

## Andrew Schelling / SOUTH PARK CHORUS

1.

“The whole air is full of souls, who are worshipped  
as the daemons and heroes, and it is these who send  
humankind dreams and omens.”

—Alexander Polyhistor

A feather robe for the planet  
a weave of migratory songbirds up from Mexican forests  
—here comes a pair  
quick flight over the ridge  
birds or a nuptial  
song on the wing?  
Dipping for insects another sharp call—  
metabolic thought feathered aloft  
or urge to stitch  
two realms of air—?  
Oh forage with sharp  
eyes the woodlands  
seasonal resident  
adrift over town & farmland  
Roadsides nor thickets stopping the flight, this  
temperate zone—  
& vast flocks, true'd by instinct arrive  
*as toward a bridge over worlds.*

The planet assumes a feather robe  
“condors, huge condor-like teratorns, carrion storks, eagles”  
In the Noh play  
the *sennin* or fairy  
*a bridge over worlds*  
performs her dance  
what does the patch-robe'd wandering priest want?  
fixes an exacting eye on her,  
alone & moving  
bare limbs with cold dignity  
Lost feather robe draped over a pine branch in moonlight  
flat feather edge glints  
mottled shade under pine boughs

her feet birdlike—  
She dances to recover the robe  
her feather'd robe  
    a dance to recover her robe.

2.

To have tracked the skyways in annual journey—  
have you tracked the skyways?  
To have heard  
    numerous voices aloft—

“In 1779, with the element of surprise in mind, an outraged Spanish governor of New Mexico, Juan Bautista De Anza, marched his force up the Rio Grande Valley, through the San Luis Valley, and over Poncha Pass to the headwaters of the Arkansas River. In doing so, he made the first documented penetration of the inner Rockies. Passing under the Fourteeners of the Sawatch Range, the Governor turned east over Trout Creek Pass, crossed South Park, and descended onto the plains just south of Pike's Peak.”

A bird scolds the intruder. Cocking its crested head—  
Note  
a low *churr*  
    also *phew*—

straighter posture than the female  
lacks rusty wash on its dusk-color'd breast  
    *as toward a bridge over worlds*

And from the mix of common  
European grasses  
brought in by grazing—seeds lodged in a cattle hoof—  
    blue gama   Canada Bluegrass   foxtail barley  
a buzz of insect tribes circles the “yard”  
    season's arrivant

300 years  
of gunpowder civilization  
the whirring & beating still with us  
    Russian thistle & snakeweed  
entered the New World.  
What has been missed  
in the crosshairs  
    of utterance—?—a single  
clearly struck thought  
    cross the sky quick between branches.

3.

*Some dance on a small  
patch of meadow  
hoof or claw in the grasses—  
    others perform on the wind*

Or from Blaser to lift the  
evolutionary line     *confounding*  
    *the gods and the fish*  
lucid night visions  
hoof or claw in the grass  
fish with feet     babes with tails  
Earth in South Park  
    open'd the gate between species—  
I thought it the Gates of Horn.

And wakened alone next to the meadow at  
10,000 feet  
    a few hot cinders  
last night's fire pale in the dawn  
    one pronghorn hoof deep in sod-grass  
out on the meadow  
I heard the kick of his hooves

feeding on paintbrush, uprooting the  
pale cluster'd buds too pale  
to call red

*aetiolate?*

behavior no deer would exhibit  
stood & stepp'd  
far from the wood's edge

4.

A tract of ground

“winter pasture for deer or other grazing animals”

*geard gyrdan*

to gird or enclose

Latin *hortus* and in the distance

reconstructed old *\*ghor-o*

gives way to Greek *choros*

gives onto the dancing ground

gives *choros*, “a special enclosure for dancing?”

gives dance & the tragic inflected

bridge of the

chorus

*as toward a bridge over worlds*

5.

“You could have seen herds of horses, long-horned bison, camels,  
antelopes of several species, and mammoths...giant dire wolves,  
and tapirs...”

And for three days

we had to lie over

—I got it out of a traveler's journal—  
three days while the bison herd pass'd  
all passage westward  
    blocked for three days  
Three days dust and hooves  
up from the book's page  
    young men cut off from dreams  
Three days of migration or three days  
locked up with books  
a bison herd fifty miles long on the plains  
three days rapt by old language intricacies  
    we lived "on the hoof"  
lock'd wits with ancestral harbingers  
three days sifting back words  
    & cast a forward glance at the  
map like a spy  
Three days waiting over  
while swift green summer grass parted with thunder &  
crushed underfoot  
    a wing-tip, a shoulder pelt, knee—

This was the study—  
in high mountain meadow  
to have heard the numberless feet of the chorus

I reached into the poem  
I heard the feet of the *choros*.

\* \* \*

*Antero Reservoir Quadrangle*  
*Chaffee County*  
*Colorado*