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STATEMENT OF INTENTION

As the first magazine of the world’s tribal poetries, ALCHERINGA will not be a scholarly “journal of ethnopoetics” so much as a place where tribal poetry can appear in English translation & can act (in the oldest & newest of poetic traditions) to change men’s minds & lives. While its sources will be different from other poetry magazines, it will be aiming at the startling & revelatory presentation that has been common to our avant gardes. Along the way we hope

- by exploring the full range of man’s poetries, to enlarge our understanding of what a poem may be

- to provide a ground for experiments in the translation of tribal/oral poetry & a forum to discuss the possibilities & problems of translation from widely divergent cultures

- to encourage poets to participate actively in the translation of tribal/oral poetry

- to encourage ethnologists & linguists to do work increasingly ignored by academic publications in their fields, namely to present the tribal poetries as values in themselves rather than as ethnographic data

- to be a vanguard for the initiation of cooperative projects along these lines between poets, ethnologists, songmen, & others

- to return to complex/“primitive” systems of poetry as (intermedia) performance, etc., & to explore ways of presenting these in translation

- to emphasize by example & commentary the relevance of tribal poetry to where we are today: thus, in Gary Snyder’s words, “to master the archaic & the primitive as models of basic nature-related cultures ... knowing that we are the first human beings in history to have all of man’s culture available to our study, & being free enough of the weight of traditional cultures to seek out a larger identity”

- to assist the free development of ethnic self-awareness among young Indians & others so concerned, by encouraging a knowledgeable, loving respect among them & all people for the world’s tribal past & present

- to combat cultural genocide in all its manifestations.
PRELIMINARIES

ALCHERINGA . . . “dream time” of the Arunta . . . “The Eternal Dream Time” . . . (or) “The Dreaming” . . . of a sacred heroic time long long ago when man & nature came to be . . . a kind of narrative of things that once happened; a kind of charter of things that still happen; & a kind of logos or principle of order transcending everything significant . . . the act of dreaming, as reality & symbol, (by which) . . . the artist is inspired to produce a new song . . . (by which) the mind makes contact with whatever mystery it is that connects The Dreaming & the Here-&-Now.

—W.E.H. Stanner, “The Dreaming”

what the informant told Franz Boas in 1920 (Keresan)

long ago her mother
had to sing this song and so
she had to grind along with it
the corn people have a song too
it is very good
I refuse to tell it

—Armand Schwerner

The ancient Poets animated all sensible objects with Gods or Geniuses, calling them by the names & adorning them with the properties of woods, rivers, mountains, lakes, cities, nations, & whatever their enlarged & numerous senses could perceive.

And particularly they studied the genius of each city & country, placing it under its mental deity;

Til a system was formed, which some took advantage of, & enslaved the vulgar by attempting to realize or abstract the mental deities from their objects: thus began Priesthood;

Choosing forms of worship from poetic tales.

And at length they pronounc’d that the Gods had order’d such things.

Thus men forgot that All deities reside in the human breast.

—W. Blake (1790)

Time flows past the permanent central position . . . they live at a place called noon, at the center of the world, the only place where space & time intersect.

—Stanley Diamond, from “Anaguta Cosmography” (Nigeria)

O, they were hot for the world they lived in, these Maya, hot to get it down the way it was—the way it is, my fellow citizens.

—Charles Olson

Sioux Vision Event

Go to a mountain-top & cry for a vision.
Magic Words (Eskimo)

In the very earliest time,
when both people and animals lived on earth,
a person could become an animal if he wanted to
and an animal could become a human being.
Sometimes they were people
and sometimes animals
and there was no difference.
All spoke the same language.
That was the time when words were like magic.
The human mind had mysterious powers.
A word spoken by chance
might have strange consequences.
It would suddenly come alive
and what people wanted to happen could happen—
all you had to do was say it.
Nobody could explain this:
That's the way it was.

(English version by Edward Field)

It was a vast old religion, greater than anything we know: more starkly & nakedly religious . . . For the whole life-effort of man was to get his life into contact with the elemental life of the cosmos, mountain-life, cloud-life, thunder-life, air-life, earth-life, sun-life. To come into immediate felt contact, & so derive energy, power, & a dark sort of joy. This effort into sheer naked contact, without an intermediary or mediator, is the root meaning of religion, & at the sacred races, the runners hurled themselves in a terrible cumulative effort, through the air, to come at last into naked contact with the very life of the air, which is the life of the clouds, & so of the rain.

—D.H. Lawrence

A Wintu Indian Statement on the Ecological Crisis

The White people never cared for land or deer or bear. When we Indians kill meat, we eat it all up. When we dig roots we make little holes. When we build houses, we make little holes. When we burn grass for grasshoppers, we don't ruin things. We shake down acorns & pinenuts. We don't chop down the trees. We only use dead wood. But the White people plow up the ground, pull up the trees, kill everything. The tree says, 'Don't. I am sore. Don't hurt me.' But they chop it down & cut it up. The spirit of the land hates them. They blast out trees & stir it up to its depths. They saw up the trees. That hurts them. The Indians never hurt anything, but the White people destroy all. They blast rocks & scatter them on the ground. The rock says, 'Don't! You are hurting me.' But the White people pay no attention. When the Indians use rocks, they take little round ones for their cooking . . . How can the spirit of the earth like the White man? . . . Everywhere the White man has touched it, it is sore.

—Old woman speaking to Dorothy Lee "in prophetic vein"
Zuni Cryptogram

teyalanne / ground
tek’ïnayé / the ground is wet
te’ananne / footprint
teyacchinne / cultivated field
teky’appowanne / hill
tewutso’ya / the weather is clear
tene’ anaye / a strong wind is blowing
tets’ënaye / the weather is cold
tehts’ïnaye / it is winter
telakwayi / spring

tehya / it is valuable
telhasshinanne / shrine
teshkwine / taboo
tewusu / sacred
tewusukk’ya / pray
tenanne / song
tephanne / pottery drum
telapnanne / story
tesshukw’a / yesterday
tehi’k’a / night is coming
tewani / tomorrow
tewankwin / eastward
teyaye / living
tek’ohannanne / daylight
tek’ohannan aaho’i / daylight people (mankind)

The American Indian is the vengeful ghost lurking in the back of the troubled American mind. Which is why we lash out with such ferocity & passion, so muddied a heart, at the black-haired young peasants & soldiers who are the “Viet Cong.” That ghost will claim the next generation as its own. When this has happened, citizens of the USA will at last begin to be Americans, truly at home on the continent, in love with their land. The chorus of a Cheyenne Indian Ghost Dance song— “hi-niswa’vita’ki’ni” — “We shall live again.”

———Gary Snyder

old Moke, if you could
see these mountains all
around, if the two of us
could laugh with the pines,
if a dark Pygmy and a
dark Indian could share
the tears of a rainbow
then it would be as when
cloud bursts flood the forest
of the Ituri and scatter
the happiness of the BaMbuti
to everyone everywhere
and all who will accept
this universal prayer

———Harold Littlebird, Pueblo Indian

He who loses his dreaming is lost.

———Australian Aborigine
Ezra Pound

ON ARRIVING AND NOT ARRIVING

Culture is not due to forgetfulness. Culture starts when you can DO the thing without strain. The violonist, agonizing over the tone, has not arrived. The violonist lost in the melodic line or rather concentrated effortlessly on reproduction of it has arrived.

There is no faking in the arts. No artist can present what he hasn’t got. Edgar Wallace triumphed by modesty. One can learn from that if from nothing else in his craft.


THE LIONESS WARNS HER CUBS

Ware of one with sharp weapons
Who carries a tiger-tail tuft
Ware of one who comes with white dogs,
O son of the shorthaired lioness,
Thou my child with short ears,
Son of the lion, that I feed on raw meat,
Carnivore,
Son of the lioness whose nostrils are red with bloody-booty,
Thou with the bloodred nostrils,
Son of the lioness who drinkest swampwater,
Water-lapper my son.

R. Prietze,
Haussa Sprichwoerte und Lieder, 1904

PRAISE SONG OF THE BUCK-HARE

I am the buck-hare, I am,
The shore is my playground
Green underwood is my feeding.
I am the buck-hare, I am,
What's that damn man got wrong with him?
Skin with no hair on, that's his trouble.

I am the buck-hare, I am,
Mountaintop is my playing field
Red heather my feeding.

I am the buck-hare, I am,
What's wrong with that fellow there with his eye on a girl?
I say, is his face red!

I am the buck-hare, I am,
Got my eyes out ahead
You don't lose me on a dark night, you don't.

I am the buck-hare, I am,
What's wrong with that bloke with a poor coat?
Lice, that's what he's got, fair crawlin' he is.

I am the buck-hare, I am,
I got buck teeth.
Buck-hare never gets thin.

I am the BUCK-HARE, I am,
What's that fool got the matter with him?
Can't find the road! Ain't got no road he CAN find.

I am the buck-hare, I am,
I got my wood-road,
I got my form.

I am the buck-hare, I am,
What ails that fool man anyhow?
Got a brain, won't let him set quiet.

I am the buck-hare, I am,
I live in the big plain,
There's where I got my corral.

I am the buck-hare, I said so.
What's wrong with that loafer?
He's been to sleep in a bad place, he has.
I am the buck-hare,
I live in the bush, I do,
That's my road over yonder.

I am the buck-hare, I said so,
Women that don't get up in the morning,
I know how they look by the chimney.

I am the buck-hare, I said it,
I can tell any dumb loafer
Lying along by the hedge there.

I am the buck-hare,
Women don’t love their men?
I can tell by what their cows look like.

Von Sydow gives note to effect that this is in Wm. Radloff's Proben der Volksliteratur, 1866. Teleuten, Sibirien.

ALCHERINGA
is planning for future issues:

— Nathaniel Tarn's English version of Rabinal-Achi, a surviving pre-Conquest Mayan play
— An insert recording of Jerome Rothenberg’s total translations of Navajo Horse-Songs, arranged for four voices
— Abuse Poetry of the Ewe, translated by Kofi Awoonor
— Further Zuni narrative poetry, translated by Dennis Tedlock
— Gary Snyder’s workings from Mohave & Maidu sources
— Kenneth Hale’s Walbiri gatherings from Australia
— Maps of the Dreamtime

plus contributions by Dell Hymes, Armand Schwerner, W.S. Merwin, Ulli Beier, Simon Ortiz, Stephen Berg, David P. McAllester, Stanley Diamond, others;
articles & reviews, reconsiderations of earlier translations, editorial exchanges;
poems, picture-poems, sound-poems, happenings, etc.
Jerome Rothenberg's collaborative translation, with Richard Johnny John, of traditional Seneca poetry: these the slow stately opening songs of the hajaswas or ceremonial leader for the cycle of curing & renewal called I'dos in Seneca—either 'Shaking the Pumpkin' or 'The Society of the Mystic Animals' in English. Seneca poetry, when it uses words at all, works in sets of short songs, minimal realizations colliding with each other in marvelous ways, a very light, very open play-of-the-mind, the words set out in clear relief against the ground of the ('meaningless') refrain. The attempt in the present version is to provide paginal equivalents for all such elements, i.e. to translate the poems onto the page, as with 'concrete' or other types of minimal poetry, letting the words of the (oral) original program the translation. The full sequence to appear soon in J.R.'s anthology of Indian poetry, Shaking the Pumpkin (Doubleday & Co.), the whole a sequel to Technicians of the Sacred.

From SHAKING THE PUMPKIN: SONGS & OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE SOCIETY OF THE MYSTIC ANIMALS: The Opening Songs

The animals are coming by

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{T} & \quad \text{H E H E H H E H H E H} \\
\text{he} & \quad \text{H E H E H H E H} \\
\text{The animals are coming by} & \quad \text{H E H U H H E H} \\
\text{ni} & \quad \text{H E H E H H E H} \\
\text{mi} & \quad \text{H E H E H H E H} \\
\text{als} & \quad \text{H E H E H H E H}
\end{align*}
\]
The doings were beginning

The doings were begun
A she-loon too soon

H A H A H H A H
H A H A H H A H
H A H U H H A H
H A H A H H A H
H A H A H H A H
She drifts on the water

He drifts on her water
Caw caw the crow comes at us
Caw caw the crow who's here
... the last three songs more rapidly

S H E W A S
C shesna R
A washnm U
M rrreie N
E rruwni N
I nniann T
N nngsgH N
H assraI G
I hecrsG A
G amersH S
H inHrhH S
H IGHreE H
E HEYucY E
Y HEYHEY Y

THE SONGS
I thetri B
S sonher E
T gsbePn G
H egisUa I
E nheoMn N
I rePnPe H
R UMPgKH E
N KINsII R
A SisbNG E
M theeSH P
E irngiH U
H ameisE M
I HIGntE P
G HHEhhe K
H EEYeey I
H EEYeey N
NOTES ON A NEW TRANSLATION OF THE POPOL VUH

It is my conviction that the Popol Vuh is primarily a work of literature, and that it cannot be properly read apart from the literary form in which it is expressed. That this form is general to Middle America (and even beyond) and that it is common to Quiche discourse, ancient and modern, does not diminish its importance. The Popol Vuh is in poetry, and cannot be accurately understood in prose. It is entirely composed in parallelistic (i.e., semantic) couplets (see Garibay K., 1953).

When I had read enough Quiche texts to begin to comprehend the fundamental importance of this feature in them, it seemed to me that a poetic translation of the Popol Vuh might be very helpful in clarifying its ambiguities. The various difficulties of the text leave the translator with an embarrassment of riches: often a dozen or more quite disparate meanings may legitimately be proposed for a particular monosyllabic root. Knowledge that the author was writing in couplets may diminish this near-hopeless ambiguity by half or even more. The present translation, therefore, has the double object of demonstrating the importance of this mechanism for comprehension of Middle American Indian literature and of presenting in improved translation what is probably the most splendid literary monument of aboriginal America.

It is my conviction that the stylistic subtleties of the Popol Vuh have eluded all its translators, including me. The language is varied, but it is often telegraphically terse, evoking rather than expressing the rich symbolism of Quiche religion. The nuances of Quiche grammar are demonstrably exploited for effect within this sparse and repetitious form, and do produce a variety of effects—comic, elegant, discursive, dull. I have tried to reflect these in English within the bounds of a tight and complete translation—at least where I think I understand them. There are some elements of Quiche style, however, which are very difficult to reproduce in English.

The Quiche sentence leans forward. Beginning with a collection of orienting adverbial particles, it may proceed with an indefinite number of subtly joined verbal clauses to the eventual noun or noun clauses that finally reveal who or what is doing all this carrying on. In something of the sense that German saves verbs for a final triumphant closure to a thought, Quiche saves nouns. There are markers to show that the noun is coming. Its number, for example, may be revealed early, and other attributes may be thrown in along the way, all contributing to the forward movement towards the person or object who would be in English the antecedent! The difficulties this poses for the translator are, I think, obvious and will be found throughout the present translation.

It is congruent with this syntax that Quiche is, by English standards, excessively fond of passive constructions. A verbal form early in the phrase of the type “its having been thought . . .” may be separated by several lines of poetry from the referent of the pronoun, if there is one. And then it may turn out that the Quiche interest was in these abstract states of being and their sequence, and the final element may not provide a proper subject at all. It may even become apparent that there was no verb there, since both active and passive verbal forms are readily used as nouns in Quiche. The Latin ablative absolute has something of the feel of these Quiche locutions. In order to preserve the poetry of the Popol Vuh, I have had to sacrifice throughout the preferred order of the English sentence. The few cases in which I have resorted to inverting the Quiche order are noted.

The Quiche are very much attuned to the form of discourse used in the Popol Vuh. They speak to each other, at least most of the time, in the same poetic form. If one asks a Quiche-speaker the translation of a Spanish word, he will almost invariably answer with two Quiche synonyms. (The Anonymous Franciscan Dictionary of early colonial Quiche is almost entirely composed of such couplet entries!) Words matter, and formal discourse matters even more. Hence direct discourse in the Popol Vuh is usually formally announced twice: at its outset and at its close. The effect is like that of saying “quote . . . unquote.” Furthermore, framing of internal quotes is
common, and once or twice there is a quote within a quote within a quote. The clarity of these formalisms is not helped by the fact that one is additionally expected to emphasize his own speech by saying "this is my word: ... is what I say." The rigid formalism of Quiche expression is not always easy to convey in English, where such phrases sound awkward and redundant rather than elegant and fixed. I have settled on italics to try to keep internal quotes straight.

The fact that the fundamental poetic form of the Popol Vuh is semantic makes it relatively easy to produce the poetic effect in translation, as indeed has been remarked by most of the better translators. A close rendering of the Quiche inevitably gives rise to semantic couplets, whether they are printed as poetry or as prose. In no case, so far as I can determine, does the Quiche text embellish this relatively primitive poetic device with rhyme, syllabification or meter, not even when it is quoting songs. The form itself, however, tends to produce a kind of "keying," in which two successive lines may be quite diverse but must share key words which are closely linked in meaning. Many of these are traditional pairs: sun-moon, day-light, deer-bird, black-white. Sometimes the coupling is opaque in English, however clear it may be in Quiche, as in white-laugh. ("White" also means to throw white bone dice; "laugh" also means to play ball.) Occasionally there is a pun key which cannot be produced in English at all (and is therefore given in the notes). Always the underlying coupleings are stronger and more evocative in Quiche than can be rendered in any foreign language, even though much of ancient Quiche remains obscure to us.

The fact that the poetic scansion is semantic may make it easier to translate once it is understood, but it makes it impossible to scan until it is translated. In the face of this circularity, I am quite uncertain at many points about both the scansion and the translation. Often I have found that a rendering which yielded only a weak couplet could on close study be re-read as a stronger couplet which simultaneously clarified an otherwise obscure passage. I am certain that my reading does not exhaust either the poetry or the sense that is expressed, and that the Popol Vuh contains more of both beauty and meaning than I have found in it.

It would be inappropriate to call the Popol Vuh the epic of the Quiche. Although it belongs to a heroic (or near-heroic) type of literature, it is not the story of a hero: it is (and says it is) the story of a people, and the text is bracketed by opening and closing lines declaring and affirming that intent. In the language and concepts available to him, the author has set down everything that "Quiche" means in its full mythic, historic, and ethnic ambiguity, from the origin of the world to the 16th century. The work is a compendium of Quiche myths, legends, and history. It is a treasury of ethnographic information. But it is first and most surprisingly a coherent literary work, with order, scope, and unity equally missing from the episodic annals of the Cakchiquels and the sybilline prophecies of Yucatan.

The theme of the Popol Vuh is the greatness of Quiche: the people, the place, and the religious mysteries which were all called by that name. It is a tragic theme, but its treatment is not tragic: it is Mayan. The rise and fall of Quiche glory is placed in the cosmic cycling of all creation, and when it is ended, like the cycles of Mayan time, it stops. In cyclic time, of course, every end is a beginning. But the end of the glory of Quiche is not self-renewing. The author has treated his theme as though Quiche and its glory were the central feature of the epoch of which there is human knowledge. The next cycle will be something else, perhaps the epoch suggested by the closing line of the work, something "called Holy Cross."

The cycle of "what is called Quiche" is made up of subcycles—the four creations of the world. They are given unequal treatment. The first cycle ends at line 820 with the fall of the purvers carved of wood who did not learn to worship the gods. The second ends at line 1674 with the destruction of 7 Parrot and his sons for their pride. The third terminates at line 4708 when the hero twins, Hunter and Jaguar Deer, are transformed into the Sun and Moon. Almost half of the text deals with the fourth creation, from the First Fathers to the present time. Presiding over all four is the Heart of Heaven and Earth, author and parent of creation, to whom the men of the fourth creation learn to pray under a variety of names.
Excerpts from Munro S. Edmonson’s breakthrough translation of the Popol Vuh, a first attempt to reconstruct the verse structure behind the surviving “prose” manuscripts. These sections & the notes on the preceding pages are reproduced from nearly final page proofs of The Book of Counsel: The Popol Vuh of the Quiche Maya of Guatemala, Publication 35 of the Middle American Research Institute of Tulane University, by permission of the author & publishers.

THE TRIALS AND DEATH OF ONE AND SEVEN HUNTER

XVII

And so then messengers came from 1 Death
And 7 Death.
“Go, oh counsellor warriors,
Go and call
1 Hunter
And 7 Hunter.
Tell them when you reach them
The lords told you they are to come,
Hither then they must come to play with us
That we may enjoy ourselves with them.
Truly we are amazed at them,
And that’s why they should come, the lords say.
They should also bring here their implements:
Their rings,
Their gloves are to come,
And also their ball,
The lords say,
Tell them when you get there,”
The messengers were told.
And their messengers were the Owls:
Knife Owl
1 Leg Owl,
Parrot Owl,
Skull Owl,
As they were called,
The messengers of Hell.
For there was Knife Owl like a knife,
Just sharp.
And there was 1 Leg Owl with just one leg.
He had wings.

XVII

Kate q’ut ki petik zamahel r umal Hun Kame,
Vuqub Kame.
“K ix beek ix r ah pop achih
He’i taqa
Ri Hun Hun Ah Pu,
Vuqub Hun Ah Pu.
K ix ch’a ta k ix opan k uq,
K e pet ok, k e ch’a ’ahavab ch iv ech,
Varal tah k e’ ul chaaha vi q uq
Chi qa k’azatah ta qa vach k uq
1880
Qitsik ka qa mayihah k’i chi
Kehe ta q’ut k e’ pe vi, k e ch’a ’ahavab.
Chi ki k’am q’u’ ulok ri ki choqonizan
Ki bate
Ki pach q’ab chi pe
Nay puch ri ki kiq’
K e ch’a ’ahavab,
K ix ch’a ta k ix opon ok,”
X e’ uch’axik ri zamahel.
Are q’ut ki zamahel, ri tukur:
1890
Ch’abi Tukur,
Hu r Aqan Tukur,
Kaqix Tukur,
Holom Tukur
K e’ uch’axik
U zamahel Xibalba.*
Are ri Ch’abi Tukur kehe ri ch’ab
Xa kopokik.
Are q’u ri Hu r Aqan Tukur xa hun r aqan.
Q’o ’u xik’.

1890
And there was Parrot Owl with red skin. He had wings.
And there was also Skull Owl. He had nothing but a skull.
He had no legs,
But he did have wings.
The four of them were the messengers, Counsellor warriors in rank.
So they left there then,
From Hell,
And immediately they arrived
And they alighted
On the ball court
Where were playing
1 Hunter
And 7 Hunter,
In the ball court Honor,
Worship,
Grab,
Hold, as it is called.
And so the Owls fluttered down
On the ball court.
And then they lied their words,
Although they did recount the words
Of 1 Death
And 7 Death,
Bile Maker,
Bone Staff,
Skull Staff,
Flying Noose,
Blood Chief,
Filth Maker,
Wound Maker,
Hawk,
And Snare,
The names of all the lords
Whose words were lied by the Owls.
It was not really
What was said by the lords
1 Death
And 7 Death.
“It is true though,”
They said,
“And we are to be your companions.
Bring along all your gaming things,
The lords say.”
“Very well,
You just try to wait for us now,
   While we take leave of our mother," they said then,
And they went to their house
   And they spoke to their mother,
Their father having already died.
   "We are going then, oh our mothers,
But will return a little later.
There has come
The lord’s messenger
   To take us.
Have them come on, he says then.
   They said to send us.
This ball of ours will stay behind,” they said then,
   So they went to tie it up accordingly at the top of
the house.
   “When we get back
   We’ll play with it again.”
“You just play along on the flute,
   And just sing on.
Continue painting,
   Continue carving.
Keep the house warm,
   And keep warm the heart of your
grandmother,”
They told 1 Monkey
   And 1 Howler as they took their leave.
Bitterly then wept their mother,
   Xmucane.
“We must go, but we’re not going to die.
   Don’t grieve,” they said as they left,
1 Hunter
   And 7 Hunter.

XVIII

And so they left, 1 Hunter
   And 7 Hunter.
They took their road from the messengers,
   And so they went down the road to Hell.
The edge of the cliff was very steep,
   But they went down.
And then they went further along
   To the edge of different river canyons,
Trembling Canyon
   And Narrow Canyon were their names.
They passed there,
   And then they passed
Into the quite different river Scorpion.
   The scorpions were countless.

K oh iv ooyeb na
   Oh na qa pixabah kan na qa chuch,” x e
   ch’a q’ut
X e be q’ut chi k ochoch
   X e ch’a q’ut chi r e ki chuch
(X kaminak ok ki qahav)
   “H o na, ix qa chuch,”
Xa ’et k ulik
   “Mi x ul
U zamahel ahav
   Qamol q e
K e pet ok, ka ch’a q’ut
   K e ch’a taqol q e
X chi kanah q’u kan va qa kiq’,” x e ch’a q’ut
   Kate x be ki xima kan ok p u vi haa.

“K oh ul na
   Chi qa chokonizah chik
Xa k ix zuvan ok
   Xa pu k ix bixan ok
K ix tz’iban ok
   K ix k’oton ok
Chi meq’oh q ochoch
   Chi meq’oh puch u k’ux iv atit,”
X e’ uch’ax q’ut Hun Baatz’,
   Hun Ch’oven ta x e pixabaxik.
Q’uz q’uz q’ut ch oq’ ki chuch,
   X(m)ucane.
   “H o na, ma ha bi k oh kamik.
M ix bizonik,” x e ch’a ta x e beek
Hun Hun Ah Pu,
   Vuqub Hun Ah Pu.

XVIII

Kate puch ta x e beek Hun Hun Ah Pu,
   Vuqub Hun Ah Pu.
X qam ki be k umal ri zamahel
   Ta x e qah q’ut p u beal Xibalba.
Xuluxuh u chi kumuk
   X e’ qah q’ut.
Ta x e’ el chi q’u apon ok
   Ch u chi hal ha Zivanub,
Nu Zivan
   Qul q’u Zivan u bi.
X e’ iq’ov vi
   X e’ iq’ov chi q’ut
Ch u pan hal hal ha Zimah.
   Ma vi ’ahilan zimah.
They passed along
And were not stung.
Then they came to a river,
To Blood River.
They passed there
Without drinking.
They came to a river,
And there was nothing but pus in the river,
But they were undaunted
And just passed by it too.
Then they came at last to the four crossroads,
And there they were to be defeated at the four
crossroads:
One red road,
And one black road,
The white road was one,
And one yellow road,
Four roads.
And then the black road spoke,
"I am the one you should take;
I am the lord's road," said the road.
And there they were to be defeated,
For they took the road to Hell.
And then they arrived at the council of the lords of
Hell,
And there they were defeated,
For the first of the seated figures was only a puppet,
Only carved of wood, decorated by those of Hell.
And so he was the first one they greeted,
"Hail, 1 Death," they said to the puppet.
"Hail, 7 Death," they repeated to the carved wood.
And they did not win out,
For then the lords of Hell burst into laughter.
All the lords just roared on with laughter.
Because they had won completely;
In their hearts they had defeated
1 Hunter
And 7 Hunter.
They went on laughing,
Until at last they spoke again,
1 Death
And 7 Death,
"Very well,
You have come.
Tomorrow take up (the face of) your rings
And your gloves," they were told then.

X e'iq'o vi
Ma vi x e tokotahik.
Ta x e' opon chi q'ut chi 'a,
Chi Kiq'i 'A.
X e'iq'ov chiri
Ma vi x k uq'ah.
X e' opon chi 'a,
Ut ukel puh chi 'a,
Ma vi x e ch'akatahik
Xa vi x e'iq'ov chik.
Ta x e' opon chi q'ut pa kahib xalakat be,
Q'a chiri q'ut x e ch'akatah vi pa kahib xalakat be:

Hun kaqa be,
Hun q'ut q'eqa be,
Zaqi be hun,
Hun q'ut q'ana be.
Kahib be.
Are q'ut x e ch'av ri q'eqa be,
"In k in i qamo.
In u be 'ahay," x e ch'av ri be.
Chiri q'ut x e ch'akatah vi.
Are x ki taqeh ri be Xibalba.
Ta x e' opon q'ut pa ki popobal r ahaval Xibalba,

X e' ch'akatah vi q'ut chiri.
Are nabe kubulel ri xa poy,
Xa 'aham chee, ka vutalik k umal Xibalba.
Are q'ut nabe x ki q'ihila,
"Q'ala, Hun Kame," x e ch'a chi r e ri poy.
"Q'ala, Vuqub Kame," x e ch'a chik chi r e ri 'aham chee,
Ma q'u xe ch'avovik.
Kate q'ut xe humuhub r ahaval Xibalba chi tze.
Xa k e humin chik chi thz k onohel ahavab,
R umal x e ch'akomahik,
Chi ki k'ux x ki ch'ak
Ri Hun Hun Ah Pu,
Vuqub Hun Ah Pu.
X e'tzeen na
Kate q'u xe ch'av chik

2030

Hun Kame,
Vuqub Kame,
"Utz ba la,
Mi x ix ulik.
Chuveq chi qaza 'u vach i bate,
I pach q'ab," x e' uch'ax q'ut.
“Sit down then on our bench,” they were told.
  But the bench they were given was nothing but a sizzling hot rock,
And they burned themselves on the bench.
  They really whirled up again over the bench.
They didn’t just rise up;
  They really rather shot up.
They burned their seats.
  And so those of Hell laughed again.
They began to gush with laughter.
  The serpent of laughter began multiplying in their hearts.
They rocked back;
  They rolled with laughter,
All of The lords of Hell.
“Just go into the house,
  And someone will come and give you then Your torch,
Your cigars
In your bedroom,”
  They were told then.
And so they reached the House of Darkness.
  The interior in the house was nothing but darkness.

While those of Hell took counsel together.
  “We shall just sacrifice them tomorrow.
Only the sooner it is done,
  The sooner they’ll die,
For the sake of our gaming things,
  Of our ball game things.”
So said the people of Hell
To one another.
  For this ball of theirs Was just a round blade.
White Knife was the name of the ball,
  The ball of Hell.
Their ball was just polished,
  But it was packed with shattered bones,
Which were the surface
  Of their ball in Hell.
So 1 Hunter then went,
  And 7 Hunter, into the house of Darkness.
Then someone came and gave them their torch,
  Just one lighted brand in fact,
Came from 1 Death
  And 7 Death,
And their cigars for each of them,  
Only already lit,  
Came from the lords  
When they came to give them  
To 1 Hunter  
And 7 Hunter.  
They sat crouched there  
In the darkness  
When their torchbearer arrived  
With their cigars.  
The torch gleamed brightly  
When it came in there,  
So that they burned their torches  
And each of their cigars.  
"Indeed they are to come to give them back in the morning.  
They are not to be finished,  
But just as they are they should come and collect them.  
The lords say to you,"  
They were told,  
And they arranged to win out.  
They finished the torches,  
And they finished the cigars they had come to give them.  
For many are the trials of Hell,  
Whole collections of trials.  
The first one is the House of Darkness,  
Entirely dark inside.  
And the second is called Shivering House,  
Extremely cold inside,  
Quite unbearable,  
Quite intolerable,  
With frightful cold  
Coming into it.  
And the third is called Jaguar House.  
It has nothing but jaguars in it.  
They are all tangled up;  
They are all squeezed together in a rage.  
They are furious.  
Captive jaguars go in the house.  
Bat House is the name of the fourth trial.  
There are only bats inside the house.  
They start shrieking and shrieking;  
They start uttering screams.  
They flutter through the house,  
The captive bats.  
Nothing  
Comes back out.
And the fifth is called Knife House.
It has nothing but knives in it,
Pure rows and rows
Of knife blades
That clatter around,
That clash together in the house there.
Many indeed are the trials of Hell,
But they didn’t go in,
1 Hunter
And 7 Hunter.
There have just been named above
The names of the houses of trial.
Then they went in, 1 Hunter
And 7 Hunter
Before 1 Death
And 7 Death.
"Where is my tobacco?
Where are my torches
They came and gave you
Last night?” they were asked.
“We finished them,
Oh Lord.”
“Very well,
Now then
Your day is done;
You shall die.
You will be lost,
And we shall break you.
Here your faces shall be hidden then;
You shall be sacrificed,”
Said 1 Death
And 7 Death.
And then they were sacrificed
And they were buried
At Dusty Court, as it is called,
They were buried then.
1 Hunter’s head was cut off.
Only his body was buried with his younger brother’s.
“Put that head of his in the tree
That grows by the road,”
Said 1 Death then,
And 7 Death.
And so his head was taken and put in the tree,
And then the tree bore fruit.
It had no fruit
Until the head of 1 Hunter had come to be put in
the tree.

R oo ch i q’ut Chayim Haa, u bi,
U tukel cha q’o ch u pam.
Zaq leloh
2130
R e chi cha
2130
Chi tzininik
Chi yohohik chiri pa haa.
K’i nabek u tihobal Xibalba,
Ma q’u x e’ ok
Ri Hun Hun Ah Pu,
Vuqub Hun Ah Pu ch u pam.
2130
Xa, u biixik apon ok
U bi tihobal haa.
Ta x e’ ok apon ok Hun Hun Ah Pu,
2140
Vuqub Hun Ah Pu
Ch u vach Hun Kame,
Vuqub Kame.
“A pa q’o vi ri nu zik’?
A’on q’o vi ri nu chah,
X be ya ’ok ch iv ech
X q’eq?” u xuch’ax q’ut.
“X qa k’izo,
At ahav.”
“Utz ba la,
2150
Vakamik ba la
X k’iz i q’ilh;
K ix kamik.
X ki zachik,
X ki qa q’up puch.
Varal x ch iv evah vi ’i vach;
K ix puzik,”
X ch’a Hun Kame,
Vuqub Kame.
Ta x e puz q’ut,
2160
X e muq q’ut.
Chi Puqubal Chaah u bi
X e muq vi.
X q’at u holom ri Hun Hun Ah Pu.
Xa, u nimal x muqik r uq ri, u ch’ak’.

“Chi ya ri, u holom, xol chee
Ri tikit pa be,”
X ch’a q’ut Hun Kame,
Vuqub Kame.
Ta x be q’u ya ’ok u holom xol chee,
2170
Ta x vachin q’u ri chee.
Ma ha bi, u vach.
Ma ha ch ok o ri, u holom ri Hun Hun Ah Pu
ch u xol chee.
And so it is that what we call a gourd tree today
Is the head of I Hunter, it is said.
And so I Death
And 7 Death marvelled
At the fruit of the tree.
The round fruit was everywhere,
And it was not clear
Where I Hunter’s head was.
It looked just exactly
Like the gourd fruit.
And all of Hell saw it
When they came to look,
And great did the essence of the tree
Become in their hearts,
Because of what it had suddenly done
When I Hunter’s head came to be in it.
And those of Hell said
To each other,
“Nobody must cut its fruit,
And nobody should even go there right under the tree,”
They said, sentencing themselves,
And all of Hell restrained themselves.
And it was not clear which was I Hunter’s head.
It was already identical with the fruit of the tree.
Its name became Gourd Tree,
And it was widely described.

Sahagún, Bernardino de
1938 Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España.
Editorial Pedro Robredo. Mexico.

And so it is that what we call a gourd tree today
Is the head of I Hunter, it is said.
And so 7 Death marvelled
At the fruit of the tree.
The round fruit was everywhere,
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Where I Hunter’s head was.
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And all of Hell restrained themselves.
And it was not clear which was I Hunter’s head.
It was already identical with the fruit of the tree.
Its name became Gourd Tree,
And it was widely described.

Xa hunam chik u vach
R uq u vach tzima.
K u r ilo r onohel Xibalba
Ta ch ul ki kayih.
Nim u q’oheyik ri chee
X u x chi k’ux
R umal hu zu x u banik
Ta x ok u holom Hun Hun Ah Pu ch u xol.
X e ch’a q’u r i Xibalba
Chi k’ibil k’ib,
“Ma q’o ma ch’upuvik ri, u vach
Ma q’o nay pu ma ‘ok apan ok ch u xe chee,”

X e ch’a x ki q’atah k’ib
X ki q’il k’ib Xibalba k onohel.
Ma q’u q’alah chiri, u holom Hun Hun Ah Pu.
Xa hunamat chik r uq u vach chee.
Ri tzima, u bi x uzik
Nim q’ut u tzihoxik.

Right in the night an Owl car­
evined down,
In the middle of the night
“I’m planting!
I’m planting!
Bury him at the cross!
Bury him at the cross!” it said.
Father,
Forgive me.
Won’t you come?
What is this animal saying?

The particular owls in this passage of the Popol Vuh appear to be calendrical and perhaps directionally related.

SCHULTZE-JENA, LEONHARD S.

Sahagún’s text is of course mine. Most of his work is quoted from tracts written by Indians and indeed most if it scans in this fashion. The Owl is still terrifying to modern Quiches. A distraught Chichicastenango woman rushed to a diviner to report (Schultze-Jena, 1933, pp. 228-9):

x896. The Owl is a harbinger of death very generally among American Indians. Among the Aztec,
They said that he was the messenger of the god
Lord of the Place of Death,
Who came
And went from Hell.
That’s why they called him
“Courier from Somewhere”
Messenger of the god of Hell
And the goddess of Hell
Who went to call
Those he was sent for.

1896. The Owl is a harbinger of death very generally among American Indians. Among the Aztec,
They said that he was the messenger of the god
Lord of the Place of Death,
Who came
And went from Hell.
That’s why they called him
“Courier from Somewhere”
Messenger of the god of Hell
And the goddess of Hell
Who went to call
Those he was sent for.

(Teh poetic reading of Sahagún’s text is of course mine. Most of his work is quoted from tracts written by Indians and indeed most if it scans in this fashion.) The Owl is still terrifying to modern Quiches. A distraught ChichicastenANGO woman rushed to a diviner to report (Schultze-Jena, 1933, pp. 228-9):

There is no evidence that the Quiche smoked pipes. More than one species of tobacco was used and there were other plants smoked as well. These included a wild tobacco, meet k’ech ‘deer cotton’, apazote grass (zik’ ah ‘smoke cane’), and quz.

2054. Tobacco (Nicotiana spp.) was smoked in fat stubby cigars, to judge from the codices: There is no evidence that the Quiche smoked pipes. More than one species of tobacco was used and there were other plants smoked as well. These included a wild tobacco, meet k’ech ‘deer cotton’, apazote grass (zik’ ah ‘smoke cane’), and quz.
Serbo-Croatian "folk" poetry translated by poet Charles Simic & showing an imagination alternate to that which won out over the old mythological consciousness, etc. in Europe. Not so much the product of a diluted literacy as survival of a tribal / oral poetry: part of an ancient & worldwide tradition.

THE MESSAGE OF KING SAKIS AND THE LEGEND OF THE TWELVE DREAMS HE HAD IN ONE NIGHT

1
I saw a gold pillar from earth to heaven.

2
I saw a dark towel
hanging from heaven to earth.

3
I saw three boiling kettles:
one of grease, one of butter and one of water,
and grease boiled over into butter
and butter into water
but the water boiled all by itself.

4
I saw an old mare with a colt
and a black eagle pulling grass by its roots
and laying it down before the mare
while the colt neighs.

5
I saw a bitch lying on a dunghill
while the puppies were barking from her womb.

6
I saw many monks soaked in pitch
wailing because they can't get out.
I saw a beautiful horse
grazing with two heads—
one in front, one in the back.

I saw precious stones, pearls and royal wreaths
scattered over the whole kingdom,
but fire came down from heaven
and burnt everything into ashes.

I saw the rich giving workers
gold or silver or rice,
but when they came back to ask for their rewards
found that no one was left.

I saw evil-faced rocks descending
from the sky
and walking all over the earth.

I saw three virgins in a stubble field
bearing wreaths of sunlight on their heads
and sweet-smelling flowers in their hands.

I saw men with narrow eyes,
with hairs standing up and cruel fingernails,
and these were the devil’s own servants.
Versions by Jerome Rothenberg of traditional Bantu self-praises (really descriptive namings) in which the kings on installation sing the groupings of praise-names they've inherited & others newly made for the occasion. From literal translations by Jaques Chileya Chiwale in 'Royal Praises & Praise Names of the Lunda Kazembe of Northern Rhodesia,' Central Bantu Historical Texts III, pub. Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, Lusaka, 1962. Divisions of texts correspond to praises for particular rulers.

PRAISES OF THE BANTU KINGS (1-10)

1
I escort.
I go with the dead I don’t escort myself.
I was foolish someone else was wise.
I was a lion but had never stretched my claws.
I have no father & no mother.
I remained.

2
I was the rain’s child the rain comes from the east & drizzles.
I am a rain that drizzles.
I soaked some old men without hair.
I am the bed the dead will sleep on.
Sometimes I kept busy once I was looking for a place to cross.
I am the lion’s grandson.
I was angry later I roamed their forests.
I am your king.

3
I was a tree that lost its leaves.
Am I dead?
My skin is hard now only some twigs are left for burning.
I am the one my name is.
I wouldn’t let them bury me.
Tomorrow I will visit someone else.
I killed the king & all his children.
I killed the man who owned the island.
Once I killed his brother.

I love.
I overrun the country.
I am awarded lands & people.
I was scornful of their goats & sheep.

I was like a lion in the forest.
I had never been afraid of witchcraft.
I killed my victim then I ate his prick.

I am the rummager.
I dug out lily bulbs.
I searched for siftings of the corn.
I was hunger in a conquered land.

I am beautiful & light-skinned.
I am rain.
I carried the dead children like a stretcher.
I was the road through the cemetery no one could escape me.
I fought buffalos & strangers.
I despised their smalltown ways I only live among the great.

I was a marksman.
I was skilled.
I was the husband of my wife.
I wore my shirttails up.
I sported a goatee.
I dwellt among the crooked.
I was taught.
I straightened up.

FURTHER PRAISES  (1-5)

1
I was your king but suffered for it.
None of my kinsmen suffer more.
I was the "firewood" & injured those who held me.

2
I was like a mushroom that appears & rots.
I heard the graves rejoicing for their dead.

3
Someone called me The Maned Lion.
I was a river that buries the dead land.
Once I was a rotten branch a bat’s weight breaks.
I was sand covering the hills.

4
I was lightfooted.
I was heedless through nights of revolution.
I murdered on all sides of me.
I was like a drum I was a drum’s voice in the night but sleeping.
I watched the poor rise up against me.
I slaughtered the guards who crossed the lake.

5
I was the lustful woman.
I wanted a throne of husbands in my name.
Soon I would watch the world with many eyes.
Its kings look small to me.
CROW VERSIONS

1
I am making
   a wind come here

   it's coming

2
Child listen
   I am singing

   with my ear on the ground

   and we love you

3
Your way
   is turning bad

   and nobody but you
   is there
If all of me is still there
   when spring comes
   I'll make a hundred poles

   and put something on top
   sun

   for you
   you

right there I'll make a small sweat lodge
   it's cold
   I'll sprinkle charcoal

   at the end of it
   my death

   sun
   it will all be for you

   I want to be still there
   that's why I'll do it

   thank you
   I want to be alive

If my people multiply
   I'll make it for you

I'm saying
   may no one be sick
   so I make it

so

5

If there is someone above
   who knows what happens

   You

   today I have trouble
   give me something to make it
   not so

   if there is someone inside the earth
   who knows what happens

   I have trouble today
   give me something
   to make it not so

   whatever makes these things
   now just as I am
   I have enough

   give me just for me
   my death

   I have enough sadness
He was there
Old Man Coyote

Water all over the earth
no animals

He looked around
grabbed
and there was a little bird
a swallow
they say

He told it Go down
bring earth
it brought none

Then a crow
Go down
get some mud
it brought none

Wolf
you bring it
it brought none

Old Man said
Nothing I can do
grabbed a duck
then duck gone
it's gone

he said to himself it won't be back
he brought earth
made this world
here
then mud people
mud man
mud woman

at that time
with only that much mud
that was how

Afterward there was a baby
a boy
then he had a baby
a girl

so
as they say again and again
now there was
being born
more people
came to be
you get married
you make others

I am climbing
everywhere is
coming up
That shaman, owl man, dressed himself in shining yellow feathers once he had won.

Then he planned that the people should come together and dance.

So the cryer went to the hill and announced it, and called to all the people, Everyone in the country around heard him, and left quickly for Texcalapa, that place in the rocky country.

They all came, both nobles and the people, young men and young women, so many they could not be counted, there were so many.

And then he began his song.

He beats his drum, again and again.

They begin to join in the dance.

They leap into the air, they join hands weaving themselves together, whirling around, and there is great happiness.

The chant wavers up and breaks into the air, returns as an echo from the distant hills and sustains itself.

He sang it, he thought of it, and they answered him.

As he planned, they took it from his lips.

It began at dusk.
and went on halfway to midnight.
And when the dance
they all did together
reached its climax,
numbers of them hurled themselves from the cliffs
into the gullies.
    They all died and became stones.
Others, who were on the bridge over the canyon,
    the shaman broke it
under them
    though it was stone.
They fell in the rapids
    and became stones.
The Toltecs
    never understood what happened there,
they were drunk with it,
    blind,
and afterwards gathered many times there to dance.
Each time,
    there were more dead,
more had fallen from the heights
into the rubble,
    and the Toltecs destroyed themselves.
The first of the poems in this set is Edward Field's adaptation from Knud Rasmussen; the others are Armand Schwerner's translations from Poemes Eskimo by Paul Emile Victor, Pierre Seghers, Paris, 1958.

SOME ESKIMO SONGS ABOUT PEOPLE & ANIMALS

Travel Song

Leaving the white bear behind in his realm of sea-ice we set off for our winter hunting grounds on the inland bays. This is the route we took: First we made our way across dangerous Dead-man’s Gulch and then crossed High-in-the-sky Mountain. Circling Crooked Lake we followed the course of the river over the flatlands beyond where the sleds sank in deep snow up to the cross slats. It was sweaty work, I tell you, helping the dogs.

You think I even had a small fish or a piece of musk-ox meat to chew on? Don’t make me laugh: I didn’t have a shred on me. The journey went on and on. It was exhausting pushing the sled along the lakes around one island and over another, mushing, mushing. When we passed the island called Big Pot we spit at it just to do something different for a change.

Then after Stony Island we crossed over Water Sound at the narrows, touching on the two islands like crooked eyes that we call, naturally, Cross-Eyed Islands, and arrived at Seal Bay, where we camped, and settled down to a winter season of hunting at the breathing holes for the delicious small blubber beasts.

Such is our life, the life of hunters migrating with the season.
the old man's song, about his wife

husband and wife we loved each other then
we do now
there was a time
each found the other
beautiful

but a few days ago maybe yesterday
she saw in the black lake water
a sickening face
a wracked old woman face
wrinkled full of spots

I saw it she says
that shape in the water
the spirit of the water
wrinkled and spotted

and who'd seen that face before
wrinkled, full of spots?
wasn't it me
and isn't it me now
when I look at you?

spring fjord

I was out in my kayak
I was out at sea in it
I was paddling
very gently in the fjord Ammassivik
there was ice in the water
and on the water a petrel
turned his head this way that way
didn't see me paddling
Suddenly nothing but his tail
then nothing
He plunged but not for me:
huge head upon the water
great hairy seal
giant head with giant eyes, moustache
all shining and dripping
and the seal came gently toward me
Why didn't I harpoon him?
was I sorry for him?
was it the day, the spring day, the seal
playing in the sun
like me?
a woman's song, about men

first I lowered my head
and for a start I stared at the ground
for a second I couldn't say anything
but now that they're gone
I raise my head I look straight ahead I can answer
They say I stole a man
the husband of one of my aunts
they say I took him for a husband of my own
lies
fairy tales
slander
It was him, he
lay down next to me
But they're men
which is why they lie
that's the reason
and it's my hard luck

song of the old woman

all these heads these ears these eyes
around me
how long will the ears hear me?
and those eyes how long
will they look at me?
when these ears won't hear me any more
when these eyes turn aside from my eyes
I'll eat no more raw liver with fat
and those eyes won't see me any more
and my hair my hair will have disappeared

a man's song, about his daughter

That's
your son? the brother
of your first-born boy?
That's what they say to me
well I've got some work to do again
a little better this time
if it's a boy I want
I need a sharp prick
well I'll sharpen it up and do the job again
and then if they say that I messed up
it'll be just the one time that's what
Reprinted from Kovave: A Magazine of New Guinea Literature that Ulli Beier’s been editing along with poets & students around The University of Papua & New Guinea. The pidgin works in their first issue (including a one-act play by poet Leo Hannet) are only a small part of the gathering but show the possibilities of alternative forms of English, etc.

**PIDGIN SONGS**

Time me look so very young  
Allo people i wandim me  
And alogeter wandim talko too much longo me  
But time me ready for die  
No more man i save come longo me  
No more man i save wandim talko lelebiti longo me.

Mummy and my Daddy  
Come sit down within me  
Sorry and karai kasim me now  
Oh Mummy and my Daddy  
Come say good bye longo me  
Time bilongo me for die come kolosap now.

Ande alogeta leavim me  
No more man i save come longo me  
No good all i kasim sikinis i kasim me  
Oh my angel up in heaven  
Come down and pick up me  
No good all i makim foolu too much longo me.

_Collected by Leo Morgan_

Wiliwil blong mi i gutpela  
mikisim nau, na mi sin daun  
mi taitim strong, mi run long en  
long ologeta ples.

I gat onepela motoka  
i buggerup, na mi kin run  
williwil blong mi i gutpela  
i run more huriup.

I gat onepela titsaboi  
i skulim mi long ABC  
na hed blong mi i pas tumas  
bikos i gat kaskas.

_Collected by John Hakena_
NORTHERN PAIUTE NARRATIVES

How the Animals Chose Their Places

In the old time Coyote was boss.
Coyote said, “Bear, you better stay in the mountains.”
Deer said, “I want to go live in the mountains too!”
Whitefish said, “I want some water.”
Duck said he wanted water too.
Swan said, “Look at me, I am growing pretty now;
See, I am white all over.”
Bear pounded the ground.
“Ground,” he said, “Who is talking about me?”
Ground said, “Indian talks pretty mean,”
So Bear went out and bit him.
“I want to stay here in the rocks,”
Said Mountain Sheep.
“I like to feel the ground,” Rock said,
“I like to stay here in one place and not move.”
Sagebrush said he felt the same way.
This is Coyote’s story.

How Her Teeth Were Pulled

In the old time women’s cunts had teeth in them.
It was hard to be a man then
Watching your squaw squat down to dinner
Hearing the little rabbit bones crackle.
Whenever fucking was invented it died with the inventor.
If your woman said she felt like biting you didn’t take it lightly,
Maybe you just ran away to fight Numuzoho the Cannibal.

Coyote was the one who fixed things,
He fixed those toothy women!
One night he took Numuzoho’s lava pestle
To bed with a mean woman
And hammer hammer crunch crunch ayi ayi
All night long:
“Husband, I am glad,” she said
And all the rest is history.
To honor him we wear our necklaces of fangs.
THE RIDDLES (I)

Serbo-Croatian

Moon
The stallion leapt over the sea
Without wetting his hoofs.

Watermelon
I take an iron key
unlock the green city
and drive out black oxen
to pasture.

Anthill
Dead horse and his guts alive

Eyes
Two ravens sit on a single bone
without seeing each other.

Rooster
The whole world fell dead
until an old man with a bone flute
started playing
and brought everyone back to life.

Washboard
A wooden duck
in the stream barks.

Canteen
The fleabag passes through the village
and every hick kisses him in the ass.

Spark
Just off to meet God,
broke my leg.

Bull
I shake the tree here,
the fruit falls
beyond the hill.

Smoke
The priest went up the mountain
Wrapped in bacon-fat.
Translations by Ulli Beier & Bakare Gbadamosi of narratives whose recitation forms part of the complex system of divination (seed &/or nut castings, praise names for each figure formed, sacrificing, interplay of diviner & client, etc.) named for the god Ifa. The real understanding, William R. Bascom tells us, comes from such stories & myths—in which the god sometimes takes on the trickster role. But the diviner can only employ his knowledge of the narratives within the divination context.

STORIES FROM THE IFA ORACLE

Yoruba

The Sun

Agbeji Agbenahara Ogbodoso says:

The bush fowl wakes up and is not happy to see that the beans have grown up.

Then he pronounces the oracle for the owner of the forest. They told him to sacrifice, because of the iroko tree, which stands in the backyard of his house, lest it might fall and kill him.

He refused.

The iroko fell, but did not touch the ground.

Then the owner of the forest said: I want to call the wood carvers. But when they cut the tree, Orishala appeared and turned the tree into oje, the white metal.

Orishala, the great god, called his slave You-dont-hear-what-i-say and ordered him to go and give the oje to the blacksmith of heaven. He said he wanted the oje to be fashioned into a decorated pot. The remainder he wanted to be made into a boat.

When You-dont-hear-what-i-say brought the things back from heaven Orishala placed something inside the pot.

Then he covered the pot with a cloth of brass.

Then he asked his slave to put the pot into the boat.

One day he ordered his slave to drive the boat to the world and to return the same day.

Thus You-dont-hear-what-i-say became the boatman of the sun.

He is the one who rows the sun to the world and back to heaven.

The home town of the sun is Iwonran.

And Orishala gave the sun the order to beat down on the people from high up in heaven.
The Moon

Moon, giver of light, son of Ajalorun, spirit of heaven.
He shows the thin part of his body to the earth.
He shows his fat side to the heaven above.
Elaporo, the rainbow, pronounces the oracle of moon:
Ajalorun begot the moon.
Elaporo told moon to sacrifice
to obtain rest of mind in heaven or on earth.
He refused the sacrifice.
Then Olodumare, the almighty, called moon to send him on a message:
I am your maker. And after I created you, I handed you to Ajalorun so he might beget you.
The moon was in a hurry to know what Olodumare’s message was. Then he asked: What is it you want me to do?
Then Olodumare replied:
I want you to live fifteen days on earth and fifteen days in heaven.
And he said: I will use this period of time to create man and trees.
And Olodumare prayed for the moon. And he gave him the order.
It is from that day that moon has no rest of mind.
Ifa laughed at the moon: you did not sacrifice. Therefore you will have no rest. Fifteen days in the world, fifteen days in heaven.

The Creation of Land

The one who comes from far away pronounces the oracle for Oduduwa. When all the Orishas came into the world, Oduduwa went to Orunmila to know what Ifa could predict in heaven.
Orunmila told him to prepare a hen that had five toes,
and five chameleons,
and five hundred chains.
Oduduwa prepared them all.
Orunmila made the sacrifice for Oduduwa. Then Orunmila sprinkled the wood powder on the sacrifice, and he told him to go with it to the world.
When Oduduwa left Orunmila he went to Olodumare. Then Olodumare gave Oduduwa some sand wrapt up in cloth.
When Oduduwa led the other Orishas to the world, they met only water.
There was no place to step.
All the other Orishas returned to heaven, except only Oduduwa.
Oduduwa tied the chain of Orunmila in heaven.
Then Oduduwa climbed down the chain.
Then he put the sand on the water and it stayed.
Then he placed the chameleon on the sand to see whether it would hold.
The chameleon walked carefully to test the ground.
And the ground was solid.
That is why the chameleon still steps carefully today.
Then Oduduwa placed the hen on the sand.
It scratched and spread the sand about.
Oduduwa was surprised.
Oduduwa tested the ground with one foot.
When he saw that it was firm, he left the chain and came down. Then he untied the chain in heaven. And he put it down at Idio at Ile Ife. That place is still known as the house of Oduduwa today.
Next Aje (wealth) descended from heaven and told Oduduwa she wanted to live with him on earth. And she gave Oduduwa plenty of money.
Then Ogun came and worshipped Oduduwa. Then Orishala came and worshipped Oduduwa. One by one all the Orishas appeared on earth.
It is said that Orishala was the elder brother of Oduduwa. But due to Oduduwa’s bravery, he became the leader of all.

Orishala Who Made Man and Animals

Give me, I will not give you.
The peg does not enter the ground easily.
He pronounces the oracle for Orishala on the day that he came into the world with Oduduwa.
On that day they went to Olodumare to obtain the calabash of good character.
Then Olodumare gave it to them.
On their way to the world, Orishala was thirsty.
They met a woman carrying palm wine. Orishala drank until he could not control his senses.
Oduduwa a man of good sense took the calabash of good character back to Olodumare.
Olodumare told him: I give you this calabash to use.
When Orishala’s eyes opened he returned to Olodumare with annoyance.
He said to Olodumare: Why has the calabash of good character disappeared?
Olodumare said: Is that all?
Olodumare then taught him how to create human beings and animals: which is greater than anything else.
Orishala said that in his lifetime he would no more drink palm wine.
Since then everybody greets Orishala:

*One who creates the son and the mother
One who creates the nose and the eyes.*
Pakunde (close the door) the secret of Asehin.
Pakunde pronounces the oracle for Asehin Bokin.
Asehin the son of a sieve! He drank bad water from the day he stepped onto his father's throne.
He never heard a baby cry.
Since he became king, none of his wives had delivered. Then they consulted Ifa. They told him to sacrifice to his father. Then he made a sacrifice but the father refused it. Then the mother told him that the father who begat him was not a human being.
She told him: When I went to the farm to fetch firewood there was a certain animal that resembled a human being, and he forced me to sleep with him. Then I used a trick. I split open a tree with an axe and asked the animal to put his penis into the cleft. When he put his penis into the cleft, I pulled out the axe, his penis got caught and he died. Those who know the animal say that they saw Iro (Gorilla) who died near the tree. He is the animal who made me pregnant with you.
Asehin heard this and went to the place. He found the bones of an animal. He placed them in a coffin. He killed a ram. When they carried the dead body to the town, they sang:

Close the doors, Iro is coming,
The son is bringing his father.
All you landlords, close your doors.
Oro is coming!
The son carries his father home.

Then they wove ropes of palm fiber. They swung it through the air. Then the people in the town said: this is a dead person speaking.
They call it Oro till today.

The Origin of the Egungun Masquerade

Obara Osa ran away to the roof.
He pronounced the oracle for the masquerade.
The masquerade came from heaven to the world.
When the world became spoilt, the Orishas did not know how to put things straight.
Obara Osa said that all the Orishas must prepare different kinds of cloth and make them into a shroud.
He told them to bring some animals like goats, rams, and plenty of food, also gin and palm wine, and prepare them for the strangers who were coming from heaven. Because they were the ones who would put everything right that was wrong.
When they arrived, there were twenty of them.
Oduduwa started to tell them about the world.
They received it into their hands.
They inspected it and made corrections in it. Then the bad spirits that did not allow people to have peace of mind were driven away. And the witches were killed. Those who correct the world are called Egun. But Oduduwa drove Egun away, who made the correction of the world. He was afraid they would claim all the land from him. That is why there is no Egun at Ile Ife. The Eguns ran away to Oje and established a town there. So from there they began to spread into different parts of the country.

The Bird Who Brought Fire from Heaven

One who knows how to swim goes to the river and squats. One who does not know how to swim also goes to the river and squats. They are the ones who pronounced the oracle for Adaba, the red eyed turtle dove. The son of Ajalaiye was annoyed and went to put fire into the house of Olodumare. From there he caught fire in his tail and he carried it into the world. When he returned into his father’s house, the house caught fire, and the whole town burned down. There is a proverb: Anyone who puts fire on his tail Will not take it anywhere else Except into his father’s house.

What Agbe, Aluko and Akoko Say in the Morning

Eshu’s stone has a big head. It pronounces the oracle for Onikoti who is the mother of Agbe, Aluko and Akoko the Cock. He told Onikoti to sacrifice, lest her children would have to go and live in the forest. But she refused. One day the mother went to the farm. She left a bottle of palm wine in the house. Then the palm oil fell down. Then Agbe went there to put his head in the oil. Then Akoko went there to put his head in the oil. Then Aluko went there and bathed in the oil. The three children ran away: Agbe ran away to the forest, Aluko ran away to the savannah, and Akoko ran away to the rubbish heap. When the mother returned she met nobody. Then she started to call her children. The cock was not so far from the house. When he saw that the mother was not so much annoyed he started to call his brothers.
He called Agbe: Come, our mother is not annoyed.
Agbe replied: I am going to the far forest.
Then the cock called Aluko: Come, our mother is not annoyed.
Aluko replied: I am going to the far Savannah.
That is why the three of them shout at the same time in the morning.

The Rock

Orunmila is the one who prostrated to Ifa.
I prostrate to Akodaiye – the one who first came to the world.
I prostrate to Awolose – the secret one.
I prostrate to Asedaiye – the maker of the world.
I prostrate to the elders at Iworin.
I prostrate to Tewure who pronounces the oracle for the rock.

On the day on which the hill told Tewure that he wanted to be higher than the ground, Tewure told him to prepare ten fingernails, ten palm leaves, ten leaves of the silk cotton tree, and one cow.

Because the nail grows above the finger
the hill will be higher than the ground.

Because the palmleaves are higher than the palm tree
the hill will be higher than the ground.

Because the silk cotton tree is higher than the town
the hill will be higher than the ground.

Oduduwa

Orisha-whose-elbows-are-joined-together pronounced the oracle for Oduduwa.
On the day he wanted to marry Iyewa Okikiroro and to marry Alamatan the last born also.
The two women were the senior and the junior wife, and their husband was not at home. They fought together before the arrival of the husband.
The senior wife killed the junior wife.
Their husband was a weaver. He was annoyed and threw the senior wife out. He threatened to kill her. The senior wife ran away. The husband pursued her and killed her. Her dead body changed into a river. It is the river known as Opa at Ife.
The husband was annoyed because he had no more wife. He planned not to have another wife in his life. He went into a room and took a knife. He cut off his penis and used the knife on his body. From that day on he began to produce children.
From that day on Oduduwa praised himself and said:
The vagina gently produces a child.
TWO PROPHECIES

1

Flathead Prophecy Based on an Eruption of Mt. St. Helens

It was fifty years ago, my whole life almost.
There were no whites to make me wonder who I am.
I whom you call Chief Cornelius of the Flatheads
was a little boy without a name
sleeping beside my mother in our lodge.
In the night my mother woke me:
Wake up! Wake up! The world is falling to pieces!
Yes, terrible thunder, the people, all of us,
crying into the dark at something darker
sifting through pine-boughs, finer than snow,
a kind of black ash ankle-deep already,
soot on our robes. I thought: Chinook Wind
will never thaw this choking winter.
But then my uncle, the medicine man you call him,
rubbed a handful of ash into the fire
and spat, and said, Oh, we will live all right,
until from the rising sun a different
kind of men will come, bringing a book,
and they will teach us everything,
and after that the world will fall to pieces.

2

A Kalapuya Prophecy

In the old time, by the forks of the Santiam,
a Kalapuya man lay down in an alder-grove
and dreamed his farthest dream. When he woke in the night
he told the people, “This earth beneath us
was all black, all black in my dream!”
No man could say what it meant,
that dream of our greening earth.
We forgot. But then the white men came,
those iron farmers, and we saw them plow up the ground,
the camas meadow, the little prairies by the Santiam,
and we knew we would enter their dream
of the earth plowed black forever.
SONG OF THE TALKING GOD: A NAVAJO TRANSPOSITION

I, I am the Talking God
From under the East
I wander about
The dawn lies towards me
The white corn
Soft stuffs
Waters

Corn pollen
On top of Talking God's head
Obsidian etc., lie together
An ear of corn etc.
Sahanahray
Bekay
Hozhon
I, I am the Hogahn God. From under the West, etc. The yellow afterglow. The yellow corn. All sorts of hard things. The little one of the waters.

The corn pollen. The crown of Hogahn God's head, the rainbow. The little one of the waters. The little one of the waters.

NOTE. The occasion for these "transpositions" was a recording session in 1950, when Son of Bead Chant Singer re-did versions of "creation chants" originally recorded (to the number of 568 songs from various Navajo chant-events) by Hasteen Klah in 1929. David P. McAllester, who directed the 1950 recordings, writes of the resultant pictographs: "Although this singer, the master of several complete chants, recognized the melodies when the original records were played to him, he was not always sure of the order of the words. To aid his memory he drew pictographs of the original texts & by referring to these was able to sing the songs through without difficulty." But the process, though mnemonic in intention & even so "extremely rare among the Navajos," is not unrelated to contemporary experiments in media transference, & is here treated as such. The fuller translation that follows links up with the abbreviated version beneath the pictographs.
SONG OF THE TALKING GOD

I, now I wander about; I, now I wander about;
I, now I wander about;

I, I am the Talking God, now I wander about;
From under the East I wander about, now I wander about;
The dawn lies towards me, now I wander about;
The white corn lies towards me, now I wander about;
All sorts of soft stuffs lie towards me, now I wander about;
All sorts of waters lies towards me, now I wander about;
Corn pollen lies towards me, now I wander about;
On top of the Talking God's head, obsidian and all sorts of soft stuffs lie together, now I wander about
An ear of corn whose end is completely covered by kernels teaches me, now I wander about;
I, I wander about on it, now I wander about;
I, I am the Sahanahray Bekay Hozhon, now I wander about;
Before me, it is beautiful, now I wander about;
Behind me, it is beautiful, now I wander about;

I, now I wander about; I now wander about;
I, now I wander about; I now wander about;

I, now I wander about;

I, I am the Hogahn God, now I wander about;
From under the West, I wander about, now I wander about;
The yellow afterglow lies towards me, now I wander about;
The yellow corn lies towards me, now I wander about;
All sorts of hard things lie towards me, now I wander about;
The little one of the waters lies towards me, now I wander about;
The corn pollen lies towards me, now I wander about;
On the crown of the Hogahn God's head, the rainbow and all sorts of hard things lie together, I wander about with it, now I wander about;
A round kernel of corn speaks to me, now I wander about;
I, I wander about on it, now I wander about;
I, I am the Sahanahray Bekay Hozhon, now I wander about;
Behind me, it is beautiful, now I wander about;
Before me, it is beautiful, now I wander about;

I, now I wander about; I, now I wander about;
I, now I wander about; I, now I wander about;
I, now I wander about.
THREE FROM QUECHUA

Farewell

Today I'm supposed to leave.  I won't go, I'll go off tomorrow. When I leave you'll see me playing a flute of flies' bones with a spiderweb as my flag, an ant's egg for my drum and my hat will be the nest of a hummingbird.

What Harm Has She Dreamt

Her long hair is her pillow, the girl is sleeping on her hair. She cries blood she does not cry tears she cries blood. What is she dreaming? what harm is she dreaming? Who hurt her? who hurt her heart like this? Whistle to her, whistle, whistle little bird so she wakes so she wakes now whistle whistle little bird.
I raise a fly
with gold wings.
I raise a fly
with glowing eyes.

It brings death
in its eyes of fire.
It brings death
in its gold hair
and its lovely wings.

I raise it
in a beerbottle
no one knows
if it drinks
no one knows
if it eats.

It roams at night
like a star
It wounds and kills
with its light of blood
with its eyes of fire.

It steals love
for its eyes of fire.
It hides the blood
in the night,
the love, in its heart.

Insect, every night,
fly of death
in a green bottle--
I raise it,
loving it so much.

But this is so
no one knows
this is so,
if I let it drink
if I let it eat.
Translated from the Osage by Barbara Tedlock using Francis La Flesche's text and literal translation in The Osage Tribe: Rite of the Chiefs (ARBAE 36, 1921).

From CEREMONY OF SENDING: A SIMULTANEITY FOR TWENTY CHORUSES

The Hidden People & The Star People

THERE, TRULY THEY SAID IN THIS HOUSE
THERE, TRULY THEY SAID IN THIS HOUSE
The Hidden People sitting there said
The Water People of Seven Fireplaces
O! My Grandfather, they said to him
The Water People said
we have no suitable totem, My Grandfather
to The Star People sitting there
O! My Little Ones, he began
O! My Grandfather, they said to him
you say you have no suitable totem
we have no suitable totem, My Grandfather
I am a suitable totem
THERE, TRULY THEY SAID IN THIS HOUSE
THERE, TRULY THEY SAID IN THIS HOUSE
You say you have no suitable totem
He built a small house
I am a suitable totem
I have not built this house without purpose
the female cedar over there
I have built it as a place to break animal heads
truly I live in that body
I have not built this house without purpose
when the young take on my body
it is a symbol of the spider
they'll live to see old age as they walk
Indeed, I have built it as a trap
The male cedar right there
all small animals, whoever they may be
they'll walk with that totem
will ensnare themselves as they walk
the male cedar
and when the young use it, animals will appear
when they walk with that totem

Even before dawn
they'll live to see old age as they walk
animals will appear for them as they walk

THERE, TRULY THEY SAID IN THIS HOUSE
and also at dusk
And these waters
animals will appear for them as they walk
we'll unite with the two cedars as we walk

This bull buffalo right here
and these waters
this one
when they use them for old age
will make animals appear for them as they walk
they'll live to see old age as they walk
and this animal's blood
These grasses right here that never die

Even before dawn
when they use them also for old age
they'll drink his blood
they'll live to see old age as they walk
also at dusk
I stand here approaching old age
they'll drink this animal's blood
between these stooping shoulders

THERE, TRULY THEY SAID IN THIS HOUSE
I stand here approaching old age
These shall stand as suitable totems:

among these topmost white blossoms

The short-snake
I stand here approaching old age
the young will use as they walk
as the young stalks grow
there amongst the grass clumps
they'll live to see white hair as they walk
he suddenly lifted his head

Even though the young become spirits
they'll regain consciousness as they walk

When the young take on my body
the four parts of their days
they'll reach and enter as they walk
And what totems shall they use?
The long bull-snake
the young will use as they walk
there amongst the grasses
he suddenly lifted his head
the long bull-snake
they'll use as they walk
And even though the young become spirits
they'll regain consciousness as they walk
and the four parts of their days
they'll reach and enter as they walk
And what totems shall they use?
The black-snake
they'll use as they walk
there amongst the grasses
he suddenly lifted his head
the black-snake
Even though the young become spirits
they'll regain consciousness as they walk
and the four parts of their days
they'll reach and enter as they walk
And what totems will they use?
The rattlesnake
there amongst the grasses
he lies buzzing nearby
the rattler
Even though the young become spirits
they'll regain consciousness as they walk
The rattlesnake
hissing and hissing
Beneath their feet
he stands rattling and rattling
Toward their necks
Toward the east wind
Toward the west wind
Toward the north wind
Even though the young become spirits
they'll regain consciousness as they walk
When the young take on my body
The preceding are two of the twenty prayers recited simultaneously by the twenty-three clans present during the initiation of a new chief. Twenty clans - Elder Water People, White Water People, Star People, Deer People, Bow People, Hidden People, Golden Eagle People, Black Bear People, Mountain Lion People, Elk People, Crawfish People, Wind People, Sun People, Sun-carrier People, Night People, Red Eagle People, Last Sky People, Buffalo-Back People, Men of Mystery, and Bull Buffalo People - recite their particular prayers while the Turtle People, Cattail People, and Buffalo-face People remain totally silent.

The candidate and all the totems mentioned are located in the center of the House of Mystery with the clan members, arranged in the three main divisions Sky, Earth, and Water, surrounding them. After the candidate distributes all his fees - buffalo meat, sweet corn, dried squash, lotus roots, horses, clothing, weapons - to the individuals present, all the clanspeople (with the exception of the three silent clans) begin reciting their prayers. This recitation is not in unison but is simultaneous; the prayers vary in length from 17 lines to 179 lines.

The phrase “said'nth'house” on the left hand margin is a refrain or burden said after each of the longer phrases on its right. I've written it as a vocable phrase because of its natural collapsing from “said in this house” during recitation. The Hidden People are in regular type while the Star People are indented and in italics. The double spacing in the second half represents the silence of the Star People who've already finished.
TWO INCANTATIONS

KUMAN (Chimbu, New Guinea)

Apaline, jump, twist,
reflect beauty,
face the East,
from every direction
suitors, suitors searching.
Stretch, stretch arms, legs,
on the mountain.
Lie in the decorated bamboo
with open mouth,
cassowary bones so dry
black feathers, white feathers,
round stones rolling
from South, North, West.

Translated by Theodore Banda

SAPOSA (Solomon Islands)

Aeroplanes

You birds, big and white
you are strange and swift
stiff winged creatures
mocking us from above
Arrows cannot reach you
spears cannot reach you
o ancestors
release your powers
shatter them to pieces.

Translated by Larius Hulo
Nathaniel Tarn's translation of the pre-Conquest Mayan play, Rabinal-Achi, will be the featured work in the second issue of Alcheringa. His most recent book of poems is The Beautiful Contradictions.


in the name of the Creator God and Angel O God I meet you prostrated I meet you seated may you be remembered God Creator of Day and Light Angel and Lord St. Simon remembered before creation in the fragrance of fruit your throne is adorned with in your books in your accounts before the World before the Savior

Father God elder among elders in the fragrance of fruit praised in a thousand prayers son of the Incense and the Candle because you existed through the centuries of existence that the World has existed because even below the clouds your hands and feet exist Lord St. Simon First Angel you who are seated as one of the St. Simons of Glory remembered in your yellow cape in your white cape in your yellow coat in your white coat in your yellow gaiters in your white gaiters in your yellow overcoat in your white overcoat now I am consulting you with the help of a bunch of wax candles with the help of a bunch of de-luxe candles now I remind you of one of your sons a descendant of yours O God who has remembered your hands and your feet O great Master and personage!

perhaps you are going about the World going up and down the Face of the World using the crossroads who knows in the mission of your daily round like a sentinel or a sergeant or a policeman and in your long march you take with you two or three great thoughts and perhaps you meet with the sinners of the World and the Face of the Earth O Lord and Master we aren't spying we aren't judging your acts do not drown us do not suffocate us it is not my thing that I called your spirit that I called your sanctity it's the person here it's his thing your son who comes to beg with wax and candlegrease with the savor of these things that your son has brought here smoothly and with the sound of violin and guitar!

perhaps you will have to go perhaps you will have to promenade through the Holy Night the Holy Darkness you great doctor and personage of the Holy World and who will protect me then O God O World who have come crossing the World from a far-off place feels very poor in your hands poor and orphaned to come to you Father-Mother looking for your hands looking for your feet looking for your lips that have been so highly
recommended to me thanks to you Lord I have a great desire to see you and am very happy to talk to my Father today I feel happy and am much admired in the Face of the World because it is the Lord Angel who is leading me

O God it is I who came as the custodian of the aroma and savor of the God called Incense the God called Candle because Incense is the ancient symbol of God you of the white eyebrows and hair Lord of the World and the Face of the Earth ancient knower of things remembered for your wisdom in the aroma of pataxte and cacao you Pedestal of the Sky give your son who has brought you so smoothly and so delicately and with such care these goods before your table before your chair Nathaniel Tarn his name whose God this is whose Saint this is give him all power! I have come as his helper as his right-arm as his foot before God and ask for life and health on his behalf for that is what he wishes of this World and it is not because of distance it is not because the leagues have been many he has covered to reach you since he first heard of your name Don Pedro that he asks for your wisdom / your fragrance / your books / your accounts / your secrets / your cape and coat / your gaiters and scarves / your poncho and shawl and so God don’t depreciate don’t discourage he who looks for your sanctity he who looks for your hands and feet

for he is not a liar he is not an evil-doer he is not a murderer before the World for there exists a God whom he looks for and loves and we are looking for the gallant Don Pedro the Old God to do him a ritual so that we don’t forget his hands his feet his adornments Don Pedro Don Pedro de Alvarado Master and personality of the World and the Face of the Earth who lives and rules among pines / firtrees / cypresses / flowers he who abandoned his father perhaps he who abandoned his mother he who came perhaps from a hundred leagues’ distance to arrive here before this Holy World to present himself before the Holy Earth of Guatemala in the hands and before the table of Captain Santiago Zutuhil and Martin-God! O thanks to you Masters I thank you Lord I thank you Lady because I am looking for the son of the earth / the son of cloud / the son of mist / the son of pataxte / the son of cacao / the son of cypress / the son of palm / the son of pacaya / the son of stalk and the son of flower!

on Sunday your merits were remembered and your hands and feet before the Holy World that he might not suffer fractures that he might not suffer harm in the God Path in the God called Footpath before the spirit of the God called Field when he goes up when he goes down among the fields Lord perhaps out perhaps down but straight! From San Juan I came to San Pedro to Flores Peten to Guatemala City to Santo Tomas to Visitation to Quetzaltenango to Huehuetenango to Mazatenango to Chicacao and San Antonio going through mountains through valleys loving all the Gods all the Angels who are on their hands who are on their knees before your hands before your feet!
o that he might come here another time! o Savior called World! o World of his day and his birth / of our Grandmothers and Mothers / of our Masters and Great Gods and Angels of authorized speech and strong hands who lead the World and the Face of the Earth / who bring the cloud and the mist / the earthquake / the thunder and hail / who carry in their hands and palms the Foundations of the Sky / o Lords and Masters of the World and the Face of the Earth in this the navel of the World / Tziquinaha

I implore your hands your feet because you are our fathers our brothers of great value our life and the health of our spirits O God this son of yours Nathaniel Tarn his day Nathaniel Tarn's he has remembered your hands he has remembered your feet through the God called Incense through the God called Candle the gum of the storax tree the gum of the frankincense here he is gathered remembering in his own place his own essence so that I need remember only so that I need ask only because you are the owners of pataxte and cacao / owners of cloud and mist / gathered in the Sky and in Spain O Gods maintainers of the Sun and Light before the essence of man and woman before the embrace and the privacy of those two!

your son does not ask for his voice for his speech he asks for his life for his health he implores the Angels for the prayer of the holy table before our Mothers before our Fathers chiefs of the World of mist and clouds / of rain and lightning / and thunder

our Father God in Glory our Father God in Sky made of twelve Fathers as well as Mothers because they are found in each other's company twelve also are the Gods of Chiantla who look after our sons who look after our offspring who look after our shoots

Juan Martin / Diego Martin / King Martin / Pascual Martin / Parpeta Martin / Nicolas Martin / Baltazar Martin / Chalela Martin / Staka Martin / Palvera Martin / Balion Martin and St. John Martin of all the Martins Company of the Holy World Masters of the wild animals in the forests

and Maria Sabela / Maria Salina / Maria Madalena / Maria Losia / Maria Candelaria / Maria Chiantla / Maria St. Anna / Maria Rosario / Maria Concepcion / Maria Dolores / Maria Saragosta / Maria Niachotiya Mothers of the Holy World great procreators midwives experts in rocking cradles and bundles and hammocks before the Face of the Earth and Maria Yashper the tripes of woman

and Angel Semanera Pastor / Mayordomo / King Monarch / King Mateksun / King Matektani / King Sakashol / Don Galisto / Francisco Sojuel / Juan Pablo / Baltazar Pablo / Jacobo Coo / Marcos Rujutch Rainpriests of the Holy World with Anthony / John / Melchior / Baltazar / St. Philip of Galicia the oldest
of the Galicias and also Michael, Raphael and Gabriel and thousands of others
their houses in the hills their houses in the valleys their houses in the clouds
where they work and share out the plants and share out food and rain

and St. Bernard the Sun who has maintained us in the World in tiled houses and in houses of various materials who extends his flight across the World to see our past and to see our future

and you who suffered pain who suffered punishment from the moment the World began from the moment the Face of the Earth began from the moment your hands and feet existed Lord God Jesuschrist who walked in the God called Cloud and in the God called Mist under the burning Sun who came bathed in sweat remembering us when the Holy World was created you suffered pain and punishment before the Cross of Passion with three hammers and a thousand lashes they laid out your hands and your feet on the Cross of Passion and with three nails held your divine body in place in order to pay for our sin for our crime we are humankind we are sinners which is how man and woman youth and girl remained on this earth!

and with San Pedro in the West / Atitlan-Toliman in the East / Sambernawa in the North / Zunil in the South Volcanos of the Holy World

and the various places of the Holy World

a yellow wine a white wine a yellow beer a white beer have come to your hands and to your feet Lord of white hair and white eyebrows place him then under your power under your miracle perhaps it is the Angel St. Michael who leads him to you because you are our Father because you are our Mother because you are twelve you the Angels because you are the twelve chief Gods of the World take him in your arms then and embrace him World which brings forth Justice which brings forth Sacrament a thousand apologies a thousand pardons that the road of your son might remain open that he avoid harm to himself that he avoid fractures of the limbs to himself and over the World come down perhaps Lord of the white hair and eyebrows in the middle of the day in the middle of the hour to grant permission to grant license to remain under your protection forever!

I alone I am people I am people who live on a basis of food and drink I am not God I am not Angel before the World and the Face of the Earth You Angels are of God because of your divinity through being Chiefs of the World and the Face of the Earth perhaps you keep me here in the mountains in the valleys perhaps you detain me in your hands in your feet Lord St. Simon perhaps you witness perhaps you look down on me perhaps I have no destination in this World but neither shall there be anyone speaking before me or behind me God
your son has remembered you Lord St. Simon because the God of the Day
looks after him thanks then to the World to God-Father God-Son
God-Holy Ghost Amenjesus

thanks Jesuschrist my Father Ah God! this will be my table
this will be my book now that I sollicit pardon for our sins for our
guilt before Lord St. Simon when we go another time and come before Captain
Santiago when we come here another time before Captain St. James of Compostela
in this his town of Santiago which is also the House of Birds Tziquinaha!

NOTE. The religion of the Highland Maya of Guatemala is syncretistic: ancient Maya ideas
and rites and icons underlie the surface Catholicism. Apart from the Saints and Angels mentioned
in these prayers, two major "pagan" figures are referred to: St. Martin who masks an ancient Lord
of the Wild Animals (and whose female companion is Yashper, the First Mother) and St. Simon,
alias St. Michael Archangel, St. Peter Apostle, St. Andrew, Pedro de Alvarado Conquistador of
Guatemala and Judas Iscariot, whose real identity is Mam (Mam-shimon or Maximon) the Old-God
of the Maya. Both the Martin and the Mam are bundles rather than icons: but the Mam bundle
contains the elements of a large puppet which is taken out and dressed on certain ritual occasions.
Mam is a great walker, is bisexual and highly involved in love magic and witchcraft. Both Mam
and the Martin are looked after by special priests: among these, certain striking figures are invoked
in the prayers. These are dead priests who have become deities and who are believed to return to
earth - possibly as reincarnations - to help the village in times of trouble. They are connected
with the making of rain and the bringing back of the good weather after the rainy season.

These prayers were recited for me as part of an educational process which involved the possibility of my becoming an apprentice of N.C. This priest's style was and is the finest I have heard
and his systematization of belief the most impres-
vive. One of his own idiosyncracies - although not unrelated to traditional calendrical lore -
involved the listing of Powers by the dozen: twelve Martins, twelve Marias and so forth. This
was also an aspect of a stylistic trick of the prayers: namely uttering one name and then repeating it as often as one can remember names to add to it. Some of these tricks became very well
known to me after a while and I caught the habit of sensing which "slabs" of prayer N.C. would
use at various times, when he would slow down and space out, when he would go fast to the lim-
it of his breathing capacity and so forth.

I have taken liberties with the arrangement of these fragments and the presentation of data
in them (though no information is deliberately perverted) not only as part of an experiment in attitudes towards translation and translators but also, in this case, because this is precisely what I would have done had I become an ajkun myself.
The anthropologist I was knows where these "distortions" occur and readily forgives them.
My teacher and friends would probably forgive them too if the case arose insofar as the reli-
gious status I was suspected of harboring would have allowed me the greatest possible latitude in creativity had I ever wished to avail myself of that power. And a last reason is that I do not have the Zutuhil texts with me: only an indif-
ferent Spanish version and a certain pulsation in my ears.

Nathaniel Tarn, Santa Fe July 1970

Translation made on a grant from Rutgers University Research Council.
This is my almost final working of the first of 17 “horse-songs” in the blessingway of Frank Mitchell (1881-1967) of Chinle, Arizona. Their power, as with most Navajo poetry, is directed toward blessing & curing, but in the course of it they also depict the stages by which Enemy Slayer, on instructions from his mother Changing Woman, goes to the house of his father The Sun, to receive & bring back horses for The People. The Navajos, of course, had no horses before the coming of the Spaniards, but a short time after the actual delivery, the myth had already taken shape, translating history into the Eternal Dreaming. The First Song has Enemy Slayer imagining the horses & other possessions he’ll seek & claim.

I’ve been attempting total translations of all the horse-songs, accounting not only for meaning but for word distortions, meaningless syllables, music, style of performance, etc.; & , since translation is at no point mere reproduction, even the music isn’t free from changes. The idea never was to set English words to Navajo music, but to let a whole work emerge newly in the process of considering what kinds of statement were there to begin with. As far as I could I also wanted to avoid “writing” the poem in English, since this seemed irrelevant to a poetry that had reached a high development outside of any written system.

Under the best of circumstances translation-for-meaning is no more than partial translation. Even more so for the densely textured Navajo. Right from the start, then, the opening line of the first horse-song, reading something like this

dzo-wowode sileye shi, dza-na desileye shiyi dzaadi sileye shiya’e

is really a distortion of the phrase “dzaadi sileye shi” repeated three times. A literal translation (i.e., “for meaning”) would say something like “over-here they-are-there (&) mine” three times over, which would fail to get the sense of one statement presented as three distinct oral events. To do more than that, a total translation must distort words in a manner analogous to the original; it must match “meaningless” syllables with equivalents in our very different English soundings; it may begin to sing in a mode suitable to the words of the translation; & if the original provides for more than one voice, the translation will also.

The translation of the First Horse-Song follows some such program. David McAllester provided me with tapes of Frank Mitchell singing, & with texts that included transcriptions of the words-as-sung, indications of how they would be sounded in normal Navajo speech, literal & general translations, footnotes, & ready answers to such questions as I still had. I translated first for meaning & phrasing in English, adding small words to my text where the original had meaningless syllables; then distorted, first the small words so that they approximated to “mere” sound, then within the meaningful segment of each line toward more or less the density of the original; e.g. (for the opening line again) “all are & now some are there & mine” became “all are now some ‘re there & mine,” & was then distorted twice more in the forms shown in my English text. Most of the distortions were carried out on the tape recorder, & as part of the same process I went from speaking towards singing, moving rapidly from Mitchell’s version to soundings of my own. Since the opening of each song (typical of Navajo) is a string, small or large, of meaningless syllables, I let my equivalents for these introductory sounds serve as “key” to which I could refer in determining my moves within the poem. Similar sounds & distortions had naturally to be carried over from song to song.

In all this what matters to me most as a poet is that the process has been a very natural one of extending the poetry into new areas of sound. Nor do I think of the result as poetry plus something else, but as all poetry, all poet’s work, just as the Navajo is all poetry, where poetry & music haven’t suffered separation. In that sense Frank Mitchell’s gift has taken me a small way towards a new “total poetry,” as well as an experiment in total translation. And that, after all, is where many of us had been heading in the first place.

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J.R.'s "total translation" (see preceding page), done with the assistance of David P. McAllester & a grant-in-aid from the Wenner-Gren Foundation.

THE FIRST HORSE-SONG OF FRANK MITCHELL (BLUE)

Navajo

Key: wnn N nnnn N gahn

All ahrenow some 're there & mine all (gahn) & some (gwing) there are mine all (gahn) & some (gwing) there 're mine there nnnn N gahn
All ahrenow some 're there & mine all (gahn) & some (gwing) there are mine all (gahn) & some (gwing) there 're mine there

(Nnnnn N gahn) because I was the boy raised ing the dawn & nnnn but some there are mine all (gahn) & some (gwing) there 're mine there
(Nnnn N gahn) & in the howse the bluestone home & mmmrrrr but some there 're mine all (gahn) & some (gwing) there 're mine there
(Nnng N gahn) & in the howse the shiningwingNd gahn & some there are mine all (gahn) & some (gwing) there 're mine there
(Nnnn N gahn) & ing the swollenowse his breath has blown & nnnn but some there are mine all (gahn) & some (gwing) there 're mine there
(Nnnn N gahn) & ing the howse the hoNloly home & mmmmm but some there 're mine all (gahn) & some (gwing) there 're mine there
(Nmmmm N gahn) nndin the house of precious cloth we walk (p)pon (N gahn) & nnnn but some there are mine all (gahn) & some (gwing) there 're mine there
(Nnnn N gahn) N prayersticks that are blue N wwnnn but some there 're mine all (gahn) & some (gwing) there 're mine there
(Nnnn N gahn) with my feathers that are blue N wwnnn but some there 're mine all (gahn) & some (gwing) there 're mine there
(Nnnn N gahn) with those spirit horses that are blue & wwnnn but some there 're mine all (gahn) & some (gwing) there 're mine there
(Nnnn N gahn) with those spirit horses that are blue & dawn N nnnn but some there are mine all (gahn) & some (gwing) there 're mine there
(Nnnn N gahn) with those spirit horses that are bluestonawu N nnnn but some there are mine all (gahn) & some (gwing) there 're mine there
(Nnnn N gahn) with those horses that are bluestone & nnnn but some there are mine all (gahn) & some (gwing) there 're mine there
(Nmmmm N gahn) with cloth of evrygind to be(e) there N rrrr but some there 're mine all (gahn) & some (gwing) there 're mine there
(Nmmmm N gahn) with jewels of everygind to be(e) there N rrrr but some there are mine all (gahn) & some (gwing) there 're mine there
(Nnng N gahn) with hoganorses of evrygind to be(e) there N rrrr but some there are mine all (gahn) & some (gwing) there 're mine there
(Nnnn N gahn) with sheep of evrygind to be(e) there N rrrr but some there are mine all (gahn) & some (gwing) there 're mine there
(Nnnn N gahn) with cattle of evrygind to be(e) there N rrrr but some there are mine all (gahn) & some (gwing) there 're mine there
(Nnnn N gahn) with men of evrygine to be(e) there N rrrr but some there are mine all (gahn) & some (gwing) there 're mine there
(Nnnn N gahn) my howse of precious cloth in my backgwingNgahn N nnnn but some there are mine all (gahn) & some (gwing) there 're mine there
(Nnnn N gahn) the house mmm precious cloth we walk (p)pon & nnnn but some there are mine all (gahn) & some (gwing) there 're mine there
(Nnnn N gahn) & everything that's there before & mrrrr we walk upon & nnnn but some there are mine all (gahn) & some (gwing) there 're mine there
(Nnnn N gahn) & everything that's more & won't be poor N gwing N gahn N nnnn but some there are mine all (gahn) & some (gwing) there 're mine there
(Nnnn N gahn) my horses that are living to be old & blesst naht nnnn but some there are mine all (gahn) & some (gwing) there 're mine there
(Nnnn N gahn) because I am the boy who blesses to be & dlll but some there 're mine all (gahn) & some (gwing) there 're mine there nnnn N gahn

All ahrenow some 're there & mine all (gahn) & some (gwing) there are mine all (gahn) & some (gwing) there 're mine there nnnn N gahn
All ahrenow some 're there & mine all (gahn) & some (gwing) there are mine all (gahn) & some (gwing) there 're mine there nnnng N gaah!
NOTES TO “FINDING THE MIDDLE OF THE EARTH”

Since spoken narratives belong to the realm of the performing arts, written translations of them should be in the form of performable scripts. Yet for no better reason than that spoken narratives are not as mechanical as sung or chanted ones, translators have universally chosen to reduce them to dull gray paragraphs of prose. If one “listens” only for meaning (in the ordinary sense), it is easy to fall into this trap; but if one listens to the sounds (with more than the narrow phonetic ear of the linguist) and to the intervening silences, it becomes clear that what has been widely called “oral prose” is in reality dramatic poetry. Indeed, there is ample reason to believe that “prose” has no existence at all outside the written page.

In the present translation, I have tried to preserve as many of the sound qualities of the original Zuni narrative as seemed practical, using the following devices:

---Brief silences (averaging slightly less than one second) are indicated by line changes, and longer ones (two to three seconds) by double spaces between lines.
---Loud words or passages are indicated by capitals, soft ones by italics, and ordinary ones by ordinary type.
---Greatly lengthened vowels are indicated by —, as in “there is a—lI the wide earth,” in which the a in all should be held for a full second or longer.
---Lines delivered in sustained pitches (almost sung) are set on two levels, with the upper level roughly two tones above the lower.
---Special voice qualities (relatively rare in the present narrative) are noted parenthetically, in italics.
---A comment by a member of the audience is noted as such in parentheses.

The orthography for the untranslated Zuni words is as follows:

---Vowels have continental values; double vowels (aa, etc.) are held a bit longer than single ones.
---Consonants are as in English, with these exceptions: lh sounds like English h and l pronounced simultaneously; double consonants (kk, ll, etc., except that ch becomes cch, lh llh, and sh ssh) are held a bit longer than single ones; the glottal stop is indicated by ’, and when it follows ch, k, kw, ky, or ts, it is pronounced simultaneously with these sounds.
---Stress is always on the first syllable.

... The place of emergence, Kachina Village (50 miles from Zuni), Ash Water, Hawikku, Wind Place, and the Middle Place (Zuni) all lie, in that order, along a w.s.w.—to—e.n.e. axis. Gypsum Place is a short distance south of Hawikku and the Prairie-Dog Hills are some miles north of Wind Place. Shipapuli’ma is 150 miles east of Zuni, in the area of the Sandia Mountains, and Santo Domingo is north of there. Hopi is 100 miles n.w. of Zuni.

The Ahayuuta or “the two Bow Priests” are twin war gods; they led the Zunis from the fourth room beneath into the present world in the part of The Beginning preceding this one. The House Chief and the Sun Priest are the top-ranking ceremonial leaders of the Zunis. The White Shumee-k’oli is a dangerous mask that once caused a wearer to become possessed. The water-strider is an insect whose four longest legs form an equilateral cross.

The Saniyakya or Coyote Society is concerned with hunting. The Life-Fulfilling Societies are concerned with curing, and their members are sometimes called “beasts of prey”; their founders were the White House People, including Ku’asaya, Iyatiiku, and Poshyaank’i. The Clown Society (or Neweeke) is concerned with satire, and Nepayatamu was its founder.

The Molaaawo are impersonators of the Corn Mothers. Joseph Peynetsa commented on the Corn Mother episode at length: “There must be something about those plants. In Dear Abby someone wrote that they thought a lady was crazy because she talked to her plants. Then a lady wrote that plants grow better when you talk to them. The Zunis talk to their corn. When I read that, I thought, ‘Well, the Zunis aren’t the only ones who talk to plants.’ Then a man wrote in, sarcastic: ‘What about the plants you don’t want? Should you cuss them and then they’ll go away?’ But I don’t think that would work. The Zunis go in the field, early in the morning, and sprinkle corn meal and say, ‘You, our children, tell them to hurry.’ So maybe it helps to talk, but when you cuss them, I don’t think that counts.”
FINDING THE MIDDLE OF THE EARTH

Well then
at the beginning they came to Hawikku and built a village there.
They built a village at Hawikku and lived on there.

They built their houses there. As they built their houses
the village grew, it grew.
They didn't know that the Middle Place was over here, so they built their village
at Hawikku.
There were many people, so they constructed large buildings in that village.
They lived on there for some years
lived on, lived on

until
some of them
went over to Gypsum Place and built houses there.
They built a village at Gypsum Place
and lived on there.
They went on living
and those
who had gone over to Gypsum Place lived there, but
not everyone settled there, only a few, and they were the ones who thought of
the YAAYA
Dance: because they were wise
they created the Yaaya Dance, and it was from their Yaaya Dance that the
White Shumeek'oli ran away.

When this had happened and
several YEARS had PASSED
they came
to WIND PLACE.
They came to Wind Place and built houses there.
As you can see, there were many houses
where they lived
and some way
somehow they brought in the stones, somehow they brought in the rafters
and laid them across.

They lived on
building their houses.

They lived on there
until
when some years had passed
those
two Bow Priests
the two Ahayuuta
THOSE TWO
thought:
"WHAT will be DONE about
these
our
daylight fathers, our children?
Where could they really SETTLE DOWN, pass their days
where should their VILLAGE be?
Now think about it"
that's what he told his younger brother.
His younger brother said:
"Well I DON'T KNOW.
well
there is a—ll the wide earth

and the MIDDLE PLACE might be just anywhere.''
That's what they were talking about
when they thought of that water-strider.
Having thought of him

they went there
to the Priest Kiva. Arriving at the House Chief's, at the House Chief's house,
they spoke of this matter
and the priests had a meeting.
The priests had a meeting.

Their Sun Priest
spoke to them:
"Well, our two fathers here
it seems
have been thin king about the location of the Middle Place
and by means of their thoughts we will find out
the location of this site.
Because of these two
because of their thoughts
this will be.
Not even by our combined effort
could we know
such a thing.
It is our two fathers here
who have the knowledge.

How else could this be DONE?
Now then, THINK about it.”

When the priests
thought about it, they DIDN’T KNOW.
“Well, JUST AS YOU HAVE SAID
whatever these two have in mind will have to be.
IF THEY REALLY KNOW OF A DEFINITE PLACE FOR US TO LIVE
THEN CLEARLY we should live there,” that’s what
the priests said.
“Very well indeed.
I’m GOING,” the twins said.
They came this way until they CAME TO ZUNI.
When they came here to the present village, they summoned the water-strider.

WHEN THEY SUMMONED HIM
he entered upon their roads.
There they spoke to him: “NOW
this very day
we have summoned you here.

You
must bend over here.
YOU MUST STRETCH OUT YOUR ARMS AND LEGS.
BY THE POSITION
OF YOUR HEART
the Middle Place will then become known”
that’s what they said. “Indeed.
Is this your reason for summoning me?”
“YES, THIS IS WHY WE HAVE SUMMONED YOU.
Now then, stretch yourself OUT.
By the position of your heart
IT WILL BE KNOWN
WHERE THE MIDDLE PLACE IS,” that’s what
the Ahayuuta told him.
“Very well.”
Bending over toward the east
he stretched out, stretched out all his legs.
When they were ALL OUT FLAT,
    WHEN THE ARMS
LEGs
stretched
A—LL AROUND TO THE OCEANS
his heart
rested
at the site named the MIDDLE PLACE.

They stood there:
"Very well, here is the middle
here is the middle of the EARTH"
they said, and WENT BACK.
When the two Ahayuuta had found it

they went back to Wind Place, arrived at the Priest Kiva, where the priests were
    meeting, and then they
entered:
"My fathers, my children, how have you
been?" "Happy
our fathers, so you've come, sit down," they told them.
The twins sat down.
"NOW, you have gone on the road.
When you
left you spoke of finding the Middle Place.
Has it been FOUND now?"
"IT HAS BEEN FOUND, the one who
is our child
the water-strider
HAS STRETCHED OUT HIS LEGS
and the site of the Middle Place has been found.
THERE
ON THE FOURTH DAY
you must go there.

WHEN YOU HAVE GONE THERE YOU WILL BUILD HOMES
you will settle a village there.
WHEN YOU HAVE SETTLED A VILLAGE THERE
when all of you have settled in that village
then we will see what happens next"
that's what the twins told them. "Very well. This is the way it will be."

THERE THE AHAYUUTA TOLD THEM ABOUT THIS and the people told one another. The location of the Middle Place had been found. ON THE FOURTH DAY THEY WENT THERE to build their houses, they went on, went on for some years until the houses were finished. When the houses were finished THAT WHICH IS THE HEART OF THE EARTH whatever it is was thought of by the twins.

THERE where the House Chief stays, there he IS, the HEART of the earth whatever he is perhaps a stone. (audience member): yes, a stone

THAT'S WHERE HE IS. EVERYTHING A---ALL OVER THE WIDE EARTH well EVERYTHING DEPENDED ON HIM AND ON THE MIDDLE PLACE FOR FERTILITY. FOR THEIR PART the PRIESTS would sit down to ask for rain. WHEN IT RAINED AT ZUNI IT WOULD RAIN A---ALL OVER THE EARTH. WHEN THEY first started living this way ALL the village people, at Santo Domingo at HOPI ALL THE VILLAGERS WOULD ANXIOUSLY AWAIT THE TIME WHEN OUR PRIESTS WENT INTO RETREAT AT ZUNI, THE SUMMERTIME but now the way things are going
moisture is scarce.

THIS IS THE WAY IT HAPPENED
that the MIDDLE PLACE was FOUND. The MIDDLE PLACE was FOUND
AND

the SANIYAKYA SOCIETY
had its beginning.
JUST AS
THE SACRED THINGS HAD THEIR BEGINNING
WHEN THEY
EMERGED
so also
the Coyote Society
the Saniyakya Society began.

THEY BEGAN THERE AND CAME A LONG
until they entered Kachina Village.
THERE they recited prayers.

WHEN THEY ENTERED KACHINA VILLAGE
they recited prayers, and today
they do the same.

THEY EMERGED THERE. WHEN THE SANIYAKYA SOCIETY EMERGED
the YUCCA WREATH had its beginning.

THEY WENT ALONG
until they came to the Prairie-Dog Hills.
WHEN THEY CAME TO THE PRAIRIE-DOG HILLS
they had a contest with the SACRED THINGS.

WHEN THEY HAD A CONTEST WITH THE SACRED THINGS
the sacred things
brought their heavy rain.

The heavy rain came, but it was NOT
like the fine rain which soaks the earth, it did not soak the earth.

THE SANIYAKYA SOCIETY
then
sang their string of songs.

WHEN THEY SANG THEIR STRING OF PRIESTLY SONGS
THE FINE RAIN CAME, FOUR DAYS and four nights were filled with fine rain.
THERE
the Saniyakya Society
was singled out
as the most extraordinary, most wonderful group
at the beginning.

THEY BEGAN THERE
and the Prairie-Dog Hills became the site of their shrine.
THAT'S WHY, AS THINGS GO TO DAY
when the solstice comes
prayer-sticks are made
for the Saniyakya Society:
that is their payment.
When THIS had happened
when the sacred things
had their beginning
and the Saniyakya Society had begun
it was THEN that the
Life-Fulfilling Societies
had their beginning.

THE LIFE-FULFILLING
SOCIETIES BEGAN
there in the fourth room:
some of the people were still living in the fourth room beneath.
When the Life-Fulfilling Societies
WHEN THEY
WERE SUMMONED
they emerged.
EMERGING
they came out and stood in their Sun Father's daylight.

THEY SAW THE FOUR POLLENWAYS.
"Which one will be our road," they said.
"We'll take the MIDDLE road
we'll go
THIS WAY, toward the east.
At Shipaapuli'ma
we will settle down together."
Ku'asaya
iyatiiku
the White House People
Posha yaank'i:
they put
their LIFE-SEEDS in place.
Their Bow Priests set up shrines all around them. The mountain lion bear badger wolf eagle mole set up shrines all around them.

These set up shrines. The Life-Fulfilling Societies sprouted their strings of songs. WHEN THE STRINGS OF SONGS HAD SPROUTED

they came to the Middle Place. When they came to the Middle Place

they were placed in the room of the priests. When they had been put in place then the beasts of prey made their strings of songs.

THERE WERE THOSE WHO SAT NEAREST, AND THE SECOND, THIRD, FOURTH

THE FIFTH, THE SIXTH ONES, THE SIXTH ONES SAT ALL AROUND

as the strings of songs sprouted. WHEN A STRING OF SONGS WAS SUNG

THOSE WHO SAT NEAREST learned the entire string. THE SECOND ONES COULDN'T GET IT ALL,

and so that's the way it still is with the societies as they live on. THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED:

the Life-Fulfilling Societies sprouted. They had their beginning. When THIS had been straightened out ANOTHER society

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then had its beginning:
The Clown Society.

FAR OFF AT ASH WATER
at the spring
of the Clowns
the Clowns had their beginning.
THEY CAME ALONG
until they came to the Middle Place.

At that time
we were irresponsible.
It seems that we didn't love
our mothers
all the kinds of corn.
Our elders, our grandfathers, our grandmothers, the people who lived before us
DID NOT LOVE THEM, and so
the Corn Mothers ABANDONED them.
THE CORN MOTHERS ABANDONED THEM
and went toward the coral.
THERE IN THE CORAL OCEAN
out in the water
a goose
nestled the ears of corn
and NO WAY
to bring them back was known.
THERE WAS NO SEED CORN.
They were living
WITHOUT SEED CORN.
They were full of anxiety.

Even the priests
though they were wise
did not know HOW TO GO ON LIVING.
The CLOWNS were summoned.

When the Clowns were summoned
Nepayatamu
came to the Priest Kiva

He entered the Priest Kiva: “My fathers, my children, how
have you been?’ ‘Happy, our child
sit down,’ they told him, and he sat down. When he sat down
the Sun Priest questioned him: ‘NOW, our father, CHILD
we have summoned you HERE.
PERHAPS, AS WE HAVE IN MIND
you might
find our Corn Mothers.

Our Corn Mothers aren’t here, they’ve GONE somewhere.
Because we were irresponsible we lost the sight of our mothers.
Since
you are an extraordinary person
perhaps
you might find them.
You might bring them back to us’
that’s what they told Nepayatamu. ‘Indeed.

But even if that’s what you have in mind
I don’t know WHERE they WENT.

How-EVER
IT’S UP TO YOU,’ he told them.
‘IF YOU WISH
then I
will look for them.’

Then Nepayatamu told them:
‘THERE WILL BE FASTING.
IF YOU WANT IT
IF YOU ARE WILLING
to go into fasting
then I will look for them’
that’s what he told them.
The priests
went to thinking.
They went to thinking.
They talked.

Their House Chief said, ‘Well then
this is the way it will be:
WE ARE WILLING, for truly
we were irresponsible and lost our mothers, and so
we will go into fasting, we are WILLING to fast.''

"IF YOU ARE WILLING TO FAST IT MUST BE

my own sort of fast.

IF YOU FAST IN THIS WAY
THEN I WILL GO,'" that's what he told them.

"Yes, we are WILLING.'"

"ARE YOU VERY CERTAIN you are willing?'"

"We are willing.' "Very well indeed.

THIS VERY DAY
you will go into fasting
THIS VERY DAY
I will go toward the coral,'" that's what he said, NEPAYATAMU.
That's what he told the priests. "Very well.'"

"Well then, I'm GOING, my FATHERS.
May you be happy as you pass the DAYS.
IF WE ARE FORTUNATE

it might be on the fourth
or perhaps the eighth day
when I bring them back to you. MAYbe.
PerHAPS.
CERTAINLY YOU WANT THIS,'" that's what he told them.

"Yes, we want it.'"

Then Nepayatamu went out and went toward the Coral Ocean.

On he went
spending three nights on the way
and after the FOURTH night he came to the Coral Ocean.
Out in the water
lay the goose.
She was nestling the ears of corn.
THERE WAS NO WAY
to get across.

He went about thinking
pacing up and down.
He was pacing up and down beside the waves.

A duck came to him.
"What are you doing?" the duck said. (sadly) "Well
our mothers

have abandoned
the Middle Place
and I'm looking for them." "Indeed. (tight and nasal) AND YOU'VE COME HERE, but even so what do you plan to do?" the duck said.

"Well, our fathers at the Middle Place the priests were WILLING when I spoke of FASTING and so I've come" that's what he told the duck. "Indeed. Very well indeed then LET'S GO ON OUT THERE," the duck said. The duck

the duck sat down in the water. Nepayatamu sat on the duck's back and they flew out there until they came to where the goose lay. "My mother, my CHILD how have you been passing the days?" Nepayatamu said. "Happily, our FATHER So you've come," she said. "We've come."

"Indeed. FOR WHAT REASON have you entered upon our roads? Perhaps it is because of a WORD of some importance that you have entered upon our roads, for you would not do this for no reason," that's what the goose told Nepayatamu. "YES, in TRUTH my mother, my CHILD there at the Middle Place our fathers, the PRIESTS have lost the sight of their MOTHERS all the kinds of corn. Because they have ABANDONED us I am looking for them." "Indeed. BUT DO THEY REALLY LOVE THEM?" she asked NEPAYATAMU.

"Yes it must be that they really love them. WHAT THEN?" Nepayatamu said. "I am nestling them.
Right here I’m nestling them
but if you
have set a day for them
THEN THEY
will certainly have
that day.
Through THEIR FLESH
the women
among our daylight children
will have good flesh.
Their flesh will smell of corn.’’
Those
were the words of the goose.
‘‘But if THIS is what you want
perhaps you will be very CAREFUL.
YOU ARE IN NEED
so you may GO AHEAD and take them JUST AS THEY ARE
and THAT will be IT.
But IF YOU HAVE DIFFICULTY on the way
then that’s the way it will have to be.’’
Those were the words
she spoke to Nepayatamu. ‘‘NOW
our father, CHILD
you may hold them in your arms,’’ she told him.

He gathered up
ALL THE KINDS OF CORN
with his arms
locked together

and then Nepayatamu was FORBIDDEN to SPEAK.
‘‘Now you must not speak
until
THE CORN MOTHERS HAVE ENTERED THE PRIEST KIVA

and have been put down together in their place.
The prayer-sticks that have been made
THE PRAYER-STICKS WILL GO

there
where the ones named MOLAAWE

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are supposed to stay.
The prayer-sticks will enter there.

THE PRAYER-STICKS
will be put down together in their place.

YOU will be the one who thinks
of entering with them.

HEREAFTER
this
is the ritual you will follow.
THIS IS THE WAY YOU WILL LIVE
and these are your instructions.''

THE FASTING was held very sacred in the time
of our elders
when we were beginning to grow up.
When it was time for the MOLAAWE to come
no one made any NOISE.
No one ATE anything.
Because of this
there would be no pests, that's why
in former times
the people held their
religion
very precious.
BECAUSE THIS HAPPENED THEN
when the Molaawe enter today
the same procedure is followed:
Nepayatamu
does not speak
when he enters
and the priests are completely quiet inside, well you
have seen this yourself, at the Kiva.

When this happened, BECAUSE THIS HAPPENED THE CORN MOTHERS CAME
BACK, and so today we still see
our Corn Mothers.
That, well that's all.
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