ALCHERINGA: ETHNOPOETICS opens its pages and its recordings to the transcription, translation, and discussion of the spoken and chanted word. The voices heard are those of the Fourth World (the tribal peoples who continue to resist cultural and linguistic destruction by the nation-states of the other three worlds), of the ancient world (through texts with oral roots), and of modern literates who work back toward the oral. The name ALCHERINGA comes from the Arunta of Australia; it refers to dreams, to the mythic past, and to moments when a new song makes itself heard through a singer.

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Insert disc recording/side 1: “I'm Here and I Don't Know Why I'm Here” and two excerpts from “Dressed in the Armor of God,” by Reverend Sherfey; side 2: “Debaghaale Arr Dilley aragten,” a Somali tale told by Zahra Abdi Kareem to Abdi Sheik-Abdi.

Victoria Howard

Five Short Narratives

These texts were transcribed by Melville Jacobs in 1929 and 1930 from the Clackamas-Chinook dictations of Victoria Howard. Although ancillary to the longer traditional myth recitals of the Howard-Jacobs collection, these short poems and jokes display the measured verse patterns which are being demonstrated for Chinookan narratives. The line and verse arrangements here have been made by Dell Hymes and Charles Bigelow. The texts have been written out by Kris Holmes in a calligraphic adaptation of the Americanist phonetic alphabet. This adaptation has been developed in the Bigelow & Holmes studio as part of a continuing program in the design of letter-forms, printing types, and books for American Indian literature.

Notes


3. This work has been supported in part by the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities (Youthgrants and Folk Arts programs), the Oregon Arts Foundation, and the Melville and Elizabeth Jacobs Research Fund.

Basket Ogress

Anáa! Q’awaqašxínaxsínaxina aga akdźál.
OH GOODNESS! THE BASKET OGRESS
KlúnaXa aga ilkáskaš.
SHE IS LOOKING FOR A CHILD NOW.
Néšqi axadwáywál!
DO NOT BE RUNNING AROUND!
Aqásašxínaxsínaxina agúšgiwál.
THE BASKET OGRESS IS GOING ABOUT.
Agəmšgəlgáya.
SHE WILL TAKE YOU.
Whistling

Łgūşgiwal ałxalsḵsk̲,  
When some person goes around whistling,

aq̲ṭuxáma,  
they would say to him,

«É. Łgūşgiwal Xá-witálapas-díwi,  
“Yeh. He is going around just like Coyote,
sáksáksáḵsk̲.”  
whistling et whistling.”

Ałgima,  
Such a person might reply,

«K̲ʷaḷqíči nixúxax itálapas?»  
“Is that the way Coyote was?”

«É. K̲ʷaḷqí nugʷagímx.»  
“Yes. That is what they used to say.”

«?Á. Gánča ɬga máyka gamílc̲̑mlid̲̑lmx  
“Oh. I thought it was you hearing
sáks̲k̲ nixúxax.”  
him whistling.”
giyáxółkiwllxt ičáxliw wakáyim.

Nákim,
«Náyka anútx'-ida
Kánawi dán adíq'élbayaxdxia,
 itk'íwax, itk'áxa, wačgěti.
Nútx'-it
Kúuuya dán niq'élbayx.»

Gaqúlxam,
«Máyka imíxliw giyáxółkiwllxt.»

She Is Going is the name of the moon.
She said,
“When I will stand
Everything will be sprouting,
flowers, leaves, grass.
When I came
Nothing at all was growing.”

They said to her,
“Your name is She Is Going.”

Aga nútx'-it dáwax wakáyim, ičáxliw Wačgěn.
Kʷálíwi gadiq'élbayx dánmax,
 itk'íwax, wačgěti, itk'áxa.
Dánmax aga díq'élpxix.
Aga kʷáxqí aqúpgnaya Wačgěn.
Now this moon stood, her name is Little Shoulder.  
Then indeed everything was growing,  
flowers, grass, leaves.  
Everything now is growing.  
Now that is what they named her, Little Shoulder.

Nútxwit gúgayX wakáyim.  
Nugragímx,  
“Aga qíq’ayaq wílx ayákuč alxákxáymat.  
Iwád alxagalímačxida,  
aga lxúwit čagw’ayxyámt.”  
K’áXqi alugragíma.

A large moon stood.  
They used to say,  
“Now we are lying in the middle of the backbone of the land.  
We will be going down the other way,  
Now we are going toward summer.”  
That is what they would say.

Galútxwit agúnax wakáyim, ičaxliw le lálamayxn.  
Nútxwit aga wilamayxn idyák’axa gatxílux.  
Aga k’áXqi ičaxliw.  
K’áXqi nugragímx.

Another moon stood, her name is Her Cottonwood.  
She came then as the leaves of the cottonwood came out.  
Then that is what her name was.  
That is what they used to say.
When the person who continually prayed first came to this land, he told them,

"You should pray all the time, the Chief above will see you.

But if you do not believe it, Then you will get tails, just like the animals that flee in the forests.

Then my husband's mother said, "Dear-oh-dear! Probably it would be something different when we play shinny, Our tails would be continually whipping us."
Our house was close to the road. Some white person would pass by, She would look at him.

Then she would laugh. She would say, "Dear-oh-dear, it is a light one! Maybe it is Milt!"

Then she would sing. This is what she would say, "Milt! I changed him into a man!"
Philip Kahclamat, performer
Dell Hymes, transcriber

Iyagiximnilh

Transcriber’s Introduction

This speech was written down late in the night of July 25, 1956, in a booth of what was then the Rainbow Cafe, above the Deschutes River, Oregon, just beyond where the river marks the eastern boundary of the Warm Springs reservation on the road to Madras. It was recited by Philip Kahclamat, who came to the Cafe many evenings that summer, after work in the sawmill on the reservation across the river, for dinner, and to work with me on his language, Wishram (as the Chinookan dialect of his home on the Columbia River has come to be called).

Formal oratory was important to the Chinookan communities. That much is known, and I have tried to reconstruct a cultural pattern underlying the place of formal speaking in Chinookan life from various bits of evidence (Section VI of Dell Hymes, “Two types of linguistic relativity,” in William Bright, ed., Sociolinguistics, The Hague: Mouton [1966]). Very little is known of the actual oratory. There are indications in the Wishram Texts published by Edward Sapir (New York, Publications of the American Ethnological Society, 2 [1909], pp. 206, 210, 228-9).

This speech is the longest recorded one known to me, and the only continuous and apparently complete formal discourse that Philip could be persuaded to give that summer, and at that after several beers. It was something he believed, I think, but he was a loner, half acculturated and intellectualized as a young man through work with Walter Dyk and a semester with Edward Sapir’s seminar at Yale, reinforced by that experience in his sense of the value of the old culture, but disdaining the forms in which old ways continued around him and disdaining other Indians. He had no family, kept apart from kin ties, had some income. In his heart, and in his nightmares, he was Wishram (he said he abandoned his small house on Shitike Creek on the reservation because the ghosts spoke; in Wishram) to him. The end of this speech breaks into Wishram, I think, because at that point, and for that moment, he assumed the role in his own person.

Philip Kahclamat died a year later, as a result of a blow on the head in an altercation with his brother, near White Swan, Washington, where he had gone to live on property he owned at the Yakima reservation. This report became known to anthropologists with whom he had worked only some years later. A trunk at White Swan in which he was believed to have kept papers was destroyed.

In the morning he steps out. He intones his words.

“This is Sunday morning. You people should know — I don’t have to come round this morning to tell you — that you people should put on all your trappings; that you will come to church.

You know that we were put here by the Great Spirit. We have to worship him. I am getting to my old age; some of you will have to take my place when I’m gone.

When you hear the drum this morning, it’s calling you to worship the Great Spirit. That’s where all our ancestors went. If you go by the old religion, you will
see them when you leave the earth. You know we are going to have to leave our flesh in the ground; only our souls go; and we'll be sure we'll meet our ancestors.

You people know that we didn't come here ourselves. He who created us is above. He put us here. We have to be where we are today. Me — I'm not telling you this myself. I'm only giving you the revelations which I've learned from somebody else.

When you do hear these drums, go. We are Nadidanuit here; this is our country. These white people came; they brought Christianity. It's not for us. The Christianity was brought here for the white people only. The white people cheated us out of our country. So don't follow them whatever they teach you. Shushligli was a Jew; he was not Nadidanuit and he was not for the Nadidanuit. Shushligli iju ikixax. Yaxdau ipendikast, ikáethlik, Presbyterian, Methodist, kwadau ishik, k'ya amxauixa. K'ya t'unwit amdúixa.

Notes

The title names the role of speaker, using a noun construction of a type common in Wishram for such a purpose. The elements of the word are: i-, classificatory prefix (masculine, singular); ya-, 'possessive' prefix (third person, masculine, singular); -gi-xim-nilh, noun stem, nominalized with gi- from the verb stem -xim 'to speak' and the repetitive suffix, -nilh. An awkward literal translation would be something like, "the one who speaks regularly (or repeatedly)," or "there is speaking recurrently in relation to him."

Nadidanuit: collective term for Indian.

Shushúgli: Jesus Christ, from the French form. Wishram does not differentiate sh/s, except expressively, and in any case, the zh- of the first French syllable would normally become sh- in Wishram, the z of the second syllable sh as well. Thus, French zhe-zu to Wishram shu-shu. There being no r in Wishram, and all Wishram stops being voiced before l, gli is simply the Wishram pronunciation of French kri. This name is attested only in this text. Presumably it dates from the nineteenth century presence of French-Canadians in the area.

i-ju ... i-pendikast, i-kaethlik ... , i-shik: Jew, Pentecost, Catholic, Shaker, provided with Wishram noun-classificatory prefixes.

The last two sentences in English: "Jesus Christ is a Jew. That Pentecostal, Catholic, Presbyterian, Methodist, and that Shaker [church], don't concern yourselves with them. Don't believe in them."

Orthography

The letters can be pronounced as in English with these provisos:

a : always as in father.

ae : as in fat.

au : diphthong as in foul, fowl.

k' : glottalized k (no equivalent in English; to compare the catch between the identical vowels in oh-oh).

l' : voiceless, fricative l, as in Welsh Llewellyn, Lloyd.

Except that the side of the tongue touches the side of the mouth, not dissimilar to English th.

k : glottalized t (cf. k').

x : palatal fricative, similar to the ch of German Ich.

x : velar fricative, similar to the ch of German ach.
Reverend John Sherfey, performer
Jeff Titon and Ken George, transcribers

Dressed in the Armor of God

Transcribers' Introduction

When I'm in the pulpit preaching, God just seemingly — now God don't talk to me like I've heard some people say he does. To me, when God is speaking to me, it's through the impression on my mind. In other words, it seems like it's said, but there's no voice. And when I'm preaching it goes the same way. It just comes in my mind and it's said. I don't have to stand and wait, or meditate what I'm going to say, because I depend on God, and it just comes thataway. It always has. — John Sherfey

Folk preaching — in America found today mainly among certain Baptist and Pentecostal congregations — is marked by extemporaneous oral performance. Anointed and led by the Holy Spirit, the preacher relies on the direct inspiration of God instead of a previously prepared manuscript. These practices and the beliefs underlying them may be traced to Separatism and the first Great Awakening in the New England of the 1740's. As the mouthpiece for the Spirit, a preacher does not need formal education or seminary training. What he must have is the calling from God — the knowledge that God has entered his heart and blessed him with the Spiritual gift of preaching — and the approval of a congregation. One of Reverend Sherfey's followers, Verne Meadows, described him this way: "I think he preaches under the anointment of the Lord. I think he's called by the Lord. I think the Holy Ghost leads him, preaches him, and that's what I like. There's no trouble to tell if the Holy Ghost is leading a preacher or not a-leading him. You can tell it in his action. You can tell it in the power that he preaches in. You take a man that's got a written sermon, there ain't no power to it . . . You've got to be borned again to know it, I mean to really feel the presence of it." — John Sherfey

John Claymon Sherfey was born on April 6, 1923, in Boone, North Carolina, into a family of 12 children. His father, a sharecropper all his life, was the song leader at Howard's Creek Baptist Church. As a young boy Sherfey helped his parents do the farm work as they moved from one place to the next on the Tennessee-Virginia border; he was unable to finish grade-school. Married to the former Pauline Dorn at the age of 17, he spent the next 20 years farming, driving gasoline tankers, carrying pulpwood, rewinding paper, and working as a jailer, all in the Bristol — Kingsport — Blountville area of eastern Tennessee. Having made a profession of faith as a young man, he later drifted away from God; but the death of his 5-year-old son, Buddy Wayne, convicted him of sin. In August, 1951, he and Pauline were born again in a tent revival; his "Conversion Narrative" (see below) recounts that experience. Six months later he announced his call to preach (see "When God Called Me to Preach") but his first sermon was a failure. He had studied John 15, practically memorized it, then forgot everything in the pulpit and was reduced to tears and testimony. "But that learned me one of the greatest lessons in my life," he said. "Not to depend on myself for nothing when I'm behind the pulpit. Trust the Lord. Put him in it. Because God's the one that called me to preach. And if God called me, God can preach me." He began his ministry as an evangelist, preaching in revivals and on a half-hour radio program on WKin (Kingsport), but he could not support himself and his family that way, so he continued with factory work and contented himself with part-time evangelizing. "I'm Here and I Don't Know Why I'm Here" (see below and sound sheet), a miracle story, is set in this time period. In 1961 he and his wife, four sons, and daughter moved to Falls Church, Virginia, a suburb of Washington, where he has worked as a truck-driver and engine mechanic ever since, reserving his ministry for weekends. For the past 16 years he has been preaching regularly in Page County, Virginia, about 80 miles west-southwest of Falls Church, boxed in the Massanutten (Shawnee, = basket of grain) Valley between the Blue Ridge Mountains to the east and the Massanutten Mountains to the west. Here are two views of Page County: the Environmental Protection Agency has named it one of the ten most healthful spots in the nation, while the town of Stan-
ley, with a population of 1500, is the largest community in the state of Virginia without a sewer system. Presently Reverend Sherfey is the pastor of the Fellowship Independent Baptist Church, which he and 19 followers founded, in Stanley.

Besides his pastorate, Reverend Sherfey also conducts a half-hour radio ministry each Sunday on WRAA, a 1000-watt radio station in Luray, the only AM radio station that can be received in Page County. It was through this radio ministry that he first came to Titon's attention, in 1971. In the summer of 1975 George, who had heard Sherfey's radio sermons in Titon's folklore class at Tufts, interviewed the preacher and attended a service at his church in Stanley. The sermon that he recorded then, "Dressed in the Armor of God," has been transcribed here by George in its entirety. The pace of the sermon is quite rapid and the volume loud. Sherfey alternates between chant (indicated in the transcription by a sequence of indented lines) and relative repose (indicated in the transcription by a sequence of lines begun at full left margin). The format is an extension of a transcription system developed by Titon and presented at the 1975 annual meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology. The following directions for performance apply to the sermon only, and will be clearer after listening to the excerpt on the accompanying soundsheet:

Full left margin, sequence of lines: period of repose.
Indented margin, sequence of lines: period of chant.
New line (chanted sections only): pause about ½ second.
Double-spacing between words (repose sections only): pause about ½ second.
Return to full left margin: read without pause as continuation of prior line.
Period (.): terminal intonation fall.
Semicolon: syntactical imposition by transcriber.
Standard (roman) type: ordinary conversational volume and intonation.
**Boldface type:** increased volume and expanded intonation range.
**BOLDFACE CAPS:** greatly increased volume and expanded intonation range.
*Italic type*, in brackets: stage direction; tone of voice.
* : pounds rostrum.
= : claps hands.
+hah+: loud expulsion of breath that punctuates the chant.

In 1976 Titon interviewed Sherfey and attended services at his church, and during the summer of 1977 George and Titon both spent two months with Sherfey and his congregation, recording services, radio broadcasts, and interviews. A case-study of Sherfey and his church is in preparation, while copies of the recordings have been deposited in the Archive of Folk Song, Library of Congress, and the University of North Carolina Folklore Archives.

The "Conversion Narrative" was collected and transcribed by George from a tape-recorded interview with Sherfey at his home in Falls Church on July 28, 1975. "When God Called Me to Preach" and "I'm Here and I Don't Know Why I'm Here" were collected and transcribed by Titon from a tape-recorded interview with Sherfey at his home in Falls Church on July 9, 1976. Also present at these interviews was Sherfey's wife, Pauline. The following directions for performance apply to the narratives only, and will be clearer after listening to the excerpts on the soundsheet:

New line: pause about ¼ second.
Double-spacing between lines: silence for about 1 second.
Return to full left margin: read without pause as continuation of prior line.
Capital letter: Except in conventional use for proper nouns and first words of quotations, a word begun with a cap is always preceded by a terminal intonation fall. Terminal falls are additionally punctuated by periods in "When God Called Me to Preach," "I'm Here and I Don't Know Why I'm Here," and "The Ordaining of Holt Herrell," version 2. No periods are employed in the other two narrative transcriptions.
Standard (roman) type: ordinary conversational volume and intonation.
**Boldface type:** increased volume and expanded intonation range.
*Italic type*: decreased volume and compressed intonation range.

Notes

3. See n. 1.
Sermon

Ephesians chapter six beloved. Starting in the sixth verse of chapter six I want to read about five verses there; hope it will be a blessing in your heart. [reads] "He said not with eyeservice as menpleasers but as the servants of Christ doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service as to the Lord and not to me. Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth the same shall be received of the Lord whether it be bond or free. And ye masters do the same things unto them afor- forbearing threatenings knowing that your master also is in heaven; neither is there respect to persons with him; finally my brethren be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil; for we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities against powers against the rulers of darkness of this world against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day and having done all to stand stand therefore having your loins girt about with truth and having on the breastplate of righteousness and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel peace; above all taking the shield of faith wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit which is the word of God praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit and watching there unto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints."

[end of reading] Brother I read a little more than I intended to; that's goin down to the eighteenth verse in this chapter. My friend this morning what I'm speakin to you about beloved is pan-o-plied. Brother what America needs today is to be pan-o-plied. "What do you mean preacher by that?" I mean brother today that we need to have something brother that will stand up my friends in the evil days when time brother gets hard and gets rough my friend. Brother I know you think "Well this is something true." +hah+ But brother this is something that does with Vital TRUth. +hah+ Brother we need Vital truth; we need POWer. Brother today the only way to get the POWER is from GOD my friends IS TO BE WRAPPED UP IN HIS SON JESUS. +HAH+ Praise God this morning brother; now the first thing I want you to notice was +hah+ in Ezekiel—Exodus chapter twelve and verse thirteen; +hah+ brothers when God prepared Exodus—why E-Ezekiel and told him down there in Egypt my friends +hah+ brother he was preparing them to come out of Egypt bonded; but brother the FIRST thing that God told them to do was "Get READY." +hah+ My friend be prepared to go when Moses told them he said "I want you to eat the Passover
with your loins girded about.” +hah+
And brother this morning what YOU AND I
OUGHT TO DO PRAISE GOD BELOVED IS BE GIRDED UP +HAH+
AND READY TO GO +HAH+
MY FRIEND BECAUSE JESUS MAY COME TODAY. +HAH+
BROTHER WE NEED TO HAVE ON THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD. +HAH+
GOD DON'T WANT YOU TO BE HALF DRESSED. +HAH+
GOD DON'T WANT YOU TO LOOK LIKE THE WORLD.
GOD WANTS US +HAH+
TO LOOK LIKE CHILDREN OF GOD +HAH+
AND BE on the go when he comes.

Amen; brother we need to be dressed up this morning in the spirit of God. Hallelujah. Amen; all right. He told them he said now “When you eat the Passover you eat it with your loins girded”; look in Exodus chapter twelve verse thirteen.

You eat it with your loins girded in other words +hah+
and when you eat the Passover we’re going to start movin.
Brother praise God you may move today
I don’t know; the Lord may come; +hah+
you ought to be girded up with truth this morning. +hah+
Praise God brother we need the TRUTH OF GOD. +HAH+
Brother I’ll tell you today it’s not so anymore; +hah+
you can ask fast people that are Christian
and brother they won’t TELL YOU the truth about it. +hah+
Praise God if you can’t TELL THE TRUTH +HAH+
YOU’RE NOT A CHILD OF GOD THIS MORNING. +HAH+
CHILDREN OF GOD TELL THE TRUTH +HAH+
BECAUSE GOD IS TRuth.

He said that Jesus “I’m the way of truth”; brother if you got him this morning I don’t care how bad people may come to you you’ll still tell the truth; anything comes up you’ll tell the truth. Brother we need our loins girt about with truth; so if we do the things brothers some men ask about you’ll tell the truth. Amen; God don’t want people that lie; God can’t stand people that lie. Amen.
Now instructing his servants in readiness he-he of his coming the Savior said “Let your loins be girded about”; Luke chapter twelve and verse thirty-five.
Amen. Let your loins be girded about. Now God wants me and you to be girded up this morning.

Amen; you say “Preacher” +hah+
“I-I-I’m loosely fit.” +hah+
Amen; God wants you to be TIGHT-FIT brother.
Praise God this morning this LOOSE bunch beloved
that can DRINK a little bit CUSS a little bit +hah+
RUNnin round little bit do anything they WANT TO +HAH+ 
BROTHER THEY’RE GOING TO HAVE THEIR LITTLE BIT IN HELL. +HAH+
PRAISE GOD THIS MORNING; GOD WANTS PEOPLE MY FRIEND +HAH+
BROTHER THAT’S UP TIGHT THIS MORNING PRAISE GOD +HAH+
FOR THE GLORY OF GOD AND LIVIN FOR HIM +HAH+
and holdin Jesus up.

Have your loins girt about with truth this morning. Be ready to go; if he
comes today are you ready to go? Are you ready to go? If he’s not you’re goin to
miss him brother. Praise God; some say “Well I got a thousand years to repent in”;
there ain’t no Bible for that. Amen; there ain’t no Bible for that.

My friend the Bible says “Repent.” +hah+
ToDAY is the day of salvation; toMORROW +hah+
may never come.

Proverb chapter twenty-five both right there. The Bible says “Boast not thyself of
tomorrow; withhold not thine hand

for THOU knowest not what a day may bring forth.” +hah+
It may bring DEATH to you beloved. I don’t know. +hah+
But the most important thing is to be ready.

Sister Cubbage said a while ago when she walked up here eighty years old if
she died she was ready. Amen; that’s what counts beloved. Amen. Being ready to
go. Then the next thing we need is the bless — breastplate of righteousness. Now
we know beloved that a breastplate shields a heart. And you’ve noticed beloved
I know in the old high pictures you’ve seen and everything beloved how that
you used to have back in the olden days what you used to fight with a spear.
Amen; they had the long spear beloved and they’d fight with it and they had a a
shield here brother that they held out befront of em. Yessir brother. And that
shield or that shield was protection from the heart and from the body. Amen; if
you want protection this morning beloved

you get the shield of faith. +hah+
Praise God there ain’t a dart IN THE WORLD
THAT CAN PIERCE FAITH BELOVED.
IF WE GOT THE FAITH +HAH+
THE BIBLE SAYS WE CAN SAY TO THE MOUNTAIN
“Be removed”; and it will move.

Amen; it will be the sycamore seed thou plucked; “How big a faith did you say?”
The size of a grain of mustard seed. Boy that’s awful little ain’t it? Amen.

But brother when you got just a little bit of FAITH +HAH+
BROTHER you’ve got POWER PRAISE GOD. +HAH+
and brother that’s what he’s talkin about here.
Have the shield of FAITH. +hah+
Brother if you got that shield out thar in front of you +hah+
you can run up agin devils all day long brother
praise God they can bounce into you
but I'LL TELL YOU Hallelujah
they'll go off one way or the other.

I'm glad to know this morning I've got one praise God the Devil can't touch.
Amen. Brother Jesus Christ the Son of God died on the cross of Calvary my
friends; praise God he set up the way brother that we can live hallelujah and
the devil can't bother us. Amen; praise the Lord this morning. Brother when you
heared when the blows from the ol devil come you'll find that First Corinthians
chapter one verse thirty when the blows from the devil come praise God you
got the shield of faith it'll turn it off one way or the other and the bullet won't hit
your heart.

I praise God this morning; I
read a letter one time beloved of a boy
that was overseas my friends. +hah+
He had the love of God in his heart; he prayed in the foxholes. +hah+
Brother this bullet my friends they shot. +hah+
And he had a Testament in his shirt pocket. +hah+
And brother the bullet hit the Testament +hah+
went almost through it but beloved before it got through it
it stopped my friends and that
praise God that was the faith brother that was over his heart. +hah+
Praise God this morning if you got faith in God honey
the devil can shoot at you with anything he WANTS TO. +HAH+
BUT BROTHER IT WON'T PIERCE THE HEART +HAH+
because God takes care of you.

I believe that this morning with all my heart. God will take care of my heart your
heart every man's heart brother if we'll have the shield of faith praise God this
morning and stand true to God. Brother now in our standing before God every
believer's righteous; just as righteous as Jesus himself. Amen; if you'll look in Sec­
ond Corinthians chapter five and verse twenty-one. Brother listen this morning;
some will say "Well preacher I'm not too righteous this morning." Brother
you're righteous if you're saved. Amen. God don't have no half Christians; I want
you to get that this morning.

Amen. God don't have no half Christians;
my friends today you're either a whole child of God
or you belong to the devil; one of the two.
Amen; brother this morning this thing is sittin a-straddle the fence; +hah+
praise God your legs won't reach around either side my friend. +hah+
And I'll tell you what if you're sittin a-straddle a fence like that; +hah+
the devil is going to grab you by that leg and jerk you on his side just as sure as the world. +hah+
Praise God GET ON GOD’S SIDE BROTHER.
If we’ll get over on GOD’S SIDE praise the Lord +hah+
then the devil can’t bother you.

You say “Preacher don’t he bother you?” Yeah he’ll bother you but he can’t get you. Because God’ll take care of you if you trust him. You got to trust God beloved; put him first in your life my friends; so then another thing we need today is the sandals of peace. The Bible sayeth the word of God says that ye must have on be — have our feet shod with the gospel of the preparation of peace. Brother now the reason there’s so much wickedness in the world today people are not shod with the gospel of the preparation of peace. Amen. Brother they’ve got on their walking shoes but it goes the wrong way. Amen. [laughs]

We need the shoes that will walk for Jesus. +hah+
Praise God TALK ABOUT THE LORD. +hah+
Praise to be a song beloved they sung in Kingsport: +hah+
“Let us talk talk talk about the Lord.” +hah+
Praise God brother if there was a time we ought to talk about JESUS +HAH+
it’s NOW HONEY.
GET ON THOSE SCARUH — PREPARATION of the sandals; +hah+
put the SANDALS on your feet +hah+
and be SHOD WITH THE GOSPEL OF THE PREPARATION OF PEACE. +HAH+
AND PRAISE GOD YOU’LL WALK RIGHT YOU’LL TALK RIGHT. +HAH+
AND YOU’LL ACT RIGHT YOU’LL SMELL RIGHT +HAH+
PRAISE GOD BECAUSE YOU GOT SOMETHING TO LEAD YOU right.

Brother let me tell you there; see if you got them sandals on; you’re ready to go. There’s peace in your soul. Brother Ephesians chapter two and verse fourteen: “Stand therefore having your loins girt about with truth having on the breast-plate of righteousness and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.” Amen; if you get these on honey you’re all right. Brother so we must take a firm hold on it. Brother that’s what’s the matter today; too many are just loosely fit. Amen. We need to take a firm hold. Brother Romans chapter five and verse one will tell you also about it praise God that we need to be firm.

Be firm in the love of God;
don’t be ashamed of Jesus.
Don’t be ashamed of the power of God.
Let GOD RULE in your life;
let GOD LEAD YOU.
The Bible says in Ephesia— Romans chapter eight: “The TIME IS THEREFORE NOW:
NO CONDEMNATION TO THEM WHICH ARE IN CHRIST JESUS +HAH+
WHO WALK NOT AFTER THE FLESH BUT AFTER THE SPIRIT.” +HAH+
BRÖTHE큐 LET THE SPIRIT OF GOD LEAD YOU praise the Lord +hah+
AND YOU’LL GO THE RIGHT WAY YOU’LL WALK THE RIGHT WAY. +HAH+
Now praise God this morning +hah+
I know we have them today. +hah+
BROTHER THEY’LL SHOUT AND LIVE LIKE HELL ALL WEEK. +HAH+
WE NEED TO SHOUT THEN WHEN WE HIT THE GROUND. +HAH+
WE OUGHT TO RUN RIGHT BLESS THE LORD. +HAH+
Let God lead us by his spirit.

Brother God’s a big God this morning; my God’s not dead; amen. He’s a live God this morning praise God. Amen; now brother now we need to be certain we got the right outfit. Amen. We need to be certain we got the right outfit; I remember ol David one time; little ol David if you’ll remember beloved was when he was goin out against Goliath this big ol giant; ol Saul do you remember Saul defiled God. Amen; he turned away from God; he done the things he shouldn’t have did. Amen. So they had to get somebody else to take Saul’s place. God told him; he said “You can’t rule in the kingdom no longer. You can’t be a king over Israel no longer; you’re not fit.”

Brother I say this morning preachers that’s preaching the word of God teachers teaching the word of God ought to be fit to do it before they try. Amen.
Praise God this morning; I been a firm believer in I still am and I’m goin to stay that-a-way. Amen; so beloved
when they called little ol David in why Saul took his coat brother
and put it on him; +hah+
his armor;
and put it on him; said “Here David;
take this when you go out against the giant.” +hah+
But brother what’d David do? +hah+
He said “Saul I can’t GO IN THIS GARBAGE.” +HAH+
in other words “This garbage you put on me +hah+
I CAN’T GO OUT THERE AGIN THAT GIANT.” +HAH+
He pulled it off; he said “It hasn’t been approved.” +hah+
PRAISE GOD BROTHER; HE TOOK JUST A LITTLE OL SLINGSHOT +HAH+
AND FIVE LITTLE PEBBLES OUT AGAINST THE GIANT; +HAH+
PRAISE GOD; THE OL GIANT SAID “WELL WHAT ARE YOU OUT HERE FOR?” +HAH+
HE SAID “I’M GOING TO TEAR YOU FROM LIMB TO LIMB. +HAH+
I’M GOING TO FEED YOU TO THE FOWLS OF THE AIR.” +HAH+
BUT DAVID SAID “I’M GOIN TO GET YOU BUDDY.
THAT’S WHAT I COME FOR.” +HAH+
HE SAID “I COME IN THE NAME OF THE LORD.” +HAH+
GLORY TO GOD IF YOU GO IN THE NAME OF JESUS +HAH+
YOU CAN WHIP THE DEVIL EVERY Time.

Praise God this morning. And he went out there and the old giant thought he had him. Beeerly be-listen. If David had-a-went out in the garb that Saul wanted to put on him the giant would have killed him. You go out there with the garb the
devil wants to hang on you and he's goin to kill you. Amen; if you hang on the
garb the devil wants you to put on you'll go to hell with it. Amen. Brother but
you put on the armor of God wants hallelujah this Bible says put on praise God
you got something you can walk right up in the devil's face rear back and stick
your chest out. Amen. I know Brother Bob² said last Sunday on TV I don't know
whether many of you heard him or not. He said he was in a place one time this
man said he was going to whip him.

He said “All right; go ahead.” And he said “I'm going to tell you something;
you whip me you got four to whip.”
He said “What do you mean Bob four to whip?”
He said “I don't see but one.” +hah+
He said “Yeah; but inside of me is the Father Son and the Holy Ghost.” +hah+
And he said “This is me.” +hah+
He said “You're going to have to whip them to get to me.” +hah+
GLORY TO GOD IF YOU GOT JESUS NEIGHBOR
he'll stand the test for you.

He'll go with you alll the way the Bible says even to the end of the world. He said
“I'll never leave you; I'll never forsake you”; said “Mother may forget her suckling
child; but” he said “I'll never leave you.” O hallelujah. Brother we need to have
on the right shoes. Have on the right size. Shoes that's too big for you will flop up
and down; shoes that's too little'll pinch the foot; you get the right size and you
can stand firm all day bless God. Amen; you get a shoe that will fit you and you
can stand up all day and brother do the job hallelujah. You get one that's too
small brother and you're in misery. Amen. [laughs]

That's what happened to a lot of church members: they got one too small.
Amen; they're in misery. +hah+
They can't STAND to be in the house of God. +hah+
Brother the preacher starts preaching +hah+
it bothers them;
THEY'LL— IT WORRIES them. +hah+
And then those that got em too big brother
they just flop up and down; they're just into anything. +hah+
It don't matter what comes along
they'll just jump into it headlong. +hah+
Amen brother; but praise God +hah+
when you get in this THING THAT WILL FIT YOU NEIGHBOR
PRAISE GOD HE'LL BE THERE ALL day long.

That's what we need today neighbor is things that's firm. Amen. The shield of
faith; now we need the shield of faith. Brother faith my friend is a vital place in a
Christian's experience. Hebrews chapter eleven and verse six. Brother faith is
one of the greatest things in the world. Have faith believe God trust God. My
friend the Lord Jesus is the object of faith; as we focus our attention upon him
and upon his word faith cometh. Amen. "How do you get faith preacher?" By believing something you never seen. That's faith brother. What is faith? Believing in Christ; I've never seen it. I was over in Jerusalem my friends; I had the privilege of walking up and down the shores of Galilee. I was in Capurnia. I was my friends at Jacob's well where Jesus sat one day when he told the woman my friend to come.

He said "Give me a drink"; and she said "The well's deep and you have the water to drink and nothing to draw with"; but he said "If you'd ask of me I'd give you a drink of living water"; he said there'd been a well he knew that would spring you up into everlasting life.

My friends I was in Jerusalem I was down in Jericho
praise God the places where my savior walked. +hah+
And brother I want to tell you you can feel the power of God when you go there.
Praise God this morning when your mind begins to run back.
I went to Calvary beloved; I looked upon Calvary where he was crucified.
I went to the tomb beloved outside the city where he was laid.
Praise God he wasn't there; he'd got up and gone back to HEAVEN;
BUT PRAISE GOD HE'S COMIN AGAIN Hallelujah. +hah+
AND WHEN HE COMES THIS TIME BROTHER HE'S COMIN AFTER PREPARED PEOPLE +hah+
that's ready to go to a weddin.

Praise God. Brother so we need to have faith in God. Brother faith cometh my friend when we look for Jesus Christ; look for him; look to him. Amen. Brother it takes faith to believe in God. Amen. If you don't believe in Christ when you say you accept him you don't really accept him. Amen. You got to believe in him.

You got to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God that God raised him from the dead.
And the Bible said: "Thou shalt be saved for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."
I believe that's the way it is today. The Bible says he said "He who cometh to me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit
I will in no wise cast him out."
Praise God when we come with a broken heart and contrite spirit we're ready to call upon that name.

My friend the Bible says in Acts chapter four verse twelve: "There is none other NAME given unto heaven whereby that men must be saved." +hah+
Brother it's through the name of Jesus; you got to believe in it. +hah+
You got to ACCEPT it on those terms +hah+
or you'll NEVER be a Christian my friends. +hah+
You must accept it and that is faith believing.

Hebrews chapter eleven my friend says faith is the substance of things hoped for and things not seen. Evidence my friends praise God this morning. Some said "Preacher how do you know you're saved?" Because I feel it in my soul. Amen.
I told you all a long time ago I got a letter from a feller in Front Royal
said we wouldn't know we're saved until we got to heaven; bless God I got news for that ol boy.
Amen; I told him so right on the radio brothers; I did; I told him praise God
my friend when you get right with God you know it hallelujah;
the Bible said we know we have passed from DEATH
UNTO LIFE
BECAUSE WE LOVE THE BROTHREN. +HAH+
BROTHER LET ME TELL YOU THERE'S LOVE IN THE FAMILY OF GOD. +HAH+
WHEN WE GET RIGHT WITH GOD WE LOVE one another.

If you don’t have that love you say “Well the sinners’ love”; yes; but it’s a different
type. [laughs] AAaaaamen. Why the worldly crowd they like their booze they
like their women. Brother they like their cussin their smokin their dancin where
God’s people love God’s way of livin’ the house of God and the Holy Spirit;
brother get in the Holy Spirit my friend; let the power of God begin to move; and
the children of God have so much love honey it just floods the whole house.
AAaamen; praise God this morning. Yes we need the shield of faith; brother and
then we need the helmet of salvation. Now let me tell you something neighbor.
You can have every one of them on but if you leave off the helmet of salvation
brother you still don’t have anything. “Why preacher?” Because the head brother
my friend takes a lot of blows. Amen. But if you got the helmet of salvation
brother there ain’t a dart big enough to go through it praise God; and that’s the
salvation of God. Listen what he said in the word of God: “And take the helmet of
salvation and the sword of the spirit which is the word of God.” Brother you notice
all your football players my friends all your car — uh — men race in the automo­
bles you know when they go on these tracks and they race you notice my friend
they wear a big strong helmet. My friends something that will protect them if
they if that car wrecks or somebody up there on that football field he comes at
you real hard brother and he’ll hit you in the head; and I notice even in the ball
players the baseball players any more — “Say preacher do you watch it?” Well
sure I like to watch good clean sport. I don’t see a thing wrong with good clean
sport — my friends they even have a thing to protect their ears on this side or that
side brother; praise God this morning; “What is it preacher?” It’s protection.

Protection I’m talking to you about this morning;
that IF WE’RE CHILDREN OF GOD WE’VE GOT ON THE HELMET OF SALVATION
WE GOT PROTECTION brother.

The boys when they go into the service my friends they give them a steel helmet.
Brother a bullet will pierce off of it. If it hits it at a glancin lick it won’t go through
it. It’ll pierce it and go the other way.

What do they do it for? They don’t want the man killed.
What does God put the helmet of salvation on me and you for? +hah+
He DON'T WANT US TO GO TO HELL BROther.
He DON'T WANT THE DEVIL TO KILL US BROther.
He wants us to live for him.

That's why we need the helmet of salvation. Brother I tell you praise God that if you got the helmet of salvation it'll protect you; now Christ is that helmet. Amen; you can't have you can't have that helmet if you're just bein a Baptist. Amen. You can't have that helmet on just bein a Methodist. You can't have that helmet on just goin down to the river and be baptized. But you got to be borned again in the spirit of God. Jesus made it so plain to ol Nicodemus one time

a man my friend +hah+
was a ruler; one that was HEIGHTY and MIGHTY;
BUT YET JESUS SAID “NICODEMUS YE MUST BE borned again.”
Brother that's what's the matter with the world today.
They dined the churches; they dined and they danced and they left God out of it.
Honey we must be borned again. We must have the spirit of God in our life.
You say “Preacher we'll get that when we get to heaven.” Honey
you get it HERE.
Praise God; listen neighbor;
I want to say this brother; we're goin to a WEDdin after a while.
You don't wait til you get to the weddin to get DRESSed; +hah+
praise God you're DRESSED BEFORE YOU GO TO THE WEDDIN. +HAH+
Hallelujah. +hah+
Why if you women wait for your husbands come +hah+
or your boyfriend come to pick you up +hah+
and then you have to go get DRESSed you'd be LATE for him. +hah+
And the SAME WAY WITH YOU +HAH+
THAT ARE CHURCH MEMBERS THAT ARE NOT RIGHT WITH GOD. +HAH+
WHEN JESUS COMES YOU'RE GOIN TO BE LATE +HAH+
for the gatherin in the sky.
Brother we better be ready now. My friend then we know we pass from death unto life because we love the brethren. Brother listen; Jesus said to be saved is to be brought out of death and to be put into life. Be brought out of darkness and put into the light. Praise God this morning that's what it means neighbor to be a child of God. Amen. Be brought out of darkness and put in light. Then you have a you have on my friend the girdle of truth the breastplate of righteousness the sandals of peace the shield of faith the helmet of salvation; there's one more to go yet. Amen. This is what I been tellin you my friend this morning to carry to the house of God with you is the sword of the spirit. Brother that's the word of God. Now listen beloved this morning let me say this: not everyone not every preacher that grabs a Bible and sticks it under his arm and takes off down the road is a preacher neighbor. Amen; don't get me wrong. I'm not fightin nobody this mornin. But brothers there's a lot of them in it today for the money and you know it's the truth.

Amen; I told you about the man down in Maryland beloved southern Maryland my friend +hah+
that was gettin nineteen thousand five hundred dollars year's house furnished his lights his water and his phone bill;
my friend everything was furnished and he put up before the church and they didn't have the money;
and he said he had to have twenty-two five.
Amen. Twenty-two thousand five hundred dollars a year
my friends to preach one sermon on Sunday;
had an assistant pastor and he had a big salary too.
My friend today but praise God +hah+
we're few in number here but we still believe in the old-fashioned way. +hah+
Amen; brother praise God today. +hah+
My friend but God called me into the ministry +hah+
my friends and I'm not ASHAMED of it this morning. +hah+
Praise God when God saved this ol country boy +hah+
I'll tell you neighbor I DIDN'T HAVE NO EDUCATION AND STILL AIN'T. +hah+
But GOD'S ABLE TO EDUCATE a man +hah+
if he'll trust God.

Brother we need the whole word. My friend listen. It's not my friend just having our name written on the church book but brother be written by the angels of God in the book in heaven. Amen. The sword of the spirit is the word of God. And brother let me tell you something: this blessed ol Bible will put sin to a rout. Amen. It'll bring sin right out in the open. Some of us say “Well we shouldn't say nothing about sin. We shouldn't preach on this we shouldn't preach on that”; brother all you got to do is preach the word of God and it'll bring it right out in the open. Amen; do you ever take notice my friend the very bird that you hit will holler every time? Amen honey; I tell you bless the Lord

I-I used to do a-a lot of hu-huntin beloved
and you could throw a rock in a pack of dogs and the one you hit he’d holler every time.

Yes he would; he’d squaalll out. +hah+
And brother that’s the way it is today. You get somebody brother
that’s not livin close to God livin a loose life and then you get in the word of God +hah+
and the word hits them my friend they’ll start barkin. +hah+
They’ll yelp and they’ll squeal. +hah+
Amen; they’ll go down the road and talk about the pastor. +hah+
Amen; they’ll talk about their neighbor they’ll talk about one another. +hah+
But when we get the love of God in our hearts and get rooted and GROUNDED +HAH+
WE’LL BE ON OUR KNEES SOMEWHERE PRAYIN FOR HIM +HAH+
AND TALKIN TO THE LORD ABOUT HIM +HAH+
if there’s something wrong.

I believe that with all of my heart this morning. We need the sword of the spirit
which is the word of God. That’s his blessed holy Bible that I have right here
brother. King James version trans-a-lated sixteen eleven. I’ll tell you I heard a
preacher this week on the radio station in Falls Church brother and some of the
things that he was sayin about that Modern Good News for the Modern Man. 
Brother he said “I’m goin to tell you something”; he said “Don’t buy the thing”; he
said “It’s of the devil.” Amen. Brother I’m not; I’ll tell you we need to stick to the
old-fashioned way;

I’m old-fashioned don’t care who knows it this morning bless God. 
Brother I’ll tell you I can remember when they used to go to church
brother they’d walk through the fields and carry their lanterns and go to the house of God
brother used to ride the old hacks and the buggies my friend ride side-saddle to church;
and brother the men would ride along beside his wife on the horse; +hah+
and brother they went to the house of God and SHOUTED ALL OVER THE PLACE. +hah+
But brother we’re living in a different age today; they say “Well times have changed.” +hah+
That's all right; times may change; but listen to this: +hah+
my Bible tells me beloved +hah+
Jesus Christ's the same YESTERDAY TODAY AND FOREVER. +HAH+
BROTHER IF HE WAS JESUS A HUNDRED YEARS AGO +HAH+
HE'S STILL JESUS RIGHT NOW. +HAH+
AND HE'LL be Jesus when he comes again.

So there we shouldn't change neighbor. We ought to have it old-fashioned. I love it the old-fashioned way. I love hearing people shout "praise God" when the spirit of God hits them. Amen. Brother praise the Lord so what we need is the sword of the spirit. Brother now I tell you we can put the ol devil on the run every time you got the word of God; Bob Harrington you remember him sayin just take your Bible get on an elevator some time when you're goin up to the third or fourth floor; just open up your Bible and start readin and see how many notices you'll get. Amen. Brother you do that and a lot of people turn their back on it. They can't stand the word of God and they they just can't stand the word of God; it kills them; amen. The word of God kills; did you know that? [laughs] It does. It sure do. [laughs] The word of God will kill you and then praise God the same word that kills you will make you alive. [laughs] Amen; that's what he said. [laughs] The Bible said Jesus said he had the power TO KILL AND TO MAKE ALIVE. Amen; I believe that this morning. Before you ever get saved you got to die. “Amen preacher; how in the world do I have to die?” You got to die out of sin. Amen.

Brother praise God the night I got saved
there was a little span in there I don't remember what happened.
Amen; the only thing I know is I got on my knees on the ground
and I started PRAYIN BROTHER.
NOW I REMEMBER SAYIN “LORD +HAH+
HERE I COME SWIM SINK OR DROWN; I'M COMIN HOME.” +HAH+
And brother then something happened I don't really remember +hah+
but when I come to myself I was standin UP +HAH+
HUGGIN PEOPLE AND A-CRYIN +HAH+
AND PRAISIN GOD BECAUSE I WAS SAVED.

And I still got it. [laughs] Aamen. [laughs] I still got it. The same Lord that saved me that night is just as real boy he's more real right now than he was that night. “Say preacher”; well I'm like Brother Jesse said. I've growed in grace. Things that used to knock me right off my feet and just about kill me praise God I can rear back stick my chest out and laugh right now. Amen. I've growed in his sight. Well you take a little baby for instance beloved when a little child is born into the world when they first start walkin just the least little push and they'll go down won't they? They'll fall; just the least little thing. If it trips just the least little bit it'll fall right on its face. But praise God you let that child get up just a few more years on you brother the first thing you know he can outrun you. Amen. [laughs] SAME WAY WITH THE CHILDREN OF GOD HONEY. Praise the
Lord when you’re just a little BABY why in Christ it seems like EVERY-
thing will just about knock you over. But neighbor after you go on for a while
you grow in this and you grow in it and it gets bigger on you and bigger on you
you’re less scared of the devil; amen. Why neighbor when I first got saved I was
afraid of the devil. I was. Boy I ain’t afraid of him now. Praise God I’ve growed in
this thing honey; I ain’t afraid of the devil; don’t care how big he is. Praise God;
hallelujah; he ought to run off fast if he gets me. Praise God I got on the helmet of
salvation the sword of the spirit my friends the gos—the breastplate of right-
eousness and my friends the loins girt about with truth and the helmet of
salvation. If you got it on this morning brother if you’ll notice there’s one
place ONE PLACE MY FRIEND THE DEVIL CAN STAB YOU YET.
“Where’s it at preacher?” In the back. All right now; what I’m going to say is this:
God can’t use a coward. A coward will always run. Amen. You get the best part of
a coward and he’ll turn and run every time. When you run that’s when the devil’ll
stab you. Amen; but stand up there face to face neighbor. Have it all the armor
of God on; stand right there face to face. The Bible says when you’ve done all to
stand then stand; and boy there ain’t a devil big enough to get you. I believe that
now praise God this morning I believe that. When you’ve done everything you can
do to stand neighbor then you can stand because God will see that you do stand.
Amen. Have on the whole armor not part of it. Not just part of it neighbor; but
put it all on. Put it all on and live for God and heaven will be your home.
Brother you can shout as you go along here; after a while when you cross over
that great beyond brother you can shout all over God’s heaven. I’ve said so many
times Brother Jesse if I could see just one soul when I get to the city of God
marchin down those gold streets when I see one soul that I been a blessing to on
this side and helped to get him into the city of God I believe I’ll have to rear back
and shout real big; I believe that this morning. You say “Preacher that’s an awful
little margin”; yes it is; but if I could see one I’ll shout. I’ve seen I don’t know I
couldn’t tell you how many souls since I been preachin how many souls have
come to God. But neighbor listen; if I can see one when I get there I'll have to shout. Amen. I can't help but think about Jeannie's daddy and mother. I was in a revival at the Fellow — uh — the Free Will Baptist Church here in Stanley several years ago; Jeannie came and her daddy and mother both came the same night. All three of them got saved; they're still on their road to heaven; they been a blessin in my life; you can hear they got saved; you been a blessin to my life. Every time I look at you praise God you're a blessin to me. And I want to see you when I get to the other side of the river. [quavering voice] Praise God sing and shout together over there where there'll be no more heartaches no more sorrow. No more pain no more trouble. No more sick bodies no more heartaches praise God but the former things of life will be passed and gone forever. Last Sunday I had a load on my shoulder. Thought my mother they thought my mother was goin to die; they didn't think she'd live. But by the prayers of God's people honey she was sittin up in the bed by Tuesday my friend Tuesday or Wednesday one I've forgotten which one it was; my sister came back said mother was sittin up in the bed laughin and talkin. [bolder voice] Brother let me tell you when God's people go to work honey and get on their knees and start prayin something's goin to move neighbor; something's goin to happen praise God. Aww hallelujah; God is so real; he's so wonderful I can't do without him. He can do without me but I can't do without him. He can do without you but you can't do without him neighbor. So praise God let's get on the whole armor of God. Panoplied means to have it all on. Be supplied with everything. God will supply our needs he said. If you're panoplied this morning you're sanctified and set apart from the world. And you have on the armor of God and ready to go when he calls. When he calls are you a Christian this morning? Are you saved by the power of God? Are you ready to go if he calls you in the next few minutes?

July 31, 1977, night service. Rev. Sherfey is making the altar call just after the close of the sermon. He used the handkerchief in his right hand to wipe his mouth.
Notes for the Sermon

1. Sister Rosie Cubbage, a member of Fellowship Independent Baptist Church.

2. Reverend Bob Harrington, a television evangelist from New Orleans.

3. Brother Jesse Comer, Sunday school teacher of the adult class at Fellowship Independent Baptist Church.

4. Sister Jeannie Sherfey, daughter-in-law of Reverend Sherfey and a member of Fellowship Independent Baptist Church.

Conversion Narrative

Well [clears throat] let me let me start from the beginning of it uh me and my wife

Uh I hadn't been goin to church for a long time and she hadn't neither and we got married and

We were I mean after we got married neither of us had been going to church so

Uh

We heard of this tent revival and

Uhh

One night
I was workin in Kingsport at that time
we decided we'd go over and

you know So I sat out in the car with her Me and her stayed out in the car and the children and

sit there

listen to the preachin Now of course he had these
big horns you know for speakers which were great I

and you could hear it out in the car just as good as if you're sitting inside the tent see

And of course I

sat there and

listened to that And it got

it really got to me

And I

I smoked at that time I smoked cigarettes and

bitin my fingernails and

you know I-I was I was under conviction but I wouldn't move

So I went home that night and I couldn't sleep

I was just I was under conviction so bad I just couldn't sleep

And I wrasaled and I promised the Lord that if he would let me live to get back over there the next night

that I would fix this thing up

So he did and after I
told him that why the
I guess you'd call it your conscience or whatever it was eased down and I went to sleep. So the next night I come home me and her got ready and we went back to the tent and that night I went in. I went on inside the tent and sat down about fifth row back from the front. Of course they had chairs you know. aah fold-up chairs. And we sat there and when Brother Milburn Morlock Kingsport Tennessee he began to preach and seemed like everything that man said he looked right at me and [laughs] it it was all for me seemed like. And I just thought well man somebody's told him something you know. Course I guess the Lord had.

And uh. But when he made the altar call well I certainly was one of the first ones to get there. And uh I accepted the Lord. And uh that was one of my greatest blessings I ever got in my life. I believe that night. And uh.

So took my wife and children on home and when I got first got home why the ol devil tried to tell me you know that I didn't get saved. He said "You didn't get saved. You'd look at you now. You stood up over there you cried and you said you were saved and now look at you." So we lived in a little three-room house on behind her daddy's house and. down at uh between Kingsport and Johnson City. And uh I headed toward the barn and I got on my knees out between the house and the barn and I said "Lord if that was real I felt over there tonight I want to feel it again." And praise God I felt it again right there in the road and so I haven't doubted it since [laughing] I still got it.

When God Called Me To Preach

When God called me to preach which has been twenty soon be twenty-four years ago. I was workin at the Mead Corporation in Kingsport Tennessee. . .

And uh so I was workin there the on the three-to-eleven shift well before this the Lord had been dealing with me.
uh
to go I-I felt to go preach
see it kept dawnnin on me.
But I kept saying "No that can't be it"
and uh
every time I'd testify or somethin in church why
somebody'd walk up and say "I believe God's callin you to preach" see.
I said "Well if he does I'll go."
So I- I kept fighting it off and going you know with this
I don't know it was a a burden seemed like or a heavy feelin on me a load upon me
and uh
so one evening I was workin the three-to-eleven shift and I was comin home from work and
and uh it just got so heavy upon me I just couldn't stand it.
And I pulled an old '42 Studebaker car I had
oh it was about eleven-thirty in the night
and uh I was about a half a mile from home and
I pulled that old car over to the side of the road and stopped
and of course I'd a-been I was prayin and a-cryin you know the tears got so big in my eyes I couldn't
see the road
I just fell down over the steering wheel.

And I said "Lord if it's preach I'll go.
If you'll lift this burden."
And believe me it left.

Just like that
it was gone.
I felt like I could fly away.
So I went on home and I was just happy as a a little lark you know.
And because the
the burden had been lifted see.
It'd gone.

... It was just
I don't uh
actually it's hard to explain.
Uh to describe
the uh pressure
that was on me.

... It was just
it just just felt
you just felt like you know that you were just
in a cage or somethin and you couldn't go nowhere.

... I just just felt like I was
pressed down.

And uh I kept prayin and tryin to get out from under it until I said “Lord if it’s preach I’ll go.”

And when I said that it just [snaps fingers] just gone.
Just vanished.
Just like if you’d have lift a big rock right off the top of me.

I’m Here and I Don’t Know Why I’m Here

We got married when we were seventeen.
Both of us seventeen.

And uh

we’ve
had some mighty
mighty rough roads to go over I’ll tell you.

Seen the time we didn't have
enough food to put on the table.
But the Lord seen us through.
That's uh
I didn’t have a job one time there

you know we was living down at Kent next to Kingsport and uh I didn’t have no job no money no food.

And uh at two o’clock in the mornin
I was on my knees prayin.

And the next mornin she’d fixed all we had and she said “What we’re goin to do?” and I said “The Lord’s going to send somebody to us.”
Something’s goin to happen.

And at ten o’clock that mornin just as sure as I’m setting right here
a deacon from a church in Bristol
pulled down in front of my house and he blowed his horn you know.

Well I went out to see who it was and there’s Ike Blalock from Bristol
deacon in the Shiloh Freewill Baptist Church.

And uh I asked him to come in he said “I ain't got time” he said “I'm in a hurry” and he said “John” he said “I'm here and I don’t know why I'm here.”

Well I knew why he was there.

And uh
so I got within the car and set down talked to him a few minutes and he started to leave he pulled out a ten dollar bill
handed it to me.

Well you know I tears started running down my cheek and I started rejoicing and I said “Brother Ike you don’t you don’t understand.”
I said “They ain't a thing in my house” I said “And I prayed last night at two o'clock in the mornin for God to send somebody to our rescue.”
And I said “You’re here.”

I said “That’s why you’re here.”
He said “Give me that ten back” and I handed it back to him he wrote me a check for twenty-five dollars.
And he went on down the road with tears runnin down his eyes and I went back in the house with them runnin out of mine
happy and that that put the food on the table then.

So
we been
we've had some rough hills rough roads but
God's seen us through.

Certainly has.

Many times we didn't know which way to turn but just trust the Lord he'd fix a way for you.
Introduction

To Deal with a Messiah

There must be some definition. By using 'a Messiah' and no qualifiers (pseudo- or false-) it should be clear that I am not concerned with the supernatural. Messiahs follow the monomythic pattern precisely as do Campbell's Heroes; with one distinctive difference: all messiahs define themselves as such, or stand by while others do it for them. So, to the present, anyone claiming to be the messiah must be taken into account. As to whether any claimant is or was The messiah, again, the only general canon should be the claim itself. A messiah is self-employed and his labor is his own to define. If he says he is going to bring on the millenium in his lifetime and that fails to happen, he is not The messiah; if he says he is going to bring on the destruction of the present world order and that happens, then he is The messiah. Thus there is a potentially large number both of messiahs and of The messiahs, some more attractive and enduring than others. Of course, no messiah ever fails in his own eyes or in the eyes of those who have made heavy investments in him. Instead there is rapid resort, both on the part of the messiah and on that of his followers, to interpretation of the contradictory event and re-interpretation of the original promise. So, in Judaism, there is a failed messiah and a successful one; or, in Christianity, there is the Second Coming; or, in Sabbatean messianism, the messiah must pass through various failures and degradations to arrive at his boon (including conversion of a sort to other religions). For the followers, there must be time to pause and interpret/re-interpret at every mischance; for the messiah, the process may be well-nigh instantaneous.

The messiah dreams that he is the whole world; in contact with all of it, in control of all of it, and that the two systems, himself-on-the-earth and all the rest are, in some manner, one. Whether as langue and langage, or as an anthropocentric universe, etc., varies. I would suggest that this stance is a brave one, this vision of adam kadmon he plays for us, and that we do not need to be ashamed of the messiah. There is nothing here that needs Bultmann-izing (to continue that handy misunderstanding); the possibility of a simply insincere or venal messiah is not worth considering. Seeing oneself as primarily a messiah of chaos, and acting accordingly, is quite different from 'false prophecy,' evangelism and the First Baptist Church. The appeal of a view of the universe as chaotic, or proceeding in that direction, though, depends on the stabilization of a whole set of socio-economic circumstances that are inherently unstable: a long-lasting, or extraordinary chaotic environment and a certain sellability, born out of a true conviction that his world really is in chaos — superb alienation — on the part of the messiah.

By 'sellability' I mean the successful presentation of an attractive product in an exchange. The necessary consistency of the product-in-process can be seen in the successive postures adopted by Jacob Frank (Podolia, 1726-1791) on his Way. My feeling is that Frank's line of chat (his 'Sayings') and his machinations (polymechanos, Ulyssean), real and imagined, will reveal this game of word and confidence the messiah plays as the high art it can become.

For details of Frank and his movement, I would refer the reader to Professor Gershom Scholem's articles on Frank and on Sabbatai Zevi in the Encyclopaedia Judaica. Roughly, Frank was one of many messiahs and prophets born out of the disintegration of medieval political institutions, religious hierarchies and, that fabulous creation of the social historian, the medieval mind. As Scholem puts it, "[Frank] propa-
ings of the Lord') as proof texts in a largely antagonist
from the lies spread by clerics and their captive

foreigner carefully selected and shaped to the polemic purpose.

devoted to the theme of the Messiah. There are some
led to believe. I extracted all the sayings quoted in

Frank emerges from the account as somewhat dif­
framed by his own Jewish tradition, unethical. Towards
was forced to take a
look at Sokolow's Hebrew translation of A. Kraushar's
(Polish) Frank and Polish Frankism. In that biogra­
phy Kraushar uses Frank's 'Sayings' (from a text he
cites as 'Księga słów Pańskich' = 'The Book of the Say­
ings of the Lord') as proof texts in a largely antagonis­
account. There is enough ambivalence in Krau­
shar's own feelings in the matter though (he himself
converted to Catholicism, and thus the second volume
of his work was, though translated into Hebrew, never
published), so that, assisted by the quoted 'Sayings',
Frank emerges from the account as somewhat dif­
ferent from the lies spread by clerics and their captive
scholars, and rather more interesting than I had been
led to believe. I extracted all the sayings quoted in
Kraushar's first volume and translated them to the
best of my ability. These, with a brief introduction, are:
The centerpiece of the forthcoming issue of Tree,
devoted to the theme of the Messiah. There are some
points in the translation that I would alter now, and
my feelings have changed a bit from those of the intro­
duction in Tree; in addition, the quotations in Krau­
shar, and all the more so in Sokolow's translation, are
carefully selected and shaped to the polemic purpose.
At the very least though, those translations show how
unsinkable Frank proves to be.

With the very kind help of Professor Wl. Serczyk,
Director of the Biblioteka Jagiellońska in Kraków, I
managed to locate and obtain copies of the two remain­
ing and fragmentary manuscripts of Frank's 'Sayings.'
There are about 1800 of the sayings left out of some
2100, and the mss. we have are apparently secondary recensions, titled 'Zbiór słów Pańskich' (= 'Collection . . .'). Towards the end of his life, probably in Brno, Czechoslovakia, as our mss. have it, a collection was made for the faithful of Frank's dicta. Some seem to have been remembered by the followers and are related in the third person; some are in the first per­son. There appears (cf. No. 11) to have been some sup­pression of cultic mysteries and perhaps some bowd­
erization of an original that, in addition to having been entirely spoken by Frank, was uttered in a dif­ferent language or different variety from that of our mss.'s medieval Polish.

My friend and colleague, Professor Chopyk, gave me literal translations of one or two of the sayings and himself promptly fell under the Frankist spell. We agreed that he would continue to do the literals and would provide information from his fund of eastern European knowledge and from primary and secondary documents in languages I do not know. I would add whatever understanding could be gained from the Jewish tradition and milieu, and work up English translations aimed back at the oral original and its sätz. The Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute has agreed to publish the final product with introduction,
notes, maps and indices, including the manuscript in
photo-reproduction. This last provision was very
important, since it freed me from the need to be exces­
sively close to the text at hand and allowed me, for
example, to insert the Jewish phrases and words of
the hypothesized ur-text in place of the circumlocu­
tions of the immediate recension. For the rest, Dr.
Chopyk keeps me on a close rein.

I should mention here a few of the conventions tem­
porarily adopted in the 'Sayings' translated here: the
only oddments of phonetica we use are: h (for the
sound at the end of the word 'yuccch,' Hebrew het), z
(for the sound at the end of 'bits,' Hebrew za'dí), and ó
(for the Polish vowel like that in 'book'). Place names
are dealt with by substituting the name by which a
locale is best known for whatever's in the text. We try
to reproduce personal names exactly, with the except­
ton of those that have gained a traditional spelling
(e.g., from the Bible) where we use the received form.
Traditional notational devices (punctuation) have been kept to a minimum; spaces of varying length, and the symbol ‘&’ are used as representational of an oral event; occasionally an accent mark is used to mark emphasis. The notes, for this presentation, are my own and minimal.

A Final Bit of Chutzpah

It is presumptuous to start talking about the organizational principles of the ‘Zbiór’ text on the basis of these fifty ‘sayings,’ or about motifs and concerns. But I will presume to point out a few things, based not only on these sayings, but as well on my reading and on the several pages of sayings I managed to extract from Kraushar-Sokolow. There is a-plenty of natural obstacles that are to be overcome: mountains to climb, flooding rivers to cross, etc. There is persecution from outside the cult and betrayal from within. There are seductive women, doors that close Frank in and doors and windows he bursts through. The brave things that he does, and the suffering he bears are forced on him by his destiny. He is enabled to do them and bear them because he is chosen to; he is chosen to, for his ability to see what needs to be done and to get it done. Much that he is required to do chooses to do is ‘contrary’ to the expected, for his directives emanate from the source of things rather than from ‘seeming.’ ‘Sayings’ tend to cluster around these themes. From those quoted in Kraushar, the themes appear to be present from Frank’s earliest memory.

—HL

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1. I had a vision in Salonika. It seemed to me I heard a voice call ‘Go & lead Jacob the Wise to the Chambers & when you bring him to the first Chamber I warn you the command is upon you open all the doors and windows before him. When I entered the first Chamber I was given a rose a sign with which I could proceed from one Chamber to the next. And there I was flying in the wind & on my right & left were two virgins the like of whose beauty has never been seen. In the Chambers I saw mostly women & maidens in a few of them there were groups of teachers & students & when I had heard just one word of their discourse I immediately understood everything they intended to say & there were very many of these Chambers & in the last of them I saw the First (I mean Shabtai Zvi¹) seated as well like a teacher with his students wearing the clothes of a frank² & he turned to me & asked ‘Are you this Jacob the Wise? I have heard about you that you’re a hero & have heart I too got as far as here but I didn’t have the strength to go on. If you want to be strong! & may God help you Many Fathers have taken this burden on have set out on this road & failed’ & there he showed me through the window a depth a black gulf covered in a fearsome dark & across the gulf I saw a great mountain reaching up into the heart of the sky & I called out
'Come what may!
I'm going!
God help me!

Then I flew slanting down the air into the depth. When I felt solid ground underneath me, I came to a landing at the very bottom of the abyss. I walked on through the dark until I came to the side of a mountain. This cliff was very steep & slick & to climb it, I had to drag myself up by my fingertips & nails with all my strength. I reached the top. When I stopped climbing there, I smelled a marvelous odor. There were many of the Righteous there. I was exalted in great joy. I could not pull the rest of my body wholly onto the mountain but said to myself 'I will rest here awhile.' Sweat poured off my face like the flooding river. I had to cross clawing my way up the mountain. ‘I will go up on to the mountain well-rested to meet the Good One who dwells there’ & that is what I did. Letting my feet dangle off the mountain, my hands & body on the mountain.

Then I went up on to the mountain.

2. I had this dream sick once in Giurgiu. I saw a woman of unusual beauty who stood beside two wells one well of the water of life and the other of clear water & this woman said to me ‘Put your feet in the water & you will be cured at once.’ I did so & was cured.

This woman stood upon a broad and lovely field. She took me by my hands & said ‘Come, I will take you to see my daughter, still a virgin.’ & I went with her into the depths of that field & I smelled a marvelous odor arising from many flowers. A maiden came to meet us, her beauty could not be described in words of this world & she was dressed in Polish rubran & her breasts were uncovered. When I saw this, I suddenly saw the whole world from one end to the other.

Her mother told me she would give me the girl if I wanted her for a wife. But I said that I had a wife & children.

I asked about the meaning of this dream several times in Iwanie.

3. When R., Mordecai was a melamed in Prague, he had the same dream three times in three nights. He was told in the dream 'Go you out from here & reveal this Mystery to Jacob.' He saw this same thing once, twice & a third time & paid it no attention. Then, one day, a simple man came to him & said 'Run away from here.' Some people here want to beat you up & accuse you of seduction & other things.' He was very frightened then & ran away. Since he had a son-in-law named Jacob & thought he should tell him the Mysteries he did so when he came to Lwów & then by coincidence having left everything behind he came to my wedding in Nicopole & found me beneath the hupa.
according to their custom & without knowing who I was confided everything to me

I heard all this & asked ‘& so where is this messiah’ & he answered ‘In Salonika’ & I said ‘If that’s so then I will go to him immediately I want to serve him with all my heart If he needs me to work chopping wood for him I’ll chop wood & if he orders me to draw water I’ll draw water & if he should ever need to fight a war I I will march at the head of the troops

When he heard this he was very frightened

4.

When I was young I asked R. Mordecai to reveal the secret faith to me He said ‘You may not know it until you are ready to take a wife Then during your wedding itself the whole of the secret faith will be made known to you’

5.

God from the beginning has always been here in this world but his particular place is known to no one Therefore all the ancient peoples though they tried hard to know God & to find him did not & failed

It has been said till now that God may be sustained or weakened through good deeds But I tell you now that God will reveal himself in this world & no one’s deeds will hinder it If one does evil one hurts only oneself There are no hindrances to God himself

6.

A lame man called Raphael asked the Lord while yet in Iwanie ‘Must all members of a group suffer for the crimes of one?’ The Lord answered ‘If a man make a hole in a ship will not all her passengers be endangered? Just so all of you sit in one ship’

7.

I had this dream in Czestochowa I dreamed that I was in a synagogue & there were three Arks that had the appearance of altars I came to a halt before one of them & prayed Then when I’d finished I went back to my place as the custom is & took off my talis & then I saw twelve Jews whose faces full of wisdom shone light & I said ‘Sholom’ to them & they answered me ‘Sholom’ & said ‘We are sent from God himself to be your brothers’ I answered them ‘This cannot be for I have already chosen brothers for myself in Iwanie’ In spite of this they repeated ‘God himself sent us here to you’ ‘Heaven & the earth may change I will never exchange these I chose them long ago’ & I saw on the other side of the mehizo twelve women beautiful & righteous & they too said ‘But God himself sent us here as well to be your sisters’ & I answered them too
as I'd answered the men & gave my blessing to all of them & then I woke from my sleep

8.

When Jakubowski asked in Rohatyn ‘Why did the Lord go back to Salonika?’ the Lord answered ‘When an owner moves from dwelling to dwelling even though he take with him all his vessels & possessions & leave nothing he returns thereafter to his empty dwelling & lighting a candle looks into every place & checks every corner to see whether he hasn't left something behind That's what I'm doing’

9.

The Lord told Osman in Nicopolis about Her Majesty then only a year and a half old ‘You see my daughter? Know that she is a queen! But do not think that it is on account of her beauty I call her ‘Queen’ No! She really is a queen in her very being’

10.

In Nicopolis once the Lord paced anxiously about the room Osman noticing asked him ‘Wise Jacob why are you so bothered?’ ‘The One who breathes air into the world came to me to have me set the limits to a sickness which he brings This has worried me greatly’

11.

When I was in Salonika the first time I was awakened suddenly one midnight & was told ‘Jacob Go out from the city towards the harbor & perform a certain rite there’ ‘How can I?’ I said ‘the gate is closed & it would take thirty Turks to open it’ ‘Don't concern yourself Just go’ & then the keys were brought to me & that mighty gate opened easy as a common door I came down to the beach & celebrated the zivug etc., etc. then came back closing the gate after me The keys were taken from me back to the place they belonged

12.

Her Highness Z.L. told Matushevsky Z.L. that when she was in Giurgiu two great Turkish ladies came to visit her & as is their custom brought two slave girls beautifully dressed with them The whole time the ladies were there their eyes were fastened on one corner of the room They told their husbands later that they’d seen four slave girls there dressed in indescribable riches Later the mayor of the city a man called Nazer asked the Lord who was visiting him ‘Please tell me why you conceal your wealth? It would be such an honor for us if you would permit your lady to go to the baths publicly with her elegant slave girls’
13. A similar thing happened in Brno. When Her Highness came with the Lord to see the emperor in his camp she wore no jewels neither in her ears nor round her head. But still one lady reported that the officers said they'd never in their lives seen so many jewels as those she displayed.

14. While yet in Iwanie the Lord said 'I shall seek of the Holy Lord that I be not pockmarked & you if you will be good will be whole too. Then when we sit together at the round table you will not seem different from me by even so much as a hair. Whenever one of you goes out people will say 'This is the holy Lord himself.'

15. In Salonika the second time I received an order to perform contráy deeds & so when I met a Turk on a Greek street I drew my yatagan & made him pronounce the names of the First & Second & make the sign of the cross & I did not let him go until against his will he did so.

& when I met a Greek in a Turkish street I would make him say the words 'Mahomed rasul 'allah'—that is 'Mohammed is the true prophet'—& to pronounce as well the names of the first Two with his finger pointed upward as is the Mohammedan custom.

& when I met a Jew in a Turkish street he had to make the sign of the cross & pronounce the names of the Two. & when I met a Jew in a Turkish street he had to point one finger upward & pronounce the names of the Two & I performed these deeds daily.

16. In Salonika one Shabbat I ran into a certain Jew a great wiseman of the Talmud & asked him a hard question & he could not answer it at all.

& after much conversation I answered the question myself & the wiseman was rejoiced.

& I said to him 'Now you ask me a question & I will resolve it for you.'

'How can we do that here in the street?' the wiseman answered.

& I said to him 'Come on with me to the Turk's coffeehouse & we can talk more there.'

We went into the coffeehouse & I winked at the servant to bring us two cups of coffee. He brought them right away along with two pipes as is their custom.

'What are you doing?' the wiseman asked dumbfounded. 'Don't you know that it's Shabbat & we are forbidden to eat or drink in the house of an Ishmaelite?'

I didn't answer but said to the Turk 'Have you mixed lard in this coffee? The Jew won't drink it.'

& the Turk got very mad—God forbid they should use pigfat—and threw him-
self upon the Jew & was about to stick him with his knife.

So I said to the Jew 'Your Torah permits the forbidden in a moment of danger so let's drink the coffee. What else can we do?'

So we drank the coffee & smoked some pipes & the coffeehouse was open to the market according to the custom of those countries & everyone that passed by stopped astonished shocked & couldn't understand how a great wiseman like this one could profane the Shabbat so openly.

Then it was time to pay up & the Jew had no money with him because it was Shabbat & I too had no money at the moment there was nothing to pay with & so I took the Jew's turban & gave it in pledge & the Jew had to go back to his house without his turban bareheaded.

& I'd do this every single Shabbat one time in one street one time in some other street & everytime some Jewish wiseman would fall into my trap.

17.

One Shabbat I went outside the city & bought some oranges I had my knife with me & was peeling one with it when a Jewish scholar & his students came upon me 'My God!' he said 'How can you? Don't you know that today is Shabbat & here you are with a knife?' 'You are right' I answered 'What you say is true But then why are you a learned man carrying your own knife today?' 'That can't be!' the Jew shouted 'I always bathe on Friday & change my robe for the Shabbat' 'Since I have said it is so if you will just put your hand into your pocket surely you will find your knife there' The Jew reached into his pocket & brought out his own penknife He was stricken with fear & cried out in amazement 'You must be more than a man for if you are not then I am an ass' & then he began to beg me to come visit him & promised me many things to make it worth my while but I did not want to.

I did similar things wherever I could.

18.

There is a congregation in Salonika called 'The Congregation of the Prophet Elijah' When I met a young pupil from the congregation I asked him 'Why do you call this bet midrash 'Elijah's Congregation'?' 'One of my ancestors' the Jew answered 'passed by here just after Shabbat once & found the prophet Elijah seated here on a chair Ever since then the bet midrash has been called 'Elijah's Congregation' & it was decided that our family should direct it & it has in an unbroken line' When I heard him say that I fell upon the Jew & started choking him 'I am an honorable Jew just like you! Now show me that Elijah!'

The Turks heard the yelling & ran over to where we were Some asked what we were fighting about I told them the whole story then asked 'So tell me Would you fall for a story like that before you yourself saw Elijah? Why may I not look upon him myself?' 'You're right! You're right!' they all shouted together 'Beat him up! Go to it!' etc.
19.

I came once to the synagogue in Salonika when there must have been at least 1200 balabosim gathered together. According to their custom one of the pupils would call out ‘Let so-&-so come up to read the Torah’ I called out in a mighty voice ‘Don’t a single one of you dare come up on the bima or I’ll lay him out right on the spot!’ Everyone was astonished & they began shouting ‘By what right do you prohibit it?’ So I grabbed hold of the bima & called out again that with that very bima I would murder the first one who dared rise up against me.

Then I took the Sefer Torah & laid it on the bare ground I pulled down my pants & sat on the scroll with my bare behind & all the Jews were unable to do anything & were forced to leave.

20.

The Jewish women found my deeds very repellent They laid an ambush for me one evening in a certain street Each one had her scarf loaded with rocks As I passed by they began to pelt me with a hail of rocks I said nothing but picked those same rocks up & started sling them right back Some of the heaviest ones struck home right away Many women fainted away many were wounded Groans & cries spread through the street but I just went on home.

21.

The Jews could do nothing with me So they hired some Turks to kill me in my own house While I was asleep one evening in my room I felt the need for some reason or other to go lie out on the porch So I told a Greek staying at the same inn to take my place & that I would go sleep out on the porch That is what we did The Turks knew which room I had been sleeping in They charged in & killed the Greek thinking it was I who lay there.

22.

What did the Jews do in the end? They paid off all the innkeepers of Salonika & persuaded them to kill me wherever I might come to spend the night I came to one of them He was honest & revealed their plan to me & their names & declared ‘I am going to keep well out of this business myself but still I cannot permit you to spend the night here’ & so unable to find lodging I was forced to pass the night in the mud & in ditches I bore all this & suffered it on account of my love for God to do his will For even those who were remnants of the Second feared to take me in.
23. When I sought to leave the town these remnants of the Second refused to help me at all. They were afraid that if I got hold of a few groschen I would stay on. So I went to R. Issachar who gave me 5 crowns\textsuperscript{18} for the journey. I rented a horse from some wagon drivers who were traveling in companies as was their practice. The Jews paid off the Turks to kill me on the way. The Turks took up positions along the road. Shortly after we started out my horse drew up lame. I exchanged it with my driver, borrowed a blanket from him to wrap up in, and trotted up to the front of the train. The Turks had seen me at the rear of the train in the beginning, and since they thought I was still there they killed the driver and took him to the Jews, who then saw the futility of their plot.

24. & like this when I left Poland the second time to go to Salonika, the Jews hired Turks to kill me. The Turks, chasing me, caught sight of a woman of unusual beauty riding on a horse. They burned with desire for her and rushed after her. She fled away and led them off farther & farther from me & I rode on.

25. & when I left on that way that time my whole body was cankerous & sown in boils except for my face & hands so that my entire shirt clung to my body & when I wanted to remove it I had to tie one sleeve to a tree & tear myself & body away from it & when I did I groaned like a snake when it sloughs its skin so loud that all my fellows wept many tears on my account. As I drew near Salonika I was told, Jacob Go you to that least of my servants to the sea & bathe there & be cured of all your wounds & cankers. I did that, leapt into the sea. The pain was indescribable & I sought to drown myself but the sea would not keep me down but kept tossing up up. After an hour of this bath in the early morning I emerged healthy & refreshed & there was not a mark left on my body. I was entirely without blemish.

26. I was visiting a certain very rich Jew Eleazar once & R. Mordecai said to me, Jacob Show your might here! At once I climbed up the oak stairs to the floor above & every step I took carved out its impression in the wood.

27. When I was traveling to Salonika with R. Mordecai & a large company we
found a spear stuck in the ground in the middle of the road which through cus-
tom meant that a robber was there. A rug was spread out beside the spear on to
which everyone passing had to pay tribute.

Suddenly the robber charged out at us, grabbed the spear & threw it at me.
It went right by me. I filled my hands with rocks, shouted loudly & when the
robber heard he fled back into the forest. He had come to know my wrath.

Then it began to storm violently. Thunder, rain, lightning & when they
had passed we went quietly on our way.

28.

In Poland the very first time in 1756 I did even greater things in Ozerjany,
Rohatyn, Zbórow etc. I bewildered them completely. I worked intrigues
among the Polish powers like these as well & you can see now what has hap-
pened to them.

If I could have done these deeds in your presence much more would have
come of them.

29.

In Vienna I rode forth in great pomp like Joseph when he ran Pharaoh’s
government despite the sly & underhanded plots the princes and Jews played
out before the Queen despite all of them being against me. In the name of my
God who did I have to be afraid of?

& the scream you yourselves heard as I left it was a sign I saw you then
already but far away in time. If you could have been there then entirely then
you might have seen what more could have come about in that town.

30.

While still in Giurgiu the Lord said ‘In the first town I come to in Poland
they will imprison me.’ In Iwanie the Lord repeated the verse Jacob said to his
children (vide Gen. cap. 48.22) ‘Since you will occupy yourself with my burial I will
give you an extra part bigger or better than that of the other brothers’¹⁶ So
when I made known to you in Giurgiu concerning the prison & told you in Iwanie
to perform my burial rites you should have caught on immediately. I was giving
you a sign that ‘the grave’ was to be understood as ‘the prison’ & you would have
said ‘We won’t let you go alone’ ‘We want to go with you’ just as Ruth said
‘Whither thou goest I will go: & where thou lodgest I will lodge: thy people
shall be my people & thy God my God’.

& when I went into the prison you should have known I was not going there
in vain & that I was searching after a thing of very great value. If I had been
sure of you & felt your complete desire for me I would have taken two of you &
revealed to you what I seek.

But you went to Warsaw & spoke freely against my order so I read you
this verse: ‘Unstable as water . . . ’ as Jacob told Reuben (Gen. c.49 v.4).
31. In '56 when I came to Poland I showed everyone this verse explicit in the Bible: (in the 5th Book of Moses, Cap. 29, v. 4,5, and 6) ‘God hath not given you an heart to perceive & eyes to see etc. so that you would know that I am Jehova your God’

32. When I was told to go to Poland I answered ‘Why me? You have so many truly learned men why not send them?’ ‘No you yourself must go’ I was told ‘since God himself has chosen you & if you won’t go voluntarily they will lead you there in irons so you can do what you must’

So in Poland for the first time I did things which no one knows for these were things which the lips cannot utter The heart keeps them to itself

33. It was like as I told you before when I was brought to those Chambers in which were all the kings of Israel & the Fathers They said to me ‘Jacob We have come this far from here you must go on alone’ ‘I am a prostak’ I answered ‘& have no great mind How will I get there?’ ‘Don’t worry’ they answered ‘It doesn’t matter at all Wisdom is hidden in the lowest places’ But still I held back

Then the First stood me up on a table & opened the window He showed me a gulf & said ‘Look this place is impassable We cannot go there But you if only you would not hang back would have much less trouble along your path But since you delay so much you will have to get through many tight spots’

& then I saw all the burdens which I’d have to take on myself & so they pushed me into that gulf

34. Her Highness asked me once in Brno in 1785 why I chose only prostaks & the witless why I had not taken her in among the women She would never have repudiated me & so I answered her ‘What would the work be worth if God were to save the world with the help of wisemen & scholars? God must come into this world with the lowest & the scum so that his power can shine forth from that place Look at me & consider There was no greater prostak so lacking in mind The wisdom I spoke came out from nothing

I was in Bucharest in ‘48 at a certain lady’s house She was 24 I had cyffki of gold & silver worth 100 crowns & I sold them to her for 500 That amazed me but I didn’t pay much attention to it & went on my way I said to myself ‘If she gives it voluntarily why shouldn’t I take it?’ This lady was very rich She had about 1200 servants fine young ones Her husband was away at his estates at that time She called me & asked me to sit beside her I did & saw that the servants were one by one quietly going out from that room & I was left there alone with her The servants locked the doors behind them
The lady started in persuading me to stay over night. She wanted me to satisfy her needs & offered me 1000 sacks of lev's & 'If you work with a will I will double it. See how many handsome slaves I have here? But I must have you this very night & if some time in the future you want me I will be yours. My only wish is that you satisfy my desire this night at any price'

I wanted to run away but all the doors & gates were locked. She caught on to what I wanted to do & said 'If you won't do it willingly then you will have to be forced to' So I thought 'If I knocked out the window & jumped there would be too much racket.' To make a long story short I gave her all my valuables to keep for me & asked her permission to go out on the porch. She agreed & came with me. The porch was a long way off the ground & there were many tall stakes.

35.

I was travelling with my partner through some villages. He ran into some peasants he owed money to. When we tried to go on several peasants who'd come to us stopped us from going. I was about to attack them to throw myself on them when they said 'We don't have any business with you. That other one owes us 900 lev's.' My companion knew I had 600 lev's on me. The peasants tied him up & he started wailing Jacob. For God's sake do me a favor. Let me have 400 lev's. This will satisfy them for the whole debt & I'll be freed. As soon as I get home I'll take my wife's coral necklace worth 100 crowns & give it to you.' I agreed & gave him the money. When we got home I asked for the necklace. My partner replied 'My wife is sleeping now. Tomorrow morning I'll give it to you & for the consideration you've shown me I'll give you my sturdy wagon the one at my father's as a gift.'

In the morning my partner & his wife & their possessions had disappeared. I ran to his father with the letter my partner had given me to claim his wagon, but I was refused. His father told me that his son owed him more money than that & he put the wagon in his courtyard for safekeeping.

His yard was surrounded by a high fence. I came there at midnight with two ladders I had tied together. I set them against the fence. I took the wagon which weighed 100 òk²⁰ on my shoulders. I carried it over the fence. I climbed down off the ladder with it & went on to Romanie a half-mile away with that wagon on my back. The father ran after me but everybody else talked him out of it. They demonstrated to him that his son had done me the greater damage in taking the 400 lev's.

This is another example of being a prostak.

36.

I came to the river Totorozh & found there 150 wagons waiting on the shore afraid to go on because the river was in flood. I said nothing but took my robes & bundled them onto the top of my head & in spite of the great
danger swam the river with my horse. People shouted at me from the other shore: 'What are you doing? For God's sake! Why take such a risk?' I paid them no attention just swam on across & in that same day went on 6 miles further to Romanie.

The people that stayed behind had to wait there 11 more days. When they got to where I was they were shocked & surprised to see me alive & this was done by being a prostak.

37.

In the village of Faraon in Walachia there is a bottomless gully terribly wide. I would jump it all the time on my horse. The Turks couldn't get over it. From these consider how my deeds were those of a prostak & heedless. But I was chosen because I was very upright & Godfearing.

38.

Some robbers were hiding out in a certain forest. They had everything in their cave even their own musical instruments. I was passing by & went in. I couldn't find anybody. I saw the drums & flutes the tulumbas & so on. I picked up the drum & began to beat on it as hard as I could. On purpose. So they would come find me.

Now no one would call this 'wise' but I was chosen & so I have chosen the people I have. They will not be wise but they will get the thing done for God.

39.

Near Skopje there's a river which will permit neither a calf nor a man to cross it. It drags them right under. On the other side of the river there's a mountain with palaces on it. They belong to Asmodeus & he himself lives in them with his army.

One night some of his servants built a bridge over the river but left it 10 spans short. The local people tried every year to finish it off. It was no use. The water would catch at it & pull it right down.

A certain Nathan one who was a prophet while the First lived went to Skopje. When he got there the old Asmodeus died & his son succeeded him. This Nathan took all the innocent children & preached a eulogy over him calling him a spark of divinity.

Another time this Nathan passed a certain young woman & said to her 'I'm going to bathe in this water. If I return I will live forever.' The woman begged him to help her do it too when he returned. But when he did return he ordered his will to be drawn up & died.

I was there myself & saw his grave.

All this happened in 1679.
40.

I was staying there for some time in 1754. One old woman told me about Nathan's experience. But I paid no attention. I went there & got undressed. Even though all the city warned me away, I jumped into the water & bathed. I swam there without misfortune & when I was done, I said to R. Mordecai, 'Let's go up the hill to Asmodeus. He will reveal many secrets to us.' He said 'Good. I know one secret name.' & he wrote it down & put it in his hat.

Then R. Mordecai saw the king crossing the bridge in great pomp on his way to the castle & then immediately a table laid in the castle & two guardsmen standing at the gate like two tall towers with drums as big as houses. When he saw that, he got scared & did not want to go on any farther. I told him 'Don't be afraid. Come with me. You'll see how glad he will be to see us & how he will invite us to his table & how freely he will enjoy himself with us.' But it was all in vain. I had to go back.

If he would have listened to me & gone on Asmodeus would have given him his unmarried daughter for wife.

41.

When the Lord came to Poland he said to Mrs. Matuszewski Z.L. 'What would a merchant feel who came to a fair with a very precious stone & although many people were there not one of them understood the value of the stone?'

42.

In Giurgiu during Ramadan I visited a Greek who invited me to have some plaechen & a pipe. I was sitting there eating & smoking when two Turks came along. They did not see me eating but were struck by the pipe. Then one of them said 'Happy is the people ruled by a lenient master.'

But if they had met one of their own people doing such things he would not have escaped with his life.

43a.

Coming from Poland I went into an inn in a village south of Lwów off the road. There I begged the innkeeper a Jew to let me stay over Shabbes & promised to pay well. They said their home was not a boarding house & wanted to send me on to another inn near that same village. I begged them again. When nothing came of it 'Since you refuse to take me in know: a certain nobleman will pass this way & beat you & do you damage.'

As soon as I said it a nobleman & his courtiers came along. led by a drunk stableman. When he got there he made a big fuss. The Jew tried to get rid of him as he'd done with me but they started to beat him. The wife threatened to take a complaint to the squire. That made the traveler even madder & he beat the Jew.
harder  He bruised both of them & wounded them  When they saw that  they both fell at my feet  They offered me their service & their home free of charge  But I didn’t want it  & went on my way

43b.

My mother’s mother was a very learned astrologer  When I was born all the witches came to our home & surrounded it  Their queen led them  We had a dog  then half-wolf half-bitch  He barked the whole time & never went to sleep  If he had fallen asleep they would have seen to it that he never woke up  But he kept close guard  On the eighth day at the bris they surrounded our home again to do evil but they could not because the dog kept them at bay & my old grandmother fought their evil too with her craft  She said ‘Keep a close watch on him  Bring him up properly  For a new thing comes into the world through him’

44.

In Salonika Jakubowski Nathan & I went before Pesaḥ to see the old wise-man who kept the poor-fund  & asked him to give us some money for Pesaḥ since we were poor vagrants  & Jakubowski began talking Torah with him  according to the custom of the place  & talked a long time in homilies & touched on all sorts of wisdom in order to stir some sympathy in his heart  But the wiseman didn’t want to give us anything  & answered ‘There’s plenty of local beggars  We can’t feed strangers too’  Jakubowski said ‘In our country all outsiders get help & there is even a special fund for foreigners  The poor of our own country we took to our table’  ‘So why’d you leave your country’ the treasurer replied ‘if you were so well-off there?’  I couldn’t take that  I yelled at Jakubowski & Nathan to get out of the way ‘Now I’m going to talk to him!’  & I turned to him & said ‘Where do you get off asking us why we left our country?  You can just tell me right now why did our father Jacob leave his country & go with all his children to Egypt?  Isn’t that how Pesaḥ came to be?  If he had stayed in his own country we wouldn’t need matzos now!’  & then I started yelling at them in Turkish & they found themselves in a terrible fuss & then I cried out ‘Your wife & daughters are in danger of being raped!’  Then the frightened treasurer ordered that Jakubowski be given the money at once  & when he had given us a few lev’s escorted us politely away

45.

I was traveling with Jakubowski from Salonika to Smyrna  There I sent him to a man highly learned who was treasurer for a poor fund  This man had the practice of getting into scholarly disputes with the foreigners who came to him  If the visitor won with his argument  the treasurer would give him money for the road  If not then the foreigner would be sent off empty-handed  When Jakubowski got there  he found a stranger disputing  That tough
head the treasurer won the dispute & the stranger had to go off unsatisfied But that was not the case with Jakubowski He was lucky & got a few lev's for the road

We went from there to Adrianopole where three learned rabbis likewise take on passers-by in disputes If the rabbis attest that someone is a learned man from then on he is qualified to receive charity & a proper welcome everywhere Jakubowski won such a certificate He thought he'd got it by his wisdom & eloquence & he did not have the modesty to consider that it had happened through God's power

R. Issachar knew one of those three rabbis & praised him as one so learned that he knew nobody else so learned & nobody that could win an argument with him Yet Jakubowski won

46.

When I was traveling with Jakubowski from Salonika to Poland an evil air was abroad in Podolia We came to one little town where the plague was just sweeping the people off We had no provisions no bread or wine or cheese etc. & I remembered that it was dangerous to take money from the stricken so I told Jakubowski to do the contrary thing to 'Go there Get whatever we need but give no money' so that is what he did He went to the baker bargained for bread put it in his bag & before he'd even had time to pay the baker fell dead He went to the storekeeper & bargained for some cheese The storekeeper put the cheese in his bag & died He went to a store to buy some vodka The same thing happened to that storeowner In a word wherever he went he got everything for nothing The plague carried off the merchants

When he was on his way back to where I was waiting for him a horsem an riding along bumped him with his horse 'What are you doing?' Jakubowski yelled 'You're riding right on top of me!' The instant he said that the rider tilted over & fell to the ground

This is how it was I did all this since it was promised me that no plague nothing could get at me So when I gave orders they were destined to be carried out by the one I ordered This you too must do

47.

I asked R. Issachar & R. Mordecai why if the Second was of the divine did he die R. Issachar answered 'Our books have it that he came to this world to taste of everything that is Therefore he also had to taste the bitterness of death'

'That's all well & good' I answered 'but since he came to try out everything why did he not try being pasha vizier or sultan? Why did he not taste the power of rule? I don't believe a word you've said'

They could not find a reply
48.
When I was ordered to go to Poland I did not want to I said ‘How can I such a prostak go on this mission when there are here two such scholars as R. Issachar & R. Mordecai? Let them go’ & I was told this: ‘Your suggestion will not be heeded You are chosen by God’
I was still unwilling Stones were thrown at me ‘Because you delay’ it was said ‘you will go in poverty If you delay further you’ll be led there in irons There you must do what is needed Whatever is to your heart’s desire is permitted you Do as you see fit’
I was shown the places & roads I was to tread & the one who would rise up against me It was said ‘You are Jacob You must not fear Do whatever you will’

49.
In Podolia travelling with Jakubowski & Nathan I tried to be very careful about what I did I was staying overnight in one town & heard a lament in one house I went there I found a Jewish girl there dying & the whole household lamenting ‘All of you be quiet’ I shouted ‘& leave me alone with her’ They left & I pronounced these words: ‘I command you to be well!’ & then I did a deed with her She awoke & became well I ordered that she be dressed in a white blouse & as I was leaving I ordered them all to keep the matter secret This woman is still living today She has children is healthy has everything she wants & is rich

50.
A similar thing happened in Czestochowa with Henryk Wolowski’s daughter She was near death & her mother who had come to the Lord pleaded hard for her child The Lord told her to laugh twice & beg while laughing He said to her ‘Go home Your daughter will be well’ & that is what happened The child lives to this day

Notes
1. Zvi, the First (1626-76), and Brauhian Russo, the Second (d. 1721) were earlier incarnations of the messianic soul that was Frank’s inheritance, as it were. Frank’s own movement was regarded for most of its duration as a continuation of this tradition, and was known as ‘Sabbateanism,’ ‘Zoharism,’ ‘Contra-talmudism,’ inter alia.
2. The messiahs in the movement, as well as their followers had a fair variety of names: their proper Hebrew names (I will use Frank as an illustration): Ya’akov ben Lev; cultic designations: Ḥakham (= Wiseman) Ya’akov, Ha’adon (= the Lord); names adopted at conversion: Jakoba Joszefa Frank; and others as the situation warranted. Frank’s adopted surname is, as it should be, a bit of an enigma. Various great historians say that he received it as the epithet assigned to those wearing Turkish costume in eastern Europe; others, that he was called ‘frank’ as one wearing European costume in Turkey. Oddly, both these are possible. By the time the Crusades were over there was some confusion as to who the
Frank's were in the middle East. (Speaking of the Crusades, I am reminded that there is a Latin verb, 'affrancare,' used in some documents of that period, to mean 'given the rights of a frank,' that is, freed from some obligation or other. And, of course, our common word for 'free' derives from that tradition.) This first saying would appear to resolve the argument in favor of the identification of 'frank,' in the present context, with 'Turkish,' since Zvi typically appears in Turkish costume. The possibility remains, however, that Frank is pointing out that Zvi was wearing an unusual (for him) costume as some sort of symbolic gesture, and that 'frank' means 'European.'

3. Typically, in some of the religions of the area, the wondrous odor is a sure sign of saintliness (as in incorruption); the rose mentioned earlier may be a specific Virgin's symbol, or merely that old mystic rose.

4. Frank was very widely traveled. There are many place-names in the 'Sayings' that have changed, and political designations that have been wiped out of the atlas. A straight-line map, with no regard to actual voyages and returns, takes him from Ismir, through Istanbul, around to Thessalonika, up through (around) Yugoslavia (Skopje), through all of Bulgaria and Romania, into the Ukraine, up to Lublin and Warsaw in Poland, down through Czestochowa to Brno in Czechoslovakia, Vienna and Frankfort. Chiefly by oxcart or afoot; occasionally in a carriage and pomp.

5. Used as an abbreviation for 'rabbi,' proper, or 'reb,' without the value, perhaps, of 'ordained cleric.'


7. The canopy beneath which Jewish vows are exchanged. It is a Sabbatean tradition that the Mysteries are revealed at the initiate's marriage. (cp. No. 4)

8. The ceremonial 'fringed garment' of Jews. I am making some attempt at retaining not only the Hebrew, etc. phrase but at reproducing it in its Sefardi or Ashkenazi realization depending on the environment of the saying.

9. A thin partition, used in synagogues to divide the women off from the men.

10. Perhaps some suppression here. The rite of zivug, that of coupling with the presence of God, as it were, is a practice descended on the Frankists through their predecessors and from the kabalistic practice of Zfat Luria and his circle.

11. For Hebrew, 'zkhir/o a livrakha,' '(May) his/her memory be for a blessing'; a phrase used when mention is made of someone dead.

12. 'Landowners; well-to-do Jews; home-owners; patriarchs,' from Hebrew (Sef.) 'ba'al ha-bayit.'

13. The pulpit, lectern, etc.


15. In use temporarily for the symbol which appears in the text. A coin of relatively high value.

16. Frank gives the interpretation of the verse as Rashi (a medieval French exegete) has it. Here and elsewhere, it would be guesswork as to what Frank said originally. Certainly he did not say, as the text does, 'vide Gen. cap. 48.22.' Where it seems likely that Frank recited the verse, I use the King James version as attaining to a degree of traditional value similar to that of the Hebrew for Jews.

17. Frank might easily have cited well-known sources and verses by tag, just as here. Here, oddly, the point Frank is proving with his citation is deleted in the tag: 'unto this day.'

18. With this saying a series of some seven or eight attempts at defining the term 'prostak' begins. 'Prost,' 'simple, boorish, ignorant,' and 'prostak,' 'one who is .. .' are in common use in Yiddish as pejoratives (cf. 'peasant'). The Hebrew equivalent, also in common use in Yiddish, is 'am ha-arez,' literally 'peasant,' but connotatively, 'one who is knowledgeable in the Bible and its interpretations but not a Talmudist'; not necessarily a pejorative. For Frank the image is undeniably positive, closely related to the Wise Fool, etc. At times he brags of being a prostak; at other times, he claims it as a deficiency. I would suggest that we see here a very fancy variety of the 'Country Cousin' or 'Bumpkin' gambit, outfolksing all the marks. Alternatively, one might say that the messiah's soul is the very type of the (individuated) volksgeist.

19. Temporarily unidentified.

20. Temporarily unidentified.

21. Russian, 'a Turkish drum.' (per D.C.)

22. The 'secret name' referred to is one of the magically potent names of God. Here, R. Mordecai, gains vision through its use.

23. A Moslem sacred month, observed in daytime fasting.

24. A guess at the text's 'pleczenta.' Plaechen are fancy layered noodle squares used in soup, perhaps also as snacks.

25. Following 43 (a) the text used by Kraushar proceeds to 44; our text is presumably the errant one, and this 43a, 43b usage is some sort of compensating device. There are other differences between the 'Ksiega' text and ours, but I will leave them for others to work out.

26. Circumcision ceremony, held on the eighth day following the birth of a male.

27. The circumlocution, 'did a deed,' succeeds in its dastardly purpose. But the 'white blouse' might shed some light, since
the wearing of white garments is a practice of some Sabbateans following marriage. Even though the question of Frankism’s sexual incontinence has been decided, and both he and his followers excommunicated on account of the sins of adultery and so forth and as contributors to bastardy; even so, at this early stage in the proceedings, I would like to make a few points in mitigation of the accusations: the affair at Lanskrum in the darkened house with all the dancing and at least one part-naked woman, from which the accusations in the case of Frank seem to proceed, is a) observed by an incompetent through a peephole; b) reported with sufficient variation, so that, in the minimal account, and taking into consideration both a panicky puritanism (m.m.) and a tendency to exaggerate, nothing more might have been going on than a little ecstatic dancing with one woman bare-armed; c) perhaps no more than an example of the cliched accusation commonly laid against religious reformers by the religious establishment. The matter obviously requires a fresh, hard look, though it is apparently the case that Frank’s predecessor, Russo, was a little antinomian in this regard. Nevertheless, R. Yakov Emden is no more to be trusted, as a violent disputant in the whole Sabbatean controversy, than is Graetz; and precisely what the functional load of such dogma (as the Zohar’s, ‘[In the Emanated World/The World of Emanation] there is no incest,’) is, and to what degree such notions are purely speculative and meditational, is presently unknown. The most useful discussion of the matter may be found in Dr. Scholem’s essay “Baruhia, Leader of the Sabbateans in Salonika” (Hebrew) (Zion, 6, p. 135 ff.).

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Ocean Woman Who Already Knows

Translator's Introduction

A short note regarding the Tibetan tradition of holy madmen, known as smyon-pa, is in order, as the author of the piece here translated was himself such a 'madman' from the Eastern province of Khams. Although we know this madman was most probably of the Nyingmapa sect, apparently no biographical details yet exist. The Tibetologist E. Gene Smith has written that the whole phenomenon of the smyon-pa seemed to emerge in the 15th century, a time of great religious upheavel. He records that the three greatest madmen according to Tibetan tradition were: Gtsang-smyon (1452-1507, whose life of Mi la ras pa was made famous to European readers through the English translation by Evens-Wentz, and whose Songs of Milaraspa was translated by G.C.C. Chang), 'Brugs-smyon Kun-dga' legs pa (1455-1529, whose life story was recently translated into French by R.A. Stein as Vie et chants de 'Brug-pa Kun-legs'), and 'Dbus-smyon Kun-dga' bzang-po (1458-?). Smith goes on to say that the evidence points to the existence of a host of other smyon-pa whose biographies and collected mystical songs might someday turn up. The reader who is interested in this genre of madmen poets should read Stein's introduction to his Vie et chants. All of this material assumes, in the mind of the Tibetan reader, some familiarity with the esoteric practices and terminology peculiar to the ascetic tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. Again the interested reader should refer to H.V. Guenther's Royal Songs of Saraha (Shambala Publications, Berkeley) for the philosophical underpinnings and psychological worlds within which such poetic utterances burst forth. The present piece is from pages 15ff. of a text entitled, "The Visionary and Mystical Poetry of Khams-Smyon Dharma-Sengge, Being the Text of Khams smyon dharma seng ge'i nyams ngur chu zla'i gar 'phreng." It was reproduced from the edition prepared by 'Chimed-rdo-rje' (Padma-rgya-mtsho) by Sonam T. Kazi and was published as Volume 23 of the Ngagyur Nyingmay Sungrab Series in Gangtok, Sikkim (1970).
wrathful moods ensue
when i try to explain
what's really happening
a clue
is all you get

if you've lived at home
you've felt her presence
if you hold to this presence
you'll arrive home

if you try to enjoy her
nothing will happen
if you offer small presents
she'll gently respond

when amongst mortals
she's very tight-lipped
after hard work
no reason for chatter

try to go uphill
you'll just fall back down
try to sneak in the door to reality
& you'll kill the infant calm

if you stay at home
no child will be born
if you want to bear heroes
arguing doesn't help

when i talk like this
there's no stopping me
if you suffer similar thoughts
then nothing makes sense
(the day after tomorrow
you'll realize you're sorry

not cut
it can't cut
a hair can't cut!
not made
it's not made
reality isn't made!

few know how to
enter reality's door
but you
madam
have transformed
restless mind
(easily spoken
painfully won)

this woman
then answered:

although it's true that
you've got your faults
if you transmit this precious teaching
to everyone
men & women
the aged & young
& amongst animals too
you'll surely accomplish my wishes
& certainly experience what's real...

well i don't remember much
right now
but the essence of her message
i lost most of it
will remain for a long time
people shouldn't bother
looking for guidance
apart from
just

what's happening

again

a voice spoke:

namo guru
in the oral tradition
amongst mere mortals
they say
women, outcasts & cripples
wherever they go
encounter difficulties
(& it's true

if they've got money, they run into thieves
if they don't, they wander around begging
if they're good-looking, spiritual troubles arise
if they're ugly, they spend their time hiding
if they get friendly, they end up married
if they're aloof, there's nowhere to stay

but the precious message
which a lama has
is always available
wherever you are
& the real teaching
about being rich or broke is
there's nothing you can do about it

(i joyfully thought
about this
& replied:
these sacred words are true
they remain so &
through them
one can taste
the authentic fact
of complete teaching &
then pass it to others
(this kind of instruction
can't be found
except
by asking her
by invoking her
totality, as:

father
mother
& teacher &
doing so again
& again
i entered reality's door
& became thoroughly wise

after drinking my fill
after six years
the message came
special events &
achievements erupted

now the afterflow
becomes potent

earth : gravity

water : cohesion

& all the
other forces

burn out
going beyond &
even if you wander around
even if this song makes no sense

you'll arrive

at the stairs
at the door

home
Today I'm going to speak about what god did. There was a god, MEEM IPAYU; MEEM IPAYU had a son MET?AY KUWA IPAYU. There he was. He created two women.

One day MET?AY KUWA IPAYU was lying on his stomach and one of his wives was sitting on his calves delousing him. He felt something fall on his leg. He got up to look, saw it and wiped it clean. “It was nothing,” he chuckled. He lay down again.

When his wife had left he looked and saw a tiny rash. [Caused by menstrual blood.] “So that was what it was,” he thought to himself.

The woman fled, travelling for a great length of time until she came to a distant place. The man had followed her tracking her. She had come to a place known as ?AHAA YIT NMARU, “where-the-mesquite-seed-shows,” he caught up with her there, as she was eating mesquite seeds.

He came running up to where she was and pulling out a knife, plunged it into her breast. The blood spewed out on to the blade. He flung the bloody knife into the Southern sky. The blood formed a red ring around the sun. To this day when a woman of the MENUWIY KUNMATP [Kiliwa band] is going to be murdered, you can see that sign.

After he had killed her, he left her lying there. He returned home. The other wife who was expecting a child went about asking after her sister. “I saw my sister leave some time ago, how is it that she hasn't returned yet?” People answered her, saying, “No, she hasn't been here.” “Heh!” she said to herself. “MET?AY KUWA IPAYU must have killed her and left her hidden somewhere.”

The MENUWIY KUNMATP came together, weeping to mourn the death of the woman in a memorial ritual. The shaman-of-the-south said, “Let us chant a prayer [for the return of her soul].” He stuck his staff in the earth and sat down to chant.

As he chanted, he sang that he could hear her footsteps coming closer as if they were crushing brittle seeds underfoot. She was crossing a sandy plain called MAT XUWL HALTOOP. It seemed that they could hear her faint footsteps intermittently. The shaman chanted for a long time. He once again said, “A woman is approaching.” The KAKHWAA, bird of pinyon-groves, cried out. It was the woman. “She's almost here,” sang the shaman.

Feathers began to sprout from the shaman. He flew up and about the house and out through the door to the north, crying WHOO! WHOO! The people cried out, “An owl! He's turned into an owl! He is mighty indeed! A MENUWIY KUNMATP has become an owl! He's a terrifying thing!” That's how they shouted.
Meanwhile, some time later, the god had begun to hear rumors, rumors of the birth of a child. There's always someone to carry a tale. The sea was roaring, churning in a song.

“The sea is rejoicing at the birth of a god. I can hear it from here. It’s true, a child has been born,” he said as he lay listening to the sound of the sea.

Some days later he said, “I feel like paying a visit to my wife.” He set off. Along the way, he killed some lizards, large and small. He pierced their hind legs with a sharp stick and held them with the stick as a handle.

He arrived at his wife's house but remained at a distance.

Heh! there was the child! He was blowing a little piece of leather about.

He was running about close to where the god was sitting. The little toy fell nearby. Each time he blew it, it fell closer. The child didn’t come too close; he would grab his little piece of leather and run.

“Come, come closer,” said the god. “I’m your father.” WHOOSH! Off ran the little boy to tell his mother.

“Heh!” he said. “There’s someone out there who said such-and-such to me.”

“Heh!” said his mother. “He's just teasing you, just mocking you.”

There he came again blowing his little toy around. He blew it gently.

WHOOSH! It flew straight to where the father was.

The child came up to him. He tried to grab the toy, but the father caught hold of him and hoisted him up in his arms. “Heh!” said the god. “He must be my newborn son.”

He anointed his head; spitting on his forehead, he left a green, forked groove there. He then turned over all the game he had hunted on the way.

The child took the game to his mother and said, “He gave me this, saying ‘cook this.’” “All right,” she answered.

She gathered some kindling for roasting. She tossed the lizards on the flames and grilled them for some time. When the food was ready he came to tell his father.

His father asked, “How did she prepare it?” “Well,” said the boy, “I took it to her and she gathered some kindling, then she just heaped the game on the flames.”

“I guess that’s the way she cooks for you, then,” said the father.

“Oh, no,” answered the boy, “usually she gathers kindling and waits for the flames to die down until there are only embers left. Then she roasts everything carefully; that’s how I’m used to eating.”

“I see,” said the father.

The child left and came back. “What is she doing now?” asked his father.

“She’s toasting some seeds,” the boy said.

“How is she toasting them?”

“Well, she wasn’t doing it right, she did it when the flames were still high.”

“Well,” said the god, “I suppose that’s how she’s usually done it before.”

“Oh, no,” said the boy, “she usually burns the wood down to ashes, then she toasts the seeds. That’s how I’m used to eating them”

“Heh!” exclaimed the father. The child left and came back once more.
“Has she finished?” the man asked.
“She’s grinding now,” said the boy.
“How is she grinding it?” asked the father.
“She did it with her hand folded into an obscene sign,” was the answer.
“Well, that must be the way she does it for you, then,” said the man.
“She grinds it with her hand folded right when she does it for me,” said the boy.
“Heh!” said the man.
“My uncle XAČAA WAQU KESARU wants to kill you,” said the boy. “He’s an excellent shot. One time he hung a tiny mouse on a strand of agave fibre and pierced it with a single shot.” That’s how good a shot he is.
“I see,” said the father.
As dusk fell, he came to where his wife was. He went to bed with her. What was she to do? They lay in bed together for a long time, long past midnight, the MENUWIY KUŇMATP started off to hunt jackrabbits.
“Oh cousin, oh father’s nephew, won’t you come hunt jackrabbits with us!”
“Heh!” he said. He just lay there listening. A little while later, another group passed by and called to him. And so on, one group after another. Finally, by the time dawn began to break, they had all gone.
By the time the sun had risen, and was well into the sky, about to cross the blue-green heaven, the kinsmen were gone. Everything was still. When he no longer heard anything he got up and put the child on his back.
XČAA WAQU KUSARU had stayed behind alone, waiting however. “He’s running off with the child! METPAY KUWAY IPAYU has stolen the child!” he shouted. He took his bow and stood not too far away and let loose an arrow.
The arrow struck in the very spot where the blood had been. It struck him right there! He fell in his tracks. The people ran up to get the child, who rose into the air, a terrifying sight! Bristling with flames as a barrel cactus bristles with thorns against the light, hovering there in the air.
“Come down to us, come down,” they called to him. Each time he rose a little higher. After a while they stopped calling to him and left him alone.
The child descended and straddled his father’s body, rubbing and shaking him. He was healing him. In a moment, up jumped the father! Off they went, the child on his back again.
“Don’t carry me facing forward,” said the boy. “Turn me around so I can face the rear”; this, to better fend off the pursuer’s arrows. But the father didn’t heed him. He went on just as before.
“Look, he’s come back to life!” shouted the people. He was already at some distance when they saw him. The archer stood as before. “Well,” he said, “this man doesn’t know how to die, maybe I’d better teach him.” He shot and dropped him just like before.
The people ran up and began to tear the body to pieces. They skinned him. They ripped his shoulder blades off and split open his abdomen pulling out his entrails which they draped over the branches of the nearby brushwood; they hacked his guts to bits as they hauled them along.
They then tried to get the child. Again he rose above them into the air just as before. After some time, the child grew weary and came down reluctantly, weeping all the while. He wept painfully on and on.

"He must be hungry," they said. "There's a piece of mescal (agave heart). Give him some to eat." They gave it to him and he didn't eat a bit of it. It turned bitter in his mouth. AAAX! That's how M?AAL KUXAA, the bitter mescal, was created. He kept on weeping and weeping.

"What can we do?" they said. "There's some pamita seed there, beat him up a frothy drink. He must be thirsty!" He didn't drink any of it. He swirled it around in his mouth and spat it out. That's how X?EER KUXAA, the bitter pamita seed, was made.

Finally he calmed down and stopped his crying. He fell silent. The people fondled and caressed him. He stayed with them for some time.

One day he ran away. For a whole day he was gone. The next morning they went looking for him, but he was nowhere to be found. "Some wild beast must have snatched him away and eaten him," they wept. The people cried and cried. While they were weeping, someone wandered off into the desert. He stood off at a distance and listened.

It seemed he could hear a faint sound. "There's someone singing over there," he said. He came back to tell the others. They went and found the child. They brought him back fondling and playing with him. But he ran away again. He was gone for two or three days.

The people placed him under a large earthen pot and two men held it down on either side with their feet. He got away anyway! When they looked he was gone! He had been gone a whole month this time, before he came back again.

A shaman who was there said, "If he goes on this way he may yet be the end of us all." He began to sing calling on the coyotes for help in killing the child. He chanted:

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Oh Coyohotehees youhou wahahander
abouhouhout the world fahahamished
for something to ea-ea-eaheat
cohohohome kihihihihill him
for mehehee!
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Well, the coyotes chased the boy trying to kill him. They had him surrounded, one on each side and one snapping at him from behind. Around the world they ran, twice, three times!

He was growing weak. He ran to the north, to the place called ?I?XARI and there he stopped. He began to curse the beasts. He cursed and cursed, chanting:
The crestfallen coyotes came loping back to report their failure. "No one will ever kill him," they moaned.

Then the shaman chanted again beseeching the winds to come to his aid. "You winds, come cohome kihihihill hihihim."

Then, the winds gave chase. It grew bitter cold. They chased after him around the world two or three times. The god-child said, "these winds are really going to kill me."

He came to the same spot as before. He stood there chanting his curse against the winds. These returned to report that it wasn't possible to do him any harm.

"Well then," said the shaman calling to the clouds, "you clouds come kill him for me!" The clouds came in from the four corners of the world, whirling around the god-child.

Again it happened, the god-child wept from the cold. His snot hung in long strands from his nose. He didn't look human anymore. After him came the winds blowing ceaselessly, chasing him around the world twice, three times.

The child was beginning to feel his body stiffen with the cold. He finally came to the same spot and stood as before. As he chanted his curse against the winds, he could feel the warmth clothing his body.
The clouds returned to say “nothing can touch him. No one can harm him.”
The god-child thought, “If I stay here they may very well kill me. I’d better leave.” With that he headed south. He came to where the sea wheels about and begins its return.
He began to think, “I would like to make something.” He cleared the earth with his foot, sliding it along the surface. He wanted to make something, but the stench of his father’s death was still in the air. “Not yet,” he said.
He returned following the crest of the highest mountains, the spine of the earth, to the very end. He climbed to the very top of QHAAY KU’SAAY, the grey-streaked cliff. He sat down looking down at the country far below.
Far below he could see the MENUWIY KUNMATP busily burning the brush for a rabbit surround. The smoke twisted up toward him in a great spiral. He watched sadly weeping as they hunted.
He wept and wept. His tears rushed down the sides of the mountain. Two canyons were formed. To the west, one which is now known as XMIR XA?; the other XIKIL KA?, to the east. Into this one he descended to where his old blind grandmother lived.
When he came to her house he called out, “Grandmother, it’s me. I’m here.”
The grandmother retorted angrily in disbelief, “Go fuck your grandfather you MENUWIY KUNMATP!”
“No, really, Grandmother. Come kneel here and touch me.” She reached up for his calf and exclaimed, “It is you. You’ve really come back!”
“Grandmother, let me have some water to drink.”
“Not on your life!” she cried. “There’s a pool of water, but there’s a monstrous beast in it and no one can come close to it. I haven’t tasted a drop of water.”
“I see,” said the god. In the corner of the house he saw his grandfather’s staff shaped like the setting moon. He took hold of it and picked up a small pot and went down into the canyon.
There was the monster. The god stood looking at the pool. The monster lay there, his jaws showing in a hideous leer. The child said, “I’m going to drink where you drink.”
“Heh!” said the monster, “not just any little boy that comes along can mock me. I am a man-killer!”
“All right,” said the god. He blew at the beast. WHOOSH! He took the beast’s reason away. “I’m going to drink out of the water where you drink,” he repeated.
As the monster lowered its head to drink, WHACK! HACK! Up he leapt chopping him into pieces with his club. How else could it turn out? The water of the pool was churned up with blood, and so it remains to this day.
The god-child ran up the canyon, bringing his grandmother back with him. He threw her into the bloody water. In a moment she stuck her head out, her little eyes twinkling bright. “Oh,” she exclaimed, “so that’s what things look like!”
“Go home now,” he told his grandmother. And she went back to her house.
He stayed there awhile splashing out the bloody water. He cast it into the four corners of the world creating diseases that would plague the MENUWIY KUNMATP, syphilis, gonorrhea, poison ivy. After he was through he went on his way.
God was eating something, suddenly he gave a start. A man appeared. God
said to him, “Did you notice that they’re having a dance over there?”
“No, I didn’t even come close,” answered the man.
“Come here, then.” He pulled at his hair, snapping it at the roots as he stood
before him. “Now take your bow and come dodging up to me.” The man took his
bow and approached leaping and dodging. Once, twice, three times. He stood
before him again. “Well,” said the god, “you seem to be pretty good at it. Now go
to the dance and come back and report to me.”
The man said, “I think the shaman is going to suspect something, he’s very
clever.” But he went anyway.
The man got to where the people were dancing. He joined the dancing with
real zest. They were dancing to the rattle made out of the scrotum of the god’s
father. The man said, “Lend me the rattle so I can really enjoy myself.” The sha­
man said, “No. You never know what might happen. Don’t give it to him.”
The god was smoking as he listened to what was happening. He blew smoke
into the shaman’s ear taking his reason away.
The man asked for the rattle once again. “Let me have it so I can enjoy
myself.”
“Well alright,” said the shaman. “You might as well give it to him, but don’t let
up your guard. Don’t let him escape.”
“He really is clever,” thought the god who was watching it all.
They finally gave him the rattle. He began shaking it. He danced and danced.
They were all dancing close together to keep him in, but after awhile, they spread
apart a little more and in a moment the man slipped through the space.
The shaman leaped after him and catching up with him, grabbed him by the
hair, but since this had been fixed, the man just slipped away. In two great jumps
he was back.
“Here it is,” he said when he got back. The god shook the rattle. “Hisss!” it
went. “No wonder they wanted to play it. It really sounds good.” Then to the man
he said, “Well done. Now go back and tell them there’s going to be war. You’ll tell
the shaman this,” ?MA? NAM TCHAAYP, the distant sky-molder, is going to
make war on you.
The man came back and said, “God is going to make war against you. I went
last night and he was talking about it until dawn.”
The man returned to the god. He said, “You don’t look like a man anymore.
You’re too old. Your face is all wrinkled. You’re too old to mock anyone.”
God said, “What did they say?” The man answered, “They said such and
such.” Then god said, “Go back and tell them again, ‘He’s going to make war on
you.’”
The shaman meanwhile said, “I wonder what this man is thinking. Go see
what he’s up to.”
Two or three men went to see. They saw a very ancient old man defecating
with great effort. “This man seems to be near his death. He won’t last the day,”
the men said.
They reported back to the shaman, “There was no one there, just a little old
man, and he won't last the day. That's all there was."

God's man came back and told him, "They found out that you killed that woman."

At that point, god began to chant a call to war. First he called the MIYKUX'ALI, the Mexican people; from beneath the earth came the ants which he turned into warriors. He called the lizards. The gopher snakes he made into arrowheads, the rattlesnakes into arrowshafts and so on and on...

He continued gathering his warriors, on and on. Finally when they were all together, "Well," said god, "now I've got my people all together."

The MENUWIY KUNMATP also gathered together. They looked like a dense scrub forest there were so many of them.

The messenger came back and reported that everyone was ready. All the warriors were in their places.

The MENUWIY KUNMATP were completely surrounded. The shooting was about to begin. They arranged themselves in rows. God floated into the air and stroked the wind chanting a song.

When the song ended the fighting began. They killed many MENUWIY KUNMATP. They thinned their ranks like chopping through weeds.

During the battle they would bring god his wounded warriors. "Look one of your warriors got his knee broken." "Come, come," he called and rubbed the wound, healing it. "Look, one of your warriors got his eye knocked out." "Come, come," he said and bound the eye back.

He set up a barrier of cat's claw thickets and pushed the enemy back onto it killing many on the thorns. A little further beyond, he placed a barrier of cholla cactus where more were slaughtered. Then a little further on, a muddy swamp where more got stuck and were killed. Finally, he made darkness fall, killing off the last survivors.

"There's only your uncle and nephew left. What should we do?" he was asked. It didn't matter to him that they were his kinsmen.

The shaman MENUWIY KUNIMATP KUWEELUP in the thick of battle, his head band loose, gave a great leap with all his might trying to cross the Gentle Eastern Sea, the Gulf of California; but god leaped after him, severing his head from his body with a single blow. The head flew off into the southern sky, to Southern Sky Ladder to become a comet. His headless body plunged into the sea.

All were killed. The whole earth fell silent. Nothing stirred. Then, from the highest heaven a god XA'L IPAYU shone a feeble light on the earth below. There was a blue-green flash that faintly lit up the dead.

Those that were struck by the light came back to life and from these few, life returned to earth again, so they say...
There once lived in the forest a mighty bull elephant who was very much
dreaded by the other creatures. He lived all by himself in a grove of acacias with a
tall green canopy. Bull elephant fed wherever he pleased, wallowed in the clearest
and coolest pools with little concern for the other creatures who watered there,
and trampled underfoot anything that was unlucky enough to happen on his way.
In the afternoons, after his nap, he would go on mad rampages, uprooting trees
and crushing less fortunate creatures under his huge feet. That is why he was
called Big Foot.

Many of the forest’s medium-sized beasts followed Big Foot’s pernicious exam­
ple and helped make life for lesser creatures most intolerable. That is why
Mr. Squirrel was once heard muttering to himself, “When you’re small your ene­
mies are many.”

For years life remained unpredictable and perilous in Big Foot’s stamping
grounds, until Big Foot, weary of his destructive games, decided to take a bride.
Big Foot’s choice was none other than Miss Camel of the high-crested hump, a
comely well-mannered creature of even temperament. She was not exactly the
mate others had in mind for rambunctious Big Foot. The newlyweds retired to
Big Foot’s notorious grove and remained quietly content for some months. With
Big Foot temporarily secluded, the creatures of Acacia Grove were able to
breathe freely once again. They roamed about without fear of being stepped on
and slept in peace at night, all thanks to Miss Camel’s subtle charms.

Then came distressing rumors that Miss Camel was being cruelly mistreated.
Sounds of moaning and whimpering assailed the ears of those who lived closest to
Big Foot’s retreat. It was not long before Horn Bill, sailing high above the green
canopy of the acacia grove, witnessed a ghastly scene in which Big Foot shame­
lessly meted out heavy blows to his defenseless bride. Big Foot hadn’t been
reformed, as some had imagined. He had simply found a captive victim.

The reaction to this new development among the creatures of Acacia Grove was
less than heroic. None dared intercede on the unfortunate Miss Camel’s behalf.
She must learn to bear her burden as they themselves had learned to bear theirs.
Henceforth, whenever the other creatures heard Miss Camel’s wailings, they sim­
ply worked harder at whatever it was they were doing.

And so matters stood for some time until Miss Camel early one morning stirred
herself to action and, taking advantage of Big Foot’s temporary absence, bolted

For a version of this tale in the vernacular, listen to side 2 of the insert disc recording at the back of the
magazine.
away from what had become for her a virtual prison. She lost no time in putting a healthy distance between herself and her husband's evil dwelling place. She had a simple plan. She would seek protection under the second largest beast in the valley. Accordingly, Miss Camel tearfully entreated Spotted Giraffe to save her from her cruel husband. She would be glad to be his in the bargain. But Mr. Giraffe slowly shook his long undulating neck from side to side, then explained in his piping voice, “I don’t wish to tangle with Big Foot if I can help it, Miss Camel.” Miss Camel next went to the rude rhinoceros, but rhinoceros only lowered his great horned snout and snorted his refusal. Afterwards, Miss Camel sought hippopotamus’ aid, but hippo merely yawned disagreeably before diving to the depths. She next pleaded her desperate case before water buffalo, then the maned lion, and leopard, all to no avail. Night was approaching fast when the disheartened Miss Camel arrived at the western gate of Acacia Grove Valley. She was now faced with two choices, either to retrace her steps and face the dire consequences or venture into the unknown. Confused and exhausted she simply knelt down in a bower of branches and climbing vines. “Perhaps tomorrow will show me the answer,” sighed she as she started to chew her cud.

Miss Camel was so caught up in her own predicament that she hadn’t noticed Mr. Squirrel desperately trying to get her attention. He kept jumping up and down on his hind legs, his front paws tucked up under his puffed up cheeks. For all her distress, Miss Camel couldn’t help but notice the astonishing size of Mr. Squirrel’s enormous balls, the seat of his fabled courage.

“Oh, Mr. Squirrel, forgive me. I must be blocking the entrance to your house,” apologized Miss Camel as she wriggled on her knees to one side.

“Don’t mention it,” bellowed Squirrel to Miss Camel’s amazement.

“Such a big voice coming out of such a tiny frame,” she marvelled.

“What brings you here, Miss Camel?” inquired Squirrel.

“Oh, Mr. Squirrel, you can’t imagine the terrible fix I am in. Big Foot will be at my heels in no time and here I sit helplessly.” “I have been from one end of this valley to the other,” continued Miss Camel after a pause, “and not a single creature would dare take me in and save me from that horrible beast.”

Very soon Miss Camel was all in tears as Squirrel tried to comfort her as best as he could.

“Now, listen to me,” roared Mr. Squirrel, summoning up all his courage. “I will be glad to take you in and save you from Big Foot —”

This announcement brought such an unexpected peel of laughter from Miss Camel that Squirrel jumped clear off the ground. Upon recovering from his momentary shock, Squirrel watched in dismay as Miss Camel laughed herself into a proper fit of hysteria.

“You... you save me from Big Foot? Oh, oh, ah, ah... .” She half-cried, half-laughed. She was no longer kneeling down dejectedly but reeling about outside Mr. Squirrel’s hut. Squirrel waited patiently until Miss Camel laughed herself out.

“Now, listen to me!” he thundered sternly. “I can and I will save you from your tormentor, but on one condition. You must agree to become my woman.”
Miss Camel simply stood amazed. What was she to make of Squirrel’s preposterous claims? Whoever heard of a squirrel challenging a bull elephant? But if she consented, she would be no worse off than she already was and they might even have some fun before Big Foot squelched them both under his mighty foot.

“Do as you see fit, Mr. Squirrel,” responded Miss Camel with a straight face, while suppressing a snicker.

Squirrel led Miss Camel to an unused enclosure behind his house and tethered her to a tree truck with a piece of rope. He then made a fire and laid plans for the coming day. Bull elephant, on account of his poor vision, was not likely to bother him before morning. The important thing was to get a good night’s sleep and prepare for the terrible struggle ahead.

During that night much terror was experienced by those living near Acacia Grove. Upon returning home Big Foot searched for his mistress in vain, then began destroying everything in sight with reckless abandon. Trees were uprooted. Balls of steaming hot dung shot through the air in all directions, and lesser creatures were crushed underfoot. Big Foot’s furious trumpeting added to all the physical damage during his hour of madness created the overall effect of a grave natural disaster, such as a monsoon or an earthquake. By sunrise many were the stragglers heading in all directions, determined to put as much distance as they possibly could between themselves and the fury of Big Foot. Only Mr. Squirrel remained unperturbed by the prevailing confusion. He even had the presence of mind to stop a straggler now and then and inquire into the newest developments. By and by he gathered the bare outline of events as they had transpired that day. He learned that as soon as there was enough light to see by, Big Foot had followed Miss Camel’s tracks to various beasts’ lairs. Big Foot collared and roughed up these unfortunate beasts one after the other until he had them spitting out what little they knew of Miss Camel’s escape. Spotted Giraffe was seen dragging his neck, which had been grotesquely twisted out of shape. The rhinoceros had gotten away with merely a bloodied nose. Lion was not as fortunate. He was found flat as a board under a big trunk after his encounter with Big Foot.

Squirrel knew he had no time to lose. He scurried back into his house and returned lugging a ball of grease. He rolled this ball of grease onto the top of a flat rock directly under the sun. Squirrel didn’t have to wait long before the grease ball started to melt and soon he was methodically applying it to his furry body from tip of nose to tip of tail. Then he bided his time, waiting for the inevitable encounter by gnawing at a certain root to sharpen his front teeth. By now Big Foot’s trumpeting was so near that the tree branches above Squirrel’s dizzy head cracked and shook with every blast. The ground itself was becoming unsteady under Squirrel’s tiny paws. Squirrel, forgetting his own troubles for a brief moment, looked over his shoulder to see what effect all this was having on poor Miss Camel. He could barely see the curve of her round belly where the poor thing lay stretched out with fear. Her legs must have grown weak with terror.

Turning away from poor Miss Camel, Squirrel suddenly found himself face to face with the dreaded Big Foot. He was so huge and terrifying with his billowing clouds of dust, smoke and flies that Squirrel in all honesty couldn’t tell where
Big Foot started or ended. It was as if poor Squirrel was faced with a whole heard of elephants. Big Foot seemed to be everywhere. Squirrel might just as well be inside Big Foot, for he could not see, hear or sense anything beyond the dreaded monster.

A full year seemed to come and go before Squirrel realized that Big Foot was trying to speak to him above his own universal din.

"You, little fellow! What are you staring at?" thundered Big Foot in a most dreadful manner.

"Who is staring?" shot back Squirrel fearlessly.

"Let me be the judge of that, you little runt!"

Squirrel simply stood his ground.

"Now, Squirrel. Let's cut out the preliminaries," began he in a more conciliatory manner. "Have you seen my Missus?"

"What if I have?" squeaked Squirrel fiercely. He was the first to be amazed at his own reckless bravery.

"Now, look here! You miserable pipsqueak," thundered Big Foot, arching his ears and kicking up dust as if about to charge. "You deliver my missus this very minute or consider yourself a dead squirrel!"

"Do your worst, you blustering, foul-smelling hulk," shrieked Squirrel defiantly.

This outrageous insolence from a creature so tiny and powerless as squeaky Squirrel had the effect of actually sobering up Big Foot. He really couldn't help but admire the feisty little fellow. Yet, he could not go back on his threat. If Big Foot said he would squelch Squirrel under his foot, then Squirrel must be squelched underfoot. Big Foot raised his right front paw and brought it down upon the insolent squirrel. That, as far as Big Foot was concerned, was the end of Mr. Squirrel. What Big Foot didn't know was that the abundant grease that resourceful Squirrel had applied to his whole person allowed him to slither out from under Big Foot's paw in a twinkling. Nor had Big Foot noticed Squirrel slipping into the opening through his trunk. As a matter of fact, Big Foot hadn't the presence of mind to notice a thing, for his body shook with a terrible fit of sneezing shortly after he supposedly squashed Squirrel under his foot. Soon sneezing proved a minor annoyance, hardly worth the mention, for a whole plague seemed to be unleashed upon his innards. Big Foot's vision suddenly failed and his mind seemed to go blank without warning. His whole frame shook uncontrollably before he collapsed in a mass of inert flesh. Big Foot was soon dead. And when sometime later Squirrel emerged out of the dead elephant's rear end, the cause of Big Foot's death was not hard to guess.

Slowly, Squirrel climbed atop his kill and fell to preening himself. His fur was wholly covered with grease, blood and guts. It would be a while before he was presentable enough to celebrate his victory in public. As he preened himself, he fell to humming and by and by the humming turned into a song which was heard throughout the now-hushed valley of Acacia Grove:
Debaghaalle arr dilley Maa ragten?
Nin yar oo nin wein dilley Maa ragten?
Hassan oo Hussein dilley Maa ragten?

Did you ever see a squirrel beat a lion?
Did you ever see a small man beat a big man?
Did you ever see Hassan beat Hussein?
How the Sky Camel Lost his Tail

Behold the camel kneeling down at eye level in the Southern night sky; his head resting on a plane horizontal with his elbows, his wholesome hump erect in the starry sky, his hips round and well-proportioned, his tail—you will find that he has no tail, the only blemish in his noble outline.

Legend has it that the gluttonous Warsangheli cut off the sky camel’s tail many centuries ago. It is said that once upon a time the Warsangheli tribesmen were threatened with famine. The earth had been scorched by a drought that left not one morsel of food for man or beast. There were hardly any beasts to speak of. Herds had been decimated. Nor did the creatures of the wild escape this Heaven-sent scourge. The unlikely event of a lone hyena wandering through the sun-burnt valleys of the Nugaal was considered a miraculous occurrence. Children and infirm adults were dying by the score. It was even feared that hungry mothers might be tempted to feed on the remains of their dead offspring. In desperation, the elders of the Warsangheli called a clan meeting. Many a speaker addressed himself to the dire situation in which this unfortunate tribe found itself. Few, however, among the various speakers could propose a viable solution. It seemed to many that the Warsangheli had come to a dead end and Doom itself was upon them. At long last the sage of the tribe struggled to his feet. He too foresaw no hope for his nation unless new sources of food could be found in a hurry. The Heavens and the seas have not been tapped yet, he pointed out. There was many
a brawny beast figured in a bright constellation, plenty of fish in the vast green sea.

The men of the Warsangheli had a profound distaste for all forms of seafood. Only chachis, naked beachcombers, fed on putrid fish and like creatures. Threatened with mass starvation though they might be, the Warsangheli could not countenance eating fish; but the beasts of the sky were something else. The Sky Camel was a good possibility. It could easily feed the whole clan. Worse calamities than drought might befall the Warsangheli for assailing the Sacred Camel, but in the councils of this ill-fated clan the shrill voices of hunger prevailed over good sense.

Early one morning the men of the Warsangheli erected a human pyramid on top of the highest mountain in the Al range, which stood directly under the North Star. The topmost man on the pyramid reached to the very sky. He even touched the glassy ceiling of the Heavens with the tips of his fingers, though in vain. The Warsangheli arrived a little too soon. The camel would not return to his corral till dusk. There was going to be a long wait, and a chilly hungry one at that. The cold air blew right through the men's lean bodies. Nevertheless, the vigil must continue.

When the camel finally returned to its chosen spot in the sky, it immediately assumed its nocturnal sitting position. It had no notion that it was to be ambushed by a group of hungry creatures from far below.

The topmost man on the human pyramid quietly reached for the heavenly beast's tail. His bold action was rewarded with success, for the rarified air was soon rent by his exultant shouts, "I've caught him! I've caught him!" His joyous cries travelled downward to be echoed from the valleys of the Al and back to the Heavens: "I've caught him!" "He has caught him!" The pronouns got so mixed up until not two speakers were referring to the same person.

Unfortunately for the Warsangheli, there was going to be no fasting on this fatal day. Just at that critical moment when the topmost man on the pyramid was maneuvering for a firmer grip on the unsuspecting camel, one of the pyramid's living blocks remembered that he had left his basket far below on the ground. How was he going to carry his share of sacred flesh? "I must climb down and get my basket!" With these words he quit his post before anyone could restrain him. It was a fatal move. The tottery pyramid lost its precarious balance.

In the ensuing confusion, the celestial beast stampeded, and the leader of the doomed tribe found himself towed speedily across the starry sky. In desperation, he cut off the camel's tail with his machete. It is believed that he has been falling down ever since with a machete in one hand and a bloody tail in the other. Neither was he singled out for misfortune, for many of his fellow tribesmen perished in the sacrilegious attempt.

Before the irreverent Warsangheli attacked him, the sky camel lived in the Northern Skies. He has since made the celestial South his new home, far above the reach of human greed.

This incident marked the third occasion that Allah had increased the distance between earth and sky. The first was effected following Adam's fall. The second, when a Midgan shot an arrow at the heavens in a fit on passion over a tragic family quarrel.
Carol Rubenstein

Poems of Sarawak Dyaks

Translator’s Introduction

In August 1971 I began work with the Sarawak Museum on a project to translate songs of indigenous peoples of Sarawak. In November 1971 the Ford Foundation awarded me a grant, based on cooperative work with the Museum, which made it possible for my work to continue in the years following. The work has been published (with native-language texts) in two volumes (Poems of Indigenous Peoples of Sarawak, Parts 1 and 2, Sarawak Museum Special Monograph 2, Vol. 21. No. 42); the present translations represent a selection from these volumes. The work included seven groups: Iban, Bidayuh, Melangu, Kenyah, Kayan, Kelabit, and Penan; expeditions were made to each of these groups, my last expedition completed at the end of 1974. I worked with interpreters from the Museum or at the location or both. Variations of English, Malay, indigenous dialect, and song-language phraseology were used, in word-for-word translation. This was gradually expanded to phrase, sentence, stanza; very careful attention was given to the locating and following of the progress of the images that make up the poems, that is, their natural structuring. Being poems, they are not different from poems anywhere, essentially; and since my primary field is the creation and study of poetry, finding these picture-markers and directional cues for changes was not as difficult as might be imagined, considering the ostensible strangeness of the material and the differences in cultures.

Without examining each word, one can miss vital differences that set the tone or mark the poem from others which are similar. In Kelabit the word for thunder is lagku, but there are many kinds, each with unique atmosphere, and all the kinds of thunder appear in the poems. The wrong kind can dislocate the poem’s meaning. For example: gurut — long rumbling, rolling sound; banu-banu — muffled rumbling from a distance; tala-tala — many breaking sounds, one crash directly following another; ganit — a warning pause, with flash of lightning, followed by thunder breaking; gurap — booming pounding sound; rugan — crashing sound; daring-daring — high vibration overhead; ai-ai — moaning sound, slowly dying away; and a few others. These are necessary distinctions, each essential to the Kelabit singer and audience and thereby to the sense of the poem.

My primary concern during the first stage of translation, the word-by-word stage, is the basic components and images, the vocabulary and grammar of the images as they relate to each other and as they pattern themselves, and as they innately are individually. When the first stage is completed, one has what looks like a message sent by a distracted telegraph operator. The words may seem to mean nothing or may seem, deceptively clearly, like something they are not. The pieces are restructured into phrases and then sentences, checking and questioning at each point. In the second stage, that of developing the phrase, sentence, and grouping, one needs to know what is indirectly or colloquially meant. The concern at this time is to learn and make clear if or how it is related to ceremony; to understand the mood and its variations and development; and to bring forward the poem in its societal setting. The third stage is one of writing and rewriting each line, until the line sounds the way I imagine the original complex of poets or performers meant it to. In this I may be much mistaken; but given the components and as much information as possible, one's intuition has a reasonable chance of re-creating at least a viable whole.
Aban Balang

Tivai anak Sakit:
Prayer to Heal a Sick Child

The singer is from Long Matisem, Silat, Upper Baram, 4th Division.

O white chicken, good chicken, chicken that is just a chick, crying peep-peep. Throw off, send away Bale Oke, spirit of sores, Bale Pali, spirit of sudden bad changes. Release sickness from the body, from inside the body where it has gone deep, deaf to our call — O white chicken, good chicken, chicken that is just a chick, crying peep-peep. Sickness, follow the pig, the male pig to the end of the mountain, to the end of the valley, to the end of the mountain slope, to the end of the steep slope on the mountain. Beat the air from out of, get rid of, release — you rhinoceros hornbill — beat the air from out of, get rid of the sickness from the body; break its hold on this life.

Pasabah Yeng Pu'on:
Greeting by Hunter Returning with Nothing

The hunter returning empty-handed at once puts himself in disgrace, exaggerating and thereby voicing everyone's unspoken disappointment. He calls himself a widower (aban), his wife dead of his neglect, through his being so poor a hunter and provider. This is the formal announcement of one's failure.

I come back from hunting — not even one thing do I hold, absolutely nothing. No animal fell down, I killed nothing. No animal lay dead — I am a widower! There was no nose of the wild boar, not even one unlucky wild boar; there was no snout of the wild boar, no single sign of the wild boar, empty-handed of wild boar, absolutely nothing of wild boar. Of everything there is, there was none. Every animal had scattered — I am a widower!
Ma'au

Gan anak Kou:
Where Is My Child?

Collected separately by Stephen Morris and Tuton Kaboy in 1963. The singer is from Kpg. Medong, Oya, Dalat, 3rd Division. This funeral game is both a diversion from and an expression of the experience of death, in particular to that of a child. A group forms a line and walks, slowly swaying. The leader calls out the question: "Where is my child?" and each of the group calls back a different and perhaps unlikely answer, to distract from the funeral sorrow. Where the child is said to be going down the Oya River, the reference is to a miniature boat sent floating downriver to sea — the soul going on its death journey and the living group making sure it goes away and does not come back. Many carved figures are placed in the tiny boat, slaves to accompany him and serve him in the other world.

Walking slowly, swaying, the line we form moving, we together all are walking slowly, swaying, the line we form moving:

"Where is my child?"
"Your child has already gone out of the house."
"Your child is paddling across the river."

"Where is my child?"
"Your child is playing among the rushes that grow along the riverbank."
"Your child is playing beneath the house."

"Where is my child?"
"Your child has already been traded in exchange for a dog."
"Your child's schooling is finished."
"Paddling upriver to collect bamboo went your child, paddling upriver to collect bamboo for a fishtrap."
"Your child is already dead, struck by a falling tree."
"On down Oya river goes your child."
Tapan Ayu, composer
Pun Fred, singer

Lakuh

The composer is from Kuba'an and the singer from Bario, 4th Division.

Thunder rolls and everyone drinking noisily becomes still. 
Hear that my name is famous above all others. 
When people are drunk and want to fight, 
I am the only one who is able to stop them.

Slowly I stand, feeling free and fine. 
I ask the young people to make me a boat, 
a boat like a bridge that can go over the rapids. 
To go down the Kuba'an river, 
a pole made from the samara tree becomes my leg, 
a paddle made from the balangian tree becomes my hand. 
Before I start down on my journey, 
I stamp inside the front of the boat to encourage myself. 
Down the rapids of the Tutuh 
I go without stopping, a leaping fish — 
continuing down, the boat half loaded with flying water — 
like a fish going downriver I go.

At Long Mutan we pull up the boat and camp, to walk from there. 
We stop at a poor Kayan longhouse, 
where the people have only palm shoots to eat, 
and ferns that grow wild in primary jungle. 
Like a hornbill in flight, I drop down at Marudi, 
the place where they make shoes. 
I go to see the District Officer. 
And because I am a leader, known and respected, 
I must agree with the rule of peace made by the Rajah of Sarawak. 
Life has changed suddenly — one may not do as before.

Yet my anger against those of Dalatang longhouse continues, 
and my rage repeats and is not satisfied, spent. 
I want to take a shotgun and many cartridges and go “bang-bang.” 
I want to finish off all the grown men carrying parang sheaths, 
to slash all the people so quickly none can escape. 
The thunder would crash loudly, 
caused by the cries of the spirits of the unlucky dead 
as they are put into coffins by the few left living. 
I want to be known as one who does whatever his heart desires,
one whose fame is twice the height of the mountain,  
breaking the sky in its thrust;  
who is able to blacken the earth  
as if the sun gave no more light;  
who is able to make darkness  
as if the full moon were cut in half and fallen apart.  
These thoughts rage repeating within me, unsatisfied, unspent.

Unong anak Reram

Song

The singer is from Kpg. Sebintin Mawang, Serian, 1st Division. Otherwise known as Mongula Dudup, “Sweet Blindman,” he is a blind singer known and loved among Bidayuh and others for his sweet pure tone, expressive voice, imaginative expressions, and the comic-tragic style that is typical of the Bidayuh. He can be heard now and then on Radio Sarawak. Once he was asked by an Iban why he did not sing in “real” Land Dayak, rather than in the traditional song-language, which is a mixture of one or two Bidayuh dialects and an old or ceremonial form of Iban. Therefore he composed these songs in the “down home” form of the Bukar Sadong dialect, unmixed with the more refined poetic word combinations. What he produced is partly a satire on the traditional modes of the songs and partly an expressive comic-tragic version of them: the “blues” songs of Borneo.

1.  
Eating sour fruit with salt,  
the salt is eaten with the rambai fruit.  
There is no place where I, dead or alive, can go  
to approach someone to be my lover.

2.  
Collecting sago bark on the bank across from the landing stage,  
bark to be used for a plate, for wrapping the roasted eggplant.  
Pityingly I think of myself.  
The women look at me as if I were a stinking white moonrat —  
they look at me as if I were the carcass  
of a crocodile chewed by a dog.

3.  
I feel thirsty while collecting leaves,  
collecting leaves at the edge of the outer verandah.  
I thirst to sing, to be heard by the young girls  
and for all the young girls to answer me.
4. Felling a tree on a boulder:
   It falls to the edge of a large mat for drying padi.
   Pityingly I think of myself.
   Thirsty, I want to ask someone to bring me water,
   but it is impossible if I have to pay for it.

5. Who has felled the sour fruit tree?
   It has fallen on top of the parai tree.
   A man walks by grinding his teeth,
   past where I sit resting.

6. Reaching for a rag of coarse material
   while I am sitting on a table.
   You girls, do not always be so angry.
   Otherwise you will not know your lover,
   if you are always busy seeking more power to scorn.

7. The tuba tree with the platform on it is felled
   and falls toward the hill.
   I am ashamed to see strangers coming here.
   I trade a jar and get a spoon in exchange.
   My stomach worries me, making loud funny noises
   ever since I ate the sago.

8. The betel nut trees stand up in rows,
   the parai trees lie piled in a heap.
   Those engaged to the girls stand up —
   and lie down with their lovers.
   I put on the simpong luyong shirt
   which is bound at the edges with cotton.
   The hat is made of the thread of knowledge,
   the thread that is spun by the girl who has a lover.
   The girlfriends of Aput Aman and Aput Abu
   encourage them in the test set for them:
   To sell the strings of tobacco
   which the girls have plaited for them.
Gawai Labong Singut:
The Red Hat Ceremony

The singers are from Kpg. Segu Bunuk, Kuching, 1st Division. In this early, key section of the girls' puberty ceremony the tale is told of the care of the first coconut brought to Sarawak, from which all other coconuts were created. The individual being initiated is purified by the water of coconuts split toward the end of the complete ceremony.

A cluster of coconuts and one individual coconut are placed under bamboo tubes filled with water so that the water falling on them will cause them to grow.

The coconuts are taken to a long platform made especially to receive them, for them to dry in that place.

The coconuts are taken to the rafters of the inner rooms of the house and placed there to grow into a plant, the shoot piercing upwards thru the husk, and let grow strong as the tooth of the leopard, and let grow high until the leaves can be blown by the wind. As the coconut grows, its roots reach out thru the husk.

When the coconut is grown, the husk is skewered with a metal rod and a knife pushed thru to enlarge the passage and openings. Rottan is passed thru it and tied around it, and ijok rope is also passed thru it and tied around it, and the coconut is hung outside in back of the house.

Let any stranger to the longhouse know that, when chewing betelnut, he is to avoid spitting carelessly on the coconut, for, so struck, it may wither.

The man who has hung the coconut outside the house leaves the house and brings the coconut inside the house and places it on the inner verandah outside the door in a special safe place reserved for it.
Then the coconut is moved to a place on the outer verandah
to avoid contact with flying stray bits of chaff
when the women winnow and shake the padi grains.

At last the coconut is brought to the Head House,
and hung outside of it.
But there is danger to the coconut caused by
the young men within, dancing in their quarters,
shaking loose the coconut from its fastening,
and the new coconut plant might be destroyed
by children playing and knocking against it.
The coconut is hung higher, hung from the roof of the Head House.

A man holding a parang knife in his right hand
cuts away grass near the end of the longhouse.
But the risk to the coconut newly planted there
is the rooting of pigs at it,
and children scratching and breaking the stem,
and the failure of the coconut to grow in the soil there.

Urgently the coconut is taken away from the longhouse
and planted in the outlying new jungle.
But the heat of the sun may dry up the young plant.

The coconut is moved to a high hillside,
but the danger to it is the wind of the storm
which may blow it away.

The coconut is moved to the original and thick jungle,
but there it may be smashed by a heavy falling branch.

The coconut is moved to the top of the mountain,
but there it may be struck by a great rolling rock.

The coconut is moved to a high sandbar in the river,
but there it may be swept away by floods.

The coconut is moved to a clearing not far from the longhouse,
but there it may be kicked over and trampled
by strangers unaware, on their way to visit the longhouse.

The coconut is brought near to the Head House,
where a clearing for it is made.
There a hole is dug for it,
but not too wide, only as big as a mortar hole,
the size of the coconut itself.
And the coconut is placed inside of it, but not carelessly, planted with care so that its shoots face the east.

The man who plants the coconut in that place borrows a great knife to cut down the hard *nibong* palm and splits it into pieces. The thorns of the tree are struck off and the long pieces are carried back in a bundle. And a fence of stakes is thrust into the earth around the coconut, the encircling fence strengthened with ropes of vine, to keep the coconut from all harm and to protect the coconut as it grows.

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Ulli Beier

**The Position of the Artist in Traditional Society**

Even the casual observer must notice the decline in artistic standards in the villages of Papua New Guinea. This decline is closely related to the disintegration of cultural values and motivations. Until recently the Sepik carver, for example, worked largely in a ritualistic context and exclusively for his own society. Now he works mainly for outsiders and his motivation is commercial. It is a phenomenon that we can observe in all Papua New Guinea societies to a greater or lesser degree; and in fact it is a problem that is encountered throughout the Third World today.

Colonialism and the social and economic changes that have come in its wake have affected traditional artists in a similar manner—but we must not conclude from that that the position of the traditional artist in society was identical all over the world, or even within Papua New Guinea.

Artists throughout the world have always worked in response to their community’s value system. They always produced what society thought it needed from its artists and their status within society was determined by this need.

In the following I wish to compare the position of the artist in four different societies: two from Africa and two from Papua New Guinea.

I hope to show that each community is according a completely different place to its artists and that the art works they produce fulfill different functions and are judged by different criteria.

**Mbari House Artist, Ibo, Eastern Nigeria**

An *Mbari House* is a monument to the earth goddess Ala. It is built in mud and basically consists of a roof resting on four heavy square mud pillars, with a fifth, even thicker pillar in the center. This centered pillar is wide enough to contain a small chamber.

The ground plan is square and the house has no walls on any of the four sides. Grouped around the
central pillar and looking outwards are a large number of mud figures. These represent the earth goddess Ala, the thunder god Amadi Oha, her consort and numerous other divinities. In addition there is a collection of human beings: chiefs, district officers, teachers, tailors, nurses, farmers and a variety of animals, like leopards pouncing on goats, gorillas, dogs and fanciful elephants.

There are whole descriptive scenes, like medical orderlies carrying a patient on a stretcher or pornographic ones like dogs copulating with women.

The Mbari house in fact represents a microcosm: a small representation of the entire creation.

It takes a year or more to build an Mbari House, but once completed, it is left exposed to wind and rain and usually disintegrates within five to eight years. No attempt is ever made to preserve it.

What is the meaning of this strange art form and the extraordinary lack of respect accorded it by the community?

The Ibo people say that the Mbari House is commissioned by the goddess herself, through her priest. Usually she sends a sign: a swarm of bees settling on the priest’s house or python curling up in her shrine. This is an indication that the community might face a severe crisis, unless an Mbari House is built.
Ala, the earth goddess, holding a child on her lap. The right arm, usually holding a sword, has broken off.

Once the house has thus been commissioned by the goddess, a senior craftsman selects one boy and one girl from each compound in the village. The whole group then goes into seclusion for at least nine months and often much longer, during which time the house is built. Food is passed into the enclosure every day by the community, but no one must see the work in progress. When the Mbari is complete, it is exposed to the public amidst celebrations and a major sacrifice. Once this ceremony has taken place, the house fulfils no more function in the community. It never serves as a shrine. It is usually shown to strangers as a kind of entertainment and the more bizarre scenes are pointed out amidst shrieks of laughter.

What is important here to the Ibo community is not the finished work of art, but the ACT OF CREATION in itself. The only meaningful way of serving the creator goddess is to be creative oneself. Once the community ceases to be creative, it stultifies, becomes rigid and dies.

The building of an Mbari House therefore is an act of rejuvenation for the community.

The people involved in it are not artists, they will never become artists and they will never build another Mbari House in their lives. The next Mbari House would be built by another age group.

The attitude displayed by the Ibo people to this particular art form is diametrically opposed to the essentially European concept of a museum: the preservation of art works outside their proper context.

It is very interesting to note that the mud sculptures for Mbari Houses survived longer as an art form than wood carving and other more durable art forms in that part of Ibo country. This arises obviously from the fact that renewal is the very purpose of the art form.

The aesthetic concepts of the Mbari House builders are interesting: a certain amount of convention is observed in the shaping of the earth goddess herself: her headdress, her body painting, her posture are reasonably uniform in all the Mbari houses. This convention is obviously passed on by the master craftsman under whose guidance the work is carried out. But when it comes to other deities the work gets much freer and much more individual and in the portrayal of human beings and animals and phantasy creatures the young artists are giving completely free reign to their imagination. Here inventiveness seems to be highly prized. The artists are obviously also influenced by other Mbari Houses they have seen. But without any doubt, there can be few traditional art forms with as little convention as the Mbari House.

There is a certain competitiveness between villages when they build Mbari Houses and when strangers are led to the site, innovations and original ideas are proudly pointed out.

The Mbari House, which starts as a ritual act, ends up as a profane object, whose value is mainly entertainment. To attempt to preserve it in any way would destroy the meaning of the ritual.
A leopard killing a goat
Water spirit with python (the python is a symbol of Ala).
Hohao Boards, Orokolo, Papua, New Guinea

This is an example of an art form from Papua New Guinea that is carried out by non-professional artists. Hohao boards represent the aualari or clan ancestors of the people of Orokolo. The Hohao board is kept in the darkness of the eravo or ceremonial house and it is approached with smoke offerings, mainly in times of stress or warfare. The Hohao board is carved from the concave side of a broken-down canoe. They are oval-shaped boards, about four or five feet high.

The designs are rigidly conventional: mostly the ancestral spirit is represented by a face and a navel; the body is usually not shown. The eyes are always concentric circles; the mouth is always open, baring its teeth; the nose is raised in slight relief, higher than the rest of the relief which is very flat indeed.

The nose must be raised high enough to have its septum pierced and decoration to be tied onto it.

The navel is always shaped like a star. The navel is extremely significant, because it symbolises the navel cord with which the clan is tied to its ancestor and the ancestral land, in the same way in which the child is tied to its mother. It is the function of the clan’s magic man (known in Orokolo as the “string man”) to keep this line of communication to the ancestral spirit constantly open and the Hohao board has a major part to play in this ritual. The rest of the designs on the Hohao board are purely geometric designs: triangles, circles, herringbone patterns, stars. The vocabulary is extremely limited and the meanings of these geometric shapes differ from clan to clan.

Each design symbolises a plant or animal or star associated with the particular clan.

It is of the utmost ritual importance that the right symbols appear on the Hohao — otherwise it could not function properly.

In Orokolo there is no apprenticeship system for carvers. The artists are always older men, who are no longer active in hunting, fishing, gardening and warfare. A man in the prime of his life, who is still begetting children, is not considered a suitable person to make Hohao boards. This may be so because only men beyond those activities could be ritually pure enough to handle such work, or perhaps simply because older men made themselves useful in this way to the community they could not serve otherwise. No special status was accorded to the carver in Orokolo and no great material rewards. Usually he was fed by his clients while he was working.

Throughout his life, of course, the Orokolo man had the opportunity of observing other carvers. He was familiar with the designs and their meanings. If he felt he had a “good hand” and he had reached the right age, he would try his hand on less sacred objects, like bark belts.

Given the extreme limitations of the art form and the rigidity of the convention, it may have been the very fact that these carvers were NOT professionals and that there was NO apprenticeship system, that kept the art form so fresh. In the hands of a professional class of carvers, Orokolo art could easily have
Hiakoe, Hohao of the Vailala clan. The zigzag pattern around the navel (merove ari) represents the thorns of a kind of cane; the eye design represents the erara palm; the zigzag pattern framing the head is the lapu, a warrior’s pig bristle headband.

Ila Kalaika, Hohao of the Maori clan. The jagged four-pronged design around the eyes represents a kind of orchid which is sacred to this clan. The black area above the eyes is unoccupied land which the clan hopes to conquer and farm in the future; the zigzag pattern above that is the lativala, a casowary-feather headband worn by clan leaders. The fishbone pattern at the top and on the sides represents clouds, which are the visible manifestation of the spirit world.
degnerated into lifeless stereotype. Instead each new
artist brought a completely fresh vision to his work,
seeking inspiration from “the red eye of the sun” or the
clouds that were drifting across the ocean in the
evening.
To the Orokolo community the Hohao was a ritual
object that had to fulfil a function. It could not and was
not discussed in aesthetic terms.
One could not call a Hohao “beautiful.” The Orokolo
word beveke, which means good or beautiful, could be
applied to a woman or a flower, but not to a Hohao.
To express approval of a Hohao carving, people
would use words like hovea, enough; or kaharika iele,
meaningful. These terms suggest merely that the
carver put the right design in the right place and that
the correct symbolism had been used. The craftsman­
ship as such was not commented on.
Contemporary Hohao, made in a commercial con­
text, are sometimes condemned by the older men by
saying that they had “too much colour” and “too much
design” and that they were “just made to attract peo­
ple.” In other words: the carvers tried to make the
carving look pretty and attractive to potential custom­
ers. To the man who still lived by the values of Orokolo
culture such a Hohao was a meaningless object.

Carvings for Orisha Shrines,
Yoruba, Western Nigeria

The Yoruba are a large African people, of probably
15,000,000. For a thousand years they have basically
lived in walled cities, their farmland stretching ten or
twenty miles beyond the walls. Even in the mid-nine­
teenth century, Yoruba towns ranged from 10 to 70
thousand inhabitants.
The Yoruba believe in divine beings called orisha,
who are a complex fusion of heroic ancestors and
forces of nature. Thus on the one hand the orisha are
seen as founders of cities, conquerors and heroes. On
the other hand and simultaneously they represent
such forces as Thunder, Stormwind, Rivers, Rocks,
Ocean and Earth.
The orisha are worshipped with sacrifice, prayer
and divination, and the major shrines are usually
enriched by wood carvings, although these rarely rep­
resent the orisha himself. More often the carvings
represent priests or worshippers who were prominent
in establishing the particular form of worship in that
city or that compound.
These images are intended to create the mood and atmosphere for worship, but they must also become vehicles of power in their own right. A carving that cannot contain such supernatural power would be considered a useless piece of wood — regardless of its aesthetic qualities.

Quite unlike the Hohao carvers of Orokolo or the Ibo Mbari artists, the Yoruba woodcarvers are highly professional. Children may be apprenticed to a woodcarver at the age of five or six years. Usually woodcarving is a craft that is passed on from father to son in certain families, but occasionally a carver could pick a young apprentice from another family. The carver is also a farmer, who has his yam garden, but this is usually worked for him by other members of his family, while he spends most of his time on carving. When a young man has mastered the technique and the style completely, he will remain working in the master craftsman’s workshop for years — until in fact he develops an individual style within the fairly strict stylistic conventions of the traditions. At that point he will set up his own workshop.

An interesting aspect of Yoruba art is the relationship between the artist and his client. The artist cannot work in isolation. To make sure that the finished object will serve its ritual function a close relationship between the carver and his clients (a group of priests from a certain shrine) must be established. Although the clients must not watch the work in progress, they must concentrate their spiritual energies on the carving. They must supply the artist with freshly cooked food three times a day. (The process of Yoruba cooking being laborious and painstaking, this is almost a full-time occupation for somebody.) The carver’s manual skill would be useless without the establishment of this state of harmony and communication between him and the clients. The work can only fulfil its ritual function if it has grown in a situation where the artist is totally integrated into society. He never sees himself as an innovator. His job is to perfectly express the values of the society, be they religious or aesthetic.

Yoruba people do not normally discuss the aesthetic qualities of their carvings; they tend to see it in religious terms. Nevertheless it is very obvious that the carvings follow a rigidly established canon of aesthetic rules. Robert Thompson has been able, for the first time, to prompt Yoruba people to discuss their work in aesthetic terms and he found as many as nineteen different criteria by which they judged their art works. The most important of these were:

Flute-player from Apala shrine, Ilobu.
Two figures (painted with indigo) from the Oya shrine, Ilobu. Oya is the goddess of the storm wind.

1. *jijora* the moderate resemblance to a subject. A Yoruba carving must never be a close portrait, but it must never be as abstracted as a Hohao board.

2. *ifarohon* which means clarity of structure. The different parts of the sculpture must be clearly conceived and blocked out. The details must be cut in with precision and clarity.

3. *didon* or luminosity. This refers to the shining surface texture. Unlike Papua New Guinea sculpture, Yoruba sculpture is not usually painted and therefore relies to a large extent on the play of light and shadow that a hard smooth surface texture can create.

4. *pigon* a straight upright posture. Yoruba carvings never show people in action, but always in repose,
upright and symmetrical.
5. odo means that the image always represents a person in the prime of life, or perhaps rather with ageless features. Even when children are portrayed, they do not show childish features but the same agelessness.
6. tutu or coolness means that the face has to be composed and slightly detached. Emotions like joy, anger, sadness are never represented. Instead the images show a trance-like state of concentration.

Canoe Prows, Trobriand Islands

As in Yoruba country, the art of woodcarvings runs in families in the Trobriand Islands.
But even though the carver’s work is complicated and elaborate, there is no formal training or apprenticeship system. The gifted child will carve his first toy canoe at five or six years of age. At sixteen or seventeen he will probably attempt his first fishing canoe. When he gets married, he will make his first kula canoe. Nobody tells him what to do; but if he has grown up in a carver’s family, he will have ample opportunity to watch his father or uncles.

The Trobrianders make a distinction, however, between the kegi voyelu, that is the “one who follows the voice,” and the artist who is said to have sope or genius.

The kegi voyelu is the highly competent craftsman, who can reproduce the Trobriand repertoire competently. But the man with sope is the innovator who extends and perfects the craft. Sope literally means water, and it refers both to the rhythm of the carver’s line and the easy flow of his imagination.

According to Chief Narubutal: “The ancestors have said that anybody can have talent; but only one person in each generation can have sope.” The master carver who has sope carefully watches the young children in his family, and he decides which child is capable of having this gift bestowed upon him.

From the time the child begins to eat adult food he will be adopted by the artist. He must abstain from eating pig, fish tails and fish heads, as well as mona (mashed taro). After five months he will receive his magic medicine and can then proceed to eat as usual.

The ritual must take place on a very calm day when feathery clouds streak the sky. On such a day, early in the morning, the carver takes a newly carved mortar and pestle and crushes some betel nut with lime and mustard. The incantation is spoken over this betel nut, which the child must then eat. The ritual is repeated three times over a period of five days. This will build up the sope in the child.

Throughout his adult life, magic will be practised by the carver. There is magic to make a tree fall in the direction one wants it to fall; magic for felling it; magic for driving out evil spirits, magic for making the log light; magic for dragging it to the village; magic for carving it; and finally magic for giving the carving migila, or expression.

The art of carving a canoe, a drum, or a yam house is never taken lightly. The carver requires absolute concentration and will not tolerate the presence of others while he is working.

Because of its cool refinement, the magic content of Trobriand art is not easily perceived by outsiders, but it is nevertheless very strong. A canoe prow, for example, is not just a decorative board that protects the helmsman from the splashing of the waves, even though it fulfils that function too.

The magic of a canoe prow is concentrated in the little figures known as boalai that always appear at the top of the carving. They are said to come alive in the water. They protect the canoe from both the action of the weather and the evil spells of witches.

They are powerful spirits and unless looked after properly and treated correctly in a ritual sense, they will in fact destroy the owner of the canoe.

Trobrianders are the most aesthetically conscious people I have met. They are prepared to explain every design and every motif and give fascinating reasons for every aspect of their work. Unlike most other artists in Papua New Guinea, artists in the Trobriand Islands are prepared to talk freely and very critically about each other’s work. As an example of the precision and clarity with which Trobriand artists explain the significance to them of certain motifs I here quote Chief Narubutal’s comment on the importance of the boi, the white heron on Trobriand carvings: “Our ancestors said, ‘We have seen all the birds, but none has the same grace. The crane is complete in rest or in motion.’

Whether he bends forward or tilts his head backwards, whether he is standing or sitting, whether he is resting or flying the boi is always seen, always balanced, always clear.”

When judging the work of a carver Trobriand Islanders look primarily for three qualities: migila,
Stern of a canoe from Vakuta Island. The two small human figures at top center are called boalai; they protect the canoe, and "come alive in the water." Beneath them is the sakwabu design, representing coconut husks drying and curling in the sun; the carver must achieve an effect of real springiness. This stern was recognized as the work of a carver with sopi.

kakapisi lula and kala migileo.

Migila is literally 'expression'. It is a quality that can be imparted only by a man who has sope. Migila is not achieved by technical ability or aesthetic standards. It is a magical quality and depends both on the carver's knowledge of magic symbolism, which he incorporates into the design, and on the magical ritual with which the finished object has been endowed. Almost any artistic object, for instance, a kula ring necklace, could have migila, but it is most commonly used in speaking of canoe prows. In the canoe prow the quality of migila is demonstrated most dramatically during the launching of a canoe. The prow is seen as a face—half human, half spirit. People see the face as tender or aggressive, serene or flamboyant. When a canoe is launched, people weep: "It was made by human hands," they say, "but when it moved, it became a human being."

Kakapisi lula is 'beauty'. It means literally 'it moves my inside'. Kakapisi lula therefore refers to
the inner kind of beauty that can arouse an emotion in the onlooker. The emotion can be sad or happy. The term could equally apply to a woman, a carving or a flower. It defines the subjective response of the beholder. It does not separate features from character in a person but expresses an emotive response to the total being: to features, manners, posture and character. If referring to a carving, it signifies the response to both form and content.

There is another word, however, that isolates the formal qualities of a carving. Kala migileo is the ‘evenness’, the ‘clarity’ of a carving; therefore its charm and its beauty. This expression can also apply to people and animals. A clean, pure line is what Trobriand Islanders seem to appreciate above any other aesthetic quality.

At all times the woodcarver aims at clarity and balance. The balance is achieved by perfect weighing of the red, white and black lines against each other. “Too much white diffuses the design,” they say.

When good balance is achieved the onlooker will talk of sena boena — a clear (good) carving. When this has not been achieved, he will talk of sena gaga — a bad, poor carving.

The real artist, however, must know how to communicate on two different levels at the same time. While the ordinary man will merely see that the carving has ‘a clean face’, others who know the magical significance of the design will understand its more profound meaning.

Thus we have seen that in four different communities the artists enjoy different statuses, fulfil different functions and that the relative importance of ritual and aesthetic aspects of their work varies considerably. However, in all cases, before the coming of the Europeans the traditional artists were people who worked exclusively for their own society and who shared and expressed its values.

**Bibliographical Note**

and ive called this talk
tuning

and you probably have no very good idea of what
im going to talk about       and it gave me a certain freedom
from expectation            as it gave you        for it is part of my
generosity and self indulgence simultaneously that what
i will take for myself i will allow to others       which seems
only fair                now i gave a title to this piece long before
coming here and if the title i gave was not intended
to offer you a very precise image of what i was going to do and
if you see me fiddling with this tape recorder       its mainly
because i have no very precise image of what im going to say
though i have a considerable notion of the terrain        into
which i tend to move and the only way im going to find out
whether it was worth doing or not is when i hear what ive got
which has been my way of entrapping myself
and the reason ive chosen to entrap myself rather than to
prepare in advance a precise set of utterances has
been that i felt myself ive written things before
this in the natural vacuum that is the artificial hermetic
closet that literature has been in for some time and the
problem for me is in the closet confronting a
typewriter and no person so that for me literature
defined as literature has no urgency it has no need of
address there are too many things no there are not too
many things there are only a few things you may want to talk
about but there are too many ways you could talk about them
and no urgency in which way you choose to talk about them
there are too many ways to proceed too many
possibilities for making well crafted objects none of which
seem particularly necessary i dont think im unique in
feeling the absence of urgency in constructing a literary
object its in fact i think a fairly recent aberration
the existence of literature conceived in a tight
framework there is some sense of urgency out there (a
passing police car) they have an audience they have
an audience and a need and they may do badly by it but
they have their sense of urgency the most exotic
example i can think of and the most striking example i can think of which i have thought about recently and which is not something i want to spend a great deal of time thinking about still was a kind of post napoleonic commitment to producing an amazingly important object balzac say i dont really want to talk about balzac except that its an example of incredible arrogance and ambition with nothing to say a man goes into a closet in order to say it a half baked kid decides to be a great writer to be like napoleon to take over the empire of letters what would he do? whatever was going to be great what would be great? classical tragedies that was what was great in paris what else would be great in paris? racine how else? he would write plays its very difficult you go with nothing in your mind in particular except your own future greatness you go there to paris to write great plays because thats where they write them you go there mainly to exercise your dominion balzac is a good example he couldnt speak he had nothing to say coffee black coffee was the answer self intoxication late at night what came out presumably ive never seen an autograph manuscript of balzac and i dont know anybody who has but ive seen early proof sheets he obviously managed to achieve finally utterance a string of cliches an incredible propulsion of garbage an incredible group of commonplaces flowing one after another but they flow after endless cups of coffee which presumably finally killed him second proof sheet third proof sheet i never saw a second or third proof sheet presumably i saw eleventh proof sheets or something of that order theyre filled with literary high class the flow of cliches the flow of platitudinous trash is interrupted primarily by self conscious reflexive high class prose that is it enters into the flow one thing was flowing and it was nonsense but it was at least flowing after that there were second thoughts and third thoughts and fourth thoughts balzac criticizing balzac getting smarter learning little bits and pieces of junk embedding a mosaic of early 19th century cleverness going swedenborgianism going sociology going real worldism going whatever to take away the embarrassment of this fluent trash which flowed all the way through unrealized and absurd cliched scenes
followed largely by modifications that add respectability and slow down the pace of the prose till finally in what? the 22nd proof sheet we have the brokenbacked mosaic of a balzac novel a monster what we have is a fluency of utterance and energy restrained by a disastrous mosaic which is an image of what an image of class an image of mentalism an image of whatever it was the now nearly worthless currency of 19th century hip that had value then for that reason that it was their currency and and there are strata in balzac and all the strata appear together pressed in various sized fragments onto the surface of the text a balzac novel is an archeological trove its not so much a work as it is a series of self conscious reflections on his inability to let his talk fall where it fell because he wanted to be great its very bad to want to be great because theres no reason in the world why you should be great until the world decides that you are great which is all that greatness consists of now i didnt start from a critique of balzac and im not interested in laying balzac open to this critique that could apply almost as well to so many other writers but balzac is an enormously interesting case for the reason that he is so typical of the arrogance of literature as a construction that will eventually claim to equal the career of a progressively accumulated intelligence that the world had just come to call science and this new career would be something like a science a quasi science of the real world what "real world" the world of common sense made to seem as if it was more than common sense? or less than common sense? the world of if A then B the world of the truth table? no balzacs not the world of the truth table its the plausible world of the marriage novel the plausible world of the money accumulating novel the plausible world of the success story its all plausible but its plausible but its plausible only afterwards because before that what is it its an opera or a fairy tale because balzac writes basically a romance or an opera which he then subjects to a somewhat cynical critique a 19th century critique of this romance and the critique is called realism now theres a kind of comedy to this because the critique is a kind of afterwords its as though balzac expects to be judged why does he expect to be judged its an interesting question he expects to be judged because hes going to have an object in front of the
world and the world will have the leisure and the desire to examine it once and then examine it again and then examine it again and then again and its as if he was back in school and he was preparing to face a board of examiners and he was turning in his examination booklet that this board of examiners was going to scrutinize over and over slowly turning its pages to see if they pass. Now theres one issue in a book its that a book is always reinspectable when you recall a passage it is always the same which is unlike talk which you can also recall but it is never the same and is never reinspectable except in your memory that is you may believe that its the same but you have no certainty that its the same and the talk goes out into the world and its gone and its not worth any more than anyones confidence in you or confidence in their ability to perform the interpretive act upon the discourse with you because the discourse is the one thing that youre sure of theres a situation and you respond to it now this lust to produce this unassailable object this examination passing book is a common enough lust and balzac is only an early example of the lust to produce such a thing and there is this book and it is produced as an object which becomes an abject of scrutiny and if it passes this examination it becomes an objet d'art and you know its there and becomes precious it becomes valued and winds up in libraries a critical apparatus discusses this thing as if it were more than the provisional activities of a man the provisional talk of balzac in some situation and balzac is a very interesting man in spite of the fact that it is a tissue of cliches that emerges from his mouth because cliches are the commonplaces by which we begin a discourse there is no way to put down cliche in the beginning because if there was nothing in common in the utterances with which we addressed each other thered by no way that we could understand what we were saying in some sense there is no adequate theory of how we understand what we say to each other one of the most depressing things about the present attempts at knowledge is the array of formal machines we have for explaining how we know what we say and how poorly they explain it for a while i was involved in formal linguistics chomskyan linguistics and i gave it up when it became apparent that chomskyan linguistics promised no intelligent rationale for dealing
with semantics because all of chomsky's proposals and that's all they are is proposals and all of roland barthes proposals suggest and sometimes even claim that the troops in back of them will soon come in and mop up all the details in the beginning there is always a brilliant proposal and it has this form there is a sudden flash of illumination that is quite brilliant and momentary and it is all dazzling virtuosity you see we have this set of rules that will describe the fundamental basis for the understanding of language by all of its speakers now you may realize that these rules that were writing are in themselves provisional the rules that were writing are to be sure only baby examples of the real rules we are setting out to write rules that are part of the fundamental grammar and we happen to be using the real words of english to apply them to and this shouldn't really be done that way because our rules apply to much more general formatives because you see we are really beginning by referring to a universal phonetics a universal phonetics is moderately well established it begins to break down only at the neurological level but there is a universal phonetics a fundamental set of phonic classes that we have characterized by a set of features these are universal features that we have derived in part from their manner of articulation generation in the mouth say and partially acoustical features derived from the way they seem to sound or seem to sound to instruments devised to characterize certain aspects of the way they sound to the human ear anyway we have these features which we may not entirely agree upon that nevertheless constitute the reservoir of the moderately well grounded universal phonetics that are more or less agreed upon and which the men in back of me are very busily in the process of working out the details of the agreement of and these are to be mapped by a set of phonological rules that have not been entirely formulated but the men in back of me are about to finally formulate them into a systematic set that will provide for all the significant distinctions that are made among sound classes in all of the languages of the earth that will allow us to map these distinctions into a set of formatives which you may be more familiar with when they are called morphemes or even more colloquially words which are then mapped into sets of possible and distinguishable arrangements we could call the syntax
of the language and while these are also not yet quite worked out quite satisfactorily the men in back of me are busily working this out also all we then have to do is map this entire system into a thorough and sufficiently abstract lexicon that will contain all of the rules for relating the possible lexemes words those formatives that point toward anything in the world to the range of their possible meanings references and senses which should all be found in this lexicon also to be prepared by the people in back of me some of whom have yet to be born now they are working away at this i suppose at m.i.t. which is relatively close or theyre working away at it at the university of california perhaps which is not so close to you but a lot closer to me are they really? are they really working away at it? in what sense? in what sense is it possible to write a systematic semantics? in what sense do we understand language that we could write a fundamental and systematic semantics presumably we would use a feature theory because it worked so well in phonetics and is about to work perfectly in phonetics that is there would be for any word lexeme sounds good technical lexeme high class twenty third proof sheet lexeme basically we ought to be able to reduce the lexicon to a presumably finite set of lexemes though there are problems in that because at the same time that it will have to be finite it will have to be potentially nonfinite because you can always coin new words from old ones or parts of old ones or merely from new arrangements of phonemes by a set of rules from the word generating system which would have to be part of a systematic lexicon this would be the word generating part of the lexicon and this set of words would presumably have new meanings different from the collection of old meanings which they might conceivably push and shove into new and different meanings as well so that as the world filled up with distinguishable new things or new states or new acts or modalities the lexicon would have to fill up with new modalities to distinguish them but this is only the potentially nonfinite part of the lexicon what you would expect to find would be a finite if fairly large set of quite general or abstract features and some kind of rules for combining and partitioning these into all the words that have been and may have been and may have to come to be though this might sound overly ambitious even to a
language scientist at M.I.T. or to a structuralist at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes though there is no accounting for what would sound overly ambitious to them since there are so many people standing in back of them working out just these problems still more modestly you might want to ask of this lexicon that it lay out at least a fairly compact set of features to generate the system of references and senses of a significant segment of the words currently used in a particular natural language like English say now how would they do this by a feature theory that proved so successful in phonetics now the nucleus of the lexicon will consist in a set of features and what kind of features will they be you know they will be binary contrasting features sets of opposing pairs like hot and cold or hard and soft but much more abstract perhaps so that they could apply to a great variety of words to some degree and form a kind of feature system thesaurus of the language and each feature would be two poles of one kind of axis with one end positive and the other negative or one end zero and the other one oddly enough it will resemble somewhat machine computer language and that may surprise you but it shouldn't be too surprising because so many things now are analyzed in this way which is clear and unequivocal and convenient for the machines and it is of course easy to distinguish zero and one the empty set and the full set that it might seem simple even reasonable to approach the lexicon this way marking each lexeme as a bundle of features that are scored zero when they are absent and one when they're present and say you only bother to mark features that are present otherwise these features are absent now lets take a pair of words like "generous" and "thrifty" say we could probably find an axis that ran through them unfortunately we could find many more than one axis but lets take an axis an axis is a good word it suggests so much a kind of space through which it runs a kind of semantic globe domain? hyperspace? anyway lets call it an axis because this axis is like a line that will be determined by two points like any other straight line thats nice straight lines are convenient and friendly from our days in geometry and they are all so nicely determined by two points and these two points are its poles one at each end of the line
and one pole is called "open" and the negative pole is called "closed". "open"/"closed" is our feature; we call it "1" when its "open" and we call it "0" when its "closed". Ok, this is one of our features; say we've got two words we happen to want to deal with; "generous" and "thrifty". Now I'm sure you can see how easy it will all be. "generous" will be "open" and we will mark it "1" and "thrifty" will be "closed" and we will mark it "0". What could be easier unless you want to ask what happens to "stingy" which might seem to lie a lot closer to the "closed" end of this axis of meaning closer to "zero" so to speak. But what could that mean that a word could lie closer to the same axis than another? It could mean that we will have to find only pure opposites or antonyms lying at ends of feature axes and that all the words in the system will have to be plotted by the intersection of various axes their spatial coordinates in some kind of hyperspace so that we know how far off the axis of "closed" and "open" "generous" and "thrifty" may really be and how close they lie to an axis of "big" and "small" or "soft" and "hard". How many features will we need to map any lexeme? How many features are there? Is there a feature axis that can be constructed by drawing a line between any two words that can be regarded as opposites seen from some point of view will we have to connect every word with every other word in practice in principle dollars and doughnuts if not will there be a finite set of such contrasts? And how will we select them and is this finite set potentially infinite? Will we have to have a rule system for feature construction as there is a system for word building? And supposing this is so will we be able to determine the distances angular or other that separate words that are not opposites from the polar oppositions that separate "thrifty" from "generous" and "stingy" which may happen to lie on an axis and will we know if a word is intersected by more than two axial lines for two lines determine a plane and if whether the three or four or five lines lie in one or two or three different planes still its a terrific idea if we have all of those people there in back of us working away the way they always seem to be in the marvelous flashy and ultimately trivial proposals made by transformational grammarians and
french structuralists now trivial in what sense for these are all glamorous proposals backed up by regiments of intelligence and diligence packing away facts all over the world and subordinating them to these wonderfully clear and commonsensical ideas and yet and yet how could you ever use them these great unclosing enterprises supported by equally unending granting institutions i remember once commenting on the rather similar theory that i.a. richards held for language contrasts within something as commonplace as a poem now richards held a fairly commonsensical notion that a poem was constructed of a series of utterances that you could consider as a series of pushes or pulls in one direction or another which certainly had the advantage of being a dynamic theory of a poem but what he was offering was a kind of vector analysis of a poem and this is very similar to a binary contrast analysis because a vector is a directed magnitude a line of a certain magnitude moving in a particular direction and what you mean by a magnitude is the force of the utterance and the direction is the sense of the line and that sounds reasonable enough and from that it might follow that a poem is a composition of forces but unfortunately to deal with this even in an uncomplicated way you need to be able to specify certain things whether all the statements utterances of the poem lie in a single plane and if not how these planes are related to each other and how these forces lines are measured off against a specified set of coordinates which is all that will allow you to measure them anyway and what means you will take to measure them anyway and what means you will take to compose all these fortunately for richards he was not so thorough going and seemed to suggest that all of these lines lay pretty much in one plane that they were merely a matter of push and pull one line or image for or against another which sounds terrific unless you try to do it so suppose we take a poem by auden say and imagine he said "they lived in houses that were colloquial and blue" we could probably say that "blue" lies closer to the pole of an axis called "concrete" and "colloquial" lies closer to its other pole "abstract" and that part of the energy of that line its dialectic arises from the collision of these two differently directed adjectives directed at their "houses" maybe at least that axis makes some kind of sense to us because after all "blue" constitutes an experiential fact it is an outcome of vision it marks
their houses when we look at them and "colloquial" well its an overall judgment of the style in which they live so it seems further from the physical reality now there are other axes that run through "colloquial" and "blue" probably too many to do this conveniently and presumably richards would never have undertaken this without the help say of fodor and katz or a variety of other generative semanticians whose help richards probably never knew he was about to receive and probably never would except that i am in a generally helpful frame of mind and will provide it now for the sake of the provisional convenience that is the universal characteristic of this approach let us pretend that these are the two most important features that this is the axis that counts so in what sense is "blue" concrete only in the sense that you suppose "blue" to be some kind of physical phenomenon the name of a particular range of electromagnetic frequencies or the like which it is not or more naturally that it is the name of a physical experience and that "colloquial" is a loose denomination for a kind of behavior for a kind of act somewhere on the scale of deviation from a notion of "propriety" say or "formality" all this seems quite obvious and yet and yet even here it is not so simple for if blue is the name we give to a particular physical experience a particular visual experience an experience of looking it is not the name of a single particular experience "blue" it is more like the name of a class of experiences to which it applies somewhat loosely as to a range of blues and even there it is not so simple because this experience this class of physical experiences to which this name properly applies is really only a part of an experience or part of a part of an experience because it is very uncommon to experience color alone in fact we have to learn that name "color" which is seldom encountered alone to determine that there is a part of the visual experience that we can call "color" and that within that experience or part of an experience there is a set of alternatives that cover a range or divide it into the colors we know so "blue" is a subset of the conception color and the conception "color" is a conceptual extraction we make from the experience of looking for example you look around the room i look around the room and you're wearing pants that somebody might say are "blue" on some days of the
and they say "hes wearing blue jeans" his pants are colloquial and blue right? now "blue" for an american a european which is about the same thing here is part of a vernacular color system with about 8 terms you know nonspecialized you say visual experience subset color subset nonspecialized youve got red and blue and yellow and white and black and green and purple maybe which is really seven and maybe brown and grey to throw in the two commonest tertiaries and there you are and it adds up to nine and you could be a sport and add orange and it gives you ten common terms into which you can divide the whole world of color experience more or less and in a nonspecialized way and what i mean by this is that they constitute a range in the sense that these names shouldnt cross so you couldnt confuse blue with yellow say or red with blue or black or white or green and this is nonspecialized color in the sense that "vermilion" is not part of this system because there youre moving into specialized color for example i wouldnt say that these are turquoise pants theyre not but thats not why i wont say it azure? ultramarine? think of the term "cerulean" "he wore a pair of colloquial pants" "cerulean" is perhaps somewhat more concrete than "blue" or at least it seems so but now "blue" is not so concrete anymore because we have had to remove it by a process of conceptual abstraction from an aspect of a visual experience "color" and its only within "color" that "blue" has its meaning at all and "blue" occupies a space within this system or by jacobsonian theory is one of a set of possible substituents that form the range of the color paradigm in this system "cerulean" if it is fitted into it may come to occupy a narrow portion of the space occupied by "blue" where it may come to serve as one of a set of possible substituents within the subparadigm "blue" along with a whole set of other alternatives like "azure" "turquoise" "ultramarine" "prussian" "sky" "cyan" "royal" "navy" "powder" "baby" "midnight" but i think not they are not part of this system at all just pressed up against it in a crush resulting from the collision of several other systems of color naming within the english language but within the simple vernacular system of nine or ten colors the important thing is that there should be no crossing if it is blue it will not cross red or yellow or green
no, my wife and I have a difference of opinion every time we look at bluish green or greenish blue. I always think it's blue; she always thinks it's green. It's true; she looks at a car the car is driving in the street; she says, "Look at that green car." And I say, "It's blue." She says, "No, no, it's green." I say, "No, no, it's blue." Really, we don't argue about it at all. I have come to expect that when she sees a certain kind of car that I would call blue, she will call it green as well as she knows that when I see that same car I will call it blue. Though she calls that green, and that is a kind of language understanding too, that we speak each of us somewhat different color dialects and understand them both though only using one ourselves, but to the Australian aborigine, an Aranda say, but among the Aranda there is a different way of looking at all this, or at least a different way of talking about what we have just been looking at for in the Aranda system as it existed in the 19th century, there were according to the people familiar with them four, or actually five fundamental color terms: two blacks, white, red, and one other term for all the rest. One black was purka, used of charcoal, and the other urupulla, which included brown and a fair range of greys. White was churungura. Red tutuka, and the other was tierga, the sky was tierga. A green leaf was tierga, and yellow ochre was also tierga. Now this is a very different system for talking about seeing than ours. One term for black, one for tertiary colors, one for white, one for red, and one for the range of blue yellow and green. I have no doubt that we could persuade any reasonable Aranda gentleman or lady to distinguish between sky color leaf color and the color ochre and they could do this very handily. This gentleman or lady, an Aranda painter maybe; they could say that of course one was sky tierga, the other was leaf tierga, and the last was ochre tierga, but that they were merely three different shades of the same color tierga. That is that they were all the same color but modified by some other aspect of vision that we've chosen to call "shade," which would be somewhat similar to our "light" and "dark," or "deep" or "thin" or "saturated" or "not," but we really wouldn't have any appropriate name for this feature of vision.
that we have just called "shade" but which applies to a somewhat different range of visual experiences because the word "color" would also not apply to quite the same visual experiences of looking as ours or would apply in a different way so their word "shade" which would depend for its significance on their word "color" as our word "shade" depends on our word "color" would not be at all the same and we would simply not have any word for it that came conveniently to hand though we might very well know what they mean by it and this leads to interesting conclusions because it seems that "blue" occupies a different semantic space to use our old formalist conception of word meaning a different semantic space than our word "blue" and that not only that their conception of "color" probably has a different spatial configuration in the semantic domain of aranda looking than our notion "color" what interesting effects this should have upon an aranda critic of a fauve painting an aranda critic of a fauvist painting what a terrible idea because it is virtually a certainty that where a fauve painter would have placed blues and greens next to each other with deliberate assertiveness an aranda would not see two colors placed edge to edge just one color the aranda critic would surely reduce the fauve color system to a smaller numbered system with wider ranges so it could come to pass that a painting which consists of five colors for us could consist of three for an aranda an aranda painter hes looking at a different painting provided that what hes looking at is the color it will be an entirely different painting because the space will be partitioned entirely differently within the world of color this semantic space it seems then from this analysis that blue is a very abstract term that it is very far from being the name of a concrete physical experience but it is based on a very elaborate system of inferences and abstractions and that the physical act of seeing intersects with a socially preserved historically developed set of partitioning devices that will facilitate us and hinder us selectively in our seeing and so blue lies very close to the abstraction pole of the feature axis concrete/abstract when it is seen from this point of view which is a consideration when youre considering how close something seems to be to something else and even then we dont know how close but forget that how close the question that is more important is
where we are standing im standing were standing
youre standing somewhere facing somewhere in this semantic space . if there is such a thing as semantic space we are standing in it because there is no looking without standing sitting? somewhere with your eyes looking out of the front of your head and not behind it now youre standing somewhere and im standing somewhere in semantic space and theyre not the same place because i find it hard to imagine us all or any of us standing in precisely the same place even in semantic space now supposing from where im standing say "blue" looks pretty close to abstract and from where youre standing you say it looks pretty close to concrete i can imagine your position and you can imagine mine how can we each get to imagine the others position how come i can imagine your position as well as mine? how do you get to imagine my position as well as yours? if auden had written this poem in which he said "their houses were colloquial and blue" we would feel that "blue" was intended to be a concrete term that from audens position in semantic space "blue" looked fairly close to the pole marked concrete that it was intended to be a concrete term a primitive term perhaps such as one familiar to the experience of children one of the five hundred basic words of english or 1000 and that colloquial is not such a term belongs to the social world of adults or linguists or university graduates and therefore abstract now how do we do this come to understand each other? now this may be a bad term to understand but let us use it for the moment because we will know what we mean by it here now anyone who is going to have a theory of language will have to have a theory of how we use it to come to understand each other how we come to an understanding how we may not be at an understanding when we begin to talk and how we may arrive at an understanding when we are through or something of the sort they dont have to have merely a grammar they have to know to what the grammar applies and when to apply it that way or the grammar is a fairly meaningless construct if you cant propose some set of rules though thats a bad term rules some system for orienting ourselves to understand other peoples uses of language what they are saying and its relation to some kind of practice you dont understand their language you and an aranda cannot have a conversation at all until you somehow learn what an aranda uses those words for
and under what conditions now there is no grammar in the world that can provide for that nor is there any theory of grammar that will do that for you nor is there any theory of language that will do that for you now the reason I chose to talk about tuning I was proposing a way of looking at how we understand things how we come to understand things come to an understanding with each other about things through language has something to do with a notion process I would like to call tuning now why tuning now what kind of proposal does anyone make for understanding as an idea before I take up the idea of tuning think about the notion of understanding the idea that you understand something you imagine a kind of classical psychological idea of understanding somebody has some set of conceptions either internalized or expressed by a text or an utterance or a set of utterances and these utterances "mean" something that is in whatever space they exist they form a representation of these conceptions or they refer in some manner to this set of conceptions which constitute some kind of reality to which they may refer as say a map some kind of map which another person if he understands or she understands this text or these utterances recognizes as a man and knows the rules for using that map so that he could orient himself to the space referred to by that map and go to the same terrain in other words if you take my map and your map and you superimpose them on each other the two maps are the same and accordingly I could take your map superimpose my map on it and it would deviate very little from your map I'm now introducing a possibility of minor deviation and I could take either map and by orienting myself facing to the east and finding the north to my left and the south to the right and believing all the while that the west is in back of me and finding how I or we fit into the map thus oriented be able to go to the place marked out on that map that you might want me to go to using your map or my map with only minor difficulties now the idea of the matchability the congruence of your map and my map might be regarded as the notion of understanding and accordingly we could also suppose for this same theory that when I hear your utterances read your text they direct me to a map that is not quite congruent with your map or perhaps quite
far from congruence with your map and then we may negotiate through texts or more utterances i will say something and you will say something else perhaps we will go to some of the places and pace them off together if it is possible and if we care enough about the whole business and we will finally arrive at a pair of congruent maps and we could call this process coming to an understanding now this idea of congruence of matchability of maps is an extreme case which is the fundamental idea of understanding is not only an extreme case but an extremely odd case because it supposes that you have some way of superimposing these maps in some space it is our favorite childhood geometry trick of finding congruence by matching these maps in one space to determine this congruence or the degree of congruence or deviation from congruence and more its relation to some place that we have to go we know its relation to practice for example my right hand my left your right hand and your left mean the same thing which is to say that if i stood in back of you and faced the back of your head my right hand and your right hand would both be on the same side and we would both know it because in some mysterious fashion we can distinguish our right and our left and we do it in the same way because fortunately we both have our eyes in the front of our face and we know that if our noses are pointing toward the rising sun it will go down toward the back of our heads which is to the west and we know how all that lines up on the map so not only are our maps congruent but we also have a set of axes that tell us the significant orientation of these maps toward the world and we have a set of rules for how to behave in relation to these maps to get around the world these maps are families of instructions for how to get around in the world by placing some image of myself my double inside of these maps and orienting myself and my double our face and our hands in the map and the world this may all be involved in an idea of absolute understanding but thats a very peculiar kind of practice thats a very special idea of practice how many practices can you think of that require this kind of understanding what will we do together that will require it how many things do you do with other people that require you i hold the needle in my hand you have the thread and we start walking together approaching each other by giving each
other instructions in a dark room you're going to thread my needle in the dark the room is dark and I have a needle and you have a thread and I know that you have a thread and you know I have the needle and you're going to try and thread the needle in the dark with me? even this may not be a perfect example of congruence you may even think of it geometrically considered as a little sloppy but it's still very extreme how many times have you ever had this problem how many times have you ever had to thread a needle in the dark with somebody? not too often? if you got close together at all would you be happy? well not if you had to sew up my space suit then you wouldn't be happy at all but on the other hand if we had only to find each other in the dark and I was coming from one cell and you were coming from another and we were both alone and we only wanted to touch hands to know that we were not alone then we really could get together more easily if you only had to get a sense of what my room was like and your room was like you had to be reassured by my humanness in your dark room as I had to be reassured of your humanness in your dark room we would need even less we could be talking different languages and we might begin to hear the sound of voices or maybe like the count of Monte Cristo I'm working at my side you're working at your side were not even talking you're hearing the taps and you want to know its not a mouse that is I'm grating at my side of the wall this is the count of Monte Cristo paradigm I just named it twentieth proof I hear taps on the side of the wall below my cot is it water dripping a mouse is it some human figure trying to be released from his cell her cell its cell their cell is it a human agency intentionally moving toward me? is it an act of intentionality well if I can keep working till I get through to the other side I can find out empirically right? I can imagine being in the cell remember how in the count of Monte Cristo they begin by tapping to each other? when they tap to each other they have to somehow decide that someone is tapping Dumas is not very good on things like that or at least I don't remember if he was I don't remember him explaining how it was they knew it was somebody tapping there is a certain confidence they have that that other thing is not a random noise somebody is going tap tap tap tap it isn't clear how we know that that something is a human
agency and that human agency is intending toward us
already in the tapping there is a communication system
on the one side of the wall there is this tapping
you've identified it as a volitional act intending to reach
me im tapping on my side trying to assure the person on
the other side that im there the tap has to say im
here it may not have begun with that in mind it might
have merely been drumming on the wall to beat out the boredom
of my isolation but it has to be interpretable as
something more than a rat gnawing the lime out of the cracks or
burrowing through it has to not be a mechanical agency
because if it is i despair once and for all there is
nothing to go on for im going on because im trying to move
toward another human being to what end not to be
alone if there's another human agency its probably like
me you say thats egotism well its sort of like
me it doesn't have to be a lot like me it could be like
somebody else but enough like me to know that its trying
to avoid loneliness some other thing enough like me
so its moves are like my moves sort of they may
not be exactly like it but theyre enough like it for me to
feel assured that there is something to get to that
would make it worth trying and i could be wrong
imagine if the count of monte cristo were to be rewritten
and what's his name dantes edmond dantes
edmond goes through and he keeps moving and moving and
moving imagine he gets all the way through and he finds out
that the sounds were being made by a mechanism some
terrifying mechanism some stupefying nonhuman agency
not an animal agency not a rat but a mechanism
its very pathetic he'd probably die of a broken heart
im being very romantic today he dies of a broken
heart immediately or else starts going again to the next
wall again the hope is that the practice helps
define for example if you once decide that the other
agency is like you he/she is also scratching at the wall
the way you are and the intention which may initially
have been to escape is now to reach each other all
these are suppositions that are perfectly plausible
once you assume likeness if you don't reach each other
and still hear the sound you can still get certain
satisfactions from the sound (if you still assume
likeness? supposing you can never reach each other
supposing all you can do is arrive at a certain closeness
what would be satisfactory then to define the
perimeter of your cell? i could imagine since the wall may be so unfortunately strong at the central point which may be of a kind of rubble construction in which the rocks are of varying hardness but for some more or less irrelevant accident based on piling during construction the center of the wall consists of a concentration of rocks of much greater hardness of a granitic constitution let us say that finally resists the abrasion of your sharpened spoon or the nail from your shoe well what would you do next? you'd work along the wall hoping to track a path of weakness through the mortar holding it together but what if you couldn't get through what would you do? ultimately you would define the membrane separating you from the other and you would what would you "understand" him you would understand the limitations of your intercourse maybe or in part that is you would be on the other side of a well defined wall from someone else who was also on the other side of a wall from someone else who happened to be you and you would suppose that they were as aware of the limitations of their wall as you were of yours more or less and that they were trying to communicate with you and be with you as close as they could be with you under the circumstances of an impermeable wall which was yet definable something you could articulate together now that's also a model of human understanding sort of though it no longer supposes that you can penetrate to anybody else's experience now we've avoided the problem of the wittgensteinian situation in which we each have separate boxes into which the other cannot look and we each say that we've got a beetle in the box and i talk about my "beetle" and you talk about your "beetle" and we worry about whether what you're calling a "beetle" and what i'm calling a "beetle" are the same thing because at this point we are no longer asking what happens in the box we are merely trying to define the box that is the limits of the box which may not be much easier but that's understanding of a sort now how demanding are we going to be about understanding why identity of understanding what could this identity mean that i could stand in your place that i can occupy your mind your body your space absolutely finally you can occupy mine two lovers coming together in a simultaneous orgasm do they understand each other identically are they then one being in one place
and why do we keep coming back to this idea of identity with this word understanding is there something inherent in the term with its suppressed notions of congruence one knowing underlying another or imposed on it in a single space what kind of notion is this this queer congruence is there the notion really of two things occupying one place is there really a significant notion of standing in someone else's place can you imagine it truly? what would that be? to be someone else? to stand in someone else's place is to be someone else the term for understanding is very illuminating in German verstehen it means to stand in the wrong place right? verstehen it doesn't mean to have an identical place with anyone it means to be displaced to lose your footing to lose your place and no longer to stand right verstehen to stand wrongly as the noun verstand means to have lost your own and therefore to have the wrong stance its a bad word "understanding" we may have to give it up its a bad image and we may have to give it up this particular fragment of our language may be merely the unfortunate outcome of a damaging culture career in which we happen to have found ourselves by being born here and now we were not locked to all of the language images we've got we can move them around or more accurately move around among them because there are a lot of them and avoid some and approach others thats what it may mean to be able to use a language in common moving it around as we are moving around with it and in it lets talk about being able to use language in common together in relation to a common practice to a common what a common conception no to some common process set of interactions a common career perhaps i keep coming back to this word "tuning" because it doesn't suppose identities why tuning? i suppose that almost anything that happens in the world between us seems to involve kinds of recurrence for us why so? well as organisms perform certain common actions again and again like breathing or eating in a sense these acts are so common they seem trivial and endless but while they are very common and repeated numberless times they are no more trivial than they are endless but how many times before they come to an end? and these common acts are not absolutely identical but we can identify the coming and going of breath the taking of air into our bodies
and letting it go in all of its minute variations
and we do it again and again and we wake up every
morning and go to sleep each night we wake we sleep
we go through various other periodic activities
we talk we become silent we move we stand still
we seem to be beings characterized by many many
discontinuous and repeated events we are organisms that
dont maintain a continuously steady state we are organisms
that maintain a more or less steady state by assimilating
discontinuous events to a continuing process right?
were losing energy nearly all the time we lost it discontinuously and at
different rates and we certainly dont gain it
continuously and we dont gain it at the rate that we lose it
we gain it to make up for the loss several times
a day how many people eat more than five seven eight meals
a day? how many people are hooked up to intravenous systems
continuously to replace the material and energy we lose
during the course of a day very few basically
you have an intake system that works by gulps you have an
intake system for air that is not continuous your lungs
don't remain constantly open with air constantly
sucked into them by a kind of vacuum cleaner you take in
air that you need and you get rid of the carbon dioxide you dont
need through the same opening alternately you take
something in you give something out you do it again and
again breathing in and out now you may do it
differently at different times but its a repetitive cyclical
process and what you're trying to do is to organize it
to adjust it to some other process that is going on
at the same time though it may have started at a different
time and may be proceeding at a different rate if lets
say you're running up a hill it uses up burns up
even at the start a lot of energy for all those muscle
contractions that are going on again and again so that
organized tensile bunching fiber will contract again and again
to overcome the resistance of gravity to the weight of your
body trying to get up that hill and to burn up all that
energy at the rate you're beginning to need it you need to get
more and more oxygen into your blood faster and faster to
burn up all that fuel that your meals have provided you with
and this burning these many small fires burning in
the muscle fiber have to be sustained by the oxygen from your
blood at a rate that will keep them capable of tensing and
tensing again and again to let you keep on gaining ground up
the hill so you have to adjust the rate of your breathing
at which you're taking in oxygen to your greater need for
it and the blood has to flow faster through your body
to get to the places where the oxygen is needed to keep
stoking those fires and all of this work this
consumption of energy will give off heat that would get in the
way of the processes going on by raising the temperature of
your body which opens to let its cooling waters escape
that the wind from your motion may absorb from your skin
cooling the surface of your body at the same time
and for a while you're tuning as well as you can
your intake of air and your pulling of fuel from your
body which you can do for a while and up to a point
unless you need too much too fast for your muscle to keep
working and soon you're going to need water and at
some point your going to need food to replace your fuel
losses and the salts that the water has carried away but
for a while you've been dealing in tuning all the while
you've been running up this hill and working and breathing it
looks like you've been doing something continuous but what
you've been doing is adjusting recurring phenomena
adjusting to each other processes that are sequences
of small recurring events and I assume that standing
still is a kind of motion or more precisely a rate of
motion admittedly minimal but motion nevertheless
so I assume that we are always moving coming from
somewhere and going somewhere and while we are not in
continuous motion because the rate and the manner of our
motion varies often rather abruptly but were still
moving without being in continuous motion in the
sense that we are not mounted on wheels if we were
mounted on wheels we would have rotary motion and
if we were electrical things driven by electrical motors
that could power our wheels we might advance and retreat
by a rotary motion that would give the illusion of
continuity to our locomotion that was in fact driven by
the recurrent collapse and reformation of electromagnetic
fields that would in a series of indistinguishable but
repeated single pushes power our little wheels but
we don't have such an erector set construction we advance
and retreat by grossly discontinuous alternating repeated
moves we pick up one foot and we move it forward then
we lean on that leg for leverage to lift up the other foot and
move it forward and so on we have this funny binary way of
going this binary fashion one-two one-two one-two
this is so characteristic of our activities with our hands and our feet that it may have provided the basis for our taste for binarism for even and odd as an idea we may even have invented even and odd numbers from the nature of our locomotion because if we were spheres that merely rolled around even and odd numbers might never have occurred to us but as it is we have feet two of them and one foot goes forward and that's odd and when the other one comes to meet it they are paired and that's even and so we were inventing number now but this regularly recurrent action one foot and then another were going somewhere and were going somewhere by managing this set of periodically recurrent actions and someone else is going somewhere in the same way though probably at another pace and we have to do something together in this situation to accomplish anything together at all we have to find out what the other person's pace is we have to find what our pace is and the easiest way for me to do this is for me to try to adjust my pace to his or her pace and for her to adjust her pace to mine we have to adjust our paces each to the other so that we can come more or less into step now how do we do this? by watching my step and her step i can tell that she's walking slower than i am and at a different angle and i can slow down or she could speed up and she might have speeded up too much while i was slowing down so that she would have to slow down again while i was speeding up a bit to catch up and all the time we would have before us our ongoing acts that we could compare because they were still going on in front of us and we would have some idea based on our notion of going together what we would like or require demand or desire from going together for a while and we could try for this in our practice which could all change in a while but it is this kind of negotiation i would like to call "tuning" because that's pretty much like what you're doing when you're trying to sing together whether your idea of together is in unison or fifths or thirds or in whatever makes a kind of common sense for your common practice which may have just become common and may cease to be common to the two of you the three of you or the whole barbershop quartet in a minute or two or a week or a year and i like this idea of tuning because it depends on an idea of going for there will be no
knowing without going and no common knowing without some 
kind of going together for a while now suppose i take 
it out of the physical ive given a physical analogy for 
this common knowing ive tried to replace as an idea of this 
common knowing the notion of understanding which carries 
with it as a ghost of a figure a static physical analogy 
with a very nonghostly dynamic physical analogy that 
replaces an idea of a common standing more commonly 
treated as an identical standing with an idea of a common 
going which seems a lot easier to conceive of 
especially in the matter of how we may arrive at it or 
leave it and suppose we now take leave of it this 
figure of speech as all discourse is some figure of speech 
as linguistics is also a figure of speech or a 
sequence of figures and turn to a different figure 
from the discourse of memory a number of years ago 
i was in a somewhat dislocated situation a girl friend of 
mine went to visit her parents in texas and this girl and 
i had been going together and so spending a lot of time 
with each other trying to come together or get as much in 
step with each other as a going together of this type required 
and doing as poor a job of it as we were and still 
not giving it up as a project but taking a brief vacation from 
it for a while as it were she went off to texas and 
i was left in new york more or less at peace but 
without a great deal that i had to do and a friend of mine 
a woman i knew called me up and said listen theres an 
arabic movie playing an egyptian movie and id like to see it 
would you like to go and i said far out id never seen 
an egyptian movie where is it playing? it was playing 
in a neighborhood theater on court street in brooklyn 
which as i later learned was a lebanese arabic portorican 
italian neighborhood it was an egyptian movie i was 
learning arabic studying arabic actually studying 
classical arabic which was what the schools prefer to 
teach and learning palestinian street arabic which 
was what i preferred to learn but i hadn't as yet made much 
progress and besides this was still not egyptian arabic 
so that it would have been nearly hopeless except 
there were subtitles in spanish and so i went to see 
this arabic movie with subtitles in spanish which made it 
a lot better for me when i could see them and it was 
a wonderfully perplexing movie i had after all never seen 
an egyptian movie at all and all countries have their own
distinct fashions in movies but this movies fashion was
how can i describe it there were two twins children
a boy and a girl going somewhere apparently in
a caravan and the caravan was raided by bedouin
and the twins were separated and one twin wound up
in cairo in a rich family and the other twin wound up
somewhere else and they were a boy and a girl
somehow the boy met the girl in cairo years later
it was a cairene romance and somehow the romance
took place in a department store you see tha my spanish
and my arabic were having problems i wasnt really sure how
these circumstances came to be but she was the protegee of
the wealthy department store owner who had adopted her but
had come to love her as a woman and the boy was an up and
coming young man in the firm a handsome young sales manager
it was after all the 20th century and he was also in
love with this beautiful salesgirl or model or whatever she
happened to be in the department store and as he was in
love with her he asked her out on a date and they had
this scene of dining and dancing over rooftops overlooking
all cairo and the music plays and theyre wearing 1940's
outfits and shes wearing a kind of ginger rogers dress and is
dancing beneath this sliver moon with the keylight
reflections flaring up from her fair 1940's page boy shoulder
bob and they sing to each other and love begins
i could tell that spanish is very clear about the
beginning of love and love began in both arabic and spanish
to throbbing violins and much corazon and i watched
this movie intently trying to figure out what was going on
and i thought aha i am watching a kind of
egyptian musical i thought i am trying to tune to an
egyptian musical the boy and the girl will get together
and it will be terrific they will be happy and they will
dance over rooftops drinking champagne happily forever under a
sliver moon against a backdrop of the mosques of cairo no
that wasnt what happened because at one point the
wealthy patron stepfather of the young lady the
department store owner her protector and boss who
you learn by mysterious means is the real father of them
both the young girl and young man though nobody
knows this but you who are watching the movie and who
is madly in love with the young woman whose father he does
not know himself to be and who is also the patron
employer of the boy whose father he does not know he is
either though he has encouraged his progress to sales
managership from street waif this father patron store
owner discovers the romance that exists between his two
differently encouraged proteges and he becomes deeply jealous
and begins to spy on them keeping check on their dates
and their meetings and even their occasional encounters in
the store because you see they do not both live under
his roof for the girl has been living with her stepfather
which is proper who is in fact her real father
while the boy has been living on his own while his
father has merely been acting as his sponsor so to speak
so he has his own apartment in cairo which the
father can now spy on unbeknownst to the boy and
there is a showdown for the boy and the girl are having
dinner together in this apartment harmlessly enough no
doubt but romantically with candles and wine
and there is laughter and music while the father is
spying at the keyhole in the guise of an outraged
stepfather while he is in fact a jealous lover and
he somehow bursts into the apartment just at the moment
when the girl as i remember has gone off to the
bathroom to powder her nose and there is this struggle
between the boy and the man and there is somehow a gun
which i believe was the fathers though now i think
of it it belonged to the son who had seized it from a
drawer when his father burst into the room because he
thought him a burglar perhaps and intending to defend
himself and the girl from this unknown marauder went for
his gun but then recognized his patron employer
who began to reproach him in angry tones about his
shameful treatment of the girl which they argue about
loudly and with much waving of hands in the midst of
which the gun which seems to have been largely forgotten about
is waved idly too in the sequence of wildly
gesturing hands that becomes more and more violent as the
argument gets more heated and the voices grow louder
while the girl is still in the john and the father in a
fit of rage strikes out at the boy and they grapple and roll on
the floor till somehow the gun that is still in
somebodys hand by accident goes off and the boy
gets up and is frightened and confused and runs out the door
in despair so you can imagine for yourself the thoughts
in the mind of the girl as she comes back freshened out
of the john to find her lover gone through the open door and
her stepfather lying in a pool of blood on the persian rug next
to her chair and all of this in the brief interlude
after the last song had just ended now this is becoming a
different movie the police have captured the boy
who is now in jail and receives visits from his
tearful girl friend sister who cannot believe in his guilt
at which all the evidence points including the
fingerprints on the gun he had left on the floor but
fortunately it all has a happy ending somehow the
father who had been left lying with his rotund belly and
little feet pointing upwards as in a maigret novel turns
out not to be dead and by another mechanism completely
incomprehensible to me the father learns through
evidence from some kind of letters that his would-be
murderer is really his son and the girl is his daughter
and there is a final scene in which the father forgives
the son though i am not certain for what gives his
blessing to them both the brother and sister at
which all three of them embrace and the movie is over
and i havent the vaguest idea of what it is that ive seen
as i came out of the movie i was completely baffled and
said so to my friend who seemed equally baffled but
suggested as a possible moral that it was better to go to bed
with your father than your brother anyway i said goodbye
to amy who lived on state street and walked over to catch
the fourth avenue local which goes back into greenwich village
where i lived and i realized that i was completely
baffled when i noticed in the subway station
waiting for one of the trains that came rather
infrequently at that hour a very pleasant looking man
who i happened to notice had come from the very same
movie i had just seen i had seen him in the lobby and
walking down court street and he was a kind of gentle
sensitive man cultivated and obviously not an american
and we got into a conversation in french which was
the most convenient language we had in common he was an
arab and he spoke french and arabic but i couldnt converse
with him in arabic so i conversed with him in french and
in the course of this conversation that we had i asked him what
he thought of the movie that we had just seen i thought
maybe i would find out i was trying to tune i wanted
to understand what movie i had seen because this movie seemed
unrecognizable to me in any way at all and i said to him
this movie and he said to me the movie its all blague mais c'est la patrie the movie was nonsense
but its my homeland i thought i understood sort of you see how understood here is a funny term and we
continued to talk for a while about other things the middle east living in the united states whatever when somehow another person appeared in the station an american a red haired choleric american who somehow got into a conversation with us about politics how he got into this conversation with us i'm not entirely sure but somehow we discussed the suez coup that is anthony eden's adventure or more properly the israeli french english adventure to seize the suez which had ended almost as abruptly as it began and had occurred rather recently and the two of them got into a fairly hot argument and you may ask how this happened because the american spoke no french and the egyptian didn't speak any english and i was caught in the middle so i would translate for the one and then i would translate for the other and they were trying to get together on the suez coup how this started i really can't say but somehow they were in this discussion and they clearly had very different points of view and the questions and answers were coming thick and fast the egyptian who was an educated and intelligent man i could see that he was intelligent but i couldn't understand him which had nothing to do with his way of talking because he was a very precise even elegant speaker and i understood everything he said but i was certain that i didn't know what he meant he kept insisting that it was nonsense to believe that the russians and the americans had frightened england out of the situation he had bluff ed them out and the american every time he heard that got choleric he would wave his hands in the air and insist that it was common knowledge that the two superpowers had brought the adventure to a halt and you see my friend the egyptian was really as insistent as he was polite so what i had to do was consistently soften the rather rude tone of the american and somewhat as well the crude stance of the argument so while the american was waving his hands around in the air shouting about the obvious weight of the superpowers i would translate his comments rather more softly into sentences somewhat like "well don't you suppose there was some fear in the east and west and among the community of nations that this scramble for advantages could upset a delicate balance of power? that russia and the united states might have had a great deal to be concerned about that there was some danger even of world war and so on and so on" as i
alluded to pressure that could have been brought to bear suggested threatened by russia and the u.s. all the while my speech was being listened to eagerly by the red haired man who was waiting to see what possible response could be made to his crushing arguments while my friend the egyptian was as insistent as he was polite and replied as disdainfully as you can imagine "do you really believe that the english would be afraid of the russians?" looking all the while toward the american with a smile of superior knowledge now this got me really interested because i wanted to know what was going to happen and naturally the american got crazy at my translated response but i didnt pay much attention to that since from the beginning i had been softening the impact of his crudeness anyway and turning his rudest remarks into something conversationally acceptable and he was a pretty crude choleric fellow and was often really yelling at the egyptian who was extremely polite and even suave but very subtle and stubborn himself and i also wanted to know what he had in mind here so i pressed him to explain further and he did "the reason" he said "that the english backed out was to finally get the french out of egypt" at which point i got nervous because i realized that if i were to tell that to the american he would get hysterical and i didnt want them to get into a fight so i said its generally believed that there were certain french interests in egypt that the english were trying to liquidate and they took this opportunity to sacrifice their own interest to bring down the french i said this is our train i said to the american lets go and we got in and it was not my friend the egyptians train and we went off now i understood everything that had been said to me i knew what the words were what they appeared to signify and i kind of had a feeling i understood roughly what kind of conceptions were being pointed to but i wasnt sure my impression was that there was something here that was too subtle for my understanding altogether i gave up on it because i think i had reached the point where the cell divides and there was no way i could get through that wall i thought about it all the time i was on the train and when i reached my station i got off the train and went home and i felt that i understood as well as i would ever understand what he had said to me and what i had said to him without a great deal of further effort
at tuning as i also knew i was not even close to an understanding of what he meant by "england" or "france" as he was not even close to what the american had understood as the "united states" and "russia" no i knew that that attitude to england meant something but i had no experience of english importance let alone influence and domination to me the english are absurd i mean i worked in boston once you work in boston and you realize that england is a mildly debilitating disease contracted by americans mainly on the east coast and especially in boston though it is by no means entirely so isolated and it has a number of fairly clear symptoms among which is a peculiar confusion of whatever happens to be a native american dialect with whatever happens to be the working idea of a southern english accent that is considered fairly high class and victims of this disease will produce some astonishing speech sounds in startling places and especially when they feel themselves to be in important speaking circumstances and the more impoverished and powerless england becomes the more purely gratuitous this situation becomes but all this is merely amusing and still i could imagine i suppose with the help of all sorts of historical discourse because after all england was a great power once and especially so in the middle east and noted for diplomacy and intrigue i could imagine such a frame of mind frame of reference but i would have to imagine it without experiencing it within which the term england carried with it references to a great and insidious economic and diplomatic power such that i could explain no situation in which the term england appeared without taking account of that power but that i can only imagine it is what makes this a trivial illusion of understanding because there would still be no common knowing based on any common going there would have been no tuning only my own arrogant fantasy of standing in that egyptians place because after all his place was still egypt and much closer to cairo and the suez canal than mine and it is quite possible probable even from the nature of his class and conversation that he had a much better idea than i of who were in fact the shareholder owners of the suez company what part of them english what french and even how much weight they might conceivably have had with their respective governments though i have no proof for this either still he was standing much
closer to the Suez Canal than I and had been standing there for a long time and he may also have had a rather different notion of pressure and how it may be brought to bear at a place because after all, though the great powers were decidedly great the Suez Canal was a narrow space perhaps too narrow for a great power to exert its power in as it is difficult for the heart to exert pressure directly upon a remote capillary without affecting too many others let us say and I by no means want to insist or even suggest that it was these considerations that lay behind what he had said because somehow I did not know what he had meant though I was beginning to arrive at a notion of how far we might be from each other and what sort of distance we might have to travel with what effort to even approach a common knowing which might in the end prove to be either impossible or not worth the effort or the time it might take from a life and this is a kind of learning I have been experiencing lately and I have had this experience fairly often of late and though it may seem an especially easy experience to encounter in the context of Arabic I'm not so sure but I am sure that it is a valuable experience and we have to learn it in more difficult circumstances this learning to not understand we may have to learn it with New Jersey people I certainly have very little understanding of New Jersey or Encinitas or Solana Beach and at this time I think it's very important for us to form a new notion of human rapprochement that's not based on understanding and I would like to contribute to not understanding I would like to contribute to human not understanding I would like to slow down the fantasy and illusion of understanding so that we could inspect the way and the pace at which we are approaching or leaving other people and see how far away they are and whether there is any reason or prospect for reaching them because one thing that's been promoted endlessly in this world is the fantasy of understanding the notion that it is always possible desirable and costs nothing I remember once when I was working in the New York City school system reading poetry to high school kids and we used to talk together before and between readings and after and somehow we got into a conversation about what you read in the newspapers and facts and the meaning of talking about things and I remember one very shrewd kid saying to me what about what you read in the newspapers what they say there and this was in what we would
now call the early stages of the vietnamese war and i had been putting down what they were saying in the new york daily news which was new yorks most popular picture newspaper which had a very high moral stance in favor of the war so i said well if a revolution broke out tomorrow in some part of the world you had never heard about the daily news if they decided to care about it would write about it in such a way as to give you the impression that you understood all about it and knew exactly what to do about it as well as they did so the kid who was really pretty smart said what about the new york times and i had to think for a moment and then i said if that same revolution broke out in that same part of the world that you had never heard about and they decided to take it seriously they would write about it in such a way as to give you the impression that they understood all about it and knew exactly what to do about it the idea of understanding is of the order of knowledge you get at a worlds fair you come in it costs very little to get in they have the flags edge to edge the costumes and the crafts you bow to each other you shake hands you walk out and what do you know? some fragment or two of knowledge beyond the level of the pitch maybe its time we got rid of this fantasy of understanding you have to go a fair way with someone to come to a common knowing or at least some way to some knowing look several years ago new york had a subway strike i dont remember how long ago but it was a long time ago because i was still a kid and working for my uncle and i happened to have a car and i was driving in to work and as often happens when there is a state of emergency new york had a kind of festive attitude toward the occasion and people were very friendly and helping each other giving and taking hitches and having conversations they would otherwise never have had and somewhere under the el in downtown brooklyn on my way to the bridge to get into the city i picked up a couple waiting for a hitch they were an unlikely couple a dark smallish older man late fifties maybe and a very beautiful young girl maybe in her mid twenties very respectable people neatly dressed in drab cheap even slightly shabby clothing and we started to talk as the code of the situation prescribes they started talking to me somewhat shyly and it was mainly the man who spoke and i learned from them that they had
recently gotten out of a country in europe with difficulty escaped with some danger to their lives to this country where they knew nearly nobody but had somehow gotten here and watching them as carefully as i could while driving and listening attentively i realized that the girl was this man's daughter because this is what he told me but all the time that he was telling me about his daughter who had been a student at the technical college in the capital where she had been pursuing studies in engineering but all this time that he was telling me about their lives there in a very affectionate unconscious but unfatherly and slightly erotic way he kept stroking her hair and shoulder and she paid no special attention to these apparently rather common attentions and remained more or less silent except when she would confirm a detail or two of what he was saying what it had been like the student life over there and how different living seemed to be over here and how she was not really sure that she minded giving up an engineering career for a life in the united states because of the difficulties of life over there and it was a long and circumstantial story about how strange they found living in the united states in a kind of unfamiliar form of poverty in which they were without family or friends in a strange city where i suspect they knew nobody at all and as they talked to me of this i began to suspect that this was possibly the first time since they had been here that they had talked to anyone to anyone in any detail of their lives and their sense of it and it was because i was a stranger and they were very proud and they would in all likelihood never see me again and around twenty-seventh street there was a small factory around the furriers district where i had to let them off and i guess that they both worked there although she had studied engineering and the old man was also some kind of technical expert or other and now they were working more or less contentedly in this crummy little factory into which i watched them go and as i saw them go i realized that i was sure they were lovers and that i got this assurance from the way the old man touched her her hair and her shoulder and from the way they shared their physical space together which from the way they shared it somewhat more than affectionately i was sure that it was an erotic space the living physical space of lovers and as i drove off to where i was going near fortieth street i
wondered what country they came from and i realized that it was difficult for me to tell because all this time i didn't know what language we were speaking because all of the time we were talking together we were not speaking any language i knew we were speaking a language something like several languages that i knew a language i obviously couldn't speak they couldn't speak my language and i couldn't speak theirs but in spite of that we managed to speak and their language was something like italian and something like russian and there were a lot of slavic words in it i could understand and it had a lot of kind of latin in it and i figured maybe we'd been talking rumanian

This piece was originally an improvised talk performed at the Center for the Humanities at Wesleyan University in Connecticut in January 1977.
Robert Kelly

Studies from the Mishnah III

The Mishnah is the first writing-down of the Oral Law of the Jews. It is a sudden text, then, where speech had been. This third Study is motivated by the triliteral root D-B-R, which has (at least according to the old lexicographers) the 'root-meaning' of behind, then of setting one thing after another, thus arranging, thus speaking coherent words, thus words so arranged, or any words, or any thing at all. As 'speak' or 'word' or 'thing' the root most frequently incarnates.

Behind this book
I want to get behind this book this thick thing this afterlude this thick belated thing this thick this book

I want to get behind this book this thick thing spoken,

back to the Oral Law they say came before & talks behind this book. But they say it only in a book, this thick replacement for a savage breath or lover's idle soft breathing left a minute later still ringing in the ear how soft she said whatever it was she said —

& in this Spoken Law thank God the message can get lost. Back behind the book is a beforeness. Before the thing written thickly in the book is a breath breathing. Before the breath is a breather. That means a pause or silence or a rest. Or one who pauses her mouth half-open at my ear about to speak. Or not. Or let the message loose into its breath.
The law
breathed its last
into a book.
Now it lasts
instead of breathing.

I want to get behind this book I find her breathing.

[Of Poetics]

And it would be that way with the two of them
the whole winter
sometimes talking sometimes
he thought it was poems they were writing or she
was writing in him
from all that distance
spoken
out of the common snow that this year
had its way with the whole seaboard
there was no home
after all
of being different
they loved each other & were far

she was writing in him
& sometimes they came onto the paper
like snowmobile tracks found at morning
up their hill theirs no
longer & not even a memory
of some hard noise in the night
to show what but they knew full well what
had gone that way

that poetry
is as brutal as such machines
& leaves tracks on a less perishable surface
from which the person or personality of whoever was driving
has long ago been able to disappear
back in his private ranch-house.
Ted Enslin

Ranger LXVI

How do you open the rock?
The key to stone is where?

(And he went up
over the hill, puzzled
about many things,
almost dreaming.
There were fledgelings
in the young branches,
flyag all around him,
worried, and frightened.
He said to them,
“Never mind, little ones,
I am looking for a way
to unlock stone — —
not to break it.”
But they could not answer him.
They were trying to fly higher.

How do you take
what is a present
with thanks? and without saying thank you?

(He was not a wise man,
not quite foolish.
He did not like the life
below him;
but he knew so little!
what was ahead.

The wind, now, how
can you tell where it comes from?

really comes?
Not just that which moves
because the other
stirs through it.

(And he came to a place
where the road
was thick with brush.
But he was anxious to go on,
and did.
And the thick brush opened
to a flat place.
He could have thought
that he was the first man there,
but he saw wood,
cut and stacked,
and left there to rot —
old wood — rotten at the ends —
that glowed in the dark,
being damp
and abandoned.

The key to stone?
(He had almost forgotten that,
and the last glint of light
— — and the last glint of light — —
a red patch on an old tree — —
made him afraid
— almost afraid —
though he kept on.
Climbing.

Where has the wind gone?
There is no new wind here???

(He came to broad water.
There was still enough light to look,
and he saw two water beetles:
they were arching and contending
on the soft flow.
Were they fighting, or making love?
He wondered about it,
but he knew so little.

The moon, with fire,
or is it a firefly?
Above us the moon.

(He looked out on the land,
and he compared what he saw—
the high land
above the low
from which he came.
“This land is older than that land....”
He said it without thinking.

Then he thought,
and wondered at what he had said.
He was high
— high enough—
but the peaks were still above him.

Stone, and the stone swings open.

Wind, and the wind moves through.

Fire, and the moon lights up.

(He never came back,
and because he had gone
(before he was forgotten)
men who had laughed
when he was still with them
called him wise.

Re: Ranger LXVI

The dream occurred after I overheard the little boy who asked his father to open a stone
for him, and it was followed by a simple walk on a wet day when swallows were learning to
fly. The three circumstances: question, dream, fortuitous timing of the walk, led me into a
world which I have known before. I take no credit for being there, but I am grateful.
What Jung talked about as 'collective unconscious' I like better in my own terms as
'remembrance by blood.' These are the rituals that sustain us quite as much as bone and
ligature. I would not want to live without their possibility.
Note on Soma · Oneirika

In the root meaning of Ethnopoetics (*ethnos* from Indo-European *Seu*², as listed in the *American Heritage Dictionary*, = “self,” “our people,” “our kind”) all *poesis* is implicated, because deeply everything we make involves Self-making and a reaffirmation of our link with People: it’s personal and it goes beyond the personal. But more specifically *Soma · oneirika* can be viewed in the Ethnopoetic context by its connection with *alcheringa*: it belongs to Dreamtime. The poems are “dictated” (to use Spicer’s word) directly from the dream. For many years now I have been doing what I call *oneiropoesis*, which involves writing in a state of mind midway between dream and waking, maintaining and cultivating the dream and writing whatever comes. It is not so much “remembering” the dream as *furthering* it, by obedience to its specific energy rather than grasping after what is past. I think of it in the context of what Henry Corbin, speaking of Avicenna, calls Recital: a Telling that is implicitly a Reading, to be read by the teller as he tells (or writes); that is, the tale is not grasped by him except in the making. “Reading” at root means “telling,” and we may distinguish a kind or a “tradition” of poetry that is “readerly,” in which the maker is actually in the position of reader. His Art is surrender. And that may be the truest sense of the Sacred that we know, a surrender to What Is without aid of doctrine or governing foreknowledge. “Readering,” reader-making, laying out the word-path that takes what is Given as the only revelation. That brings us back to ourselves, or what Keats must have meant by the life as allegory, though the truer word is story, the Telling.

Soma · Oneirika 15

**Sayings**

1
Surrender to the room  
and let the horse jump out.

2
If it’s a bone,  
if it’s a stone,  
if it speaks it speaks.

3
Picked a fight  
with my own fist  
and poked my  
Self in the nose.

4
Trying to recall the pull of a lost place:  
Sticking hand in pool to catch its flex.
You’ll get to encounter it anyway:
It in us, in it, in us, anyway.

Purifying the dream
licking the lips.

So press the pen into the bleeding beef
to sense the blood potential in the writing.

Who says the sacred depends upon familiarity?
Everything said was self-evident, and yet I remember nothing. Doomed
to lucidity, the Sacred Lily revealed itself in the sacroiliac.

As for the Rose,
it bedevils itself to unravel itself.

The dream is for reading.
Notice how anything that happens goes around the world.

Soma - Oneirika 16

The Morning Changes

The morning changes
   rose
in its throat.

The morning changes
   Rose
in its throat.

The morning changes
   ROSE
in its throat.
Two women are riding horseback.  
A man and a woman ride up on horseback.  
The two women pursue the man and the woman.  
I'm rooting for the man and the woman, but I don't know why.  
The man is the first to lose and gets his head bashed in.  
Next the two women on horseback pursue the one woman on horseback. One of the two women on horseback flanks unexpectedly to her right (our left) and enters the treetops with her stern look.  
With her stern look, on horseback, now she is traveling at us. Riding in her purple bodysuit, on horseback, she lunges at us, whip in hand, she lunges at us, hip in hand, wearing purple.  
So now we're in the Bardo crossing the lower and middle regions riding bareass. The word puns itself free and forward.  
This kind of action is always in 5-D.  
Let us ask as few questions as possible about what has just happened lest we interfere with someone else's initiation or disturb a birdnest.

For the moment I'm convinced that the Jews discovered America.  
Wandering over the ocean Black Jews who meet Red Jews on their way to Jerusalem Ur-Jerusalem Ur-Ur-Jerusalem discovering Ur-America and then losing track of it beneath their feet in the effort to regain the literal
homeland, storyland, the tellable
as nameable but not re-tellable, not re-nameable, no
name sticks as long as the Man
Knows . . .

The one-half Jew in me
knows its name too well, it It he He
Who? knows my name too well but
not the old discovered America.

Soma · Oneirika 19

On the Line

Pyramidal cities
cannot hold up
better than she
who carries her tea on her belly-line
curved around the world

Soma · Oneirika 20

Oneiropoesis, or the Dream addresses Itself

1
Dream writing. Sitting
on the page, holding
the tail of the dream
between your teeth.

2
Is the butterfly
dreaming it is me
dreaming it is he
dreaming it is me
or vice versa?

3
Is there no brain coral big enough
to make a full glass?
A glass of what?
Take it and drink.
The dream has given us permission
to think these things.
The Further Self-Addressing Dream

1
Everything you will utter at the end
of this state, call it dream, call it trance, is
closer and closer
down onto a micro-
second, the
ledge
of the
gap.

2
it is it is it is
O it is it is it
is so

3
What matters is the
Bird on the page.

4
He eats the worm
flaps his wings
and lifts us over the green slime

Wearing Itself

Wear out socks.
Wear out even the sandals
of the incarnate feet.
But not being.
Can't wear out
being itself,
not on the outside,
not on the inside.
Neither being itself
nor the place on the page
where the pen goes
to wear itself.
Believing no unconscious
but the words
spilling themselves into speech
flesh made speech . . .

suddenly a road that
wasn't there before
finds me walking
in a new direction
presumably homeward
but I have no home
and the strangers I meet at the bridge
conduct a further detour
so that animals and disfigured
creatures of mud and formless flesh
are parts of the general entourage

and anything is possible.

I am drawn out
down
through
out.

At the border of the southern
jungle
clarity of mountain rocks and snows
not accessible
from regions known.

You have to go down
into sub-equatorial
regions of the globe
or underneath the surface of the earth itself
there to gain access to a spaciousness

and mountain openness of expanse
not accessible
above
in regions known.

1/4/77

In South American Jungle Swamp and Darkness
“escapees”
from North American Life
live
in carnal swamp and night among
tall white trees of bone and living muscle tissue
fucking constantly.

A woman of webs in flight
floats down the air.

At first I don't know if she is a woman,
but then she lures and attracts me
with the beautiful white dots
on the surface of her shadow-colored facial skin
until I am all amass of herself and other females —
one particularly huge mammalian creature
maternal beyond desire.

Later
we are upstairs
in a jungle restaurant
being served a meal at table
including nice hot “roles.”

This is, however, too “liberal” a possibility
for most of the jungle creatures
not willing to submit
to dining table conversation and decorum.
Visiting Gerrit Lansing.

He shows me dime sized coins he is collecting.

He shows me his old desk.

He shows me folded over cartoon scroll where layers and levels of all kinds of cartoon stories demonstrate magical layerings of magical worlds.

The higher levels show armoured cartoon fliers zooming down from metallic heights.

This is a book of special kabbalistic doctrine and magical diagram satisfactory at last and not needing rationalizing extenuations to adjust imbecile absurdity or impossible-to-be-believed propositional presumption dating from a previous layer of the mind-fold

mind-field we are riding through the Webs and Beams and that which we clutch onto with our minds has to be of such polarity and fabric as actually abides here. It can’t be some time else’s mindfold patched up to look right now.

It’s late at night and Gerrit is about to snatch the cartoons back again before I have time to study Oracular Devices.

2/21/77
ZK's back.

I am in his ritual.

If the bead of wax
drops from the pin
before the rite is over
I must die
or I will die . . .

This can only happen because of
carelessness, inattention, or wrong will
and it is this last possibility makes me not desire
to perform the rite myself as ZK wishes.

Twice we are going to begin and twice
I back down
fearing to die.

Give myself over to the mythic act . . .

Overcome the only obstacle . . .

Allow the African deity to speak
be
friends with him
or them . . .

Put on strange masks . . .

Amuse my friends . . .

The rite is concerned with oracular enquiry.

In a book discussing Yoruba "ethics" I learn
that if a child is asked the question
the answer is oracular.

I ask a little girl among my friends
and she says
don't go on with it.

A wine bottle
long and tall
whose waters must be spilled
over the line
strung out above the altar.

Then wax congeals
and long drops hang from the line
and ZK reads them.

2/27/77
Arrive in Germany alone
and walk into a church
which is performing Lohengrin.

Singing paintings make me weep.

Vast halls and restaurants.

Orchestras play surrounding
an immense interior.

Drummers and glockenspiel
operators flail their gongers

but the beautiful haunting song which lured me in
has vanished utterly.

Thursday's Turtles:
a little whistle sings
an uncanny melody

By pressing her fingers
softly in wet sand
Joby Kelly has made "impressions"

and in the morning
the sand has hardened
into subtle rock forms.

I call everyone over to see
and Joby shows us how they all are turtles
of a really remarkable life-likeness to our turtle
and one of them . . .

but here a tiny voice
begins to repeat an
uncanny melody:

   mi fa/ mi mi mi fa/ do re mi
   mi fa/ mi mi mi fa/ do re mi

The last three syllables
make the word
"Lohengrin"

who is one of Joby's Turtles.

3/12/77
I have been working at musical composition in German
by drawing curves on paper as I hum “irrational” melodies
or tunes whose mathematic chooses
irrational intervals or numbers in their structure.

Someone objects
and says these tunes will not
be acceptable in Vienna
in spite of the references within the musical configurations
to the bass notes so
typical of that which is popular there.

I am simply preoccupied with producing these musical doodles however
which vanish anyway as I write them
like notes on air.

3/31/77

Swimming with the ancient
barge across the ocean — pulling it
by its rope
through night time water.

I am swimming
at the front of this primitive rig
and I take my shift by pulling an iron rope
attached to a large black woman
up in the prow.

The journey is an “example”
of journeys ancient
peoples took
crossing from primitive America
back towards Europe.

The barge is a mere iron frame
with a battery of oarsmen
aiming their oars
into the fiery waters
Sarah Appleton

from Ladder of the World’s Joy

The head reflects over the sexual star
The star of sex speaks to the head
There is a spiral echo
opening the lily
to the
bee
within
the widening thigh

Not the star over the star
but the world embraced within the world
drawn in, held by breath
arms held out embracing

The backbone is inside
the spiral of the chest

Sound is resounding
through the bone — into the cave
of the throat nose and ears

One hums, sees a swirl
of blood behind the lid like a moon
or the ripple of water
The phylum, the living bundle the line of lines . . . here, scripting itself from the tiny threads in the brain, wooed by the heat, what the sun gives what the line of music recalls

the graph of the heart, the blood music against the skin, raised to passion by the breath

a language piece by piece, where the spiral lies next to the spiral trembling harmonically delicately

Note

These poems came about as I was entering into a new relationship between the poetic and natural world in a new long poem I have written called "Ladder of the World's Joy." Teilhard de Chardin's *The Phenomenon of Man* (vision of the past into ecstasy of the future) is not really science or philosophy but a new epic for man, generating for us the energy and life for survival. I did not (and do not fully) understand this as I began to reread it while considering the relationship of poetry to plant life. It generated a whole series of poems and it was only through writing them that I could comprehend Teilhard's essay. The poems were not "subject" poems, but musical sequences released by understanding, which moved outward, towards a mystery of what is partially known, so that individual poems caught moments, glints, insights of the whole. The series, which developed on its own as a deeper and deeper initiation into living things, ran parallel to his divisions of Pre-life, Life, Thought, Life-beyond (they translate it as "survival"). As I read his epic, writing the poems, certain inexplicable scenes, emblems and movements occurred within the poems as the effect of vision restored. I won't detail the journey here. But there seemed to be an emblem, a bodily emblem presented at each state: the star over the star; the world within the world; the spiral. At one moment a random, chance emblem was given from a book. I also had to liberate an immense oak from a vine that was girdling it. There was a companion who taught me about the dance of creation (from India). So that really as much time was spent in action as in writing.

These emblem-poems are selected from a longer work, *Ladder Of The World's Joy*, published in book form by Doubleday in December, 1976. We gratefully acknowledge the permission of the author and publisher to reprint this portion of the book.
These are the quilts

that
rise like
The Moon Over
The Mountain on
the horizon of memory.

These are the quilts of geese and down,
quilts of fans and feathers,
quilts of dovetails and swallowtails

birds-in-air, birds-of-paradise

the quilts that
fly
away

from the sheets.

These are the quilts like flags
from the mastheads of pilgrim ships,
like signals from the bedsteads
of lovers.

These are the quilts

that Log Cabin.
Trail all
follow Winding up
the Ways and
Turkey Tracks down
Tracks to Jacob's
Tracks to the Ladder.
the Snail's
These are the satin quilts
that flow like rivers,
ribbons in sunlight
or shining in candlelight
by the

Star and Planets
Star Flower
Star of Bethlehem
Star of the Four Winds
Star of the West
Star Upon Star.

These are the quilts of artistry, the quilts of therapy,
the quilts of friendship, the quilts of pride.
These are the quilts of contour strips, the quilts
of the city, twelve quilts of the bride.

Here are the quilts politic:
Queen Charlotte's Crown,
the quilts of democracy, scissoring silk and chintz,
the quilt for the minister, the quilt for the senator,
White House Steps
Lincoln's Platform
Old Tippecanoe, too.

And these are the songs of the quilts,

"Seeing Nellie home,
Seeing Nellie home,
It was from Aunt Dinah's
quilting party,
I was . . .
My whole life is in that quilt
It scares me sometimes when I look at it.”

Here are the quilts unreasonable,
not the Conventional Tulip,
but the quilts of revolution,
the quilts of regret:

The Drunkard’s Path
The Storm at Sea
The Fool’s Puzzle
The Bleeding Heart
The Jagged Edge

These are the quilts of tracks in the forest,
These are the quilts in remembrance of the dead,
These are the quilts of hope in the cedar chest,
These are the quilts in pieces in the bag.

These are the enduring quilts

Blazing Sun
Blazing Star
Wonder of the World
World Without End.
Anselm Hollo

**gypsy poem**
*(for josephine clare)*

it's *you* puts the green sprig in my hatband
if *you* should ever leave me
my hat would be a dirty old thing
my heart empty, eyes full of tears
i'd look for green leaves in the woods
but they are the wilting kind
they wouldn't stay green on my hat
where could i find as good a woman
a wife, as beautiful
i'd burn my caravan, cut off my hair
& trot off to the darkest part of the woods
to sleep there in my black sorrow
weep & sleep, until the white dog comes
to take me back to *you*

---

moon shines on valley
good sleeps by river
now why don't you come
sit down with me
& love me a little
as i love you

---

my little stalk of alfalfa
i used to like to laugh a lot
with everyone i met
laugh & play with them
take them by the hand &
pull their little earlobes
then go to the tavern with them
run up some ridiculous tab
until i got bored with the booze
& felt the farts & hiccoughs coming on

---

i'll rig up a little hammock in the plumtree
for you to swing in, little boy
rain will fall, to wash you
leaves will fall, & cover you
wind will rock you to sleep
goat will come, give you suck
sleep, my boy, my little duck
listen to mama, don't cry

---

sleep, baby, your mother's out reading palms
come night, she'll be back &
you'll drink her milk
sleep, little child, sleep
i am your mother's old mother
& as you now love her friendly nipples
she once loved mine
Comments

There are a number of changes in this issue of *Alcheringa*, among them the addition of a self-description to the magazine's masthead. A brief exegesis of that statement seems in order.

The reference to "the spoken and chanted word" opens our field toward song, which, as David McAllester rightly points out, has been too little seen in these pages and too little heard from the soundsheets. Saying "word" instead of "poetry" also suggests an opening of our field, but if we were living in Chaucer's time there would be no problem here: "poetry" was "applied to imaginative or creative" uses of words in general, including "fable, fiction," until Wordsworth finally narrowed the meaning to "verse." *Alcheringa* stands within an ongoing tradition — yes, tradition — that works toward the reopening of the word.

*Alcheringa* "opens its pages" to the spoken and chanted word, a situation which McAllester finds ironic: "We have the perception of tribal poetry as event, process, rather than object such as book or page. We write about this so frequently on the inert page that it almost becomes a process in itself." His statement suggests that perhaps there should be more soundsheets — though those, too, are objects — and fewer pages, or that *Alcheringa* should be a theater company rather than a magazine, but it also calls attention to the fact that writing is a process, an event. The page may then fall "inert" until someone reads it, but reading is again a process. Sound recording, for its part, is not all that radical a break with writing. "Transcription" properly refers to the soundsheets as well as to the written pages: the soundsheets are, after all, inscribed in their own way, successors to the clay tablets of the ancient Middle East. They have their own particular form of inertness, even when played: they sound the same every time. Read aloud, the written page never sounds the same way twice, and in that sense it has its own particular closeness to the original oral process.

Transcription of the written kind need not be left up to the magazine's typesetters. Photo offset printing and the wide availability of typewriters with changeable type elements and carbon ribbons make it possible for contributors (as with David Antin in this issue) to have direct control over how the pages will finally look, lessening the total distance between an original event and its eventual reading aloud. Calligraphy closes the distance still further (see the work of Kris Holmes in the opening pages of this issue), in that one can "recognize a hand" in the way one can "recognize a voice," whereas type has the timbre of a machine. But whether it be through typewriter or calligraphy, the more "camera-ready" contributions *Alcheringa* receives, the greater will be the richness of its voices (interested parties should describe in advance what they propose to do and ask for instructions as to dimensions and other technical details).

*Alcheringa* remains open to "modern literates who work back toward the oral," as the present issue testifies. Some of our readers in the social sciences, Alan Lomax among them, feel that modern literates have no proper place in the magazine except, apparently, as scribes to "true" oral poets. But it is not our view that some people are "ethnos" and some are not, nor is it our task to divide a speaking and chanting humanity into "authentic" and "inauthentic" halves. McAllester even feels the magazine is too "mouldy figgish" as it is, that it gives too much preference to the work of poets who are "certified uncontaminated by civilization." There is still the fact that the "Fourth World" (see the masthead) has much to teach us about the recovery of the voice, but it must be remembered that we cannot truly respect the tribesman without also respecting something in ourselves.

*Alcheringa* invites not only transcriptions and translations, but "discussions" of poetry as well. The proper place and proportion of that discussion has been a central concern in correspondence received by the Editor, especially in the wake of the all-discussion "symposium" issue (Volume 2, Number 2). J. Pimponeau writes from Paris that previous "essays and explicative texts were done with taste, intelligence, to serve the original texts, not to show off the writer," adding that "a symposium is not the best way to bring out the best in people, and I would have hoped that you leave this pompous performance to dreary academics in quest of some money." Bob Callahan writes from Turtle Island:

It is the old battle between show and tell. I find every established journal doing the telling: what we never have enough of are the actual texts. Anthro journals are filled with theories about theories, and most posey mags are offering a similar product: the work of loosely allied, often non-allied (really) formal schools of poetics.
I find this decadent. It's as if they have all lost the ground from which the work springs — the actual grounding in experience (the record of same) — and have already begun the business of codification and empire building.

Callahan would like to hear the artists of "indigenous and traditional and alternative cultures" speak for themselves about what they do:

I am learning now to read Totem Poles, for example. I have been in Alaska often recently, as the guest of some native friends. Each time I go up I learn more about these poles as an expression of the Tlingket people, in this case, to document their culture, and express their sense of the meaning of their struggle. More, I have learned, only the Tlingket should attempt to explain this, except under very specific conditions — it's their art, not ours — and the Tlingket are quite capable of giving you just enough to allow the form to speak for itself.

Christine Price, whose publications on visual arts include Made in West Africa and Arts of Wood, writes of her concern for seeing the verbal arts in context:

A story, for instance, loses terribly from being written instead of told with gesture, change of voice, interspersed songs, etc. Not long ago I had the rare experience of attending a moonlight storytelling session in a Djunka village in Surinam. The Anansi tales told that night would doubtless have been of interest to the folklore scholar as manifestations of the African culture of the Djunkas; but told in that setting of the moonlit village, as dramatic dialogue accompanied by song and dance, the stories became an experience of total theatre — going far beyond the sketchy outlines of the tales themselves. Here again too was a living example of the wholeness of a traditional culture, with all the arts meshed together.

Dell Hymes, writing from a year in Chinookan Oregon, shares the contextual concern but places the focus squarely on the art itself:

My first thought is of the unique and indispensable role to be played by a journal that is interested in the poetry and poetics of traditional cultures for their poetic qualities. One can't expect an anthropological journal, or even a folklore journal readily, to publish work whose outcome, whose purpose, is the aesthetic qualities of something . . . In so many cases, especially with American Indian materials, one can't take what is in print in English at face value. If one is to go to the originals one has to be able to work with them in ways that require some command of the language and of the tools for working with language. And also some knowledge of cultural contexts, performance contexts, etc. But there just doesn't exist a place where one can send work, or discuss work, which is seriously motivated by a love of the verbal art itself, and doesn't intend or require a further aim.

Translation, if indeed it can be separated from the problem of the discussion of texts, is the second of the main themes in the Alcheringa correspondence, and we hope to see these editorial pages become the scene of a continuing exchange concerning translation practice. McAllester, concerned with the "thorny way" created by the ethical questions that arise in the collection of verbal art among contemporary non-Western peoples, points to the "safe way" of retranslating older materials:

There is much material already published, complete with native texts, for which only a nineteenth or early twentieth century translation exists. Dell Hymes has stated beautifully the need for retranslations of such material from time to time, just as there should be new versions of Murasaki, Baudelaire or Sappho for different eras. Let me illustrate with a single name, very important in Navajo poetry. The deity, Anii't'aniil, is one of a number of supernaturals in insect form, in this case a fly often seen on corn blossoms and associated with ripening and therefore with life itself. The first translation, "grasshopper," by Matthews in the 1880's, was entirely off the mark except that it did refer to an insect. Later, with "corn bug," he did indicate the association with corn. A generation of anthropologists felt that "bug" was not deific enough and the more dignified "cornbeetle" became the received translation for fifty years. Wyman in the 1960's established that the insect form of the deity was usually thought to be the lacewing fly, but in his editing of Fr. Berard Haile's translations of Blessingway myths and songs, he retained the established, but now incongruous, "cornbeetle." Fr. Berard himself suggested "ripener" as the possible meaning of the name in his Stem Vocabulary published twenty years before, and uses it without the question mark in his interlinear translations. Here is a time and place for a retranslation. Among the retranslators we should begin to count some Navajo contemporary poets.

Allan Burns, writing from Florida, makes a plea for more thoroughly annotated translations:

I think it is necessary to allow readers the chance to
become more involved with the translations than they can by just looking at them and perhaps speaking them out loud. Some of the nuances of meaning, the assumed knowledge in what is being said, need to be provided for people coming upon a culture's literature for the first time. For example, Yucatec Mayan verbal art is laconic, often purposely convoluted, and characterized by word-play. In “The Rainmaker and the Milpero” (Alcheringa old series No. 4), it is a “fat horse” that cannot get off the ground to take a farmer on his magical flight. Only the opposite of such a real-life beast of the earth, a skinny horse, can make the journey through the clouds to where the rain is dropped. The fact that the farmer in the story could not recognize this opposition in the mythic world was funny to the narrator and the audience.

Robert Kelly writes from Annandale-on-Hudson, concerning the translation of sacred texts: “It all remains, doesn’t it, this question of exousia—the word Mark uses about Jesus’s preaching in the synagogue, how he preached with authority—the word suggests, in some proto-Heideggerian metaphrasis, that authority comes only from be-ing.” Kelly opposes “hyped-up” translations, “and worse than hype, the bland terrible new textus receptus, that all Primitives swing the same Primitive Story, that everything equals everything else. What a savage irony, that the custodians of difference (who really are, aren’t they, the scholars and poetae) should have any hand in that market.” It is good to recall his words of six years ago (old series No. 2):

How to get it without me. I am of no value; only what transmits itself through me despite me is of value. The typical anonymity of tribal poetry & tale-telling is not an accident of oral transmission, but perhaps an indispensable condition for the reception of the straight story. Timaeus calls the creator of the world poiesis, but attributes no personality to him (or it); I suspect that beyond personality stretches the pure Story of the World we must strip ourselves to hear.

Notes

Jeff Titon currently holds an NEH Fellowship for Independent Study and Research in folk preaching, and is Associate Professor of Folklore and Ethnomusicology at Tufts University. A Tufts graduate, Ken George is enrolled in the M.A. program in folklore at the University of North Carolina.

Abdi Sheik-Abdi is a native of Somalia. His fables and short stories have appeared in Black World and Okike, and his article, “Somali Nationalism: Its Origins and Future,” is scheduled for publication in The Journal of Modern African Studies. He is currently engaged in research and teaching in the Department of African and Afro-American Studies at SUNY/Albany.

Mauricio J. Mixco is in the Department of Languages at the University of Utah. Kiliwa, the language from which he translates in the current issue, is a Yuman language of Baja California.

Breyten Breytenbach, the South African poet (see v. 2, n. 1, pp. 144-45), has been acquitted in a second trial of all serious charges, and has been fined for smuggling poems and letters out of prison.

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