

Introduction by Christine Y. Kim

Sometimes the most apocalyptic landscapes are drawn straight from reality, and it often takes an artist to tag them. Take George Herriman's *Krazy Kat* comic strip from the 1920s, set in a fantastical moon-like landscape full of enormous jutting rocks, impossible plateaus, and surreal volcanoes, for example. This otherworldly landscape, which Herriman calls Coconino County, is an actual place with the same name. Coconino County (pop. 135,000) is located in north-central Arizona and includes Flagstaff and the Grand Canyon. The massive work *Roden Crater* (1974–present) by James Turrell sits on the edge of the Painted Desert in Coconino County, and Turrell has flagged every image of the comic strip in which a drawn geological formation exists in the actual landscape that he himself has located in Coconino County.

Likewise, sometimes the most outrageous protagonists and sensational narratives are drawn from actuality. These are often more complex, less concrete, and with more room for slippage than fiction, and it takes an artist to reveal them. Aimee Semple McPherson, like Herriman, traveled west with her family around the turn of the century. Real story. In Herriman's case, it was to escape the increasing restrictions of the Jim Crow laws in New Orleans; in McPherson's, it was in search of her own manifest destiny: to Christianize the heathens of the Wild West, driving in her "Gospel Car," with the words "Jesus is Coming Soon—Get Ready" written on one side and "Where will you Spend Eternity?" on the other. A highly theatrical and charismatic evangelical preacher and faith healer known to speak in tongues, in 1923 McPherson founded her own denomination and

her own five-thousand-seat church, the Angelus Temple in Echo Park, Los Angeles, which also owned the radio station KFSG, on which she broadcast the sermons that made her a national household name. She had three marriages, two ending in divorce, and multiple affairs, one with a married engineer from KFSG, for whom she staged her own disappearance on May 18, 1926, off Ocean Beach. While followers held seaside vigils day and night and panicked parishioners searched for her body, she was shackled up in a rented seaside cottage with her lover in Carmel. Five weeks after her disappearance, McPherson mysteriously reappeared, stumbling out of the desert in Agua Prieta, Sonora, a Mexican town near the Arizona border, with a sensational story about how a man named "Steve" and a woman named "Mexicali Rose," had kidnapped, drugged, and held her for ransom until her brave escape.

Zoe Crosher implicates the McPherson disappearance in a photograph of an empty beach on an overcast day, one in her *Transgressing the Pacific* series, seven images of the sites of fictional and actual disappearances along the southern California coast. One of these images, *Where Aimee Semple McPherson Disappeared at Ocean Beach* (2009), provokes such questions as, "What happens beyond manifest destiny, after one crosses the Pacific?" McPherson, traveling with her mother and her daughter, were the first documented women to drive across the United States; what if there was more, for a woman? Somewhere else to go? Something beyond the danger (albeit fabricated) of the Pacific?

Coincidentally, Herriman and McPherson both died in California in 1944, and not long after, a woman whom Zoe Crosher calls Michelle DuBois, an all-American girl from Oklahoma, seeks her own manifest destiny, traveling across the United States and then to

various Pacific Rim cities. Photographing herself disguised, costumed, posing, parading, role-playing, and carousing, by herself or with occasional male companions, whom Crosher has cut or blacked out, by the early 1970s she has made it across the Pacific and is discovering and furthermore documenting herself as a representation of what exists beyond. Our female protagonist is neither in danger, nor deserting her church, nor hiding an affair, nor being held captive by outlaws. She is realizing her very real exotic fantasies, and unknowingly those of McPherson, and making sure that we witness them by way of the archive that she has produced, which Crosher has narrated.

After three prior iterations and presentations of this archive in the volumes *The Reconsidered Archive of Michelle DuBois (aka Kathy)*, *The Unraveling of Michelle DuBois (aka Alice Johnson)*, and *The Unveiling of Michelle DuBois (aka Cricket)*, this is the fourth out of five, *The Disappearance of Michelle DuBois (aka Mitchi)*. Just as these titles read as chapters in a novel, *The Disappearance* contains blasted, damaged, re-created, flocked, burned, crumpled, trashed, and snowed-out self-portraits, or “autoportraits,” as Crosher calls them, of DuBois. As every storyline and trope has been written but then deliberately re-created and restaged by DuBois, she now holds the master key to those forces: natural (the Pacific Ocean), social (Christianity), geographic (landscape), and sexual (identity).

With this book, Crosher introduces the complication of knowing what is less or more real because, as we see unfold before us, all histories are unstable, and as Crosher reminds us in the second part of the interview in this book, “The archive is not of a stable time (then) but its history accumulates each time its contents are remembered, spoken about, considered, thought about, discussed, etc. The archive then becomes the container of its own

dynamically shifting history, and the just past begins to infect the just now and the just future." Crosher then goes on to accuse herself of rambling, when, within the rambling, we drift *aimfully* to find exactly the point. The very real purpose of a fictitious disappearance through self-activated implosion represents fantasy rooted in all things real.