger's and Duncan's mutually influential friendship, much less the effects film had formally on Duncan's output. Clearly, the time has come to think about the relationship between Anger's film and Duncan's poetry—my hope is that this essay will lead to further exploration not just of the affinities that Duncan's work had with Kenneth Anger's practice, but of the aesthetic and social interactions between innovative writers and filmmakers of the postwar era generally. The fact is that so many poets affiliated with the "New American poetry"—John Ashbery, Michael McClure, Frank O'Hara, Helen Adam, Robert Creeley, Diane di Prima, and Allen Ginsberg come to mind—collaborated extensively with their filmmaker peers, including Stan Brakhage, Rudy Burckhardt, Jack Smith, Jonas Mekas, and Alfred Leslie. I wish to position this essay, then, as an "opening of the field," to use Duncan's well-known phrase, one that will simultaneously reveal new interpretative strategies for Robert Duncan's poetry specifically and inspire scholarship on the as-yet undocumented valences between American film and poetry of the postwar avant-garde.

Robert Duncan's "Modernist Shame"

In sifting through the correspondence between filmmaker Kenneth Anger and poet Robert Duncan, and in reading sections of Duncan's unpublished "Notebooks," we find Duncan referring in various ways to the influence that Anger had on his developing poetics and "spirit." In a notebook entry, Duncan wrote:

The violations of art are ruthless, and Kenneth Anger's film in reaching out to disturb the centers of life has corrupted his actors until thru the decompositions of their individual being enigmatic avatars appear; he has corrupted the motion of the film, ripening it and pushing it on to the inertias of human pleasure . . . O felix culpa, Augustine cries—And this cry I heard repeated as I lay awake after this film. These images of pleasure having forced themselves thru Anger's art to address my spirit that recoils at pleasure. For all spirit as it has dedicated itself to joy has sought, as it is weak, escape from pleasure and, as it is strong, defeat of pleasure . . .

Whatever the war of our existence—in living we are at every moment upon a partisan front—of this world or the other, the artist is dedicated finally not to life or to death, not to creation or destruction but to truth. And this is the final authenticity of Anger's art: it has not shied from the true thing which its process reveald [*sic*].²

Here, Duncan grants Anger credit for challenging his resistance to heightened sensuality and pleasure: "These images of pleasure having forced themselves thru Anger's art to address my spirit that recoils at pleasure." Duncan appears to look to Anger in part for permission to go back to what at this point in time seems like a practically corny, Romantic conceit—the pursuit and enactment of "truth." As Keats, Coleridge, and Blake understood before him, Duncan sees inherent in the moving visual image (be it the magic of absinthe-induced hallucination, vision, or the "process" that finds light projected onto the cinema screen) a point of entry into a state of consciousness free from binaries. Interestingly, words including "decompositions" and "corrupted" are used here to describe Anger's actual effect on the actors *and* the material of the film itself. A filmic process that tends to "disturb the centers of life," to "corrupt," to "violate," all in the name of articulating a nonbinary "truth" suggests that Duncan saw in Kenneth Anger's work a Keatsian ability to flourish in doubt and decay.

Duncan appears ready here to at least consider a derangement of the senses, one that will lead him in no uncertain terms to the promised land of visionary certainty. It is significant that this entry was written in 1954. Marking the shift from Duncan's early modernist-influenced work,

including his Stein imitations collected as *Writing Writing* (first published in 1964, though written in 1953)³ and *The Venice Poem* (1948), the 1950s found Duncan becoming more involved personally with filmmakers, including Anger and Stan Brakhage, as he reacted against certain aesthetic practices associated with Modernism in favor of a marked Romanticism.⁴ Duncan's readings of Blake seemed to have an especially important influence on his self-positioning as Romantic poet:

Sometime in 1953, the poetess Helen Adam brought Blake's introductory song from *Songs of Experience* as an example of great poetry to a workshop and read it in a sublime and visionary manner, as if what was important was not the accomplishment of the poem but the wonder of the world of the poem itself, breaking the husk of my modernist pride and shame, my conviction that what mattered was the literary or artistic achievement.⁵

After discussing Blake in some detail, Duncan added, "I was already a convert to the Romantic spirit, and myth in that spirit is not only a story that expresses the soul but a story that awakens the soul to the real persons of its romance, in which the actual and the spiritual are revealed, one in the other."⁶

The great conversion narrative described above, unfolding within a year of Duncan's acknowledgment of the effects of Anger's cinema on his writing, is startling in the way in which Duncan almost aggressively works against contingency in favor of highlighting the Romantic vatic role as it elicits actual community, the "story that awakens the soul to the *real persons* of its romance." Getting over his "modernist shame," Duncan begins in the 1950s to write the great poems of what we might call his early Romantic period.⁷

"Impoverishment in Stasis": Duncan and the Moving Image

Such a Romantic impulse appears to be predicated partly on a kind of synesthesia—text is perceived as moving visual spectacle. In a section entitled "As an Apologia" in Duncan's notebooks of 1955, for example, Duncan writes: "These are poems written because I am sure to die. Drawn up out of and within the chemistry of life, into a consciousness—fragments, blotches, streaming wounds or healing lights, opacities and darkness (all as Corbett or Still, Hassel-Smith, Bischoff, the Drip and Blobists have shown it)—a discontinuity of awareness within a chemical continuum and returned [*sic*] out of itself into the great chemistry."⁸ Duncan seems in an almost unconscious manner to emphasize qualities of light in movement—the "streaming"

wounds affixed to "healing lights," "darkness" pierced by the blotches and fragments Duncan associates with Bay Area painters.

Given the chronology of literary history, Duncan's way of talking about the visual in relationship to text should be differentiated from Pound's Imagist project. As Pound had it, the imagist poem must instantaneously present "an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time." Duncan, on the other hand, acknowledges Pound as an influence for a kinetic poetics while critiquing Pound's Imagist "systemization" as "locking or freezing of ideas":

Part of his systemization, i.e., the locking or freezing of ideas into *idées fixes*, that characterized his paranoid condition, was related to his very creative contribution: the ideogram or idea cluster. In the Cantos the parts of such a system are maintained in a mobile. Where such a system does not manage "the maximum interpenetration of moving parts"—I have in mind here Giedion's description of the creative principle in mechanization, exemplified in Calder's mobiles—in the stables of Calder the artist's works exhibit their impoverishment in stasis.⁹

In an effort to avoid such "impoverishment in stasis," Duncan in his work emphasizes the connection between movement and sight as a kind of metaphor for the dance of his own imagination. "The act was dancing, the product of the act was the dance, poetry. In one kind of dancing the hand and the eye danced together. Thus the hand 'saw' the stones and sticks, and the eye 'felt' them."¹⁰ The synaesthetic dance is an analogue for the serial nature of much of Duncan's work culminating in the "Passages" sequence. Duncan considered seriality as linked conceptually to the cinema, particularly in terms of how cinema was materially able to, in Duncan's words, go "on and on." As he explained it to filmmaker and poet James Broughton,

Before I was always trying to write some great Design instead of going on and on. And what I really love in movies or the stage, my modern sense of it, is just the going on and on. Why we recently have seen over and over Renoir's *THE RIVER* and Kelly and Donan's *SINGING IN THE RAIN*. Amazing compositions of just anything. Well, *THE ADVENTURES OF JIMMY* and *LOONEY TOM* were just that . . . Because, that is, they suggested "doing things" to my episodic mind.¹¹

The "episodic mind" visible in films as diverse as Broughton's *Looney Tom* and Gene Kelly's *Singing in the Rain* is one that offers Duncan a way out of the stasis he believes results from a monumentalizing or totalizing poetics,

one in which “a great Design”—i.e., a discrete, closed-off entity—freezes out contingency, openness, and a material movement predicated on intertextual seriality. Duncan’s colleague Jack Spicer appeared to suggest as much when he insisted that “Duncan, [Robin Blaser], and I had a kind of similarity, and what was it? And it occurred to me that it was a serial poem” (which, as Spicer added later), “has to be chronological.”¹² As Robert Bertholf adds, “For Spicer, [Duncan’s] *Medieval Scenes* was the initial spectacle of the dictated poem and of the serial poem—by which he meant nothing as recondite as serial composition in music might lead one to believe, but the episodic appearance of a movies serial.”¹³ For both Spicer and Duncan, film was one of the crucial models for the “open” poem, one that necessarily presented the text consistently in relation to other texts, always moving forward. Indeed, Duncan appeared to conceive of the link between writing and visual, serial movement as early as 1940. In a letter that year to friend and soon to be renowned film critic Pauline Kael, Duncan insisted, “painting is as limited in meaning as a single scene in a dream is, but in writing we can give a sense of the movement of images, their constant fluctuations of meaning, and in motion pictures . . . the very birth seed of surrealism seems to grow from the potentialities of the film.”¹⁴

Experiencing “Integrity”: Anger’s *Fireworks*, Duncan’s “The Torso,”
and the Enactment of Ritual¹⁵

Perhaps the one book that most clearly shows the effects that cinema generally and the new American cinema specifically had on Duncan’s developing Romantic aesthetic is *Bending the Bow*.¹⁶ Duncan reenacts and extends the specifically ritual aspects of Anger’s film *Fireworks*, creating a kind of cross-genre dialogue between poetry and film predicated on Anger’s attempts to achieve what he called “integrity,” a state in which binaries are reconciled and ultimately synthesized via a ceremonially impelled serial composition. Kenneth Anger insisted, “With my researches in cinema, I am trying to restore the dream to its primal state of reverence. *Fireworks* remains for me a key to existence: it re-presents research toward experiencing integrity.”¹⁷ Crucially for Duncan, this “integrity” was represented in Anger’s film as a specifically queer cosmos attainable via the yoking of dream time with real time.¹⁸

The vulnerable homosexual dreamer in *Fireworks* manages, through the magical process of the film narrative, to ritually evoke, benefit from, and transcend his demons, and ends with a gloriously affirmative vision of homosexual lust and love. Anna Powell reads this ritualistic pattern in the context of Anger’s own well-known adherence to the tenets of occultist Aleister Crowley:

On the mundane level, we witness a sado-masochistic, homophobic attack in the Gents lavatory. The underlying theme, however, is Crowleyan in inspiration: an initiate's symbolic death, rebirth and self-realisation. It has been linked by Robert Haller to the ritual of The Building of the Pyramid (*Liber Pyramidos*) in which the candidate undergoes a rigorous self-initiation. The Dreamer (played by Anger himself) seeks Lucifer as well as a light for his cigarette.¹⁹

Fireworks, cited specifically in Duncan's "The Earth, Passages 19," and alluded to in "The Torso" and "Structures of Rime XXVI, Passages 20," partly informed Duncan's own overtly ritualistic use of serial movement, queer themes, and symbolism. Interestingly, in January 1954 Duncan admits in his diaries to having some desire for Anger. Detailing his attempt to lure Anger back to his home on Baker Street after a visit to Philip Lamantia's house, Duncan wrote: "There had been, cavalierly, some machination on my part toward Kenneth's coming back to Baker Street and so some wanting, a rift of desire in the excitement—and I knew an over-reaching betrayd [*sic*]."²⁰ The combustible mixture of Duncan's early attraction to Anger, alongside Anger's role as a pioneer in depicting homosexual desire through a ceremonial form, appears to have partly influenced Duncan's growing interest in the mechanisms of cinema generally and Anger's film specifically.

I would like to focus on several moments in *Fireworks* to suggest that we can fruitfully read "The Torso (Passages 18)," perhaps Duncan's most famous overtly homosexual poem, as extending some of the basic themes in Anger's film. To consider the poem in light of *Fireworks* is in no way arbitrary. The poem precedes Passages 19 and 20, both of which refer directly to *Fireworks*—given the serial nature of the "Passages" poems, the chronology of "The Torso" invites the reader to detect thematic links between allied texts. Indeed, "The Torso" practically *asks* to be read in the context of Anger's film. Consider that Passages 20, dedicated "for Kenneth Anger," contains the line "From the moaning body of the boy the man he is breaks like a wrathful husband his fiery torso."²¹ The repetition of the word "torso" creates a dialogue with "The Torso (Passages 18)," encouraging the reader to make the connection between what is overtly ceded "for Kenneth Anger" in Passages 20 and what is less obviously evoked in "The Torso."

Before analyzing "The Torso," it is important to focus on several key elements in Anger's film. One of the final and most memorable images in *Fireworks* features the dreamer balancing a Christmas tree on his head. A burning candle is attached to the tip of the tree. The tree/candle is then pointed into a fireplace and used to set photographs of the protagonist in a sailor's arms aflame. The film concludes with a shot of the pictures burning in the fireplace, and a pan on to the bed where the protagonist is lying

next to his male lover, whose face appears to be ablaze due to Anger's having scratched lines onto the surface of the film. "Scratches over the filmed images hide [the lover's] face from us. The pan continues to the plaster hand, now repaired so that all its fingers are whole. The hand falls into the water, where the torch had been quenched in the first shot. 'The End' appears in superimposition over the water."²² The plaster hand, which at the beginning of the film was shown to have broken fingers, is now restored. The ritual is complete "as the initiate's virile power is restored."²³

Anger's use of a Christmas tree is symbolically rich given the events depicted in the film. Christmas is generally understood to be a Christianization of pagan ritual, one that specifically uses an evergreen to symbolize fertility. "Prehistoric man would regularly take in green boughs or full evergreen trees at the winter solstice for use in magical rites intended to insure the protection of his home and the return of vegetation to the otherwise brown and dead forest. As Christianity supplanted older, pagan religions, the decorating of evergreens continued in various parts of northern Europe on many special occasions, including Easter and Midsummer's Day. The Maypole is known to have begun as an evergreen tree and originally bore many of the same decorations that were used on the first Christmas trees."²⁴ In light of the practically unprecedented filmic evocation of homosexuality in *Fireworks*, Anger uses the pagan elements inherent in the Christmas tree to refer ironically to fertility (the restoration of "virile power").

Anger himself put it rather archly, "This flick is all I have to say about being seventeen, the United States Navy, American Christmas, and the Fourth of July."²⁵ Beyond Anger's use of the Christmas tree to associate homosexuality with fertility and power, it is important to recognize that Anger is humorously critiquing "American Christmas" itself by self-consciously realigning the holiday to its pagan origins. As Frazer shows in "The Golden Bough" (a book that Anger and Duncan read dutifully), the origin of Christmas can be traced back to Christian ecclesiastical authorities' attempts to ban the "Nativity of the Sun" festival celebrated by the pre-Christian Mithraic cult:

It was a custom of the heathen to celebrate on the same twenty-fifth of December the birthday of the Sun, at which they kindled lights in token of festivity. . . . Thus it appears that the Christian Church chose to celebrate the birthday of its Founder on the twenty-fifth of December in order to transfer the devotion of the heathen from the Sun to him who was called the Son of Righteousness.²⁶

Considering that *Fireworks* ends with the lover's face ablaze, as if he were the manifestation of the Sun God himself (discussed in more detail below),

it is not farfetched to conclude that the film works in part as a reclamation of the heathen elements of Christmas. We should note that Robert Duncan, even in his most casual correspondence, echoed Anger's conflation of Christ with the Sun God. In a holiday letter to Robert Creeley, Duncan wrote, "And to your family our as ever benedictions for Christ's (the Sun's) birthday all round."²⁷ Duncan and Anger evoke Christmas primarily to remind their audience that the origins of the holiday lie in a dissident, pagan cosmology.

As *Fireworks* uses the pagan Christmas tree in an overtly phallic manner, and combines the pagan aspects of the tree with the ritualistic cleansing force of fire, so Duncan begins his poem "The Torso" with

Most beautiful! the red-flowering eucalyptus
the madrone, the yew²⁸

What can we make of the trees mentioned here?²⁹ Significantly, the eucalyptus, madrone, and yew are all evergreens. The fact that the "red-flowering eucalyptus" is "most beautiful" is especially compelling. Eucalyptus leaves are often used to make Christmas wreaths—this nod toward Christmas becomes especially interesting when we consider that eucalypts are renowned for their ability to regenerate quickly after fire. The finale of Anger's ritual in *Fireworks* that ends with "the initiate's virile power . . . restored" thanks to the cleansing force of fire is, in Duncan's overtly homoerotic poem, echoed in the beginning of "The Torso" with the introduction of the eucalypt, itself a symbol of regeneration and resistance.

The eucalyptus has a particularly personal resonance for Duncan as well in terms of its role in the pagan harvest festival Lammas (also known by its Gaelic name, Lughnasa). As Lisa Jarnot points out in her forthcoming biography of Duncan:

In Celtic tradition, August 1 marks the Lammas Tide, a celebration of the first harvest of the autumn. It was a date that fascinated Robert Duncan . . . It had been on August 1, 1919 that Fayette Philip told her sister Minnehaha Symmes [Duncan's adoptive mother] of the conversation that had transpired in the Philip & Philip pharmacy on that day [a conversation about Duncan's birth-mother's death during labor, and Duncan's availability for adoption]. The following day the Symmeses made arrangements to see the Duncan child for the first time, and on August 4, six-month-old Edward Howe Duncan was placed in the custody of Minnehaha and Edwin Symmes.

Given that Lammas was significant for Duncan, we should note that eucalyptus is used as a "correspondence" during Lammas celebrations—for example, eucalyptus oil is applied ritually to the body or eucalyptus is burned

on the Lammas altar. During Lammas festivities, it is also customary for bonfires to be set and for "fire magick" to be practiced. As there is a natural link between harvest festivals and fertility generally, it is not surprising to learn that Lammas is commonly associated with unbridled sexuality. Festivals in Wales, the Isle of Man, and Ireland found young people celebrating Lammas by enjoying "sexuality in the open air."³⁰ The links in Lammas between fire, renewal, and liberated sexuality that are evoked through Duncan's use of the word "eucalyptus" are all the more striking when viewed in the overall context of Duncan's references to Anger's *Fireworks*—itself a ritual marked in part by fire and the ceremonial/sexualized use of the pagan evergreen.

Lughnasa is named after the Celtic sun god, Lugh. "He is sometimes described as a solar divinity because of the *brightness of his face*" and is described as "a god of arts and crafts." Lugh was known generally as a "fertility god" and as a "harvest god."³¹ He was also associated with fire, light, and metallurgy, and he was the protector and defender of the weak and ill. Lughnasa assemblies connected Lugh with a whole host of pagan figures; "[A]bout the first of August in very old times a gathering took place on the hill and fruit and flowers were strewn round the 'stricken' at the hilltop. In the evening a bonfire was lit and young people danced on a flat near the top. 'Fry-chawns,' flowers and fruit were left for the unseen residents in the hill, i.e., Donn-Firine and his host as well as leprechauns and fairies."³² Anger was versed in such occult and pagan mythology even at the age of seventeen (when he directed and produced *Fireworks*).³³ He designed the sailor whose head emanates light at the end of the film to represent a host of alternative gods including Lucifer (whom Anger repeatedly referred to as his "Angel of Light") and Lugh himself. When we illustrate how Duncan's "The Torso" alludes to Anger's film and to the Lughnasa festival, the interdisciplinary conversation between text and film becomes rich and complex.

The second stanza of "The Torso," "So thou wouldst smile, and take me in thine arms / The sight of London to my exiled eyes / Is as Elysium to a new-come soul,"³⁴ is an almost direct quote from Marlowe's *Edward the Second*. One could argue that such an image is used here to evoke one of the more famous still images reproduced from *Fireworks* of Anger being carried tenderly in the arms of a sailor with just the barest hint of a maternal smile.

Such an interpretation is strengthened when we consider the queer resonance of Duncan's quotation. As Greg Hewett comments,

Duncan notes the source only in the back of the collection, and yet this knowledge adds significance to the poem, as Marlowe was, despite the lack of a precise word/concept for "homosexual" in the

Renaissance... a lover of men, and masculine love is central to the drama. As with the earlier references to Verlaine and Genet, sexual identification becomes secondary to the process of transforming masculinity and male sexuality.³⁵

The camp passion (retrospectively speaking) of Marlowe's diction here corresponds wonderfully to the transformative excesses of Anger's homosexual representations, and of course to the homosexual narrative of "The Torso" itself.

The ritual aspects of "The Torso" are introduced in succeeding stanzas as the speaker promises rhapsodically "If he be Truth / I would dwell in the illusion of him." Using sexuality for antinomian ends, Duncan here echoes Christian prayer in a remarkably transgressive way. The "He" here is not the Truth of the Son but the truth of a nascent and promisingly illuminating same-sex love. Duncan writes in subsequent lines "His hands unlocking from chambers of my male body / such an idea in man's image / rising tides that sweep me towards him / . . . homosexual?" As *Fireworks* performs what Carel Rowe described as a "reverse transubstantiation" "turning essence into substance,"³⁶ so Duncan appears to use the ritual of the sacrament to sacralize homosexual love and lust. Here, the speaker is not made in the image of God but in the image of another man. "He" represents sexual love of man for man, "homosexual."

Subsequent lines make much of orality, the passing of the higher power into the mouth of the supplicant, though, as in Anger's *Fireworks*, this is a reverse Eucharist that finds both Lord and host benefiting from the oral exchange—"and at the treasure of his mouth / pour forth my soul / his soul commingling." The body of the man becomes the vessel through which the speaker will attain a Paradise of distinctly earthly delights: "I thought a Being more than vast, His body leading / into Paradise, his eyes / quickening a fire in me, a trembling // hieroglyph." Duncan here insists resolutely on the body as an inscribed surface rich with meaning, what Cary Nelson describes as "a signifying field or a sacred text constituted by an alternative, celebratory naming."³⁷ Following stanzas then decode the hieroglyph: "the nipples, for the breasts are like sleeping fountains of feeling in man;" "the navel, for in the pit of his stomach the chord from / which first he was fed has its temple;" "the pubic hair, for the torso is the stem in which the man flowers forth and leads to the stamen of flesh in which his seed rises;" and so on.

As the young dreamer in *Fireworks* achieved virility and strength only after plumbing the depths (and I use "plumbing" here as a pun, considering that the dreamer was beaten by a gang of sailors in a men's toilet), so the speaker in "The Torso" acknowledges of his object of desire that "He has brought me into heights and depths my heart / would fear without

him." The poem suggests that to be loved necessarily requires one to be initially scourged. In subsequent lines the lover's look "pierces my side" with (significantly in light of this reading) practically demonic "*fire eyes*" (my italics).³⁸ Continuing to challenge binaries, and echoing Anger's reassessment and redefinition of the "Prince of Darkness" as Angel of Light, Duncan grants a voice to his lover who, we discover, is a practically Miltonic Lucifer-like figure:

I have been waiting for you, he said:

I know what you desire

you do not yet know but through me .

And I am with you everywhere. In your falling

I have fallen from a high place. I have raised myself

from darkness in your rising

In this potentially eerie section of the poem, Duncan appears to align homosexuality with magic—the act of sexual love between men results in a kind of resurrection ("rising") of the lover with "fire eyes" that leads to self-knowledge of both lover and loved. Subsequent lines add weight to this interpretation. The lover with fire eyes promises, "wherever you are / my hand in your hand seeking the locks, the keys / I am there. Gathering me, you gather / your Self."³⁹ The lover in "The Torso" and the sailor/lover/Lugh in *Fireworks* are both invoked through a ritualized narrative centered on a consecrated erection: "I have raised myself / from darkness in your rising." Communion with the daemon lover results not in damnation but in a resolutely queer salvation marked by "integrality": "I am with you everywhere."

In light of all the echoes of *Fireworks* in "The Torso" (and given that Duncan is about to begin *Passages 19* and make the first *overt* reference to the film), it is tempting to read the final two lines of "The Torso" as analogous to the film's final moments. Again, near the end of Anger's work we see the young dreamer lying in bed next to the sailor, whose face is emanating magical sparks. In the final two lines of "The Torso," we find a corresponding image in the assertion "For my Other is not a woman but a man" followed by the petition, borrowed from Marlowe, "*the King upon whose bosom let me lie.*"⁴⁰ Significantly, as Hewitt points out, this quotation is a misreading of Marlowe's text. "Here, startlingly, even Marlowe's 'The king, upon whose bosom let me *die*' is revised or misread for Duncan to create his own specific mystical king and visionary masculinity."⁴¹ The appearance of the "mystical king" in Duncan's poem complements the

ending of Anger's film, as both the speaker in "The Torso" and the Dreamer in *Fireworks* lie next to their invoked Other. Anger's God of Light and Duncan's "King" are raised "from darkness" to achieve Oneness with the initiate speakers—as Duncan puts it, "Gathering me, you gather / your Self." In both poem and film, this ritual is enacted primarily through the transformative sacrament of homosexual sex.

"Jets of Blood, Milk, and Rain"—Fireworks in Robert Duncan's
"Passages 19"

Duncan's poem "The Earth (Passages 19)" is the first instance in *Bending the Bow* where Anger's images are directly invoked. Duncan names the ritualistic bodily fluids so crucial to Anger's film: "the jets of blood, milk, and rain / commingling / in the moving picture / [*Fireworks*, Kenneth Anger, 1947]."⁴² The liquids correspond to a scene in *Fireworks* where the dreamer is attacked by a group of sailors. "From above we see fingers shoved into the dreamer's nostrils, and blood shoots out of his nose and mouth. A sailor twists his arm, and he screams hysterically. A bottle of cream is smashed on the floor. With a broken piece a cut is made in his chest . . . Cream poured from above flows over it into his mouth. Cream washes his bloody face; then it flows down his chest."⁴³

Interestingly, the opening lines of the poem strain against their boundary on the page:

Incidents of me the eye sees

a leaf among many leaves turning upon the stream, the screen,

the words upon the page flow away into no hold I have

What did it say?⁴⁴

Duncan's use of the phrase "the screen" invites the reader to engage in a dialogue with the cinema. The disjunction achieved through the use of enjambment and typographical spacing suggests frustration. It is as if each word cluster is a single frame, the movement of which the speaker of the poem wishes to release from the page to the unbounded atmosphere. "The words upon the page flow away into no hold I have" is a self-reflexive formal statement, yet it speaks the language of film as much as it does the language of poetry. Unlike the "words upon the page," the moving image, projected onto "the screen," is very much animate due to its nature as moving, living light. Considering that the printed word is materially chained onto the page, it appears that Duncan in these lines wants to liberate text

so that it moves or “flows,” ideally turning it onto “the screen.” There is a kind of freedom that film has materially in terms of its autonomy—“no hold I have,” writes Duncan, as if to remind us that what is recorded on the surface of celluloid is in a sense liberated when projected. (Duncan’s appreciation for the material autonomy of the filmic image should not be underemphasized. In a letter to James Broughton, Duncan isolates “the achievement” of films as predicated precisely on their freedom from becoming objects, unlike, say, the printed word or sculpted artwork. “The achievement of the movies is exactly that they are works of art without being objects; we cannot own them, yet once seen in a way they own us”).⁴⁵

After alluding to film in the first three lines of the poem, Duncan asks “What did it say?” Duncan then quotes a section of Jacob Boehme’s *Aurora*:

(A PASSAGE) Kraftgänge:

... for the stars have their kingdom in the veins of the body which are cunning passages (and the sun has designd [sic] the arteries) where they drive forth the form, shape and condition of man

This quotation is designed to blend into the *Passages* series as a whole, not merely because it is literally *in* *Passages* 19 but because it corresponds to Duncan’s agenda of replacing binary models with a more fully integrated vision. The excerpt from Boehme’s *Aurora* works toward conflation and coherence—the veins of the human body are linked formally to the stars, the holy is in evidence in the carnal. As a passage linked to other passages, Duncan’s “*Passages* 19,” assisted in part by Boehme’s *Aurora*, fits in thematically with the series through its evocation of what Kenneth Anger referred to as “integrality.”

Notebook entries of December 1964 show Duncan was reading *Aurora* at the same time as he was composing *Passages* 19 and 20. This is significant particularly in light of the poem’s relationship to Anger’s *Fireworks*. In the notebooks, Duncan quotes the following sections from Boehme’s *Aurora*:

3/112: Nor is this my *natural will*, that I could do it by my own small ability, for if the spirit were withdrawn from me, then I could neither know nor understand *my own writings*.

4/37. For when the powers spring up in God they *touch* and stir one another, and move one in another, and so there is a constant harmony, *mixing* or concert, from whence go forth all manner of colors.

4/55 (Lucifer) by his proud elevation in his kingdom, *kindled* the qualities or the divine Salitter out of which he was made and set it on fire.

7/8. Whose depth we cannot sound or reach with our sense, *all* this place or room together was one kingdom, and *Lucifer* was king therein.⁴⁶

We ourselves can know no good apart
from the good of all men

Metaphorically speaking, the gift of homosexual union and same-sex love ("no good apart / from the good of all men") is here akin to the gift of fire, in that it brings with it both joy and "sorrow."

In light of the fact that Duncan refers directly to Anger's *Fireworks* in this poem, it is certainly possible that informed readers are invited to consider the above stanzas in light of *Fireworks*. After all, "They," like the "Angel of Light" at the end of *Fireworks* whose head is emitting sparks, have "gold crowns of hair." Duncan continues to establish connections between poem and film after his citation of Anger's *Fireworks* ("the jets of blood, milk, and rain / commingling / in the moving picture / [*Fireworks*, Kenneth Anger, 1947]," by providing the reader with a reading list ("*Aurora*, Jacob Boehme; Hesiod, *Works and Days*; / *Rewards and Fairies*, Rudyard Kipling). The reference to Kipling is particularly telling. *Rewards and Fairies* begins with the story of two children, Dan and Una, meeting Puck, "the last survivor in England of those whom mortals call Fairies."⁵⁰ Duncan echoes Kipling by introducing "Puck":

"I said to my Mother in the morning, 'I go away to find a thing for my people, but I do not know whether I shall return in my own shape.' She answered . . ."

"True," Puck said. "The Old Ones themselves cannot change men's mothers even if they would."⁵¹

Again, *Fireworks* specifically and Anger's films generally can inform our understanding of this particular section of the poem. In the context of a series of poems that in part provides an insurrectionary model of homosexuality, the very reference to Kipling's *Rewards and Fairies* is rich with double meaning. Literally speaking, both Anger and Duncan believed in the existence of fairies. Anger himself was keen to return to—or reinvigorate—a self-consciously Romantic agenda that aimed to aggressively overturn hegemonic truths imposed on him in the name of reason, and found in the purported existence of fairies a model wholly apart from rational discourse. In a letter to Duncan and Jess written during the height of the Vietnam War, Anger wrote, "I've been reading Blake too, Robert; this has been a summer for returning to sources. Have spent a cantie day climbing the heathered correi and have found one of the fairies lairs beyond bank, bush and scare. Even to our sight the images advance."⁵² With absolutely no irony intended, Anger establishes his belief in fairies as he locates Blake's visionary poetics as a "source" for his own aesthetic.

Duncan appears to share Anger's fascination with the possibilities "fairies" offer him in terms of conceiving of alternatively gendered subjects. The gender-ambiguous "I" quoted above acknowledges that his/her body might very well transform into another shape after his/her quest, and, thanks to the reference to Kipling's book, we sense that such a metamorphosis would occur as a result of a mischievous fairy's spell. Duncan then shifts to the next stanza with a quotation from Puck, adhering to the theme of metamorphosis when Puck affirms, "The Old Ones themselves cannot change men's mothers even if they would."

The figure of Puck was crucial to Kenneth Anger's own self-fashioning. Anger included images of and allusions to Puck throughout his work—he named his company "Puck Productions," embossed his personal correspondence with an illustration of Puck, and so on. Indeed, a Puck-like figure features prominently over the fireplace in *Fireworks*. Puck helps Anger and Duncan to create gender trouble of all kinds. As Robert Haller explains:

Transfiguration and transformation are themes, working materials, that Anger has continued to explore in all of the years following his departure from Beverly Hills . . . One of Crowley's central maxims was "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law." For Anger, too, this is a primary premise. We can see evidence of this in his adoption of Puck in his film logo. Puck is described as "the name of a fancied, mischievous or tricky goblin or sprite, called also Robin Goodfellow and Hobgoblin." Puck is also a figure in the Reinhardt-Dieterle *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and a rebellious trickster who can additionally be associated with Lucifer, another classic figure Anger has embraced (classic in the canon of John Milton and *Paradise Lost*, not the Christian sense).⁵³

Haller's reference to "transfiguration and transformation" is particularly important. Metamorphoses are consistently presented as liberatory in Duncan and Anger's work—the transformation of the lovers at the end of "The Torso," the sailor become Angel of Light or Lugh in *Fireworks*. The figure of Puck is representative of this thematic concern, as Puck, a popular character in English folklore variously described as faerie, goblin, devil or imp was a shape-shifter. "Puck travels to England from Athens and back in a few minutes."⁵⁴ He "turns himself into a Will o' the Wisp, a horse, a headless bear, a roasted crab-apple, a three-legged stool."⁵⁵ Given this typology, Duncan's use of Puck in "Passages 19" is designed to usher in representations of troublemaking as it simultaneously refers the knowledgeable reader to Kenneth Anger's oeuvre. Throughout the *Passages* series as a whole, Duncan consistently inserts references to "rebels" like Puck in order to situate the poems as transgressive, order-defying texts.

 "Passages 20"

As space does not allow for a full reading of "STRUCTURE OF RIME XXVI" (also titled "PASSAGES 20: AN ILLUSTRATION"), dedicated "for Kenneth Anger," I want to end by referring the reader to several crucial links between the poem and *Fireworks*.

In the "Notes" section ending *Bending the Bow*, Duncan refers to the poem as "An Illustration, Structure of Rime XXVI, Passages 20: Maeterlinck, *The Blue Bird*. The poem illustrates a collage by Jess now in the collection of Kenneth Anger." However, we can see that Anger's *Fireworks* itself forms one of the sources for the imagery found in the poem. In the first prose stanza alone, for example, we are introduced to the by now familiar burning Christmas tree "in whose branches our lives are continually kindled," along with the substances "Fire, Water, Bread and Milk."

The stanza contains other subtle references to film. The final phrase, "and the Children set out with Fire, Water, Bread and Milk—animated Things—on a progress thru the stories of the house they live in," works to emphasize movement and visuality in the poem. As with the titular phrase "AN ILLUSTRATION," "—animated Things—" serves to emphasize the visual aspects of the text. "Animated" is often used in relationship to film (i.e., the animated cartoon). More importantly, "animated" reflects back on the process of serial composition in *poetry*, particularly as Duncan practices it here. When we consider that an animated cartoon or film is made by photographing a series of images in order to give the *illusion* of movement, the conversation between poem and film is all the more apparent. Duncan, working against his "modernist shame," does not seek to juxtapose static images for the Poundian purpose of encapsulating an "intellectual and emotional complex" in an "instant of time." Rather, Duncan seeks to animate the static image, to make it move within a serial sequence that spools from poem to poem, book to book.

As I mentioned earlier, we are almost immediately introduced to the Christmas tree, and accordingly our attention is drawn outside the poem to the texts preceding it as well as to *Fireworks* itself. This connection is established further when we consider the significance of "Tytyl," mentioned in the first line of the poem. Tytyl is a character in Maurice Maeterlinck's play *The Blue Bird*, which tells the story of Tytyl and his sister Mytyl who, after falling asleep following a disappointing Christmas (significantly given Anger's focus on "American Christmas") have a dream in which a fairy sends them on a quest to find "the bird that is blue." Importantly for the purposes of our reading, in 1940 Maeterlinck's play was adapted for the screen by director Walter Lang. Featuring Shirley Temple, the film version was widely understood to be Twentieth Century Fox's response

to MGM's *The Wizard of Oz*. (References to the Oz books, if not the film, abound throughout the Duncan/Anger correspondence.) Shirley Temple features prominently in Anger's mythology, and it is widely known that Temple was Anger's dancing partner when they were both children. Given that *The Blue Bird* contained elements echoed in *Fireworks* (i.e., Christmas, a quest narrative occurring in the context of a dream, metamorphoses, fairies, and so on), we find that Duncan's reference here is a rather camp in-joke designed, as he acknowledges in his dedication, for Kenneth Anger. Once again, the languages of cinema, myth, poetry and historical friendship interact in a highly complex fashion, one that is, however, not devoid of an almost lighthearted humor.

In the second prose stanza, we find Duncan conflating *Fireworks* with *The Blue Bird* as he continues to cause gender trouble:

From the boy's slight form the bride goes up to the closed room to open the one door she was forbidden to open. She turns the essential key of the story she seeks. In the gloom of the red chamber she spies upon the hanging corpses of life after life. From the moaning body of the boy the man he is breaks like a wrathful husband his fiery torso (68).

Duncan appears to be paraphrasing the moment early on in *Fireworks* where the Dreamer gets up from his bed and opens the magic door marked "GENTS," a door that, informed by our reading of "Passages 20," is perhaps meant to evoke all the magic doors typical of children's stories from *Alice in Wonderland* through the Narnia series. Additionally, while a cursory reading might suggest Duncan is granting both the male and female genders distinct presence in the poem, Duncan here blurs the boundaries between prose, poetry, and film as he complicates any essentialist reading of gender. The "bride" after all "goes up" "from the boy's slight form." There are a number of ways that we can read this. The "bride" may, most prosaically, simply have gotten up after resting against the "boy's slight form." However, the ambiguous syntax suggests the bride emanates from the boy, that female is combined with male.

That Duncan dedicates this poem for Kenneth Anger helps us consider the "bride" in light of *Fireworks*. After all, the Dreamer's role as he is carried in the arms of his heroic savior can certainly be interpreted to represent an iconic "lady in distress." Other relatively clear references to *Fireworks* in "Passages 20" include the evocation of the restoration ritual via the "body of the boy" breaking into "the man he is"; the phrase "his fiery torso," which reverberates with "Passages 18 (The Torso)"; phrases in succeeding stanzas including "The fire in the hearth"; "Death by fire"; "Fireblast and flood."

Conclusion

Unlike his literary predecessors Pound and Eliot, Duncan's use of formal techniques including seriality, pastiche, pronominal shifts, and disjunction was not in the retrospective service of mourning the rupture of a coherent tradition. Duncan believed his poems could work toward *progress*, not bereavement. And unlike contemporary avant-gardists, Duncan wished to *integrate* opposites as opposed to playfully foregrounding the materiality of the signifier. As I've argued throughout this paper, Duncan had Kenneth Anger's *Fireworks* as a model for such a project. Regarding the overall trajectory of the Magick Lantern series, Anger explained,

The last shot, in "Fireworks" is me in bed, and there is another boy in bed but his face is all bursting with white flames or light. This is the Lucifer brother, you see, the Unknown Angel side. In my own drama as an artist, I am always looking for him, that angel side, you know, the Lost Angel side. And it came out then, of course, much more clearly, in the "Invocation of My Demon Brother," only here it's the Dark One. And now, in "Lucifer Rising," I am trying to find the angel again, the Angel of Light."⁵⁶

Anger uses his cycle to achieve "integrality"; to summon forth the Angel of Light; to reconcile Good with Evil. Duncan was involved in much the same undertaking. Duncan used the "Passages" series in an effort to effect, if not successfully or finally, something we can call transcendence. Duncan, like Anger, was "always looking," and the "Passages" series appears to be his way of carrying out that search.

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NOTES

1. By "New American" or "Underground" cinema, I am referring to the period in cinema history beginning with Maya Deren's film *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943), extending through the New American film phenomenon of the 1960s exemplified by the institution of Jonas Mekas's Filmmaker's Cooperative and the subsequent national distribution of avant-garde films by artists including Stan Brakhage, Marie Menken, Gregory Markopoulos, James Broughton, Ron Rice, Jack Smith, and others.

2. Robert Duncan. "Notebooks." Unpublished diary, 14 April, 1954. The Robert Duncan Papers. Poetry/Rare Book Collection, State University of New York, Buffalo. Reproduced by permission of the Literary Estate of Robert Duncan, Jess Collins Trust.

3. Ibid. *Writing Writing: a Composition Book, For Madison 1953, Stein Imitations*. Albuquerque, New Mexico: Sumbooks, 1964.

4. Duncan also began decades-long friendships with filmmakers including James Broughton and film critics including Pauline Kael when he was a student at Berkeley.

5. Robert Duncan. *Fictive Certainties*. New York: New Directions, 1985. 30.

6. Ibid., 31.

7. Duncan's friendship with other filmmakers including James Broughton and Stan Brakhage suggests that the sexually transgressive and/or celebratory aspects of New American cinema—from Willard Maas's *Geography of the Body* to Stan Brakhage's *Flesh of Morning* to Jack Smith's *Flaming Creatures* to James Broughton's *The Bed*—offered Duncan a model for liberated sexuality which informed his increasingly candid writing. In a letter to Broughton, for example, Duncan tells Broughton how the "poetic world" of Broughton's films helped Duncan defeat his own "hypercritical censor," a comment which resonates with Duncan's crediting Anger for helping him get over his "modernist shame": "... your pleasure in my work still means much to me I find. Certainly in writing *Adam's Way* I was often thinking that you wld [sic] enjoy my numerous defeats of my own hypercritical censor, or maybe better than 'defeats' bewilderments. And certain poetic moods and modes of mine must always owe part of their inspiration to your poetic world that was for so long an environment I relisht [sic] in." Robert Duncan. Letter to James Broughton. 24 Feb. 1965. James Broughton Papers. Kent State University, Department of Special Collections and Archives.

8. Robert Duncan. "Notebooks." Unpublished diary, 18 Sep. 1955. The Robert Duncan Papers. Poetry/Rare Book Collection, State University of New York, Buffalo. In an interview with Scott MacDonald, the filmmaker Robert Nelson discusses the interrelated San Francisco poetry, art, and film scenes in the 1950s: "San Francisco had always been the center of interesting activities, but at that point, the Zen Center was established, with Suzuki Roshi. The literary scene, the beatniks, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, and City Lights Bookstore—all that was in San Francisco. The city was being validated as an art center in a larger context than anybody had felt before, though a few older artists from around the area were already recognized: Diebenkorn, for one, and Parks, and Bishoff [sic]" (261). Scott MacDonald. *Avant-Garde Film Motion Studies*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993. Reproduced by permission of the Literary Estate of Robert Duncan, Jess Collins Trust.

9. Ibid. 6 Jan. 1967.

10. *Fictive Certainties*, 61.

11. Robert Duncan. Letter to James Broughton. Fall 1952. Box 6, Folder 108. James Broughton Papers. Kent State University, Department of Special Collections and Archives. *The Adventures of Jimmy and Looney Tom* are the titles of Broughton's own films.

12. Peter Gizzi, ed.: *The House that Jack Built: The Collected Lectures of Jack Spicer*. Hanover, New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 1998. 52–53.

13. Robert Bertholf, afterword. *Medieval Scenes, 1950 and 1959*. By Robert Duncan. Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Libraries, 1978. n.p.

14. Quoted in Faas, 71.

15. An earlier version of this section on Duncan's "The Torso" and Anger's *Fireworks* was published previously as "The Transformative Sacrament of Homosexual Sex: Kenneth Anger's *Fireworks*, Robert Duncan's 'The Torso,' and the Enactment of Ritual." *Talisman: A Journal of Contemporary Poetry and Poetics*. Nos. 32–33 (Summer/Fall 2006): 18–26.

16. The first indication of film's presence in Duncan's *Bending the Bow* is found in "Structure of Rime XXII (for Dean Stockwell)." There are a variety of historical reasons for Duncan's reference to Stockwell. First, it is possible that Stockwell—a quintessential child actor of the 1940s adored for his cupid-like features—may have reminded Duncan of Anger's own role as a child actor in Max Reinhardt's 1935 feature film *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. According to Duncan biographer Lisa Jarnot, "Duncan and Jess were hanging out with Stockwell and someone named Tony (boyfriend?) quite a bit around the Topanga Canyon scene, 1970s." ("Duncan essay." E-mail to the author. 23 Aug. 2005.) Additionally, Stockwell was close friends with Marjorie Cameron, an actress who in 1954 appeared as The Scarlet Woman and as Lady Kali in Kenneth Anger's *Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome*. The final "Sacred Mushroom Edition" of *Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome* appeared in 1966. As the correspondence between Anger and Duncan makes clear, Duncan was interested in and approved of the film from its very inception. In a letter to Duncan dated 1954, Anger wrote "Thanks for your words and thoughts on Pleasure Dome. I'm touched, I'm glad to have some partisans. I myself have wanted to put it to sleep for a while, so I could gain a perspective; except for a showing for Cocteau at St. Jean some months ago, I haven't shown it; I'm waiting. Cocteau said of it: '... cette riche folie figée des etres Presque vivants . . .'" (Kenneth Anger. Letter to Robert Duncan. 3 Dec. 1954. The Robert Duncan Papers. Poetry/Rare Book Collection, State University of New York, Buffalo. Reproduced by permission of the Literary Estate of Robert Duncan, Jess Collins Trust.). Cameron also played the part of the Water Witch in the film *Night Tide* (1963), acting alongside Stockwell and Dennis Hopper. It is no coincidence that Cameron was chosen to play this part, as by this point she was well known in Hollywood for her participation in Anger's films and in occult circles generally. (Shadow. "Biography for Marjorie Cameron." *Internet Movie Database*. 2005. 24 Aug. 2005 <http://www.imdb.com>. Path: <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0131669/bio>).

Further references to film content and form appear in later poems. In "At the Loom," images both of a literal loom and of a film projector weave in and out of given lines. The thread spooling through the loom is consistently granted qualities of light: "luminous soft threads" suggests film itself, as the images embossed on the celluloid are latently incandescent. The line "the fire, the images, the voice" combines the "fire" that is the light of the projector, the "images" projected onto the screen, and the soundtrack or "voice"; "Let there be the clack of the shuttle flying / forward and back, forward and / back" (11–12) refers to the shuttle of the weaver's loom as it implies the shuttle of a film projector, which can fast forward and reverse film according to the wishes of the projectionist.

In the evocatively titled poem "What I Saw," Duncan ends with the lines "the slit of an eye opening in / time / vertical to the horizon" (14). This image might fruitfully be interpreted to represent the lens (the "eye") of a film projector projecting images onto the "horizon" of the screen.

The next poem, entitled "Where It Appears," finds the speaker of the poem composing "in the air," as if images are being projected not onto the material space of the blank page but into the unbounded atmosphere itself. Duncan asserts, "let image perish in image, / leave writer and reader / up in the air / to draw / momentous / inconclusions" (15), and so "writer and reader" are left watching images as they appear and extinguish sequentially.

"The Currents (Passages 16)" refers to Jean Genet's film *Un Chant d'Amour* (a cause célèbre in 1964/65 due to the fact that Jonas Mekas was charged with obscenity for showing the film at the Bridge Theater): "Then Jean Genet's *Un Chant d'Amour* / where we witness the continual song that runs thru the walls" (58-59). As if to emphasize the connection to film, "Passages 16" is followed by the poem "Moving the Moving Image."

"Structure of Rime XXV" refers to a "Fire Master" whose "rimes flicker and would blaze forth and take over." Employing the poetic equivalent of cinematic dissolve, Duncan writes in the final lines "the lion's face passing into / the man's face, flare into / flare, // the bright tongues of two / languages // dance in the one light" (37, my italics). The poem ends as if aching to escape the boundaries of the page in order to appear as light.

In "Passages 30 (Stage Directions)" there is a clear reference to Stan Brakhage's oeuvre in the line "Behind the lids / an after-image burns." (Brakhage is oft-quoted defining his films as attempts to illustrate hypnagogic vision, what people see through closed eyes.) Duncan's poem continues by making direct references to filmmaking: "He brings the camera in upon the gaping neck / which now is an eye of bloody meat glaring / from the womb of whose pupil sight // springs to see, two children of adversity." References to film reappear in the poem in the lines "thunderous hooves, striking // flashes of light from unbright matter" (128-32). It is tempting to read these lines as suggesting the very materiality of the "unbright" film strip emanating "flashes of light," particularly in the context of the book's repeated references to New American cinema and film technology.

We should also note that the spacing of the words and lines on the page in Duncan's poetry owes a clear debt to Charles Olson's essay "Projective Verse." The use of dramatically empty space between words, the placement of slashes within lines, the blend of prosaic blocks of text and purely lyrical gestures, all hearken back to Olson's desire to, as Michael Davidson puts it succinctly, "defeat Cartesianism by restoring the physiology of the poet's breath, musculature, movement—in the composition process" (241). ("Skewed by Design": From Act to Speech Act in Language Writing," *Artifice and Indeterminacy: An Anthology of New Poetics*, ed. Christopher Beach. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1999). What is interesting in light of Duncan's references to the technology of cinema is that Olson believed such a humanistic conflation of the poet's verse with the poet's body can (if ironically) be reenacted thanks to the technology of the modern typewriter. The typewriter "can, for a poet, indicate exactly the breath, the pauses, the suspensions even of syllables, the juxtapositions even of parts of phrases, which he intends." (23) (Charles Olson. "Projective Verse," *Selected Writings*, ed. Robert Creeley. New York: New Directions, 1966). Thus, Olson is a model for Duncan in terms of understanding how developing technology can help revive a shamanic conception of the poet's body as transmitting and projecting a literally magic series of chants/lines. The

title of Olson's essay is itself instructive, in that it relies on the language of cinema itself. Like the film projector, Olson's typewriter assists the poet in his attempts to liberate language from the page, to project words *out*.

17. Qtd. in Hutchison, 39.

18. See P. Adams Sitney, *Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde, 1943–2000* (New York: 2002), for a good narrative description of *Fireworks*.

19. Anna Powell. "A Torch for Lucifer: Occult Symbolism in the films of Kenneth Anger." *Moonchild: The Films of Kenneth Anger, Volume 1*. Ed. Jack Hunter. London: Creation Books, 2002. 56–67.

20. Robert Duncan, "Notebooks." Unpublished diary, 2 Jan. 1954. The Robert Duncan Papers. Poetry/Rare Book Collection, State University of New York, Buffalo. Reproduced by permission of the Literary Estate of Robert Duncan, Jess Collins Trust.

21. *Bending the Bow*, 68.

22. Sitney, 87.

23. Powell, 64.

24. Phillip V. Snyder, *The Christmas Tree Book: The History of the Christmas Tree and Antique Christmas Tree Ornaments*. New York: Penguin, 1977. 12.

25. Kenneth Anger. "Program Notes for Kenneth Anger's Magick Lantern Cycle." *Filmmaker's Cooperative Catalogue* (1966): n.p.

26. Sir James George Frazer. *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1922. 416–17.

27. Robert Duncan. Unpublished letter to Robert Creeley. January 2, 1960. The Robert Creeley Papers. Department of Special Collections, Stanford University. Series 1, Box 40, Folder 29.

28. *Bending the Bow*, 63.

29. Greg Hewett helpfully points out, "The madrone is a tree native to the western United States, and the eucalyptus, while originally imported from Australia, is abundant in California, as is the yew." (537). "Revealing 'The Torso': Robert Duncan and the Process of Signifying Male Homosexuality." *Contemporary Literature* 35.3 (Fall 1994). 522–46.

30. Patricia Monaghan. *The Encyclopedia of Celtic Mythology and Folklore*. New York: Facts on File, 2004. 296–97.

31. *Ibid.*, 297, my italics.

32. Máire MacNeill. *The Festival of Lughnasa: A Study of the Survival of the Celtic Festival of the Beginning of Harvest*. Dublin, Ireland: Oxford University Press, 1962. 205.

33. "It's about the angel-demon of light and beauty named Lucifer. And it's about the solar deity. The Christian ethos has turned Lucifer into Satan. But I show it in the Gnostic and pagan sense . . . Lucifer is the Rebel Angel behind what's happening in the world today. His message is that the Key of Joy is disobedience" (qtd. in Sitney, 113).

34. *Bending the Bow*, 63.

35. Hewitt, 537.

36. In Anger's case, "Transubstantiation is one of [his] favourite themes. Frequently this takes the form of a reverse Eucharist where essence is converted into substance; this process can be discovered in *Fireworks*, *Puce Moment*, *Rabbit's Moon*, *Scorpio*, and *Lucifer*. These films summon personifications of forces and spirits

whose dynamic powers appear to 'break though' and turn against the character and/or structure" (24). Carel Rowe. "Illuminating Lucifer." *Film Quarterly* 4.26. (1974): 24-34.

37. Cary Nelson. *Our Last First Poets: Vision and History in Contemporary American Poetry*. Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1981. 134.

38. I suspect that the lover who "pierces my side" is meant to evoke Longinus, the Roman soldier who pierced Jesus's sides as he hung from the Cross: "But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water" (see John 19: 34-35 in the King James version).

39. *Ibid.*, 64-65.

40. *Ibid.*, 65.

41. Hewitt, 542.

42. *Bending the Bow*, 67. These are Duncan's brackets as they appear in the poem.

43. Sitney, 87.

44. *Bending the Bow*, 66.

45. Robert Duncan. Letter to James Broughton. Fall 1952. Box 6, Folder 108. James Broughton Papers. Kent State University, Department of Special Collections and Archives.

46. Robert Duncan. "Notebooks." Unpublished diary, 1-2 December, 1964. The Robert Duncan Papers. Poetry/Rare Book Collection, State University of New York, Buffalo. Reproduced by permission of the Literary Estate of Robert Duncan, Jess Collins Trust.

47. George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*. 1833-36. Trans. E. S. Haldane. *Hegel-by-HyperText*. Ed. Andy Blunden. 1996. Marxists.org. 19 Aug. 2005 <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/hegel/works/hp/hpboehme.htm>.

48. Hesiod. *Works and Days*. Trans. Stanley Lombardo. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993. 24-26.

49. *Bending the Bow*, 26.

50. Rudyard Kipling. *Rewards and Fairies*. New York: Doubleday, 1910. xiii.

51. *Bending the Bow*, 67.

52. Kenneth Anger. Unpublished letter, 24 August, 1968. The Robert Duncan Papers. Poetry/Rare Book Collection, State University of New York, Buffalo. Reproduced by permission of the Literary Estate of Robert Duncan, Jess Collins Trust.

53. Robert A. Haller. *Kenneth Anger: A Filmmakers Filming monograph*. Film in the Cities / Walker Art Center. St. Paul / Minneapolis, Minneapolis: 1980. n.p.

54. K. M. Briggs. *The Anatomy of Puck: An Examination of Fairy Beliefs among Shakespeare's Contemporaries and Successors*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1959. 45.

55. *Ibid.*, 47.

56. Jonas Mekas. "Movie Journal." *Village Voice*, May 17, 1973: 89, 99-100. 89.

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