

Those quiet men who always stand on piers asked where we were going and when we said, "To the Gulf of California," their eyes melted with longing, they wanted to go so badly.

Juli and Sarah standing opposite each other.

Audience is standing.

Sarah

We want to talk about the Gulf of California. We could do one of several things to make it a performative work, but we have decided to let it form itself. Its boundaries are a book, two seas and a friendship; its duration a six days' charter time; its subject everything we could see and think and imagine; its limits - our own without reservation. 69

How does one organize an expedition: what equipment is taken, what sources read; what are the little dangers and the large ones? No one knows this at the start, one can only speculate.

What do we know? The expedition will be enclosed in the physical framework of start, direction, ports of call, and return. These you can forecast with some accuracy. One can know what kind of road to take, how much food will be necessary for a given crew for a given time, what medicines are usually needed - all this subject to accident, of course. 73

Whenever one has the chance to go and visit a particular place of longing - the wild, the desert, the Andes, the Baja - an idealized version of a place one looks for, that one has heard of, that one has read about, it is important to be aware of one's visiting privileges.

Whenever one has the chance to visit, one has to be aware that this visit might not be as exciting for the visited as it is to the visitor.

When one has the chance to visit one shouldn't forget that it is not much more than that: a visit. Any traveler, wanderer or walker will never be anything more than a visitor. A philosophical vacation-goer, searching for a break from one's habits; searching for someone else's way of looking at the world. But there is one thing missing: an invitation.

Can you mutate when you migrate? Or are you always the colonizer?

Juli

Sarah was reading a book about the Gulf of California called *The Log From the Sea of Cortez*. In 1940, novelist John Steinbeck and marine biologist Ed Ricketts hired a sardine fishing boat in Monterey Bay called The Western Flyer. With a four-man crew they spent six weeks travelling around the Baja California peninsula to collect specimens from the Gulf of California. They thought their collecting methods were very different from the usual. In most cases, collecting is done by those who specialize in one or more specimen. For example, someone specialized in collecting hydroids won't notice any other life form in the collecting area. The sponge or the anemone would be just in the way

of the hydroid. Ed and John collected large numbers of species, erratically and unorganized, which makes for a completely different collection. 122-123

John writes in *The Sea of Cortez*:

Puts on hat

In a way, ours is the older method, somewhat like that of Darwin on *the Beagle*. He wanted to see everything, rocks and flora and fauna; marine and terrestrial.

We came to envy this Darwin on his sailing ship. He had so much room and so much time. He could capture his animals and keep them alive and watch them and out of long consideration of the parts he emerged with a sense of the whole. This opposed to the modern process of looking quickly at the whole field and then diving down to a particular fragment. This is neither a good nor a bad method; it is simply the one of our time. We can look with longing back to Charles Darwin, staring into the water over the side of the sailing ship, but for us to attempt to imitate that procedure would be romantic and silly. For we first, before our work, are products of our time. 123

Take off hat, change tone to 'comment', move

Well, you can look at the old way of accumulating with nostalgic longing or you can look at it critically from another time again and again and again. We picked the second option.

Sarah

About 75 years later, we visited the same coasts and harbors as *The Western Flyer*. We didn't collect any sea animals or specimen, and we didn't have a boat. By car we drove across the southern tip and stopped to observe the life of the littoral. We looked at the distribution of the land and the wealth and the power of the hominid vertebrates. We recorded the species and numbers, how they live together, how sites and situations are regulated, what they eat and drink, how their wealth is produced, who has stolen what from whom and who has built the ugliest house. The fight between the existing communities and the colonizing real-estate developers is getting worse every year. Capital changed a region that was once barren and unwanted into an exclusive paradise for the rich, leaving behind traces of destroyed communities forced to move somewhere else.

Obsessively, we gathered a subjective collection of Sally Lightfoot crabs, of one girl in a town called Melitón Albañez, of owners of a small business, of gringo's that had moved to the *baha* years ago, of real-estate developers called Paul Clark, of backpackers marching through the desert. Obsessively, we gathered a subjective collection of fishermen that lost what's been their job for generations and are now forced to work in the tourist industry. Obsessively, we gathered a subjective collection of indigenous traces, of surfers and of all the human trash left behind anywhere in anyplace, with in the

back of our head the constant pulsation of the book that describes the land as abandoned, harsh, beautiful and boring.

In a world of binaries there is: the vertebrate and the invertebrate. The powerful and the powerless. The dead and the alive. The land and the sea. The thing and its name. The collector and the collected. The writer and the biologist. There's order, ideas and things. In a world of binaries, the boat travels from **A to B to C to B to A**, in a linear way.

We travelled from B to A to C to A to B to C to B to A to D to G to A to R to A. Past, present and future were not ahead or behind, above or beneath, but in between. There was no collector or collected, no either or, no living or not, the thing has a name amongst several other names.

There is only the visitor and the visited.

To claim not to know what's previously been claimed known.

Hat on – step to front of table, Juli step to other side of the table

“If you steer toward[s] an object, you cannot perfectly and indefinitely steer directly at it. You must steer to one side, or run it down; but you can steer exactly at a compass point, indefinitely. That does not change. [...] The compass simply represents the ideal, present but unachievable.” 102

Hat off

Juli

So here we go, one trip into the Gulf in a grey Honda fit, chaperoned by a lady named Antonia and the book.

With every new chapter, write the title on an A4. Hang on the wall following the order of the trip.

THE TRIP - Sarah

Juli - melodramatically

“Those quiet men who always stand on piers asked where we were going and when we said, “To the Gulf of California,” their eyes melted with longing, they wanted to go so badly. They were like the men and women who stand about airports and railroad stations, and universities and art spaces; they want to go away, and most of all they want to go away from themselves. For they do not know that they would carry their globes of boredom with them wherever they went.” 106

DAY 1: LA PAZ - Sarah writes

Sarah

The Western Flyer's harbor was Monterrey; it took them weeks to get to La Paz.

Put on hat

"[It] was Good Friday, and we scrubbed ourselves and put on our best clothes and went to church, all of us. We were a kind of parade on the way to church, feeling foreign and out of place. In the dark church it was cool, and there were a great many people, old women in their black shawls and Indians kneeling motionless on the floor. It was not a very rich church, and it was old and out of repair." 175

"And then we thought of what they are, and we are - products of disease and sorrow and hunger and alcoholism. We are the products of our suffering. These are factors as powerful as other genetic factors. To cure and feed would be to change the species, and the result would be another animal entirely. We wonder if we would be able to tolerate our own species without a history of syphilis and tuberculosis. We don't know." 176

Hat off

Juli

And our harbor was La Paz.

Search for map - Get map. This is it. Stay with map. - Sarah holds map, Juli points at it.

La Paz is one of the two major cities on the peninsula. It lies in a circular bay, embraced by the Mogote - *point at it* - which is this long thing here.

The book says that everyone in the area knows about the greatness of La Paz and that you can get anything in the world there. It is a huge place - not of course so monstrous as Guaymas or Mazatlán -, but beautiful out of all comparison. It is a proud thing to have been born in La Paz, and a cloud of delight hangs over the distant city from the time when it was the great pearl center of the world. The robes of the Spanish kings and the stoles of bishops in Rome were stiff with the pearls from La Paz. And it is an old city, as cities in the West are old, and very respected in the eyes of the people of the Gulf. Guaymas is busier, they say, and Mazatlán gayer, perhaps, but La Paz is *antigua*. 161

Sarah

Antigua

Juli
Antigua

Sarah
Antonia said it was pronounced antigua.

Juli
The Gulf and the Gulf ports have always been unfriendly to colonization. Three attempts were made before a settlement would stick. In the early 1500, Cortes sent an expedition to La Paz, then called Airapi, but they get into a deadly fight with the natives, the Guaycuras. Cortes organizes a second expedition, but this time he wants to go himself. He arrives and thinks it is an island and calls it Bahia de la Santa Cruz. Cortes tries to establish a colony but fails because it's too rough and they don't know how to grow food. By the end of the century a third attempt brings another Spanish man to set up camp – but it was only a camp. This is when they change the name to La Paz. And I think it was not until the 18th century that the Jesuit monks came on a mission to the peninsula. 162
Humans are not much wanted on the peninsula, but La Paz drew men from all over the world for its pearl oysters. Antonia told us some story about it. 162

Sarah
Story (read/tell in own words):
A boy found a gigantic pearl by accident. He knew its value was so great that he would never have to work again. In this one pearl there was the ability to be drunk as long as he wished, to marry any one of a number of girls, and to make many more a little happy too. In this great pearl lay salvation. He went to La Paz with the pearl in his hand and his future bright. He took his pearl to a broker and was offered so little, he knew he was cheated. Then he carried his pearl to another broker and was offered the same amount. After a few more visits he came to know that the brokers were only the many hands of one head and that he could not sell his pearl for its value. He took it back to the beach and hid it under a stone. That night he was beaten unconscious and his clothes were searched. The next night he slept at a friend's house and both got injured and the whole house searched. Then he went inland to lose his chasers and was tortured. Very angry and hurt he sneaked back to La Paz in the night and he crept like a hunted fox to the beach, took out his pearl from under the stone, cursed it and threw it as far as he could into the sea. He was a free man again with his soul in danger and his food and shelter insecure. And he laughed a great deal about it.162-163

Juli puts on hat to comment on parable.

"This seems to be a true story, but it is so much like a parable that it almost can't be. This boy is too heroic, too wise. He knows too much and acts on his knowledge. In every way, he goes contrary to

human direction. The story is probably true, but we don't believe it; it is far too reasonable to be true."

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Sarah

We just thought that La Paz was very hot and thanked god many times for air-conditioning. We only saw a black pearl in a statue of an oyster on the Malecon, and in the movie of course. One American woman told us there is actually a funny version of a pirate on the Malecon that looks just like Jack Sparrow. He's painted silver, and when you give him some pesos you can take a photo with him. She also said she moved to La Paz five years ago with her husband and now she takes care of the tourists that want to ride horses on the ranch of Chayo the Mexican.

Puts on hat

"On the water's edge of La Paz a new hotel was going up, and it looked very expensive. Probably the airplanes will bring week-enders from Los Angeles before long, and the beautiful poor bedraggled old town will bloom with a Floridian ugliness." 177

Juli

Si, we know. We saw it. Melitón Melitón Melitón

DAY 2: Melitón Albañez - Juli writes

Juli

Melitón Melitón Melitón

On day 2 of the visit, we drove to Todos Santos pueblo magico.

– *Get map. This is it – hold map together
point at map during text*

After lunch, we tried to get to the Pacific Ocean. By 3pm we ended up in a tiny tiny town called Melitón Albañez where we asked a local girl how to get to the sea. For fishing? She asked. No, to take a photo. She said that to take a photo of the sea we should go to La Paz. She also taught us an elaborate high-five.

Do elaborate high-five.

We never made it to the Pacific, only saw it at the horizon.

Sarah

Put on hat

We sat on a crate of oranges and thought how great most biologists are, the tenors of the scientific world - temperamental, moody, randy, loud-laughing, and healthy. Once in a while one meets the other kind - what used to be called a 'dry-ball' - but those are not really biologists. They are the embalmers of the field, the picklers who see only the preserved form of life in formaldehyde without any of its principle. The true biologist deals with life, with crawling energetic life, and learns something from it, learns that the first rule of life is living. The true biologist proliferates in all directions. 95

Take hat off

We sat on a crate of oranges discussing how to proliferate in all directions without destroying that what we're thriving for. The dry-balls might be boring in their singular view of the preserved form of life, at least they are not touching, captivating and changing it. We are not here with the intention to destroy or to judge, but in doing so aren't we exactly destroying and judging? Every visit has consequences.

With the car we drove to random places to look, to look at the peninsula, to look, not to compare, but to see, to understand. Random places, for how can it not be unless one has some sort of relation to the place? How can we be more nuanced than those two men and their crew, that were here to collect sea specimen, whilst in the meantime discussing the land and its inhabitants in a stereotypical

manner. John had many presumptions about people, comparing many of them to an idealized version of the human: to him the western white male.

Juli starts writing Bahia de los Suenos

How can we discuss this place without being gratuitous and indeterminate? It would be good to know the impulse truly, and not to be confused by the “services to science” or the “services to art” clichés, or those other little mazes into which we lure our minds so that they will not know what we are doing. 69

DAY 3: Bahia de los Sueños - Juli writes

Juli – *with selling voice*

“On the eastern coast of Baja California Sur is a stretch of bays and beaches that remain as secluded today as when Cortez landed here in 1535. Bahía de los Sueños (the Bay of Dreams), located 35 miles south of La Paz, is an exclusive resort community that will offer waterfront custom residences, an elite fishing club, a Tom Doak 18-hole golf course, resort hotels and spas, and the tranquility that can only come from such a natural setting. A road that has been traveled by locals for 400 years leads to this hidden fishing village. This is the undiscovered bay of Baja California Sur. It has the feel of an old Mediterranean fishing village, but it is Baja to the core.” (www.bahiasuenos.com)

Sarah

Once the Bay of Dreams was called Ensenada de Muertos – Cove of the Death.

Get map,

*juli where's the map of the shark bay,
juli gets the map and holds it. This is it.*

Sarah

When the Bay of Death became the Bay of Dreams, everyone living there had to change name as well. Who will give you another name when you don't have access to select one yourself?

Yet you go back every day. To work. To serve. Because you were once living here.

Ensenada de los Muertos is the past. In 1998 the papers were signed and it became the Bay of Dreams. Welcome to the world's aquarium.

One doesn't find a different paradigm, **we make it**. If there is no past, present, future in a linear way, the bay still exists. If you want to stay on Ensenada de Los Muertos, you have to make it because that place is lost as a past, but not as a future. You have to make it habitable through destroying its present state.

You have to make it habitable without destroying its barrenness - for that is what attracted you there in the first place.

I told you I would come back because I could not stay. That was only a part of the truth. And we both felt sad. And I cannot come back because I don't even know your name.

How to migrate without destroying?

Juli - *with selling voice*

"Baja's Natural Residential Resort Community. Italian style. Mexican Prices. Invest in gated communities designed with you and your family's comfort and safety in mind."

Experience. Tenacity. Results.

Legacy. Tradition. Lifestyle. Location.

Private. Gated. Retreat.

Imagine. Find. **Own.**

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Antonia has one great passion; she loves rightness and hates wrongness and thinks that speculation is a complete waste of time. (86) On the way from Pescadero Point to Cabo Pulmo, she asked us about our way of collecting for the performance. If we were planning on using the same split view on the world as Ricketts and Steinbeck had? Why did we choose to work with this book?

She said: The randomness of their research should not be a method for an artwork. For what are you adding to the discussion? Another work that's indetermined, that leaves interpretation and analysis to the intellect and interest of the viewer?

You come from Brussels and Mexico City to this place you are not from; what are the standards by which you research and observe? Those men come from Monterey USA to this place where they are not from, with a scientific research method that is unbound and random. But at the same time, they refer to the complete peninsula, the animals, the species, the plants and the humans as the 'other' which creates an unequal distinction; a rational and finite universe. And all this while it's been long established that the world is not you and the other, but exists out of a myriad of complexities, human and non-human, in an infinite universe.

Their approach is as Western as their Western Flyer. And this makes me suspicious about yours. For what is your approach? You don't want to make the mistake of believing that when something is researched and observed through the frame of art, it would imply you can be as free and random as John and Ed thought they could be.

She repeated: you are destroying; the Gulf changes the moment you visit it. Not because you are in some power position as the real-estate developers, but just that any tiny gust of uninvited, privileged wind could be a transgressor. It is not essential for you to be there; you are not running away from a critical situation in your own home.

She made us feel like shit.

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DAY 4: CABO PULMO - Juli writes

Juli

We arrived at Cabo Pulmo and Antonia said that she'd never seen a national park this dirty. But later at the beach she said that it was actually the nicest beach she had ever been to.

Sarah get the map of Cabo Pulmo. This is it. *Takes map from Sarah and puts it on the floor.*

Paul Clark is a man whose thought and emotion all had gone into his job. As a real-estate developer he has been building homes for 40 years. In 1996, Paul and his wife and their development and construction business moved to the Cabo Pulmo Area. Paul learned the Baja building techniques and imported sustainable and green building concepts to the local market,

Sarah *interrupts*

in dollars,

Juli

and has been building sustainable housing and development sites here ever since. There is no one who is more in with Cabo Pulmo than Paul Clark.

Welcome to the East Cape.

Sarah

Doña Maria Griselda Castro Montaño is 80 something and has lived in Cabo Pulmo all of her life. She was not able to dedicate her life to the sea, like her father and brothers, but she occasionally accompanied them in the canoe to go fishing. She says: "We would fish the chopas, the cabrillas; I did not know how to, but I would watch my brothers and father. Fishing was for eating, there were no prohibitions, and all the time I would see so many garropas, meros and sharks. One of them was very big, we called it cornuda, she has two horns and was very pretty. People would come from outside to buy the hammer sharks, and left very good little money because we were poor. Doña Maria Griselda Castro Montaño lives on the main road. She has 8 grandchildren and 22 great grandchildren. She confirms that the happy times were back in the days, extremely poor, but alone. Now the cattle is gone, the family was robbed of its land by a gringo named Colt, who married a niece of the family for legitimizing his actions.

On the day we die we will not take anything.

Juli

When two crayfish meet they usually fight. One could say that they might not fight in the future. But without any mutation it is not likely that they will lose this aggressive feature. And perhaps the human

species is not likely to stop fighting without some psychic mutation which at present, at least, does not seem imminent. 84

Sarah

Back on the beach, Antonia asked whether a migration into another way of understanding the world means a migration into another world or a mutation into another being?

Juli

The next day as we left Antonia said 'From here it only gets worse'.

DAY 5: CABO SAN LUCAS - Sarah writes.

Sarah get the map and hold it. This is it.

Juli puts on hat

Cabo San Lucas finds itself at the rocky bottom of the peninsula. There is a famous cluster of rocks called 'The Friars' sticking out of the water proudly at the point where the Pacific Ocean and the Gulf of California meet; indicating the end of a thousand miles of peninsula and mountain. The uppermost rocks are full of Sally Lightfoots, that beautiful red crab, with its long legs and sensitive nature. There is a little harbor and a few houses along the edge of the beach. 114

A sad little town. Gives hat to Sarah

A winter storm and a great wave had wrecked it in one night. We set foot on land. In front of the local cantina were some young men, hanging and waiting for something to happen. And they had been waiting for several generations for something to happen.

Takes off hat, moves place

How different this scripted beach was from what we encountered in Cabo San Lucas. There were jet skis and loud techno techno music, and bananas with 10 people on it and 47 boats with a glass bottom view that can bring you to those beautiful rocks at Land's End. Burned people drinking piña colada in the waves of the once transparent water, shouting at each other. Other humans, red as lobsters, parading on the beach, walking as if there inside thigh muscles were sore from riding a horse for too many hours without stretching. Elderly men with younger women were hanging out in private patios on the beach. We could pay in dollars, no problem. Want to pay in dollars? No problem. Dollars, yes, very welcome.

There was not a sign of Sally, there wasn't even a fish. In the distance we saw the great friars. One looks like Scooby Doo, one of the boatmen told us.

Juli

What if the original communities in San Lucas don't have an interest in a rock formation that looks like Scooby Doo? What if they don't have an interest to change their fishing life for a job carrying suitcases and serving people? In this encounter the choice is not mutual, it's biased and one-sided. But who cares? People are spending money, drinking beers, making out, having fun, listening to sweet sweet beats in their safe and large-scale tourist's hubs. All together in the hot sea!

And as we left the beach Antonia whispered 'from here it only gets better' - but we knew that was a lie.

DAY 6: Isla Espiritu Santo - Juli writes

Sarah

On Espiritu Santo Island we finally saw Sally.

Juli

Sarah, I need el Cajete, El Coyote and Isla La Partida

Sarah shows map – Juli: this is it

Sarah

The factors of a trip: the car, the many personality phases, the visited and their stories give an expedition a character of its own, so that one may say of it, "That was a good, kind trip." Or, "That was a mean one."

We ran from collecting station to collecting station, following a journey The Western Flyer did before us, and when the night came and the tents were put up, a quiet came over the land and the trip slept. And then we talked and speculated, talked and drank beer. And our discussions ranged from the loveliness of visiting a place to the complexities of the constructed relationships in every other way.

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Both step forward towards the table

From studying to wandering.

From wandering to collecting.

From collecting to destroying.

To writing to asking to touching to doubting to studying.

From Antonia's certainness to Calida Fornax.

From A to A. **To B.**

Melitón Albañez in the Mirage of the Gulf, where visual distance is a highly variable matter.

We wondered whether Antonia's certainties were ever tipped.

Juli – *melancholic – soft voice*

We wanted to go so badly. Like the men and women who stand about airports and railroad stations and universities and art spaces; we want to go away, and most of all we want to go away from ourselves. For we do not know that we would carry our globes of boredom and destruction with us wherever we went. 106

Both sit down

Sarah

At 9.30 am we arrived in Mexico City – Antonia said that it was the best plane she'd ever been on, and she also didn't fail to mention again her opinion about the intentions and consequences of this trip. We cannot ignore our intrusion.

She said:

Juli

In most indigenous worldviews, there are many perspectives and many worlds. In these perspectives, to know is not reduced to recognizing an object, to know is to attribute to it vitality and a soul, to acknowledge its subjectivity. This enables contact with the perspective of other things and beings around us. This enables a migration into the living-world, as a curious, new resident and not as a tourist.

Distinctions and categorizations might still remain, but no longer on a vertical plane where one thing is exceeding the other. A rock is not less living than a tuna steak. A shark is not more alive than the water it swims in. A person is not more, or less, displaceable, disposable or killable than any other. All of it is important or none of it is.

Paul Clark and Doña Maria are not equal; the hierarchy is evident. What's urgent: a potentiality for coexistence. Between Paul Clark and Antonia. Between John and Ed. Between Paul Clark and Ed and the invertebrates. Between John and Antonia and the books they read. Between the tuna steak and Sally, and you and me and Sarah and Doña Maria.

Sarah puts hat on, stand up

"We wonder whether the paradoxes of our times are not finally mounting to a conclusion of ridiculousness that will make the whole structure collapse." 105

Take off hat

It is easy to grow tired of visiting. At first the scenery seems bright and every creature draws the attention. The picture is wide and colored and beautiful. But after a day and a half the attention becomes tired, the colors fade, and the field narrows to an individual animal, a stereotype. Interest and observation, enthusiasm and sharpness is killed by weariness until finally they retire into easy didacticism.

And perhaps this is the same narrowing we observe in relation to ourselves and the peninsula - a person looking at reality brings one's own limitations to the world. If she has strength and energy of mind the landscape stretches both ways, digs back to electrons and leaps space into the universe and fights out of the moment into non-conceptual time. Then ecology has a synonym which is ALL.

145-146

Juli

Dear Sally,

You exist! We saw you on the rocks that day we went to Espiritu Santo.

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