

was somehow — responsible. So just before we left I came up to visit his folks' place for dinner, maybe to give them a kind of assurance it was reasonable to do. And while most of us were in the kitchen his old Polish grandmother, who spoke not a word of English, sat staring glumly at the television set, which was doing some documentary on North Dakota. As I passed I noticed she had tears in her eyes so I asked her what was the matter, and she looked from me back to the television set as though surveying the whole country before her. She looked at me and shook her head, "*a zoy fil goyim*" ("so many gentiles"). That's one of the things he had to look back toward.

On the other hand when I came back I had to stay with my mother a couple of days before I was able to get a new apartment. I was lying on the bed in her spare room that was in this Brooklyn housing project called the Vandervere Estates near Newkirk Avenue. The apartment was on the first floor and I heard a conversation between this kid, who was wearing a Davy Crockett cap and playing with a hula hoop, and his mother who was hustling him up the street toward the shopping. "Mama, mamma was Davy Crockett Jewish?" "No," she said, "but Dr. Salk is." New York and the '60s was in front of me, and Poland 1931 was in back of Jerry.

But somehow we've been closing in on the same terrain.

For a long time I thought it was more sensible to suppose we all speak a common language, to the degree that it's a language at all. Now I'm not so sure. I think this commonness of language may have been exaggerated. I mean by Lakoff and Ross and the rest of Chomsky's ambitious disciples, who've been trying to situate the language on a common substructure of logic. But the more I look at the way "meaning" operates — I suppose I should say "signification" — the less I'm inclined to believe it. I mean supposing you break down all signification into its components of "sense" and "reference" — I'm talking about the semantic components of language here of course. Even the domain of "reference", which should hardly be as problematic as the modes of "sense", seems to suggest that we each speak different but closely related languages, whose differences simply don't often get manifested because our common projects don't require a very precise match. Finally "reference" is not much more than pointing, and pointing has a lot of room in it for variation. Threading a needle together and driving a car in traffic make different demands for agreement about location in space. And what kind of common projects do we have where our differences come out? Two groups building a bridge from different sides of a river have to meet, and two people making love try to come together. And this is pretty extreme, but for lovers "together" is a domain with lots of room in it for different epistemologies. Besides, this is a time when we're finding out that there's been a great deal of exaggeration of our need to always come together — even fucking. So for two poets moving toward what looks like a common

terrain, it seems there's even less need to come to a single place and a much greater need to recognize how much room there is in a world we hope to inhabit in common.

I hope we've got everything together, and I'm looking forward to seeing the whole correspondence in a single piece.

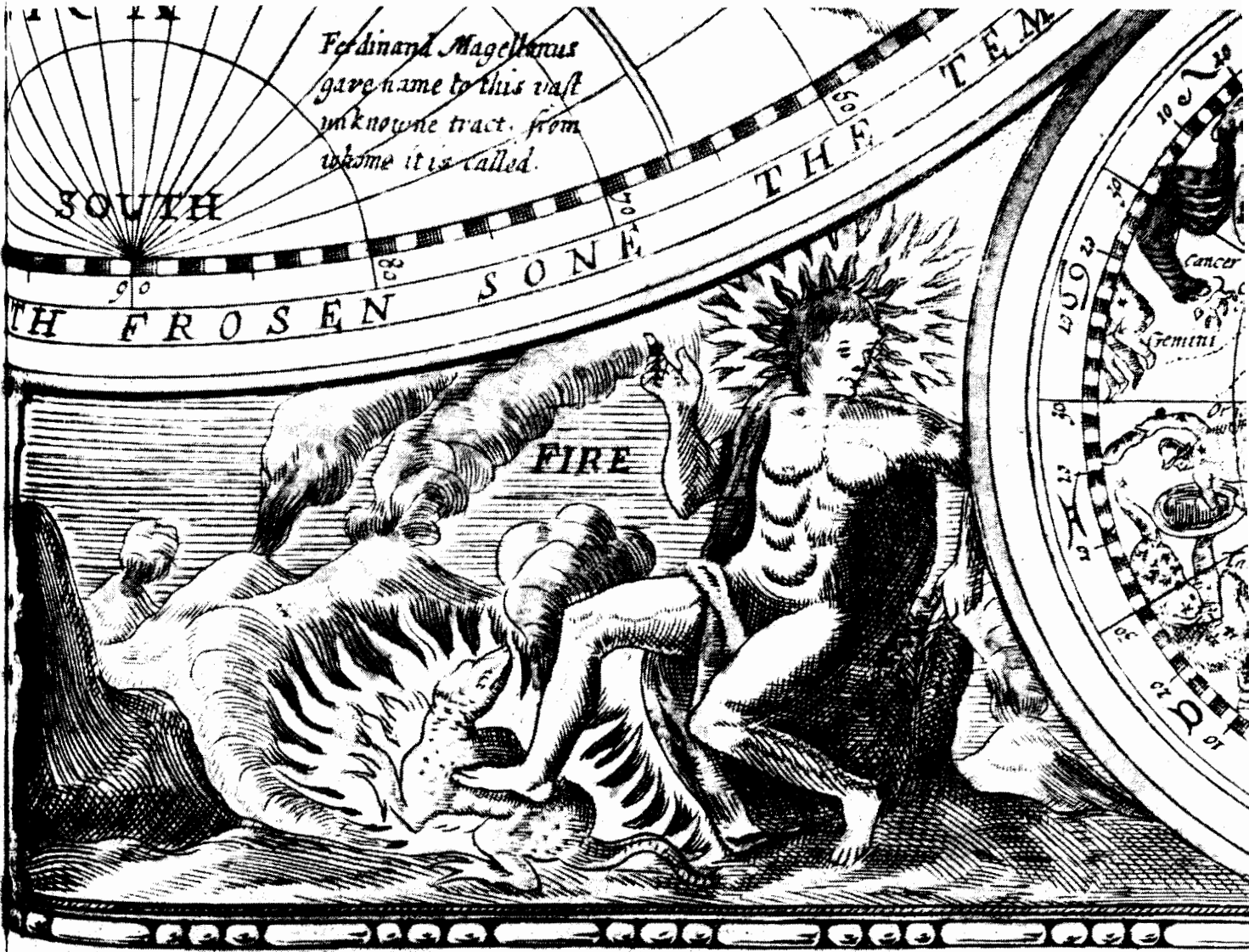
Best,
David

*William Spanos (Binghamton) to David Antin (Solana Beach),
February 5, 1975.*

Dear David: We've come to the end of our time, and we haven't found India. We're still — all three — on the way. Perhaps that's summary enough.

Sincerely,
Bill

*Ferdinand Magellanus
gave name to this vast
unknown tract, from
whome it is called.*



LA FIGURE DV MONDE VNIVERSEL.

