Editors: Dennis Tedlock and Jerome Rothenberg
Editorial Assistant: Paul Kahn

Contributing Editors: David Antin, Kofi Awoonor, Ulli Beier, Stanley Diamond, Charles Doria, Dell Hymes, Harris Lenowitz, David McAllester, William Mullen, Simon Ortiz, Gary Snyder, Nathaniel Tarn.

ALCHERINGA: ETHNOPOETICS, "A First Magazine of the World's Tribal Poetries," is published biannually (April and September) by Boston University. Designed by the Boston University Graphics Office.

Annual subscription rates are $7.00 for individuals, $10.00 for institutions. Outside the U.S.A. add $1.00 for additional postage. Single issue price of the current issue is $4.95. For information on price and availability of back issues see the Notes & Comments section.

Subscription orders, single issues and bulk purchases, claims, and notices of change of address should be sent to: Subscription Department, Boston University Scholarly Publications, 775 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, MA 02215. Requests for advertising and distribution information should also go to this address.

Manuscripts and illustrations (accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope) should be sent to ALCHERINGA, Boston University, 270 Bay State Road, Boston, MA 02215. Contributors are paid a nominal fee at the time of publication. Payment of fees is made possible, in part, by a grant from the Coordinating Council of Literary Magazines.

Copyright © 1976 by the Editors and by the Trustees of Boston University.

ISSN 0044-7218
Contents

Son House / Two Narratives, transcribed by Jeff Titon 2
Jeff Titon / Downhome Blues Lyrics Since The Second World War:
              A Selection 10
Onwuchekwa Jemie / Signifying, Dozens, and Toasts: A Selection 27
Scott Dunbar / Three Tales From The Mississippi Delta, transcribed
              by William Ferris, Jr. 41
Eli M. Mile / Mama Ba Mafille Poems 48
Edward Brathwaite / Angel/Engine 51
Jean Borgatti / Songs Of Ritual License From Midwestern Nigeria 60
Terri B. Joseph / Poetry As Sexual Strategy: Songs Of The Moroccan
              Rif 72
Tristan Tzara / Poèmes Nègres, translated from the French by Pierre
              Joris 76
C.G. von Brandenstein & A.P. Thomas / from Taruru: Aboriginal Song
              Poetry From The Pilbara 114
Bengt af Klintberg / The Forest Diver 119
Samuel Makidemewabe & Howard Norman / Swampy Cree Personal Name
              Origins 124
Dennis Tedlock / 13 Poems 128
George Quasha / Somapoetics 74: Lecture on Ripples by Prof. Chin-Lap 134
John Nelson / Pawnee Skies: The First Edge 141
Jerome Rothenberg / For Breyten Breytenbach In Prison 144
The Editors / Notes & Comments 146
Insert Disc Recording / Side One: Son House telling of his conversion
              experience; Side Two: Awawo-John, Igiepo-Aimieb, and Asegieme-Obemata
              singing Songs of Ritual License from Midwestern Nigeria.

Photo Credits: cover (Igiepo-Aimieb), Jean Borgatti; p. 9, Jeff Titon; p. 47,
              William Ferris, Jr.; p. 61, Jean Borgatti; pp. 119, 120, 121, 122, Olle
              Tesch; p. 123, Bengt af Klintberg.
Son House, performer
Jeff Titon, transcriber

Son House: Two Narratives

Transcriber’s Introduction

One of the few living singers who made race records before the Depression, Eddie “Son” House is living proof that one cannot be interviewed to death; quite the opposite. Meeting him on several occasions after his 1964 “rediscovery,” I became intrigued as much by his storytelling as his singing. Responding to my questions about his life and music, he habitually cast his experience directly into sustained autobiographical narrative. And sometimes autobiography shaded into drama as he played out the various roles: landlord, preacher, sheriff, and so on.

A devout Christian until his mid-twenties when he took up blues, his early song lyrics (and recent conversation) reveal a personal conflict between the church and the devil’s music: “just puttin your hands on a guitar,” he told me, “looked to me like that was a sin.” He was a sometime preacher in the 1930s, the same decade that he was best known throughout the Mississippi delta as a blues singer. His “Conversion Experience Narrative” is an excerpt from a tape-recorded conversation Son House had with me in Minneapolis, Minnesota, at the Gopher Campus Motor Lodge, on May 8, 1971. I had asked him why he waited so long before taking up blues, and he replied with a reminiscence of his Christian conversion experience.

His career as a blues singer has been the subject of numerous published articles. His nine 1930 Paramount sides — only six of which have been found — are splendid examples of the Delta blues style which formed the music of two of his better known pupils, Muddy Waters and Robert Johnson. “The Death of Robert Johnson” is a narrative which preceded and introduced a song, “Levee Camp Moan,” at the first Ann Arbor (Mich.) Blues Festival; I transcribed it from a tape recording I made in the audience on Aug. 3, 1969.

I tried to render both narratives in a prescriptive notation to capture something of their stress and flow: space (reading across from left to right) suggests time, while typeface indicates volume and intonation pattern, as follows:
Conversion Experience Narrative

When I was a kid, a youngster up—

teen—
a young teenager

and

up like that I was more churchified.

Then that's mostly all I could see into.

Cause they'd had us go—we'd had to go to the Sabbath School, uh.

Every Sunday we didn't miss goin to no Sabbath School. We'd be into that and uh then and uh—

in this church there some of the

ones a little larger than me and like that and it come time of year for em to run revival meetin, uh, some pastor come to open up the revival meetin,

oh, for a week or more.

[Coughs.] Well,

we'd all be goin to the thing they call the mourners' bench.

Gettin on your knees, you know, and lettin the old folks pray for you.

Yeah an

in a couple of days or weeks somebody'd come up, holler out they had something.

They had religion; they'd squall round, man, go on. So they left me

that away I guess

oh about
near bout

six or eight months sometime.

Uh I didn't fall for it because I— I figured they was puttin on and I didn't want to be puttin on. I wanted mine to be real and so I just kept on until finally, [clears throat] the next session,

I said, "Is there—this one time I'm just gone see is—is any any way to get this thing religion they goin round here talkin about, puttin on and goin on."

I prayed and pray—commenced prayin man, every night; workin

in the field an

plowin the mule and every thing. Work all day hard an go on home (whew) tryin to pray, tryin to pray an work.

So finally I kept on like that until

they

uh come back home that night, middle of the night after the pastor turned out.

So I went on home and I was livin down in the lower part the

place from where my daddy an them stayed, down to my cousin's. Went down there; I didn't want to be up there around the old folks.

And man I went out back of the house

little bit in
in this old alfalka
field out there.

I had been scared of snakes
cause snakes would be bad in the summertime, you know, crawlin through them weeds and things. But I wasn't studyin them snakes then.
I'd say they — they better get out of the way if they don't want to get their heads mashed off [laughs].

I went on; I was there in that alfalka field and I got down pray gettin on my knees

in that alfalfa.

Dew was fallin.

And man I prayed and I prayed and I prayed and

for wait awhile,
man, I hollered out.

Found out then; I said, "Yes it is somethin to be got, too, cause I got it now!" [Laughs.] Sure did.

Went on back there to that house and told my cousin Robert and all them bout that and went walked about
two miles and a little better

and up to another white fellow's house

and woke him up and told him all about it.
An we was workin for him, too.
But I wouldn't care
how tough he was or whatnot. "Get up out of that bed and listen to what I got to say." [Laughs.] He thought I was crazy!

Yeah.
Name was—
we all called him Mister Keaton, T. F. Keaton.
Yeah.

I say, "Oh yeah!"

Found out better now.

The Death of Robert Johnson

Yeah this blues business
it's a killer!
Yoo!
Yessirree Bob.
Yeah.
Yes it is.
You understand it good.

Now
let's see.
This fellow here

he worked on the levee once.
Old Mississippi River
levee
camp.
I used to work on it myself.
He worked on it.
He had a girl
uh there in Memphis, Tennessee
once
but she didn’t like him too well. But she liked—
when you—when you made a dollar a day ‘long in them times,
oh, man, that was big money.
That was big money, whoo!
Dollar a day? Good goodness alive; he was a big shot.
Yeah [Laughs].
And she—she was capturin all that dough, you know.
You know, it would—pat him in the back, you know, and call him “daddy.”
Whoo! An him workin. His flesh’d crawl. [Laughs].
I—I used to tell little Robert Johnson bout that directly after he first learnt.
And he—first thing he knowed to do, he’d follow me and Willie Brown around—to Saturday night balls, and he’d
blow harmonica—he was a good harmonica blower. He could really eat ’em up. So he went off some-
where and got on one of them levee camps and
when he came back
I—he
could uh
play the guitar
mmm, “Terraplane Blues,” and me and Willie, we each—
we was playin out there a little old place they called, uh, Bankston, Mississippi.
He—he come out there that night.
So every time we had on an act, when me an Willie’d set the guitars over in the corner, in the summertime, hot, and we
go out on the porch, the
fan, you know, and
sweat cool off some, and time we’d get up he’d grab (that was ‘fore he learnt) and grab the guitar
keep racket and people didn’t like that.
No.
So we done the old slow drag dance then; they didn’t do the kind of dance stuff they put out now.
Oh. They slide it—slow drag at you. Mmm—dippin’ that snuff, too, you know. [Laughs].
And they didn’t want to hear that stuff.
They sayin, “Whyn’t y’all go in there and stop that boy with that thing. He’s drivin everybody crazy.”
[Laughs]. They talk. Try to stop him and so forth. When he come back that time,
me and Willie’s coolin off, I said, “Listen:
the 'Terraplane.’” I said, “Wonder who is that in there?” I just knowed it wasn’t him.

“Hmm, who is that playin that the ‘Terraplane Blues’?”

Just to peek, we went to the window and peeped in.

They didn’t tell any they’d want we come in there and stop him then.

They was crowdin up around him.

And, oh, when he got to the end of it, and got through with the all of it, and, little bit of “Play it, daddy. Play it again. Play at the Terr —.” Oh, he just couldn’t stand that “daddy” stuff.

So after he got through and everything, I told him, I said, “Now —.”

I say, “Robert, I’ll tell you this, now, boy,” I said, “Some of them guys is in there shootin craps, and got them old owl-heads,

and all them ain’t got them old owl-heads got shotguns up under the — under the house.” [Laughs].

I say, “You have to watch for that stuff, man. Because you can’t stand them callin callin you ‘daddy’.” I said, “You better s — you better stand it.”

So, sure enough, and he went down out on that Dog somewhere and so we — next news we got back there at Robinsonville (his father and mother lived there) they was tellin us about a guy that got killed.

Yep. He just couldn’t stand that.
Son House, Minneapolis Minnesota, May 1971
selected and transcribed by Jeff Titon

Downhome Blues Lyrics Since The Second World War: A Selection

After the second World War newborn tiny record companies broke the major companies' monopoly on blues recording. The downhome style—a state (usually Mississippi) and state of mind—produced regional best-sellers and could be heard endlessly on roadhouse juke boxes. In the North and far West, downhome blues steadied recently migrated men and women, though those who wanted to raise their station in life were uneasy and kept the music out of their homes and away from their children.

While urbane blues singers, such as Joe Turner or B. B. King, relied frequently on professional songwriters, arrangers, and jazz band accompaniments, the downhome singer wrote or patched his own songs and accompanied himself. As a result, downhome songs are capable of striking invention and (sometimes) stronger emotion, more quickly felt.

Blues lyrics are moral, ethical; they pass judgment on behavior and show how to get along in the world. Although the songs are thought sinful by Black churches, the singers preach an ethic of the Golden Rule. In most of them a drama of love is set against a geography of motion. Movement in blues lyrics is precipitated by a "mistreater" character, someone who does not respect the singer's dignity. Recognition of the mistreatment becomes, first, the occasion for a bill of indictment. The drama then turns on what the "I" of the song will do: accept the situation, try to reform the mistreater, or leave. Though blues songs do not narrate stories the way ballads do, the corpus of blues lyrics may be viewed as history: a cycle of journeys in search of fair treatment and better times. Each song

lyric—indeed, often each stanza—becomes a way-station, a realization, and a declaration. At each phase the "I" of the lyric, asserting independence yet troubled by memory, advances by beginning again. If the theme of Anglo-American ballads is tragic—love thwarted by fate and ending in death—the theme of Black American blues is comic: celebration of freedom. The one is linear, progressive, and final; the other is cyclical and regenerative.

A note on the transcriptions, written down as I heard them. Since 1967, my transcriptions of blues lyrics have reflected Charles Olson's notions (in "Projective Verse") of the poem as a field of force whose lines project from the breath. Italicized words are my guesswork; identification at the end of each song indicates stage name, real name, record company and number of original issue, recording date, and copyright holder (if known).
Ludella

1.

Now Ludella you know I even paid your house rent
I got you ev'rything you need
Now Ludella you done start some side stuff baby
You're runnin' 'round on me but Ludella Ludella
Baby don't you hear me callin' you

Now you know I've did all in the world I could Ludella
Baby just tryin' to get along with you
(Ride baby ride
Give me the blues)

2.

Now and I says goodbye Ludella babe
I declare I'm through with you
You can keep on runnin' 'round woman I don't
Care what in the world you do but Ludella Ludella
Baby don't you hear me callin' you

Now I've did ev'rything in this world
Baby and I can't get along with you

Jimmy Rogers
(James A. Lane)
Unissued
Chicago, 1949

Lonesome Home

1.

Ain't it lonesome ain't it lonesome
Sittin' in your home alone
Ain't it lonesome ain't it lonesome
Sittin' in your home alone

Yes you know when your wife done quit your Black self
And the girl you love is gone

2.
Yeah you know she kinda like Katie Mae
I give her ev'rything in the world she needs
That's why she don't do nothin' man but
Lay up in the bed and read and you know she's
Kinda like Katie Mae
Boy I give that woman ev'rything in the world she needs

Yes that's why you know she don't do nothin' man
Lay up in the bed and read

3.
Yes you know I bought her a radio
I even bought her a 'lectric fan
She said “Sam I'm gon' lay here and read and God knows I won't have no other man” that made me feel so good
Till I don't know what to do

Yes darlin' ev'ry dollar poor Sam makes you know
He got to bring it back home to you
(Got to play it out right here)

4.
Still I say can't a woman act funny I'm talkin' about
When she got another man
You know she won't look straight at you boy she always raisin' sand can't a

Woman act funny
Boy when she got another man
Yes you know she won't look straight at you
Then she's always raisin' sand

Sam "Lightnin'" Hopkins
Gold Star 624
Houston, 1947
Modern Music, BMI

**Five Long Years**

1.
If you ever been mistreated
You know just what I'm talkin' about

Well if you ever been mistreated
You know just what I'm talkin' about

I worked five long years for one woman
She had the nerve to put me out

2.
I got a job in a steel mill
A-truckin' steel like a slave
For five long years ev'ry Friday I went straight home with all my pay if you've
Ever been mistreated

uh you know just what I'm talkin' about

I worked five long years for one woman
She had the nerve to put me out

3.
I had a death in my family
She wouldn't give me a helping hand
I borrowed two or three dollars from the woman she said "Hurry up and pay it back old man" if you've
Ever been mistreated
Uh you know just what I'm talkin' about

I worked five long years for one woman
She had the nerve to put me out

4.
    I finally learned a lesson
    I should have known a long time ago
    The next woman I marry has got to work and bring me some dough

I've been mistreated
You know just what I'm talkin' about

I worked five long years for one woman
She had the nerve to put me out

Eddie Boyd
JOB 1007
Chicago, 1952

Good Thing Blues

1.
Good things
My baby make good things come to my remind

Good things
My baby make good things come to my remind

Ev'ry time she throws her arms around me
I don't do a thing but act a clown
Man y'know my baby went out last night and got drunk
Man that's somethin' I really can't stand
She came home this mornin' kickin' up on the door
"Doctor Ross I done found me another man
Because he make good things"
My baby make good things come to my remind

'n ev'ry time she throws her arms around me
I don't do a thing but act a clown

Good things
My baby make good things come to my remind

You know when she throws her arms around me
I don't do a thing but act a clown
(Play the blues man)

Man you know my baby said she's goin' away for four or five months
She said "Doctor Ross I'll be back home soon
If I don't come back home Wednesday evenin'
You can look for me Thursday in the afternoon 'cause you make good things"
My baby make good things come to my remind

Ev'ry time she throws her arms around me
I don't do a thing but act a clown

Doctor Ross
Isaiah Ross
Unissued
Memphis, 1954
Tradition Music, BMI
Alley Special

1.
You know now mama take me out to the alley now mama
Before the high water rise
Y'all know I ain't no Christian
'Cause I
    once have been baptized know I went to church this mornin'
Yes and they
called on me to pray
Well I fell down on my knees
    on my knees
Gee
    I for—
    forgot just what to say

2.
You know when I cried "Lord my father my Jesus" I didn't know what I was doin'
I said that would be the kingdom come
I say if you got any brownskin women in heaven
Will you please to send Wright Holmes one
Listen master you
    know I ain't never been to heaven
Oh there's a black one
    I have been told
You know they tell me got women up there
    women up there
Gee with their mouths all lined with gold

3.
I'll bet you I get my cream from a cream'ry
You get your'n from a jersey cow (all right)
I'll bet you I'll get my meat from a pig
I'll bet you get your bacon from a no-good sow tell the truth now don't you because the woman I'm gon' to lovin'
She’s a holy woman
    and she
    beats that tambourine
And ev’ry time me and that little sister go to lovin’ each other
Oooh well boy
    she talks that only one tongue to me

4.
You know I ’cided to get me nigh a little heifer
And I’m gonna get me one little jersey bull
    Lord don’t you hear me now mama
    Keep on a-talkin’
Yeah I ’cided to get nigh a little heifer
Yes I’m gon’ get me one little jersey bull
I’m gonna keep on a-churnin’ churnin’
Yeah
till my
    churnin’s done got full
(Well I believe I’ll churn a little bit
Yeah)

5.
Now some of these here days
I’m gonna have me a heaven of my own
    Lord don’t you hear me
    Keep on a-pleasin’ to you
Babe I say some of these here days
I’m gonna have me a heaven of my own
I’ll have a gang of these brownskin women
Yeah they’re gon’ be gathered all ’round my throne
Beat-up Team

1. No the blues ain't nothin'
   But a botheration on your mind

You know the blues ain't nothin'
But a botheration on your mind

When you think your woman's gone
Your woman there with you all the time

2. I used to pick a whole lot of cotton baby
   Peoples and I used to pull a whole lot of corn

You know I used to pick a whole lot of cotton people
And I used to pull a whole lot of corn

I used to try to tell this city boy what to do
But look like to me
   he just couldn't learn

3. Ain't it wonderful
   to know what to do
'Special when you at home

Ain't it wonderful to know what to do
'Special when you at home

That's while I was raised up workin Lord now
Out there on Mister —
   Mister Charlie's farm
4.  
I couldn't go to town till Sat'day  
Peoples I couldn't even spend my dough  

I couldn't even go to town till on a Sat'day  
Peoples I couldn't even spend my dough  

You know I would even got scared now  
I was scared to go from door to door  
(Well all right)  

5.  
Well when I wasn't drivin' tractor  
Babe I had me a old  
beat-up team  

You know when I wasn't drivin' tractor  
You know I had me a  
old beat-up team  

You know I was down in Mississippi  
And peoples you know just what I mean  

6.  
The work wasn't so hard  
But my boss was so doggone mean  

You know the work wasn't hard  
But my boss was so doggone mean  

But I had two
pretty horses Lord
Two of the ones
that you ever seen
(Watch out brother Robert)

7.
You know when you see me laughin'
I'm laughin' just to keep from cryin'

When you see me laughin'
You know I'm laughin' just to keep from cryin'

You know I done
worked so hard
I can't get it
off of my mind

Otis Spann
Candid Lp 8001
New York, 1960

Ugly Face Blues

1.
I got up this mornin'
And I put on my shoes
I strung my shoes
Then I washed my face
I walked to the mirror
For to comb my hair
I made a move
Didn't know what to do
I stepped a little forward
Start to break and run
Oh baby
Oh baby
baby this ain’t me

I done got so ugly I don’t even know myself

2.
I’m goin’ to town
Have some pictures made
I’m gon’ bring ’em back home
Put ’em side by side
I’m gon’ take a good look
See if it favor me

Oh no
Oh no
baby this ain’t me

I done got so ugly I don’t even know myself

3.
Mama said about her baby
Prettiest thing she had
That’s what remain
Of the thing in the past

Baby
Oh baby
baby this ain’t me

I done got so ugly I don’t even know myself

4.
I was standin’ on the porch
Lookin’ down the street
I looked like somethin’ I
Hadn’t saw in a week
Baby this ain’t me
Oh baby’s ain’t me

I done got so ugly I don’t even know myself

Tim Moore’s Farm

1.
Yeah you know it ain’t but the one thing
You know this Black man done was wrong

Yeah you know it ain’t but the one thing
You know this Black man done was wrong

Yes you know I moved my wife and family
Down on Mister Tim Moore’s farm

2.
Yeah you know Mister Tim Moore’s a man
He don’t never stand and grin
He just said “Keep out of the graveyard I’ll
Save you from the pen” you know

Soon in the morning
He’ll give you scrambled eggs

Yes but he’s liable to call you so soon
You’ll catch a mule by his hind legs
3.

Yes you know I got a telegram this mornin' boy it read
It say "You're wife is dead"
I show it to Mister Moore he said "Go ahead nigger
You know you got to plow old Red"
That White man says "It's been raining
Yes and I'm way behind
I may let you bury that woman one of these old
Dinnertimes" I told him "No Mister Moore
Somebody's got to go"

He says "If you ain't able to plow Sam
Stay up there and grab your hoe"

Bad Boy

1.
I used to be a bad boy a bad boy
Don't have to be bad no more
    oh well

I used to be a bad boy
Don't have to be bad no more

I learned my lesson
A long
    time ago

Sam "Lightnin' " Hopkins
Gold Star 640
Houston, 1947
2.
My mother died
Left me
    by myself

My mother died
    oh well
    she left me by myself

Well well well well well well-ll-ll mmmmm mmm m mmm
Now I ain't got nobody
Set down and talk with me

3.
Ohh
    mmmmmmm mm mmm mm
    Lord Lord

Lord I'm by myself

My brothers
    and my sisters
    don't seem to know me
    Lord no more

Mm mmm mm mmm mm mmm mm

John Lee Hooker
Modern 942
Detroit, 1953
Modern Music, BMI
Doctor Blues

1.
Well now I went to the doctor
You know 'long the other day
Know my doctor he
Throw the book away say that he
Couldn't do me no good
Yes he couldn't do me no good

Say "If anybody can help you son
Take somebody in your neighborhood"

2.
Well now I was
Went in to the hospital
And this what the doctor said
Said "You got
three days here son and
Nine months in bed"
Said "I can't do you no good
Yes I can't do you no good"

Said "The only one that can help you boy is the
Peoples in your neighborhood"
(Watch out brother George)

3.
Well now I was
Layin in my bedroom you know
All alone
Didn't have nobody baby
At my lonesome home
Couldn't do me no good
Yes he couldn't do me no good
Say "Anyone can help you son it
Be somebody in your neighborhood"

4.
Yes he couldn't do me no good
The doctor couldn't do me no good
No he couldn't do me no good
Say he couldn't do me no good
Say "If one can help you boy it take some—
Body in your neighborhood"

5.
Well you know what the doctor told me
he couldn't do the boy no good

Otis Spann
Bluesway Lp 6013
Detroit? c. 1967
Panco Music, BMI
These selections are from a forthcoming book, *The Signifying Monkey: A Collection of Afro-American Oral Literature*. The material was collected in New York City and Philadelphia, but the informants came from different parts of the U.S. and occasionally from the Caribbean. Onwuchekwa Jemie teaches African and Afro-American Literature at the University of Minnesota. He is a Nigerian.

Onwuchekwa Jemie, transcriber

**Signifying, Dozens, and Toasts; A Selection**

### Some Features of Afro Oral Art

Oral literature is a performer’s art; an active audience is therefore essential. The performers are actors, conscious of the effect they are having on the audience, and responding to the audience’s applause or ridicule, especially in contest situations (dozens, boasts, threats). Implicit always in performer/audience interaction is the call-and-response or leader-choral antphony which is one of the central features of the oral art of African peoples, and a dimension difficult to recreate in print.

*Language / imagery* is marked by a fantastic play of imagination, an excess of wealth, exaggeration, wild hyperbole. Images are far-fetched, unexpected, extraordinary; their impact is *surprise*, which contributes to their freshness and power. Images are concrete, vivid, capturing essential relationships, whether natural/eternal conditions (“the lion stuck on the monkey like stink on shit”) or historical ones (“Stack stuck on Jesse like a German on a Jew”). Verbal virtuosity, combining what Samuel Johnson called “strength of thought” and “happiness of language.” These attributes are of course not unique to Afro oral art but operate in varying intensities and combinations in oral arts the world over.

*Obscenities* (shit, fuck, motherfucker, ass, etc.) carry at least three possibilities: (1) as rebellion (conventional): angry iconoclasm, attacks on status quo, on phoney respectability, etc. (2) as intensifiers, emphasis: “take your fuckin hands off me!” (angry); “run, motherfucker, run!” (affectionate—a 7 year old cheering his buddy to second base); “... soon as I get my shit together” (neutral— or self-deprecatory?— like, I who have nothing). Similarly, “Nigger, you ain’t shit!”— a graphic rendition of “nothing.” (3) as African carryover: minimal puritan embarrassment (at least among the Igbo of Nigeria) regarding sex and bodily functions, e.g., in polite company: “o-na ars nsi”— he eats shit (is a dog, a stupid idiot, a low-down, no-good motherfucker); “arasilam nsi”— don’t eat shit in my presence (don’t give me that shit).

### Signifying

— a put-down so cleverly phrased it sounds like praise, or at least neutral/harmless, e.g., Monkey’s concern (crocodile tears) at Elephant’s (alleged) insults to Lion and his family. Monkey is signifying, playing the dozens on Lion without Lion realizing it. Or as in these lines from H. Rap Brown’s *Die Nigger Die!*

*If I had your hands I’d give ‘way both my arms
Cause I could do without them
I’m the man but you the main man
I read the books you write
You set the pace in the race I run
Why, you always in good form
You got more foam than Alka Seltzer...*

Brown’s rap slips (subtly, imperceptibly) from what sounds like praise but is really a double entendre (your hands look like claws, that’s why) to what seems like genuine though playfully hyperbolic praise to playful dispraise masked behind the final double entendre of the foamy seltzer. Brown’s rap is a harmless, gentle brand of signifying, as between friends; Monkey’s a more serious/malicious species, bringing the unwary, gullible Lion to grief.
Dozens

also known as sounding, hiking, screaming, ranking, woofing, capping, joining, etc.: a verbal game of trading abuse, abuse mostly of female relatives. Played mostly by males. Among its central functions is social behavior control: channeled aggression, ritualized release of violence within rigid boundaries, following understood and accepted conventions. Despite its conventions, however, the dozens in real life is always flexible, ambiguous, double-edged: always, it could be used either to amuse or to abuse (and of course when it amuses, it amuses by abusing). Much like boasts and threats, dozens could be used either to start a fight (as an unequivocal expression of anger and provocation), or to inject light humor in a gathering of friends. When thus used to amuse, it is equivalent to a joke well told, an exhibition by two contestants (two at a time, at any rate) of superb imagination and verbal virtuosity before an approving audience.

The audience is always vital. Whether the exchange ends as entertainment or degenerates into violence quite often depends on the audience. The performance is staged for their appreciation, and they are, in their responses, the final arbiters of victory or loss. At a good score they would break into laughter, or shout their approval: “Oooooo!!” “Sound!!” “Rank!!” It is the crowd’s comments, their derisive or approving laughter, that most readily turns the game into a fight. The crowd could channel the contest toward one goal or the other; or they could see-saw it, pushing it first in one direction, then in the other. To that extent the players are unfree; and unless one or both players simply bow out, a crowd that is determined to see a fight will manipulate them until it gets one.

Toasts

(hercic narratives, epics): toasts are commonly recited in bars, pool halls, barber shops, gyms, playgrounds, schoolyards, shop classes, street corners, stoops, in the army, navy, air force, jails — anywhere men gather. A mostly male pastime. Beginning in the high school years, the memorizing and recitation of toasts represents an elaborating and complicating of the forms and skills of rapping and signifying, boasts and threats and dozens (all of which would have been learned beginning in early adolescence), and serves as a rite of passage into adulthood.

There are two basic hero types: the badman and bully, as in Stagger Lee; and the trickster, as in the Monkey. A third type combines the attributes of badman and trickster, as in Shine. As embodiments of fragments of Afro-American sensibility, all three are existential nay-sayers, with their roots deep in slave life and lore: the badman is the hard, tough, “bad nigger” who would rather die than bend; the trickster a type of the wily slave John and of Brer Rabbit.

The audience (listeners rather than participants, far less active than the dozens audience) recognize these heroes as people like themselves, as a composite of people they encounter in everyday life. They know them by circumstantial details — by the way they dress, the way they talk, the places they go and the things they do. Both reciter and audience identify with the hero to some extent. The hero plays a role in personality formation: one watches Stagger Lee, for instance, to learn how a bad dude operates, then becomes one by imitating him. The creative process comes full circle: first, art copies life (Stagger Lee modeled on real-life bad niggers), then life copies art.
Signifying Monkey #2

It was deep in the jungle, way back of the sticks.
It was raining like a muthafuka and cold as a bitch.

The monkey and the coon were sitting on the ground,
drinking corn liquor and bullshitting around.

Now there hadn't been any shit in the jungle for quite a bit.
So the monkey decided he'd start some shit.

When out of the jungle came a mighty roar.
It was King Leo the Lion on all four paws.

The coon poked the monkey in the side,
and said, "That's one muthafuka we'll all let slide."

The monkey hunched the coon back and said, "What will you bet?
I'll have that lion's ass kicked yet."

The monkey jumped up. He yelled, "Leo, Leo, have you heard,
have you heard the latest word?"

Why, there's this fat muthafuka down the lane
that's been talking some shit that's a goddamned shame.

He talked about your momma. He talked about your dad.
Why, he even said some shit that even made me mad.

He talked about your sister, the one you love so dear.
Why, he said the little whore would fuck for a small can of beer."

Leo jumped back with his jaws all fat.
He said, "Where's the big muthafuka? Where's he at?"

Immediately, the monkey's tail pointed to the East.

Like a ball of lightning and a ball of white heat,
the lion set out on all four feet.

He spotted Dimbo in a small clump of grass.
He said, "Get up, muthafuka. I'm going t' kick your ass."
Dimbo looked out from the corner of his eye. He said, "You better go 'head, Leo, and fuck with somebody your own size."

The lion tried to hit him with a forward right pass. The elephant side-stepped him and kicked him in the ass.

They fought for thirty days and they fought for thirty nights. And I still don't see how the lion got out of that fucking fight.

Why, he crawled through the jungle on a cane and a crutch, looking for that monkey that had to say so damned much.

When high, high, in a coconut tree, the monkey hollered, "Hey, fuck-face, you looking for me?

Why you come past my house roaring and shit? I ought t' kick your ass for that little bit.

If I hadn't sprained my finger or broken my thumb, I'd walk with your ass from here to kingdom come."

Well, the monkey started laughing and jumping up and down, when his foot slipped and his ass hit the ground.

The lion was on him with all four feet. He said, "I'm going t' grind this little muthafuka up to hamburger meat."

The monkey said, "Why you just let me get my balls out the sand, I'll fight your ass like a natural man."

The lion jumped back all ready for a fight. And that's when that monkey jumped damned near clean out of sight.

Since then there's been a lot of talk and a lot of lying, but I'll be goddamned if there's been any more signifying.

Meanwhile down at the bar having himself a ball, Cousin Baboon heard of Monkey's downfall.

He looked at the crowd with a tear in his eye. He said, "That muthafuka Leo is just my size."
He took a shot of whiskey. He took a shot of gin.
He said, "I got a long way to go and little time to make it in."

The fight was about to start.
Cousin Raccoon set it off with a fart.

UUUuurrt!

"In this corner, Cousin Baboon, a mean muthafuka.
In this corner, Leo, king of us all."

The bell rang. The whistle blew.
Cousin Baboon was on Leo like a German on a Jew.

Cousin Baboon turned his head to spit.
Leo stuck close to him like stink on shit.

The monkey jumped out of the tree and onto the grass,
just to see his cousin get kicked all in the ass.

And like I said before,
Since then there's been a lot of talk and a lot of lying,
but I'll be goddamned if there's been any more signifying.

Crying Blues

Hard Luck:
I was walking around the fairgrounds and this man stopped me and said, "Hold it! Here's ten dollars."
I said, "Ten dollars? What for?"
The man said, "The ugliest man on the ground get ten dollars."
I was proud to be ugly then because I didn't have nothing then. I reached out for it like that and the man snatched it back and said, "Hold it. Here's a man back of you that's uglier than you."
And that's the kind of hard luck I had.
If bad luck was music, I'd have the hottest band in town.
If bad luck was money, I'd be the richest man in town.
I got buzzard luck. Can't kill nothin' and nothin' will die, and I'm slowly starving to death.
Dozens

1. Willie: Hey man! How's your mama? I saw her last night, her hair was kinky, her draws were baggy, and she was drunk as a skunk. She looked so bad she would have scared a baboon to death. Joe: Say man! That was your mama, who was looking so bad even you didn't recognize her.

2. Your pap's in jail and your mother's around corner shouting pussy for sale.

3. Your mother's like a doorknob, everybody gets a turn.

4. At least I have a father and not fifty suspects.

5. Your mother goes to church, puts in a penny and asks for change.

6. I did it to yo moma
   on the railroad track
   And when her ass went up
   The trains went back

7. I don't play the Dozens
   I play the 6½
   And the way I did it to yo moma
   Made yo grandpa laugh

8. Some like it hot
   Some like it cold
   Some who like your mama
   Like it pretty damn old.

9. Your mother is so ugly, when she cries tears run down her back.

10. Your mother is like a cake, everybody gets a piece.

11. Your mama has so many wrinkles in her head that she has to screw her hat on.

12. Your mama's head is so bald that I can read her mind.

13. Your mama is like a balloon, always blown up.

14. Your mother's got two left titties.

15. Your mother's teeth are so buck that she can eat apples through a picket fence.
16. If brains were dynamite your mother wouldn't have enough sense to blow her nose.

17. I don't want to talk about your mama, she is a good old soul. She has a double-barrel pussy and a cannon asshole.

18. Your mother rides shotgun for the Sanitation Department.

19. Your mother's like a railroad track, she gets laid all over the country.

20. Your mother's like a cup of coffee: hot, black, and ready to be creamed.

21. I saw your mother on a bench
   Trying to screw a cock with a monkey wrench.

22. Your family is so poor the roaches leave at dinner time.

23. If you find a pair of slippers under your mother's bed, they're mine.

24. A lady said to your father, "Your fly is open." Your father said, "You noticed my fly was open, did you see that big shiny black cadillac?" The lady said, "No, but I saw a little volkswagen with two flat tires."

25. Let's get off the subject of mothers, 'cause I just got off of yours.

Oratorical

Ladies and gentlemen, hobos and tramps,
bumble bees, mosquitoes and bowlegged ants.
We've come before you, to stand behind you.
to tell you something we know nothing about.
On Wednesday, which is Good Friday,
there'll be a ladies' meeting, for men only.
The admission is free, so please pay at the door,
there'll be plenty of seats, so sit on the floor.

[Sing here and clap hands:]
   One bright day in the middle of the night,
   2 dead boys got up to fight.
   Back to back they faced each other,
pulled out their swords and shot one another.
A deaf policeman heard the noise, 
he got up to kill those two dead boys. 
If you don’t believe my lie is true, 
ask the blind man, he saw it too.

A Declaration of Friendship

You’re my ace boon coon 
You’re my pride and joy 
You’re a ugly motherfucker 
But you’re still my boy

Song

Now I lay me down to slumber, 
I pray the lord I hit the number . . 
If I should die before I wake, 
Put all I own on 208!

Shine #2

The 4th of May was a hell of a day 
when the great Titanic sailed away.

Old Black boy work’n round deck 
had made up his mind not to be part of that historical wreck.

Bow broke open, water started to flow, 
Shine thought it was time to let the captain know.

Shine jumped up from the deck below, 
said, “Captain, Captain, I want you to know 
the water done rose up to the first floor.”

Captain said, “Shine, Shine, have no fear, 
I have 99 pumps to pump the water clear. 
Now carry your black ass back down below, 
before I beat your ass with this 2 by 4.

Shine went back and he started to think, 
he said, “This motherfucker is about to sink.”

Shine went up from the deck below, 
said, “Captain, Captain, the water done rose to the second floor.”
Captain said, “Shine, Shine have no doubt,
I got 99 pumps to pump the water out.
Now carry your black ass down below
before I beat your head with this 2 by 4.”

Shine said, “Captain, Captain, can't you see,
this ain't no time to bullshit me.
Now I have no fear and I have no doubt
but I think it's time to get my black ass out.”

Shine jumped overboard and he started to stroke
making waves like a motor boat.

He swam on his back and he swam on his side,
he saw a whale and hitched a ride.

Just about that time the captain came running cross the deck,
crying, “Shine, save poor me,
I'll make you the greatest black man you could ever be.”

Shine said, “You hate my color and you despise my face,
jump your ass in this water and give these sharks a race.”

About that time the captain’s daughter come running across deck,
with her draws around her ankle and her bra around her neck.

Cried, “Shine, Shine, save poor me,
I'll give you more pussy than you'll ever see.”

Shine said, “Pussy on land, pussy on sea,
pussy on land is good enough for me.

Now I know you're pregnant, about to have my kid,
but you better hit the water like old Shine did.”

Then all of a sudden a passenger came on deck
crying, “Shine, Shine, save poor me,
if you can't save me please save my child.
Come up here on the deck and rest for a while.”

Shine looked at the boy with a tear in his eye,
“I'm sorry, little fellow, but every motherfucker is born to die.”
Shine ran up on this shark, Shine said, “Nearer my God to Thee.”
Shark said, “Bring your black ass to me.”

Shine said, “There are fishes in the lake, the ocean, in the sea,
you have to be a swimming motherfucker to out-swim me.”

Shark said, “Shine, Shine, you're doing fine,
miss one stroke your black ass is mine.”

Shine said, “Oh if I had my razor and a little notion.
I'd spread shark shit all over this ocean.”

By the time the news hit the land the Titanic had sunk
Shine was in Harlem at the Rooster dead drunk.

**Stagger Lee and the James Brothers #3**

Way back in the 1800's, you know,
lived two brothers who didn't give a damn about the poor.

Robbing and conniving, they thought they were right,
and the ones who thought different had to put up a motherfucking fight.

Frank and Jesse was their names,
they were the last of the family called James.

It was on this particular night you see,
they set out on this big destiny.

Frank rode a horse by the name of Shine,
who could piss, shit, and run at the same time.

Jesse rode a big Pinto called Mack,
who got mad as hell if Jess broke wind on his back.

Away in the night they rode like fools,
couldn't nobody tell 'em that they wasn't cool.

As they rode and rode they watched the moon,
man, that damn train would be there soon.
"Jesse," said Frank, "Let's wait on that hill, so we can hear that Iron Bitch when she makes that squeal."

Jesse said, "Brother, check out your .44, we can't have no bullshit when we kick in the door."

Just at the lick of time, that big funky train gave a sweet whine.

"O.K., Brother, cover your face, we can't have no recognition after we have fucked up the place."

They rode like hell to catch up with the train, but that was all in the work of the James.

"Jesse," said Frank, "Pull your .44; when I count three we'll break in the door."

Wham!! Them fucking James boys jumped in the door, passengers screamed, shouted, and all in a uproar.

Jesse said, "Shut up this goddamn noise, you hags, I'll blow your fucking heads off and put them in the bag!"

Jesse said, "Frank, you guard the rear, while I go up front and pick on the fucking engineer.

Way over in the corner as far as Frank could see, sat a black shiny nigger; who can this be?

Up jumped the nigger out of fright shouting, "Come on, motherfucker, you got a fight!

I'm going to teach y'all about fucking with me, 'cause my name is Stagger Lee."

Frank said, "Nigger, ain't you ashamed, you mean you never heard of the brothers called James?"

Stag said, "It don't matter about a name, when I finish whipping your ass you'll be in the Hall of Fame."
Frank said, "Nigger, don't fuck up, you know,
I got a friend who don't give a damn about you called .44."

All of a sudden Frank made a slip
and Old Stag cocked him in the lip.

Yea, Old Stag was on Frank like stink on shit.
This ass whipping he'd never forgit.

He shouted, "Please, black man, don't hit me in the face."
Stag said, "Shut up, motherfucker, before I pull out my case."

The passengers were jumping up and down with glee,
cheering for this black hero called Stagger Lee.

Just about that time old Jesse came back,
but Old Stag was quick, he ran Casey Mae up his crack.

Until this day the James boys can say:
"If you see this black nigger coming your way,
please, please let him be
'cause this bad nigger is Stagger Lee!"

**Bad, Bad Stack-O-Lee #4**

From the golden gates of California to the rocky shores of Maine,
there was some bad motherfuckers and I knew them all by name.

Take Billy the Kid, he had a groove of his own,
he was a fast motherfucker and bad to the bone.

And across the border from Mexico,
came throat-cutting, ass-kicking Geronimo.

He shot his dad, and killed his best friend,
he said, "I'll close the books on the nation and bring the world to an end."

Then up from hell came gun-slinging Sam,
he was a black motherfucker and didn't give a damn.
He had a little boy who was born to be
the baddest motherfucker on land or sea,
and the little boy's name was Stack-O-Lee.

When Stack-O-Lee was just one day old,
his dad kicked his ass til' his blood ran cold.

The very next day after Stack was born,
he shot the tittie out of his mouth and made him drink pure corn.

When Stack-O-Lee was at the age of five,
he saw the white folks burn his daddy alive.

This was in Mississippi where your black ass was mud,
and them crackers was looking for nigger's blood.

He walked to the grave and he didn't shed a tear,
he said, "If you take over in hell, pop,
Stack will damn sure rule back here."

He got back home at 4:44,
his blood was boiling when he knocked on the door.

Although his mother's heart was breaking, she met him with a smile.
She said, "We're left alone, my son," then she cried just like a little child.

He walked on past his mother, and looked up over the door,
that's when he buckled on his daddy's two famous .44s.

He said, "I love you, Mother, but I got to go away,
but before I leave this town, there some goddamn debt I got to pay."

He rode through Marshall, Texas, when the sun was going down,
he said, "Reach, you motherfuckers, because I know my way around."

The undertakers called a conference and they began to smile,
"This little nigger will bring us plenty business, although he's just a child."

Billy the Kid said, "Stack-O-Lee, I think you're out of class."
Stack shot Billy the Kid, and kicked Geronimo's ass.
Then he rode on out across the western plain,
he's the only black man that ever robbed Jessie James.

The white folks said, “Let’s hang Stack’s Mother, while Stack’s not around.”
But what they didn’t know, this black nigger had eased back into town.

They called his dear old Mother bitches, and a no-good southern whore,
and Stack fell outside blazing, with a brand new .44.

This time he started shooting, fiery tears was in his eyes,
and them motherfucking peckerwoods was dropping dead like flies.

But one old red face peckerwood ran from tree to tree.
He took a lead and fired, and he dropped poor Stack-O-Lee.

He said, “I got that nigger boy, and I got him on the run,”
but what he didn’t know, there was one more bullet in Stack’s gun.

He ran and stood up over Stack, and then to his surprise,
he stopped that last damn bullet, right between his goddamn eyes.

His Mother ran out to him, while Stack was on the ground.
He said, “You had better call the doctor, Mom, for your son is slowly going down.”

She called the old peckerwood doctor, and they put him in the bed.
They put two blankets on him and put two pillows under his head.

He said, “Look, little nigger boy, is there anything you’d like to say?
Your temperature is rising like hell, you won’t live to see the break of day.

Stack said, “All you peckerwoods are going to hell for sure,
and I’ll be there waiting on your ass, with a brand new .44.”

Then Stack’s chick came running in, she said, “Stack, I am your girl,
don’t you want some just before you leave this world?”

She crawled on top of Stack and got the fucking of her life.
She said, “Don’t die now, daddy, for I want to be your wife.”

She left his bedside crying.
She said, “Stack said tell you peckerwoods he’ll take on any bets,
Stack don’t owe a motherfucker here. Stack paid off all his debts.”
Three Tales From The Mississippi Delta

Introduction

I met Scott Dunbar during the summer of 1967 while recording blues singers throughout Mississippi. In 1960 his music was first issued by Frederic Ramsey in a book and record which include both photographs and descriptions of his performances. Since that time I issued several of his blues and an unusual cante-fable which Dunbar calls "Jay Bird" on a record and discuss his music in Blues from the Delta. More recent recordings of his music were issued by Parker Dinkins in 1970. Dunbar's musical evolution is thus documented over a sixteen-year period. He is a gifted performer who reshapes materials from both blues and country music sources.

To date, however, no one has looked at Dunbar's equally impressive repertoire of tales. Within the black community at Lake Mary he is known for the wit and humor of his tales as well as for his music. The following selection includes an elaborate version of "Belling the Buzzard." Richard Dorson recorded a shorter version from Mary Richardson, a native of Clarksdale, Mississippi, who later moved to Michigan.

Lake Mary is a river "cutoff." Originally part of the Mississippi, through erosion the river by-passed the lake bed and continued along another route. Martha and Scott Dunbar have lived on Lake Mary all their lives and their ancestors were slaves on plantations in the area. Stilts raise their home above the high-water level, and when the lake rises after heavy spring rains, chickens and dogs take shelter with the Dunbars and wait for the water to recede. Their two-room "shotgun" home is built with weathered cypress planks and stands beneath tall cypress trees covered with moss.


Belling The Buzzard

(Ferris) Somebody told me you tied a bell on a buzzard one time.
I did. I was raised on this river (the Mississippi). I was a little child when I put that bell on that buzzard, me and three or four boys. Well in them days when I was little, everything that roar like it does now, them old folks would say "That's the Lord coming. The Lord."
And you had to git on your knees and pray. If you didn't pray, they'd hit you in the head, Cap'n, with a stick or something. We lived over there, right over yonder (across the lake). Just look like a city. I said "Y'all old folks got too much religion. Y'all know the Lord ain't never made no racket like that roaring over yonder. Y'all know that's a boat or airplane or something. Y'all old folks got too much religion for me."

Me and a bunch of boys found a buzzard down in a stump hole. We went there and caught that buzzard and put a string around his neck and drew him up out the stump where was laying. Another fellow brought a bell and he held the buzzard while I tied the bell around him. We turned that buzzard loose and he went up in the air and that old bell hollering "Jing-a-ling. Jing-a-ling. Jing-a-ling."

Them old people hollering "Oh, Boy. I told you the world coming to a end. Don't you hear the Lord calling you? Shut up your mouth and listen. The world coming to a end. Shut up."

Every time that buzzard flapped his wings, that bell would jing-a-ling, jing-a-ling. It did sound 'stressful, Cap'n and that made that old buzzard like to run himself to death, that bell round his neck. He would git up higher and higher, higher and higher. He would git up so high till you couldn't hardly glimpse that buzzard. You just could hear that racket up in the air hollering "Jing-a-ling. Jing-a-ling."

Them old folks would peep out the door. "Oh, Lord. Have mercy. You told me you coming. You told me you coming. Ain't nobody like Jesus."

And the sun just hot as this here, Cap'n. I say "Y'all folks sweating now. Y'all ain't sweat yet. Y'all quit that holleringbout that's the Lord. Y'all hush."

"You don't know what you talking 'bout, Boy. Shut up."

They'd hit you right in the mouth or anywhere, Cap'n. I had to git down on my knees and sit there and laugh under my little knee pants. Just set there and laugh. They better not hear you laugh. I said "That's a shame these folks got so much religion here. A buzzard up in the air hollering 'Jing-a-ling. Jing-a-ling,' and they hollering 'Oh, here come the Lord.'"

"Shut up. I hear the Lord coming. Be still, Chillun."

If you biting on a piece of bread, you had to keep your mouth still. They was just that scared, Cap'n. Here come a preacher and he setting up on the gallery with a Bible. Everybody was sweating and hot and here he come. He wanted that money that night. He gonner preach that sermon about the Lord going through the air hollering "Jing-a-ling."

Everybody got on the gallery and said "How do you do?"

Oh, they "mister" that preacher. "How do you do, Mister Preacher? Us gonner fix up tonight? You gonner preach one tonight?"

"Let me tell all y'all sisters. Come here."

The people was hot and hungry and he rared back on that porch with his coat and necktie on. "You hear that someting flying through the air?"

"Yes sir, Preacher. Yes sir, Preacher."

"I been up there and I talked to the Man. The Man say 'All them ain't got religion, I'll send someting down there and make them kill theyself.'"

I say "Yeah, And you bout to kill yourself, Preacher. You know you ain't been
“Boy, shut up. That’s the preacher.”

I say “Momma, you don’t know if he a preacher or what. I bet he’s a good preacher. Go kill that chicken and give him some thighs and he’ll preach all right. But that ain’t it. He’s talking about that thing up in the air going ‘jing-a-ling, jing-a-ling.’ If he preach that sermon I won’t say nothing till us go to church.”

Oh, Man. Sundown couldn’t come fast enough. Everybody went to church that night. That’s what that preacher started off with, the text. “Amen. I been through. I went up in that man’s house. I went up there in a chariot. I went up yonder and I told him to put something to go through the sky to make the people git right. They ain’t right.”

When he say that them old sisters, they say “Woooo! Woooo! Woooo!” I mean some fainted so till their dresses come up over their heads here, Cap’n. Up over their heads and us just laying back laughing. “Say woman, pull your dress down. You ain’t got that much religion. Keep it down. Something else coming down to reckly (in a while) to shame you amongst all these people here shouting with your dresses up there.” I said “That’s a shame. Y’all better keep them dresses down fore something happen here.”

That ole preacher, he looked at that woman with that dress up and said “Amen!”

Everybody was setting there. “Yaah. Yaah, Preacher. You know what you talking about.”

After a while that buzzard come down low over the church when it got sort of quiet. That old bell hollering “Jing-a-ling. Jing-a-ling.”

“Don’t you hear him? Don’t you hear him out there? Let’s git outdoors and see what that is. That’s the Lord.”

And that old buzzard just “jing-a-ling” and them people just hollering and carrying on and us kids just sitting there laughing. They had some ice water there in a bucket and one woman fainted so till she couldn’t hardly move. A great big woman. I knowed the onlest thing to git her cured was to git a bucket of ice water and throw it up under her dress and let it run over her. Cap’n when that ice water hit her, that woman jumped up in the air and hollered “Wiiooo! That ain’t the Lord, is it? Let me git up from here.”

I said “Y’all cut this sermon off now cause I’m gonner talk now. Y’all people hush your mouth and let us talk here. Y’all don’t know what that is going through the sky? Say, Preacher. You the main one. You say you went up there?”

“Yeah, Boy.”

I say “I ain’t no boy now. You ain’t went nowhere. How did you git up there, Preacher?”

“Boy, I went up there with a Indian.”

“A Indian ain’t never went up there. No kind of Indian went up yonder with God. That ain’t it yet. You got all these people here crazy by you preaching a sermon for what us boys done. Us boys done this here for to fool y’all. What y’all gonner do now? Us put that bell on that buzzard and sent him through the sky.
Y'all waddn’t doing right. Y’all had too much religion. Everything you hear roaring, you git out there and holler ‘Here come the Lord.’ Airplane, ‘Here come the Lord.’ Everything. Couldn’t a motor or nothing run without ‘That’s the Lord coming.’ All y’all sisters and brothers here now, y’all just go back home and study about something else.”

“Boy, us oughta kill y’all. Us done like to killed us fool selves listening at the preacher and then . . .”

I said “That’s what I wanted y’all to do cause y’all like to killed us. Everything come along, y’all hit us in the head. My head sore now from y’all knocking me in the head and talking about the Lord coming.” They don’t know what to say about me now, these old people. Right now I puts it on them. Us done that and made it up ourselves and that solved the problem.

Swimming Lake Mary

I used to have a many a story when I was a boy, but that’s the worst one I ever put on, with that buzzard. Here’s the kind of story that tickled me. It was a man betted me once I couldn’t swim across that river (Lake Mary) and back. When I was little I could swim across to this side and back over there to the other’n. That was a mile swim from here over yonder and back. That man told me “Now I got fifty dollars. You swim from over yonder and back and you can have it.”

I said “Yes sir. That’s a plenty money, ain’t it. I believe I’ll try it.”

I jumped in that river and I went on ‘cross there. I got out there and something eased right ’tween these legs. That thing got ’tween my legs and I hugged it. You know that thing just carried me on ‘cross that river. I don’t know if it was a alligator or what, but I thought I was dead. Cap’n, I had to fly like wings, that thing carried me so. I got over to the other side and I opened my legs and I went and then he went. I said “Thank God for whatever that was. He shore done me on my journey. I shore am glad he didn’t bite me.”

That man hollered on this side “What you swimming so fast for?”

“Man, something was behind me. I had to move up.”

“I never seen nobody move that fast.”

“Well that thing helped me on my journey. You just have my fifty dollars when I git back there.”

I swam over there and got in the tree and rested a little bit. After I rested I took a little piece of board and put it between my legs to come back. That helped hold me up to come back ’cross that long journey. I got ’most to the bank and then I kicked the board out from under me and I come on to the bank. I got to the bank and this man said “You didn’t win that fifty right. Here’s fifty more and I’ll swim it.”

I said “You’ll never make it, Cap’n.”

He said “Let’s take a drink.”

He had a gallon of that old moonshine liquor down there. I was ready to drink cause I had made my journey. I knowed he waddn’t gonner make his journey without no boat following him. I was laughing and drinking and he got in that
river and his wife was up on the hill, said “Claude, don’t go in there. Please, Claude, don’t go in there. Don’t go in there.”

Claude went in there. She said “God damn you. Let you drown then. If you drown, Scott, don’t git him.”

I say “Yes mam. I ain’t gonner let him drown cause I’m gonner follow him in the boat.”

I got in the boat. He didn’t know I was going along with him paddling cause I know he waddn’t gonner make it. He got out till about ten steps out in the river, this white man, and his hair got to standing up on his head. Every time he’d go under. I know if he go under three time he gonner drown. I said to myself “That’s a hundred dollars I done won off that man. He bet it and it ain’t none of my money.”

He got to hollering and I just rolled his hair up and throwed him over in the boat. He waddn’t dead. I knowed he waddn’t cause I wouldn’t let him die. That man lay there and waddn’t breathing and I hold my head and say “Mr. Claude?”

He ain’t said nothing. “I’m gonner give you your money back.”

“What you say?”

“I want you to come to life cause you ain’t gonner git that money back. You playing dead.”

His wife hollered out and say “Scott, throw him overboard. Let that son-of-a-gun drown. I don’t want him nohow.”

“I don’t want him to drown in Lake Mary while I’m here, Miss. You just carrying him home and throw him in a pond.”

“I’ll kill him if he come back here.”

I say “Don’t pull that pistol on me. Just wait till us git up on the hill and you can shoot him.”

His wife, she the one had the money, and she told me “I’m gonner give it to you, got dog, but let him drown.”

“No mam. I ain’t gonner drown your husband out here. After I got him in the boat.”

“Throw him out of there. Throw him out of there cause if he comes up that hill, I’m gonner kill him cause I told him not to go out there swimming. He done lose all his money and that’s us last hundred dollars.”

I say “Oh, his daddy got a’plenty of it. I ain’t worried.”

His daddy come down here the next day and asked me “What you doing to my boy and his wife?”

“I ain’t done nothing. He bet me fifty dollars I couldn’t swim cross there and I went cross there and made that fifty. And I bet fifty more he couldn’t swim. The best thing for you to do is go back home. You got a’plenty of money. Go there to his wife and tell her I sent the hundred dollars back to her.”

He had a’plenty of money and I told him what to do with the boy’s wife. He went back there and give her a hundred and twenty and say I sent it. That next day him and her was down here. They come down here and she say “Scott, that’s nice of you to send us money back. I had left the son-of-a-gun and felt like killing him, but that solved the problem.”

“Thank God. Don’t let him bet no more. That gonner kill you.”
Hoodooed Syrup

Another time Mr. Charley Reed asked me to pull him in a skiff from here to way up there in Lake Mary. In them days they had a pair of oars in a skiff. You had to have wind to pull. I pulled from right here to up there at Homochitto, four miles up there. Got up there to Homochitto and come back here and he had left the car in the hot sun with a bucket of syrup (molasses) in it. We come back and got almost to the bank and he was telling me about the bucket of syrup. He say “That syrup too good to give you cause you ain’t worth a bucket of syrup. Them syrup the best syrup I ever seed in my life. If you worth them syrup, fellow, you’ll be a good one. That’s all you worth today. You ain’t worth a bucket of syrup.”

I say “Yes sir. That’s all I worth? When I git up to that car them syrup gonner fly all up in the air. They gonner shoot sky-high cause they hear what you telling me and I know I worth more than a bucket of syrup, Man. Don’t tell me that.”

And he got up there to the car and had left the car in the hot sun. He say “I’m gonner show you something.”

I ain’t got out the boat good, I was so tired and mad too cause he told me I waddn’t worth a bucket of syrup. He got up there and opened the top of that syrup and that syrup shot sky-high and went all over his car. “I’ll declare. I said you ain’t worth a bucket of syrup. Come up here. Don’t you want to pick’em up?”

“Man, I don’t lick up no syrup that I ain’t worth. That syrup heared what you told me about I ain’t worth a bucket of syrup and it’s a good thing.”

“Go down there and git some water and let’s wash it out.”

I say “I declare if that’s so. You gonner carry that car back to Burnsville where you got it from and let the hose pipe wipe it out. I ain’t gonner tote no water up the hill.”

That water was way down that hill, Cap’n. He got down there and got to panting “Well I be doggone. This the hottest job I ever had in my life.”

“Sweat a little bit. I sweated on them paddles and I’m gonner lay right up here under this shade and open my mouth.”

“You ain’t gonner help me?”

“No. I can’t help a fellow if I ain’t worth a bucket of syrup. Them syrup gotta go back to Burnsville where the people can see your car.”

Everybody come down here said it take concentrate lye and everything else to git them syrups out that man’s car and what did I do that for.

I said “God done that. God done that for him cause he said I waddn’t worth a bucket of syrup.”

He calls me “Lightning.” Every time I see that man he say “Aw, Lightning.” I call him “Slim.” “All right, Slim.”

“You know that car ruined till today. I told you bout the bucket of syrup and I’ll never tell nobody that no more. When I come out here again I’ll set them things outdoors. I’ll set them under a tree. Won’t git in my car no more.”

“Well don’t bring me none. I ain’t worth a bucket of syrup and I don’t want a bucket of them syrups. I don’t like them nohow.”
He come up after the syrup flew and say “Well, gotta give you a little money. The syrup gone.”
I say “Yes sir. The money liable to fly out your hand too if you say I ain’t worth it. You better not say that, (if you) do it’ll fly out your hand.”
You know that man aimed to git the money out his pocket. His pocket book dropped and he didn’t know where it was. I was standing right over the top of it. I said “I told you that money gonner fly.”
“Lightning, I believe you’s a durn hoodoo. You a hoodoo, Lightning. You go away from here. Please help me find my pocket book so I can pay you and go home, cause I’m nervy and I don’t know what ails me.”
“I told you in that boat. I told you in that boat if you said I waddn’t worth a bucket of syrup, something was gonner happen to you. Look. You can’t even pick up your pocket book. There it is on the ground. Pick it up. Pick it up.”
Oh that man was crying. I said “I’m glad I didn’t come up there cause that syrup would have got on my old black hat, and I didn’t want it on there and the flies coming on me.”
That was the ticklest thing I ever seen.
Creole or “nation-languages” have been opening the possibility of a new poetics in the Caribbean and elsewhere. (See the following, plus Edward Brathwaite’s Angel/Engine, below; also the recent eruptions of oral poetry and music into reggae, etc.)

Eli M. Mile

Mama Ba Mafille

I
Mama Ba Mafille is old
She live in the woods alone.

The Principality angels come
They watch her
How she make the bread.

"Mama Ba Mafille" they say
"You make crosses on them loaves?"

Mama Ba Mafille
Not answer them one word
She throw the fork stick
In the fire

Soon her oven open up
Breadloaves fly out on the floor... They got plenty crosses
They got stars.

II
Mama Ba Mafille
Got pockets in her skirts
She carry loaves
One time she carry knife.

She keep one chicken
By a string around his neck.

Samday evening she make ready
She call San Sebastian down
San Sebastian one sweet Indian man
He got plenty arrows
He got feathers
He got red skin
From he sitting in the fire.

III
In the moonlight
On the hill
Old Lou Garou go by

He hear Mama Ba Mafille
How she sing
He keep walking plenty fast.

Lou Garou got no arrows
He got no feathers
He got one small boat
He steal that
From his sister Queen Marie.

Mama Ba Mafille not care
She draw arrows on the floor
She draw circles with white flour
She gon dance with San Sebastian
Some day she gon fly
One place away from here.
Mama Ba Mafille and the Conjure Man

I
There been one time in summer
And the conjure man come by.
Mama Ba Mafille
Stand plenty quiet
She hold dust upon her breast
And she point
The fire stick in the East
For-by she make
One true line to the sun.

That conjure man he smile
And sudden in the wind
The fire stick jump
And run about.

Mama Ba Mafille
Been breathing dust and blood
She sit
Downside the ground.

She remember now
How in her pocket
She got charm.

The conjure man he sit
He feeling blessed fine.

II
Mama Ba Mafille
Turn her back upon the sun.
Longside her shoulder
She whistle sister moon.
In her pocket be a toad
And the spawn-child of a toad.

There been mud upon the dust
And the conjure man he shrink
He maybe choke right there
While he sit out on that stump.

Still he know . . .
One trick.
He speak before he fall
Damballah's golden name.

III
Nice shimmer break the air
And Mama Ba Mafille
Know
How her eyes go splinter up
She get blind
She get crazy

Still she not forget . . .
How the ground stand still in light
And the ground stand still in dark
But the sunshine die at night
So she wait.

IV
The conjure man he worried.
"Mama Ba Mafille?
You still breathing?
You still hold your head together
All this while?"

"My head be plenty strong, conjure man,
Like the rock longside the hill
And that howl you maybe hear
That aint me.
That the crying of the owl
That see the sun go down."
"I be going now" he say
He turn his legs and bow.
"Mama Ba Mafille,
I got plenty busy times
I can't visit
Here no more."

V
Mama Ba Mafille
Stand up.
She make straight her eyes
And she tell the conjure man
"You got one stone
Inside your shoe
Name of death.
You walk out fast now, conjure man,
Longside the busy times.
Some day it break your foot
One time I still be here."

Author's Note:

Mama is an imaginary personage inhabiting an invented landscape. Her religion is a mix of Candomble, Xango, Voodoo, etc. Her language is a made-up creole.

I have been fascinated for a long time by the languages and religions which arose from the forcible mixing of African and European cultures on the Atlantic coasts of America and W. Africa. Extraordinary languages without proper pedigrees exist on both sides of the Atlantic — Saramachan, Sranan, Sierre Leone Krio, Haitian Creole, Papiamento, etc. Starting out as master-slave lingos they developed into sensitive expressions of black culture, employing, for instance, complex verbal aspect markers which are unknown in the European languages from which most of their vocabularies are derived.

Having immersed myself in the study of some of these new world forms, I dreamed up Mama. (She literally came to me while I was asleep.) So Mama's not real except in my mind, and if you want a pedigree for my mind I can only tell you that it's just one more bastard spawned by the new world.
Brathwaite's poetry here moves into "Nation-language" of the West Indies. The god aimed toward is Shango; the condition is trance. The poet teaches History at the University of West Indies in Jamaica.

Edward Brathwaite

Angel/Engine

1
The yard around which the smoke circles
is bounded by kitchen, latrine and the wall
of the house where her aunt died, where

her godma brought her up, where she was jumped
upon by her copperskin cousin,
driving canemen to work during crop
time, smelling of rum and saltfish,
who gave her two children when, so she say,
her back was turn to the man, when she wasn't lookin.

the children grew up quietly
the boy runnin bout like a pumpkin vine, the girl name christofene

they went to st saviour primary school
then the boy sit down an win a exam
an gone down de hill to de college.

christie still bout here turn-
in stupid. she us:ed to help me to sew
an mek up de doze pun de singer

sewin machine: but she fingers gone dead
an she int got eyes in she head.
then one two tree wut-

less men come up in here an impose a pregnant
pun she. one tek,
but de other two both foetus dead.

she sittin up there wid she hann in she lapp in de corner
rockin sheself in a chair by de window
an as far as i know, she too cud be dead.

2
i tek up dese days wid de zion
we does meet tuesdee nights in de carpenter shop

praaaze be to god
i hear de chamman hall preacher shout out

praaaze be to god

an i hear de black wings risin
an i feel de black rock rock

praaaze be to
gg
praaaze be to
gg
praaaze be to
gg

an i holdin my hands up high in that place
an de palms turn to

praaaze be to
praaaze be to
praaaze be to
gg

as the fingers flutter an flyin away
an i cryin out

praaaze be to
praaaze be to
praaaze be to

softly
an the softness flyin away

is a black
is a bat
is a flap

o de kerosene lamp

an it spinn
an it spinn
an it spinn-

in rounn
an it stagger-
in down

to a gutter-
in spark
in de dark

praaaze be to
praaaze be to
praaaze be to gg

praaaze be to
praaaze be to
praaaze be to gg

de tongue curlin back
an me face howlin' empty
all muh skin cradle an crackle an ole

i is water of wood
ants
crawlin crawlin

i is a spider weavin
away

my ball
headed head
is ancient an
slack an it

fall from de top
of de praaze be to
tree to de rat-

hearted coconut hill

so i walk-
in an talk-

in: i talk-
in an call-

in thru
echoing halls of flame

an i stopp-
in an stepp-

in: i shak-
in an wak-

in thru
faces of walls that barr-

en an bare
of my name

thru crack

crack

thru crack
crick

i creak-
in thru crev-
ices, reach-
in for i-
circle light

who hant me
huh

who haunt me
hah

my head is a cross
is a cross
road

who haunt me
is blue

is a man
is a moo
is a ton ton macou

is a hoo
is a shade
is a cow

itch

who hant me is
huh

who haunt me is
hah

is de curl
o de blade
on me tie

tong

bub-a-dups
bub-a-dups
bub-a-dups

huh
is a hearse
is a horse
is a horseman

is a trick
is a trap
is de future rack

is a trip
is a track
is a seamless hiss

that does rattle these iron tracks

is me eye
is me trut
is me path-

way

is de white
is de height
o de heat

is de scissors gone shhhaaay
to de edge o de healin worl'

bub-a-dups
bub-a-dups
bub-a-dups

huh

bub-a-dups
bub-a-dups
bub-a-dups

hah

who tear-
in my face wid de gong
gong
praaaze be to
huh

praaaze be to
gg

praaaze be to
shaaa

an i fallin

who engine
huh

who engine
hah

i de go
i de go
i de haaaaaah

an i fall-
in

shang

an i fall-
in

shhhho

under de rattle an pain

i de go
shang

i de go
shhho

an de train comin in wid de rain.

praaaze be to
shhhh
praaaze be to
praaaze be to
praaaze be to

**shang**

an a black curl callin me name

*bub-a-dups*
*bub-a-dups*
*bub-a-dups*
*bub-a-dups*

huh

*bub-a-dups*
*bub-a-dups*
*bub-a-dups*
*bub-a-dups*

hah

*bub-a-dups*
*sha*
*bub-a-dups*
*go*

*bub-a-dups*
*bup-a-dups*
*bup-a-dups*
*bup-a-dups*

**shang**

praaaze be to
praaaze be to
praaaze be to

**shango**
Since 1884, the only periodical in the U.S. exclusively devoted to the study of ancient and medieval civilizations of the Near East. Contributors from many nations offer original articles on language, literature, history, law, religion, science, art, and archaeology.

Forthcoming Articles

William J. Murnane, The Earlier Reign of Ramesses II and His Co-regency with Seti I
Edward F. Wente, Thutmose III's Accession and the Beginning of the New Kingdom
David A. King, Al-Khalil's qibla Table
Jeanny Vorys Canby, The Walters' Cappadocian Tablet and the Sphinx in Anatolia in the Second Millennium B.C.
David B. Larkin and C. C. Van Siclen III, Theban Tomb 293 and the Tomb of the Scribe Huy
Bernard R. Goldstein, The Hebrew Astrolabe in the Adler Planetarium
William Culican, Phoenician Demons

Published quarterly by The University of Chicago Press
Robert D. Biggs, Editor

Journal of Near Eastern Studies

Please enter my one year subscription:
☐ Institutions $16.00 ☐ Individuals: $12.00
☐ Students (with signature of faculty member): $9.60

In countries other than U.S.A. add $1.00 for postage.

Name______________________________________________________________
Address______________________________________________________________
City________________________State_________Zip________________________

Please mail with your check or purchase order to Journal of Near Eastern Studies, The University of Chicago Press, 11030 Langley Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60628
A recording of these six songs, in the order they are printed here, makes up one side of the insert disc of this issue. Jean Borgatti is presently on the faculty of Boston University, where she is teaching African Art History.

Jean Borgatti, translator

Songs Of Ritual License From Midwestern Nigeria

Translator’s Introduction

The Ekperi are an Edo-speaking people living in Nigeria’s Midwest State, approximately sixty miles north of Benin city. According to traditional history, they migrated north from Benin early in the eighteenth century. Okpenada, one of the seventeen Ekperi villages, maintains a shrine called “Okhailopokhai,” meaning “a warrior will not enter the house of another warrior.” The name refers to the efficacy of the cult’s power materials (ikhumi) in protecting the village from Nupe slave raiders. Although the cult originated in the late nineteenth century in response to the Nupe problem, it continues to function as a focus for village worship. The forces localized in the shrine may be activated on behalf of any individual during the weekly service. Votive offerings of white cloth, a white cock, palm wine and kola are made by successful petitioners.

The shrine is served once in four days (the traditional week) by an elderly custodial priest. He prays while pouring a libation of palm wine over a group of three stones in the shrine shelter (located at the edge of his compound), makes an offering of chalk and kola, and cult members sing a particular body of songs. When these songs were recorded, Awowo-John, sister of the current priest and cult devotee, dramatically initiated the performance by flinging herself to the ground and addressing the earth. (Songs were subsequently addressed to the tape recorder for technical reasons.) Igiepo-Aimiebo, the cult priest and senior titled elder (okaku) of Okpenada, followed with a song as did a second elderly titled man and cult member, Asegieme-Obemata. The songs were partially accompanied by rhythmic handclapping. A chorus, comprised of children and spectators, alternately joined and followed the lead singer. An attempt has been made to visualize the patterns of singing and accompaniment through using different type face, symbols, and spacing: Lead singer alone, SINGER WITH CHORUS, chorus alone, handclapping, time-keeping, and overlapping.

A note on the transcription: Mr. Barnabas Alonokua, present at the recording, transcribed the tape and assisted with the translation. He is a retired policeman, circa age 65, currently living in his natal village, Azukhala-Ekperi. The transcription utilizes accepted vernacular spellings; a phonetic transcription would differ considerably.

The songs themselves represent an occasion of ritualized verbal license in which men and women ridicule each other’s genitalia and sexual habits. Normally such ridicule would be an anti-social act in the extreme, an offense against the elders, the living representatives of the ancestors, and hence against the continuity of life. In the ritual context, however, the songs provide recognition, acceptance, and release of that tension which exists between the sexes in all cultures, and so neutralize this potential threat to community stability. Similar songs are reported from other northern Edo: Among the North Ibie, they form a part of an annual community festival; among the Weppa-Wano, they are part of a coming of age festival for both sexes.

Awowo-John delivers “What Fell Down? Penis!” with the intent of penetrating masculine delusions of grandeur. Man is identified with Elo, a powerful
spirit, through the repetitive device “is supreme” (*nofigbo*) which also implies “not a woman” in this context—as it is alternatively translated. The identification is intended not only to point out man’s overweening pride but also to call down the wrath of Elo on his head for such pretentiousness. Impotence, boasts of prowess, and the transparent schemes of seduction are exposed, while the physical qualities of male genitalia are ridiculed.

Igiepo-Aimiebo replies with “What Fell Down? Vulva!”, exposing woman’s petty greed and dishonesty, for she has hidden her market earnings in her storage container rather than using them to help her husband, and “songs-of-the-mouth” are lies. An interesting contrast between the songs is found in the female plea for men to have greater insight (Let them see!) as opposed to the male response which is disciplinary (Slap her!). “Vulva is Hole” satirizes female sexual appetite and capacity, while “When A Man Is Laughing: Haw-Haw” and “I Saw A Man Whose Penis Was Too Heavy” continue the themes of ridiculing men’s genitalia and habits. In the latter case, “penis” is rebuked for wandering away from home with the taunt: “Houserat, why do you go to the water to fish?” Finally, Awawo-John celebrates the ultimate sexual power of women, singing “When I Refuse Him.”

1. Research in Nigeria from 1971-1974 was partially funded through grants from the Museum of Cultural History, UCLA, the UCLA Patent Fund, and NDEA Title VI grants from the United States government.
Eme Dhe? Eveli!

Vocalist: Awowo, wife of John

Hai Hai Hai Hai Hai-i-i-i     HOE! HOE!
Eme dhe?            EVELI!
Ebo de?             ODE GBI!
Utaki nobor         JOYOH!
Utolowike          JOYOH!
Utolonape           JOYOH!

Ene ja wo otor jelo re neo ko koli kelo le ko kpo lu-lu-lu
ULE KEA SE MO KOLI GWE
EGUWA ETUMABE     JELALO!
Oyeleto           JELALO!
Ojigwabo          JELALO!

E-elo nofigbo  Elo
Omonogbo nofigbo  Elo
Nofigbo nu lai da Elo
Nofigbo nu lai thai Elo

Oyome pia viaku  Elo
IKAMATI PIA VIAKU YE KI PIA VIAKU EVIAMIGBE  Elo
Oyome jogana
IKAMATIJOGANATA KLJOGANA VIAMIGBE  Elo
Oyome gwepe
IKAMATI GWEPE YEKI IGWA VIEPE OVIAMIGBE  ELO
E-elo nofigbo  Elo
Omonogbo nofigbo  Elo
Omoi thegbe nofigbo  Elo
Omoi kpikpia wo nofigbo  Elo
What Fell Down? Penis!

Vocalist: Awawo, wife of John

Hai Hai Hai Hai-i-i i-i
What fell down?
HOE! HOE!
How did it fall?
PENIS!
The oracle
IT FELL WITH A BANG!
Pot with noise inside
LET IT SPEAK!
Iroko tree in the compound
LET IT SPEAK!
Those who pull honey from the ground say a woman's body is sweeter than honey
WE DO NOT EVEN BELIEVE THEY HAVE TASTED OUR BODY
SPIRIT, EGUWA ETUMABE
LET THEM SEE!
Ridiculous men whose pubic hair is straight
LET THEM SEE!
Foolish men whose arms are bent like a monkey's
LET THEM SEE!

Elo who is supreme
Elo
The one with cudgel is not a woman
Elo
The supreme one has never fetched water from the river
Elo
The supreme one has never fetched firewood
Elo

He asks me to "shake my waist" a little bit Elo
BUT I CAN'T SHAKE MY WAIST A LITTLE BIT BECAUSE IT'S TOO DIFFICULT Elo
He asks me to lie on my back
BUT I CAN'T LIE ON MY BACK AND SPREAD MY LEGS BECAUSE IT'S TOO DIFFICULT Elo
So he asks me to lie on my side a little
BUT I CAN'T LIE ON MY SIDE JUST A LITTLE BECAUSE IT'S TOO DIFFICULT Elo
E-elo who is supreme
Elo
The one with cudgel is not a woman
Elo
The one with sticks on his body is not a woman Elo
E-elo nofigbo
Elo
Omoi de gbe nofigbo

Eme Dhe? Okoli!

Vocalist: Ogiepo, son of Aimiebo

Hai-ai-ai-ai-ai
Eme dhe?
Okoli!
Ebo de?
Utaki nobor
Utolowike
Uloko nape
Ene jawo TOR JELO RE NO KEVELI OKPOLU-LU-LU
ULE KEA SO MO EVELI GWE
OGIU WAI OBE
GBE OLIALO OYELETO
GBE OLIALO OJIGWAGO
GBE OLIALO!

Amiemie ekauno nime
Amiemie ekauno nime
Ukpade nor kptoo agha
Egboje yowoh-o-o-o-
Oho koko ho-o-o

Ayoma owa iyagbagiela
Ayoma owa YAGBAGIELA NA
Utaki nobor YAGBAGIELA NA
Okhailopokhai YAGBAGIELA NA
Ayoma owa yagbagiela na—A— E-e-e-e-e
The one with okra is not a woman
_Elo_
The one with an “extra body” is
not a woman
_Elo_
E-elo who is supreme
ELO-O-O-O

What Fell Down? Vulva!

Vocalist: Ogiepo, son of Aimiebo

Hai-ai-ai-ai
What fell down?
_Vulva!
How did it fall?
It fell with a bang!
The oracle
_Let it speak!
Pot with noise inside
_Let it speak!
Iroko tree in the compound
_Let it speak!
Those who pull HONEY FROM THE GROUND SAY THAT A MAN’S BODY IS SWEETER THAN HONEY
WE DO NOT EVEN BELIEVE THEY HAVE TASTED OUR BODY
THE ONE WHOSE CLITORIS IS TOO LONG
SLAP HER, THE ONE WHOSE PUBIC HAIR IS STRAIGHT
SLAP HER, THE FOOLISH ONE WHOSE ARMS ARE BENT LIKE A MONKEY’S
SLAP HER!

Let us sing songs-of-the-mouth together
Songs-of-the-mouth
Let us sing songs-of-the-mouth together
Songs-of-the-mouth
The bottom calabash in the net
SONGS-OF-THE-MOUTH
Four-score cowries inside-o
SONGS-OF-THE-MOUTH-o
Oho koko ho-o-o
SONGS-OF-THE-MOUTH-O-O-O

No one should ask why I dance Agiela-dance
No one should ask WHY I DANCE AGIELA-DANCE
I DANCE AGIELA FOR the oracle
I DANCE AGIELA FOR Okhailopokhai
No one should ask why I dance Agiela-dance E-e-e-e-e-e
Esige The Nai Gwe Ye

Vocalist: Awawo, wife of John

Esige the nai gwe ye, oya gbele agene
Esige the nai gwe ye, oya gbele agene
Ekwo kwo me ne kho kho, nufe ne tho ya gbigenë—e—e—e.

Repeated twice with minor variations. Chorus sings along with the vocalist in the final version.

Esagene Ogie: Gwo — Gwo

Vocalist: Awawo, wife of John

Esagene ogie: gwo—gwo, gwo—gwo
Esagene ogie: gwo—gwo, gwo—gwo
Esagene ogie: gwo—gwo, gwo—gwo
Eniviai eve lusho(lo)go sho(lo)go
Enivia eve luna(la)gha na(la)gha
Eniviai eve lusho(lo)go sho(lo)go
Enivia eve luna(la)gha na(la)gha
Enivia eve lonogbo nogbo
Esagene ogie: gwo—gwo, gwo—gwo

IVIAVE LUSHOGO SHOGO
Iviave lushogo shogo
Iviave lushogo shogo
Enivivave lushogo shogo
Enivivave lushogo shogo
Enivivave lushogo shogo
Enivivave lunagha nagha
Enivivave lunagha nagha
Enivivave lunogbo nogbo
Enivivave lushogo shogo-o-o-o-o

The song is repeated twice with minor variations.
When I Refuse Him

Vocalist: Awawo, wife of John

When I refuse him, the man is filled with sorrow
When I refuse him, the man is filled with sorrow
When my “thing” is bright and happy like a baby chick, it drives him wild
When my “thing” is bright and happy like a baby chick, it drives him wild

Repeated twice with minor variations. Chorus sings along with the vocalist in the final version.

When A Man Is Laughing: Haw-Haw

Vocalist: Awawo, wife of John

When a man is laughing: haw-haw, haw haw
When a man is laughing: haw-haw, haw-haw
When a man is laughing: haw-haw, haw-haw

His balls flop up and down
His balls swing side to side
His balls, they “go” fall off
When a man is laughing: haw-haw, haw-haw

HIS BALLS FLOP UP AND DOWN
His balls flop up and down
His balls swing side to side
His balls, they “go” fall off
His balls flop up and down-o-o-o

The song is repeated twice with minor variations.
Okoli Nololo

Vocalist: Asegieme, son of Obemata

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Song</th>
<th>Chorus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Okoli nololo</td>
<td>GBOLOLO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okoli nololo</td>
<td>Gbololo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akadua va du udo</td>
<td>Gbololo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ada omuadowo</td>
<td>GBOLOLO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aka wotha ge ebe</td>
<td>Gbololo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omuadowo</td>
<td>Gbololo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okoli nololo</td>
<td>Gbololo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okoli nololo</td>
<td>Gbololo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aka dua va du udo</td>
<td>Gbololo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aka omuadowo</td>
<td>Gbololo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aka wotha ge usi</td>
<td>Gbololo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aka omuadowo</td>
<td>Gbololo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okoli nololo</td>
<td>GBOLOLO-O-O-O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ikede Ko De Eve

Vocalist: Awawo, wife of John

Ikede ko de eve ogwigbagio, ogwa nyi nagha-e
Ikede ko de eve ogwigbagi, OGWA NYI NAGHA-E
Enaki nagha-nagho ná wa kele
ÚSOMI BÚ SO MI ÚKATHÁ
Enaki nagha-naghó na wa kele
ÚSOMI BÚ SO MI UKATHÁ
ÍKIDÉ KO DE EVE ÓGWIGBAGIÓ, OGWA NYI NAGHA-A-A-A
Vulva Is Hole . . .

Vocalist: Asegieme, son of Obemata

Vulva is hole
Vulva is hole
If you carried a gun
and a stone inside
You could not fill
If you carried a tree
with all its leaves inside
You could not fill
Vulva is hole
Vulva is hole
If you carried a gun
and stone inside
You could not fill
If you carried a tree
with branches inside
You could not fill
Vulva is hole
DEEPER THAN A TERMITE NEST
Deeper than a termite nest
The termite nest
THE TERMITE NEST
Deeper than a termite nest
Deeper than a termite nest
The termite nest
The termite nest
Deeper than a termite nest
DEEPER THAN A TERMITE NEST–O

I Met A Man Whose Penis Was Too Heavy

Vocalist: Awawo, wife of John

I met a man whose penis was too heavy digging ground nut ridges,
digging to cover his testicles
I met a man whose penis was too heavy digging ground nut ridges,
DIGGING TO COVER HIS TESTICLES
This is the bell we are looking for
THE HEAD OF HIS PENIS WAS BULBOUS LIKE THE CROWN OF A FULANI HAT
This is the bell we are looking for
THE HEAD OF HIS PENIS WAS BULBOUS LIKE THE CROWN OF A FULANI HAT
I MET A MAN WHOSE PENIS WAS TOO HEAVY DIGGING GROUND NUT RIDGES,
DIGGING TO COVER UP HIS TESTICLES
Eve ye no kelokun
Eve ye no kelokun
AKAKAGHO OKATSO WO
AKAKAGHO OKATSO WO
EVE YE NO KELEKUN

EMU THA KE WE ESUARE
EMU THA KE WE ESUARE
NU YOMHI YOAMHE ISUE
NU YOMHI YOAMHE ISUE
EMU THA KE WE SUARE–E–E–E

Unyamunya
Eve munya munya
Eve nu nya kutu
Aku na ja eja moi eve bo no kpai moh

eve bo no kpai moh
Unya kutu
Munya munya

Onyomalo
Onyomalo
Onyomalo
Onyomalo

Akpu na ja eja moi
Onyomalo–o–o
Onyomalo–o–o–o
Onyomalo–o–o–o
You, penis, are a houserat

WHY SHOULD YOU GO TO THE WATER TO FISH?

THE FISH WITH SPINES-TAHT-STING SHOULD BITE YOU
SO THAT THE FISH-WITH-PAINFUL-BITE CAN DRINK WATER FROM YOUR NOSE
THE FISH WITH SPINES-TAHT-STING SHOULD BITE YOU
SO THAT THE FISH-WITH-PAINFUL-BITE CAN DRINK WATER FROM YOUR NOSE
YOU, PENIS, ARE A HOUSERAT WHY SHOULD YOU GO TO THE WATER TO FISH?

Terror — terror
Penis, a terror to behold
Penis, terror of terrors
Even the waist carrying this penis
from which this penis shoots out
Terror — terror

Terror to a child's eyes
Terror to a child's eyes
Terror to a child's eyes
Terror to a child's eyes
Even the place
Terror to a child's eyes
Terror to a child's eyes
Terri B. Joseph, translator

Poetry As Sexual Strategy: Songs Of The Moroccan Rif

Translator’s Introduction

Although the Berbers of the Rif Mountain range in northern Morocco adopted Islam when the Arabs conquered North Africa in the seventh century, A.D., they have retained their own language and tribal customs. Known as the Land of Dissidence (al-blad as-siba) for the Berber’s refusal to pay tribute to the Sultans of Morocco, the Rif stretches along the Mediterranean Coast east of Tangier towards Melilla. The Berbers pile walls of stone across the steep hillsides to create the narrow terraces they farm with hand implements. The terrain, seen from the highway that, as a Berber song puts it, “cuts the Rif like a thread,” is a patchwork of vegetable gardens and golden squares of barley broken by groves of pine and the fields of kif in Katama.

The Berbers are heir to an imaginative poetic tradition which insure the creation of vigorous poetry with each agricultural cycle. All women in the Rif are expected to be poets: from their early adolescence until they marry, they compose lyrics to perform at the wedding festivals held each year after the harvest of grain in the late summer and early autumn.

Although Berber society is ostensibly patriarchal, women use their songs as strategic devices to win them a measure of control over their own destinies. A Berber girl can use her lyrics to undermine her father’s prerogative to choose whom she will marry. If the young man she likes hasn’t taken the initiative, she can praise him in a song to let him know she cares for him. On the other hand, if an unwanted suitor is negotiating for her hand, she can ridicule him—in a performance witnessed by the entire tribal community—to such an extent that he will probably withdraw his suit.

As important as these songs are as strategic devices, they are chiefly regarded by the Berbers as an art form and are valued for their wit, beauty, and aptness of language. The lyrics deal not only with love and marriage but also with social criticism, commentary on tribal life, and attempts to integrate “modernism” into a traditional set of values.

A traditional refrain serves as the introduction to the lyrics, which are composed in compacted, dense couplets with a strict rhyme scheme. Phrases of French, Spanish, and Classical Arabic are interspersed with Berber to demonstrate the learning of the composer. Berbers remember and quote the best songs of the season; some of the lyrics survive as long as fifty or sixty years after their first performance.

I collected these lyrics from Berber women in 1965 and 1966 during an anthropological field expedition in the Rif. I wish to thank my Berber friends for sharing their poetry with me and for the hours they spent patiently helping me understand the meaning of the lyrics. I present some of these translations at greater length in The Rose and the Thorn: Marriage Ritual and Symbolism in Morocco, a forthcoming book co-authored by Dr. Roger Joseph and myself.
Ayah ra-la boyah
Ayah ra-la boyah
Ayah ra-la boyah
Ayah ra-la boyah
Ayah ra-la boyah, etc.

1.
Memsaah memsaah l'hair memsaahkum yohwedah
Nishnen descren-nused an srah

Good evening, good evening, good evening to all of you here.
We are the partridges who have come from afar.

Ayah ra-la boyah, etc. as chorus

2.
Arala the thas-sirethene er-kus si u-bebe
Ef kus sed arreda n-turt saneen amone.

My friend made me an evening gown cut on a pattern;
She also severed my love of three years' duration.

Ayah ra-la boyah, etc. as chorus

3.
Math zwed el vino nhara methumnat
Math zwed el vino math kul bid tazeyat

Did you drink the wine today or yesterday?
Did you drink wine glass by glass or the whole bottle at once?

Ayah ra-la boyah, etc. as chorus

4.
Ehuwhad sidrahwe it-tibi ethether-car
Wamethigeth novia eme zah gre-thun then cathar

The Sidrahwe bus disappeared down the hill;
When you found a new sweetheart, why didn't you tell me?

Ayah ra-la boyah, etc.
5.
Ath-sarah themese hokahnon owahnu
Athadosun waman athaso lefeno athesu
I shall lower a candle at the mouth of the well.
If the water rushes upwards, my lover will drink.

_Ayah ra-la boyah, etc._

6.
Kis n-war thar n-we i-yah duru fahwen
Hamduthas kar an tu-rit ge-the-tawen
Take off your dark glasses; don't coldly deprive me
Of a glimpse of those beautiful eyes.

_Ayah ra-la boyah, etc._

7.
Afer runil nesar hand g-kesan
Ay alemania nesfishan emsan
A piece of packing cord has sullied a water glass.
Why, Germany, have you given illusions to beggars?

_Ayah ra-la boyah, etc._

8.
Shebab n-Al-hoceima hisrah su sekun
Kenu alemanan hezrah tibe serkun
The young boys of Al-hoceima dive from the shining cliffs.
You, the Germans, sprawl on the blazing sand.

_Ayah ra-la boyah
Ayah ra-la boyah
Ayah ra-la boyah
Ayah ra-la boyah, etc. as conclusion._
Notes:
1. This song was used as the opening lyric by the friends of a bride who was marrying into a neighbouring tribe. Since it is felt that a bride from a different tribe may be taken advantage of in her new home, the girls emphasized throughout the evening the high status of the bride in her own tribe and that she had friends and protectors. The "good evening," repeated three times in the song, was in Classical Arabic rather than Berber to underscore the cultural attainments of the bride and her retinue.
2. Most gowns in the Rif are purchased at the weekly markets and are ready-made. Since most garments made in the Rif are simple rectangles of cloth stitched together by hand, the fact that the singer's friend was skilled enough to make her a gown "cut on a pattern" and presumably fitted is noteworthy. The seamstress, however, used her friendship with the poet as an excuse to make advances to the poet's finance and break their engagement.
3. In a pious Berber community that takes seriously the Koranic injunction against intoxicants, this song's accusation of drunkenness is not only insulting but shows the young man violating his religious laws.
4. This song refers to Berber men who sign contracts with European factories and go abroad to work for several years. The Berbers who do this and return to the Rif with their savings become "millionaires" by tribal standards. The singer criticizes Germany for "giving illusions to beggars" or making the poorest Berbers wealthy and upsetting traditional values.
5. This song is a jibe at the tourists of Al-hoceima who passively lie on the sand, acquiring tans at Playa Quemada, while the Berbers dive from the cliffs above the bay.

SEPTEMBER 1975 ISSUE—EXPRESSIONISM
Three Plays by August Stramm
German Expressionist Acting
The Work of Oskar Kokoschka
plus recreations of
Georg Kaiser's From Morning to Midnight
Ernst Toller's The Transfiguration
Jozef Szajna's Replika
The University of Michigan Experimental Theatre Festival
documenting performances by
The Living Theatre
The ProVisional Theatre
Friends Roadshow
Otrabanda
The Performance Group

THE DRAMA REVIEW
300 South Building
Washington Square
New York, N.Y. 10003

Payment is enclosed for
One-year subscription $ 9.50
Two-year subscription $17.00
Back issues $ 3.00
(Foreign subscribers add $2.00 a year for postage)

Name ____________________________
Address ____________________________
City ____________________________ State ______ Zip Code __________

THE DRAMA REVIEW
America's most influential journal on the performing arts
Translator's Note:

The poems here presented constitute the total output of Tristan Tzara's ethnopoetical work. The order in which the texts appear follows that of the first volume of the "Oeuvres Complètes," edited by Henri Béhar (Flammarion, 1975). 

A number of the poems appeared in various early Dada publications or were performed during the famous Dada "soirées" held in Zürich during 1916 and 1917. Thus on July 14, 1916 the dadaists presented an evening of African song-events, with Hugo Ball playing the drums. The rest of the poems were found in Tzara's notebooks of that period, which notebooks also show the excellent grasp and deep knowledge the poet had of the anthropological work of his time.

Tzara left a number of these poems in German, and the editor of the complete works had those translated into French. This means that some of the English versions are up to four times removed from the originals (or to the ethnographic translations at hand). It is also at times difficult to make sure when/if Tzara "invented" parts or whole poems in the dadaist mode, although from what I was able to find out it seems as if he usually stayed very close to the originals. Some of the poems are literal renderings of the originals.

As my main aim was to present Tzara's poems, I have stayed on the whole as close as possible to his versions, even if at times this means a certain loss in elegance or clarity. Spellings of pure sound elements are left as in the French.

As to Tzara's sense of ethnopoetry, his Note On Negro Poetry which prefaces this collection, does, I think, say all that needs saying.

A Note On Negro Poetry

"I don't even want to know that there were men before me" (Descartes), but some essential & simple laws, pathetic & muffled fermentation of a solid earth.

To fix on the point where the forces have accumulated, from whence the formulated sense springs, the invisible radiance of substance, the natural relation, but hidden and just, naively, without explanation.

To round off and regulate into shapes, into constructs, the images according to their weight, color and matter; or to map the arrangements of the values, the material and lasting densities, subordinating nothing to them. Classification of
the comic operas sanctioned by the aesthetic of accessories. (O, my drawer number ABSOLUTE.)

I abhor to enter a house where the balconies, the “ornaments”, are carefully stuck to the wall. Yet the sun, the stars continue to vibrate and hum freely in space, but I loathe to identify the explanatory hypotheses (asphyxiant probable) with the principle of life, activity, certainty.

The crocodile hatches the future life, rain falls for the vegetal silence, one isn’t a creator by analogy. The beauty of the satellites — the teaching of light — will satisfy us, for we are God only for the country of our knowledge, in the laws according to which we live experience on this earth, on both sides of our equator, inside our borders. Perfect example of the infinite we can control: the sphere.

To round off and regulate into shapes, into constructs, the images according to their weight, color and matter; or to map the arrangements of the values, the material and lasting densities through personal decision and the unswerving firmness of sensibility, comprehension adequate to the matter transformed, close to the veins and rubbing against them in the pain for the present, definite joy. One creates an organism when the elements are ready for life. Poetry lives first of all for the functions of dance, religion, music and work.

Luritcha (Northern Australia)

The Kangaroo

He spread the moving tail
in the tail he spreads it

the grass makes them stumble
the utungu grass

both of us here on the good plain
both of us here on the good earth

drink to bend down to kneel
to wet oneself

the pebbles click
in the creek
they eat flowers smacking their tongues
and bend their backs

on the white mountain the white mountain
quickly they hop

maybe it's little, maybe it's fire
that spreads climbing the hill

it's bellies
beneath a mulga tree

there is their lair, their lair
they scratched the earth and threw it far

with their sticks in the west
they give the news

another moon evidently becomes path
moon the men are leaving

red bodies
red

granite rock
is on

the pointed backs, the pointedbacks
come into the cave

their long shaggy hair
falls, falls
they run they run
under the punpu trees

where are those gumtrees
to beat with the tail to beat with the tail
against the thick-barked gumtrees
they elbowed their way

Fiji (Melanesia)

You crawling serpent, deign to come down quickly
The song of the women (present) is to invite you
send the wave of the South Wind
That Rukuratusenileba may wave upon it
take off little buli pendant
to be an ornament of the young girl
take the short paddle
and let us both row to the beginning of the pass

buli: seashell

From Vunivutu
Luduruku slowly approaches.
Children, what's the news?
God of the mountain, give me the news
In the middle of the morning he drowned
He drowned, he took his last breath
the water filled his belly
chorus:
Far away the fear isn't it so?
Let us sing
Wapare (Tanzania)

Komboi — komboi
hoi
There’s a cow needs to be milked — hoi
The Gonja forest is open
No balk falls on a man

What did you eat at your brother-in-law’s last night hee hee
The centipede devours house and garden

— Uh
  hee
  Uh
— hee
  The men from the Schube tribe
  Yes from the Schube tribe
  Men give me the feast
— What feast?
— The forest feast, so that my child too may penetrate into
  the forest, so that I may take him back to his mother, so
  that he too may frequent women like the others.

I’m gonna rip me out a potato
A woodchuck’s got strawberries
Horere hehe
haramnyanga he he
The woman here is the child
He arrived with the cattle
Horere he he
The woman here is the child
He arrived with the cattle
Horere he he
haramnyanga he he
Woman we are bringing your child
Forget your worries your child is here.
**Song of the Young Girls**

I always pass in front of you, in front of you  
Karishoto, just in front of you

So burn, burn then for me  
hende muyombeke  
My child has been lowered  
I’ve carried the oracle, hee, a little oracle for the child  
Hinda kulanghi my child is healed.

**Herero — Owe Herero (S.W. Africa)**

*The Tale of Omumborombongo*

It is said that men come from Omumborombongo, that’s at Kaoko, and there is a very large tree and there is a hole, and it is the origin of men. And men when they come to the Omumborombongo they have fire and sacrifice there and call upon it. And he who passes in front may he not pass in front again with a man or else he die, may he not blaspheme when he reaches the tree. Here some sacrifice glass and iron bead collars but others sacrifice the sacrificial animals. That’s what is told. And we, as we hear you, hear you that there by the sea there in Kaoka he is called the omundjavaira. But the small cattle it is said to come out of a rock, and the oxen and the living beings that are among men. But these things are told like a mystery.

**Naura [Nauru (Micronesia) ?]**

*Marriage*

We climb up and get to the top in ranks, I look from the summit of the Yoai mountain I received a good tooth we will be stones of equal size, we will be of the same size, because you take our daughter, both are of the same age, your husband shall be that Tereregea let him be good like Tanuiniuro, good, good, like Tanuibo.

**Hain Teny (Malagasy) [?]**

the water on the rock: seen from afar it shines,  
If one draws some one doesn’t find any  
Do not undo kinship
For kinship is like the figs
one opens them there are ants
The parents of the others
resemble the water on the rock.
Seen from afar it shines,
If one draws some one doesn't find any.

Tell me door-sill
tell me door
Was Rasoavangaina here?
— She was here the day before yesterday
— And what were her words?
— You and she, she said, are the water drops on the arum leaf
joyful they face each other
Irritated they roll to the ground together
Where will we wash the lambas?
— In Ankatso
What will we wear to play
lemons limes
When the time to wash comes
We will both be perfumed

Maybe you thought yourself the great rock
    That the chisel won't cut into
Maybe you thought yourself the great rock
    That the water won't cut into
Or did you think yourself the dry brush
    That the fire won't burn

    When will you find
The smith who won't burn himself
    When will you find
The water bearer who won't be wet
    When will you find
The fire watcher who won't be in a sweat?
Soubiya (Zambeze) [Zaire?]

Tchabalanda’s Song

Tchabalanda
We come to marry Tchabalanda
— Which ones do you marry Tchabalanda
— Let them only listen to me Tchabalanda
— They were at home Tchabalanda
— Bring them Tchabalanda
— Open them up Tchabalanda
— They are closed closed Tchabalanda
— This one to whom does she belong Tchabalanda
— This one’s my child Tchabalanda
— That one to whom does she belong Tchabalanda
— That one belongs to you Tchabalanda

Batatela (Zaire)

Mourning Song of the Ba-Totela

When a person has died the men bring their little drums.
Mothers of Monga yo yo pray for Monga
War has crushed him how did war crush him?
Cry my gullet, mother of Monga yo yo pray for Monga
War has crushed him O how did war crush him?
When they have finished crying they dance and sing all day long.

Ewe (Ghana)

Iron turned to fire beats the smith. Think of that, smiths of the earth. You let him free. Akuesihu says “You let him free this year still!” When Akuesihu was sick the sorcerers said: “He’ll die!” But laziness kills the carrion-kite. The vulture himself says: “It is like that a question of body!” They say a broom for the mill-stone doesn’t sweep in the street. He’ll remain this year still!
Mossi (Mali-Upper Volta)

*Song for the nomination of the village chief*

The one who hasn’t been elected will gather the ground-nuts.  
Their naba is like the child of the teal, he isn’t afraid  
of the cold, he plays in the water.  
Come to meet the elephant, to greet him.  
If someone wants to kill the crocodile, the serpent comes  
right away.

Lounji [Southern Africa?]

*Song of the fishermen*

Fish, fish, what animal has eaten my child  
An animal with a noisy tail, fish, fish with the noisy tail  
What animal with a noisy tail will I eat today.

*Song of the children of Libunda*

The hippopotami eat the pumpkin leaves, the moles  
\[\text{eat the potato leaves}\]  
The hippopotamus is the child of the multitudes, he dives  
\[\text{into the deep waters}\]  
The treacherous sand when he wanders about swimming

Arunta (Northern Australia)

*Song of the cacadou*

here tips of branches certainly  
here grains mixed with the ball certainly  
on the dug out place put them  
heaps heaps put there  
many heaps put there  
heaps heaps put there  
big heaps put there  
deep heaps put  
great heaps put
On a heap pour
germinated kernels germinated kernels
germinated kernels lay down to brown
germinated kernels lay down to brown
germinated kernels want to rub
germinated kernels want to lick

round the one on the sand hills
round the one on the sand
pods are there
with whipped scars there are many sleeping there
in pods are there arranged
with scars strung laid down in order in lines
“bite for real o o white cacadou
much much eat for real o o white cacadou”

Luritcha (Northern Australia)

in the west clouds vegetate
to spill in the east
flower unfolded itself
white cloud unfolded itself
branches of mistletoe — urine flow
lightning mistletoe branches
flow thick ilbara trees
killed
véhée
weeping motionless
wider spreads fire squeeze
fire having seen squeeze fire
charge wood for the fire
lair widen
lightning strikes breaks
water on the clay surface
he roared continuously
lightning
thunder holds a grudge

The serpent’s song

winding throw forward
twisting throw forward
snake skin rises
to the sky
heart beat continually
tail beat continually
tail wants to extinguish itself
tail wants to move
trembling
A hero is swallowed in the west

A hero is swallowed in the west by a water monster. The beast leaves with him toward the east. During that time he lights the fire in the belly, and cuts off a hanging piece of heart because he is hungry. He notices that the fish glides on the earth; right away he begins to cut the animal from the inside to the outside; then he slides and escapes. In the fish’s belly it was so hot that all his hair fell out. — The hero frees at the same time all those who had been swallowed before and who escape also the hero cuts the belly of the king’s fish and slides outside. He slides outside and sees a flash of lightning. And he sits down and thinks: “I’m surprised where am I? he says. Then the sun rose all at once and threw itself on the other side.”

Ntuca [Africa?]

Tropical winter

The color recomposes flows between the spaces
like a liquid hanged man sways
the rainbow
the worms of light circulate in your diarrhea
there where the clarinets grow
pregnant woman toucanongonda
like the green ball
pregnant woman culilibulala produces the satellite
the bell glides under the boat
green ball burning
the town below flame-bandages caressing the centrifugal wound
squeeze squeeze strongly — high the bellies and infuse the plants’ acid
the feldspaar he in your interior speed angel mac mac mechanic
O mechanic of necrologies
she throws at her husband’s head a bowl of vitriol
lets go to the other meeeeteeeoooroooolooogies
in Cambodia for example
while the sun glides tangent of the atmosphere
in poupaganda I glide aureola ganda ganda gandapalalou
skating leading to the zoo of heedless mammoths

Note: This is one of Tzara’s dada-ized workings, from which his own poem, “Ange” (Angel), is derived.
Maori (New Zealand)

Toto-Vaca

I
Ka tangi te tivi
kivi
Ka tangi te moho
moho
Ka tangi te tike
ka tangi te tike
tike
he pok o anahe
to tikoko tikoko
haere i te hara
tikoko
ko te taoura te rangi
kaouaea
me kave kivhea
kaouaea
a-ki te take
take no tou
e haou
to ia
haou riri
to ia
to ia
to ia ake te take
take no tou

II
ko ia rimou ha ere
kaouaea
totara ha ere
kaouaea
poukatea ha ere
kaouaea
homa i te tou
kaouaea
khia vhitikia

kaouaea
takou takapou
kaouaea
hihi e
haha e
pipi e
tata e
a pitia
ha
ko te here
ha
ko te timata
e — ko te tiko pohue
e — ko te aitanga a mata
e — te aitanga ate
hoe-manuko

III
ko aou ko aou
hitaoue
make ho te hanga
hitaoue
tourouki tourouki
paneke paneke
oioi te toki
kaouaea
takitakina
ia
he tikaokao
he taraho
he pararera
ke ke ke ke
he pararera
ke ke ke ke

Note: Tzara used this text as a sound poem. His translation appears at the end of the present series.
Kai Islands [Pacific?]

Song of the absent one

Enemy (I am) (with) enemy village. Enemy of the village over there.
Enemy enemy go tell (the victory) name the friends like a
rumor. Rumor friends: his mother peddles it at the dance feast
His mother hawks it at the dance feast
The feast: his mother and all they hawks it at the dance feast
At the feast: his friends will tell like a rumor
His friends are right about what they tell as a rumor (woman of)
Kadan will recognize his long hair
The long dragging hair will trample our earth that creaks under the feet.
Grates underfoot: deserted is his empty house
The pigeon maybe stays to guard the house.
But act as if other person didn't guard our house
Guarded is our house; Babooi is in Ceram
You don't care for Baboi, he, so choose Movien of Amboine
Amboine: build in your house his room
House, room, room build in your house his room, his room
Your task is to go where you'll find it again.
Even a Dutchman his task is to go where to find it?
After the Dutchmen the guards go to find it
Where do they go to find it?
Will they go the house inside?
The house inside the country that they visit it

Finale
I'll visit like far a little Aios and Keij
I'll go far far away we'll enlist the fire boat that moves by means of wheels
By means of wheels; will berth in our Nammco roadstead.

I'm a passenger of humble blood a passenger
A passenger who follows the others who follows
Of Reenro woman, of good family the youngest son
Of Reenro woman, “A” woman, the youngest blood
The youngest hanging at the breast who for the first time comes to Dobo
Cherished for the first time comes to Dobo he stays to contemplate strangers who go about their trade
The foreigners and the Dutchmen go about their trade
Trade gives one treasures, to me money none
To me money none, I cradle the empty hands
Empty hands; but the rudder's there, I'm looking for it
The rudder and the sail go there, I'm looking for them
I desire the muscatel that's close to the water of Bongraad
The flower that's close to the water of Bongraad
The perfume spreads all the way from Bal

**Finale**
Ancestors come and keep watch, I offer you, ancestors whose spirits reside here
Spirits of the sea open over there, protect the sailors who are all of good family

**Ewe (Ghana)**

The bird that saw sings
Tseutsé's child is dead
She should eat, they say
I don't want to eat, she says
God himself greeted them
And said, she should eat
But Tseutsé refused and said:
I'll never eat

Then earth greeted them
and said she should eat
But Tseutsé said never will I eat
Foufou she desired
but said to eat she doesn't want
the mush was her envy
but said to eat she wouldn't want
But nevertheless stole the ripe fruit and ate them

**Sotho (South Africa)**

Mosimoli Mosimotsane
Put the jug on your head, let me help you
But you fooled me
Mosimole; Mosimotsane
your father and your mother
have (mousu) (moussu) with the millstone
the small hippo and the crocodile
wanted to make me an animal, I didn't want to
they say, I should be a man, again I didn't want to
they say I should be a bird with wings to fly, I didn't want to
and they thought finally that it’s better
to say that I should be a woman
then I agreed

**Kinga [Africa?]**

You who let the water gurgle in the gourd
Doudura Doudura
Are you my sister?
Are you the one who accused me?

And you threw me in air, after?
Came a tearing rain
Carried me into the Talsenkoung

**Nauri [Africa?]**

Who wants to throw the Zigendung?
Zigendung
That I want to throw in the sky
Sky
That he may let some water fall on me
some water
That the burned grass may grow a little
fresh grass
That my old cow may eat
Old cow
I want to kill her for the vultures there
The vultures there
That they may give me their feathers
feathers
Those I want to fix to my arrow
arrow
I want to hunt the enemy’s oxen
oxen
to receive my wife
wife
That she may give me a child
child
that it may pick my lice
lice
that old man I may go and die with them
The dance of the greased women

(Steingeröll) new signs putting
short putting new signs
signs head stretch out
white dots they feel along the wide bands
twins on a pile say
twins a pile say
senses of the girls yell loud
from the sky loudly to say
then the paved women advance in a straight line
the (wasserälber) walk around
salt lakes with upright shores
(wasserälber) high upright
water plans green of grass come
the torch comes
feet quick come
the women of the past come
thick grass come out of
from thick bushels come outside
on the paths of the gods always to lie
the paving lead them
through the rocks' openings lead (gehne ich)
the paving lead them
woman of the past (me) I sigh after my house
from the deep I wish to return
in joy I sigh after the house
the bushes I sigh after the house
in the throat I desire
in the belly I sigh after the house
in the belly I tremble continuously
in the joy I tremble
in the joy I am in mourning
in the belly I am in mourning
the girls tremble continuously
the fertile girls
flames of fire are bent (over) bent (over)
the rock's edge is vaulted is vaulted
the convoy of the heights is well bent is well bent
the eucalyptus foliage is vaulted is vaulted
the agia's trunk is bent
the agia's trunk is bent is bent

the water is vaulted is vaulted
the course of the river is bent is bent
the tied (Geschwürte) are approaching
The past women advance

The lines advance
walking fast walking in a nearby line
on a pile sit down
on blocks of rocks sit down
the flame of fire advances
the great flame
the paving with wheels approaches
the flame
Inteer angoulba remains standing motionless
the flame of fire remains standing
Kinga [Africa?]

Praise-song for the chief

Bawhoe
Yes my lord!
Yes my friend
Yes my mother
Yes my god (Gegenspender)
Yes my distributor of benedictions
O you give a fat goat, aha and then she gives birth, and you,
You don't ask her back (pretend)
will you ask her back, the world would rather break
O you mother of the forests, goats, that you have sowed make a present like god
that is like stone that is buried and never swells

Chaga (Tanzania)

Song of the shepherd

Men's markets are wars and battles
Men's markets are gleaming lances
O the father's shield lies there on the road
O the father's shield lies there on the path
Yes, war doesn't know the poor man's daughter
Yes the lance knows nothing about the rich man's wife

Coucoutlé's war song

I am Coucoutlé
The warriors passed by they sing
The battle hymn, line of animals, has passed close by me
It passed despising my childhood
And stopped at Bonkoukou's door,
I am the black warrior
My mother is Bosséléssé
I'll leap like a lion
like the one who eats the virgins
by the forests of Foubassequoi
Mapasta is with me
Mapasta, Télé's son
We leave intoning the song of the Tial
Ramakoala, my uncle, cries:
Coucoutlé, where are we fighting?
We'll fight before the fires of Matossé
We arrive . . .
The enemy warriors are lined up
Together they throw their spears
They exhaust themselves in vain
Moatla's father leaps among them
He wounds a man on the arm
In front of his mother's eyes
Who sees him fall
Ask where the head of Sébegoané's son is
It rolled to the center of the native town
Victorious I've entered his home
And I purified myself in the middle of his sheepfold
My eye is still circled by the clay of victory
The shield of Coucoutlé has been pierced
Those of the enemies are intact
Because they are the shields of cowardly men
I am the white powder
after the rain
ready to return to my children
I roar I need a prey
I see herds escaping
through the thick grass of the plain
I take them away from the shepherd with the white and yellow shield
Climb on the high rocks of Macaté
See the white cow running in the middle of the herd
Makoné will no longer despise my club
The grass grows in his deserted meadows
The wind sweeps the straw roofs
of his destroyed huts
The buzzing of the gnats is the only noise heard
In his village once noisy
tired and dying of thirst I visited Entélé
His wife was churning a delicious milk
Whose white and foamy froth
Like a small child's spittle
I picked up the shard of a broken pot
to draw from the vessel
Which I soon left empty
The white cow that I conquered
has a black head
Its chest is wide and high
it nursed Matagamé's daughter
I'll go and offer it to my chief
the name of my chief is Makao
And Makao is Makao!
I swear it on Mamassiké's
mottled ox.

*Goloané's war chants*

Goloané goes to battle
He leaves with Lerzié
He runs toward the enemy
The one they murmured against
The one one never wants to obey
One insults his little red shield
Though it still is the old shield
of Goloané's ox
How does Moscheh come and say:
Stop defying Goloané the veteran?
Be that as it may, here come the horses . . .
From the battles Goloané brings back
A grey horse with red
Your songs of triumph go to the mountains
They even enter the valley
Where the enemy kneeled down before you
The cowardly warriors! They pray!
They're asking for food
They'll see if they'll get it!
Let's give to our allies
To the warriors of Makaba
To those we never see coming to attack us
Goloané returns lame from the battles
he returns and his leg streams
a dam of black blood
Escapes from the leg of the hero
of Kantsoapé's companion
Grabs the shoulder of a heifer
It's Goloané son of Makao
Malisseé's representative
let no one proffer insults
Ramakamané complains
He sighs he says his heifer
has broken his white shoulder
The companion of the braves
Goloané has measured himself against Empapang and Kabané
The spear is thrown
Goloané avoids it with skill
and Kabané's stinger
lodges itself into the ground
These will no longer return to their masters
the hornless ox will no longer be sold
Today war broke out
more terrible (than ever)
It's the war of Pontsam and Masétélié
Makato’s servant
Goloané has thrown a king
He has hit the warrior with the yellow shield
Do you see that felled warrior’s cowardly companions
Standing motionless by a rock
Why can’t their brother go and take away
The flowers with which they’ve decorated their heads?
Goloané, your praises are like the thick mist
That precedes the rains.

“Let us fight with the shield taken from that ox sacrificed for us, that is Jesus Christ”
Christian of Baronga

**Baronga (Mozambique)**

The lake dries from its edges
The elephant dies from a small arrow

the squealings of the green finch (?)
You’ll die with your lie

I still sculpt a stick of ironwood
I still think about it
The noise a cracked elephant tusk makes
The anger of a hungry man
A gourd that stretches its branches over the plain
A chief dragging himself across his village square.

The strident noise of the dry sorgho stalk
The anger of a hungry man

A small tree covered with wild pigeons
Your father, covered with heavy bracelets

The palm leaf with its many folioles
The old fallen one has passed the river

People against a wall
Ah if only I died
A short stick carrying a mace at its end
to refuse food one to the other
in the same village, is a fault for which
one may be fined.

I threw my Kouakoua far away it rolled to the end of the world
I have accepted pickaxes that came from Ba-labi.

• • •

The thieving monk has eaten all my millet
Now he comes back. He (to have received from) me
Where will we go to seek refuge? (as famine is gnawing at us now)
Go to Mougondja (or to Modjadji the famous rainmaking queen who lives in the north).
Go to Maouéoué
Where will we seek refuge?
Eyéyé! é! é! é!

• • •

Don’t you want to buy a new wife from us?
later on your daughter will bring you a domain
worth fifteen (silver) (money)

• • •
Rongué's song

The handsome dancer with the slim hips
— Now I have no dance companion
(these young girls) our heart is really very sad
— No matter My brother Noua Koubyélé, for he shines as much as a piece of white silver
Nouahangoua! Nouahangoua! when one sees him his slim hips. He it is who executes to perfection
the many songs of Rongué

• • •

— You dance, Guilela! You dance and your waist isn’t thicker than a piece of string
Son of Tschirubéni. Dance Dance. It was too little. We haven’t had our fill yet.

• • •

Maori (New Zealand)

Toto Vaca

— Kivi cries (the bird)
— Kivi
— Moko cries (the bird)
— Tike cries (the bird)
— Tike
One belly only
Gubet h, ihm auf gubelt ihm
Hold him the road
It’s the second year
Because, my men
it’s the (...)

Song for the tattooing of a man

We are together
and eat together
we watch the signs
the eyes, the nose
of every tava
winding hanging to the right and to the left
like foeds

note: This is an early version of the “Toto Vaca” poem,
the full translation of which appears at the end of this series.
Baronga (Mozambique)

Meal of cyclamen
This here chief is mean

Two mice chase each other around the termite hill
Two chiefs speak evil of a subject

Song of the antelope horns

I take a ring I give it to a young girl
How it shines, Tchaka!
—Mother, here are the Bangoni. Let’s go see what’s happening to the children on the hill
How it shines Tchaka

• • •

The pretty bird with the coral neck in the grass
Young girls smear yourselves with ochre

The merchants’ song

Hoho hoho you lead us in the name of our mother
hoho hoho break the dish let’s go home
the elephant’s twin doesn’t abandon its little one

The hemp stalk

The Zulus walk single file
I walked all along a vast plain to walk
    Némaleyam back home
I’ve ploughed a huge field and planted there
    only one pea

I found two cobs of corn in a basket
I met two-Makhoga who were leaving for Khocène

• • •
We found a tree that ripens ripens
it's only got one almond left
we found a white man that loses weight loses weight
he's only got one beard hair left

• • •

I walk around my hut and I go to cut my acacia branch
I walk around my hut and I go to dig up my elephant tusk

The chief's wedding

Well, you the chiefs
of Npouma really let's sign
We are assembled today
we have seen
that yes we have to
elevate the chief
and give him the woman
of the land give him
There's no other business
you the chiefs.

In telling us about it
Have you been above the task
And we what other words
could we add?
There's nothing left to say
so you tell us
what we have to give
you the inhabitants of the capital.

Yao (Mozambique)

Let's hold on tight, we the old ones
What is a war, what is it? They said:
Mister Sulia isn't born yet?
Then the Massiliu arrives. The Gemehoré
are crushed (enormously).
Then they ran away. But the
Germans came, and there lies
the danger. All the wood’s been burned,
The ants were burned, the goats
were burned, the hens were
burned; all the people were killed.
Came the levying of taxes; they had to bring
rupies by the hundreds. It still wasn’t
enough. The heart was strangled
with anguish. We
prefer to stay on the other side
of Lunga. Mister Sulia
will telegraph the subprefect: he came
to shear the wool off my back
to make himself a money-bag.
Now I’m tired.

—The skulls don’t play, only he who has hair plays.

Chakalakala child of God journeys to the father
Show the way to father Koumampaye
Go to the riverbed where Chenampuya works the field
Came to the country and to his father
then they fired they gave him the village
And he stayed home

**Wanyamwezi (Tanzania)**

We fire, we fire with the eyes
upon the Mamuki we fire with the eyes
upon the Wambunga we fire with the eyes
upon the Mamuki we fire with the eyes
Ki! we fire with the eyes.
upon the Wawnera we fire with the eyes
Ki! we fire with the eyes
Upon the Wakumbma we fire with the eyes.

**Yao (Mozambique)**

Linda’s voyage: he set out for Mossassi and yelled
with all his strength: inform the Bwana
Mkubwa: war is here and I took off
without turning around. Inform the Akiden Mataora: war is here and I’ve beaten the war drum. Then we went to Mossassi; the Mwera give themselves up all the way to Lindi. Then they got the permission: return to your homeland; plant millet.

Song for a woman

You, tree, you are called Sayalassi
Joy
Bring me that young girl;
but as a sign that it has to be so,
look, I hammer my words into you.

Wanyamwezi (Tanzania)

We were night and day til clarity day
by the shore we anchored. The baharias by the shore,
the sailors said:
You Schemé from the interior you’ll spit yourself to death.
But nevertheless we came to Lindi healthy saying
You have insulted God but we nevertheless arrived
healthy. All in good health.

Basuto (Botswana)

These white birds
flecked with black
what do they eat up above
They eat the fat
the fat of the zebra
of the zebra with
the mottled colors
with the noisy nostrils
with the quick feet
far away
the drizzle is thick when it will lift
there’s a chest will resound
the lion
Yao (Mozambique)

You, my pupil, now you are circumcised.
Your father and mother, honor them. Don’t visit them
without having announced your coming; otherwise you could surprise
them in a tender embrace. Of the young-girl, feel no fear;
sleep together; bathe together. When you are ready,
let her massage you; when you are ready, let her greet you:
Masakam. Then answer; Mashaba. At the new moon, be
careful. Then you could easily become
sick. Because of cohabitation
during menstruation, illnesses in great number.

Unyago (Tanzania)

Dance I

Let’s leave let’s leave my dear child.
Let’s leave let’s leave my dear child.
The owl howls in the Shamba
Early in the morning Livile’s little basket
is carried out of the house.

Wauru [Eastern Coastal Africa?]

Young-girl
stay up there
stay on the Däbanne chair
the Däbanne up there

Steer your boat leap from the sea to the shore
Stay stuck in the private parts of the . . .
fuck her, in her private parts rage like
thunder and lightning, thunder growls
thunder growls leaping from her sex.
 . . . O!
Show, open wide her intimate organs,
drink the palm wine
foam in her
drink the palm wine.
... your sex stinks like the shark's gall
the shark's gall stinks atrociously
and everything that pours from it
I want to go towards Tararuru
to go get Tararuru
to open to open
to smell to smell
to pick the flowers
to shake the petals
e é watch that clitoris

(Dance)

Let's go, let's move
Woman, watch your things
I didn't hang them up
because I was busy trying to dry myself.
I gave you a promise and I'm confident
rubbed with ointments and I waited for you, you, my little silver fish,
because the more I rubbed myself with ointments the more I spread myself
I've always had confidence in you, with ointments I rubbed my old nuts
they belong to you, my necklace,
everybody wanted to see the young girl
beautiful as a necklace
beautiful as the sun
She is all splendor
O like the silvery fish in the water
you are beautiful, my young girl.

Ebo Ebo the silvery fish has come
from the reef it came
Ebo Ebo she watched over the deep of the sea
Ebo she swims on the Baweln
Ebo Ebo she swims on her back Ebo she swims on her back

Puberty chant for young girls

You the young girls, all together oo
Get up and come over here
cause the sun rises oo.
The waves come closer, unfurl and break with a thunderous roar
the water unwrinkles and flows back, flows back towards the great rock
and we dance around you for you
A basket falls from the rock
Do you still remember how we fished with the net the net?

(Dance)

Men, divide into two groups oo
You whisper in my ear that I should go to you
what do you want from me
what do you want from me
don't look at me
or else they'll watch and hurt you the shark's teeth
what do you want from me
what do you want
today come close
I'll go with you
roll up your skirts roll up your skirts sky high
come see come see come see

• • •

Two Ebos play together
one Ebo is strong but the other is weak

(Dance)

We skirt the island and sing
we're going to the dance
(we want to go to the place of the dance)
because everybody has to come and watch the spectacle
we want to go to the place of the dance, come here
we skirt the island and sing
we utter here we utter there cries of joy
We can't contain our pleasure any longer
put the ornaments around our members
slowly slowly
and we are busy with our burden
to advance a little a little
We are standing on one leg we the young girls all together on the shore
we the young girls all together on the shore oo
stretch today stretch today may some of you
carry everything into the young girl's house
but nobody may touch may touch her private parts.

*Trgattrogel's song*

Woman of the south  oo
Woman of the north  oo
come close  oo
come close
and see a quantity
just finished and put away,
of tin cans of pandanus sugar
of pandanus molasses
and ripe nuts
on the north side
on the north side

Eoradetà Eoradetà  o
wake up wake up
I haven't slept all night
you groan and you moan
get some water and drink
because you're thirsty.
Come, come closer
dawn breaks and morning becomes day.
Purify your mouth
Listen, let's go south
as a couple, together, down there
We'll frolic like butterflies.
Wedding song

Let's go with her, but we'll return home
Where are you going, our mother
Where are you going?
They'll bring you the basket
and the van, o my mother!
When you have crushed it
they'll make you crush some more o my mother
when you've plastered the floor
they'll make you once more my mother
We are a small band,
Young-girls; we are few
We are going to get
a piece of meat from the spit;
once we wouldn't have known where to find any, o our sister ...
It's our sister will get us some from her husband
Where are we going dragging
the hook behind us
We are detested people
We walk in unhappiness, an unhappiness that strikes our house
Go see, but lame and leaning on your stick,
grand-mother, yap away . . . She makes kowé kowé kowé!
Come down young girls. lets go drink some water in the dale
they refuse the mill-plate when she borrows it
they refuse the small mortar and the small pestel
they tell her: go get them at your house and come back and crush your husband
She is hiding something, that woman
The things she says! we are dead! we are lost!
Are you the master of the village?
Don't you give us water that we may drink
We don't hear the water from the well; we want to drink beer
    and spirits
We don't want any part of what Koué does
We want the animal that is brought on a string

•  •  •

Eh! See how he avoids us!
When he avoids us!
When he sees us, he goes and hides behind the houses
We want what satisfies the heart! we demand very fat fat.
You snake! You dog! You make oua-oua!
Ewe (Ghana)

Song of the singer Holonu-Adynyo in Alecho

The tick-riddled leopard doesn’t run away from the hunter
We are male sheep who don’t avoid the battle
The sorcering priest calls: Adynyo defies us
the town of Adygo certainly is a town
but what do you care?

In the days when Alowohu came, when Hotuso came
To Anecho certainly you went to live there
your uncle Gbadoe escaped the French
and they took Gbadoe and tied him up
they beat Gbadoe so much he let go his shit
King Agbewe they chased you from Anecho
you left and now you are in Togo. The town of Tofo says: the business that you bring
whorings child and mother they carried them on their heads
you went to sell them the town of Togo has chased you
you left and now you are in Glidy
Kloma’s whip is as long as a carbine it is a Danish carbine
up at night, on the road, and now you are in Dyete
there in the pigsties you live
son of a bitch son of a pig there you are on the road eat pigherds
The tick-riddled leopard doesn’t run away from the hunter
We are male sheep who don’t avoid the battle
The sorcering priest calls: Adynyo defies us
the town of Adygo is a town, it’s true
but what do you care.

Song of the singer Kanyi in Adydo. Ingratitude

My apologies to you, bad women
you corrupt yourselves in Lomé
Kanyi, son of misery, took the road of unhappiness, he walks it already
You drum-children
Kanyi became once more a war vessel among the singers
Latevi said: yet that
matter seemed settled
Abalo singers said/he heard a word, he went he came he went
to Tonu on Tonu earth groaned, don’t say a word Kanyi has al-
ready taken the road of unhappiness; still men are full of desires again
The day Kanyi dies, they’ll marry his widow
The ram doesn’t die that easily; Tomu said:
The ram doesn’t die, and, can his horns be broken that easily?

Young Anecho girl’s song for a young man

You worked once
You worked once
you covered the tree with clothes
The ant ate ayo oho
You worked once
You worked once
You covered the tree with clothes
The ant ate ayo oho

Young Anecho girl’s leaving song

I despise you; add it up
I despise you; add it up
there’s a treasure far away
speaks to my soul will anger you
I despise you; add it up

I despise you: kill me you want to kill me
    sell me you want to sell me
nail me you want to nail me
roast me you want to roast me
carve me up you want to carve me up
knife me you want to knife me
The singer Kanyi’s praise songs

I
He rears up like a rock
that nobody measure himself against him
Aziagbenyo says: to be king if it was a matter of money
they say
Certainly if Ayite reigned as king
Chico and Antonio, they would be
his porters in Anecho

II
A thing that has never happened will happen, will occur
one day, Kuadyo will return to the kingdom of the dead will get back his voice,
says the assembled enemy the fetish doesn’t cook of stone
The people of Anecho on the side of the fish. The people of Adyavo sigh
the people will go to the kingdom of the dead in the country below

• • •

He tarries, Taarao his name
in the spaces of the unfinished world
no earth yet, no sky yet
no sea yet existed; no creatures.
From up there Taarao calls
In new shapes Taarao wanders
He, Taarao, as fundament of the root
as foundation of the rock
Taarao as elaboration of the furthest
Taarao irrupts as light
Taarao reigns in the deep
Taarao all around;
Taarao down here.
Taarao wisdom.
Born the earth of Hawaii
Hawaii great and sacred
as Taarao’s envelope.
Yao (Mozambique)

Chungulugula

At Mtarika’s — the old Wayao chief — a great marvel was seen: the Usanye grains, the red fruits wept in the basket in which they were. And it happened like this. They had cut Usanye (grains) in the “Schambé” and had put them in a basket. And while they were being pressed, the grains began to weep and they moaned in the basket. The people didn’t know where those cries came from and threw the Usanye grains out of the basket to examine the basket from every side. But they found nothing. So then they put the Usanye grains back into the basket and once again the cry arose and all the people ran away scared and went looking for other people. These also examined the basket and found nothing. And they all went away, very surprised. But when they got back home, suddenly the mortar began to dance; the great mbales and the sound conches also began to dance: and hundred-footed Yongola began to build houses. The next morning every body assembled to talk about what it all meant. And three days later Mtarika died. It was an omen.

Suahili (Tanzania)

Song of the weight-carriers

Today is the beginning, today is the beginning
Very early this morning
we will speak to God

Dig dig
Hemedi’s daughter
let her work the clove field
dig dig

We’ll go to Mama Yaya’s
today at Mama Yaya’s
we’ll drink Kassawa and sweet palm wine
at Mama Yaya’s.

Zanzibar

o mam re de mi ky
we’ve escaped from Wahha, ha ha
The wawinza won’t torment us any longer oh oh
Mionwu won’t get any more cloth from us hy hy
and Kiala will never see us again he he
**Basuto (Botswana)**

*Building song*

```
\[ a \text{ ee} \text{ ea} \text{ eee} \text{ ea} \text{ ee,} \text{ ea} \text{ ee,} \text{ a} \text{ ee}
\text{ ea} \text{ ee} \text{ ea,} \text{ ee,}
\text{ ea} \text{ ee} \text{ ea} \text{ ee ee,}
\text{ here we are building the stakes for the chief's court}
\text{ we're building for the chief.}
```

**Wanyamwezi (Tanzania)**

*Hacking song*

**I**
When it comes to working I'm lazy but when it comes to eating ah to eating I'm fast.

**II**
Come the rain is here — I am tired I am tired of working
let's hurry to the labor of sitting down and eating

**III**
Could you measure me a tiny measure of bracelets
King, could you forge me certain european kinds
of bracelets, the dance drum is calling you.

**IV**
Yamalila oh, he's an elephant hunter, we'll eat with you,
toothless people, we're no longer able to sift the grain
for the others, we're no longer able to.
Suahili (Tanzania)

To swing iyo to swing
to swing iyo to swing
you Maassiti come join us on the swing
sit down and swing

When the time of the millet swings
then we want to swing the fresh millet
the millet and we swing
of joy to swing

My mother told me chase the hens
but the hens I can't chase 'em
I'm sittin here footless
and my mother's rice is eaten by the birds
isch isch

Tahiti (Polynesia)

The lobster's song

Varo, Varo, move your tail
So that one may grab you by the head or by the legs
swallow this good piece of fish
if you're male come to the surface
if you're female come to the surface
a spirit pursues you, hurry up
a spirit pursues you, hurry up.
Maori (New Zealand)

Tukiwaka

now pull
now push
now dive
now hold
forward forward, on the way
on the way to Waipa
now haul
his boat's wind-quills aren't beautiful
fast pull
fast pull
haul
haul
sink
sing a song
shove
an oar in the water
deeply
a long stroke
ai ai
a pull on the oar
an old man shows himself by his oar pulling
further
bend
cape
out to sea
out to sea

Song for the tattooing of a man

Here we are assembled
to feast
we watch the signs
on the eyes on the nose
of Tutetawa
winding arabesques
the lizard's feet
engrave it with Mataora's chisel
don't have the nostalgia
that the women want to look at you
want to pick
the young leaves of the Warawara
I am the master
of your splendid signs
the man who pays you well
tattoo him artistically
the man who doesn't pay you
don't give him a beautiful tattoo
let the grumbling resound
stand up Tangaroa
stand upright Tangaroa.

Song for the hauling of tree-trunks

Puhwa (Hari)

Pull o Tainui pull the Arawa
throw it into the sea
lightning's hit its aim
fell on my sacred day


*Tota Waka*

Kiwi cries the bird
Kiwi
Moho cries the bird
Moho
Tieke cries the bird
Tieke
only a belly
rises into the air rises into the air
continue your road
rises into the air
here's the second year
Kauaeaa
here is the catcher of men
Kauaeaa
make room and drag him
Kauaeaa
drag where
Kauaeaa
Ah the root
the root of Tou
Heh the wind
drag further
raging wind
drag further the root
the root of the Tou

So push, Rimo
Kauaeaa
go on Totara
Kauaeaa
go on Pukatea
Kauaeaa
give me the Tou
Kauaeaa
give me the Maro
Kauaeaa
stretch stretch (the hauling rope)

kauaeaa
my belly
Kauaeaa
kihi, e
haha, e
pipi, e
tata, e
apitia
HA;
together
ha
me the rope
ha
me the rope
me the spear
me the silex-child
me the child of the Manuka-oar

I am I am
a long procession
dead is the thing
a long procession
goes on gliding goes on gliding
to sink you to sink you
brandish the axe
Kauaeaa

only a rooster
only a Taraho bird
only a duck
ke ke ke ke
only a duck
ke ke ke ke
The editor's intention, like that of the translator, is to present Tzara: his view of the "ethnopoetic" as it existed on entry circa 1916 into dada. There has therefore been little attempt (beyond the Englishing of some tribal names) to make the work more proper than it was. The context of these poems was the first large scale attack on the dominance of renaissance European models of art & poetry—a project sometimes viewed as "anti-art" or, in Tzara's words, as "a great negative work of destruction." In the field of the dada poem, the "ethnopoetic" was surely at the other pole: a positive work of recovery & a return to the lost basis of human poesis. It had been my assumption, at the time I wrote Technicians of the Sacred, that the influence of what Tzara calls "Negro poetry" (here both African and Oceanian) was largely indirect before our own time. The publication of Tzara's "Poèmes Nègres"—more than five decades past their intended appearance—now clarifies the process of transmission in all its roughness. It lets us see how Tzara used the texts he found in ethnographic translations & transcriptions; how he worked & spoke them back to life; how they affected his own poems as image, sound & structure; how they went from him into the mainstream of surrealism, where they instructed not only the poets right at hand but even those latter-day Americans sometimes too busy asserting their own new poetic hegemony to take sufficient notice of its sources. In all of this, Tzara—like Roussel, Leiris, Cendrars, etc.—was a pivotal & incredibly germinal figure.

C.G. von Brandenstein & A.P. Thomas, translators

from Taruru: Aboriginal Song Poetry From The Pilbara

The following two poems are reprinted from Taruru, a new collection of Western Australian Aboriginal songs, collected and translated by C.G. von Brandenstein and A.P. Thomas. Both poems are translations of a song form called tabi, composed and sung by an individual singer, as opposed to corroboree, the older form of group choral music of the area. See the translator's note below for an explanation of the tabi form. The book, composed of songs recorded in the field by von Brandenstein in the 1960's, contains full bilingual versions of each song poem, followed by a detailed interlinear version with linguistic notes and some details on composer and singer, where it was available. Taruru is available in the U.S. for $6.95 from University Press of Hawaii, 535 Ward Avenue, Honolulu, HI 96814, and was originally published by Rigby Ltd., Norwood, South Australia.
The First Truck At Tambrey

Toby Wiliguru Pambardu

The strange thing comes closer, coming into view for inspection.
The strange thing comes closer, coming into view for inspection.
The strange thing comes closer, coming into view for inspection.
The strange thing comes closer, coming — full length into view.
Now we have seen you, stranger, coming — full length into view.

Now we have seen you, stranger, coming — full length into view.
Poor fellow you, stranger, — your transparent eyes reaching everywhere,
You stand there, fire spitting: eedj! — your transparent eyes reaching everywhere.

You stand there, fire spitting: eedj! — your transparent eyes reaching everywhere,
You stand there, fire spitting: eedj! transparent. — With its splutter
Inside below the engine is built — with its splutter.

Inside below the engine is built — with its splutter,
Inside below the engine is built — the starter,
Chirping “njeen njeen” in the front like crickets — the starter.

Chirping “njeen njeen” in the front like crickets — the starter,
Chirping “njeen njeen” in the front like crickets. — Up and down
Smell the petrol going through
by the big end! — up and down.

Smell the petrol going through
by the big end — up and down!
Smell the petrol going through
by the big end! — Bubbles,
See them suddenly blown high,
boiling — bubbles!

See them suddenly blown high
boiling — bubbles
See them suddenly blown high
boiling. — Both shaking

. . . . . you two,
clever men, — both shaking.

. . . . . you two,
clever men — both shaking
. . . . . you two,
clever men — in the sleek cabin
Sitting on a seat to drive,
all gadgets! — in the sleek cabin.

Sitting on a seat to drive,
all gadgets! — in the sleek cabin
Sitting on a seat to drive,
all gadgets! — The noise swells,
When they accelerate along the road
to a rumble — the noise swells.

When they accelerate along the road
to a rumble — the noise swells
When they accelerate along the road
to a rumble — a buzz sets in.
The wheels make miles,
at a proper speed — a buzz sets in.

The wheels make miles
at a proper speed — a buzz sets in.
The wheels make miles,
at a proper speed — the tyre marks spin
Around in the dust like mad,
    like firesticks — the tyre marks spin.

Around in the dust like mad,
    like firesticks — the tyre marks spin
Around in the dust like mad,
    like firesticks — its sides rattle,
Jerking when a load is pulled
    by the truck — its sides rattle.

Jerking when a load is pulled
    by the truck — its sides rattle,
Jerking when a load is pulled
    by the truck. — The ground whirls past,
When you look out front it is swaying,
    running straight — the ground whirls past.

When you look out front it is swaying,
    running straight — the ground whirls past.
When you look out front it is swaying,
    running straight — the roar’s like a meteor
Blundering from star to star,
    running through the bend — the roar’s like a meteor.

Blundering from star to star,
    running through the bend — the roar’s like a meteor.
Blundering from star to star,
    running through the bend — fading far away
The noise making miles
    like a firestick — fading far away.
Tjabi

Development

There he sits, bald as an egg
And wants to tell us
That railway tracks will criss-cross the desert, the liar!
They'd even cross the Pilbara, near Warden's Pool.
So he lies, the idiot!
Sand is all he'll find up here
To wipe his arse with,
the big-shot from Perth.

Notes

The First Truck At Tambrey

Toby Wiliguru Pambardu (“the blind”) died 1934. He was the greatest master of tabi-making in the Pilbara in this century. Blind since boyhood, he strove to overcome his handicap, and developed his talents to such a degree that he reached the highest possible standard, and a rare perfection in song-making. The song presented here illustrates this by the following statistics:

The non-repetitive verse text consists of sixteen kala accommodated in fifteen sung verses, the last of which includes the sixteenth kala in its last line. Each kala consists of five words, divided by caesura either in 3 + 2 or 2 + 3. There are nine cases of 3 + 2 and six cases of 2 + 3 caesura.

Each sung verse consists of three kala, i.e. fifteen words, of which nine are repetitions from the foregoing verse, and six new words; the ratio of repeated and new words in one verse is therefore 3:2.

The number of non-repetitive words in the sixteen kala is eighty, the number of all words used 225 (15 \times 15) + 10 (of two introductory kala) = 235.

Considering the many songs Pambardu made, to make a song of such strict measuring without writing anything down is the sign of a really great bard, and of a superior individual. Unfortunately, little is known as yet of his personality. One peculiar habit has been reported: he used to sit alone listening intently to some imaginary person behind his shoulder, at the same time striking an imaginary mirrimba on his forearm. Gordon Mackay sings the song and introduces it as follows: “This is about the first big truck that came to Tambrey. My friend happened to be there, and he saw it, and made a song about it, and this is it here. I am going to sing it.” The song was taken 7 October 1964 at Port Hedland.

Tambrey is now a deserted station 100 miles south from Roebourne, on the Wittenoom road.

Development

Egg “Magardu” (native fig) replaces our “egg” in the original, as an object of comparison for bald.

Pilbara The original Pilbara is the name of the mining area about fifty miles south-east of Whim Creek. The name means “plenty, rich,” and is also a word for fish. The new Pilbara is about 100 miles to the east, fifteen miles east of Marble Bar, and has developed into a small tin-mining shanty town. In its wider sense, Pilbara refers to the whole area between De Grey and Fortescue rivers.

Warden’s Pool is a few minutes south of old Pilbara on Pilbara Creek. The meaning of the original name, Marndangul-langgana = Rocks therein, is well chosen.

Perth The old Aboriginal name for Perth is still in use everywhere in the north. Tjabi’s songs go back to the 1940’s. The man he is deriding for his talk on progress was a certain Swan River George.
The Forest Diver (Skogsdykaren) was originally published in an edition of 300 copies by Edition Sellem, Lund, Sweden, in 1974. What follows is af Klintberg's text and some photos of the event.

Bengt af Klintberg

The Forest Diver

It all started when I got an old diver's suit as a birthday present from my friend Erik Langlet. It was one of the last December days in 1966. The suit was made of some kind of grey waterproof canvas. Its inside was lined with black rubber. It had black rubber gloves and black rubber boots; the latter were mended at some places with red rubber patches. The most remarkable thing about it was the size: it was so tall.

I did not know what to do with it. For several years it hung on a wall in my work room. I looked at it every day: the neckband was just below the ceiling and the boots almost touched the floor. We moved to a house outside Stockholm, and for another run of years the diver's suit lay rolled-up under a drawing-table.

One night I have a dream. I am sitting and talking to a vocational counselor, answering questions, drawing crosses and underlining words in various forms. Then a computer is fed all information about me. It goes rattling and twinkling, the minutes pass away, and finally a strip of paper comes out with two words on it: forest diver.
Forest diver. I check in my encyclopedia: a species of African antelope. No, that must be wrong. This forest diver should be a sailor between treetops, a lookout for chanterelles and crow feathers on the ground.

You know how the bottom of the sea can resemble a forest. One winter the Swedish television screen was like a wall of an aquarium. Each time you switched it on, a shoal of fish slowly drifted by, and a diver swam into a floating submarine forest, filled with lurking sharks and octopuses. He seemed almost weightless, the gliding diver. What a difference from your own mushroom hunts in an ordinary Swedish pine forest. You move like a crab on the bottom, deep under the cones of the treetops. That's it: the forest as a sea bottom, with a forest diver rising and sinking through the branches of the trees.

Another possibility: the forest as a marionette theatre. I read in my encyclopedia: a theatre with jointed puppets which by means of threads can be made to imitate the movements of human beings. The marionette is generally around 50 centimeters tall and appears in a theatre reduced to the same scale. Why not, for once, a really large and airy stage? Perched in two treetops my brother-in-law Olle and I pull and release ropes. Between us is the forest diver, performing a slow dance with grave and waving movements, like a huge, reluctant jumping-jack, insulted by our proceedings but still not quite negative. He scents new possibilities after the rolled-up years under the drawing-table. We let him move slowly sideways between spruce branches. The air is cold, and there is a smell of snow on it. We tie the ropes to the trees and climb down, two forest sailors with frost-red fingers.
I ask my friends what they think of when looking at the tall headless diver hanging high over them. Someone says: it’s Superman who has hung his suit to dry. Another one remembers a photo from the Second World War where you see parachutists who had got stuck in trees and were shot by enemy snipers while hanging in the air. Yes, there is something military about the grey and black colours of the suit. Hanging there with loose limbs it becomes very similar to a headless human body. You think: there is someone who has been both hanged and beheaded. Then you think: that is impossible. You can be hanged, or you can be beheaded. But not both.

My diver’s suit is what is called “an old Trellenburger” in divers’ circles. One November afternoon in 1968 I was standing in the drizzle outside my studio at Blektörnsgränd 1 talking to my neighbor. It was a warm rain for November so we did not bother about going indoors. His name was Svensson and he had been a diver for many years. After the Second World War his job was to pick up the corpses of dead sailors from the bottom of the English Channel. “I guess no one in Sweden has found as many dead in the sea as I have,” he said, and there was a grim look on his face as he was standing there in the dusk, a middle-aged man dressed in a checkered shirt with rolled-up sleeves, with huge hands and a dark voice. Later I showed him my diver’s suit. “Looks like an old Trellenburger to me,” he said.

When you stroll around in the woods on damp autumn days with your eyes on the ground, you will find chanterelles and crow feathers everywhere. The chanterelles all have the same dense, pale yellow flesh, the same fresh, sourish smell. But in one of the crow feathers, in the hollow pen, there would be room for a rolled-up piece of paper with some kind of message on it. This, you may say, has nothing to do with the forest diver, but it has. There exists a connection between the grey suit, the black feathers and the yellow chanterelles. If the forest diver is to have a bed, he will find crow feathers and chanterelles in it.
Another day we let the diver hang horizontally stretched between four trees. It makes you think of a fettered body, exposed to the tools of tormentors. I still remember how furious and at the same time sick I was when the papers told of the torture of Alekos Panagoulis, the man who failed to blow the junta colonel Papadopoulos in the air. The first articles about the attempt called him Giorgios. That was the name of his elder brother, who had also joined the resistance but who was thrown chained into the Aegean by the soldiers who captured him. Somehow, the junta officers must have thought that he had succeeded in swimming ashore. And somehow Alekos must have decided to take over the role of his brother. There must have been many who followed his fate in the papers. And the pride everyone felt, when it became clear that he was stronger than his tormentors, that they could not break him down. He, who at first became renowned for a whole world as the patriot who failed, was finally the victor.
There have been old myths about heroes who could not be fettered but escaped from their chains, swimming like fishes in the water, flying like birds in the air. The forest diver is a piece of waterproof canvas with gloves and boots of rubber. It never flew away when I came to look at it. But it has reminded me of the fact that our time too has heroes who fit into the old mythic patterns.

The pictures from the world outside the Swedish pine forest shine each evening from the TV screen and throw a blue light on the trees outside the windows. A man throws himself from the tenth floor of a burning hotel in Seoul; he is followed by the film camera as he falls with flowing black hair towards the street. A man tied to a pole with a piece of white cloth over his eyes suddenly shakes and sinks down a handspan. Pictures from flood disasters, from drought disasters. Men, women and children living in villages; men, women and children exhibiting scars from torture; freshly killed men, women and children laid in rows.

It may seem as if the forest diver has taken flight, that he is on a gliding flight through the Swedish pine forest, away from these pictures. But it is not so. Somehow, the forest diver is a relative of all those who are bound hand and foot in other countries, or those living in huts. While we are sitting in our Western livingrooms, consuming to death, he prefers to hang out in the darkness of the night, in the drifting snow.
A collection of Howard Norman's work, *The Wishing Bone Cycle*, will be published this summer by Stonehill Publications (distributed by Braziller). Included will be the entire wishing bone trickster cycle, part of which appeared in *Alcheringa Old Series #5*, a larger collection of personal names, a section of shorter poems, and one long tale, with a pre-face by Jerome Rothenberg.

Samuel Makidemewabe, performer
Howard Norman, translator

**Swampy Cree Personal Name Origins**

The following were gathered and translated from Samuel Makidemewabe, in northern Manitoba, Canada. Makidemewabe is one of the old tribal "historians" near the community of Otter Lake. He says: "To say the name is to begin the story. If you want to know more about it, just ask."

In this translation/transcription CAPITALS are used when (on the tape) the voice is raised very significantly. In the case of the italic in "Many Voices" the voice was lowered, in that instance.

**Followed The Heron Shade**

She knew two herons flew over each morning, and sent their shadows along the ground below them.

Those birds were going to meet the cool mud with their feet, in a far place I still know about. But I don't walk there anymore because my ankles are too old.

She would wake early and run after their shadows, trying to keep in their shade!

This was moving heron shade she chased along the ground.

Each time she had to stop at the edge of a lake, and watch those shadows float out and become rafts shaped like herons on the water.

That's what happened.

Finally, we saw how those herons were giving us her name.
Rain Straight Down

For a long time we thought this boy loved ONLY things that fell straight down. He didn’t seem to care about anything else.

We were afraid he could only HEAR things that fell straight down!

We watched him stand outside in rain. Later, it was said he put a tiny pond of rain water in his wife’s ear while she slept. And leaned over to listen to it.

I remember he was happiest talking about all the kinds of rain.

The kind that comes off heron’s wings when they fly up from a lake. I know he wanted some of that heron rain for his wife’s ear too!

He walked out in spring to watch the young girls rub wild onion under their eyes until the tears came out. He knew a name for that rain too.

Sad onion rain.

That rain fell straight down too, off their faces, and he saw it.
This boy went out in a snow blizzard 
to catch fish. He went out on the swamp ice 
and brought his ice chisel with him 
to dig a hole through it. 
He went singing. 
In summer we could hear that swamp 
sing all its birds and frogs together, BUT THIS WAS 
IN WINTER. 
He was the only one singing. 

We heard him dig the ice hole 
in the distance, but we could not see this. It was a chewing sound 
his work made. After a while we got worried 
he fell in. 
Or that the snow snakes curled him away. 

Worried we would never again 
see him bob up among the wood duck decoys, LAUGHING. 
In summer. 

He stayed out on the ice 
until night. Then we saw his torch-stick fire 
moving toward us, 
and he came BACK HOME to put the fish he caught 
on the fire. 
Our worrying did not stop there. 
He sat with us and watched the fish thaw and cook. 

He sat with us 
in the center, shivering. 
THEN we heard his laughing thaw out too. 
That's when our worrying stopped.
Many Voices

We were out gathering full ripe berries.
The black ones with spitting seeds in them. We were gathering those berries.
That’s when she made a voice.
Her first one of the day!
It was not her own, BUT IT CAME OUT of her. It was fox barking noise she made.
I listened hard to make sure.

I heard a fox bark in that voice. Maybe she was thinking of a fox barking, long ago,
and that thinking CAME OUT LOUD. If that’s the way it worked.

I sat in shade to listen.

Then there was just the sound of her picking berries again.
Until her basket filled up. And belly.

On the way home I heard CRICKET noise. I heard a cricket
and turned over some stones to find it. A wet stump, too.
I couldn’t find it.

Then I looked at her. I should have known!
She got quiet as if I had lifted a stone off HER.
When I looked straight at her she got quiet, yes, because that’s how it goes
with a cricket when its stone is lifted.

Always Surprised

Owls started this.

When this boy went owl looking it was night. He would hear one up ahead
and squint his eyes to try and see it.

He tried to catch one by not making noise.

Then that owl called at him from BEHIND!
And he jumped.

He only heard owls from behind.

Always fooled by owls, which was, in later days, the cause of his name. He got jumpy.
Even if a leaf fell on his shoulder he jumped, JUMPED as if he was always being surprised.

Or the first drop of rain he felt, too, he’d turn and say
“WHICH OWL SPIT THAT ON ME?”

Even in daylight.
These are selections from work in progress that speaks from years with the Zunis in New Mexico.

Dennis Tedlock

Advice Received

Don’t ask too many questions.
Don’t ask questions about religion.
Don’t take notes in front of people.
If someone is chopping wood
don’t just stand there.

Dialogue

— I could tell you a story.
It’s the story told to all boys when they are initiated.
Do you want me to tell it? —

— If you want to tell it go ahead. —

— Don’t say that.
Say you want me to tell the story.
The Hunter’s Wife

1
She looks out the window
the snow is falling
her husband went hunting for elk
the boy went along too
a neighbor thinks he saw them at Red Hill
she hasn't seen the sun all day.

2
She was out in the woods
gathering pine nuts
and there
under a tree
was a fawn
the fawn said
—Tie me up. —

3
The men left her in camp for the day
a wounded buck
charged right into the fire
she hit him over the head with a frying pan.

When Only The Breath Is Left

On the third day after her grandson died
she thought she heard his
transistor radio playing
but that wasn't even in the house
it was already
broken and buried.

On the fourth night
the door was left open for her grandson
she dreamed of masked dancers
in a row
she heard the cry of the deer
they all walked away
he was the one in the middle.
That Fire In Your Fireplace

You started it right up with one match, it must be your aunt loves you. It was quiet for awhile but now listen to that fire! The flames go straight up it roars! Someone is hungry, it must be your great-grandparents. Every time you eat take a little bread a little meat throw it in the fire, say —Great-grandparents! Eat! — That's the shortest prayer there is.

While Eating Mutton

Here are the eyes but that means weak eyes here is the fat around the eyes but that means getting tears in the wind here is the tongue but that means getting thirsty all the time here is the brain but that means snoring all night here is the heart but that means forgetfulness here is a bone with marrow in it but that means hangnails now here is the meat on the palate, with this I'll be able to eat cactus fruit.

Spiders

1
A spider walked across the table he lit a match and burned it then he said — Bluebird! That handsome Bluebird! He's the one who killed you! Shrivel up his eyes!

2
A spider bit the girl there were big red bumps down her arm but her aunt knew the right medicine it was the juice of the burnt Bluebird.
The Year

First comes
Broken Branches Moon
the snow is heavy
next
Snowless Road Moon
it snows
but it doesn’t stick to the road
next
Little Wind Moon
when the snow is in patches
next
Big Wind Moon
next
Nameless Moon
next
Turnabout Moon
next
Broken Branches Moon
also called Rooster Pull
the time of the rodeo
next
Snowless Road Moon
also called Get-together
Look-at-one-another
next
Little Wind Moon
next
Big Wind Moon
also called Pick-the-ears-of-corn
next
Nameless Moon
when they set the date for the dancers
next
Turnabout Moon.
All these twelve together are called
time-surpasses-itself.

Winter Solstice

Here is the place of fear
for four days
no greasy foods are eaten
there is no coffee
no trade
all places of business are closed
for ten days
no sweepings
no garbage is taken out of the house
no fire is taken out of the house
not even cigarettes are lighted outside
people shouldn’t use their cars
the street lights are all turned out
this is the middle of time.
Recipe

Fill a bowl with hot water
add, to taste:
dried leaves of wild mint
ground chili
onions
dried chincheed flowers
wolfberries
and venison jerky.

This is called
hot-bowl
it is
an ancient dish.

Cornshucking

Pull down the husk
all around
then twist it all off at once
with the stem
put the dry ears in this pile
for us
put the damp ears
the moldy ears in this one
for the hogs
and throw the shucks out there
some of the ears are yellow
some are blue
red
white
some are pretty
the multicolored ones
some are black
look for the Fully-Finished-Ear
without a single kernel missing
right to the very tip
a deer, a buck
wears that one on his breast
and the Flat-Ear
with a forked tip
a doe wears that one on her breast
and the Road-Ear
with a groove down its whole length
runners wear that one on their backs
now here it is
a Fully-Finished-Ear
but it's wet
I'll put it at the edge of the good pile
and here is an ear
yellow, but
each kernel
is tinged with red
it's sort of pretty
there's no name for this one
I'll put it here on the fence rail
maybe I'll do something with it later.
When The Witches Are Out

On the road at night
we caught a deer in the headlights
he didn’t know which way to go
he came toward us
turning left and right
in the lights
we stopped
he cut left through the sunflowers
into the dark
we went on up to the house
so our nephew could get his rifle
on our way back down the road
there was another car coming
far off
his lights went out
we rode all the way down past
where the deer was
and there was no deer
and no car.

The Two Of Them

The Zuni
and the anthropologist
walk the narrow road
to the tip of the mesa
to see the Hopi Snake Dance
between two sheer drops
the Zuni says
to the anthropologist
—Both sides!
You jump one way
and I’ll jump the other.
"Following Somapoetics 73: Essie Parrish in New York
[Alcheringa, New Series Volume One #1, 1975, p. 27], this poem completes the Eighth Series, Hands in the Land of a Daimon by the Throat. The series has a continuing thread of 'daimonial speech' as a guide through 'the Land' and an initiation into healing. This poem connects with Essie Parrish in New York as a special sort of Ethnopoetic event in which I function partly as scribe: in the one case (Essie Parrish) an almost literal transcription of a dream-vision, and in the other a more complex weave of lecture notes from a talk on Tibetan medicine and a direct 'calling up' of the Daimon — 'Taking the Powers.'” (G.Q.)

George Quasha

Somapoetics 74

Lecture on Ripples
by Prof. Chin-Lap

1
The subject for the day is Through the Substance: Ripples of Splendor.
I had to satisfy my Western compulsion for verifiability. So I asked the participants: Why do you do what you do, and mostly the answer: To feel better, I went to make myself feel better. Power medicine. Perfect Medicine.
These are the words that come into the mouth willing for an English. As for the point of the ritual: To promote the transfer. Splendorous ripples.
Render the lips to the words and the shapely substance utters itself. So the theory goes. Such is the spectation in the mind of the doers. Power coexists with the principle of time itself. The principle times itself to coexist with the transfer of power.
Coexistence principles itself
through the power of time.
Time coexists in the principle of power.
Hence the transfer. There are many ways for the substance to say itself.
Why is it we are doing what we are doing?
Is it the notorious transfer of ambrosia?
Translate this back into Sanskrit
and see where that gets you: Flying through the sky
or back into the lexicon.
Two tongues meet in lexispectation.
And so we are given the Tibetan word men drug,
to think medicine, drug for the men, mind
dragging itself out of any particular hole,
thus: “to accomplish or retain.” Hold the seed long enough for the transfer, keep the middle open to itself, we are reminded never often enough. The word enters the dictionary to begin its poem, the definition is ta‘wil on its own first word.
So when I say ambrosia I mean anything usable in the present context. Correlative semantic device. Power medicine.
We read the dictionary in order to feel better. The backward opening word cures, in order to move forward.

2
Close the page to turn the mind.
We were speaking before the break about Gnostic equinimity or the further fabrication of the self.
Now we are no longer before the break and so we no longer have to speak about it.
The transfer from tongue to tongue by the King of Ambrosia through the langue d’oc is a complexity of Yes in the urge of the mind to turn on itself. The Mage closes the Book and nods to the Numen, and even he is led by our being led by him in what he says. Stress, strain, and general entropy of the body
get together in the transfer:
Soma, as against soma.
Tongue placed against the tongue.
Sense it in the tip of saying
*It touches the Alveolar Verge*
in order to utter *It tongues itself*.
Tiny sound with a diamond center,
the Daimon cures in kind.
King. Queen. Quaynte.
Hard tone heard in the enter
Put your head in your hands and hear it enter.
Put time in the tone and you think it to enter.
This then is the center of turning. Time lapse.
The entropy of body enters the ripple of splendor
and the rot is transferable music.
This is the rite
as against phlegm which causes ignorance in the brain
and semen producing desire,
and so Mara soars.

This is a very esoteric subject
and few will speak of it.
Someone interrupts the train of thought
always before the secret is spent.
We keep it in context
in order to feel better, we keep
the three channels open, left,
right, and center. Note
that we are skipping all the vital data.
Patience. There is an art of listening
that may instruct us even in this
kingly but questionable discourse.
We have to watch our tongue
or we'll lose track
and let the word out of the vocal sack,
and lose our double nature.
O double double soil and ripples
everything is twice come,
twice seeding, Blood
is the origin of the gross and the subtle,
Soma rubbing against soma.
Let it ignite. We have touched the tone
and burned the tongue in the open process.
Lure the spiritus into the materia.
Listen to the distance: Charlie Chan
is in the next room, he has ordered a wrecking crew
to repair the lost Train of Thought. O Orient
with your slanted tongues!
Teach us the trick of the Ambrosia Cycle
as it pumps out the blood and semen.
Help me across these Urals of word
bearing a pack of healing mushrooms
into the body of the text.
When we accept all the roles that have ever been
we will use as many strains as exist in the tongue.
Congestion in the lung is a fact of the lecture.
Divine pride is a fact in the mind of the doer
in the time of the rite. Time is a person.
Or time is the medium of the transfer
and it gets personal. It lapses
and we have our spectrous thoughts, yogis
of the word eating our vile substance.
Lure the spiritus into the materia.
[Explosions outside the text.]
Mahakala in this distance, approaches.
Tantric blessings and powerful medicine
for all you folks out there. And you,
Herr Reich, you come too, there's room for you too.
In the Seventh Stage the Ambrosia comes to life.
In the Tenth, Purification of the Three Doors.
You can't see him doing it but he's doing it.
Anoint the genitalia with a drop of Ambrosia.
Note that this is what we call Metaphoric Reality.
And yet we believe it when the voice says
This Is Your Life, your poetics,
This is your Kleopatra Chrisopoeia.
And the text reads: One
is the Serpent which has poison
according to two compositions.
O Language! Restore me my ears
as the end of the Art of Hearing.
I hold up the Lycurgus Cup of green chalcedony
and light it from the center: It reddens,
and I discover: All facts are simple
by the fact of factuality, it makes me
say it is so. Mercury halts the stroke of time.
As for Melusina, she slides down
the central pole
of my body. Time is where the dragons join.
She anoints the genitalia, a drop
of Gnosis, and the rain of flowers.
Here we enter together.

4
We transfer, so to speak, our addresses, I
is we is you is the God,
and so forth. Ambrosia in semen
in blood in thought in
word. Hence this feeble lecture.
Hence the calling it up
is called Taking the Powers.
All expectation lessens in the crevice of mind.
All your life which This Is you will struggle
for the Opening Middle, and the poetics
is never the way you thought.
The insight must be shared,
that is the path elected in the fact of text,
and you will forever try to weasel out of it.
Coward that you are.
Blood and semen on the brain
until the biological state extends, O Worry
that you will never know . . .

Add the bios to the logos
and lay out the life.
You have passed through a part of the dark
and now you may notice:

Female Blessings
and Transubstantiated Spiritual Horses
passing before you.

Now you have heard it
and may begin
to disassimilate. The Goddess
officiates at this stage.

Give me
Mind Power. Receive the Syllables.
Two. Eat up. Leave no sacrament on your plate. 
Ripples out and beyond sight. This 
is about the process of hearing 
it said in time. Twisted 
as the strand seems.

5
Here we gently turn our minds: 
the Lovers awaken. 
Recall the first time 
you heard your parents shriek in the sexual bliss. 
These are the stages, now place the finger 
of the mind 
in this sticky structure. 
What have we done in doing what we do? 
We entered the fire. 
We entered the tree. 
We entered the lily. 
We summoned the demons and used the garlic. 
We placed it all in the urine of a camel. 
And now we return. 
Back into form. Back into philosophy. 
And here the Goddess asks us 
to explain the Golden Pill. 
We snort and slurp our words like the pigs we are. 
We mumble something about the synthesis 
of body, speech, and mind. 
Togetherness of the organs 
through the fiery grip in the thighs of time. 
O Time, give us a break, 
we cry in the spirit of Confidence, 
the Great Racket 
at the end of the Negative Rainbow. 
Three Conflagrations. See? 
The rite calls us to attend the Festivities. 
Attention of turning: See? 
We’re moving toward form. The ass brays 
in the lapis tones of Tibetan: 
Firetime is Mahakala, 
Inner Heat is Energeia. See? 
We’re developing our skills.
Ointment is like a vulture that goes in the sky.
The eye weighs ten thousand pounds, but: See?
We can fly.
Outward is exoteric and away from the body
and here we begin, fleshly taught
in words, on the wings of poesy.
Inside, what's going on can't be seen.
So we have no choice
but to show it all
all the time.
It's all pragmatic,
you feel a little better.
Black girls, white girls with fiery eyes,
obviously it's very dangerous.
Thank you for your patience,
and thanks also
to the Goddess of Ambrosia.

Further Note On Somapoetics 74

The first draft of SP74 was actually written off the words of the lecture as I heard them at a seminar on Tibetan medicine at the Newark Museum (part of a conference on Tibetan Buddhism, sponsored by the Buddhayana Foundation, October 1975; the lecturer was William Stablein). The second draft brought a further complexity in that I was obedient to two voices: the lecturer, speaking with deep sympathy for the materials but with appropriate caution; and the power of Tibetan ritual healing. The key event is the Transference of Power, wherein what we call transference in psychoanalysis meets the ritual event of identification of participant and deity. The poem hovers between the two. And in this respect it is truly an event in Ethnopoetics, which may be defined partly as a modality of creating a fertile terrain between us and the Sacred. As for the title, Lecture on Ripples, it comes from the central ingredient in the ritual healing, “ripples of splendor” (the Tibetan word which I gently parody in “Prof. Chin-Lap”). I was interested to learn of a vision-aiding ointment that is rubbed on the eyes, doubtless what we call a psychotropic agent. And the concern with Ambrosia and the homeopathic “like cures like” gave a further rhyme with Somapoetics, with its doublestrain of “body” and the Vedic Soma. (Soma first appeared to me in the oneiropoetic space between dream and the composition of a long poem, Of a Woman the Earth Bore to Keep [Stony Brook 1/2, 1968], in the fall of ’68, in which Soma gave four proverbs, and two years later I learned of Gordon Wasson’s research on “The Divine Mushroom of Immortality.”) A final gloss on the poem: Ta’wil (like much of the poem, not derived from Stablein’s lecture) is a recurrent theme in Somapoetics, standing for an Art of Reading that is a sacred Telling. (See Henry Corbin’s Avicenna and the Visionary Recital, Bollingen LXVI.)

G.Q., Rokeby Farm, NY/1.21.76
John Nelson

**Pawnee Skies: The First Edge**

I.

First human beings were borne to the Earth
from the star of the west by the wind

The people say, “When a child is born during the night
take notice of the stars. If the wind does not blow

and the next day is clear, the child will live
without sickness or evil troubles.”

*Hu-tu-ru*

West Wind.

“This wind is the outreach of the mysterious being
beyond the west. The being to whom Ti-ra-wa gave

power to put life into *all* things, to have
*direct* communion with man, and to guide his life.”

In the west are the powers which bring the rain
to cool and vivify the earth

In the west we hear the thunder sound. There
dwell the powers following Ti-ra-wa’s command . . .

their wind is call’d *Hu-tu-ru-wa-rux-ti*
means, “mysterious/wonderful!”
In the west the wind will divide
and there will be a place where all winds shall dwell

For awhile

II.

East wind comes from the dawn
bringing life to the body

but not help to the spirit.
Blows hair in early morning light.

III.

North wind is trophic messenger
of the star-that-does-not-move

A lesser power, this star was made
a chief, told by Ti-ra-wa to stand there

not move & watch this Earth for
if he moved the other stars would become confused

and not know which way to go.
(a petroglyph reads: I did not know which way
I was going

IV.

Ra-ri-tu-ru
South Wind. Behind this wind is south star

home of the spirits of the dead
final resting place after

a journey across the Milky Way
spirits blown from the north long ago . . .

follow the short path if
life is cut off suddenly, as in battle,
spirits direct the wind & it delights in their favor.

But there is accumulation, density of winds, gathering of forces of the dead until some day this wind rises up to make its way back to the north and will do much damage as it goes; when this comes to pass the people must remember their source, the wind's source & show respect & awe, must present a waiting Shaman to go speak with the Wind & ask for peace white and red paint on his face eagle and hawk feathers in long hair walks south from the village rain just beginning to fall chants and sings walks alone into a towering wall of GreyCloud and a warm breathing Wind.
"Breyten Breytenbach is a poet & painter from South Africa, whom I met, 1974, at the International Poetry Festival in Rotterdam. White & married to a Vietnamese, he had been living in exile in Paris. But sometime within the last year he made a trip ("illegal") back to South Africa, was arrested, tried, & sentenced to nine years for plotting to overthrow the government, etc. At the time I heard of his arrest, there were also letters in the mail concerning the imprisonment of Kim Chi Ha (Korea) & Martin Sostre (Puerto Rico & U.S.A.). There had of course been others." (J.R.)

Jerome Rothenberg

**For Breyten Breytenbach in Prison**

11/15/75

far now from Rotterdam
& the small talk of poets mouths
devouring little fishes
freed of the metaphor inside the act
knowledge of the world that if we face it
drives us mad
o Breyten vision of schizophrenia
is gnostic truth
division of world along its axis
of split in consciousness
sickness that doesn’t heal itself it is
the way of the beginning raises
in the mouth a cry
will bring it to the light
o light
how can I think of all these friends in prison
like the world itself
(poor world)
& wonder at my safety
walk with Homero in the streets of London
with Jean Clarence in Paris
last week where we spoke of you
Breyten Breytenbach who sat with us
a year ago that other summer
asked my son to write a poem
greet the poets of the world in Rotterdam
o poets poets
we are all split for love
of woman of the world
the severed being searches out
its contrary as skin
as color cannot move too fast
but tries an assemblage for the friends
a gift of language offered
we who should withhold our speech
in anguish
should share the silence God brings on the world
each in our little corner
destiny
as Shakespeare in the mouth of Lear
“but let me not go mad”
why not?
the mind spins out its images
alone the music of
another evening now reborn
the Red Fanfare plays on the stage
a crazy march song
poets of the world
united
in vision of our common death
with all the prisoners
weird fish who eat the fish
are eaten by the fish
the tiny silver bodies
of our flesh itself in witness
to your proposition
revolution makes us what we are
o poets
minds whose minds turn upside down
revive the oldest maddest dream
a word called freedom
Notes & Comments

The current issue of *Alcheringa* involves, among other things, an attempt to explore some of the principle aspects of Black oral traditions in the Americas, & thru the first presentation in English of Tristan Tzara's "ethnopoetics," to indicate the beginnings, circa World War I, of the africanization of European literature & art. The influence of all this on the language of both Black & White poets has been too easily overlooked. The reader looking for a definitive presentation & transcription of traditional blues lyrics (largely pre-World War II) is advised to check out Eric Sackheim’s *The Blues Line* (Grossman/Mishima, 1973), which is also a pioneer effort in “total transcription.” (J.R.)

Future issues of *Alcheringa* will focus in one instance on a presentation of principle addresses and discussions from the First International Symposium on Ethnopoetics (University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, 1975), and in another on Asian and Pacific oral poétaries. The contents (partial) of the Conference issue includes talks by David Antin, Stanley Diamond, Edouard Glissant, Jacques Howlett, George Quasha, Jerome Rothenberg, Richard Schechner, Gary Snyder, Nathaniel Tarn, Dennis Tedlock, and Sylvia Wynter.


Harris Lenowitz and Charles Doria’s *Origins: Creation Myths of the Ancient Mediterranean*, has just been published by Doubleday/Anchor, with a Preface by Jerome Rothenberg. Selections from this have appeared in previous issues of *Alcheringa*. Singing Bone Press (228 Edgar Road, St. Louis, MO 63119) has published a special medicine bundle/box edition of Jerome Rothenberg’s *Seneca Journal: Midwinter*, designed by Phil Sultz and Tom Lang. 60 of the 101 boxes made are being offered for sale, signed and numbered, at $29.00 each. Rothenberg’s *Poems for the Game of Silence* has just been reissued by New Directions Books. Other recent books by Alcheringa contributors include Nathaniel Tarn’s *Lyrics for the Bride of God* (New Directions), Kofi Awoonor’s *The Breast of the Earth: A Survey of African Literature* (Doubleday), James Koller’s *Bureau Creek* (Blackberry) and a reissue of his novel *Shannon Who Was Lost Before* (Grosseteste), Dell Hymes’ *Studies in the History of Linguistics*, (University of Indiana), Pierre Joris’ *Antlers* (New London Pride), and George Quasha’s *Word Yum: Somapoetics Seventh Series* (Meta­poetics Press). A working version of Paul Kahn’s *Heart of the World* has been published as a book by Truck Press (Box 86, Carrboro, NC 27510). The same press will publish three short books as one volume: John Yau’s *Creation Story*, David Wilk’s *Personal Mythologies*, and Paul Kahn’s *Edge City/Circle of Light* this spring.

Two epic poems in the narrative vein recently published are Robert Kelly’s *The Loom* (Black Sparrow), and Ted Enslin’s *Synthesis* (North Atlantic Books). Poems by three deceased and germinal American poets are now available as well: Paul Blackburn’s *The Journals* (Black Sparrow), Charles Olson’s *Maximus Poems: Volume Three* (Grossman) and Jack Spicer’s *The Collected Books* (Black Sparrow).

WARNING: increases in production costs, etc., have made it necessary to raise the single issue price of *Alcheringa* Volume Two to $4.95. The editors truly regret this turn of events and are temporarily holding the subscription price at $7.00 per year (2 issues). It is hoped that our readers will take advantage of this subscription price, which is obviously, and sadly, only temporary. Subscribe now.

Turtle Island Foundation has moved across the bay to 2845 Buena Vista Way, Berkeley, CA 94708. In addition to the works of Jaime de Angulo, Edward Dorn, H.D., Charles Olson, and Carl O. Sauer now in print, they expect to be publishing new work by de Angulo, Sauer, Paul Metcalf, Edgar Anderson and Bob Calla-
A new magazine, *New World Journal*, is now available from them, and includes pieces by Bill Benson (Pomo medicine man), Edgar Anderson (botanist), Robert Hayward Barlow (anthropologist and poet), Ernesto Cardenal (poet), Carl O. Sauer (geographer), and Charles Olson (Cabeza de Vaca: An Idea for an Opera). Those interested are urged to write to the Foundation for subscription information.

A new issue of *Big Deal* will be available by April. The previous issue, *Big Deal* #3, focused on possibilities in narrative, including work by Antin, Jackson Mac Low, Rothenberg, Robert Smithson and Roger Welch among others. International in scope, the new issue will present an eclectic group of writers, composers, artists (including video artists), and a theater group. The focus develops #3's interest in narrative means; #4 diversifies its coverage of narration, more details, more tools of that trade displayed. The cost is $3.00 to individuals, $3.50 to institutions, and may be ordered from *Big Deal* P.O. Box 830, Stuyvesant Station, New York, NY 10009.

*S Press*, edited by Nicholaus Einhorn and Michael Kohler in Germany, is now offering a large selection of reel-to-reel and cassette tape recordings of various European and American artists, composers and poets. Included are tapes of Robert Creeley (*The Door*), Ed Dorn (*Gunslinger 1 & 2*), Larry Eigner (*Around New/Sound Daily/Means*), Brian Gysin (*Where Is That Word*), John Giorno, (*Johnny Guitar & Balling Buddha*), Jackson Mac Low (*The Black Tarantula Crossword Gathas*), Rothenberg (*Horse Songs & Other Soundings*), Schwerner (*Tables I-XVIII*), Snyder (*There Is No Other Life*), and other composers and sound poets at various prices. They are being distributed in the U.S.A. by Serendipity Books, 1790 Shattuck Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94709, or if it is closer write to Kohler, D-8 Munchen 40, Zieblandstrasse 10, Germany, for further information.

*Sun Tracks*, a literary journal from the Amerind Club of the University of Arizona, resumed publication in the Fall of 1975. The new issue includes work by Simon J. Ortiz, Nia Francisca, Agnes Tso, and many others. Financial support and requests for subscriptions should be sent to *Sun Tracks* SUPO Box 20788, Tucson, AZ 85720.

Several back issues of *Alcheringa* are still available in limited quantities:

Old Series Number 3 (South American section, Ewe Abuse Poems, Ojibwa Song-Pictures, interview with Seneca Songman, ...), Number 4 (S. Carolina “Easter Sunrise Sermon” transcription and recording, Jackson Mac Low selection and recording, South Pacific section by Ulli Beier, Snyder/Tarn interview, ...), and Number 5 (Euro-Mediterranean issue: Zukofsky, Olson, Found, Crosby, plus works from Mesopotameian, Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Swedish, Yiddish, Celtic, and recordings of Schwerner’s *Tables* and Joseph Peynetsa’s Zuni narrative, ...) at $2.50 each.

Please note that Old Series Number 1 and Number 2 are no longer available.

In the spring of 1967 poets and artists from Tokyo’s Shinjuku district established Banyan Ashram on Suwanose Island, a small volcanic island in the Tokara Retto chain, south of Kagoshima, Japan. It became the center of the commune movement in Japan and the subject of various poems and essays by one of its members, Gary Snyder. In December of 1972 the Yamaha Motor Company purchased a portion of the island, with the intention of “developing” it into a leisure-land villa. The coral reef has been dynamited to allow for bulldozers to construct a yacht harbor; the ashram and fishing community have been encircled by Corporation development of their island for the leisure activities of wealthy urban people. Groups have formed in both Japan and the U.S.A. to protest this action. Those interested in lending support &/or wishing more information are urged to contact either Cosmic Child Community c/o Jimusho, 1-1314-7 Nishi­Koigakubo, Kokubunji-shi, Tokyo, Japan or The Save Suwanose Sanctuary, 2336 Fifth Street, Berkeley, CA 94710.
The only publication primarily devoted to the study of native American languages and linguistics: Eskimo-Aleut, Indian languages, and certain creoles and pidgins of the hemisphere. The Journal seeks to integrate theoretical linguistic analysis with a consciousness of the typological, historical, and social contexts of New World cultures. It has long provided a valuable archival service for these language groups, and increasingly it encourages native speakers in active scholarship on their own languages. Irregularly published supplementary monographs in linguistics and anthropology are included with a subscription.

Appearing in 1975

Ronald W. Langacker, Relative Clauses in Classical Nahuatl
Margaret Langdon, Boundaries and Lenition in Yuman Languages
Haruo Aoki, The East Plateau Linguistic Diffusion Area
Frank G. F. Wordick, Review Article: Sirionó Kinship Terminology
Albertha Kuiper and William R. Merrifield, Mixtec Verbs of Motion and Arrival

In October

Bruce Rigsby edits a special issue dedicated to Stanley S. Newman. Honoring Newman's contribution to the study of American Indian languages and cultures, the issue contains articles by Doris Bartholomew, Geoffrey Gamble, James Kari, Dell Hymes, Bruce Rigsby, Michael Silverstein, Ross Saunders and Philip W. Davis, and C. F. and F. M. Voegelin. Also included is a bibliography of Newman's works.

Published quarterly by The University of Chicago Press
C. F. Voegelin, Editor
Eric P. Hamp, Review Editor; Martha B. Kendall, Abstracts Editor

International Journal of American Linguistics
Please enter my one-year subscription:
  □ Institutions $16.00  □ Individuals $12.00
  □ Students (with faculty signature) $9.60

In countries other than USA add $1.00 to cover postage

Name ____________________________________________
Address __________________________________________
City _____________________________ State __________ Zip ____________

Please mail with your check or purchase order to International Journal of American Linguistics, The University of Chicago Press, 11030 Langley Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60628
"A very much needed book. It not only provides the proper orientation to its material, but its humanistic approach is more perceptive and illuminating than technical scholarship."

—THEODORE H. GASTER, Columbia University

"A well-chosen and wide-ranging selection of writings on American Indian religious and philosophical thinking which brings together classic statements of such notables as Benjamin Whorf, Paul Radin, A. I. Hallowell, Dorothy Lee, and others."

—MORRIS E. OPLER, University of Oklahoma

"This well-conceived introductory anthology provides balanced scholarly insight into the 'double vision' of American Indian religion and philosophy. Both landmark studies and recent reports are included, and the list of contributors reads like a Who's Who of Indian documentation."

—Library Journal

"The format is superb and the literary material alive and vital. —Ezekiel Mphahlele

OKIKE
An African Journal of New Writing
Edited by Chinua Achebe

is fast becoming an important forum for writers, readers and critics of literature throughout the world. In addition to many new writers, recent contributors have included Kofi Awoonor, Edward Brathwaite, Dennis Brutus, Mari Evans, John Munonye, David Ray and Sonia Sanchez.

Manuscripts and subscription orders should be sent to OKIKE, P.O. Box 597, Amherst, Mass., U.S.A. 01002.

Please enter my subscription for OKIKE
Name .........................................................
Address ......................................................

Subscription rates (3 issues a year): One year, $9.00, $5.00, $3.00, 2 years, $16.00, $9.00, $5.75; 3 years, $22.00, $12.00, $8.25.
$4.95
including
disc recording