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**THE LYING WOMAN: AVANT-GARDE COLLABORATION
IN JO HARVEY ALLEN'S ALT-COUNTRY**

by

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B.A., Natural History and Humanities, Texas Tech University, 2008
M.S., Geography, Texas Tech University, 2013

DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

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DEDICATION

For Gramier

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ABSTRACT

Jo Harvey Allen is an artist, writer, and actress whose work is cited as transforming performance art in the 1980s. In this dissertation, I analyze the nature of Jo Harvey's collaborative process, which spans over five decades, to better understand her positionality in avant-garde and alt-country genres. I argue that Jo Harvey's collaboration is familial, gendered, and emplaced. My goal with this project is to intervene with literature on musicians and artists from West Texas, specifically Lubbock, through an expansion of the contributions of women. This dissertation is a product of my own collaborative efforts with Jo Harvey, as I conducted my research while performing the role of her studio assistant in Santa Fe.

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Introduction

Louis, darling, listen. I'll tell you something if you promise not to tell another living soul. Now, I'd never tell this to anybody else but I believe that part of my extra-psychoic abilities connected up with the fact that I was born with a tail. Little ol' bitty hairy thing about that long. Had it surgically removed when I was just five years old. My mama kept it in a fruit jar up in the medicine cabinet right between the 4 way cold tablets and the monkey blood. I'd get up every morning, first thing I'd go in there in the bathroom, brush my teeth and stare at my own tail at the same time. Now something like that can give you power and that's the truth. Then Mama got a wild hair on Sunday and she decided to go and make a lot of money off of it, you know? Take it out to a big ol' swap meet and sold it to Lyndon Johnson's top secret service agent. And he told a good friend of mine that he was gonna sell it for even more money to the Smithsonian Institute. Shit, I said he might as well it wasn't going to do him any good. It wasn't his tail. Gee, I'll tell you, I could write a book. That thing would be a best seller.¹

In 1986, David Byrne released *True Stories*, a satirical film about eccentric characters who live in a fictional town called Virgil, Texas. Though the town of Virgil is not a real place, it is based on the general physical and cultural landscape of Texas in the early eighties. Inspired by tabloid magazines and the unconventional narrative style of the film *Nashville*, Byrne incorporated non-actors alongside professional actors to home in on (extra)ordinary realities lived by the peculiar locals of Virgil.²³ Jo Harvey Allen played the Lying Woman, known for blurting “a mesmerizing mélange of outrageous whoppers” including the excerpt above.⁴ In the scene where she delivers these lines, she is on a date with Louis Fine, played by John

¹ Jo Harvey Allen as “The Lying Woman” in *True Stories* (1986).

² *True Stories*, directed by David Byrne (1986; Burbank, CA: Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc., 2018), Blu-Ray Edition.

³ Joan Tewkesbury, who wrote the script for *Nashville*, brought Jo Harvey to Byrne's attention as someone who would be a good fit for this film.

⁴ Hilliard Harper, “Performer's Storytelling Roots Help Her Spin Own Tale of Artistic Success,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 21, 1989, 1.

Goodman. Louis is a man “looking for a wife who goes so far as to take an ad out on local television.”⁵

Though Jo Harvey now claims twenty-three television and film acting credits, including *Fried Green Tomatoes* (1991), *The Other Kind* (2015), and most recently, *Killers of the Flower Moon* (2023), the Lying Woman best represents the tension between real life and acting and performance and performativity for Jo Harvey.⁶⁷ The back-and-forth play between truth and lies has stuck with her ever since.⁸ For example, in a piece for the Santa Fe arts and culture publication *Pasatiempo* called “Telling Lies,” Simone Ellis included one of Jo Harvey’s stories about Santa Fe: “‘I was in the doctor’s office the other day with my feet in the stirrups, looking like I was giving birth to *Robo Cop Three*, when in walked three masked bandits with loaded guns. They were in the front room as we were...well, the doc and I were very quiet.’ The event actually happened,” Ellis writes, “but as she relayed the story, [Jo] Harvey began looking exactly like the Lying Woman from *True Stories*.”⁹ As Ellis points out, when Jo Harvey tells stories, the distinction between truth and lies blurs easily,

⁵ David Byrne, Interview with David Letterman, *Late Night with David Letterman*, CBS, video, 6:38, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zSjf0kqHGzI>.

⁶ From this point on in the dissertation, I will refer to Jo Harvey Allen as “Jo Harvey.” Considering that she shares a last name with Terry Allen, her husband, whom I also mention often throughout this paper, I address them both by their first names in order to avoid confusion.

⁷ Jo Harvey’s was nominated for Best Lead Actress by the International Filmmaker Festival of World Cinema Berlin for her role in *The Other Kind*.

⁸ Throughout the entire collection of press clippings in her archive, journalists consistently reference, truth, lies, and tales when they write about Jo Harvey, sometimes including one of these three identifying words in the titles of their articles. For example, Robert Taylor’s article for The Tribune Calendar on April 12, 1987 is titled “True Stories – well, almost – from the toast of Fresno.” Margaret Jones wrote a piece for *L.A. Reader* titled “Tall Tales of Low Living.” And, Ken Robinson wrote an article titled “Allen brings her Texas-style version of the truth to Fresno” for the *Fresno Bee*.

⁹ Ellis, Simone. “Telling Lies.” *Pasatiempo*, September 27, 1991, 26.

and sometimes it is difficult to tell whether or not she is in character. Jo Harvey wrote a lot of her own lines in *True Stories*, including the excerpt above.



Figure 1 Figure with tail from Jo Harvey's studio by Frank X. Tolbert 2. Photo by author, 2024. Used with permission.

The funny thing is, the tale she tells about her tail isn't even a lie. Or is it? I still don't know. When you enter the front door to Jo Harvey's studio in Santa Fe, New Mexico, on the wall just to your right hangs a piece of art featuring a woman with a tail (see figure 2). I've looked at it for eight years now, and over that period of time, I landed on the assumption that Jo Harvey was actually born with a tail. I asked her over the phone on January 19, 2024 to confirm this and I didn't get confirmation nor denial, just laughter.

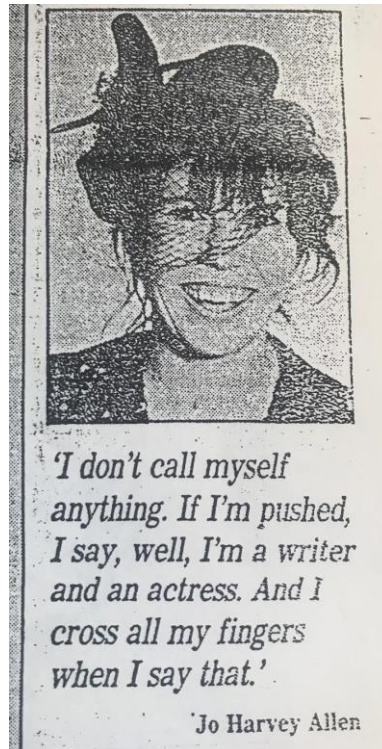


Figure 2 Image from *The Tribune Calendar* article by Robert Taylor, 1987.

“Jo Harvey Allen was born in Lubbock, Texas, on the Day of the Dead.”¹⁰ In Jo Harvey’s press books, you can find many different versions of her biography, printed out over the years and often attached to lists of compiled quotes from journalists. I am drawn to the ones that begin with the birth-and-death sentence above. She will always *be* a paradox. Born in 1942 in Lubbock, Texas, “Jo Harvey’s mother sold dresses in a clothing store and her father was a carpenter.”¹¹ Jo Harvey spent a lot of time with her two grandmothers growing up; one was very proper and the other loved listening to records, dancing, and had no problem going “right outside her back door, wring[ing] some chickens necks and bring[ing] ‘em in so we could pluck ‘em.”¹²

¹⁰ This sentence was taken from one of the biographies in Jo Harvey Allen’s press book titled “Feature Stories,” located in her studio.

¹¹ Elizabeth Hartigan, “A Ma and Pa Story,” *The Washington Post*, June 29, 1985, G5.

¹² Jo Harvey Allen, “Woman of Parts,” *People Magazine*, October 12, 1987, 101.

For Jo Harvey, storytelling is a family affair. She told Hilliard Harper of the *Los Angeles Times*, ““Always at the dinner table, it was who could outdo the other...All I remember doing was telling all these stories with people. You had to learn to do it. It was the only way to get any attention at all. You had to [upstage] somebody at the dinner table.””¹³ An only child, community also played an important role in developing creative expression for Jo Harvey. She told Margaret Jones of *L.A. Reader*, “All the neighbors and kids would take pallets to lay on and we would stay out until eleven or so at night and tell stories.”¹⁴

Jo Harvey and her husband, artist and musician Terry Allen, have known each other for most of their lives. As another version of her biography in the press book reads:

When she was twelve, she met Terry Allen. After graduation from high school and a 7:30 a.m. wedding, they fled to Los Angeles where she studied, had a brief career as an interior designer in the late sixties, hosted the LA underground country radio program, *Rawhide and Roses*, and studied with poets Kenneth Rexroth and Phillip Levine. She is an actress and writer who has lectured and performed for radio and television and at numerous universities, truckstops, museums, honky-tonks, art galleries, and theaters throughout the country.

In 1987, Jo Harvey and Terry moved from Fresno to Santa Fe, where they still live. They have a home base in Austin, Texas as well. She continues to write, act, sing, and collaborate with her family and other artists.

This dissertation is about Jo Harvey’s art and the world it resides in and reproduces. In it, I argue that analyzing the nature of Jo Harvey’s collaborative process is key to understanding her positionality in both the avant-garde and alt-country genres. The character of her collaboration is tri-fold; it is emplaced, gendered, and familial. As Mike Sell writes, it

¹³ Harper, “Performer’s Storytelling Roots,” page unknown.

¹⁴ Margaret Jones, “Tall Tales of Low Living: Jo Harvey Allen combines poetry, music, comedy, and characters for a special sort of Lubbock Lightness,” *L.A. Reader*, date unknown, 14.

is less important to argue that something is avant-garde and more important to understand how the work that is being analyzed is marginalized, how it challenges power from its marginalized position, and ask what the work does within culture.¹⁵ There are many instances throughout this dissertation that demonstrate how Jo Harvey's work challenges power, both overtly and quietly, and how it is gendered. The question of how it works within culture is closely related to the question of how Jo Harvey's work is collaborative. Using Jason Baskin's concept of culture, as it is informed by Raymond Williams, I demonstrate how Jo Harvey's art is a "specific form of collective production; a shared, collaborative activity."¹⁶ This "shared, collaborative activity" is in turn informed by place. Though Jo Harvey's complete place history informs her work, the role of West Texas in this regard is unmatched.

Place, Gender, Family

Jo Harvey and Terry belong to a West Texas scene comprised of musicians and artists such as Jo Carol Pierce, Sharon Ely, Joe Ely, Butch Hancock, Jimmie Dale Gilmore, Paul Milosevich, and the Maines Brothers (Lloyd, Donnie, Kenny, and Steve). This group, referred to as the "Lubbock Mafia" by Oscar Garza for the *San Antonio Light*, and their relationship with the landscape, has been documented at length by journalists, scholars, and film makers.¹⁷ Christopher Oglesby, in *Fire in the Water, Earth in the Air: Legends of West Texas Music*, compiled interviews he conducted with twenty-seven musicians and artists in an effort to answer the question, "Why does an isolated, conservative agricultural town like

¹⁵ Mike Sell, "Resisting the Question, 'What Is an Avant-Garde?'" *New Literary History* 41, no. 4 (Autumn 2010) 769-770.

¹⁶ Jason M. Baskin, "Romanticism, Culture, Collaboration: Raymond Williams Beyond the Avant-Garde." *Cultural Critique* 83 (Winter 2013): 111.

¹⁷ Oscar Garza. No title for article, *The San Antonio Light*, Sunday August 17, year unknown.

Lubbock, Texas, generate such innovative artists in numbers that seem disproportionate to its population?”¹⁸ John T. Davis, in *The Flatlanders: Now It's Now Again*, delved deep into the making of the scene. His work demonstrated that in order to understand one of the bands from this cohort, The Flatlanders (Joe Ely, Butch Hancock, and Jimmie Dale Gilmore), you must understand the whole group of artists, writers, and scholars (from Texas Tech University) that comprised what Jimmie Dale Gilmore calls “the incubator” that made the band.¹⁹ Terry features prominently in the literature about these musicians and artists in West Texas. Jo Harvey is there, too, but literature on the women of the scene remains underdeveloped.²⁰ In this respect, Jo Harvey can be understood as “alt” simply because of her gender.

The work of genre studies scholars, musicologists, and geographers serves as a bridge between the fields of place and music studies. As Jada Watson writes in “The Dixie Chicks’ ‘Lubbock or Leave It’: Negotiating Identity and Place in Country Song,” “The fields of cultural geography and musicology both offer models for exploring the ways in which popular music serves to express regional and national identity.”²¹ Watson points out in her paper, the concepts of place, space, and home are important for country music artists, and though “musician” is about fifth on the list when it comes to Jo Harvey’s identity as an artist, her situation within the West Texas scene justifies an engagement with musicologists. After

¹⁸ Christopher Oglesby, *Fire in the Water, Earth in the Air: Legends of West Texas Music*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006, 8.

¹⁹ John T. Davis, *The Flatlanders: Now It's Now Again*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014, 29.

²⁰ Five of the twenty-seven people interviewed for Oglesby’s book are women. In *The Flatlanders*, Davis mentions Jo Harvey on page 16, not by name, rather as “Terry’s sweetheart.”

²¹ Jada Watson, “‘The Dixie Chicks’ ‘Lubbock or Leave It’: Negotiating Identity and Place in Country Song,” *Journal for the Society of American Music* 8, no. 1 (2014): 52, JSTOR.

all, Jo Harvey incorporates country music, especially Terry's, in every piece of her work.²² Further, the attributes of Jo Harvey's art that qualify it as avant-garde also speak to her situation in an alt-country genre otherwise dominated by musicians. No one can pin down how the traditionally conservative city of Lubbock produces "innovative artists in numbers that seem so disproportionate to its population."²³ In chapter four, I argue that part of the answer to this question requires a deconstructive approach that addresses temporal and spatial components, specifically acknowledging how the landscape of Lubbock has changed over time regarding this scene, and how the negotiation between Austin and Lubbock informs our understanding of the work of its artists as marginalized.

Beyond addressing the importance of the West Texas scene that Jo Harvey belongs to in an effort to understand her work as both alt-country and avant-garde, it is necessary to look closely at the Allen familial collaboration.

²² The inverse of this is true, too, as Terry incorporates Jo Harvey's work into his individual oeuvre as well. For example, on the ninth track of his album *Salivation*, titled "Ain't No Top 40 Song," the song concludes with audio from Jo Harvey's "Hally Lou."

²³ Oglesby, *Fire in the Water*, 8.

Consider for a moment the great American families offered up by the mass media as archetypes: Ozzie and Harriet, the Cleavers, the Partridge Family, the Brady Bunch, et al. And then, consider the Allen family of Fresno... The Allens are a happy, modern American family. And, unlike the others, they are *real*.²⁴



Figure 3 Liz Lufkin's article for the San Francisco Chronicle.

In the 1980s, Jo Harvey collaborated with Terry and their sons, Bukka and Bale, on a performance titled “Do You Know What Your Children Are Tonight?” Commissioned by the Washington Project for the Arts in 1985 for Jock Reynolds series, “The Family as Subject Matter in Contemporary Art,” and then revived in 1987 for several days at the Theatre Artaud in San Francisco, the work is referred to in the press as both a performance piece and play.²⁵ It is “a brash, erratic collage of songs, sounds, images, monologues and characterization, based on their own familial experiences,” wrote Alan M. Kriegsman for *The*

²⁴ San Jose Mercury News, “One man’s family,” January 9, 1987.

²⁵ Elizabeth Hartigan, “A Ma and Pa Story.”

Washington Post.²⁶ He continues, “The whole shape and tone of the thing is indelibly American, in its lingo, its bawdy irreverence, its cheerful sprawl and clutter, its rough and tumble pace, its flair for yarn-spinning, and in the way it turns the sentimental clichés of American family life topsy turvy.”²⁷

The family created the piece when Bukka and Bale were teenagers. Bukka, born in 1967, had graduated high school and was attending Berklee School of Music in Boston by the time the show returned in 1987. Bale, born in 1968, was a senior in high school and upon graduation, Bale joined Bukka in Boston to attend School of the Museum of Fine Arts. They both moved to Austin in 1991, Bukka as a musician and Bale as a visual artist.

On the 17th of January, 2024, Bale told me that “Do You Know What Your Children Are Tonight?” is not the only piece the family worked on together. They have also done workshops with the Alaska Visual Arts Center and the Anderson Ranch Art Center outside of Aspen.

Beyond a project like “Do You Know What Your Children Are Tonight?” that is explicitly collaborative, Terry, Bukka, and Bale, and their art, offer a through line across Jo Harvey’s entire body of work. This through line is reinforced by Jo Harvey’s emphasis on “home.”

In *Homerun*, a book dedicated to her grandson Sled, Jo Harvey “uses baseball to describe life’s runs, hits and errors.”²⁸ Like a lot of her work, this project exists in many forms. In the late 1990s, Jo Harvey performed *Homerun!* as a one-woman show. In 2014, Jo

²⁶ Alan M. Kriegsman, “One Crazy, Mixed-Up Family: At WPA, Spirited ‘Children,’” *The Washington Post*, June 29, 1985, G5.

²⁷ Kriegsman, “One Crazy, Mixed-Up Family,” G5.

²⁸ Perry Stewart, “‘Homerun’ describes life’s hits, errors.” *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, February 1, 2003.

Harvey self-published it in book form, and most recently, in November of 2023, she performed excerpts of the play for an event titled “An Evening with Jo Harvey Allen” at the Paramount Theater in Austin.²⁹ For the project, Jo Harvey interviewed female professional baseball players; each one represents a base (first, second, third, and the pitcher’s mound, too). Using their words to uphold the dominant narrative of “coming home,” Jo Harvey interspersed stories from the baseball players with the work of Terry, Bukka, and Bale to illuminate the importance of home for the Allens.³⁰ In doing so, Jo Harvey demonstrates how, for her life and work, storytelling and songwriting function as arbiters of truth regarding home and family. About forty pages into the book *Homerun*, Jo Harvey weaves song lyrics from her family members while telling the story of a trip she took with her sons from Fresno to meet up with Terry in Dallas.³¹

While she, Bukka, and Bale stopped to eat in a “small town in New Mexico,” Jo

Harvey writes:

I thought of Bukka’s song:
There’s a million miles of highway,
Stretched across his face,
With a million more to conquer,
And a million more to trace.

Every line of sorrow
Is a sign from the winds of fate
Every crack of beauty
Is a map to a magic place³²

²⁹ Jo Harvey has also performed excerpts from *Homerun* on two Outlaw Country West cruises, in 2019 & 2022.

³⁰ *Homerun* concludes with a poem, but the final sentence in prose before it reads, “She said, ‘Life is like baseball. It’s a good feeling, leaving this place you wanta be in, where you are safe, like leaving that base and wanting to get home.’”

³¹ While the excerpts from *Homerun* in this space do not include lyrics from Bale, Jo Harvey does use Bale’s song lyrics elsewhere in the text.

³² Jo Harvey Allen, *Homerun*, 47.

Bukka's lyrics, particularly the second stanza, call to mind anthropologist Kathleen Stewart's explanation of gaps in the space of stories. Stewart writes:

When sociality hovers on the brink of the gap between event and representation, person and signifying talk and action, the act of not noticing things or the failure to respond appropriately can be taken as a sign in itself. Then the rhythm of seeing, acting, and talking can fall into the gap in a sudden faint, leaving things open to the unchecked *signs* of mysteries, tragedies, and fates."³³

On the page following Bukka's lyrics, Jo Harvey writes about a lightning storm that she and the kids drove through after their stop at the restaurant in New Mexico: "She told the kids that she was lost and afraid that they may have taken the wrong road. Bale said, '*Mom did you see a sign that said, stop, wrong way, turn around?*'"³⁴ The following page contains only this text: "*She had not seen such a sign.*" The next page includes a song written by Jo

Harvey:

*The New Mexico wind blows
Across this highway that stretches
As far as my eyes can see
And the rain's pouring down
And the lightening is flashing
And I'm feeling as blue as can be*

*In the state up ahead
You're on a Greyhound
Headed for Dallas
Trying to forget you and me*

You'll never have rainbows

*Till after the storm
Pain was endured
Before the babies were born
And you can't live together
In perfect harmony*

³³ Kathleen Stewart, *A Space on the Side of the Road: Cultural Poetics in an "Other" America*, Princeton University Press, 1996, 157.

³⁴ Jo Harvey Allen, *Homerun*, 49.

*You have to suffer the bad
To really know the good
And they're both reality³⁵*

The next page of the book references “Cortez Sail” by Terry:

I heard Terry’s song and remember this one stretch of highway.

*Leavin’ LA on a cloudy day
Pushin’ the crowds away
You’re gonna get away today
And you turn on the radio
And let the wind blow
With your rock and roll
Down the highway
All the way*

*Ah but see how the lightening
Makes cracks in your air
Tearing the clouds
Then closing the tear
Yeah but you’re not surprised anymore
You’re going home*

Yeah, to paradise.³⁶

The story concludes on the following page. Jo Harvey writes, “I think deep down she knew she was on the right road. And besides that, you know how *things can turn on a dime.*”³⁷ This episode demonstrates how Jo Harvey layers music within a single narrative, creating the space of the story. The fact that each of her family members, and their lyrics, are included in this story, to make the point that there is meaning in the misreading of a sign, pushes our understanding of how collaboration can drive storytelling. It also demonstrates the importance of mystery in Jo Harvey’s work.

³⁵ Jo Harvey Allen, *Homerun*, 53.

³⁶ Jo Harvey Allen, *Homerun*, 55.

³⁷ Jo Harvey Allen, *Homerun*, 57.

Positionality

It's important that you work on something that really fascinates you, but that you don't have the answer for. I think what's so incredible about life is its mystery. It's difficult to talk about it because when you do, something gets lost. But when you let the mystery be a part of your life it really works. It makes things real exciting.³⁸



Figure 4 Terry holding a piece of the prophetic "shit cake." New Years, 2020. Photo by author.

I took this photograph of Terry in the early hours on January 1st, 2020, three years after I moved to Santa Fe and about three months before the COVID 19 pandemic settled in the Southwestern portion of the United States. Charlie Sexton, musician, producer, and actor, and his partner Molly Leary brought this cake to Jo Harvey and Terry's New

³⁸ I found this quote from Jo Harvey in the press book titled "Films Reviews & Lecture/Workshop/Performance." The clipping does not reveal the newspaper it published in, the date of publication, or the journalist.

Year's party. The party was full of singing, celebration, a lot of laughter, and an unawareness of what the year was to bring. Now, exactly four years later, this image not only marks the beginning of a devastating pandemic that killed nearly seven million people worldwide, it also, on the *smallest* of scales (in comparison), represents my general disposition when it comes to approaching the task of writing about the Allens, and especially Jo Harvey. It is an intimidating job.³⁹⁴⁰

How does one tell the truth about a lying woman when the lies she tells are often, for the most part, true? I think you must enter the paradox. Katelin Dixon, who is special projects curator at the Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library at Texas Tech University, said to me during a conversation about the Allen Collection that, in order to access the depth of Jo Harvey and Terry's oeuvres, "you have to hold disparate ideas in your mind."⁴¹ Moving through the contradictory surfaces of Jo Harvey and Terry's collective art-world requires a lot of listening. More specifically, I had to teach myself to be open to a sort of layered listening, willing to entertain cacophonies in an attempt to access dynamic truths that flow through Jo Harvey's artistic contributions. As Deborah Kapchan writes in the

³⁹ "WHO COVID-19 dashboard," World Health Organization, accessed February 13, 2024, <https://data.who.int/dashboards/covid19/deaths>.

⁴⁰ My position as Jo Harvey's assistant greatly affects both my approach to writing about her work and the dissertation as a product. Importantly, I was required to sign a non-disclosure agreement when I started working for the Allens in Santa Fe. Beyond the hierarchical structure that accompanies my employment, managing clear, concise, and accessible communication that effectively skirts the divisive nature of scholarly writing has been a challenge. I have logged many attempts to explain antenatal arguments to Jo Harvey in real time while discussing materials and archives in her studio, often unsuccessfully. The utterance, "Caitlin, I have *no idea* what you are talking about," coated in what Matt Damsker of *San Diego County Arts* called, "Texas twang so pronounced it seemed to pluck musical notes from the long-distance phone wire," is burned into my brain. Despite my failure to clearly communicate my thought process with Jo Harvey, she has never turned down any of my questions nor declined a conversation.

⁴¹ Katelin Dixon, personal communication with author, January 10, 2024.

introduction to *theorizing sound writing*, “Just as ‘truth is nothing but a chain of translation without resemblance from one actor to the next,’ so listening is a method whereby these transformations and translations take place.”^{42,43} I am lucky that my circumstances afford me with endless opportunities to do this listening.

I began as a studio assistant for Jo Harvey in the summer of 2016. Still completing coursework in the American Studies department at UNM, I would occasionally leave for days at a time, heading north on I-25 for an hour toward Santa Fe. Once there, I would help Jo Harvey during the day and sleep in the casita located on the northeast side of the property at night. At that time, Jo Harvey was in the beginning stages of writing a book about neighbors and old men. We would go for walks outside at Frenchy’s Field during the summer and around the indoor track at Genoveva Chavez Community Center in the winter. Jo Harvey would tell me stories about her life that I would record and later transcribe for her records.

In early 2017, I moved into the casita permanently, immersing myself in the fieldwork of coming to know Jo Harvey as a performance artist, actress, writer, and storyteller. During this time, Texas Tech University was in the process of acquiring the Allen Collection, a living archive consisting of materials documenting the lives and work of both Terry and Jo Harvey. And so my employment involved helping Jo Harvey prepare her space for the archivists at the Special Collection/Southwest Collections Library, a job that allowed me complete access to the sixty-year span of her work. Press clippings, written

⁴² Deborah Kapchan, “The Splash of Icarus: Theorizing Sound Writing/Writing Sound Theory in *theorizing sound writing*, ed Deborah Kapchan (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2017), 6.

⁴³ In addition to my own positionality, Kapchan’s line between truth and listening speaks to Jo Harvey’s methods.

correspondence, photographs, interviews, prints, mailers, DVDs; Jo Harvey and I went through it all.⁴⁴

These materials provided the basis for my scholarly engagement with Jo Harvey's work. In particular, the press clippings informed my understanding of how she is situated in the art world, how she is emplaced primarily in Lubbock, Fresno, and Santa Fe, and how her gender informs her general reception from critics and journalists alike. However, through conversations with Jo Harvey while I worked in her studio, I also discovered mistakes in the reporting. Some are obvious. For example, Jane Fudge referred to Jo Harvey's character Hally Lou as "Hally Loo" while writing about "Counter Angel" for the *Boulder Daily Camera*.⁴⁵ Fudge's mistake helped me begin to realize that, like the music Terry creates, Jo Harvey's body of work has what ethnomusicologist Aaron Fox calls an "elusive core of 'authenticity.'"⁴⁶ As I show in chapter two, the character of "Hally Lou" exhibits behavior many people might consider to be "looney," and therefore Fudge's spelling of her name illuminates Jo Harvey's play on words. This is not only demonstrated in mistakes made by journalists; close readings of articles about Jo Harvey's performances also shed light on her poetics. For example, in an article titled "A Lesbian Hooker's True Life and Loves: Jo Harvey Allen plays 'Chippy' in 'The Dirtiest Show on Earth,'" Blake Green quotes Jo Harvey, "The show's 'secret' subtitle is 'The Dirtiest Show on Earth,' the actress continues,

⁴⁴ Katelin Dixon, Dr. Jennifer Spurrier, and Dr. Elissa Stroman spent weeks collecting material from Jo Harvey and Terry's studios. Andy Wilkinson, Professor and Artist in Residence at Texas Tech, played an important role with the transition as well.

⁴⁵ Jane Fudge, "Allen offers an amusing," *Boulder Daily Camera*, September 6, 1983.

⁴⁶ Aaron Fox, "The jukebox of history: narratives of loss and desire in the discourse of country music," *Popular Music* 11, no. 1 (January 1992): 53.

giggling as she relishes the double entendre.”⁴⁷ The show Green refers to, titled “Chippy: Diaries of a West Texas Hooker,” is a country western musical based on the diary of Chippy, a real-life Depression Era sex worker from the Texas panhandle. Jo Harvey wrote the play with Terry, based on Chippy’s diary entries. “The University of Texas wanted to put it in their archives,” Jo Harvey told Kathey Clarey of the *Fresno Bee*.⁴⁸ “They didn’t know of any other kind of record like this. It’s really wonderful material, a real historical document. There are suitcases of diaries, some labeled ‘bundles from hell’ and others called ‘parcels from heaven.’”⁴⁹ Jo Harvey and Terry collaborated with their friends, musicians and artists from Texas for the concomitant album, *Songs from Chippy*.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Blake Green, “A Lesbian Hooker’s True Life and Loves: Jo Harvey Allen plays ‘Chippy’ in ‘The Dirtiest Show on Earth,’ *Newsday*.”

⁴⁸ Kathey Clarey, “Cheeky Jo Harvey Allen sets first hometown show,” *The Fresno Bee*, September 9, 1984, H14.

⁴⁹ Clarey, “Cheeky Jo Harvey Allen,” H14.

⁵⁰ It stars Jo Harvey as Chippy, alongside Terry, Jo Carol Pierce, Joe Ely, Butch Hancock, Wayne Hancock, Jimmie Dale Gilmore, Robert Earl Keen, Barry Tubb, and Jill Parker-Jones.



Figure 5 Photograph of Chippy cast by Wyatt McSpaddin for Joe Nick Patoski's 1994 article in Texas Monthly titled "Dirty Dancing: A new musical from a group of Lubbock expatriates celebrates West Texas' bawdy past." Clockwise from left: Jo Carol Pierce, Wayne Hancock, Jo Harvey Allen, Robert Earl Keen, Butch Hancock, Jo Ely, and Terry Allen.

The play uses country music to de-naturalize and re-naturalize Chippy's diary with wordplay. For example, Green includes this lyric in the article: "The Panhandle is my stomping ground; it has the bread and I have the butter."⁵¹ Yet, the "dirty" aspect of the play that Jo Harvey jokes about alludes to the fact that Jo Harvey, Terry, and the rest of the collaborators insisted upon bringing in a couple truckloads of dirt to cover the floor of the stage during each performance, which re-naturalizes the emplacement of the play, bringing the rurality to theaters on the East Coast.

Reading the press clippings helped me understand Jo Harvey's work, but my ability to speak with her about the projects and the articles provided insight that would not present itself otherwise.

⁵¹ Blake Green, "A Lesbian Hooker's True Life," page and date unknown.

Methodology

Completing this project required a number of different methods, including oral history, participant observation, and archival research.

Almost all of the materials that I accessed throughout the research process are located in Jo Harvey's studio. When the archivists from Texas Tech came to receive Jo Harvey's collection, I worked with artist Amy Johnson to duplicate the two-dimensional materials, including scripts, photographs, written correspondence, drawings, transcripts of interviews, etc. To do this, we used Epson and Canon scanners, creating digital copies of the hundreds of photographs and paper copies of the rest of the material documents.⁵² This job allowed me intimate and immediate access to the majority of work that is now located in Lubbock. In addition to the materials listed above, we sorted through hundreds of press documents, many of them duplicates.⁵³ As we worked through the articles, I filed them into five three-ring binders, categorizing them by individual performances, workshops, feature stories, collaborations, and film reviews. There is also a small collection of literature on Terry, their sons, and other members of the scene in Lubbock that Jo Harvey is a part of.⁵⁴ Because some of these articles are not in their original state and instead photocopied, important information, like the author, date, title of publication, or page numbers is sometimes missing.

⁵² The photographs include professional photographs, candid family photos, images from their gatherings (this includes their anniversary parties, often held in Marfa, Texas), and photographs from film, television, and stage sets.

⁵³ Because the press clippings date back fifty years, the majority of them are only available in physical form, as online journalism did not exist until the 1990s. (Boyer 2010). Therefore, Jo Harvey had boxes full of photocopied articles that we sorted through and organized.

⁵⁴ This includes two four-inch binders, one three-inch binder, two two-inch binders, and one one-inch binder.

While sorting through these documents, I participated in many enlightening conversations with the archivists about the content and nature of Jo Harvey's archive. I also bore witness to how the archivists approached cataloguing the work. In particular, Katelin Dixon, manager of the Allen Archive, provided invaluable insight throughout my research process. As I demonstrate throughout this dissertation, Jo Harvey (and Terry, and the majority of artists considered to be alt-country), explicitly defies labels and Katelin had the lofty task of putting her life and art into boxes, literally. I have spoken to Katelin in person and via Zoom about the archive several times over the past eight years.

Throughout my eight years working here in Santa Fe, I have participated in countless numbers of conversations with Jo Harvey and Terry. The majority of my knowledge of Jo Harvey's work is a product of these discussions. I also conducted an interview with Joan Tewkesbury, director, writer, actress, and choreographer, at her home in Tesuque. I spoke at length with Bale, Jo Harvey and Terry's youngest son, about growing up in this family and how it influences his work as a visual artist. And in an effort to intervene with traditional ethnographic work, I asked Jo Harvey to read the dissertation and write a response that functions as a conclusion for the paper.

In addition to the archivists, my role as Jo Harvey's assistant, and my taking up residence on her property, has exposed me to filmmakers, authors, musicians, appraisers, artists, and gallery directors who have visited Santa Fe to analyze and create work with and/or about the Allens.⁵⁵ Though I did not speak directly with all of these individuals, I

⁵⁵ This includes Mary Beebe (former Director of the Stuart Collection at the University of California San Diego), Adam Muhlig (appraiser), Kurt Vile (musician), Steve Earle (musician), Tamara Saviano (music producer, filmmaker, and writer), Scott Ballew (musician and filmmaker), Kimberly Davis (Director at L.A. Louver Gallery), Peter Briggs (former

could often feel their presence and sometimes, I was invited in to observe. For example, Yeti brought a crew to the Allen property in early April of 2017 while working on a film about Terry and his relationship with musician Ryan Bingham for a series titled “The Midnight Hour.”⁵⁶ On the evening of April 2nd, my cousin and I were walking past Terry and Jo Harvey’s house on the way to my casita when I received a call from Jo Harvey, letting us know that we needed to come inside and watch what was going on. The crew was filming Terry and Ryan perform a jam session in the living room. Witnessing this exchange, which was eventually followed by performances from members of the crew, and others like it through the years, has contributed to my understanding of “sound knowledge.”⁵⁷

When the music ended, my cousin and I made a quick exit as I was set to leave the following morning to present at the American Association of Geographers meeting in Boston. My paper, titled “*Rhythmanalysis, Ordinary Affects, and Counter Angel*” looked at the relationship between the work of Kathleen Stewart, Henri Lefebvre, and Jo Harvey’s Beautiful Waitress Project. As I packed my suitcase, Jo Harvey called me and asked if we wanted some pie. I met Jo Harvey at their back door, located approximately seven steps away from my front door, where she stood with the most enormous “piece” of pie I have ever seen.

Helen DeVitt Jones Curator of Art at the Museum of Texas Tech University), Paul Hunton (film producer), and Brendan Greaves (writer).

⁵⁶ The Midnight Hour Episode 3: Terry Allen, directed by Keith Malloy (2020; Austin, TX: YETI, 2020), YouTube video, 24:49, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5hcVH2hrhQQ>.

⁵⁷ Deborah Kapchan defines sound knowledge as “a nondiscursive form of affective transmission resulting from acts of listening” on page 2 of *theorizing sound writing*.



Figure 6 The “piece” of pie Jo Harvey gave me. Photo by author, 2017.

Holding the weight of this large portion of pie helped me feel Jo Harvey’s ability to exist in the space between performance and performativity. Just as Jo Harvey transformed into the Lying Woman as she relayed a story from the gynecologist’s office to Simone Ellis, I felt as though Ruby Kay, the protagonist in “Counter Angel” who consumes an entire pie during the performance piece, was the one delivering the pastry that evening.

Chapters

In Chapter One, I present articles from the press to establish that Jo Harvey’s work is avant-garde. Specifically, in this chapter, I look at instances of collaboration between Jo Harvey and Terry and two of Jo Harvey’s performance pieces, “A Moment’s Hesitation” and “As It Is in Texas,” to introduce the argument that her work is gendered, collaborative, and challenges power. One of the key ways that it challenges power is through her inclusion of alt-country lyrics in her work.

In Chapter Two, I present “Hally Lou,” a play about Louella, the wife of an evangelical preacher who desires to preach herself. Through an in-depth look into Jo Harvey’s process of quoting women evangelical preachers, and how she adjusts her

performances according to the venues and places where she performs them, I argue that Jo Harvey creates from an “in-between” orientation. In doing so, her work becomes a co-production that recognizes and manifests an emplaced truthfulness of the U.S. Southwest.

In Chapter Three, I explore how Jo Harvey’s work is layered. These layers are exposed through Jo Harvey’s creation of the composite character, Ruby Kay in her project *The Beautiful Waitress*, as well as through her collaboration with different women artists throughout the various iterations of that project, and through her interactive performances of it. I also use a song from the play, Terry’s “The Beautiful Waitress,” to look at how Jo Harvey’s contribution to the texture of knowing in truck stop diners influences the accumulative nature of the alt-country genre.

In Chapter Four, I consider Jo Harvey’s inability to fit into any generified box throughout her career as both reflection and a product of her emplacement in the alt-country region of West Texas, specifically Lubbock. In order to do this, I explore the connections between the music genre of alt-country and the region of West Texas. I ask where Jo Harvey is situated in this intersection and how her gender reinforces the connection between the alt-country genre and the place of Lubbock, Texas.

Chapter One: Avant-Garde

On the 20th of July in 2018, Mary Beebe, former Director of the Stuart Collection at the University of California in San Diego, was in conversation with Jo Harvey and Terry for an event titled, “My Life in Art: Terry and Jo Harvey Allen with Mary Beebe,” hosted by SITE Santa Fe. About forty minutes into their discussion, Mary asked, “You’re both characters. But, you both manage to build characters in your work... a lot of your work is about these real or not real characters. You want to talk about that?”

Terry responded first, saying that he “build(s) characters wide, that way where they’re told into existence by what’s outside of them.”⁵⁸ Jo Harvey responded afterwards, saying that her process is “totally opposite. I spent several years documenting characters.”⁵⁹ This exchange expressed a seemingly clear divide between Jo Harvey and Terry’s artistic styles. Where Terry zooms out, Jo Harvey zooms in. However, when Jo Harvey and Terry work together, as they so often do, the murky space in between these two approaches reveals itself, often through characters. At SITE that night, Terry went on to talk about the first “biography” he ever made, titled “Anterabbit/Bleeder,” about a friend he knew in grade school who had hemophilia. This project consisted as an exhibition/installation, a theater piece, and later, a radio show, titled “Bleeder.” Jo Harvey narrates the piece, and Terry remembered narration as the first time that he realized her ability to “jump personas.” He said:

She could move from one character to another, kind of, almost in the middle of a sentence and would take on these other characters. It was kind of one character but it

⁵⁸ “My Life in Art: Terry and Jo Harvey Allen with Mary Beebe,” SITE Santa Fe, July 20, 2018.

⁵⁹ “My Life in Art,” SITE Santa Fe, July 20, 2018.

was built out of people, like the mother, the wife, the girlfriend, all of the people that were telling the stories about this person invented this person I think....⁶⁰

Mary Beebe's question about characters illuminates a critical juxtaposition in Jo Harvey and Terry's work, and in doing so, exposes an intertextual network that weaves their two bodies of work together. Where Terry builds climates, Jo Harvey provides in-depth and consistent weather reports. This metaphor provides an opportunity to reflect on how emplaced Jo Harvey and Terry's art is. Both pull from their surroundings for artistic inspiration. One example of this (that I will delve into in the third chapter), is the diner, a place that figures prominently in the work of both Jo Harvey and Terry. While Jo Harvey homes in on particular moments, delving deep into ordinary, material realities of people who frequent diners, Terry provides insight into the things outside of those people that, over time, give shape to their emplaced-in-the-diner characters. The defining difference between climate and weather is scale, and the same is true of Jo Harvey and Terry's artistic approaches. Though their oeuvres are individual and distinct from one another, understanding how they overlap is necessary for understanding the world -or the alternative country- that their work together produces. We can better appreciate Jo Harvey's work, as well as Terry's, if we pay attention to the products of their collaborative efforts. Like affect scholars, Jo Harvey and Terry create a world, pulling a space, "into being by the tracks of refrains that etch out a way of living in the face of everything. These refrains stretch across everything, linking things, sensing them out – a worlding."⁶¹

⁶⁰ "My Life in Art," SITE Santa Fe, July 20, 2018.

⁶¹ Kathleen Stewart, "'Worlding Refrains,'" in *The Affect Theory Reader*, ed. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 342.

In this chapter, I introduce two pieces that Jo Harvey and Terry Allen worked on together, “Ghost Ship Rodez/Momo le Miso,” a pair of installation pieces, and “Pioneer,” an avant-garde opera. In each of these pieces, Jo Harvey and Terry maintain their own artistic identities while working together to create products. In addition, I present two of Jo Harvey’s performance pieces, “A Moment’s Hesitation,” and “As It Is In Texas,” both of which firmly situate Jo Harvey’s work within the avant-garde genre.

“A Moment’s Hesitation,” Jo Harvey’s first performance piece, is an autobiographical poetry performance, identified in the press as both “a series of fragments of possible experiences and relationships that contemporary women might have” and an “odyssey of Allen’s life.”⁶²⁶³ Throughout the piece, Jo Harvey recites poetry, sings songs, crawls on the floor until her knees bleed, talks about her children, and explores “the plight of the wife of an artist whose works, nurtured by their life together, become their life.”⁶⁴

“As It Is in Texas,” described by David Gregson as “a walking portrait gallery of grotesque types, all of them sharply and convincingly drawn.”⁶⁵ It is a one-woman revue that includes characters based on real people Jo Harvey encountered while conducting research. These, including Ruby Kay from “Counter Angel,” a composite character of all the waitresses she interviewed (discussed further in Chapter Three), and Hally Lou, an evangelical preacher’s wife who aims to become a preacher herself (discussed further in Chapter Two).

⁶² “Terry Allen’s Narratives,” *ARTWEEK*.

⁶³ Stephanie Sanchez, “Jo Harvey Allen Reviews Life,” *ARTWEEK*.

⁶⁴ “Terry Allen’s Narratives,” *ARTWEEK*.

⁶⁵ David Gregson, “Allen show off poetic, narrative skills in ‘As It Is,’” *San Diego Union*, April 24, 1989.

On April 25th, 1986, Stephen Holden of *The New York Times* wrote an article headlined, “Celebrating the Futurists of Past and Present.” In it he evaluates the state of avant-garde performance art:

Performance art, the emerging, hard-to-define genre that touches on theater, comedy, dance, video, music, mixed-media and art gallery ‘happenings,’ has reached an auspicious historical moment. Laurie Anderson, Whoopi Goldberg and Eric Bogosian have made their way from the fringes of the avant-garde performance scene into the theatrical and movie mainstreams, and potential new ‘art stars’ are popping up all over the place.⁶⁶

Holden then moves into a description of three events happening in New York that “underscore[d] the vitality and excitement of the contemporary performance art scene,” including Jo Harvey’s performance of “As It Is in Texas,” at the Dance Theater Workshop on West 19th Street. Holden does not explicitly state that “As It Is in Texas” is avant-garde; rather he seems to claim that Jo Harvey’s show links performance art and the sub-movement of the avant-garde, futurism.

In “What Is Avant-Garde?” Mike Sell suggests that an effort to prove that something is avant-garde is not important. Instead, the point is to better parse the relationship between the object or piece you are analyzing and these three things: power, minority, and culture. Is the object/piece you are studying marginalized? Does it challenge power? And does it work within culture?⁶⁷ The definition of culture, as argued by Jason M. Baskin in “Romanticism, Culture, Collaboration: Raymond Williams Beyond the Avant-Garde” was pushed by Raymond Williams into “a specific form of collective production: a shared, collaborative

⁶⁶ Stephen Holden, “Celebrating the Futurists of Past and Present,” *The New York Times*, April 25, 1986, C1.

⁶⁷ Mike Sell, “Resisting the Question, ‘What Is an Avant-Garde?’” *New Literary History* 41, no. 4 (AUTUMN 2010): 271, JSTOR.

activity.”⁶⁸ “Williams’s concept of culture,” Baskin writes, “transcends the entire conceptual division between an exclusive, enlightened minority and a broader populace, which has dominated the politics of culture since the collapse of the modernist avant-garde.”⁶⁹ In line with this framework, Sell calls on Barrett Watten to highlight the importance of the positionality of the avant-garde, writing that it “can be approached as a varying, situational articulation of the ‘politics of form.’”⁷⁰ At this moment in Sell’s article, he highlights that to understand the avant-garde, scholars do not need to analyze art. He quotes Watten directly, “Avant-garde negativity is quite vicariously articulated in relation, particularly, to gender and nationality at specific historical moments. There is no ‘one’ avant-garde, defined by the paradigmatic example of the historical avant-garde; a much wider range of cultural politics...continues to emerge from social formations that engender formal experiment.”⁷¹

Sell’s use of Watten to emphasize both the politics of form and the multifaceted nature of avant-garde begs the question of how Raymond Williams’s “structure of feeling” influences our understanding of the genre.⁷² In “Affect’s Future,” from *The Affect Theory Reader*, Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth are in conversation with cultural studies scholar Lawrence Grossberg about the future of affect theory. While answering a question about Gilles Deleuze, Grossberg winds up speaking about how Raymond Williams’s

⁶⁸ Jason M. Baskin, “Romanticism, Culture, Collaboration: Raymond Williams Beyond the Avant-Garde.” *Cultural Critique* 83 (Winter 2013): 111, JSTOR.

⁶⁹ Baskin, “Romanticism, Culture, Collaboration,” 111.

⁷⁰ Sell, “Resisting the Question,” 765.

⁷¹ Watten, Barrett. *The Constructivist Moment: From Material Text to Cultural Poetics*. (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2003), 154.

⁷² Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 128-135.

“structure of feeling” is about how relationships are lived in the “realm of everyday life.”⁷³ “Everyday life is not simply the material relationships,” Grossberg says, “it is a structure of feeling and that is where I want to locate affect.”⁷⁴ Jo Harvey’s ability, as Terry described above, to jump from character to character while performing speaks to her capacity, as an artist and as one half of her relationship with Terry, to access and produce affect. In the *ARTWEEK* article titled “Terry Allen’s Narratives,” on Terry’s “Ring, Fighters of the Darkness,” the author describes Terry’s art as “sui generis: more than all the traditional art forms and distinct from them. It is an art form in which content and form are identical.”⁷⁵ Three paragraphs later, the author writes about “A Moment’s Hesitation,” concluding, “What I learned from Jo Harvey Allen that night was that one way to cope with art is to make your own.”⁷⁶ Whether they are working together or separately, Jo Harvey and Terry always pull from the part of ordinary experiences that resides beyond the material, and in doing so, they develop the relationships between things.

On one level, Jo Harvey’s work is avant-garde simply because it is deemed so by critics in the press. However, we can better understand why the work is avant-garde by acknowledging the influence of Antonin Artaud on her work, by asking why, though it is rarely acknowledged in the press, her inclusion of country and alt-country music throughout her body of work helps break down socioeconomic barriers, and above all through exploring how it is collaborative.

⁷³ Lawrence Grossberg, Interviewed by Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg, “Affect’s Future: Rediscovering the Virtual in the Actual,” in *The Affect Theory Reader*, ed. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (Durham: Duke University Press), 323

⁷⁴ Grossberg, “Affect’s Future,” 323.

⁷⁵ “Terry Allen’s Narratives,” *ARTWEEK*.

⁷⁶ “Terry Allen’s Narratives,” *ARTWEEK*.

Pioneer



Figure 7 Promotional Poster for Pioneer. Artwork by Terry Allen. Used with permission.

“If you are going to write about avant-garde, you must write about ‘Pioneer.’”

Jo Harvey told me that a couple times before I kicked into gear and pulled out the press book.

“What is it about?” I asked her. She responded, “Men doing men things.”

“Pioneer,” is an opera, or “music-theater exploration of the myth of the American, looking at everything from expansionism and sexism to blind ambition and sofas.”⁷⁷ The show is a collaborative effort; Jo Harvey wrote most of her lines.⁷⁸ She worked with Terry and Rine Eckert, writer, composer, performer, etc., to write the opera; it was the third work in a trilogy produced by The Paul Drescher Ensemble, “known for experimental and innovative music/theater collaborations that combine performance art, opera, and contemporary music.”⁷⁹

“It premiered at Spoleto,” Jo Harvey told me.⁸⁰ Spoleto, a performing arts festival out of Charleston, South Carolina, “manages to find something controversial on which to hang its reputation for daring” each year.⁸¹ In 1990, “Pioneer” delivered the notable controversy. An “enormous spitball aimed at the eye of history as it has been written,” the festival issued a warning before the second performance, letting the audience know that they should be prepared for offense.⁸² Journalist Barbara Zuck declared that, “The Drescher ensemble has given ‘80s avant-garde a purpose. It may just turn out to be a major theme of the new decade.”⁸³ In a critical article published by the Associated Press, the author writes, “The avant-garde can still claim it.”⁸⁴ Reception of the opera varied, even after the collaborative

⁷⁷ Robert Hurwitt, “The sins of pioneers: Drescher Ensemble looks at history with a cold eye,” *Daily Iowan*, December 10, 1990.

⁷⁸ Christy Sheffield Sanford, “Interview: Paul Drescher & Rine Eckert with Christy Sheffield Sanford,” *Art Papers*, January/February 1993.

⁷⁹ Sanford, “Interview.”

⁸⁰ Jo Harvey Allen, Personal communication with the author, September 27, 2023.

⁸¹ Barbara Zuck, “Spoleto gains a conscience: ‘Pioneer’ uses avant-garde to criticize Western civilization,” *The Columbus Dispatch*, May 29, 1990.

⁸² Zuck, “Spoleto gains a conscience.”

⁸³ Zuck, “Spoleto gains a conscience.”

⁸⁴ Associated Press, “‘Pioneer’ an amiable play at Spoleto,” *The Times and Democrat*, May 30, 1990.

group made it through their first couple of performances. Jo Harvey's character, the widow, bore a significant amount of the conceptual weight of the play. Wendell Ricketts writes:

Let's look specifically at the Widow's story, for these are the elements of the metaphor: She's been long-married to a man she says she always loved; he dies and leaves her with a pile of cash; she has one bad sexual encounter with The Other Man (John Duykers); an Andrew Dice Clay-type lounge lizard tries to pick her up, but she gives him the slip; days later, in a weak moment, she invites him to her house; before he arrives, she comes to her senses and makes her big escape. As she drives off into the sunset, she delivers the curtain line: "She went until she reached the end of all that had happened and tried to bury forever what was left of all these men."⁸⁵

The gendered, colonial theme of the play resonated beyond the stage, and impacted Jo Harvey during its run. One significant feature of this piece is the fact that Jo Harvey cites it as the *one* professional experience she had in her career where she felt a man (maybe men, but mostly the director) abused his power. He made her feel unsafe. When she explains the collaborative process, she cites gendered differences in her approach versus the men. Zuck writes:

Jo Harvey Allen notes that being the one woman among the men gave her insights into life today, as well as what life might have been like for women in the times explored in *Pioneer*. "Even in working on this piece, I felt there was a problem. It's the only time in my life I've felt that. I had to fight to keep my material in it." Allen said she discovered how differently men and women work. The men who created *Pioneer* had a different process; they experimented freely, trying out ideas, moving things around. She, on the other hand, did copious amounts of research and took meticulous notes. "I present material that makes my character very vulnerable, and that is hard. It's the kind of thing the men would have thrown out because they thought it was too personal and intimate."⁸⁶

Critical reception of "Pioneer" consistently drew comparisons between Jo Harvey's creative process and that of her male collaborators. This provides us a window into how her capacity for research and attention to detail differentiates her work, not only as a solo artist, but as a

⁸⁵ Wendell Ricketts, "Too Much of a Good Thing," *Bay Area Reporter*, May 9, 1991.

⁸⁶ Barbara Zuck, "Spoleto gains conscience: 'Pioneer' uses avant-garde to criticize Western civilization," *The Columbus Dispatch*, May 29, 1990.

collaborator. Within this particular context, an experimental opera about colonial conquest, layered, gendered divisions are clear. In this next two pieces I introduce, where the collaboration is among family and where Jo Harvey has found no evidence of explicit gender discrimination, things begin to blur.

Ghost Ship Rodez/The MOMO Lo Mismo



Figure 8 "Ghost Ship Rodez" by Terry Allen. Photo by author, 2017.

In 2019, LA Louver, a gallery in Venice Beach, hosted a show titled “Terry Allen’s the Exact Moment that it Happened in the West.” The show, a retrospective, was primarily located in the gallery, but two paired installations titled “Ghost Ship Rodez: The Momo Chronicles” were on display at L.A. Louver’s South Gallery. According to LA Louver’s website, “Ghost Ship” is “a fictional investigation of what may have happened in the mind of French artist, playwright and actor Antonin Artaud during a 17-day journey restrained in the dark hold of the freighter Washington in 1937, and later, in various mental institutions.”⁸⁷ The ship, made from the metal frame of a bed/cot and pieces of wood hanging from the ceiling and coming out of the bed, had paper sails hanging from pieces of wood, containing projections of violent ocean waves. Projected images of Artaud’s face, and scenes from films he was in, appear. So too does Jo Harvey’s face as she “performs as the voice of ‘Daughter of the Heart,’ a clairvoyant chameleon and multi-voiced narrator. (Artaud regarded all the important women in his life as his ‘Daughters of the Heart to be Born’.)”⁸⁸ The imagery is also projected on the wall behind the ship, though the ship itself interferes with it. Below the ship, books lie open, alluding to waves/water. Green is the dominant color at work for this piece, as a green light shines down on the piece from above.

⁸⁷ LA Louver, “Terry Allen: GHOST SHIP RODEZ: The Momo Chronicles,” press release, February 2011, https://lalouver.com/html/gallery-history-images/press-releases/Terry-Allen_2011.pdf.

⁸⁸ LA Louver, “Terry Allen,” press release.

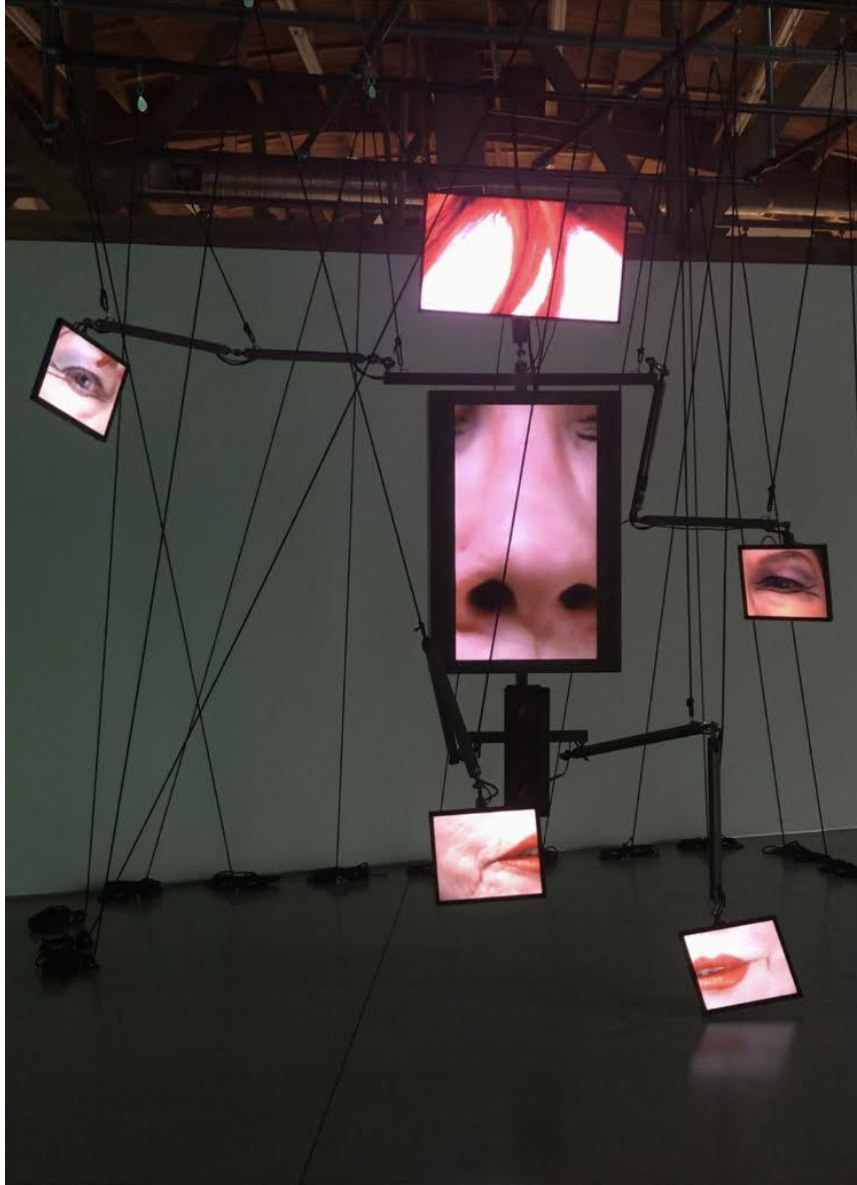


Figure 9 “MOMO Lo Mismo” by Terry Allen. Photo by author, 2017.

Across the room, the piece titled “MOMO Lo Mismo” sits, mimicking the audio from the ship piece. In “MOMO Lo Mismo,” six screens, each containing a part of Jo Harvey’s face, hang from the ceiling, creating a virtual puppet. The audio from *Ghost Ship* is about four to five seconds ahead of the puppet. In *No More Masterpieces: Modern Art After Artaud*, historian Lucy Bradnock writes of the piece, “Artaud le Momo is the French author’s

alter ego (or body double); in Allen's installation this identity is multiplied, appropriated, and rendered doubly, perhaps infinitely, other."⁸⁹ Further, Bradnock argues that "Ghost Ship" presents the subject of Artaud as "a set of shifting fragments that cannot be assembled into a whole. As such, the work resists the temptation to reconstitute and thus recorporealize Artaud; it enacts the dissolution of the unitary subject, replacing it with a series of deferrals, absences, and contradictions."⁹⁰

As impressive as these pieces are on a visual level – their largeness is exaggerated by the projection on the ship and the movement of the pieces of Jo Harvey's face in the puppet - - the aural nature of these two pieces is overwhelming. I experienced this exhibit in person and it was loud; we could hear the pieces before we saw them in L.A. Louver's second gallery. Not only that, but the fact that the audio was on a loop was disorienting. Even though Jo Harvey was reciting the written words of a marginalized French surrealist, one whose work is known for being "predicated on an adversarial relationship to the larger culture and its regnant myths," her thick West Texas accent was unmistakable.⁹¹ While conducting research in Lockhart, Texas, for his book, *Real Country: Music and Language in Working-Class Culture*, Aaron Fox describes voices as "key material and ideational site of culture as an active process."⁹² The fact that Jo Harvey's voice does such important work forming the audience experience of these two pieces situates them not only in relation to historical moments provided by Artaud, but also within the collaborative relationships between Jo

⁸⁹ Lucy Bradnock, *No More Masterpieces: Modern Art After Artaud* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021), 205.

⁹⁰ Bradnock, *No More Masterpieces*, 206.

⁹¹ Gautam Dasgupta, "Remembering Artaud," *Performing Arts Journal* 19, no. 2 (May 1997): 3, JSTOR.

⁹² Aaron Fox, *Real Country: Music and Language in Working-Class Culture*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 40.

Harvey and Artaud, and Terry and Artaud. Further, her voice pushes the work into the ordinary reality of West Texans.

Bradnock's detailed description of the two pieces includes mentions of the films projected on the ship's sails: "*Napoleon* (1927), *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (1928), and *Wooden Crosses* (1932)."⁹³ However, Bradnock fails to mention that Jo Harvey's face, too, is projected on the sails, in addition to the booming presence of her voice. At first, I thought that perhaps Bradnock witnessed a previous installation of the paired pieces, as Terry originally created them in 2010, but a flip of the page in *No More Masterpieces* reveals an image of the ship, and Jo Harvey's red lips on one of the sails are unmistakable.⁹⁴ Jo Harvey does receive mention when Bradnock moves to a description of "MOMO Lo Mismo," but her acknowledgement fails to include her full name, reading instead, "Flickering across the surface of the screens, Harvey Allen's vivid red lips nose, eyes, and forehead reconfigure the body as a fragmented female face."⁹⁵ Whenever Jo Harvey and Terry are out of town, I pick up and sort our mail, and when I do I bear witness to the different ways that credit card companies, periodical subscription renewal notices, and general adverts incorrectly print Jo Harvey's name atop the address we all share. Unfortunate typos are not uncommon, but in this instance, Bradnock's mistake evidences the unconventionalities that characterize Jo Harvey's relationship with the work of Artaud. Further, it highlights a recurring blind spot within literature on Terry's art; in doing so, it acknowledges Jo Harvey's absent presence there.⁹⁶

⁹³ Bradnock, *No More Masterpieces*, 203.

⁹⁴ Bradnock, *No More Masterpieces*, 204.

⁹⁵ Bradnock, *No More Masterpieces*, 205.

⁹⁶ Jo Harvey is not completely left out of literature about Terry, but, within the context of their cohort in West Texas, which I go into in detail in the fourth chapter, there is always

“Ghost Ship Rodez” did not begin as a multimedia installation piece. First, it was a theatre piece. “First commissioned in 2005 by Les Substances Laboratoire International, Lyon, France and the Texas-French Alliance in Houston,” the project evolved into a radio play as well.⁹⁷ During one of our walks at the Genoveva Chavez Community Center here in Santa Fe, I asked Jo Harvey about how Artaud influenced her work and her response included a detailed description of how she and Terry worked together on the project. “It was Terry’s play,” she told me.⁹⁸ However, when Jo Harvey first read the script, she hated it so much that she planned to fake a heart attack to get out of performing in it. “When he gave it to me,” she said, “it was about three days before we went to France...I hated it. I could not see one redemptive thing in it.”⁹⁹ When they got to Lyon, they edited the script together. “Terry and I had the most wonderful time staying up every night rewriting, working on it.”¹⁰⁰ Jo Harvey told me about how she developed a relationship with Artaud through this process, and his influence seeped into her own body of work.

room to expand on the presence of Jo Harvey in Terry’s life and, more importantly, his work as an artist. During their conversation with Mary Beebe at SITE Santa Fe, Terry said, while speaking about how he worked with Jo Harvey on *Ghostship Rodez*, “...the way she told the story from so many different angles, which was about an actual person... yeah, we collaborate.”

⁹⁷ Elizabeth East, “Terry Allen” GHOST SHIP RODEZ: The Momo Chronicles,” Press release, February 2011, https://lalouver.com/html/gallery-history-images/press-releases/Terry-Allen_2011.pdf.

⁹⁸ Jo Harvey Allen, Personal communication with the author, October 21, 2019.

⁹⁹ Jo Harvey Allen, Personal communication with the author, October 21, 2019.

¹⁰⁰ Jo Harvey Allen, Personal communication with the author, October 21, 2019.

“A Moment’s Hesitation”

“Sunsets are beautiful because of all they make us lose.”
- Antonin Artaud

Artaud’s influence on Jo Harvey’s work is explicitly evident in her performance piece titled “A Moment’s Hesitation.” During the play, Jo Harvey projects the quote above on the wall behind her. “I thought about that a million times, that quote,” she told me.¹⁰¹



Figure 10 Flyer for "A Moment's Hesitation" Performance.

“A Moment’s Hesitation” was the first performance piece that Jo Harvey wrote and performed. It includes twenty of her poems and several songs. In one of the filing cabinets in Jo Harvey’s studio, I found a “script” of sorts, with an outline, images, and the poems. I

¹⁰¹ Jo Harvey Allen, Personal communication with the author, October 21, 2019.

know that she performed the piece at the Santa Barbara Museum of Art and later in Tallahassee, Florida on Thursday, September 10, 1981. Stephanie Sanchez wrote about the Tallahassee performance in *ARTWEEK*. She began her article:

The Anytown, USA facade of an anonymous middle-class house served as set; a light bulb dangling overhead in the darkened space occupied by the audience created an intimate mood promising front-porch confidences made late at night between close friends or neighbors, the kind that could never transpire unless the mood were right and the night warm enough.”¹⁰² Sanchez considers the whole performance to be an “odyssey” of Jo Harvey’s life, “not dealt with in linear fashion.”¹⁰³

Sanchez also comments on the title of the play, writing:

Allen’s aptly titled performance attempted to freeze in time ephemeral moments, glimmers of sudden insight, fleeting instances of humor, secret fears which may pass otherwise unacknowledged and unscrutinized. It is common, for example, for women to feel at one time or another a brief resentment or even hostility toward their children, but it is an understandably sublimated emotion. The subject was articulated when the startling surrealist paintings by Dali (a baby eating a rat) and Magritte (a woman eating a bird) were projected onto the window behind the artist. At the same time extreme tenderness was expressed; at one point actual drawings done by her sons were flashed onto the window, one with ‘I really love you’ written over ‘I hate you.’

Though Sanchez considers “A Moment’s Hesitation” to be a retelling of Jo Harvey’s life, even she acknowledges one of its poems to be written from the perspective of another woman, “The pathos of a woman who lives only for male approval was abstracted with poignance,”¹⁰⁴ she observes. An abstraction is what Sanchez calls it. It is interesting that a play about Jo Harvey’s life includes poems from another woman’s perspective, especially considering the conversation Terry and Jo Harvey had at SITE Santa Fe with Mary Beebe. While Terry says that he creates characters based on what’s “outside” of them, Jo Harvey understands her process in juxtaposition to Terry’s. She said, “Mine, has been totally

¹⁰² Stephanie Sanchez, “Jo Harvey Allen Reviews Life,” *ARTWEEK*.

¹⁰³ Sanchez, “Jo Harvey Allen Reviews Life.”

¹⁰⁴ Sanchez, “Jo Harvey Allen Reviews Life.”

opposite. In that I spent, you know, several years documenting characters.”¹⁰⁵ She continues, “the first piece was autobiographical based on poetry. It was one of the first poetry performances where I would fall to my knees bloody and the whole performance was made up of poems.”¹⁰⁶

Towards the end of the article, Sanchez writes:

The performance culminated with the ritualistic destruction of the spiked high-heeled shoes Allen had teetered on throughout the performance, creating an odd undercurrent of tension. Shoes became a modern icon to be immolated, creating a sense of release, and introducing the mythos association of the phoenix rising from its ashes: rebirth through destruction. The strength of Allen’s sensibility is this frequently playful mixture of classical mythology and modern iconography: the Texas Bride as sacrificial Venus, herself as Mary Magdalene, a Mary Magdalene adultress in suburbia. The shoes, though obviously associated with woman’s subjugation to male fantasy, also take on a dada association; Allen refers to them being mounted on pedestals, painted emerald and perched on blazing tires by her artist-husband who displays them in museums.¹⁰⁷

Sanchez’s choice to focus on the shoes Jo Harvey wears throughout “A Moment’s Hesitation” serves a useful purpose here. The shoes are the characters’ outer layers, like the screen, sail, and page in Terry’s work.

Here is the conclusion for Sanchez’s article:

The performance will be repeated at the Portland Art Museum at a date to be announced. A small book containing poems used in the performance will hopefully be made available, for themselves they are substantial and meant to be savored, such as this short one: ‘Our Father which art in heaven,/Hallowed be thy name./Thy Kingdom come./They will be done on earth,/as it is in Texas.’¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ “My Life in Art,” SITE Santa Fe, July 20, 2018.

¹⁰⁶ “My Life in Art,” SITE Santa Fe, July 20, 2018.

¹⁰⁷ Sanchez, “Jo Harvey Allen Reviews Life.”

¹⁰⁸ Sanchez, “Jo Harvey Allen Reviews Life.”

Sanchez begins the article with a description of the set, “Anytown, USA.” However, she concludes the piece with a poem that strongly calls up place, and the place is explicitly Texas. Given how drawn to paradox Jo Harvey is, creatively and when she’s asked to describe her work, it is telling that Sanchez shifts from labeling the play as “anytown” to citing this particular poem. In doing so, she alludes to Jo Harvey’s “zoom in approach.” Further, it’s the poem that contains the title of the next piece in Jo Harvey’s resume, “As It Is In Texas.

“As It Is in Texas”



Figure 11 Flyer for "As It Is In Texas" Performance.

Though they were created and performed decades apart, I consider “As It Is in Texas” to be a work that evolved from “A Moment’s Hesitation.” “As It Is in Texas” is a later performance, and in it the characters that Jo Harvey portrays are further developed and more clearly individuals.

One of the most notable differences between the pieces is that “A Moment’s Hesitation” is largely considered autobiographical while “As It Is in Texas” is a revue of characters separate from Jo Harvey. Here is a brief introduction to some of the characters:

THE CHARACTERS of “As It Is In Texas”

RUBY KAY

Ruby Kay is a character that Jo Harvey created for the play (eventually) titled “Counter Angel” (discussed in Chapter Three). Ruby Kay’s lines center around romantic relationships, with an emphasis on discord.

CHARACTER WITH DOG

This character, inspired by a woman who lived in Fresno and scammed older men out of their welfare and Medicaid checks.¹⁰⁹ She takes the stage while it is dark. An eerie presence, she sings what sounds like a religious hymn before lighting a cigarette and calling, “Come here baby.” This character eventually turns on a lamp and you see Jo Harvey with curlers in her hair, smoking a cigarette and holding a dog, the “baby.”

MISS TAHOKA

Miss Tahoka is a privileged woman from Lubbock, two of her half-brothers are deacons, and she’s used to being treated as though she is special and beautiful. Jo Harvey interviewed her while conducting research for her Beautiful Waitress project. As Miss Tahoka in “As It Is in Texas,” she starts putting on a scarf and says:

When Mr. Right comes along, I’m gonna have a piece of paper that says, ‘you are mine.’ Then if he wants to leave, you know, I’m gonna have another piece of paper and it’s gonna say, ‘You are not mine.’ But you know everybody in this part of the country, they know that I have opportunities for money. I mean girls that work with me selling sausages at Jimmy Dean’s will tell you. I’ve had men divorcing for me. Honey, I run them in circles. You know, just to be perfectly honest with you, I really haven’t found a man that I just really thought was good enough for me. Not in this part of the country. And you know, well I’m sure that I’ve mentioned this to you before, but I was 5th runner up in Ms. Texas Pageant. You know, Ms. Tahoka. And very frankly, I don’t really have time for a man. You know, I have to

¹⁰⁹ Jo Harvey Allen, Personal communication with author, September 27, 2023.

*go to New York every year. I sat in on the Miss America pageant there. And oh, my goodness, we sat through every rehearsal and it is oh honey, it's beautiful, it really is...*¹¹⁰

HALLY LOU

Hally Lou is a mother of four children and wife to a travelling evangelical preacher named Hollis (discussed in Chapter Two). In “As It Is in Texas,” she delivers a sermon that Jo Harvey took from a woman tent revivalist preacher in West Texas.

Jo Harvey cites the influence of Antonin Artaud on “A Moment’s Hesitation,” specifically the scene where she breaks down and begins crawling on the floor, and the press lauded “As It Is in Texas” as an avant-garde performance piece, one that set Jo Harvey apart from “her urban counterparts Whoopi Goldberg, Spaulding Gray and Danitra Vance.”¹¹¹ The distinction between Jo Harvey and these actors who transitioned from the periphery to mainstream performance art, is her “genuine front-porch folksiness straight from the American heartland.”¹¹² This “genuine” quality that is characteristic both of this play, and her later work, is linked to what the press received as a truthful representation of the women she portrayed. The press credited Jo Harvey’s lack of judgment, her ability to embrace extremes, and her documentarian approach for her ability to craft believable representations of these women. It is important to consider how Jo Harvey uses music, in particular the country genre. Doing so sheds light on how Jo Harvey’s work is firmly situated in not just small-town America, or the American heartland, but specifically in working-class Texas.

¹¹⁰ Jo Harvey Allen, “Counter Angel” Script, 1982, 23.

¹¹¹ Misha Berson, “As it is in Fresno: Performance art meets the American heartland in Jo Harvey Allen’s new one-woman show,” *The San Francisco Bay Guardian*, April 8, 1987, 24.

¹¹² Berson, “As it is in Fresno,” 24.

Country and Alt-Country Music in “A Moment’s Hesitation” and “As It Is in Texas”

Though articles in the press never directly address the musical genre that Jo Harvey uses in “A Moment’s Hesitation” and “As It Is in Texas,” they do note how she uses music to transition between characters. Marshall Fine writes for the *Marin Independent Journal* that the characters are “strung together by a combination of a cappella songs, brief tall tales and self-consciously plain-spoken poetry that sounds like surrealistic laundry lists.”¹¹³ Scott Rosenberg of the *San Francisco Examiner* also acknowledged the transitions, writing, “Allen uses poetry, snippets of songs and slide projections to fill in the gaps between monologues – they’re the recitatives between her arias.”¹¹⁴ Rosenberg’s description, particularly his likening of Jo Harvey’s embodiment of each character to an aria, foretells Jo Harvey’s future engagement with opera. The journalist also invokes another genre, country music, when he compares the transitions as recitatives.

Rosenberg’s assessment of Jo Harvey’s performance style, perhaps unknowingly, signifies her ability to merge two genres, one associated with high art (opera), and one associated with the working-class (country music). In doing so, he highlights Jo Harvey’s avant-garde ability to push the boundaries of both genres through her performance art. Rosenberg also begins to demonstrate how Jo Harvey’s work moves between avant-garde and the alt-country genre. Her location at this intersection that is best understood with a closer look at the music incorporated in each project.

To begin with, here are the soundtracks for each performance piece:

¹¹³ Marshall Fine, “‘As It Is,’ it’s OK theater,” *Marin Independent Journal*, April 6, 1987, D4.

¹¹⁴ Scott Rosenberg, “One-woman show delves deep in the heart of Texas,” *San Francisco Examiner*, April 17, 1987.

“A Moment’s Hesitation”

“Snakes Crawl at Night” written by Mel Tillis and Fred Burch and performed by Charley Pride

“Street Walkin’ Woman” - written and performed by Terry Allen

“Wolfman of Del Rio” - written and performed by Terry Allen

“La Despedida” - written and performed by Terry Allen

“French Song” - written by Pease, Vincent, and performed by Lucille Starr

“Sunny Side of the Mountain” - written by H.C. McAuliffe and B. Gregory, performed by Maybelle Carter

“My Shoes Keep Walking Back to You” written by Bob Wills and Lee Ross, performed by Jo Harvey

“Jesus Won’t You Come by Me” - Gospel, performed by Jo Harvey

“I Got the All Overs for You” - Freddie Hart, lyrics recited within a poem

“As It Is In Texas”

“Jesus Won’t You Come by Me” - or is it “here?” Gospel, performed by Jo Harvey

“Saddle Bronc” Song - performed by Jo Harvey

“Wolfman of Del Rio” written and performed by Terry Allen

“Amazing Grace” - written by John Newton, performed by Jo Harvey (& audience)

“Sunny Side of the Mountain” - written by J.C. McAuliffe and B. Gregory, performed by Maybelle Carter

Near the beginning of “As It Is in Texas,” Jo Harvey uses a song to transition into Ruby Kay, the main character from Counter Angel. After singing “Jesus Won’t You Come By Me,” Jo Harvey sits down and begins talking about “the beautiful waitress.” She then begins singing a song she wrote for Counter Angel:

*Cause I was raised a country girl
On the Texas Plains
Now I’m not high flutin’
And I don’t think that I’m vain
But I’ve got real long hair
and I’ve got Maybelline
and I’ve got coco frosted lips
and eyelids of a soft metallic green¹¹⁵*

As she sings the song she begins changing into truck stop waitress’s clothes. Immediately after singing the last line of the song, Jo Harvey begins reciting Ruby Kay’s lines:

¹¹⁵ Allen, “Counter Angel” script, 1983, 9.

*Shit, those high class girls that work at Sambos....
People that have money just thank they're better.*

*But I tell you I took to Joe, my God he come through that door like a damn tornado.
I mean to tell you he swept me right off my feet. I mean he was something else. Shit, I wasn't
so bad myself. But I tell you what, now. I got married a second time and honey I wish you
could have seen that wedding. I wore the most beautifulist purple dress and his mama's real
pearls. And was married for seven years, and God, we had some happy moments til right
there before the end, before he got killed I went through some pain then.
But hell I just don't trust him.
I just don't trust men because they have put me through some pain.*

That day I went into surgery to have Joey, our little boy, I caught him with this girl.

*He yelled at me that day that he didn't care if me or the baby lived or died. You know,
through anger, that's what he said.*

*I needed him there. It was 26 hours before they even found him. When he got to the hospital,
he grabbed me and said he was sorry cause they told him what condition I was in.*

*But when I got home from the hospital, I didn't have no feeling for him. You know, everything
was just dead.¹¹⁶*

Just like in the play, as Ruby Kay talks she begins spraying whipped cream on coconut cream pie. She eats the pie as she continues to talk to the attendees and diners.

Considering Jo Harvey's swift transition from song to script, the two modes "intertwine at the level of discursive practice. But they combine in a cultural attitude that styles poetic creation as an invigorating and sometimes vertiginous 'entextualizing' movement away from the 'naturalness' of 'ordinary,' unmarked, instrumental discourse."¹¹⁷

Like the musicians in Lockhart Texas, Jo Harvey's interweaving of song and speech highlights the way that a song can spring from the everyday, ordinary conversations that waitresses in the Southwest have.

¹¹⁶ Allen, "Counter Angel" script, 10.

¹¹⁷ Fox, *Real Country*, 230.

This happens throughout both “As It Is in Texas” and “A Moment’s Hesitation.” Sometimes it is not simply poetic, it actually happens inside a poem. In 1983, Jo Harvey published a book of poetry called *Cheek to Cheek*. Many of the poems in this book are embedded in the two performances. In “A Moment’s Hesitation,” Jo Harvey recites a poem from “Cheek to Cheek” that includes lyrics from Freddie Hart’s “I Got the All Overs for You.”

*Slow icy drizzle
truck load of cows on their way to slaughter
El Paso, Amarillo
Rudolph and candles on the window
sizzling plates of chicken fried steak
slices of white bread on the side
the rancher I met at Lyles*

*leather gloves in his hip pocket
grin and rough hands
used to block off distant northwest space
where he’d been born and raised
then proceeded with his lowdown
how he couldn’t understand why pretty women
dirtied their gorgeous little bodies
foolin’ around those truck drivers
who don’t even have any money.*

*“You wanta see a picture of my daughter
and the Buick I bought her?” --
hundred dollar bills flaunted --
“You oughta come around the Rendezvous
some Wednesday after my meeting.
nice crowd --- doctors and businessmen
You have to be voted on.
Just can’t anybody be an Elk, you know.”*

*“Ah, come on, Sugar. It won’t hurt a thing.
My wife?
Oh hell, let’s me and you don’t worry about her.
Face it. There’s nothing to it.
It’s just life.”
Hollow jaws and country songs
and “Loves vibrations,*

*I can feel them when I hold you
I just tremble and my passion rises high
for the flavor of your sweet lips
keeps me hungry
and it's a hunger only you can satisfy."*

During the performance, Jo Harvey delivers this piece in such a way that it feels like you are riding a wave with her, but is more speech than song. This intertextual reference, through its "effective performance" within the poem, "(re-) contextualizes" Jo Harvey's "insight into 'real life,' situating textuality in the midst of 'ordinary' experience."¹¹⁸

In "A Moment's Hesitation," attention to the ordinary happens throughout the play. In fact, the whole performance is arguably a call to the ordinary.¹¹⁹ This is further underscored by the fact that "As It Is In Texas," the evolutionary product of "A Moment's Hesitation" is titled *As It Is In Texas*. It tells you that you are going to experience a performance of ordinary moments in Texas.¹²⁰

In *Real Country*, Fox analyzes "Golden Ring," performed by George Jones and Tammy Wynette, arguing that the "complexly voiced song exaggerates the epic/lyric opposition and makes the trope of cyclicity and timelessness its explicit theme."¹²¹ In Jo Harvey's performance, she is the only one on stage and she performs the perspectives of both the man's and woman's point of view. The poem from *Cheek to Cheek* begins from the perspective of a woman who works at a truck stop café. As seen in the examples I presented

¹¹⁸ Fox, *Real Country*, 230.

¹¹⁹ Further, I'd argue that Jo Harvey's entire body of work is inspired by and is a presentation of the ordinary. Even in film, as her early role as "The Lying Woman" is based on ordinary moments in a fake town in Texas.

¹²⁰ There is a little bit of lie in this truth. Not all the characters included in the play are from Texas. Ruby Kay, for example, is based on waitresses from all over the Southwest, not just West Texas.

¹²¹ Fox, *Real Country*, 236.

here, Jo Harvey describes the reality of truck drivers, particularly of those in Texas. This is clear from how she drops place names: Amarillo and El Paso. She also cites the road, a common metaphorical trope in country lyrics before providing a physical description of the driver and moving into a gendered description that invokes this driver's view of women. From there, the driver offers up an invite to the Elks Lodge, thereby bringing in the trope of money/class. Next, Jo Harvey introduces the trope of cheating in the man's proposition. After this, she introduces the lyrics of Freddie Hart's "I Got the All Overs for You."

Once the song lyrics begin, Jo Harvey's piece presents the juxtaposition of lyric and epic mode, "equally characteristic of working-class verbal art in Texas."¹²² Fox writes:

There is a strong preference in oral narrative and sustained conversational dialogues for conclusive aphorisms that move the interpretive perspective 'outside' the frame of the immediate situation, summing up a timeless lesson from some mundane story, calling attention to the textuality of the everyday. Such phrases (for example, '[That's] life inside a Texas honky-tonk!' and 'SHIT happens, I guess!') are ubiquitously used to punctuate and conclude long stretches of casual dialogue. Very often, these miniature lyric refrains draw on actual song refrains for added force.¹²³

In the case of Jo Harvey's performance, it doesn't feel like the lyrics contain the aphorism. Rather, the inclusion of the lyrics themselves punctuate and conclude this stretch of dialogue. Jo Harvey, as writer, artist, performer, is the one drawing on the song refrain for added force in her commentary. Lyric and epic modes are juxtaposed as she presents her own working-class verbal art in Texas.¹²⁴

Jo Harvey delivers this poem very early on in this recorded performance of "A Moment's Hesitation." Just before she recites/performs this page from *Cheek to Cheek*, Jo

¹²² Fox, *Real Country*, 237.

¹²³ Fox, *Real Country*, 238.

¹²⁴ Fox, *Real Country*, 237.

Harvey sings some of “Jesus Won’t You Come By Me.” And just before that, she recites this page from *Cheek to Cheek*:

*Our father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be down on earth,
As it is in Texas.*¹²⁵

This is certainly an example of using “conclusive aphorisms that move the interpretive perspective ‘outside’ the frame of the immediate situation, summing up a timeless lesson from some mundane story, calling attention to the textuality of the everyday.”¹²⁶ However, it’s interesting to note that Jo Harvey decides to include this modified prayer at the *beginning* of *Cheek to Cheek*, and at the *beginning* of both “A Moment’s Hesitation” and “As It Is in Texas.”

As I will expand upon in Chapter Three, Jo Harvey worked as a waitress at truck stop diners while she conducted her research for The Beautiful Waitress project. The stories that her fellow waitresses told her became less and less abstract through her employment. Another way that analytical abstraction is linked to familial collaboration for Jo Harvey is when she incorporates song lyrics that Terry wrote into these performances. In “As It Is in Texas,” Jo Harvey projects photographs of drawings by her two boys, Bukka and Bale, onto a screen next to her on stage. She says to the audience, “I always like to show these pictures. These are pictures that my kids, who are 16 & 17, did when they were about 5 or 6.” Jo Harvey then projects an image drawn by Terry as she begins reading a poem from *Cheek to Cheek*:

A dog barked

¹²⁵ Allen, *Cheek to Cheek*, 12.

¹²⁶ Fox, *Real Country*, 238.

*down the alley.
It sounded like **Help!***

*In the living room a ten year old girl
Is hysterical watching Billy Graham.
She just left a note by the telephone.*

*“Dear Mom and Dad,
I love you both.
Why did you break my heart?”*

*This morning her mama left a note of her own
That said if she didn't have her,
She would blow her brains out.*

*Her daddy left for L.A. at noon.
He took the new Volvo with religious pamphlets on the seat beside him.*

*Her mama called to borrow a suitcase.
She's found the Master Charge
but can't decide whether to follow him or leave.*

Immediately after she recites the final line of the poem, a portion of Terry's song titled “Wolf Man of Del Rio” begins to play:

*And it's crazy
Crazy in the backyard, the bedroom, the kitchen
Crazy out in the streets*

*Oh, through all their cities
And even smaller towns
It most certainly seems some disease of the dreams has been going round
It most certainly seems some disease of the dreams has been going round*

“Wolfman of Del Rio” is the fourth track on Terry's album, *Lubbock (on Everything)*. David Byrne muses on what the title might mean, writing “To me it means that Lubbock, the town where (this is not my joke) it's so flat, if you stand on a chair you can see

your own backside, is like a sauce that flavors all of these songs.”¹²⁷ Jo Harvey’s inclusion of “Wolfman” at this moment in the play, as an endcap to an abstracted poem that itself follows Jo Harvey’s engagement with her audience over drawings by the three men in her life, embodies the spirit of what is at the heart of Texas working-class verbal art.

Conclusion

Jo Harvey’s work is avant-garde simply because it is deemed so by critics in the press. However, we can better understand why the work is avant-garde through exploring how it is collaborative, acknowledging the influence of Antonin Artaud on her work, and asking why, though it is rarely acknowledged in the press, her inclusion of country and alt-country music throughout her body of work helps break down socioeconomic barriers. The way Jo Harvey uses music, and the music she chooses to include, breaks down these barriers because they challenge expectations. Just as “Pioneer” challenged Opera fans in South Carolina, Jo Harvey’s use of country and alt-country music challenged the norms of the theater.¹²⁸

¹²⁷ Byrne, David. “A Sleeping Bag in the West Texas Scrub: Reflections on *Lubbock (on Everything)*,” accessed November 29, 2023. https://dangerousminds.net/comments/byrne_allen_david_byrne_on_alt_country_cult_hero_terry_allens_1979_masterpi.

¹²⁸ This is especially true when Jo Harvey includes music by Terry. Terry is known as an internationally renowned artist and as an alt-country musician. Often, music fans are not aware of his art and vice versa. The most significant example of this divide is when the Smithsonian sought to acquire his archive. When the institution told Terry that they were not interested in his music, just his “art,” Terry told them that the two are not separate and promptly shut down the acquisition.

Chapter Two: Oh Hally Lou, Does Jesus Love You?



Figure 12 "Better Watch Out God Don't Like a Show Off" print by Jo Harvey. Photo by author, 2023. Used with permission.

In Jo Harvey and Terry's house, a print, above, hangs on a wall in the dining area. It reads "Better Watch Out, God Don't Like a Show Off."¹²⁹ A crow tells this message to a woman who is sitting at a table with a Bible and candle on it. Behind the table there is a large cross made of wood. The woman wears a dress, and though it is mostly white, her right arm

¹²⁹ This line is delivered by Hollis, Hally Lou's husband in the play.

wears a black garment. In her left hand she holds a rattle snake. The image suggests that this woman bears the dichotomous weight of good/evil, faith/no faith.¹³⁰

Jo Harvey Allen's one-act play, "Hally Lou," is about an extraordinary day in the life of Louella, a 35-year-old housewife in rural West Texas who is married to a truck-driving evangelical preacher named Hollis. Jo Harvey wrote the play in the early 1980s and she performed it in Aspen, San Francisco, and twice in Los Angeles. She also displayed "Hally Lou" as an art show in a gallery in Chicago. After the success of the play, she turned the one-act script into a screenplay that never developed into a film.

"Hally Lou" demonstrates how the collaborative character of Jo Harvey's "alt-country," as introduced in Chapter One, informs "truth," as Jo Harvey understands and communicates it through her art. In this chapter, I analyze "Hally Lou" to further demonstrate how Jo Harvey creates her art from an "in-between" orientation: here she quotes women evangelical preachers verbatim, adjusts her performances according to the places and audiences where she performs, and portrays her characters with a remarkable absence of judgment. Through these processes, I argue, Jo Harvey creates art that embodies and communicates truths about the world which are themselves collaborative, and rooted in situation. These processes, which are themselves situated in and in relation to the US Southwest, result in a co-production that both recognizes and manifests an emplaced truthfulness of that region.

Synopsis

¹³⁰ Jo Harvey made this print with artist David Wharton in Sun Valley, Idaho. The piece is an edition of 15.

The play “Hally Lou” opens with the title character standing next to the bed of a truck; she is singing “Jesus Won’t You Come By Me” with her back to the audience, and her hair full of curlers. Upon finishing the song, “she picks up a Bible, opens it, points to a verse and shakes her head as she reads it, then grins great big.”¹³¹ As she sets the Bible down and begins putting on white gloves, “Oh Hally Lou,” by Terry blasts from a speaker.¹³² The majority of the song’s lyrics riff on the popular phrase, “Jesus Loves You.” But Terry turns the statement into a question: “Does Jesus love you, Oh Hally Lou?” Terry’s manipulation of this phrase from a statement to a question is the first aural tell that the play approaches evangelism in an unconventional way.

While Hollis and the couple’s five children (C.L., Sammy, Noah, Joey, and Caleb) are sick at home with the flu, Hally Lou is supposed to be out running a few quick errands for the family. Though seemingly well-intentioned, Hally Lou decides somewhere between the grocery store, laundromat, and post office, that she should answer God’s call. Answering His call means holding the religious meeting that Hollis has scheduled for that evening, but is unable to attend. Along the way, she meets an atheist artist named Mike Angelo. Though Angelo’s inclusion in the script is brief, he comes up with the moniker “Hally Lou” and creates flyers to advertise the meeting. Hally Lou prepares for her debut as a preacher, in spite of Hollis’s constant requests, and eventual demands, over the CB radio that she return home immediately and help him and their boys. Here is an example of a common exchange between Hally Lou and Hollis over the CB radio:

Hollis: It’s all you can do to keep from falling over myself...all I can do to watch my own kids. You’re sure not gonna lift a finger for us. There’s not a towel in this house-not even a dirty one, no food, no cokes, no T.V. Guide. Where did you hide that? No toilet paper. I’ve

¹³¹ Jo Harvey Allen, “Hally Lou” script, 1.

¹³² Terry Allen, “Oh Hally Lou” on *Salivation*, Sugar Hill Records, 1999, CD.

had it. Now come on. It's gonna rain anyhow and you'll end up ruining those supplies. Get home.

Hally Lou: No, Hollis, it isn't going to rain. I feel like I'm doing God's will tonight.

Hollis: God's will is for you to get your butt home where you belong and have just an ounce of compassion.¹³³

Hally Lou doesn't heed Hollis. Instead, she holds his truck hostage as she prepares herself to preach for his faithful followers. Throughout the play, Hally Lou moves between the CB radio and the microphone she has set up in front of the truck bed, sometimes taking time to fold laundry or remove the curlers from her hair. As she transitions between the truck bed and the microphone, she talks at the audience, a move that blurs the distinction between audience and church goers.

¹³³ Allen, "Hally Lou" script, 14.



Figure 13 Woman with Guitar during Aspen, CO performance. Photographer unknown.

A little past the halfway mark in the play, Hally Lou is joined by a second character, the only other character the audience sees in the show. In the script, she is identified as “Woman with Guitar” (seen above, performing at the microphone).¹³⁴ As Hally Lou recites a line – “God said when you go into a town and if they didn’t receive you when you leave that town, shake the dust off your feet,” – the woman enters the scene, carrying a boom box playing “How Do You Spell Love?...M O N E Y.”¹³⁵ The woman asks Hally Lou if she can sing during the meeting, and Hally Lou at first pretends to consider it. After the woman with guitar sings “The Old Rugged Cross” by George Bernard and “Will the Circle be Unbroken”

¹³⁴ Allen, “Hally Lou” script, 18.

¹³⁵ Allen, “Hally Lou” script, 18.

by Ada R. Habsershon and Charles H. Gabriel, Hally Lou decides that the woman should witness at the meeting rather than sing. This suggestion prompts the woman to tell Hally Lou about the time her mother had cancer, and about how prayer was the thing responsible for her beating it. Upon hearing this, Hally Lou encourages the woman to tell that story, but to mention herself as the one with cancer instead of her mother. She says, “You know what really matters is the truth. And the truth is, the real truth is and we know it, is that God can heal and if people see you, you know, young woman, talking about being healed of cancer then they’ll be moved to come forth.”¹³⁶

After Hally Lou shoos away the woman with the guitar, and has one last contentious exchange with Hollis over the C.B. radio, she continues to prepare the tabernacle and eventually she reveals a glass cage full of rattlesnakes. In some rural Christian holiness churches, handling snakes like these is the ultimate demonstration of faith. Here, Hally Lou sits with them and begins to pray over them. She prays for her children, that Hollis won’t stay angry, that he “won’t ever find out about the snakes.”¹³⁷ She follows that, asking, “But God the main thing I’m prayin’ for tonight is for faith. Please God keep my faith strong so that I won’t be bitten. When the time comes please give me strength and courage not to be afraid. And that I won’t be bitten. And please God just shed your wonderful light on me. And give me charisma to do good tonight.”¹³⁸ With that, Hally Lou puts “Bloodlines” by Terry on

¹³⁶ Allen, “Hally Lou” script, 22.

¹³⁷ Allen, “Hally Lou” script, 31.

¹³⁸ Allen, “Hally Lou” script, 31.

the boom box and she pours water from a jug “over her hands and feet.”¹³⁹ ¹⁴⁰ While she sings along with the lyrics, the water turns to blood.

The meeting itself never comes to fruition in “Hally Lou;” the play ends before it takes place. After all, as Jo Harvey told Suzanne Muchnic from *The Los Angeles Times*, this play “isn’t really about religion; it’s about contradictions. It isn’t about being preached at; it’s about what this woman is going through.”¹⁴¹

Jo Harvey explained to me that she was motivated to create “Hally Lou” by a question: How do people, often people with an abundance of faith, get corrupted on the path to power and fame in the Christian world?¹⁴² The character of Hally Lou is someone that Jo Harvey considers to have a lot of faith, genuine faith, but when she is presented with the opportunity for fame via the power of holding a meeting she jumps at the chance with little regard for her family. To prepare for the meeting, she relinquishes her role as wife and mother, which until now, as evidenced by her communication with her husband and God, was the role that primarily defined her identity.

¹³⁹ Allen, “Hally Lou” script, 32.

¹⁴⁰ Terry Allen and the Panhandle Mystery Band, “Bloodlines” on *Smokin’ the Dummy/Bloodlines*, Sugar Hill Records, 1983, CD.

¹⁴¹ Suzanne Muchnic, “Exploring Unclassified Art Forms,” *CALENDAR*, October 9, 1983, 90.

¹⁴² Jo Harvey Allen, personal communication with the author, September 9, 2021.

Hally Lou's Sermonizing



Figure 14 Jo Harvey as Hally Lou. Photographer unknown.

As we saw in Chapter One with “As It Is in Texas” and as we’ll see in Chapter Three with “Beautiful Waitress” and “Homerun,” Jo Harvey will often interview women and quote them verbatim in her plays. “Hally Lou is a composite,” she told me, “I’m not an avid reader...I always get my information from people.”¹⁴³ In “Hally Lou,” Jo Harvey includes language from interviews with women she met at tent revivals. In addition, she incorporates

¹⁴³ Jo Harvey Allen, personal communication with the author, September 9, 2021.

segments of a sermon preached by a woman evangelical preacher whom she witnessed at one of these tent revivals “somewhere close to Dallas.”¹⁴⁴ The portions of this sermon are intertwined with testimonial statements. Together these different pieces combine to produce a monologue of sorts, with gospel songs dispersed throughout, their presence often marking transitions between Hally Lou’s preparation of the altar and her sermon rehearsal.

Here is one example of how Jo Harvey weaves language used in the evangelical world into the script.

Roughly ten minutes into the play, Hally Lou fashions a tabernacle. After she checks the state of her false eyelashes in the mirror and puts on a pair of white gloves, Hally Lou sets up a card table on the ground to the left of the flatbed truck. She roughly quotes portions of the Book of Exodus as she folds out and fastens each leg of the table, saying, “And he made the incense altar of shittim wood; length a cubit, breadth a cubit; it was foursquare.”¹⁴⁵ After she places a tablecloth on top, she looks at it and recites, “And he overlaid it with gold.”¹⁴⁶ Then comes an elaborate cross, she places on the table saying, “And he made the altar of burnt offerings, he overlaid it with brass.”¹⁴⁷ Hally Lou places a vase with flowers: “And they brought the tabernacle unto Moses.”¹⁴⁸ She then walks toward the truck and admires it, calling it her “ark, my tabernacle. His boards, his bars, and his pillars and his sockets.” She grabs an ordinary brown doormat, places it on the truck bed and recites, “the coverings of

¹⁴⁴ Jo Harvey Allen, personal communication with the author, September 9, 2021.

¹⁴⁵ Exodus 37:25 (KJV).

¹⁴⁶ Exodus 37:2 (KJV).

¹⁴⁷ Exodus 38:1 (KJV).

¹⁴⁸ Exodus 39:33 (KJV).

rams' skins dyed red, the ark of the testimony," before she gives the bed a loving tap, calling it "Moses' Moving Van." This line that receives a few laughs from the audience.¹⁴⁹

Once the card table altar is complete, Hally Lou retrieves her outfit for the meeting-- a lacy white dress and a pair of turquoise cowboy boots-- and hangs its pieces on a barrel on the bed of the truck, saying "The cloths to do service in the holy place, and the holy garments." She begins to sing "Touch the Hem of his Garment." While she sings, she begins folding the clean clothes and moves into a practice run of her sermon. She gets caught up on a line, repeating it over with caution as she moves toward the microphone that is situated centrally in front of the tail end of the truck bed. Once she arrives at the microphone, with a sock in her hand and curlers in her hair, she's able to recite these lines with confidence: "Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore, take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye might be able to stand, and having done all to stand."¹⁵⁰¹⁵¹ The final line segues into Hally Lou singing, "Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus."

¹⁴⁹ Exodus, 39:34 (KJV).

¹⁵⁰ Ephesians, 6:11-6:12, (KJV).

¹⁵¹ A segment of this sermon can be found at the end of "Ain't No Top 40 Song," the ninth track on Terry's album, *Salvation* (1999).

Hally Lou as an Emplaced Performance

“Down to the crocheted doily hung over a makeshift altarpiece placed on the back of a clapboard truck, Jo Harvey Allen’s Hally Lou was theater, first, last, and only. It was, so far, the most successful program of the [Explorations] series, proving that boundaries between theater and performance art can be breached skillfully, from both the performer’s and audience’s points of view.”

- Bruce Bebb, *images&issues, Contemporary Art Review*



Figure 15 The set for the performance in Aspen. Photographer unknown.

As convincing as Jo Harvey’s acting was during her performances of “Hally Lou,” the set also plays a significant role in presenting the material reality of Hally Lou’s rural,

West Texas identity. The whole play takes place either on or near the flatbed truck, which has all of the equipment necessary to pull off a meeting. There is a suitcase with a mirror in it that Hally Lou uses to apply make-up and do her hair. A sign that reads “If the world comes to God they could have Extry Time on Earth Planet” is placed on the left side of the truck bed next to the cinder blocks and stool that Hally Lou climbs to get on top.¹⁵² A tambourine sits on the ground near a stack of cardboard boxes. There are two boom boxes that flank the stack of boxes, a couple of them displaying labels for alcoholic brands: Cutty Sark whiskey and Skol vodka. There is a laundry basket overflowing with blue jeans and other clothes near the back, a marker of Louella’s good intentions when she set out on her way that morning. On the right side of the bed, there is a license plate that reads, “SMILE GOD LOVES YOU.” The cab of the truck is covered with white cloth in such a way that it looks like a tent, and just behind it there are three very large crosses made of tree limbs that complete the background.

An emphasis on situation and relationality informs how I approach “Hally Lou.” Keeping in mind Raymond Williams’s notion that culture transcends constructed divisions in society, Jo Harvey’s “Hally Lou” embodies collaborative culture by incorporating language produced across religious and secular social divisions. It also actively produces culture that blurs this distinction. Jo Harvey repurposed the performative sermons of women evangelical preachers into her own work, which she in turn made available for people to observe outside the usual setting of a play, the theater. The words of evangelical women play a key role in the convincing nature of Jo Harvey’s performance. In the same article where Jo Harvey tells

¹⁵² This sign presents an opportunity to explore the rural/urban opposition in Jo Harvey’s work.

Muchnic that this play is about contradictions, the journalist asks, “How do you classify an artist-actress who writes her own scripts, sings and preaches hellfire and damnation?”¹⁵³ Jo Harvey’s portrayal of the titular character as she practiced preaching was so convincing that after her performance in Aspen, Colorado, a man approached her and asked to be saved. Also, when Jo Harvey rehearsed the play in Aspen one evening, she frightened a boy who saw her across a field near the creek where she performed. She told me, “Standing out there by myself, preaching like crazy...he lit up running like nobody’s business.”¹⁵⁴

The fact that Jo Harvey performed “Hally Lou” both inside the theater and outside of it enabled an audience comprised of high art patrons as well as situational observers to engage with the play together. The most important example of this happened in the Crenshaw Shopping Center in Los Angeles. Jo Harvey performed “Hally Lou” twice in Los Angeles. The first performance was in early October of 1983 as a part of a performance art series hosted by CalArts and the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) titled “Explorations.” As Muchnic described it, the series offered “the public a rare opportunity to learn about what’s going on among multi-talented artists ‘exploring the boundaries of their art.’”¹⁵⁵ This first performance happened at the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center. Pam Hammond wrote about the performance for *Images and Issues* that “Allen dished up a homemade slice of Bible-belt sincerity, one not new or unfamiliar, but delivered with such credibility that she ‘was’ the character.”¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³ Muchnic, “Exploring Unclassified Art Forms,” 90.

¹⁵⁴ Jo Harvey Allen, personal communication with the author, October 21, 2019.

¹⁵⁵ Muchnic, “Exploring Unclassified Art Forms,” 90.

¹⁵⁶ Pam Hammond, “Hally Lou,” *Images and Issues*, March/April 1984.

Someone at MOCA told Jo Harvey that after this performance, she needed to participate in a Q & A session with the audience. At first, Jo Harvey told them “no.” She’s of the opinion that “your work has to stand on its own. If it doesn’t, there’s no point in talking about it.”¹⁵⁷ But, MOCA insisted, and so Jo Harvey agreed under the condition that she was not forced to talk about the play. MOCA agreed, and what transpired afterwards was a discussion about religion instead. This discussion – about “religion” rather than “art” -- suggests the play’s capacity for cultural production, but the second performance in Los Angeles demonstrates this notion to a larger degree.

A week before the 1992 riots in Los Angeles, which began in response to not-guilty verdicts for four police officers who violently beat Rodney G. King, Jo Harvey sat in the pickup truck from her set in a Crenshaw shopping center, one of the locations that would soon be hardest hit by the rioting. “It was on a Sunday,” she told me, “the museum had hired a staff of young people to set up the truck.” Jo Harvey went to relieve them for lunch and as she sat in the car with the intent to guard the props, she started to observe all the activity in the parking lot. One person, most likely drawn to her due to the three crosses in the bed of the pickup, kept approaching and preaching at her. Another person came up to her and said, ““Don’t pay attention to him, he’s crazy. Don’t let him talk to you.””¹⁵⁸ Then a woman picked up some rocks and moved over to throw them at the crosses. Jo Harvey started thinking about how the person preaching at her didn’t sound that crazy. In fact, she told me later that she felt more aligned with his sermonizing than she did with the sermon from her play.

¹⁵⁷ Jo Harvey Allen, personal communication with author, September 9, 2021.

¹⁵⁸ Jo Harvey Allen, personal communication with the author, September 3, 2021.

As she observed the activity around her, Jo Harvey started to get worried. MOCA planned to bus in an audience for the performance that evening, but Jo Harvey started thinking that while those people – MOCA’s carefully curated audience -- would know that her play was a performance, the “ordinary” people in the shopping center might not understand. She went to a church located in the shopping center to gather her thoughts, and she decided that she would ask the preaching man if he’d like to perform a short sermon during her play. Jo Harvey eventually asked others as well if they would like to preach, and several people got up during her play and performed in ten-minute slots. Afterward, the audience from the bus joined hands with the participants, as well as others who had attended serendipitously. Everyone sang “Amazing Grace.”

In spite of her affiliation with MOCA, Jo Harvey’s decision to change the end of the play, a decision influenced by the location of the performance, defied the norms associated with “high art.” Thus, this final performance of “Hally Lou” underscores its ability to “transcend constructed divisions in society.”¹⁵⁹

Jo Harvey’s Positionality

Jo Harvey’s process of script writing and acting, and her decisions to modify “Hally Lou” according to the site of performance, demonstrate her commitment to creating art from an “in-between” place. In “Snakes Alive: Religious Studies between Heaven and Earth,” religious studies scholar Robert Orsi finds common ground between evangelical and “post-colonial critiques of the liberal paradigm for studying religion.”¹⁶⁰ As he explains it,

¹⁵⁹ Jason M. Baskin, “Romanticism, Culture, Collaboration,” 111.

¹⁶⁰ Robert Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 196.

“proponents of both perspectives propose that the universalistic ambitions of Western enlightened rationality give way to local orientations: there is no essential, singular truth, only situated truths.”¹⁶¹ Further, “both understand the scholar herself to be situated at a particular cultural location that fundamentally shapes her vision, and both place passion and commitment at the center of research methodology and pedagogy.”¹⁶² This notion, that there are only location-driven situated truths, suggests how place might begin to inform the portrayal of religion. As noted by Wendell Ricketts in his article titled “As It Is in Texas with Jo Harvey Allen,” published in the *Bay Area Reporter* on April 30, 1987, this emplaced method of exploration is true across Jo Harvey’s work, even beyond “Hally Lou.” “In Allen’s characterizations there is a quality of the Southwest that is immediately tangible, but almost impossible to define,” Ricketts writes, “Call it faded promise, dissolution, a starkness; call it, if you want, none of those things. It is, in any case, utterly compelling, even while being slightly menacing.”¹⁶³ Ricketts compares Jo Harvey’s ability to capture the Southwest to Richard Avedon’s photograph exhibit and book, titled *In The American West*: “The real genius of Avedon’s work was that it allowed us to stand face-to-face with people we would never have the opportunity, or the nerve, to examine with such awe and curiosity. Jo Harvey Allen, in her way, does the same.”¹⁶⁴ Just as Jo Harvey’s embodiment of characters brings her audience face to face with what Orsi calls situated truths, so too does the work of Avedon, Therefore Ricketts’s comparison of the two artists is a compelling one.

¹⁶¹ Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth*, 196.

¹⁶² Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth*, 196.

¹⁶³ Wendell Ricketts, “As It Is in Texas with Jo Harvey Allen,” *Bay Area Reporter*, April 30, 1987, 26.

¹⁶⁴ Ricketts, “As It Is in Texas,” 26.

In 2005, the Amon Carter Museum in Fort Worth hosted a show titled “In the American West: Photographs by Richard Avedon” twenty years after Avedon’s original 1985 exhibition. Avedon’s original project, also sponsored by the Amon Carter Museum, represented a drastic shift in his work. Though he was known for high-end fashion photography, “In the American West” presented large scale portraits of ordinary people he found while traveling in the West, ones that defied romantic stereotypes. In doing so, says John Rohrbach, senior Curator of Photographs at the museum, “Avedon has drawn important attention to the hardships that often attend life amidst the West’s wide spaces. His oversize prints demand engagement. His sitters induce us to confront our own humanity.”¹⁶⁵ Walking through the exhibit back in 2005, I found myself wondering about the identities of the giant people presented before me on gelatin silver paper. But beyond that, something about moving through all of those photographs made me feel completely enveloped by a new understanding of the region. Arguably, the overwhelming size of the portraits contributed to this. Avedon’s work is subject to criticism of liberal documentary photography, a fact that he often acknowledged. He said when approached about this, “There is no such thing as inaccuracy in a photograph. All photographs are accurate. None of them is the truth.”¹⁶⁶

This quote from Avedon, involving the portrait, subject, photographer and truth, resonates with Jo Harvey’s approach in writing “Hally Lou,” particularly her reliance upon the words of other women, and also how the play has been received. The way she embodied

¹⁶⁵ Amon Carter Museum of American Art, “In the American West: Photography by Richard Avedon Opens at Fort Worth’s Amon Carter Museum 20 Years After 1985 Exhibition,” press release, March 3, 2005, <https://www.cartermuseum.org/press-release/american-west-photographs-richard-avedon-opens-carter-museum>.

¹⁶⁶ Stephen Frailey, “Richard Avedon: ‘In The American West,’” *The Print Collector’s Newsletter* 17, no. 2 (1986), <https://stephenfrailey.com/pages/writing/american-west-avedon>.

the language of the woman preacher, for example, had some audience members in Aspen and Los Angeles wondering what exactly they were watching. In Aspen, Jane Fudge of *Boulder Daily Camera* witnessed a woman in the audience respond as Hally Lou heads for the snakes at the end of the play, writing “Behind me, a woman whispered, ‘If she touches that thing, I’m out of here.’ You and me both, lady. For the space of a few seconds as we sat in a welter of uncertainty (Is this for real or not?).”¹⁶⁷ This question of authenticity is mirrored in Dan Sullivan’s article in the *Los Angeles Times*, titled “Character at a Crossroad in ‘Hally Lou.’” “Allen’s so real as Hally Lou,” Sullivan observed, “that one can well believe she’s been accused of trying to smuggle across a gospel message under the guise of theater. I wish we’d broken down and answered her ‘hallelujahs’ - it would have done us good.”¹⁶⁸

What makes Jo Harvey’s delivery of Hally Lou so convincing? It is her ability to move across multiple “truths,” or illuminating the notion that static truth does not exist. “Hally Lou” communicates situational and emplaced truths. It does so because Jo Harvey channels the words of real people to create the character of Hally Lou. And she doesn’t only include these words, she lets them hold court, and powerfully persuade her audience. Jo Harvey’s work can be understood as coming from an “in-between” state because she not only uses dialogue from interviews with women, but brings this dialogue to life on stage. I consider her relationship with these women as collaborative.

This collaboration hasn’t always been easy for Jo Harvey. I spoke with Joan Tewkesbury, director, actress, and writer, about Jo Harvey’s relationship with the truth on August 21, 2023 at Tewkesbury’s home in Tesuque, New Mexico.¹⁶⁹ “She is not a cynical

¹⁶⁷ Jane Fudge, “Allen offers an amusing...” *Boulder Daily Camera*, September 9, 1983.

¹⁶⁸ Dan Sullivan, “Allen at a Crossroad in ‘Hally,’” *Los Angeles Times*, October 15, 1983, 8.

¹⁶⁹ Joan Tewkesbury wrote the screenplay for *Nashville* (1975), directed by Robert Altman.

performer,” Joan said, “She does not look at those people, anybody, with judgment.” However, after a brief pause she said, “She looked at Hally Lou with judgment.” She continued, “It came down harder than the other pieces that she was doing at the time. But, she has never done a character that she didn’t find the truth.” Joan’s response to the question I posed marks the struggle Jo Harvey experienced with performing the character of Hally Lou. Jo Harvey referred to it as her “big dilemma.” She told me, “My dilemma was, will they think this is me? Because, if they think it is me then I want to take it somewhere else.”¹⁷⁰ Terry, aware of Jo Harvey’s dilemma, presented her with a quote from Flannery O’Connor. I do not know the specific quote, but the point O’Connor makes is that it is important, above all else, to be truthful to your character.¹⁷¹

In an important sense, Hally Lou has always been present in Jo Harvey’s life; this woman is a product of, and a producer of, the same place Jo Harvey is. I’ve asked Jo Harvey many times why she wrote “Hally Lou.” Tent revivals were a source of inspiration, she told me.¹⁷² Her fascination with them began when she was a young girl in Lubbock. Jo Harvey’s extended family was religious, and in some cases, very religious. This is a common familial trait in Lubbock, Texas. As Christopher Oglesby wrote in *Fire in the Water, Earth in the Air: Legends of West Texas Music*, “there are almost eight times as many churches per capita in Lubbock than in the United States as a whole.”¹⁷³ Jo Harvey’s parents did not go to tent revivals as adults, but her mother attended them as a child, and her parent’s stories about them fueled Jo Harvey’s fascination:

¹⁷⁰ Jo Harvey Allen, personal conversation, August 10, 2020.

¹⁷¹ Jo Harvey Allen, personal communication with author, August 10, 2020.

¹⁷² Jo Harvey Allen, personal communication with the author, September 2, 2021.

¹⁷³ Christopher Oglesby, *Fire in the Water*, 3.

I think when you haven't had that experience and when you hear about it, you know, you are more curious about what's happening. I would see [revivals] on the side of the road when I was a kid. I heard stories about my family, my grandparents and all, going on these revival things in Texas, where they would go and the revival would last a week and they'd be in tents and then go out in the evening and sit on pallets. I just always remember my mother saying, 'we'd take fruit jars full of ice tea and sit out on pallets.' And so, you know, the idea of kids running around and playing out there in a week-long thing, out with the tent and all that, was very fascinating to me.¹⁷⁴

Jo Harvey began to conceptualize “Hally Lou” when she came across a classroom on the Berkeley campus as the class inside watched the film *Holy Ghost People*. *Holy Ghost People* is a 1967 documentary, directed by Peter Adair, about a Pentecostal church that practiced snake handling in West Virginia. Jo Harvey told me about this experience on the 10th of August in 2020:

Terry was teaching school in Berkeley,” she said. “He was teaching in the Art Department and I went up to visit him in his office and walked past a classroom they were playing it in. So, I just walked into the class, it was just like, ‘ahhh!’ followed the sound. I sat down in that class and watched it.

After that, she rented the movie and watched it again:

My recollection is that I ordered it but Terry thinks he got it through the school later when he was teaching at Fresno State. But, at any rate, I managed to get it. I got a projector, he might have gotten the projector from school, and I think I ordered the film from somewhere, but anyway, so then I would set it up in the kids' bedroom which served as my office at the time while they were at school. So, I would watch it and you know, I just think that I was so fascinated by it.¹⁷⁵

As Jo Harvey re-watched *Holy Ghost People* in her “office” -- the room she used to write while her children were in school -- she became more and more intrigued by the snakes and their handlers. It became clear to her how faith and charisma worked in this world.

¹⁷⁴ Jo Harvey Allen, personal communication with the author, August 10, 2020.

¹⁷⁵ Jo Harvey Allen, personal communication with the author, August 10, 2020.

In some ways, Jo Harvey's fascination with snake handling seems similar to that of Dennis Covington, Professor Emeritus of Creative Writing at Texas Tech University in Lubbock, and author of *Salvation on Sand Mountain: Snake Handling and Redemption in Southern Appalachia* (1995). In *Salvation on Sand Mountain*, Covington transformed an assignment to document snake handlers in Southern Appalachia into a book detailing his personal journey with religion and snake handling.¹⁷⁶ Robert Orsi is a critic of Covington's text; Orsi argues that Covington has inscribed an existential circle, taking a long detour only to reestablish the same prejudices against snake handlers that many readers start out with, alongside whatever fascination of the exotic drew them to his work as well." Orsi presents this critique in an effort to demonstrate that the study of religion needs to move "beyond 'otherizing' as its basic move."¹⁷⁷ He calls for religious studies scholars to take stock of "how the religious figure that confounds and challenges us with his or her difference is silenced and securely relegated to otherness."¹⁷⁸ Orsi suggests that there is another way to go about managing the difficult task of studying religion: one that maintains the uneasy state of being in-between the self and other. Orsi writes that this orientation is "located at the intersection of self and other, at the boundary between one's own moral universe and the moral world of the other."¹⁷⁹ Maintaining this orientation "entails disciplining one's own mind and heart to stay in this in-between place, in a posture of disciplined attentiveness, especially to difference."¹⁸⁰

Jo Harvey's approach in creating and performing "Hally Lou" achieves, in many ways, what Orsi is arguing for here. Jo Harvey is an artist rather than an academic scholar,

¹⁷⁶ *Salvation on Sand Mountain* was a Finalist for the National Book Award in 1995.

¹⁷⁷ Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth*, 198.

¹⁷⁸ Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth*, 183.

¹⁷⁹ Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth*, 198.

¹⁸⁰ Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth*, 198.

but for her work, honest attention to difference, and a willingness to linger in the uncertain, in-between spaces created by that difference, is key. In addition, her research methods recall those of an anthropologist. When discussing the play with me, she has made it clear that accurately representing characters is a productive point of struggle for her. She talked to me in October of 2019 about truth, responsibility, and the identity of the character of Hally Lou. “You are only responsible to be truthful,” she said. “You don’t try to change your character. You try to find whatever truths you think are relevant to your character. That’s it.”¹⁸¹ She told me that although she struggled with the notion that people would think she actually was a preacher while performing in “Hally Lou,” her honest presentation of characters took priority, and this commitment to honest presentation is one of the central components that situates her work as a performance artist. “That’s what I was known for, without judgment... that I was documenting characters.”¹⁸²

Though Jo Harvey does create from this in-between state, her work still has a paradoxical bent, and her performance in Aspen demonstrates this. In *Knowing Your Place: Rural Identity and Cultural Hierarchy*, Barbara Ching and Gerald W. Creed argue that the value attached to rural or rustic art comes “from the judgments of highly visible urban consumers who use such objects to signal their class and cultural superiority.”¹⁸³ In this regard, Jo Harvey, like Covington, does not escape the reality that her work, through its affiliation with museums and consumption by the “high” art world, reinstates the rural/urban divide and in doing so, potentially reestablishes prejudices against rurality.

¹⁸¹ Jo Harvey Allen, personal communication with the author, October 10, 2019.

¹⁸² Jo Harvey Allen, personal communication with author, October 10, 2019.

¹⁸³ Barbara Ching and Gerald W. Creed, “Recognizing Rusticity: Identity and the Power of Place,” in *Knowing Your Place: Rural Identity and Cultural Hierarchy*, ed. Ching and Creed (New York: Routledge, 1997), 21.

For Jo Harvey, like Hally Lou, snakes are the ultimate symbol of faith. She's told me on numerous occasions that Hally Lou wasn't afraid of them. In August of 2020, she told me, "Hally Lou really is about a person, that in my mind had so much faith, that got the snakes because she wanted the show to be spectacular. And she really I don't think gave much thought to if those snakes were going to bite her. I think she was so convinced that God wouldn't let those snakes bite her." Jo Harvey told me that while she was positive that Hally Lou would touch the snakes, she "wasn't convinced that she was going to be able to steal her husband's truck and have that opportunity when he had the flu, and get the proper clothes that she needed."¹⁸⁴ Near the end of the play, Hally Lou reaches into a bucket of water for the flowers she has in the bed of the truck. She sprinkles water over the snakes as she says, "They shall take up serpents in the helmet of salvation."¹⁸⁵ Then, instead of continuing to practice her sermon, she prays:

Dear God, please keep Sammy safe and don't let him go near the highway. Please help me to do good tonight. Please just give me enough money to pay back for the dress and thank you that they didn't call in and find out that I hadn't paid my bill. And God, I just know I did right spending all that time with Mark Angelo today. Because I know you would want me to witness to him. And thank you for those boots. Please help me figure out something to tell Hollis so he won't get mad and find out. Dear God, please don't let me get scared. Please give me the courage and the strength to do your will and to pick up this snake *because I know with faith that I can do it*. God, please, the main thing, just please give me the charisma to do a good job out here tonight. *And I know that you won't let this snake bite me*. I walked through a beautiful field this morning, I leaned over and kissed the ground....¹⁸⁶

As an only child, Jo Harvey was "very ritualistic" and "had her own world."¹⁸⁷ Identifying as a "church hopper" when she was younger, Jo Harvey told me that she was a faithful kid. In

¹⁸⁴ Jo Harvey Allen, personal communication with author, August 10, 2020.

¹⁸⁵ Allen, "Hally Lou" script, 30.

¹⁸⁶ Allen, "Hally Lou" script, 31.

¹⁸⁷ Jo Harvey Allen, personal communication with author, September 2, 2021.

Homerun, Jo Harvey writes, “I remember sleeping down in the basement on a real hot summer night when I was five years old, praying real hard for snow. *I woke to a white morning with almost enough faith for a lifetime.*”¹⁸⁸ The basement she refers to here is in the home of one of her grandmothers. I learned a lot about these grandmothers when I started working for Jo Harvey. On July 24th, 2016, while she sat on the blue swing outside the front door of her studio, Jo Harvey told me about her two grandmothers who were exact opposites. “One of them lived in a little shack, was big and fat, and a very terrible house keeper, but extremely colorful and had a big stack of country music.” The other grandmother, “lived in a big old boarding house, was industrious, you could eat off her bathroom floor. She was skinny as a rail.”¹⁸⁹ One night, while she was lying on the bed with her “big, fat grandmother,” her grandmother told Jo Harvey that she wanted her to learn “Peace in the Valley.” She hoped that the girl could stand in front of the second Baptist church, where her grandmother attended, and sing it for everybody. Jo Harvey said, “Well, I practiced and practiced on ‘Peace in the Valley’ and I never did get to do it. So, that was a dream I had never got to fulfill, except in every single play I ever did, there was ‘Peace in the Valley’ that came after it from there on. Every one-woman show had something about ‘Peace in the Valley’ in it.”¹⁹⁰

The fact that Jo Harvey never got to perform “Peace in the Valley,” even though she practiced it, demonstrates a personal connection between Jo Harvey and the character Hally Lou, who also practices and practices. Jo Harvey remembers a strange situation she and Terry experienced in Oakland at a diner, where the waitress played “Peace in the Valley” on

¹⁸⁸ Allen, *Homerun*, 23.

¹⁸⁹ Jo Harvey Allen, personal communication with author, August 9, 2016.

¹⁹⁰ Jo Harvey Allen, personal communication with author, August 9, 2016.

the jukebox. They were headed home from San Francisco, where Jo Harvey had just finished up an audition with Tom Donahue, record producer and Top 40 deejay, at KYA. Donahue wanted Jo Harvey to be the female Wolfman Jack.¹⁹¹¹⁹² Jo Harvey explained the event at the cafe to me in late July, 2016.

We pull into the parking lot and we walk into the café, nobody is there except, we see the waitress. We go and sit at the counter. We sit right next to the opening where she walks out, you know, from the counter out onto the tables and floor. Nobody has said a word. She stands in front of me with a cup of coffee and sets it down. One cup of coffee. Terry and I are both sitting there. She set the coffee down in front of me, staring at me, I mean, really staring at me...walks out this passageway right behind me, presses "Peace in the Valley" on the jukebox, that cut (that she played during her audition), which is not on jukeboxes. She comes and stand back in front of me, looking at me.¹⁹³

"The cook comes out from the kitchen and stands there," Jo Harvey continued. "Both of them. Not a word has ever been spoken. "Peace in the Valley" is playing. The cook and the waitress. One cup of coffee. They are looking at me and I start to cry, just sobbing. Then she goes over and punches the jukebox. She plays, 'What a Friend We Have in Jesus.' Nobody in the whole world but me knew that that was the other song my grandmother had taught me. It's crazy. Terry and I get up. He never gets coffee. Nobody says a word."¹⁹⁴ Jo Harvey went on to explain that when she got home, the only thing that she could think to do, as a way of trying to understand this event that left her feeling "shook up," was to open her Bible and see if it gave her resolution. When she opened the Bible, she found Isaiah 35:9, "No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the

¹⁹¹ Jo Harvey Allen, personal communication with author, August 9, 2016.

¹⁹² Wolfman Jack was a prominent deejay known for playing rock and roll on XERF-FM, a station located on the border of Texas and Mexico. He famously had a cameo in *American Graffiti*.

¹⁹³ Jo Harvey Allen, personal communication with author, August 9, 2016.

¹⁹⁴ Jo Harvey Allen, personal communication with author, August 9, 2016.

redeemed shall walk there.”¹⁹⁵ “It was mimicking ‘Peace in the Valley,’” Jo Harvey told me.¹⁹⁶ Upon opening the Bible to that verse, Jo Harvey thought, “Well, that’s it. I’m about to drop dead.”¹⁹⁷ So, she decided to try again. She told me, “I opened it up and it was about, your fields will grow over. Thistles will cover everything.”¹⁹⁸ Ever since, when Jo Harvey opens a Bible, she comes across either of these verses.

At the very beginning of the play, when Hally Lou picks up the Bible and points to a verse before exclaiming, “Got it again!” She does not explain to the audience why she did that. But it is a marker of Jo Harvey’s own relationship with Christianity and how she relies on faith as an artist.¹⁹⁹

In-Between-ness, Gender and Evangelical Women

There are two scholars to consider when focusing on gender and religion as they intersect with Jo Harvey’s “Hally Lou”: R. Marie Griffith, particularly her book titled *God’s Daughters: Evangelical Women and the Power of Submission*, and Kate Bowler, in particular her book titled *The Preacher’s Wife: The Precarious Power of Evangelical Women Celebrities*.^{200 201} Both recognize the need for scholars of religion to better understand the place and experience of women within evangelical Christianity. Like Jo Harvey, both of

¹⁹⁵ Isaiah: 35:9, (KJV).

¹⁹⁶ Jo Harvey Allen, personal communication with author, July 24, 2016.

¹⁹⁷ Jo Harvey Allen, personal communication with author, July 24, 2016.

¹⁹⁸ Jo Harvey Allen, personal communication with author, July 24, 2016.

¹⁹⁹ This moment in the play presents yet another example of how Jo Harvey’s work straddles the separation between performance and performativity.

²⁰⁰ Rachel M. Griffith, *God’s Daughters: Evangelical Women and the Power of Submission* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

²⁰¹ Kate Bowler, *The Preacher’s Wife: The Precarious Power of Evangelical Women Celebrities* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019).

these women also have complicated and intimate relationships with their own religious backgrounds. And both create from the in-between state that Orsi argues for in *Snakes Alive*. In *God's Daughters*, Griffith reveals that she began her research on the evangelical Women's Aglow Fellowship after telling her prayer group, one she participated in while in graduate school, that she was looking for a new research topic. Griffith spends the majority of the Introduction to *God's Daughter's* detailing how in-between her approach is, and needs to be. Kate Bowler, too, reflects on her own relationship with faith and religion in the personal note that precedes the body of *The Preacher's Wife*. Bowler's battle with cancer while writing the book led to an appreciation of the women she researched, "As I was so obviously struggling against my own limitations," she writes, "I discovered that most people were quite willing to admit their own. Together we spent hundreds of hours discussing the narrow and precarious paths of power that women tread."²⁰² Both Griffin and Bowler present and confront their situated truths before delving into their research, making it possible for them to arrive at the in-between state that Orsi argues for.

"American evangelicalism is a tradition saturated in narratives of personal experiences," Griffith writes, "testimonies that echo biblical stories of conversion and rebirth, recounting events that have irrevocably changed one's life."²⁰³ These narratives have specific blueprints or protocols, Griffith notes. And those blueprints for evangelical testimony are in turn deeply inflected by gender. The characters in Jo Harvey's play, and the narratives they share in its dialogue, conform in important ways to the gender blueprints for American evangelicalism as it has been lived in rural Texas.

²⁰² Bowler. *The Preacher's Wife*, xii.

²⁰³ Griffith, *God's Daughters*, 16.

Louella was born in 1942 in West Texas. In “Hally Lou,” the play, we don’t learn much about Louella; she is Hally Lou for the entirety of the play aside from when her husband, Hollis, insists otherwise. In addition to the play, however, Jo Harvey wrote a screenplay. Though it never evolved into a film, the screenplay offers insight into Louella, the woman who spends her time becoming Hally Lou in the play with the same name. The screenplay opens with Louella, age six, outside of a West Texas shack:

Little Louella, a 6 year-old girl with bright red lipstick and a crown of long braids laced with wilted morning glories, criss-crossed crooked on top of her head, turns on the water hydrant and drags a leaky hose alongside her grandma’s shack and through the chicken coops. She drops the hose long enough to catch a chicken, stick its squawking head underneath its wing, shake it as hard as she can and set it back down to watch it ‘be hypnotized,’ then she climbs the fence and stretches the hose over into a hole in the ground as big around as a wash tub and nearly twice as deep. She takes off her dirty sun dress and washes the chicken shit off her bare feet. She has on a big pair of black nylon panties safety pinned at the waist. “Saturday Night” is embroidered across the side of them. She sits down in the muddy hole with the water hose and looks straight up. Suddenly we see a wonderful broad snaggle-toothed smile. A small plane passes overhead. It sky writes Coca-Cola in cursive across the hot, cloudless, West Texas sky.²⁰⁴

In the play, Hollis refers to Hally Lou as Louella, and during his first call with her over the CB radio, he too reveals a little bit of her past:

You’re just biting at the bit to get all gussied up, change your name and get up there in front of ever-body and pretend you’re Tammy Faye or Jan or Aimee Semple McPherson. Well, you’re not. And you’re not Hally Lou, either! I suppose you’re gonna get out there and tell ‘em about salvation... ‘Hally Lou!’ Why don’t you tell ‘em how you got saved...by me when your daddy ran off and your mama flipped out. Why don’t you tell ‘em how I came along with a steady job when you were just a snotty nosed little brat. It if hadn’t been for me, you would have never left the city limits. Tell ‘em how your ma just sat there day in and day out with her feet in a bucket and a Bible on her lap gettin’ inspired while you ran wild. Hell, you would have still been in tuscaloosa standing in chicken shit smellin’ morning glories if it hadn’t been for me. You’re not gonna tell ‘em that, though, are you? No siree-you’re gonna get up there and pretend you’re on T.V. preaching your brains out, aren’t you?...Hally Lou....²⁰⁵

²⁰⁴ Jo Harvey Allen, *Hally Lou* screenplay, revised third draft, June 15, 2000, 1.

²⁰⁵ Allen, *Hally Lou* screenplay, 6-7.

This interaction – or rather, aggressive criticism – gives us a brief window into the character of Louella as opposed to the figure we know as Hally Lou.

In this early exchange between Hally Lou and Hollis, we also learn that “Hally Lou” is a character that Louella created the minute she realized she had an opportunity to hold her own religious meeting. Hollis is correct about one thing: Louella has created a new persona that (in her mind, at least) could potentially lead to becoming a celebrity on the evangelical circuit. The women Hollis mentions – Tammy Faye Baker, Jan Crouch, and Aimee Semple McPherson – are each significant evangelical figures. In particular, Tammy Faye Bakker and Jan Crouch were both important figures in the televangelist movement of the 1970s and 1980s. Kate Bowler writes, “the television stage was the most coveted place to be seen in the Christian industry and, for women, one of the few places to perform and be interviewed without the appearance of impropriety.”²⁰⁶ In addition to Hollis directly referencing these women, Jo Harvey nods to them as well every time Hally Lou looks into the mirror, fixes her eyelashes and messes with the curlers in her hair.

Jo Harvey emphasizes that these women are important for Hally Lou. She told me, “You know, everything she does that day, it’s an extraordinary day for her and she is trying to take advantage because really, she has been stuck at home while he’s out dealing with people and she’s been stuck at home watching Tammy Faye on TV. That’s what she would love to be.”²⁰⁷ Jo Harvey watched these people on television herself. She watched

²⁰⁶ Bowler, *The Preacher’s Wife*, 121.

²⁰⁷ Jo Harvey Allen, personal communication with author, August 10, 2020.

Amy Semple McPherson, Tammy Faye, and she was interested in Jimmy Swaggart. While working on the play, Terry's aunt came to visit Jo Harvey's family. Jo Harvey told me:

She came with a woman who was divorced from an itinerant preacher in West Texas. And, because I had really carefully done so much, you know, years of following tent revivals and talking to women preachers and wives of preachers and all of that, I was able to ask her to really be blunt with me about how he acted when he was preaching and how he acted at home. And she said it was "goddamn this and that" at home. So, he really was, it was the show he was doing.²⁰⁸

The character of Hollis, meanwhile, provides a foil to Hally Lou's character. Hollis and Louella both perform under adopted religious personas (for Hollis, it's Reverend Hollis and for Louella, it's Hally Lou). Hollis questions Hally Lou's motives in part because her desire to hold meetings threatens his own performed identity of "preacher," and the masculinity that identity confirms for him. This is interesting in light of Kate Bowler's analysis writes in the second chapter of *The Preacher's Wife*. In the subsection, "The Homemaker," Bowler writes, "It is little wonder that the biggest celebrities of the decade, male and female, were those who made the Christian family the last line of defense against changing cultural norms."²⁰⁹ The 1970s and eighties is a particularly apt moment to highlight the contradictory nature of the female evangelical celebrity. As Bowler points out, this was the era of second-wave feminism and its development provoked an opposing conservative movement, bent on keeping the role of the woman within the nuclear family. For women who aimed to attain celebrity status in the evangelical world during this period, their power was parasitic in nature, always defined by proximity to their husbands. For Jo Harvey, this is an important characteristic of Hally Lou's, and it resonates with her own positionality as an artist alongside (individually and collectively) Terry. I've asked Jo Harvey about this. While Terry

²⁰⁸ Jo Harvey Allen, personal communication with author, August 10, 2020.

²⁰⁹ Bowler, *The Preacher's Wife*, 78.

and Jo Harvey's relationship does not neatly compare to an evangelical husband-and-wife partnership, the transition from Jo Harvey watching *Holy Ghost People* in her children's bedroom, which functioned as her office while they were at school, to becoming a performance artist who is married to an accomplished male counterpart, is important to acknowledge. Surely, Hally Lou's transition to preaching – one that is informed by a desire to perform, while constantly tempered by questions about whether or not she has enough charisma to pull it off – is something that Jo Harvey has reckoned with herself as an artist, wife, mother, and woman.

Conclusion

The parallels between Jo Harvey and Hally Lou demonstrate Jo Harvey's personal investment in the truth, both as an artist and as a woman from West Texas. "Hally Lou" demonstrates that truths are multiple and situated. Her ability to access an in-between orientation, not only by pulling from the place(s) she conducts her research, but manipulating her performances according to the immediate situations she finds herself performing in, reinforces the fact that her performances are co-productions. These co-productions leave marks on the people and places where she performs.

Chapter 3: Beautiful Waitress

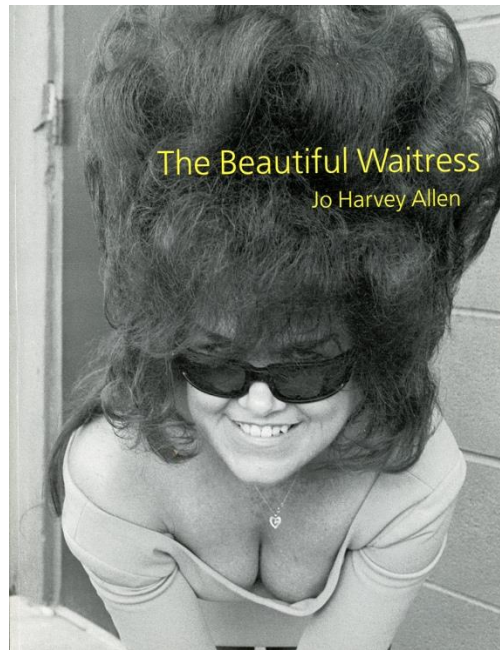


Figure 16 Cover image from *The Beautiful Waitress Booklet*. Photo by Jo Harvey Allen. Used with permission.

In 1973, at the inaugural Willie Nelson Fourth of July Picnic in Dripping Springs, Texas, Jo Harvey was hanging out backstage with country outlaw icon Waylon Jennings, when Jennings announced that he had to leave to do “some damned radio interview with some stupid girl.”²¹⁰²¹¹ Unbeknownst to him, Jo Harvey *was* that “stupid girl.” A local radio station in Fresno, California had asked her to record an interview with Jennings at the picnic. His comment did not sit well with Jo Harvey. She bailed. A few days later, on the way back to California, Jo Harvey and Terry ate breakfast at a diner on 34th Street in Lubbock. Jo Harvey was worried about her failure to collect the interview and she expressed her concern

²¹⁰ Jo Harvey Allen, personal communication with author, June 2016.

²¹¹ Upon reading the dissertation, Jo Harvey told me that this might not be exactly what Jennings said to her, but whatever he did say to her was enough to make her refuse to show.

to Terry. Terry encouraged her, partly in jest, to interview their waitress at the diner instead. Any ordinary person is just as interesting as Waylon Jennings if you pay attention. That was the idea. Their waitress agreed to talk with Jo Harvey and that was the beginning of Jo Harvey's multimedia ethnographic project currently titled *The Beautiful Waitress*.

People are always saying to me, 'I could write a book.' What they mean is that they couldn't and they wouldn't want to. Wouldn't know where to start or how to stop. The phrase is a gesture toward a beginning dense with potential. They have stories, substories, tangles of association, accrued layers of impact and reaction. The passing, gestural claim of 'I could write a book' points to the inchoate but very real sense of the sensibilities, socialities, and gestures not toward the clarity of answers but toward the texture of knowing. What a life adds up to is still a problem and an open question: an object of curiosity.²¹²

This quote from Kathleen Stewart in *Ordinary Affects* speaks to the tangles of The Beautiful Waitress project, though Jo Harvey did actually write a book manuscript. In addition to that manuscript, the project materialized in the form of an interactive performance, titled "Tables and Angels," that took place in truck stop diners. That performance eventually evolved into a play, titled "Counter Angel," that was performed in museums, galleries, and theaters. While conducting research for this project, Jo Harvey photographed diners and waitresses, creating a show with the work for gallery exhibits. Both "A Moment's Hesitation" and "As It Is in Texas" feature characters inspired by the waitresses Jo Harvey interviewed. And Jo Harvey has looming plans to revisit the project, interviewing waitresses now with the goal of seeing if and how the industry has changed over the last fifty years. She told me of her intention to do so when I met her in the summer of 2015, and again when I spoke with her on the phone on the 8th of November, 2023. The Beautiful Waitress has existed in so many forms and it is indeed still inchoate.

²¹² Kathleen Stewart. *Ordinary Affects* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 129.

Though *The Beautiful Waitress* book was never published, it is referenced a number of times in Jo Harvey's archive. The booklet for a show produced by the Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts cites the book. Jo Harvey had an agent, Elaine Markson, "who was among the first women to own a literary agency and to further the careers of fledgling feminist authors."²¹³ Unaware at the time of Markson's efforts to promote feminist works, Jo Harvey told me that the publishing companies who were interested in book asked that she change the forward, to emphasize that she was documenting these poor women, overworked and underpaid. Jo Harvey refused. "The whole point of the book is that you can't judge anybody by their occupation," she said.²¹⁴ "It wasn't that I was against women, just that that group of women I didn't want to put in some category that wasn't true....So, I put it [the book] under the bed."²¹⁵ And under the bed is where it stayed until Joan Tewkesbury visited Terry and Jo Harvey in Fresno, and asked Jo Harvey if she could see it.

Jo Harvey's refusal to characterize the waitresses she interviewed and worked with as "poor women" demonstrates her commitment to, as Stewart writes, the "texture of knowing." Positioned in opposition of "the clarity of answers," the "texture of knowing" leaves room for everything, including conflict, when considering ordinary realities.²¹⁶ In the context of this chapter, Jo Harvey's entrance into the world of truck stop diners can be understood if we take a look at layers. Here, I identify accrued layers in *The Beautiful Waitress* project. These layers come into view through Jo Harvey's creation of the composite character, Ruby Kay,

²¹³ Sam Roberts, "'Elaine Markson, Literary Agent for Feminist Authors, Dies at 87," *New York Times*, June 1, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/01/obituaries/elaine-markson-literary-agent-for-feminist-authors-dies-at-87.html>.

²¹⁴ Jo Harvey Allen, personal communication with author, November 8, 2023.

²¹⁵ Jo Harvey Allen, personal communication with author, November 8, 2023.

²¹⁶ Stewart, *Ordinary Affects*, 129.

through her collaboration with different women artists throughout the various iterations of the project, and through her interactive performances. I also use a song from the play, Terry's "The Beautiful Waitress," to look at how Jo Harvey's attention to the texture of knowing in truck stop diners influences the accumulative nature of the alt-country genre.

A Space on the Side of the Road

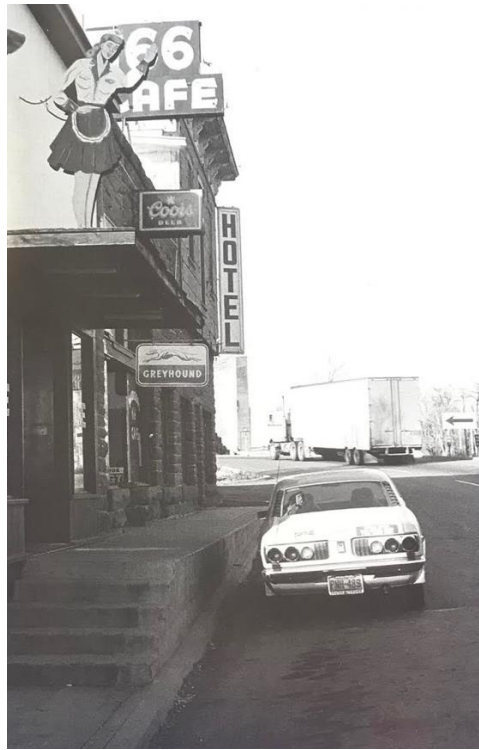


Figure 17 Photo taken by Jo Harvey Allen. Used with permission.

The work of anthropologist Kathleen Stewart helps us see how the ordinary serves as inspiration for Jo Harvey’s creative process. Reading Stewart’s work often leaves me convinced that Jo Harvey’s approach to research for her art demands that “ethnographer” should be added to the number of labels she wishes to avoid. Stewart defines the ordinary as “a shifting assemblage of practices and practical knowledges, a scene of both liveness and exhaustion, a dream of escape or of the simple life.”²¹⁷ The first line in Stewart’s book, *Ordinary Affects* (2007), reads, “*Ordinary Affects* is an experiment, not a judgment.”²¹⁸ Because Jo Harvey includes many quotes verbatim in all of her plays, including “Tables and

²¹⁷ Stewart, *Ordinary Affects*, 1.

²¹⁸ Stewart, *Ordinary Affects*, 1.

Angels” and “Counter Angel,” and because the audience finds her embodiment of each character convincing, in part due to her use of this verbatim language, in part due to her acting skills, and in part due to the settings in which she performs, is recognized by the press as not judging the characters she creates.²¹⁹

In *A Space on the Side of the Road* (1996), Stewart asks of the reader:

Picture a space on the side of the road. How the space of story situates meaning and event in a dense discursive landscape of encounter as the narrator encounters the accidental event and finds herself roaming in a graphic scene in which objects speak to her and meaning, memory, and motive seem to adhere to storied things to become a force encountered.²²⁰

When Jo Harvey found herself in the diner in Lubbock, lamenting her failure to get an interview with Waylon Jennings, Terry’s suggestion to interview their waitress provoked an “accidental event” for Jo Harvey and the waitress. The first interview led to a second, which eventually bloomed into a never-ending project, thick with meaning, memory and motive.

The “space on the side of the road,” for Stewart, is the “performative space where signs (talk) and meanings (ideals/ideas) collide.”²²¹ “This is the very motive for telling the story,” Stewart continues, “and its point in the end.”²²² The places that inspire Jo Harvey’s Beautiful Waitress Project are literally on the side of the road: truck stops and diners, where the waitresses place enormous value on engaging with their transient customers. As Ruby Kay says in “Counter Angel,” “As long as I’m here this is a trucker’s restaurant. He is first....There’s a part you play as a hostess and a part you play as a friend. I

²¹⁹ This includes Scott Rosenberg of the *San Francisco Examiner*, Ken Robison of *The Fresno Bee*, and Jane Fudge of *Boulder Daily Camera*.

²²⁰ Kathleen Stewart, *A Space on the Side of the Road* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996) 32.

²²¹ Stewart, *A Space on the Side of the Road*, 211.

²²² Stewart, *A Space on the Side of the Road*, 211.

just get involved”²²³ This quote indicates that many, if not all, of the waitresses Jo Harvey interviewed were aware of the performative nature of their job, and that the primary way they “get involved” is through what Stewart calls “just talk.” Stewart defines “just talk” as “talk that rises to the surface to overwhelm the merely referential with a rush of poetic forms and the living phantasms of a sociality embedded in remembered drama.”²²⁴

For four years, Jo Harvey interviewed waitresses in many different cafes, “from Dunkin’ Donuts to endless Terminal Diners.”²²⁵ She eventually combined quotes from many of the women she interviewed and created the script for “Table and Angels,” which then evolved into the play “Counter Angel.” In the play, Jo Harvey plays Ruby Kay, a combination of all of these women, and of Jo Harvey, too. Ruby Kay talks to diners and audience members, often with a mouthful of pie and mostly about “love, infidelity and death.”²²⁶ Each iteration of the Beautiful Waitress project involves a different medium, revealing a window into Jo Harvey’s layered approach. The first product is the performance piece titled “Tables and Angels.”

²²³ Jo Harvey Allen, *Counter Angel* (1982), 15.

²²⁴ Stewart, *A Space on the Side of the Road*, 31.

²²⁵ Steve Dollar, “‘Artist’ Only? Texan Jo Harvey Allen is too busy for labels.” *Florida Flambeau*, September 10, 1981, 14.

²²⁶ Deborah Haynes, “‘Counter Angel’ reveals life through waitress’s eyes,” *Daybreak*, August 3, 1983, 1D.

The Project(s)

“Tables and Angels”

Imagine how narrator and audience find themselves in the space of a doubled, haunting epistemology that comes of speaking from within the object spoken of. How they find themselves both subject and object of story, both inside and outside storied events, simultaneously seduced and watchful, firmly placed in the immanence of remembered scenes and unfolding events yet always cognizant of the culturally marked skill of ‘makin’ somehin’ of thangs.’²²⁷

Jo Harvey performed the interactive, performance piece “Tables and Angels,” twice.

According to Robert L. Pincus for *Art in America*, she enacted “preliminary versions in cafes in Anchorage and San Francisco...she handled all details of production in the manner of performance artists.”²²⁸ The first performance was outside Anchorage, Alaska, on the 13th of July, 1981, at the Chick-N-Burger Cafe, owned by a man named Alfonso, who had connections to Lubbock, Texas. Like the majority of people in Lubbock, Texas, Alfonso was a religious man. He and his wife, Naomi, “agreed to let Allen perform there only if they could preview what she did.”²²⁹ Judy McConnell Steele writes of how the preview went, “She agreed to do a rehearsal in front of them, even though she thought that would be the end of it. Ruby Kay doesn’t mince her words or her language. ‘I got to the third line, and Fonzo said, ‘Wait a minute.’” Allen said. ‘I told him, ‘Just give me 20 minutes, and then you can decide.’ After 30 minutes, he stood up and said, I’m beginning to like the old gal.”²³⁰

Jo Harvey also performed “Tables and Angels” at the Chat and Chew Café on September 26, 1981 in San Francisco. 80 Langton Street, home to New Langton Arts

²²⁷ Stewart, *A Space on the Side of the Road*, 34.

²²⁸ Robert Pincus, “Jo Harvey Allen at Malinda Wyatt,” *Art in America*, October 1982, 139.

²²⁹ Judy McConnell Steele, “Artist’s roles range from waitress to revivalist.” *CALENDAR*, August 3, 1983.

²³⁰ McConnell, “Artist’s roles range from waitress to revivalist.”

organization at the time, hosted eight performances during the month, two of which occurred outside the building. On the sixth, Mark Pauline, performance artist and inventor, moved the attending crowd to a parking lot on Folsom and 2nd Street. This information is provided in the Press Release for the event. The location for Jo Harvey's performance was kept a secret. The release reads (in all caps): "TO BE PERFORMED AT A CAFÉ, NOT AT 80 LANGTON STREET. PLEASE CALL FOR LOCATION." Just as she negotiated continuing the performance with Alfonso in Anchorage, Jo Harvey convinced 80 Langton Street, too. For an article titled "Woman of Parts: Waitresses, socialities and honky-tonk girls speak from the heart of Jo Harvey Allen," published in *People* magazine, Jo Harvey wrote, "I wrote a letter to an alternative art space in San Francisco and said I wanted to perform. They told me to send a résumé. So I just wrote, 'Look, I've scrubbed the bathroom a million times, and I'm ready to move on.' And they said okay."²³¹

The fact that 80 Langton Street kept Jo Harvey's performance location a secret speaks to Jo Harvey's desire to perform the piece in a space that, as included in the Stewart quote above, speaks "within the object spoken of."²³² As a result, both Jo Harvey, the performer, and the audience, lived within the layered, unfolding events that comprise the truck-stop diner scene. Just as her portrayal of Hally Lou left audiences confused about whether Jo Harvey was acting or preaching, Ruby Kay convinced (knowing) audience members and truck drivers alike. "One guy came up to me after a show and he said, 'I've got to get out of here. You're my ex-wife, my sister and my mother, and I can't stand any of

²³¹ Jo Harvey Allen, "Woman of Parts: Waitresses, socialites and honk-tonk girls speak from the heart of Jo Harvey Allen," *PEOPLE*, October 12, 1987, 100.

²³² Stewart, *A Space on the Side of the Road*, 34.

them,” Jo Harvey said.²³³ Jo Harvey remembers having the same effect in Anchorage. She recounts, “As I walked in I grabbed a trucker by the arm and said, ‘Honey, I haven’t seen you for ten damn days – where you been?’ He said, ‘On the road,’ and walked in with me.”²³⁴

The truck driver in Alaska probably knew that he had never met Jo Harvey before, but he *knew* Ruby Kay. The same goes for the audience member who recognized three women from his own life in the character. As Stewart writes, “(A space on the side of the road) culls meanings into heightened performances – scripted, mediated re-presentations that give pause to imagine a cultural real.”²³⁵

After “Tables and Angels,” Jo Harvey worked with Joan Tewkesbury to refine the character of Ruby Kay and they turned the interactive performance piece into a play.

²³³ Allen, “Woman of Parts,” 100.

²³⁴ Misha Berson, “As It Is in Fresno: Performance art meets the American heartland in Jo Harvey Allen’s new one-woman show,” *The San Francisco Bay Guardian*, April 8, 1987, 24.

²³⁵ Stewart, *A Space on the Side of the Road*, 206.

“Counter Angel”



Figure 18 Suzanne Muchnic’s article for *Los Angeles Times*, 1982.

As evident in Figure 19, included with an article written by Suzanne Muchnic for the *Los Angeles Times*, there are two significant differences between “Tables and Angels” and “Counter Angel.” First, “Counter Angel” is a play, and the transition to it involved creating a set. Joan Tewkesbury became the director and she also helped hone the script. She explained the transformation to me in her home in Tesuque:

I was working with Peter Jamison who was a production designer. And, I introduced him to Jo Harvey and I said, “We want to do this so she’s not just doing it in truck stops but in museums or galleries.” So, Peter came up with the idea of creating this whole diner out of foam core. And, he and his assistant, Bo (Welch), drew all of the characters and then cut out the fat guys at the bar, but we left her room so that Jo Harvey could move in and out. We did it at Melinda Wyatt’s Gallery, we did it at Laura Carpenter’s gallery in Texas. We did it at the New School in New York and so what we would do is we would bring an audience, pretty close to these guys out of foam core sitting at the bar. So, Jo Harvey would be talking to the live audience as well. These people would be sitting and watching her perform and so, she wrote...I forget. God, it was long. She wrote this monologue and we cut it down a little bit.

And then we started to rehearse. And, I drove her crazy. She was very loose with the language. I said, ‘Jo Harvey, your language is so good that you have to memorize it.’ So, I made her jump rope....²³⁶

As Tewkesbury explained, several significant shifts occurred in the transition between “Tables and Angels” and “Counter Angel.” However, Jo Harvey’s portrayal of Ruby Kay in the latter still allowed for the audience to be both “inside and outside storied events.”²³⁷

Muchnic writes of the performance at the Melinda Wyatt Gallery, “Ruby Kay isn’t someone you worry about after the play, but while she’s on, you are with her. It couldn’t be otherwise. She looks you in the eye and slaps a thigh – possibly yours – when it suits her. She’s a caricature with enough lovably tacky substance to stick through the show, which is blessedly free of performance art’s worst traits – tedious self-indulgence, masochistic sensationalism, and adolescent theatrics.”²³⁸

Art Critic Janet Kutner wrote an article with a similar sentiment regarding the transition from performance art to theater. She writes of Jo Harvey’s three-day run of “Counter Angel” at the Allen Street Gallery, previously located in the Deep Ellum District of Dallas, TX. “Counter Angel goes beyond the content of performance art, in which Ms. Allen, a recipient of a National Endowment of the Arts grant, has previously worked,” Kutner observed. “It has been filmed for cable television, but both Ms. Allen and Ms Tewkesbury prefer the pristine gallery situation to a more formal theatrical setting.”²³⁹ One reason Kutner

²³⁶ Joan Tewkesbury, interview with author, August 21, 2023.

²³⁷ Stewart, *A Space on the Side of the Road*, 34.

²³⁸ Suzanne Muchnic, “Pop-up Set Enhances Allen’s Play,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 7, 1982, 1.

²³⁹ Janet Kutner, “She’s a ‘Counter Angel’: Jo Harvey Allen’s saga of a truck-stop waitress comes to Dallas Gallery,” *Dallas Morning News*, November 3, 1982, 8C.

cites for this preference is the proximity to the audience, quoting Jo Harvey: “‘It’s intimate, like a real café.’”²⁴⁰

“Beautiful Waitress”

The show “Beautiful Waitress” included large portraits of some of the waitresses Jo Harvey interviewed. In addition, one of the performances of “Counter Angel,” hosted by the New Museum of the New School for Social Research, functioned as both a live performance and an installation. But, this time instead of portraits, the set that Jo Harvey performs on was on display. This particular performance in October of 1982 was presented as a pair that included both “Counter Angel” and “Bissie at the Baths” (written and performed by Joan Hotchkis). Produced by Tewkesbury and Jo Harvey’s company named “Pop-up Productions,” both performances took place on a set created by Peter Jamison (Art Director for *Mulholland Drive*, Production Designer for *The Beverly Hillbillies*, *Cold Sassy Tree* (Jo Harvey acted in this film), *Weekend at Bernie’s*, etc.) and Bo Welch (Production Designer for *Edward Scissorhands*, *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, *Beetlejuice*, etc.). Mel Gussow of the New York Times described the sets as “life-size adult versions of the illustrations that appear in children’s pop-up picture books. These are inhabitable spaces, and when the plays are not being performed, one can admire the setting for their self-contained humor. They are pop-up Pop Art, a hybrid of Roy Lichtenstein’s enlarged cartoons and Red Groom’s fun-house landscapes.”²⁴¹

²⁴⁰ Kutner, “She’s a ‘Counter Angel,’” 8C.

²⁴¹ Mel Gussow, “Stage: Performance Pair,” *New York Times*, October 7, 1982.

Tewkesbury's role in the progression of The Beautiful Waitress project is evident, particularly within the context of the transition between "Tables and Angels" and "Counter Angel." Another woman, artist and arts administrator Ree Schonlau, also helped with establishing exhibitions at the Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts in Omaha, Nebraska that featured portraits of the waitresses that Jo Harvey took.

The different mediums for The Beautiful Waitress project can be viewed as layers, each one maneuvering the relationship between talk and story in different spatial capacities. The two constants throughout the project are Jo Harvey and the waitresses, combining to create the character of Ruby Kay.

Ruby Kay



Figure 19 Jo Harvey as Ruby Kay. Photographer unknown.

Ruby Kay is a composite character. She consists of many layers. As Joan Tewkesbury writes:

These women were waitresses, handmaidens in the ritual of dining on the run. Caretakers of coffee and conversation with hefty portions of empathy and advice. Too young, too old, too poor, too smart, not smart enough, too pretty, not pretty enough, too in it, out of it, but the one thing you could say about all of these women, the thing that all of these women had in common...they were survivors and proud of it.²⁴²

Jo Harvey combined the words of all the waitresses she interviewed to create one dynamic waitress. Because so many women were involved in creating one individual, Ruby Kay contradicts herself often. In many, if not all, of the articles written about “Counter Angel,” Jo Harvey is quoted on the nature of paradox in the composite character, Ruby Kay.

Theater critic Roderick Mason Faber of the Village Voice writes:

²⁴² Joan Tewkesbury, *The Beautiful Waitress: Selected Photographs and Excerpts from the Book “The Beautiful Waitress” by Jo Harvey Allen*. Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts, 2000. Published to coincide with the touring exhibition. Omaha: Barnhart Press.

Unsophisticated, unconcerned with an inner life, not even knowing she has one, she is incapable of imprisoning herself in facile verbal self-description. For the length of her shift, she is the queen of her diner; it is not herself she wishes to define by talking, but the world around her. Her monologue is not a string of bittersweet witticisms; she is just a waitress running off at the mouth. She does not deal with ideas or trends, but with what she thinks of as facts, like death, sex, and marriages that always go wrong. She doesn't give a hoot about getting in touch with herself because she's sure she knows how she is (whether she does or not).²⁴³

In *A Space on the Side of the Road*, Kathleen Stewart writes about when “*talk* turns to story.”²⁴⁴ When this happens, the space of the story is “caught in a cultural order of things and yet still ex-centric and vulnerable, it depends on the claim that things are not what they seem.”²⁴⁵ The above clip from Faber’s review hints at how Jo Harvey accesses and recreates the moments Stewart considers “a space on the side of the road.” In doing so, Jo Harvey’s work “replaces bourgeois notions of order with its own more lyrical order,” interrupting the hierarchy of system over accident or reality over fiction long enough to imagine something more or ‘Other.’²⁴⁶

Suzanne Muchnic writes, “Ruby Kay is motherly tart - part righteous indignation, part bawdy humor.”²⁴⁷ This description suits a quote presented in the catalogue for Jo Harvey’s Beautiful Waitress show at the Bemis opposite a portrait of a blonde woman with bangs down to her eye lashes, face framed by two braids:

I married the same guy a couple of times. We moved to Buena Park. I waitress at the Hyatt House and had a baby. Then I went back to Boron and married this other guy, then went back. Now I had two babies. I went again and lived with this other guy and had two more babies. When I left the last time, I was twenty and had four babies but I left them all here in Boron when I went. When the last baby was two weeks old I got pregnant again. They cut and tied my tubes cause I just had kids.... Boom! Boom!

²⁴³ Roger Faber, “Brief Lives” 1982 – complete citation

²⁴⁴ Stewart, *A Space on the Side of the Road*, 205.

²⁴⁵ Stewart, *A Space on the Side of the Road*, 205.

²⁴⁶ Gates 1988 – find article and add to bibliography

²⁴⁷ Muchnic, “Pop-up Set Enhances Allen’s Play,” 1.

Boom! Boom! Plus I had miscarriages between two of them so I was just watcha call it? Fertile.²⁴⁸

Collaboration

“Imagine how finding oneself on the side of the road could become an epistemological stance”

- Kathleen Stewart, *A Space on the Side of the Road*, 34

Jo Harvey’s “Beautiful Waitress” project is collaborative because quotes from her interviews with waitresses at truck stop diners and cafes comprise the entire character of Ruby Kay (for “Angels and Tables” and “Counter Angel”), and because she collaborated with other women artists throughout each iteration of the project. But the evolution of the project and the resultant array of mediums she presented these interviews in demonstrate yet another dimension of this project’s collaborative character. Similar to “Hally Lou,” the fact that Jo Harvey performed “Counter Angel” in truck stop diners, galleries, and museums represents another transcendence of the division between an enlightened “high art” minority and the “broader populace.”

In *A Space on the Side of the Road*, Kathleen Stewart writes, “Culture, as it is seen through its productive forms and means of mediation, is not, then, reducible to a fixed body of social value and belief or a direct precipitant of lived experience in the world but grows into a space on the side of the road where stories weighted with sociality take on a life of their own.”²⁴⁹ Stewart goes on, “We ‘see’ it, as Agee (1941) insisted, only by building up multilayered narratives of the poetic in the everyday life of things.”²⁵⁰ This notion, that

²⁴⁸ *The Beautiful Waitress: Selected Photographs and Excerpts from the Book “The Beautiful Waitress” by Jo Harvey Allen.*

²⁴⁹ Stewart, *A Space on the Side of the Road*, 210.

²⁵⁰ Stewart, *A Space on the Side of the Road*, 210.

narratives must be multilayered in able to be seen, is at the heart of why Jo Harvey's work is collaborative and thus an avant-garde intervention into culture.

Jo Harvey was not the only artist producing in the poetic space of the diner in the seventies and eighties. In 1978, Jeri Allyn and Anne Gauldin founded The Waitresses, an art collective comprised of women "committed to creating Feminist art outside of any academy or white cube."²⁵¹ The collective sustained a "pro-female, pro-equity mission" and between 1978 and 1984, they "conceived and staged changing public performances adapted to a variety of audiences and real venues – street corner eateries – using the generic waitress role as a perfect socio-psychological-economic-sexual metaphor for the treatment of women throughout society since ancient times."²⁵² This group is associated with second-wave of feminism, and their approach was largely informed by, and understood within, academic analytics. In 2011, Allyn and Gauldin published *The Waitresses Unpeeled: Performance Art and Life*, a book that situates the work of the collective in art history, Southern California performance art history, the history of feminism, and within a conversation on collaboration, art, and society.²⁵³

The Waitresses are deeply affiliated with the academy. Anne Gauldin and Jerri Allyn each earned an MA from Goddard College in the late seventies. These artists were concerned with the relationship between personal and political; they overtly addressed women's rights in their work and while doing so became situated with other well-known feminist artists and

²⁵¹ Marlena Doktorcyk-Donohue, "The Waitress in the Context," in *The Waitresses Unpeeled*, eds. Jerri Allyn and Anne Gauldin (Los Angeles: Otis College of Art and Design, 2011), 9.

²⁵² Doktorcyk-Donohue, "The Waitress in the Context," 11.

²⁵³ Allyn, Jerri and Anne Gauldin, eds, *The Waitresses Unpeeled: Performance Art and Life*, (Los Angeles: Otis College of Art and Design, 2011).

activists, like Judy Chicago, Suzanne Lacy, and Faith Wilding.²⁵⁴ The collective formed when Allyn, Gauldin, and four other artists realized that they had all been waitresses.²⁵⁵ As Carol McDowell writes in the chapter titled, “The Democratic Art of Waitress Jerri Allyn: A chronicle of our conversations about art, consciousness, and activism,” these artists “borrowed freely from structures that were being developed in new conceptual performance art forms, like the Happenings” and they “decided to take their art to the people they wanted to address – restaurant owners, customers, and employees – in the venue that they had all worked: a crowded restaurant at mealtime.”²⁵⁶

The similarities between Jo Harvey and this collective are clear. First, the Happenings is related to the Living Theater, which inspired both Jo Harvey and Terry in the sixties. During their conversation with Mary Beebe at SITE, when asked about the decision to become a performance artist, Jo Harvey said, “I have always never planned anything and I never thought of a career. I’ve never much trained for anything I ever did. So, my whole philosophy, really and truly, is that once you decide to do something, that providence steps in and does all the work for you.”²⁵⁷ After her response, Terry says something very similar, though he provided temporal and spatial context. He said:

I’ve never thought of what we do, or what I do as a career. Like Jo Harvey is saying, fate kind of stepped in. We were very fortunate to be in Los Angeles in the sixties when everything was totally kind of breaking loose. All of the disciplines, or labels, or whatever, were kind of commingling or falling apart. The institutions of what exactly you could show that was art.... I know one of the pieces that Jo Harvey and I

²⁵⁴ Carol McDowell, “The Democratic Art of Waitress Jerri Allyn: A chronicle of our conversations about art, consciousness, and activism,” in *The Waitresses Unpeeled*, eds. Jerri Allyn and Anne Gauldin (Los Angeles: Otis College of Art and Design, 2011), 49.

²⁵⁵ Doktorcyk-Donohue, “The Waitress in the Context,” 9.

²⁵⁶ McDowell, “The Democratic Art of Waitress Jerri Allyn,” 57.

²⁵⁷ “My Life in Art,” SITE Santa Fe, July 20, 2018.

saw was with the Living Theater in the late sixties. It had a huge influence on us just because of the nature of the freedom.²⁵⁸

Jo Harvey has mentioned the Living Theater's influence on her work several times over the course of my employment with the Allens. While we walked around the track in Genoveva Chavez Community Center in mid-October 2019 she said, "The Living Theater, they did three plays in L.A. and really I think that was the first real theater I ever saw, but my God, what an introduction."²⁵⁹ The notion that fate or providence, can step in while you make the choice to create also suits the guidelines of a "Happening," as laid out in *The Waitresses Unpeeled*:

A) The line between art and life should be kept as fluid and perhaps indistinct as possible. B) Therefore, the source of themes, materials, actions, and relationships between them are to be derived from any place EXCEPT from the arts, their derivatives and their milieu. C) The performance of a Happening should take place over several widely spaced, sometimes moving and changing locales. D) Time, which follows closely on space considerations, should be variable and discontinuous. E) happenings should be performed only once. F) It follows that audiences should be eliminated entirely. G) The composition of a Happening proceeds exactly as in Assemblage and Environments, that is, it is evolved as a collage of events in certain spans of time and certain spaces.²⁶⁰

The Waitresses adhered to these guidelines more than Jo Harvey did, and the collective was ultimately concerned with the feminist nature of its work. As the years moved on, political shifts affected the ability for performance artists to do their work. Michelle Maravec writes in the chapter titled "In the Name of Love: Feminist Art, the Women's Movement and History," "The emerging conservatism of the 1980s made for an increasingly inhospitable climate" for

²⁵⁸ "My Life in Art," SITE Santa Fe, July 20, 2018.

²⁵⁹ Jo Harvey Allen, personal communication with author, October 1, 2019.

²⁶⁰ McDowell, "The Democratic Art of Waitress Jerri Allyn," 54-55.

the group.²⁶¹ “However the group endured for another five years. Increasingly they created work for the alternative art world or academic audiences.”²⁶² This is the crux of the difference between The Waitresses and Jo Harvey’s work. Despite their obvious similarities, underscored by the fact that waitressing is the job that inspired both the collective and Jo Harvey’s project, The Waitresses collective is more overtly political and it is firmly situated in an academic world, even though the group’s productive capacity does bubble up from the cracks created by gender disparity in the art academy.

Jo Harvey, on the other hand, does not have an academic background and The Beautiful Waitress project was born following an awkward and unsuccessful attempt to interview Waylon Jennings for her radio program. She became a waitress while developing the project, not the other way around. Also, she is the only “artist” amongst her group of waitresses that she interviewed. While The Waitresses worked together as a group of women artists, Jo Harvey turned her piece into a one-woman show. She compounded all of these women, including herself, into one person: Ruby Kay. Jo Harvey’s characterization of Ruby Kay demonstrates the influence class, gender and race have both on her own experience and the experience of those she interviewed. Both projects are collaborative, but in different ways.

In *Dialogue of Voices: Feminist Literary Theory and Bakhtin*, Karen Hohne and Helen Wussow write:

Perhaps instead of speaking of women’s languages or feminine ecriture, we should be talking about a feminine être. Such a process might well lead us to feminist dialogics, for dialogism is exactly a way of being....Feminist dialogics is more than just the

²⁶¹ Michelle Moravec, “In the Name of Love: Feminist Art, the Women’s Movement and History,” in *The Waitresses Unpeeled*, eds. Jerri Allyn and Anne Gauldin (Los Angeles: Otis College of Art and Design, 2011), 79.

²⁶² Moravec, “In the Name of Love,” 79.

study of the polyphonic, ever-changing voices that many insist go into making novels by women. It is a way of living, an ethics as well as an epistemology.²⁶³

By dialogics, the authors mean the way that “meaning is evolved out of interactions among the author, the work, and the reader or listener.”²⁶⁴ It is important to note that Jo Harvey is not necessarily an author here, at least in the way that these authors might mean, but the manner in which she skirts any one form of classification suggests that the notion of feminine être is an appropriate way to understand the result of her artistic approach. Hohne and Wussow continue:

A feminine être will concern itself with points of view, with the interlocative dialogic self investigating both its own positions and languages and those of others. It will consist of a ‘struggle among socio-linguistic points of view.’ Bakhtin defines the ‘languages of heteroglossia’ as made up of ‘specific points of view on the world.’ Feminine êtres will be the ongoing attempts in life and art to remain aware of, acknowledge, and analyze these different languages and contexts, positions in space and time, in which and from which they are spoken.²⁶⁵

There is no question that Jo Harvey includes many voices across all of her work, and in *The Beautiful Waitress* project in particular. Yet this particular script, performance, and series of photographs contains an important additional component for the feminine être: the fact that there is a struggle. Not only does she experience an internal struggle, one that centers around how each individual waitress will receive the character of Ruby Kay, but the waitresses conflict with each other and with themselves in the interviews, and in the script those interviews produced. This conflict nods to the concept of the female chronotope, as it is presented by Hohne and Wussow. They write:

The concept of feminine êtres would include the idea of a female chronotope, although, strictly speaking, no chronotope can be designated specifically by gender, as any location in space and time would necessarily include the other gender. A

²⁶³ Karen Hohne and Helen Wussow, “Introduction,” in *A Dialogue of Voices: Feminist Literary Theory and Bakhtin* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), xii.

²⁶⁴ Hohne and Wussow, “Introduction,” xii.

²⁶⁵ Hohne and Wussow, “Introduction,” xiii.

female chronotope, however, would consist of positing the female subject in the context of space and time. Two bodies, the female self and the female other, or the female self and the male other, can observe one another in simultaneous but different positions.²⁶⁶

In the booklet produced by the Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts (see figure 17), direct quotes from the waitresses are placed next to portraits of the women who said them. Seen individually as opposed through the composite character of Ruby Kay, it becomes clear that the waitresses often uphold multiple truths at once. For example, this quote flips gender norms upside down:

Fifty years, double shifts
 It has been a blessing
 I have good friends all over
 I always made more money than him
 But, he'd take care of the kids
 We had a ball/I never sleep over four hours a day/
 don't get tired/I don't know what sick is."²⁶⁷

Another waitress also challenged gender roles:

I've been a maid for eight years
 I raised seven children very well
 I own this cafe... And all the places next to here
 Alpha something or other/Chose me business woman of the year
 You gotta try what you know you can do."²⁶⁸

A lot of these women highlight qualities that are often scripted as masculine, especially in the 1970s and 1980s, and especially in relation to women who perform the role of serving men. However, there is also at least one instance of a waitress reveling in the gender normative reality diners and truck stops often maintain: "I was voted student most likely to speak

²⁶⁶ Hohne and Wussow, "Introduction," xiii.

²⁶⁷ Allen, "Beautiful Waitress" Booklet, 2000.

²⁶⁸ Allen, "Beautiful Waitress" Booklet, 2000.

German/I had science honors/a goody-goody/a smart duck/now I'm a foxy chick/I'm liberated/Being in a sexist job/I love it.”

Jo Harvey underscored how the waitresses contradicted themselves in the script for “Counter Angel.” The first line reads, “I don’t want to get married!” While the final lines of the performance are, “If I had one wish, you know what I’d wish for? I’d want to get married. I’d wanta stay home, or maybe get a job, but I would love to get married.” Jo Harvey told me that these lines that bookend the script were spoken by the same waitress. “And I really think she believed both things to be true,” Jo Harvey told me.²⁶⁹

Ultimately, these contradictions make Ruby Kay a character people are drawn to, as demonstrated in the press. Jo Harvey told me In the press book for “Counter Angel,” there is a piece titled “Too Many Artists” by Dan Collins.²⁷⁰ He writes:

The character of Ruby Kay is ultimately more successful as a comment on social phenomenon – for example, the changing role of women – than as a penetrating psychological study. Allen seems eager to use the stereotypical nature of the gabby waitress as a vehicle for forcing to the surface certain issues about the present condition of women (power, contexts, status inequities, female roles, unequal pay, etc.).

²⁶⁹ Jo Harvey Allen, personal communication with the author, February 17, 2024.

²⁷⁰ No More information is available about this publication.

“Beautiful Waitress” by Terry Allen: An Exercise Looking into the Accumulative Nature of Familial Collaboration



Figure 20 Page in *Beautiful Waitress* Booklet produced by Bemis.

In 2016, Paradise of Bachelors reissued Terry’s album, *Lubbock (on everything)*, which was originally released in 1979. In the liner notes of the 2016 reissue, Brendan Greaves writes, “Compared to its predecessor, *Lubbock* also represents a much more collaborative, even collective, effort by a full studio band, albeit a freshly assembled one.”²⁷¹ Greaves continues with an explanation of how the Panhandle Mystery Band met, this story accompanied by two images, portraits of Jo Harvey and Terry, taken in the same room, with a caption that reads: “Terry and Jo Harvey Allen at ‘The Nameless Hotel’ in Lubbock, summer 1978, during the *Lubbock (on everything)* recording sessions. They divided their

²⁷¹ Greaves, *Lubbock (on Everything)* Liner notes, 5.

room in half with masking tape on the floor to designate their separate studio zones.”²⁷² Even amidst a story about a mysteriously smooth collaborative experience among musicians who hadn’t met, Greaves felt the need to include evidence of Terry and Jo Harvey marking their individual spaces.

Despite the fact that they collaborate often and provide feedback to one another, there has never been any question, that I’ve observed or that I’ve found in the press books, that they are individuals.²⁷³²⁷⁴ However, we can learn a great deal from their overlap, as both Jo Harvey and Terry inhabit the same “alt-country.” Like Jo Harvey, Terry finds inspiration at a truck stop café, and waitresses show up every now and then in his work. For example, on *Lubbock (on everything)*, the third track, titled “The Great Joe Bob (A Regional Tragedy),” is about a talented football player whose athletic skill was no match for his extracurricular activities, including taking up with “a waitress named Loose Ruby Cole/While she was hoppin’ tables/Down at the Hi-D-Ho.” On his 1980 album *Smokin’ the Dummy*, a pair of songs just over halfway through, titled “The Night Café” and “Roll Truck Roll” both reference truck stops, albeit with different tones. “The Night Café” speaks to the refuge provided by the space:

*Yeah the truck driving man, he gonna understand when he leaves that night café
He gonna dance a jig out beside his rig just to shake the cold away
He gonna slam the door and let the diesel roar down the dark highway
But he has no fears while he’s shifting gears to that next night café
‘Cause he knows glowing there like a diamond in the tar pit is that old*

(Chorus)

²⁷² Greaves, liner notes, 6.

²⁷³ Terry is involved with *at least* seventeen projects on Jo Harvey’s resume.

²⁷⁴ There are several material examples of this in the archive. While sorting through materials, I found a script, written by Terry, with a note on it that (roughly) read: “DO NOT TALK TO ME ABOUT THIS UNTIL YOU’VE READ IT THROUGH COMPLETELY.”

*Juke box is playing his love song
And the coffee is hot in the cup
And there's a light in the night that spells café
Where the big trucks are all pulling up*

In the following song, “Roll Truck Roll,” the lyrics cite an opposing view:

*Yeah lonely heart wreck hitch hike truck stop
Ahh sad café where the people never care
Yeah you think you ordered a big hot beef Sandwich
But you're the one that's gonna get eaten in there*

(Chorus)

*Yeah roll truck roll
Yeah roll truck roll
You better get on down the highway
You better get on down the road*

*Yeah the waitress' smile is like some witch's womb
And her black dress moves like water through the room
And flowers die twisted across your table
And the menu reads like a tattoo on your tomb*

The twelfth track on *Lubbock (on Everything)* is titled “Beautiful Waitress.” This song opens and closes Jo Harvey’s play, “Counter Angel.” During my interview with Joan Tewkesbury, she mentioned that Terry wrote the song specifically for the play.²⁷⁵ However, when I ask Jo Harvey and Terry about it, neither of them remember which came first, and determining the origin does not seem to matter, which speaks to their specific collaborative nature.

Here are the song’s lyrics:

*Well it's not silly
When she brings you your chili
To grab a cracker
And distract her with a crunch
A cracker crunch*

²⁷⁵ Joan Tewkesbury, interview with author, August 21, 2023.

*'Cause you'll only see her once
 Only this one time at lunch
 And she might as well see you too
 Ah it's the last time, you're passing through
 And it's not rude
 When she takes away your food
 To touch her fingers
 And let them linger awhile with your loneliness
 A cracker crunch
 'Cause you'll only touch her once
 Only this one time at lunch
 And she might as well touch you too
 Ah it's the last time, you're passing through*

*Yes, it's not strange
 When she brings you your change
 To bend down and kiss her
 And whisper you'll miss her forever
 A cracker crunch*

*'Cause you'll only love her once
 Only this one time at lunch
 And she might as well love you too
 Ah it's the last time, you're passing through*

*A waitress asked me what I did
 I told her I tried to make art
 She asked me if I made any money
 I said, ?No I have to teach to do that?
 She asked me what I taught and where
 I told her, she told me, she liked art
 But that she couldn't draw a straight line
 I told her if she could reach for something
 And pick it up she could draw a line
 That was straight enough
 She said, she weren't interested in that kind of drawing
 But always liked horses, I said "I did too"
 But they're hard to draw, she said, "Yes, that was very true"
 Said she could do the body okay, but never get the head
 Tail or legs, I told her she was drawing sausages, not horses
 She said no, they were horses*

When comparing the song and the play, it is fair to argue that they provide you with the perspectives from different genders. But that said, the song also provides an opportunity to witness overlap in Jo Harvey and Terry’s creative approaches and how their bodies of work are intimately intertwined. At SITE Santa Fe in July, 2018, Terry said the following while explaining the differences in his approach with Jo Harvey’s:

The way Jo Harvey gets information and I get information are really different. Because, I get information, like we’re in a cafe or something, and I listen to conversation or what’s going on, but I never would participate in it. I would listen. Jo Harvey, if she hears something interesting going on, she gets up and goes and sits
²⁷⁶

Here Terry says that he does not engage with strangers in truck stops directly. While the conclusion to his song suggests otherwise, as he does have a direct conversation with a waitress, the fact that the waitress initiates the conversation, and has the final word, urges us as listeners to believe that he, too, is moved by the complexity of the waitress. In the liners for *Lubbock* (on *Everything*), Terry says, “The spoken part about drawing horses is almost verbatim an exchange I had with a waitress in Fresno.”²⁷⁷

Not only does “The Beautiful Waitress” reflect the influence of truck stops, cafes, and waitresses for both Jo Harvey and Terry, the song also is evidence of the influence Terry has on Bob Dylan, according to Scott Bunn, blogger and co-host of *Run That Back*, an indie sports radio talk show out of Asheville. On his blog, “Recliner Notes,” Bunn traces the potential influence of “The Beautiful Waitress” on Dylan’s music, particularly his song “Highlands” the last track on his 1997 album, *Time Out of Mind*. Bunn cites the fact that in 2011, Bob Dylan was quoted saying to John Elderfeldt, former Chief Curator of Painting and

²⁷⁶ “My Life in Art,” SITE Santa Fe, July 20, 2018.

²⁷⁷ Terry and Brendan, *Lubbock (on Everything)* liners, 16.

Sculpture at the Museum of Modern Art, “Owen Smith, Terry Allen, I like their work” when asked what contemporary artists he followed.²⁷⁸ Bunn delves in to the similarities between “The Beautiful Waitress” and “Highlands,” focusing on Allen and Dylan’s similar use of recitation and how both musicians include conversations with a waitress in the lyrics. Here is the important conversation from Dylan’s lyrics:

*I’m in Boston in some restaurant
I got no idea what I want
Or maybe I do but I’m just really not sure
Waitress comes over, nobody in the place but me and her
Well it must be a holiday, there’s nobody around
She studies me closely as I sit down
She got a pretty face and long white shiny legs*

*I said ‘Tell me what I want’
She says ‘You probably want hard boiled eggs’
I said ‘That’s right, bring me some;
She says ‘We ain’t got any, you picked the wrong time to come’
Then she says ‘I know you’re an artist, draw a picture of me’
I said ‘I would if I could but I don’t do sketches from memory’
Well she’s there, she says ‘I’m right here in front of you
Or haven’t you looked?;*

*I say ‘Alright, I know but I don’t have my drawin’ book’
She gives me a napkin, she says ‘You can do it on that’
I say ‘Yes I could but I don’t know where my pencil is at’
She pulls one out from behind her ear
She says ‘Alright now go ahead and draw me I’m stayin’ right here;
I make a few lines and I show it for her to see
Well she takes the napkin and throws it back and says
‘That don’t look a thing like me’*

*I said ‘Oh kind miss, it most certainly does’
She says ‘You must be joking,’ I said, ‘I wish I was’
She says ‘You don’t read women authors do ya?’
At least that’s what I think I hear her say
Well I say ‘How would you know, and what would it matter anyway?’*

²⁷⁸ Scott Bunn, “Recitations on Waitresses & Art Within Terry Allen’s ‘The Beautiful Waitress’ and Bon Dylan’s ‘Highlands,’” blog post for Recliner Notes, October 9, 2022, <https://reclinernotes.com/2022/10/09/recitations-on-waitresses-art-within-terry-allens-the-beautiful-waitress-and-bob-dylans-highlands/>.

*Well she says 'Ya just don't seem like ya do'
 I said 'You're way wrong'
 She says 'Which ones have you read then?' I say 'Read Erica Jong'
 She goes away for a minute, and I slide out, out of my chair
 I step outside back to the busy street, but nobody's goin' anywhere*

I agree with Bunn that there are striking similarities between the two songs, though Dylan seems to have flipped a few things around. In both songs, the waitress is interested in the fact that her customer is an artist, though the story about how the art – in Terry's case, the drawing of a horse and in Dylan's case, the portrait of the waitress – accurately portrays its subject differs, according to both narrators.

Bunn thinks that the recitation in "The Beautiful Waitress" contains Terry's ultimate message: "that real life encounters in diners are filled with missed connections and unintended insults."²⁷⁹

Bunn also writes about how Bob Dylan has come under scrutiny for including quotations in his lyrics. He does this to demonstrate that the only way to know whether Dylan is influenced by "The Beautiful Waitress" is for him to state as much. He concedes it's unlikely that scenario will ever happen. However, Bunn's conclusion in all of this also contains an emphasis on collaboration. He writes that "within 'Highlands' and 'The Beautiful Waitress,' Dylan and Allen explore similar themes of utopian ideals and the real-life implications on the function of art while utilizing the same recitation performance technique. The obvious next step should be that Dylan and Allen join forces to design their own miniature golf course for the ultimate act of artistic collaboration."²⁸⁰

²⁷⁹ Bunn, "Recitations on Waitresses & Art."

²⁸⁰ Bunn, "Recitations on Waitresses & Art."

Even if Tewkesbury's suggestion that Terry wrote "The Beautiful Waitress" for "Counter Angel" is not true, their coexistence speaks to a Jo Harvey-sized gap in Bunn's take on how Terry's work influences Bob Dylan's. The overlap between "Counter Angel" and "The Beautiful Waitress," and again between "The Beautiful Waitress" and "Highlands," exposes many layers spread among them. At the heart of all three pieces is the space of the story in a diner, and the ultimate arbiter of the "just talk" in this setting are always the waitresses.

Conclusion

The Beautiful Waitress project demonstrates Jo Harvey's layered approach to creating art. Her process of conducting interviews with truck-stop diner waitresses, and the resultant creation of Ruby Kay is the feminine être at work. This is not only due to the fact that Ruby Kay is comprised of many individual waitresses, but specifically because she embodies a struggle, or different and discordant perspectives on what it means to be a waitress and in turn, what that means for the space of the diner. These layers, and their struggle are also evident through the different iterations of the project. While "Tables and Angels" is considered performance art, which allows for a more collaborative and therefore avant-garde approach to art, "Counter Angel" represents how the shift to theater/play can maintain the interactive feel, due in large part to the believable character of Ruby Kay. Jo Harvey's research, employment, and acting access and re-present, giving "pause to imagine a cultural real."²⁸¹ Further, the space that her work creates "digresses, drifts off into retellings

²⁸¹ Stewart, *A Space on the Side of the Road*, 206.

and versions.”²⁸² Arguably, as we can see through a close reading of “The Beautiful Waitress” by Terry Allen and “Highlands” by Bob Dylan, Jo Harvey’s project has an extensive reach, though her presence is often times marked by her absence.

²⁸² Stewart, *A Space on the Side of the Road*, 206.

Chapter Four: Alt-Country

Hi, this is Jo Harvey Allen bringing you a little rawhide and roses. Right on your corner, left at your heart, and straight on your way home. Rawhide and roses, sashaying and dashaying, rip-roaring, wild and wooly, ripe and unpredictable. One hour of the best past, present, and future. A pure, down-home honest-to-goodness, country music. We're gonna feature a loosely documented look into the backwater origins, the honky-tonk glitter and the Cadillac glamour of the music that makes America home.

On Sunday evenings, from 1967 to 1971, you could catch Jo Harvey's show, "Rawhide and Roses," on 106.7 AM or FM KPPC out of Pasadena, California. Paradise of Bachelors, Terry's record label, cites Jo Harvey as the first female country music deejay.²⁸³ Each show had a theme that Jo Harvey would reinforce with storytelling; they ranged from "Truck Drivin'," "Animals," "Water," "American" and "Honky Tonk." She also included "live interviews with such singers as Linda Rondstadt, B.B. King, and Maybelle Carter."²⁸⁴ The intro, quoted above, started things off over a sound bed of Buffy Sainte-Marie's "They Gotta Quit Kickin'."²⁸⁵

When I tell Jo Harvey that I believe her work is situated in the alt-country genre, she always seems a little unconvinced. On the 12th of April, 2023, while working in her studio, we edited the first sentence of her biography. It now reads, "Jo Harvey Allen is an actress, playwright, poet, songwriter, and pioneer of women in radio." While this sentence includes many different creative roles, the two most important components for this chapter are: songwriter and pioneer of women in radio. Both of these titles immediately place her in the

²⁸³ Brenan Greaves, "Pedal Steal + Four Corners," Paradise of Bachelors, Accessed 18 February, 2024, <https://paradiseofbachelors.com/hear-terry-allens-pedal-steal-chapter-3-rawhide-and-roses-radio-show-w-host-jo-harvey-allen/>.

²⁸⁴ Margaret Jones, "Tall Tales of Low Living," 14.

²⁸⁵ Buffy Saint-Marie, "They Gotta Quit Kickin' My Dawg Around" (Traditional), track 9 on *I'm Gonna Be a Country Girl Again*, Vanguard Records, 1968, Vinyl LP.

country/music genre. Further, they push Jo Harvey's generified identity into the *alternative* realm. My assignment of her work to the alternative realm is also tied to her emplacement in the West Texas cultural landscape, and particularly to her relationship with Lubbock, Texas. Though soundtracks and lyrics have informed this dissertation throughout, in this chapter I use scholarship on music and place to connect Jo Harvey's "alt-country" to her identity as an avant-garde artist. Just as her gender, emplacement, and unsettled, at times challenging approach, inform her identity as an avant-garde artist, these characteristics also elucidate her alt-country(ness). I argue that Jo Harvey's refusal to fit into any generic box throughout her entire career is both a reflection and a product of her emplacement in the alt-country region of West Texas, specifically Lubbock. Further, her denial underscores her situation in this particular genre. In order to show this, I explore the connections between the music genre of alt-country and the region of West Texas. I ask where Jo Harvey is situated in relation to this intersection, and in particular how her gender reinforces the connection between the alt-country genre and the place of Lubbock, Texas.

Alt-Country

Near the end of 2021, Austin City Limits inducted Lucinda Williams, Wilco, and Alejandro Escovedo into their Hall of Fame. During the ceremony, Terry played the painfully beautiful "One Sunday Morning (Song for Jane Smiley's Boyfriend)" from Wilco's 2011 album *The Whole Love*. After Terry and Jo Harvey returned to Santa Fe, Jo Harvey told me that the members of Wilco are fans of her performances in Terry's radio plays. Jeff Tweedy had listened to old recordings of Rawhide and Roses, and he and the band were influenced by Terry's 1985 album *Pedal Steel*. This is significant because Tweedy, lead singer of Wilco, along with Jay Farrar, formed the band Uncle Tupelo in the late 1980s.

Their 1990 album, *No Depression* is cited by the music magazine *No Depression*, as “the alt-country album. It’s an album so important to the alt-country movement,” they write, “that it was part of the inspiration for the title of this very roots music journal.”²⁸⁶

In the middle of September, 2022, Wilco came to play a show at the Santa Fe Opera. Jo Harvey told me that the band might come to the house for dinner, which did not end up happening. In the event that it had, I like to think I would have asked why Tweedy told Jo Harvey that he was a fan of *hers*. Was it her voice? That would be my guess.

Jo Harvey’s voice is her medium. She speaks with a drawl ripe with portal-power, transposing the place of West Texas onto any space, regardless of the context. As I mentioned in the first chapter, Aaron Fox identifies the voice as a “key material and ideational site of culture as an active process.”²⁸⁷ Fox expanded on this in *Real Country*, writing that “the sounding voice is also, and perhaps principally, the medium of ‘ordinary’ talk.”²⁸⁸ “Ordinary” talk is similar in many ways to what Kathleen Stewart considers “just talk” in *A Space on the Side of the Road*.²⁸⁹ While Jo Harvey’s Beautiful Waitress project demonstrates her most significant delve into the “ordinary” and “just talk” of women she interviewed for her artwork, her method of interviewing people and intertwining their stories with her own is the consistent marker of her art. Even her role as the Lying Woman is considered to be “a composite of the fierce crackpots and fantasies who read the scandal sheets.”²⁹⁰ Though her characters often embody many different people at once, her

²⁸⁶ Matty Jackmauh, “Alt-Country: Where Did It Come From and Where Is It Going?” March 15, 2023, <https://www.nodepression.com/alt-country-where-did-it-come-from-and-where-is-it-going/>.

²⁸⁷ Fox, *Real Country*, 40.

²⁸⁸ Fox, *Real Country*, 41.

²⁸⁹ Stewart, *A Space on the Side of the Road*, 31.

²⁹⁰ *The New Yorker*, “The Current Cinema: Quests for America” October 20, 1986.

deceptively singular voice functions as the site where “categories of ‘the true’ and ‘the false’ are set into a complex, indeterminate motion.”²⁹¹

Jeff Tweedy wouldn’t be the first person to find her vocal styling unique. When Kurt Vile, musician and producer, came to Santa Fe earlier in June of that same year, I sat in Jo Harvey’s studio, printing a copy of the script for “Hally Lou,” while he, Terry, Bukka, and country musician Shannon McNally stood outside talking on the phone with Jo Harvey. After they hung up, Vile said, “Sure you can go to museums here and see the sites, I’d rather sit here and listen to Jo Harvey talk!” Ryan Bingham too. He and his band came through town in October of 2019 to perform at the Lensic Performing Arts Center. During the show, Terry joined Ryan and fiddle player Richard Bowden on stage to sing “Gimme a Ride to Heaven Boy,” a song on *Bloodlines* that tells the story of Jesus stealing a man’s car after he’d been picked up as a hitchhiker. When Bingham and his band continued on their tour, Jo Harvey told me that they listened to “Ghost Ship Rodez” on the tour bus. They rolled down the road in the dark of night “in their little coffins... It scared the shit out of them.”²⁹²

Terry joined Wilco, too, during the encore at their show at the Santa Fe Opera in 2022. He performed two songs, “Death of the Last Stripper,” which he co-wrote with Dave Alvin and Jo Harvey for the album titled *Just Like Moby Dick*, and “Amarillo Highway” from *Lubbock (on Everything)*.²⁹³ Wilco played many of their classics, along with several tracks from their 2022 album, *Cruel Country*. In an interview with Scott Simon from NPR,

²⁹¹ Aaron Fox, “The Jukebox of history: narratives of loss and desire in the discourse of country music,” *Popular Music* 11, no. 1 (January 1992), 53.

²⁹² Jo Harvey Allen, personal communication with the author, October 21, 2021.

²⁹³ Out of all the performances where I’ve watched Terry on stage, including his own shows and when he joins his friends, I have never heard a crowd belt “Amarillo Highway” like I did that night at the Santa Fe opera.

Tweedy had this to say about country music: “the music that people made when country music was forming its identity didn’t think of what they were making as country music. I think that they were expressing themselves however best they could with whatever they could get their hands on.”²⁹⁴ Tweedy also spoke about country music as a genre with Carl Wilson for the online magazine, *Slate*. There he says:

More than any other genre, country music, to me, a white kid from middle-class middle America, has always been the ideal place to comment on what most troubles my mind-which for more than a little while now has been the country where I was born, these United States. And because it is the country I love, and because it’s country music that I love, I feel a responsibility to investigate their mirrored problematic natures.²⁹⁵

Tweedy’s explanation of the genre suits Cecelia Tichi’s definition of “alt-country.” In “Consider the Alternative: Alt-country musicians transcend country music stereotypes,” Tichi writes, “alt-country claims a deliberately more emotionally searching musical style, emphasizing paradox and dilemma; it is not to be found on Top-40 smoothie, commercial radio.”²⁹⁶ Jason Kirby, in his dissertation titled “Antimodernism and Genre from Country-Rock to Alt.Country, 1968-98,” establishes that in order to “understand why Uncle Tupelo’s seriousness is meaningful within the history of the alt.country genre, it is important to first understand how observers of the genre have often defined it as ironic in character.”²⁹⁷ He

²⁹⁴ Jeff Tweedy and Glenn Kotche, “Wilco releases an out-and-out country music double album with ‘Cruel Country,’” interview by Scott Simon, *Weekend Edition Saturday*, NPR, June 4, 2022, audio, 9:00, <https://www.npr.org/2022/06/04/1103075894/wilco-releases-an-out-and-out-country-music-double-album-with-cruel-country>.

²⁹⁵ Carl Wilson, “On Its Timely New Album, Wilco Reclaims ‘Alt-Country,’” *Slate*, May 27, 2022. <https://slate.com/culture/2022/05/wilco-cruel-country-new-album-review-alt-americana.html>.

²⁹⁶ Cecelia Tichi, “Consider the Alternative: Alt-Country Musicians Transcend Country Music Stereotypes,” *The Women’s Review of Books* 18, no. 3 (December 2000): 14.

²⁹⁷ Jason Bianchi Kirby, “Antimodernism and Genre from Country-Rock to Alt Country, 1968-98” (PhD diss., University of Virginia, 2016), 153.

cites Pamela Fox, Barbara Ching, Jon Smith and Aaron Fox to support Ching and Fox's argument that "postmodern irony is the constitutive dynamic of alt.country as a genre."²⁹⁸ Kirby then highlights Anne Kathryn Hohman's engagement with Aaron Fox, citing her argument that musicians use this irony to "negotiate middle-class identity."²⁹⁹ Hohman's argument provides an explanation for Tweedy's articulated self-reflection in his definition of the country music genre, and it also, through her research on the Brooklyn music country scene, helps us understand why Kirby uses Jennifer Lena's work on genre to approach his work on Uncle Tupelo.

In their article titled, "Classification as Culture: Types and Trajectories of Music Genres," Jennifer C. Lena and Richard A. Peterson identify "two dominant approaches to the study of genre. In the first, humanities scholars typically focus attention on the 'text' of a cultural object, which is abstracted from the context in which it is made of consumed."³⁰⁰ They continue, "the second dominant approach defocalizes text and places the study of genre squarely in a social context."³⁰¹ Finally, the authors "define music genres as systems of orientations, expectations, and conventions that bind together an industry, performers, critics, and fans in making what they identify as distinctive sort of music."³⁰²

Lena and Peterson identify four genre types in their paper: avant-garde, scene-based, industry-based, and Traditionalist.³⁰³ Kirby explains in his dissertation that the timeframe for

²⁹⁸ Pamela Fox and Barabara Ching, "Introduction: The Importance of Being Ironic – Toward a Theory and Critique of Alt.Country Music," in *Old Roots, New Roots*, 4.

²⁹⁹ Kirby, 155, Hohman, 189-190.

³⁰⁰ Lena, Jennifer C., and Richard A. Peterson. "Classification as Culture: Types and Trajectories of Music Genres." *American Sociological Review* 73, no.5 (October 2008): 697-718.

³⁰¹ Jennifer C. Lena and Richard A. Peterson, "Classification as Culture," 698.

³⁰² Jennifer C. Lena and Richard A. Peterson, "Classification as Culture," 698.

³⁰³ Jennifer C. Lena and Richard A. Peterson, "Classification as Culture," 701.

his analysis on Uncle Tupelo was in the “late 1980s and early 1990s [...] wherein ‘alternative country’ was just beginning to transition from an avant-garde to a scene-based genre.”³⁰⁴ The transition of alt-country from avant-garde to scene-based genre provides insight into Jo Harvey’s art. In particular, it helps us understand the influence of her work in relation to its emplacement in West Texas. As argued in the first chapter, Jo Harvey’s work is avant-garde, and the crux of what she does is collaborative. Lena and Peterson define a scene as “a community of spatially-situated artists, fans, record companies, and supporting small business people.”³⁰⁵ Their work on “scene-based genres,” particularly their emphasis on the local, largely informs this chapter, but it is important to note before moving on that scenes are built not just by musicians, but by an entire artistic community.

In his article on Wilco for *Slate*, Wilson notes that Tweedy’s embrace of the country music genre is a shift from what he identifies as Wilco’s “art rock.”³⁰⁶ This recalls the term introduced by Brendan Greaves in the liners for the re-release of *Lubbock (on Everything)*, mentioned above. Greaves calls Terry’s work “art-country.”³⁰⁷ Greaves writes, “Even if Allen’s music is more accurately described as art-country, *Lubbock (on Everything)* sowed the seeds of alt-country’s emergence a decade later.”³⁰⁸ “The substitution “art” for “alt” is notable and worthy of underscore.³⁰⁹ Just as Tweedy said to Simon, the artists and musicians who create in this generic space are working with what they’ve got. For Tweedy and Wilco,

³⁰⁴ Kirby, “Antimodernism and Genre,” 157.

³⁰⁵ Jennifer C. Lena and Richard A. Peterson, “Classification as Culture,” 703.

³⁰⁶ Wilson, “On Its Timely New Album.”

³⁰⁷ Greaves, *Lubbock (on Everything)* liners, 2016, 6.

³⁰⁸ Greaves, *Lubbock (on Everything)* liners, 6.

³⁰⁹ It is important to mention that when Greaves refers to “Allen’s music,” it includes his band, the Panhandle Mystery Band, which includes many of the artists referenced in this chapter. In particular, Greaves points out that Lloyd Maines went on “to play pedal steel on classic albums like Uncle Tupelo’s *Anodyne* (1993) and *Wilco’s A.M.* (1995).”

their art rock is intimately tied to place, too. A quick listen to “Via Chicago” from *summerteeth*, demonstrates this.³¹⁰

In “The Dixie Chicks’ ‘Lubbock or Leave It’: Negotiating Identity and Place in Country Song,” Jada Watson writes, “The fields of cultural geography and musicology both offer models for exploring the ways in which popular music serves to express regional and national identity.”³¹¹ Michael Longan, geographer, argues that genre is spatial. In his paper for the 2021 AAG (American Association of Geographers), he writes:

While we refer to country music as a genre, we don’t typically use genre to describe spaces or places which seems a little bit odd because we frequently define regions, classify different kind of places and represent them with symbols on maps, and even structure subdisciplines around different kinds of spaces; urban and rural geography for example. Despite genre’s clear influence on the production of space, geographers haven’t developed an explicit theory of generic space. Such a theory would be useful for geographers interested in culture, communication, and media but also for interdisciplinary scholars who are paying attention to the importance of space and place in media.³¹²

Longan’s call to theorize generic space can help us think about Jo Harvey’s voice as a medium. What does this mean for her positionality as an alt-country artist who hails from West Texas? Longan’s call for generic space also reflects Cecelia Tichi’s assignment of country music as “a territory split between mainstream and alternative country, with key

³¹⁰ In “Via Chicago,” Wilco uses distortion to mimic a train eventually arriving to a station, which compliments the lyrics to the song that emphasize a desire to “come home.” When Wilco played “Via Chicago” at the Santa Fe Opera in 2022, I watched a fan, seated in front of me, describe the significance of the distortion to a friend. I could not hear what he was saying, but the gestures he made left no room for doubt.

³¹¹ Jada Watson, “The Dixie Chick’ ‘Lubbock or Leave It’: Negotiating Identity and Place in Country Song,” *Journal for the Society of American Music* 8, no. 1 (2014): 52.

³¹² Michael Longan, “Country Music, Geography, and Genre as Socio-Spatial Action,” (paper presented at the Association of American Geographers Conference, Seattle, April 2021), 2.

artists on the ‘alt’ side of the border.”³¹³ In light of Longan’s point above and Tichi’s spatial metaphor, what happens if we consider Lubbock, Texas to *be* alt-country?

Jo Harvey’s affinity for denying all labels, which often results a qualifying list that includes many identities (actress, writer, performance artist, poet, songwriter, etc...), positions her in the residual remainder of all the mediums, which speaks to the fact that it is “unstable and without definition.”³¹⁴ Yet, her work simultaneously functions as a mirror to all of these mediums. This is true, too, for her identity as a woman artist from Lubbock. Lubbock as a place can be understood to be in cultural contrast with the state’s capital, Austin.³¹⁵ As Karen Schoemer writes for the *New York Times*, “Austin is the mecca for artists. It is to Texas what New York is to the rest of the country: the place for creative types to to express themselves and feel normal doing it.”³¹⁶

³¹³ Tichi, “Consider the alternative,” 14.

³¹⁴ Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, 143.

³¹⁵ In Austin, people wear shirts that read “Keep Austin Weird,” and in Lubbock they read, “Keep Lubbock Flat.”

³¹⁶ Karen Schoemer, “Deep in the Soul of Texas: In Austin the fringe is mainstream, artists are heroes and even bad girls can feel normal,” *The New York Times*, April 4, 1993, 5.



Figure 21 New York Times article by Karen Schoemer, 1993.

In her article, which features a large photograph of Jo Carol Pierce, Sharon Ely, and Jo Harvey (See Figure 22), calling them “the cosmic sisters,” Schoemer posits Austin in opposition to Lubbock.³¹⁷ She quotes Jo Carol Pierce to do this:

I wouldn't live anywhere but here,' Ms. Pierce said. 'Have you ever been to Lubbock? It's a mean town, unless you happen to have very low expectations of life. Anybody who was strange or didn't fit in got tortured in Lubbock. People moved down here to survive and live and not be put in jail. I really like living in Texas, so I'm glad Austin's available.'”³¹⁸

Pierce is at the center of the scene that Schoemer explores in her piece, one comprised of artists and musicians who “came of age in the hippie era.”³¹⁹ An “extraordinarily close-knit” group of people, many of the artists highlighted originally moved to Austin from Lubbock:

³¹⁷ Schoemer, “Deep in the Soul of Texas,” 5.
³¹⁸ Schoemer, “Deep in the Soul of Texas,” 5.
³¹⁹ Schoemer, “Deep in the Soul of Texas,” 5.

Joe Ely, Butch Hancock, and Jimmie Dale Gilmore.³²⁰ At the time of the article's publication in 1993, this crowd was considered an "older generation of artists," one that moved to Austin and in doing so transitioned from the periphery to a more central location in the social artsy scene.³²¹ Jo Harvey was visiting Sharon Ely when Schoemer collected interviews for this piece. Although she did not live in Austin at the time (she and Terry had already moved to Santa Fe), her inclusion in the body of the article, and in the photograph featured centrally on the newspaper page, demonstrates that she, too, is part of this group of artists who grew up in Lubbock but had since moved away.³²²

Jean Baudrillard writes of the remainder in *Simulacra and Simulation*, "*When everything is taken away nothing is left*. This is false. The equation of everything and nothing, the subtraction of the remainder, is totally false."³²³ For Jo Harvey and the rest of this group of artists, Lubbock can be understood as a remainder in their collective place history, particularly within the context of its relationship with Austin. But what does this mean for Lubbock? Even though most of them have moved away, their presence in that dusty town has been marked, not only in literature about the music scene, but through sculpture, memorials, and institutions that affect the cultural makeup of this West Texas hub.

³²⁰ Schoemer, "Deep in the Soul of Texas," 5.

³²¹ Schoemer, "Deep in the Soul of Texas," 5.

³²² Though Jo Harvey did not live in Austin in 1993, she and Terry now have a home there and consider themselves based out of both Santa Fe and Austin.

³²³ Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, 143.

Lubbock, Texas

The flatter the land oh yes the flatter land but of course the flatter the land and the sea is as flat as the land oh yes the flatter the land the more yes the more it has may have to do with the human mind.³²⁴

John T. Davis includes the above quote from Gertrude Stein's *The Geographical History of America* in his book, *The Flatlanders: Now is Now Again*. The epigraph opens Part One, titled "The Land." The book is about The Flatlanders, a band from Lubbock founded by Joe Ely, Jimmie Dale Gilmore, and Butch Hancock, all of whom were included in Schoemer's article and all of whom are friends of Jo Harvey. Davis begins his story about The Flatlanders with the landscape for a reason. He writes in the Introduction, "Just as their music is beyond category, the region they hail from is not just any ordinary landscape. If the tale of the Flatlanders is to be properly told, it has to start with the circle of earth and sky that shaped them in the beginning and that still informs their music and worldview."³²⁵

Elliott L. Vanskike, in his article "Seeing Everything as Flat": Landscape in Gertrude Stein's Useful Knowledge and the Geographic History of America," details Stein's struggle with identity and history, writing that landscape "represents an unsegmented, flat expanse that utterly resists being historicized or labeled with a static identity."³²⁶ He goes on, "As such, landscape is one of the most powerful metaphors Stein uses to keep herself and her writing from becoming mired in history and shackled to a destructive sense of identity."³²⁷ This idea, that a landscape resists static definition is as true for Lubbock as for any place.

³²⁴ John T. Davis, *The Flatlanders: Now It's Now Again* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014).

³²⁵ John T. Davis, *The Flatlanders: Now It's Now Again*, xii.

³²⁶ Elliott L. Vanskike, "'Seeing Everything as Flat': Landscape in Gertrude Stein's Useful Knowledge and The Geographical History of America," *Texas Studies in Literature* 35, no. 2 (Summer 1993): 152.

³²⁷ Vanskike, "'Seeing Everything as Flat,'" 152.

And while much of the literature about Lubbock artists is characterized by an inability to generify the artist(s), there is often too a nod to the paradoxical nature of the physical landscape. The landscape and its paradoxes is employed to explain the difficult nature of defining work at hand. As Jimmie Dale Gilmore said, “Since Lubbock is the place where the earth is in the air and the fire is in the water, it’s naturally got to be the place where the music gets tied up in knots and comes out unraveled.”³²⁸ In an interview with Christopher Oglesby, Jo Harvey says of Lubbock:

It’s about the freedom. It’s about the space. When you stand on that horizon and you see all around in every direction, you could feel like a minute speck of absolute nothing, and at the same time feel like you are all of it – the center of the universe. When you see the whole world around you, you realize you are nothing in the scheme of things under that vast, big sky, and yet you are in the center of it all.³²⁹

In the first chapter, I introduced Mike Sell’s notion that “there’s nothing new about asking, ‘What is an avant-garde?’ or recognizing that doing so has broader implications than the mere meaning of a word.”³³⁰ Rather, he writes, “it is...a timely question that orients us towards contingencies of time and place, towards the conditions and horizons of our ability to know our subject.”³³¹ To ask the question is “to be a part of a venerable tradition, a tradition that, rather like the avant-garde itself, often turns on tradition itself to reveal and recast the conditions and horizons of tradition itself.”³³²

³²⁸ Christopher Ogelesby, *Fire in the Water, Earth in the Air: Legends of West Texas Music* (Austin: University of Texas Press), 1.

³²⁹ Oglesby, *Fire in the Water*, 149.

³³⁰ Mike Sell, “Resisting the Question, ‘What is an Avant-Garde?’” *New Literary History* 41, no. 4 (Autumn 2010): 753.

³³¹ Sell, “Resisting the Question,” 753.

³³² Sell, “Resisting the Question,” 754.

In *Fire in the Water, Earth in the Sky*, Oglesby asks, “Why does an isolated, conservative agricultural town like Lubbock, Texas generate such innovative artists in numbers that seem so disproportionate to its population?”³³³ He hints that there might not be a satisfying answer to the question: “The answer may be an unspoken magic in the soil, water, or the incessant wind.”³³⁴ Oglesby’s suggestion that the answer to these questions is “unspoken,” alive instead in the soil, water, and wind – the features of place – demonstrates a point Fox makes in “The jukebox of history.” He writes, “Country [...] incorporates and combines the true and the false into a poetic which is explicitly deconstructive of the ideology which these categories (text, context, and performance) encode.”³³⁵ Like country, place is palimpsestic. Geographer Àngels Pascual-de-Sans argues that when you consider someone’s place history, “the impact of new places often seems to erase the presence of former places; however, the latter do remain, as layer hidden under the newer contributions. The old layers are still there, and are the foundations upon which the newer ones are built.”³³⁶ Some places “leave deeper marks than others and some places are more deeply marked than others.”³³⁷

The title of the chapter with Oglesby’s interview with Jo Harvey in *Fire in the Water, Earth in the Sky* is, “Take Me Down to Paradox City.” Speaking of Lubbock, she says, “Seems to me there was never any encouragement for artistic behavior, and that is probably the exact reason so many of us rebelled. And yet I can honestly say the exact opposite, too. I

³³³ Oglesby, *Fire in the Water*, 8.

³³⁴ Oglesby, *Fire in the Water*, 8.

³³⁵ Fox, “The jukebox of history,” 53.

³³⁶ Àngels Pascual-de-Sans, “Sense of Place and Migration Histories Idiotope and Idiotope,” *Area* 36, no. 4 (December 2004), 350.

³³⁷ Pascual-de-Sans, “Sense of Place,” 350.

was encouraged and inspired a lot by Lubbock.”³³⁸ This sentiment is shared by Terry. He told Joe Nick Patoski of *Texas Monthly*, “Years after I left, it dawned on me that no matter how much I thought I hated where I grew up, all of this music I have been writing was about how much I loved it.”³³⁹

Sharon Ely, Joe Ely’s wife, has her own theory about Lubbock. Oglesby asked her about the creative process in Lubbock, “what causes somebody to get those juices flowing,” Sharon replied, “I’ve thought about this. The thing that was important in Lubbock was the group of friends. Without that group, I don’t think anybody really would have done anything that they did.”³⁴⁰ Oglesby goes on to credit Sharon Ely for Tom T. Hall’s song, “The Great East Broadway Onion Championship of 1978.” Cited by Nadine Hubbs as “one of country music’s most celebrated storytellers,” Hall sings about an occasion when he and Jo Ely played a game of pool with an onion instead of a cue ball, in the tiny backroom of Stubb’s Barbeque, which used to be located across the fairgrounds, as the title indicates, off East Broadway.³⁴¹

Here are the lyrics:

*In Lubbock, Texas the other night
 Drinkin’ beer and about half-tight
 Me and Paul and Jim and a guy named Al
 We were drawing pictures and writing songs
 Sitting there talking, before too long,
 Paul said, ‘We oughta’ move this party over to Stubb’s.’*

*The smoke was haning’ low and thick
 And the guitar-man was huntin’ licks*

³³⁸ Oglesby, *Fire in the Water*, 144.

³³⁹ Patoski, Joe Nick. “Dirty Dancing: A new musical from a group of Lubbock expatriates celebrates West Texas’ bawdy past,” *Texas Monthly*, July 1994, 61.

³⁴⁰ Oglesby, *Fire in the Water*, 124.

³⁴¹ Nadine Hubbs, *Rednecks, Queers, & Country Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 59.

*And Joe Ely was in the backroom shootin' pool
 We all went back there to check it out
 And Joe says, 'Well, now, shut my mouth!
 I hear the old storyteller knows how to handle a stick.'
 I said, 'I've had chalk on better clothes.'
 And y'all know how that stuff goes
 Pretty soon we were shootin' pool and raisin' hell
 Chorus: The Great East Broadway Onion Championship of 1978
 Joe and me we kind of drew a crowd
 The place got drunk and the place got loud
 And Joe reached over in a sack and pulled out a big onion
 He placed that onion on the felt
 And said, 'Here's where you're gonna need some help.
 We're gonna use that hamburger helper for a cue ball.'
 then Joe picked up a big ol' broom
 And he waved it all around the room
 He said, 'I'm gonna play that onion cue ball with a broomstick.'*

*We battled back and forth all night
 Tears were streaming from our eyes
 And I had that onion for an eight-ball in the corner pocket
 Now the place got quiet as a mouse
 And we told the guitar-man to lay out
 And I could barely see that onion for all that grass
 But I sipped a beer and fought back tears
 And watched that eight-ball disappear
 And the whole damn town of Lubbock, Texas, went wild!*

*Amidst the yelling and the tears
 Joe said, 'Y'all wait until next year.'
 And that's how I won the Broadway Onion Championship of 1978*

*I was to thank all the small people that made me what I am today
 The Great East Broadway Onion Champion of 1978!
 (Places I've Done Time (RCA APL-13018), 1979)*

Apparently, Joe Ely and Tom T. Hall played with an onion because Sharon Ely snuck back into the pool room to steal the cue ball. She preferred that they come out to the main room and put on a show. A lot of people associate C. B. Stubblefield with Austin. He moved there from Lubbock in the 1980s, and the barbeque restaurant and music venue, Stubb's, is his legacy. "Stubb was a huge focal point in Lubbock for Jo Harvey and I. We'd go there

pretty much every day,” Terry says in the liner notes for the 2016 reissue of *Lubbock (On Everything)*.³⁴² He also tells the story of how Stubb’s became a music venue in the liners:

‘The story goes,’ he says, ‘that Jesse Taylor had been hitchhiking and hadn’t had anything to eat for a long time, so Stubb picked him up and took him to the café and fed him. Stubb was telling Jesse that he was about to go under, because he couldn’t pay his rent. Jesse said, ‘Why don’t you have music in here?’ Stubb said, ‘That sounds good.’ Jesse was playing guitar with Jo Ely at that time, so they built a stage in there and started doing jams every Sunday night, giving all the money to Stubb. So they basically bailed the place out, but it also began an institution. A lot of great musicians played there. It was one of the first places Stevie Ray Vaughn ever played.’³⁴³

Today in Lubbock, there is a memorial for Stubb where the restaurant once stood. Terry himself made the bronze of Stubb that stands near the center of the slab, along with plaques indicating where things like the pool table and stage were once located.

³⁴² Terry Allen, “The Vast Expanse of Nothing: An Oral History of Lubbock (on Everything), in reissue (October 2016), 18.

³⁴³ Terry Allen, “The Vast Expanse of Nothing,” 18.



Figure 22 Stubb's Memorial. Photo by Savannah King, 2024. Used with permission.

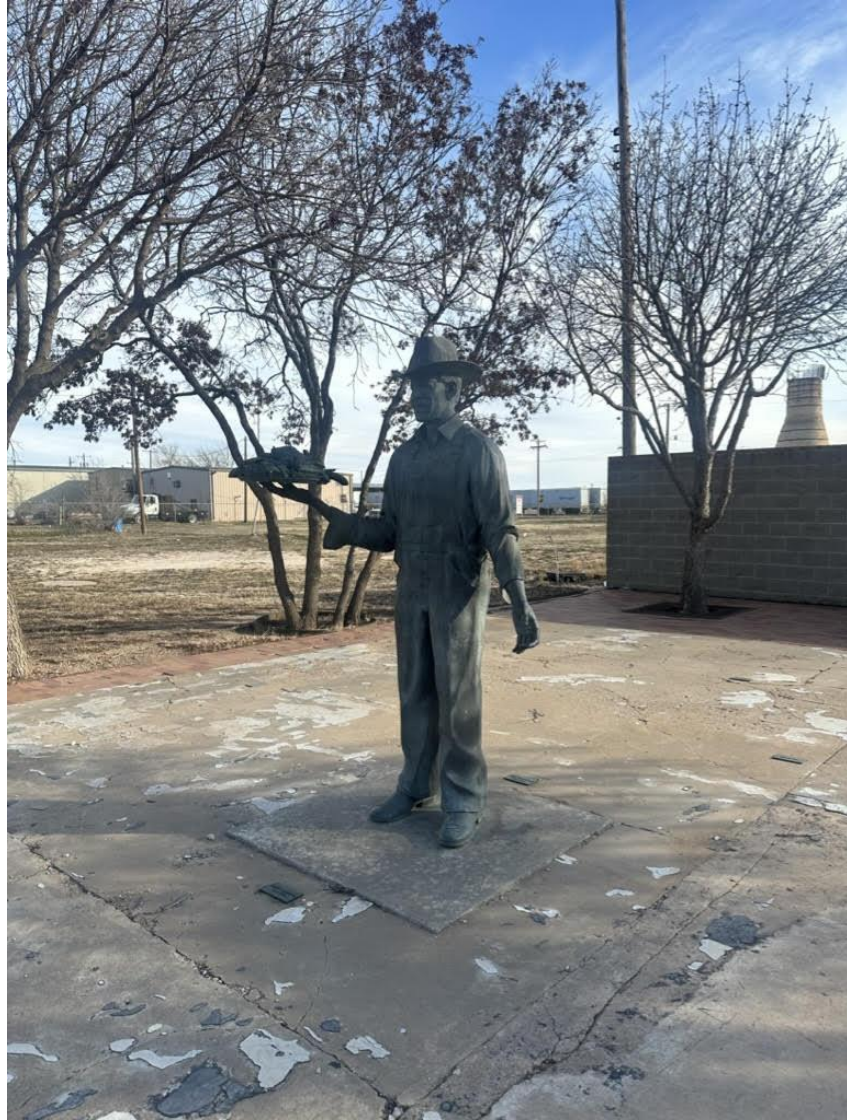


Figure 23 Statue of C.B. Stubblefield by Terry Allen. Photo by Savannah King, 2024. Used with permission.

The fact that Stubb's originated in Lubbock, where it functioned as a node for this scene, rather than in Austin, where it eventually became well-known, further demonstrates how West Texas functions as a mirror to Austin, particularly within this group of musicians and artists. When you drive through Lubbock today, you are met with plenty of reason to believe that the city values its rich cultural music history.

Mac Davis Lane, named for the actor and musician, is located in downtown Lubbock, and it provides access to both the Civic Center and the new Buddy Holly Hall of Performing

Arts and Sciences, established in 2021. I spent nine years on the Texas Tech campus, where fraternity brothers walk around donning shirts with the lyrics to one of Mac Davis's songs, "Happiness is Lubbock Texas in the rear view mirror." I always quietly wondered if they knew the final lines to the song:

*I guessed happiness was Lubbock Texas in my rearview mirror
But now happiness was Lubbock Texas growing nearer and dearer
And the vision was getting clearer in my dream
And I think I finally know just what it means
And when I die you can bury me in Lubbock Texas in my jeans.*"³⁴⁴

Just ten blocks south of the Civic Center is the Buddy Holly Center, and that museum sits across Crickets Avenue from the "West Texas Walk of Fame." The Walk of Fame "was established to honor individuals who have devoted a significant part of their lives to the development and/or gained recognition for their body of work in the promotion or production of arts, music and/or entertainment, and who have an affiliation to Lubbock and West Texas."³⁴⁵

³⁴⁴ Mac Davis, "(Lubbock) Texas In My Rearview Mirror," track #6 on *Mac Davis: Very Best and More*, Universal Music Group, CD.

³⁴⁵ Gary McDonald, "Walk of Fame induction set for Sept. 17," *Golden Gazette* 27, no. 9 (September 2015): 1.



Figure 24 Buddy Holly Center in Lubbock, Texas. Photo by Savannah King, 2024. Used with permission.

While conducting research for my Master’s thesis in Lubbock on the relationship between music and place, I interviewed Cary Banks, long-time music educator at South Plains College in Levelland, Texas and former member of the Maines Brothers Band, near the West Texas Walk of Fame. He shed some light on what Jo Harvey acknowledged in her interview with Oglesby regarding the contentious relationship between Lubbock and the creative crowds. Banks told me about the “Tornado Jam:

It started as a local jam, mostly local bands, in fact if you go in there (the Buddy Holly Center, located across the street from the West Texas Walk of Fame), you can see some scenes from the early jams...Then as it got more successful every year, they started having more and more big name people come, like Linda Ronstadt, Joan Jett...Stevie Ray Vaughn.³⁴⁶

³⁴⁶ Caitlin Grann, “Exploring the character of place in Lubbock through interviews, mental maps, and the place histories of local musicians.” (Master’s thesis, Texas Tech University, 2013), 144.

Banks also told me about a version of the event in 1982, later dubbed the “Mud Festival:”³⁴⁷

There weren’t enough port-a-potties, there wasn’t enough anything but people loved it. Right in the middle of it, a big ol’ rainstorm came in and just, you know, was just pounding the stage. The next year, the city council said that we could no longer have the Tornado Jam at Buddy Holly Park because it was killing the buffalo grass.³⁴⁸

Banks concluded his story about the Tornado Jam, “Ok, and you know, I love this place and I love musicians and I love the community, but we will never live down the headline the next year that ran in the entertainment section of *The New York Times*, which said, ‘No Music at Buddy Holly Park.’”³⁴⁹

But perhaps they did live it down, as today the West Texas Walk of Fame is just one example of how the city recognizes the contributions of artists and musicians in the development of the rich artistic heritage of the region.



Figure 25 West Texas Walk of Fame, Photo by Savannah King, 2024. Used with permission.

³⁴⁷ <http://www.virtualubbock.com/stoCOTornadoJam.html>

³⁴⁸ Grann, “Character of Place,” 144.

³⁴⁹ Grann, “Character of Place,” 144.

In 2015, Jo Harvey and Natalie Maines were inducted into the West Texas Walk of Fame. Their relationship was documented by two newspapers in town, *The Lubbock Avalanche Journal* and *The Golden Gazette*.



Figure 26 Jo Harvey and Natalie Maines' plaques. Photo by Savannah King, 2024. Used with permission.

Jo Harvey and Natalie Maines made a natural pairing for the honor; the two have known each other since Natalie was a young child growing up in Lubbock:

‘I remember Terry and Joe and the Tornado Jams and Stubb’s,’ Natalie says, ‘But I didn’t grasp how great they were. The person I really remember is Jo Harvey. I adored her. I always wanted to hang out with her. I was sort of a little brat. And her term of endearment for me was ‘little shit,’ as in, ‘You know, you’re a real little shit. I loved it.’³⁵⁰

Beyond their personal relationship, the fact that they were inducted to the Walk of Fame at the same time spoke to a shared personality trait. Williams Kerns wrote in *The Lubbock Avalanche Journal*, “Allen and Maines are two of the more outspoken personalities now forever remembered with plaques on the West Texas Walk of Fame, and both are proud of

³⁵⁰ Joe Nick Patoski, “Y’all in the Family: What Natalie Maines Learned from Her Father. What Lloyd Maines Learns from His Daughter,” *Texas Monthly*, May, 2000, 158.

that.”³⁵¹ Just as Jo Harvey has navigated the ins and outs of “high” and “low” art throughout her career, Maines identifies with the popular and alternative realms of country music. Writing in 2000, Tichi cited Maine’s band The Chicks as mainstream country artists alongside “sexy pop-country balladeer Shania Twain.”³⁵² But, three years after Tichi published this article, Maines did something during one of the band’s shows in London that would transition The Chicks from the mainstream to the “alt” side of the border Tichi drew.³⁵³ Before the band began to play their song, “Travelin’ Soldier,” Maines claimed that she is ashamed to be from the same state as George W. Bush. As Amanda Petrusich later wrote for *The New Yorker*, “When the backlash came, it was precipitate, catastrophic, and unrelenting.”³⁵⁴

In Lubbock, Natalie Maines has always been known for speaking her mind. When I spoke with Brad Carter, musician and Assistant Professor of Sociology and Psychology at Western Texas College, he told me about an experience he had at a radio station in Colorado. A deejay was interviewing him because he was getting ready to do a fundraiser. As he listened to his radio on the way to meet with the deejay, Carter told me, “I’m hearing all this stuff about Natalie Maines, and this is the first I’ve heard about it and I’m going, ‘Wow, what did she do now?’”³⁵⁵ The deejay brought it up during their interview. He continued:

Oh God, this is one of those questions where no matter what kind of answer I give, I’m going to offend somebody. So, I somehow managed to think of exactly the right response. It was just something very generic, like, you know, ‘I think at this point we

³⁵¹ William Kerns, “Wide-Open Arms,” *Lubbock Avalanche-Journal*, September 18, 2015, A9.

³⁵² Cecelia Tichi, “Consider the Alternative,” 14.

³⁵³ “Dixie” was removed from the band’s name in the summer of 2020 and therefore from this point forward, I will refer to them as simply, “The Chicks.”

³⁵⁴ Amanda Petrusich, “Why the Chicks Dropped Their ‘Dixie,’” *The New Yorker*. July 20, 2020, 5.

³⁵⁵ Grann, thesis, 202.

just have to pray for the best possible outcome.’ Had I said what I thought, I’d been in trouble.³⁵⁶

Carter went on to tell me about the response from Texas musicians. They created a petition that they sent off to *The New York Times* in support of Natalie and against George W. Bush. But in 2006, The Chicks released their album titled *Taking the Long Way*, which included songs that explicitly responded to their ousting from the country music industry and from the general public in Maines’s hometown.³⁵⁷ The seventh track on the album is titled “Lubbock or Leave It.” Here are the lyrics:

*Dust bowl, Bible belt
Got more churches than trees
Raise me, praise me, couldn’t save me
Couldn’t keep me on my knees
Oh, boy, rave on down loop 289
That’ll be the day you see me back
In this fool’s paradise*

*Chorus:
Temptation’s strong
(Salvation’s gone)
I’m on my way
To hell’s half acre
How will I ever
How will I ever
Get to heaven now*

*Throwing stones from the top of your rock
Thinking no one can see
The secrets you hide behind
Your southern hospitality
On the strip the kids get lit
So they can have a real good time
Come Sunday they can just take their pick
From the crucifix skyline*

*International airport
A quarter after nine*

³⁵⁶ Grann, thesis, 202.

³⁵⁷ Notably, their song titled “Not Ready to Make Nice.”

*Paris Texas, Athens Georgia's
Not what I had in mind
As I'm getting out I laugh to myself
'Cause this is the only place
Where are you're getting on the plane
You see Buddy Holly's face*

*I hear they hate me know
Just like they hated you
Maybe when I'm dead and gone
I'm gonna get a statue too*

As Jocelyn R. Neal indicates in “Narrative Paradigms, Musical Signifiers, and Form as Function in Country Music,” criticism is a “rhetorical means of asserting authenticity.”³⁵⁸ This song, ripe with intertextual and emplaced references, illuminates how Maines’ relationship with the West Texas landscape is a constant negotiation. When she was inducted into the West Texas Walk of Fame, she was quoted in the paper saying, “I love Lubbock. I loved Lubbock growing up. I never quite fit in, but I kind of like that.”³⁵⁹ In the same article, Kerns writes, “Allen mentioned that Lubbock always has been conservative, and much of the art created here came from those who wanted to be heard while reacting to that same conservatism.”³⁶⁰ Both Maines and Jo Harvey understand the complexity of their West Texas emplacement.

Home for Jo Harvey

For nine years straight, Fresno was voted the worst city in the United States. Those were our happiest years living there.³⁶¹

³⁵⁸ Jocelyn R. Neal, “Narrative Paradigms, Musical Signifiers, and Form as Function in Country Music” *Music Theory Spectrum* 29, no. 1 (Spring 2007), 62.

³⁵⁹ Kerns, “Wide-open arms,” A9.

³⁶⁰ Kerns, “Wide-open arms,” A9.

³⁶¹ Jo Harvey Allen, *Homerun*, 33.

Jo Harvey is used to living in places that aren't popular, and that are difficult to pin down. As I write this dissertation from my home on the Allen's' property, which is on the West side of town, I cannot confidently say that I am only in Santa Fe. According to my local library card and the post office, I live in the capital city. But, the solid waste management services stops short of the property, so when I take my trash to the dump, and the attendant goes, "city or county?" I tell them the latter. Technically, we live in the village of Agua Fria, located about five miles west of the plaza. "Agua Fria was originally named Ca-Tee-Ka by Tewa and Tano Indians along the Rio Grande," William Mee writes for the Agua Fria Village Association, "and this means 'cold water.'"³⁶²

Like the property here on the west side of Santa Fe, Lubbock where Jo Harvey was born and raised, is located in a part of Texas that is often overlooked. For many people, the first image that comes to mind when they think about Texas stands in for reality. Two examples of this in film are *Bernie* and *Vengeance*. Both are dark comedies whose plots center on small-town murders in Texas.³⁶³³⁶⁴ *Bernie* is based on a true story about a man named Bernie, played by Jack Black, who kills a wealthy and disliked woman, played by Shirley MacLaine, in their shared home of Carthage. Carthage is a real town located in East Texas, near the Louisiana border. The film, directed by Richard Linklater, "resonates with regional specificity."³⁶⁵ "It's story is filtered through the vernacular of the gossips – identified as the 'townspeople' at the end of the film – who are largely played by local

³⁶² William Mee, "Agua Fria Village," Historic Santa Fe, October 2016, <https://www.historicsantafe.org/agua-fria-village>.

³⁶³ *Bernie*, directed by Richard Linklater (Castle Rock Entertainment, 2011), DVD.

³⁶⁴ *Vengeance*, directed by B. J. Novak (Focus Features, 2022), DVD.

³⁶⁵ Katrina Boyd, "Grief Tragically Becoming Comedy: Time, Tasks, and Storytelling in Linklater's *Bernie*," *Film Quarterly* 68, no. 3 (Spring 2015): 49.

nonactors.”³⁶⁶ In her article for *Film Quarterly*, titled “Grief Tragically Becoming Comedy: Time, Tasks, and Storytelling in Linklater’s *Bernie*,” Katrina Boyd explains that you can tell who these nonactors are in the film, because they “face the camera but look off to the side, as though more interested in sharing juicy tidbits with the camera operator than serving as objective witnesses.”³⁶⁷ During the auditions, “those trying out for these roles were not asked to read part of the script but to tell a story.”³⁶⁸

Watching local people recount their version of the events surrounding a murder, and the familiar feeling of finding humor in emplaced stories, exposes similarities between the work of Linklater and Jo Harvey. They are both storytellers from Texas, and like the work of Jo Harvey, Linklater’s *Bernie* “resonates with those everyday absurdities and pleasures of lived experience that resist rationalization – and cannot be corralled into mainstream narrative.”³⁶⁹ While Linklater tends to work primarily in Central and East Texas, Jo Harvey’s work is firmly situated in West Texas, a place with a “rich storytelling heritage,” as Jo Harvey puts it. “The very essence of what I do, I got from that storytelling tradition. Everyone was a character.”³⁷⁰ Jo Harvey credits the physical landscape for her creativity as well. She says in her interview with Chris Oglesby, “There was so much magic to that stark Lubbock landscape and what you did in it, a great canvas for a bunch of budding artists and writers and a great stage for musicians and actors.”³⁷¹ Lubbock sits right at the bottom of the panhandle, a region that also makes a brief appearance in *Bernie*.

³⁶⁶ Boyd, “Grief Tragically Becoming Comedy,” 49.

³⁶⁷ Boyd, “Grief Tragically Becoming Comedy,” 49.

³⁶⁸ Boyd, “Grief Tragically Becoming Comedy,” 49.

³⁶⁹ Boyd, “Grief Tragically Becoming Comedy,” 52.

³⁷⁰ Oglesby, *Fire in the Water*, 146.

³⁷¹ Oglesby, *Fire in the Water*, 146.

During one scene in the film, a “gossip” (the only one played by a professional actor, Sonny Davis), sitting in a local café, describes the different regions in the state: “Carthage is in East Texas and that’s totally different from the rest of Texas, could be five different states, actually,” he says:

You got your West Texas out there with a bunch of flat ranches. Up north, you got them Dallas snobs with the Mercedes. And then you got the Houston, the carcinogenic coast is what I call it, all the way up to Louisiana. Then down south, San Antonio, that’s where the Tex meets the Mex, like the food. And then in Central Texas you got the ‘People’s Republic of Austin,’ with a bunch hairy-legged and liberal fruitcakes. Of course, I left out the panhandle, and a lot of people do.³⁷²

As this man describes the different states of Texas, he is accompanied with a map that distinguishes the individual regions. Each “state” contains images that suit the descriptions he provides. Not surprisingly, the panhandle is accompanied by a singular large question mark. Boyd considers the map to be both “reductive and accurate.”³⁷³

When I studied geography at Texas Tech University, the question of “Is Lubbock in the panhandle, or is it technically West Texas?” emerged often during casual conversation in the department. I was never surprised if someone who had been firmly in the “panhandle” camp in one heated debate changed their tune in the next. When it comes to regions, there are no definitive lines distinguishing one from the next; rather, the boundaries are productive zones, places where defining characteristics are alive with consistent friction. In West Texas, when you pair this productive friction with a flat, seemingly barren landscape, paradox seeps into the identities of both the place and the people who live there. A scene in the 2022 film title *Vengeance*, written and directed by BJ Novak, demonstrates this paradoxical reality. About twenty-five minutes into the film, the protagonist, played by

³⁷² Bernie, 2011.

³⁷³ Boyd, “Grief Tragically Becoming Comedy,” 49.

Novak, a character visits a fictional West Texas town. He is asked by two young women if he likes it there. He says “yes,” and they are shocked because he is from New York. Their response prompts him to honestly answer the question. He calls the landscape “bleak,” to which they respond, “How dare you!” “We just got a Target.” And, “Do you know how fucking good our football team is?” Then, their older brother chimes in, saying, “there is probably something you should know about this place. This is the most wretched, godforsaken stretch of land on the face of the Earth. And I’d never leave. You know what I mean?”³⁷⁴

On May 4, 1987, Ken Robison of the Fresno Bee writes while reviewing one of Jo Harvey’s performances of “As It Is in Texas” at Fresno State University, “...after you clear away the mystique, Texas is no different from Fresno – and Texans have no monopoly on wacked-out characters.”³⁷⁵ Robison’s statement about Texas being no different from Fresno, particularly within the context provided by Jo Harvey’s Texas characters, is linked to what he writes is a “Texas-style version of the truth.”³⁷⁶ Versions of truth can link to place in spite of their broad reach, as noted by Robison, and even though Jo Harvey has produced art in Lubbock, Austin, Fresno, and Los Angeles, the “truths” she tells are broadly Texan while her voice situates it firmly in West Texas.

Conclusion

Throughout her entire career, Jo Harvey’s truth-telling manages to consistently zoom in and out, reifying the paradoxical nature of the landscape she originally called home. In the

³⁷⁴ *Vengeance*, 2022.

³⁷⁵ Robison, 1987, Fresno Bee.

³⁷⁶ Robison, D5, 1987.

process, her work contributed to the productive, alt-country that is West Texas. Her defiance of labels, a characteristic that contributes to her identity as an avant-garde artist, also marks her emplacement in her alt-country scene that formed in Lubbock, Texas. Though members of this scene are all familiar with a general unacceptance in Lubbock in their younger years, they cannot shed their place history, a fact that many have recognized over time, as evidenced in the press and in the cultural landscape of Lubbock. For Jo Harvey, the concept of “home” is in turn influenced not only by the places she has lived, but also by her collaborative efforts with this scene.

Conclusion

On February 7, 2024, I gave Jo Harvey a copy of my dissertation along with a request that she respond to it in within ten days. Here is what she wrote:

Caitlin, the minute I finished reading this I couldn't wait to call you to express my deep appreciation for how you have written about and honored my work. Terry read it as well and was knocked out by the way you have nailed so much and worked so hard on it. We were both excited to have my work acknowledged and presented so well.

I have very small corrections to make and have noted those places in the script you gave me. I will return that to you. I understand since I received this copy you have already made some of those corrections. I will make a few suggestions that I feel are important and could add an additional understanding about my work and process. We can spend a lot more time together and hopefully some of my ideas might add to what you have already done so well. I look forward to that when we get back home.

Terry and I have often collaborated writing plays together as well as writing our own. I also perform in his plays, sing one of my songs, present a poem in one of his performances or plays and he will always have some of his recorded songs in mine or performs then live. I direct him in my plays. He directs me in his. We are both strong willed and can go round and round over a sentence for days, but also trust each other's motives and ideas and most of the time listen to each other. We are each other's best editors. He has been my strongest supporter and influence. He has always given me credit and I want to make sure I do the same for him.

It is easy when I perform his plays for people to believe they were written by me. For example, Terry wrote the script for Ghost Ship Rodez. I absolutely hated it. Once we arrived to workshop it in France, I planned to fake a heart attack so I wouldn't have to perform it. He had invested so much in it, and it was the only way I could think of to get out of acting in it. Artaud besides being brilliant, was, as you know, insane and vile. Then something very strange and powerful happened. I was standing behind a set wall when the prop that represented the staff Artaud tried to return to the Irish people, the staff he believed to be the staff of Saint George or the staff of Jesus, moved about four feet! It moved on it's own. I was the only person who saw the staff move. I immediately, in my mind, started talking to Artaud. I told him I was sorry for his mental illness. I was sorry he lost so many of his friends. Sorry the French did not fully appreciate his genius, and I promised him at that moment, I would play him and the daughters of the heart to be born who haunted him like a son of a bitch. I started a relationship with a dead man. I made him promises, I intended to keep. I felt sorry for him rather than disgusted by his own actions and words in the play and wanted to honor him. I called a meeting of the entire crew, some of whom did not understand English, and the rest who probably thought I was nuts, and told them I was now ready to perform Terry's play. From that moment on, Terry and I spent endless hours rehearsing, editing, and working late into the nights drinking wine and eating cheese and salami with great loafs of French bread and making love in our room at the monastery Leon which Terry filled with

flowers. The last scene in that play was more than theater for me. It was redemptive.

I have appreciated Terry's input, for example when I wrote my first poetry performance, A Moment's Hesitation, he said I should cut it in half. As you know, that is a difficult thing to do, taking out parts you care about, but he was right and I made it shorter. When he read the first chapter of the Beautiful Waitress book, he told me I should start over and I did, and it became better. Sometimes I refuse his ideas and sometimes he hates mine. Other times we argue endlessly and usually relent knowing the other person was right all along. Terry is a pretty great influence on me.

I also want to acknowledge that Terry financially supported me, while enabling me to stay at home with Bukka and Bale and do my own work. Having kids was the most creative thing I have ever gotten to do. Being able to stay home in Fresno with them when they were young and having Terry's support and encouragement, I still feel has been my life's blessing. If at that time, I had a big studio of my own, I would have still preferred to work in the kid's bedroom. I first cleaned the house, then set up at the table in their room drinking one cup of coffee after another. I counted 17 cups once while writing and chain smoking. That period was among the happiest times of my life and most productive. I put all my clutter away giving them back their room and being soccer mom after their days at school were over. I have been extremely lucky. I have stolen from the kids and neighbors as well as from all the real characters in my plays. And even though I am known as the lying woman, I do try to simply tell the truth presenting them with their own words and without judgment.

I so appreciate your friendship, help, and writing.

Love, Jo Harvey

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