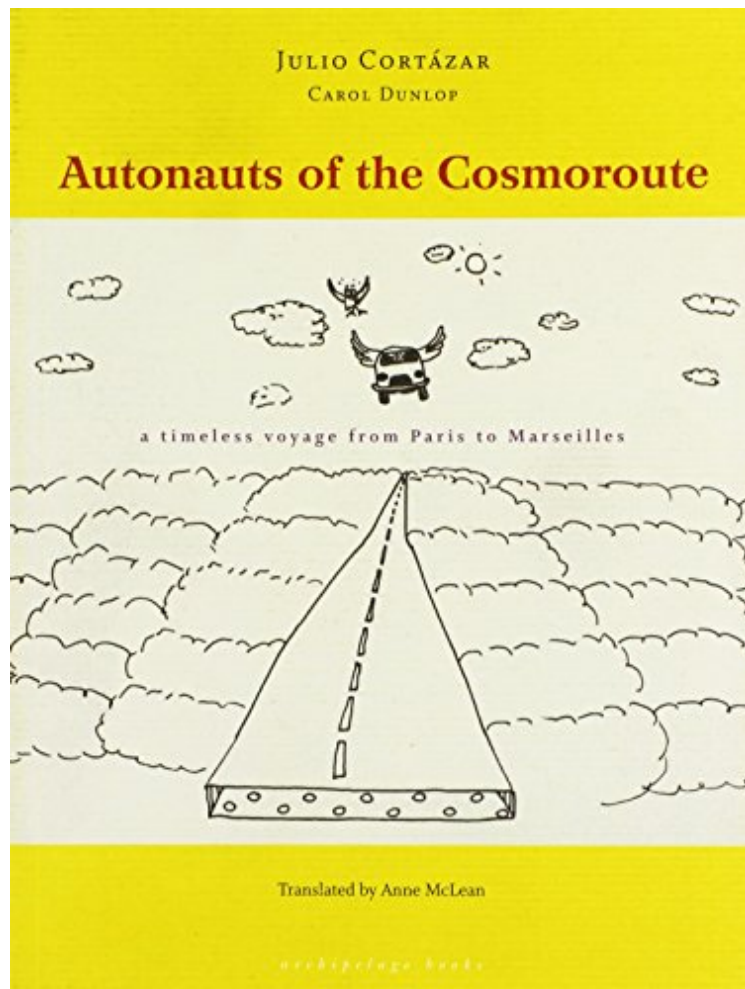


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Autonauts of the Cosmoroute: A Timeless Voyage from Paris to Marseilles

Julio Cortazar, Carol Dunlop

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Julio Cortazar, Carol Dunlop : Autonauts of the Cosmoroute: A Timeless Voyage from Paris to Marseilles before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised *Autonauts of the Cosmoroute: A Timeless Voyage from Paris to Marseilles*:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Slightly zany, sly and witty, and utterly sui generis By R. M. Peterson The "autonauts" are Argentinian writer Julio Cortzar and his third wife Carol Dunlop. In May 1982, they embark on an expedition down the L'Autoroute du Sud, the freeway from Paris to Marseilles. Most drivers manage that trip in a day. But not "el Lobo" and "la Osita" (their pet names for one another). The trip takes them over thirty days - because, by design, they visit each and every rest area along the way, staying the night at every second rest area (except when forced by exigencies to make small exceptions to that rigid routine). They therefore drive only about

twenty minutes per day and they complete the Paris-Marseille journey without ever leaving the freeway. Their vehicle is a red Volkswagen Combi Van, which they dub "Fafner" ("the Dragon"). Fafner carries a fridge and provisions and libations, their typewriters and lawn chairs, as well as a bed where they can sleep and make love. *AUTONAUTS OF THE COSMOROUTE* is their joint documentation of their madcap expedition. It consists largely of reports on what they discovered at the various rest stops along the Autoroute, as well as numerous flights of fancy conjured up during their trip. There also are brief logs for each day of the expedition; black-and-white photographs, most of which were taken by Carol and almost all of which, at least as reproduced in this edition, are sadly blurry; and charming drawings of the rest area layouts ("ex post facto cartography") supplied by Carol's fourteen-year-old son based on the autonauts' reports and photographs. A propos of a work by Julio Cortzar, *AUTONAUTS OF THE COSMOROUTE* is slightly zany, sly and witty, and utterly sui generis. Originally published in 1983 (in simultaneous French and Spanish editions), it was the last of Cortzar's works published during his lifetime. He died in 1984. Carol Dunlop died in November 1982. At the time of their trip, both Julio and Carol were suffering from what turned out to be terminal leukemia, so the "Cosmoroute" of the title takes on a poignant extra dimension. The book, shot through and through with a zest for life, is a valediction like few others. There are many brilliant notions and conceits in the book. A recurring one is a series of five letters from a mother to her son, reporting on her curmudgeonly husband, the death of Aunt Hlose, and the bizarre coincidence of repeatedly encountering this strange couple camped out in and around a red van at different rest areas along the freeway over a three-week span. Another one is a brief adult fairy tale about motel sex. And there are many stunningly original passages, of which the following one about being surrounded and buffeted by trucks while driving on the freeway is representative: "Up till now we've always been David against Goliath: What can a Renault 5, or even a tremendous Porsche, do when a tractor-trailer precedes it, and another follows ten metres behind and sticks its enormous threatening giant's face in the rear-view mirror, while a third overtakes, making space itself tremble and letting out horrendous snorts? This is how users of the freeway soon develop a complex little studied by Freud, acute truckphobia, which can only be cured by buying a truck to join the enemy's ranks (this is known as transference in psychoanalytic terms) or by taking the train." That paragraph, incidentally, is also indicative of what surely is a brilliant piece of translating by Anne McLean. Alas, like every long-distance expedition faithfully recorded, there are more than a few boring stretches. And some of el Lobo's and la Osita's fancies don't tickle my intellectual funny bone. Though to do so might have violated the spirit and structure of the original undertaking, judicious editing or abridgement by the authors would have made for a more consistently enjoyable book.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. An exuberant journey! By PK This adventure log, as full of the joy of travel as Kerouac's *On the Road* yet written with the air of a Victorian voyager's journal, will charm any reader who possesses even the merest semblance of a sense of wonder. It's a complete delight and a perfect reminder that travel is just as much about the process of the journey itself as what you find at your destination. Bring this on any road trip!

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A New View of the Ordinary By Fairlee E. Winfield Fantasy. A dream expedition. All that, but a still a fresh look at the ordinary. The autoroute from Paris to Marseille that is never seen--just traveled. It's stimulating to inspect the details. And the relationship between El Lobo and La Osita is endearing. For me though, the whole thing was simply a little too "cute." So cute that the humor seemed tiresome. Like a child telling the story of a movie over and over with details that make you want them to get on with it. Sorry, despite his fame, I've never been a Cortazar fan.

Autonauts of the Cosmoroute is a travelogue, a love story, an irreverent collection of visual and verbal snapshots. In May 1982, Julio Cortzar and Carol Dunlop climbed aboard Fafner, their VW camper van, and embarked on an exploration of the uncharted territory of the Paris-Marseilles freeway. It was a route theyd covered before, usually in about ten hours, but this time they loaded up with supplies and prepared for an arduous voyage of thirty-three days without leaving the autoroute. Along the way they would uncover the hidden side of the freeway and record the trips vital minutiae with light-hearted abandon. At roadside rest areas, armed with typewriters, cameras, and mutual affection, the authors composed this book.

From Publishers Weekly Starred . A couple's leisurely drive through France finally makes it to the U.S. in this long-overdue translation of Cortzar (1914-84) and Dunlop's (1946-82) wry, wondrous 1983 travelogue. Following two simple rules—"Complete the journey from Paris to Marseille without once leaving the autoroute," and visit each of the 70 rest areas "at the rate of two per day"—the couple stretch a 10-hour highway trip into a month-long expedition, capturing in short, snappy chapters the joy of slowing down and enjoying the scenery. At times poetic, at others sarcastic, and always playful, the authors take turns with the narrative "the way a pianist plays a sonata, the hands united in a single quest." The resulting tale is an infectious love letter to the road, their VW camper van and each other, made more poignant by Dunlop's untimely death (she passed before the book was finished). Despite some sleepless nights and depressing, concrete-slab surroundings, the couple's sunny mood and clever observation will keep readers engaged. Enjoyable, if a bit inconsequential, this jaunt makes a great introduction to the work of Latin American heavyweight Cortzar, known for short stories and experimental novels such as 1967's National Book Award-

winning Hopscotch. Bw photos. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. Idols invite respect, admiration, affection, and, of course, great envy. Cortzar inspired all of these feelings as very few writers can, but he inspired, above all, an emotion much rarer: devotion. He was, perhaps without trying, the Argentine who made the whole world love him. Gabriel Garca Mrquez Cortzars last book is unexpectedly his happiest and most playful, both linguistically and with the vicissitudes of life... Every page reveals that there is no end, because the end is to go farther, to cross all boundaries. Twenty years later Anne McLean restores the joy and liberty of the original to these autonauts. And it seems to me that Cortzar and Dunlop are still there, on their freeway, alive, happy forever inside a motionless time. Toms Eloy Martnez Anyone who doesnt read Cortzar is doomed. Not to read him is a serious invisible disease, which in time can have terrible consequences. Something similar to a man who has never tasted peaches. He would quietly become sadder . . . and, probably, little by little, he would lose his hair. Pablo Neruda This is a special book, definitely worth reading, one that will alter your view of highways forever. Chad W. Post The journey undertaken by Cortzar and his wife and collaborator Carol Dunlop is quixotic in the largest sense. At one level, it is an adventure stood on its absurd head. At another, it is something gravera mask of comedy concealing the enigma of an archaic smile. Richard Eder, The Los Angeles Times Book About the AuthorJulio Cortzar was born in Brussels in 1914 and grew up on the outskirts of Bueno Aires. His other works include Diary of Andrs Fava, Hopscotch, Blow-Up and Other Stories, All Fires the Fire, We Love Glenda So Much, A Certain Lucas, Around the Day in Eighty Worlds andCronopios and Famas. He died in Paris in 1984. Anne McLean has translated works by Javier Cercas, Evelio Rosero, Juan Gabriel Vzquez, Ignacio Martnez de Pison, Carmen Martn Gaité, Enrique Vila-Matas, and Hctor Abad, as well as Diary of Andrs Fava and From the Observatory by Julio Cortzar. She has twice won the Independent Foreign Fiction Prize.