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Jerilyn Lee Brandelius. *Grateful Dead Family Album*. Revised edition. San Francisco: Last Gasp Books, 2018. Hardbound, 256 pp. ISBN 9780867198737. \$39.95.

MATTHEW C. ARMSTRONG

One of the great speculative pleasures of reading the new edition of the *Grateful Dead Family Album* is imagining the map of this social network now, two decades into the twenty-first century. As one travels from baby pictures of the band members through an expanding array of artifacts that include Acid Test posters, Stanley Mouse album art, and photographs of the family ranging from “musicians, magicians, and mummies” (7) to “beautiful Nubians” (180) the band communed with in the Sudan during their 1978 journey to Egypt, one can’t help but see in this document a community that is at once intimate, global, and evolutionary. But before the family’s twenty-first century tentacles reached out to figures like Trey Anastasio, Joan Osborne, Barack Obama, Julian Assange, Oteil Burbridge, John Mayer, and Billy Strings, Jerilyn Lee Brandelius offered the world a multimedia glimpse of this subculture’s topography in 1989. This second hardback edition (a trade paperback was published in 1990) is both a welcome contribution to Grateful Dead studies and a fascinating look at a rhetorical operating system that, in many ways, prefigures what Dead songwriter John Perry Barlow called the “electronic frontier,” and what the rest of us still tend to call the internet.

Like Stewart Brand’s *Whole Earth Catalog* and Kesey’s *Garage Sale*, Brandelius’ *Family Album* offers readers a pre-internet journey into non-linear narrative and genre subversion. And yet, with its sub-cultural focus, chronological approach, and strange geographical center (the Middle East), there is a definite focus to Brandelius’ book, and this bearing will serve contemporary Dead scholars well as they attempt to map the arcs of the family plots in the 1990s and the twenty-first century. In the middle of the *Family Album*, taking up nearly ten percent of the pages, is the Dead’s journey to Egypt during fall 1978. In keeping with the

book's colorful penultimate page and its attention to the Dead's efforts to "Save the Rainforests" by collaborating with Greenpeace and the United Nations, Brandelius portrays the Dead as a social network torn between insularity and activism. She offers the reader an experience that simulates the collage consciousness of the psychedelic experience while always pointing, like a compass, toward a shared planetary fate, the fundamental Terrapin fact of our global village.

Brandelius may have possessed a worldview that did not precisely align with Jerry's, Bob's, Bill's, Phil's, Mickey's, Brent's, or even the majority of Deadheads, past or present. But in a contemporary critical environment where lived experience trumps nearly everything, I think it's important to mention that Brandelius, who passed away in 2020, lived in the heart of the Grateful Dead family for a long time. She was not just a fan or a former employee of the now defunct Family Dog Ballroom but an intimate companion of Mickey Hart. That may explain the book's emphasis on Egypt and its reflection of Hart's internationally oriented and politically active perspective; indeed, some may see the volume as a Hart-centric testament to a cosmopolitan aesthetic as seen through the eyes of a particular woman.

My view of the book is through the eyes of a scholar whose project for the past thirteen years has been studying another ostensibly separate subculture, America's post-9/11 soldier-writers. However, my own interest in ethnography and subcultures was prompted by Deadhead sociology, and while immersed in that world I witnessed the twenty-first century expansion of the Dead network into the most daring realms of antiwar activism. Barlow's Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) and his unique friendship with whistleblower Edward Snowden, from my vantage, lead directly from Brandelius' seminal moment in Egypt during the work to draft the Camp David Accords and her insistence that the reader dilate narrative experience in this geographical place and textual space where the band ("the mustached Californians"), accompanied by Bill Walton (basketball great), Ken Kesey (author of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*), and the ever-present but usually invisible stage crew (think Steve Parish), made friends with the "Guardians," the tribe of Egyptian custodians that protected the territory around the Pyramids (158–181). Just as Barlow

shepherded Snowden into public view through the Courage Foundation in 2013 during the heart of America's invasion and occupation of the Middle East, so does Brandelius here reveal an American social network serving as awkward but effective emissaries for peace in a country simultaneously defined as Africa and the Middle East (statal and regional).

Some twenty-first century scholarship already exists concerning the transition between counterculture and cyberculture (see Fred Turner), much of it with a Dead emphasis. But there is no serious work that evaluates the cosmopolitan spatial environments of Brandelius' work as precursor to the now flourishing Dead communities one finds online. For those interested in pursuing digital anthropology, there is a website, "The Wheel" (www.thegdwheel.com), where designers attempted to birth the *Family Album* in an electronic form. Brandelius calls that effort "the larger project" in her foreword and hoped that it would lead to what she called "a definitive printed edition" that would include readers' "commentary and insights" (7). Her passing likely makes that impossible, but as I explored "The Wheel" and Last Gasp's update to the 1989 Warner Books edition, I kept shutting off my screen and returning to the beautiful solidity and bright colors of this fine new volume and the polyphony of playful voices that pushed back at my desire to reduce the Dead world(s) to something discursive, discrete, and political.

That may be the most important reason for the timing of this new edition, but its production merits mention. Both the original hardback and paperback editions were standard trade efforts: the hardback in particular had good production values, but the Last Gasp edition offers a good sewn binding and heavy art paper stock, along with a nicely printed cover. Brandelius claims to have corrected errors in the original, though only a detailed collation will uncover those; indeed, the pages appear to match the earlier editions exactly. With the exception of Last Gasp's colophon information and Brandelius's new foreword, it is difficult to spot any substantive changes at all. For the most part, that will not trouble readers who first discover the book with this edition. The original design represented something of a cross between a scrapbook and an art book; this extends the art book aesthetic to the page stock and binding, even if the scans of some pages are less than perfect.

Those are quibbles. The larger questions raised by the book are perhaps even more timely now than they were when Brandelius and her team put the first edition together, at a peak of the Dead's popularity and performing prowess. That was twenty-five years after they had begun; now, it is more than twenty-five years after they disbanded. Yes, question the old ideas about politics and activism and challenge the ancient sanguineal notion of a family, the *Album* whispers. For, as old as the Dead may be, the Roman, Greek, Egyptian, Indian, and Bay Area echoes you find anew in these pages are nothing more than the fallen leaves of a strange tree that, every season, continues to bear new fruit.

"If you tried to delineate a Grateful Dead Family Tree," Brandelius writes, "it would not be effective to use the traditional bloodline progression, descending through the 'begats' to get to the wider branches" (49). No, instead, Brandelius recommends that readers imagine a felled tree with a core defined by "widening circles" rippling out. "But how far do the rings go outward?" she asks (49). And it is a wonderfully mysterious question, for the Grateful Dead family tree, whether you imagine it as a manzanita, a sequoia, a banyan, or some yet unnamed Amazonian arbor, has not yet been felled. The tree still stands.

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