

Translations by Pierre Joris, after Tristan Tzara

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

Nauri [Africa?]

Who wants to throw the Zigendung?

Zigendung

That I want to throw in the sky

Sky

That it may let some water fall on me

some water

That the burned grass may grow a little

fresh grass

That my old cow may eat

Old cow

I want to kill her for the vultures there

The vultures there

That they may give me their feathers

feathers

Those I want to fix to my arrow

arrow

I want to hunt the enemy's oxen

oxen

to receive my wife

wife

That she may give me a child

child

that it may pick my lice

lice

that an old man I may go and die with them

The dance of the greased women

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

flames of fire are bent (over) bent (over)
the rock's edge is vaulted is vaulted
the convoy of the heights is well bent is well bent
the eucalyptus foliage is vaulted is vaulted
the agia's trunk is bent
the agia's trunk is bent is bent
the water is vaulted is vaulted
the course of the river is bent is bent
the tied (Geschwürte) are approaching
The past women advance
The lines advance
walking fast walking in a nearby line
on a pile sit down
on blocks of rocks sit down
the flame of fire advances
the great flame
the paving with wheels approaches
the flame
Inteer angoulba remains standing motionless
the flame of fire remains standing

Baronga (Mozambique)

The lake dries from its edges

The elephant dies from a small arrow

the squealings of the green finch (?)

You'll die with your lie

I still sculpt a stick of ironwood

I still think about it

The noise a cracked elephant tusk makes

The anger of a hungry man

A gourd that stretches its branches over the plain

A chief dragging himself across his village square.

The strident noise of the dry sorgho stalk

The anger of a hungry man

A small tree covered with wild pigeons

Your father, covered with heavy bracelets

The palm leaf with its many folioles

The old fallen one has passed the river

People against a wall

Ah if only I died

A short stick with a mace at its end

to refuse food one to the other

in the same village, is a fault for which

one may be fined.

I threw my Kouakoua far away it rolled to the end of the world

I have accepted pickaxes that came from Ba-labi.

*

The thieving monk has eaten all my millet

Now he comes back. He (to have received from) me

Where will we go to seek refuge? (as famine is gnawing at us now)

Go to Mougondja (or to Modjadji the famous rainmaking queen who lives in the north). Go to Maoueoue

Where will we seek refuge?

Eyeye! e! e! e!

*

Don't you want to buy a new wife from us?

later on your daughter will bring you a domain

worth fifteen silver

*

Braid the goat's gall bladder into our hair
Then we'll return home (and the women passing by
will see that we've been feasted)

Wauru [Eastern Coastal Africa?]

Young-girl

stay up there

stay on the Dābanne chair

the Dābanne up there

Steer your boat leap from the sea to the shore

Stay stuck in the private parts of the ...

fuck her, in her private parts rage like

thunder and lightning, thunder growls thunder growls

leaping from her sex.

... O!

Show, open wide her intimate organs,

drink the palm wine

foam in her

drink the palm wine.

. . . your sex stinks like the shark's gall

the shark's gall stinks atrociously

and everything that pours from it

I want to go towards Tararuru

to go get Tararuru

to open to open

to smell to smell

pick the flowers

shake the petals

hee hee look at that clitoris

(Dance)

Let's go, let's move

Woman, watch your things

I didn't hang them up

because I was busy trying to dry myself.

I gave you a promise and I'm confident

rubbed with ointments and I waited for you, you, my little silver fish,

because the more I rubbed myself with ointments the more I spread myself

I've always had confidence in you, with ointments I rubbed my old nuts

they belong to you, my necklace,

everybody wanted to see the young girl

beautiful as a necklace beautiful as the sun

She is all splendor

O like the silvery fish in the water

you are beautiful, my young girl.

Ebo Ebo the silvery fish has come

from the reef it came

Ebo Ebo she watched over the deep of the sea

Ebo she swims on the Baweln

Ebo Ebo she swims on her back Ebo she swims on her back

Puberty chant for young girls

You the young girls, all together oo

Get up and come over here

cause the sun rises oo.

The waves come closer, unfurl and break with a thunderous roar

the water unwrinkles and flows back, flows back towards the great rock

and we dance around you for you

A basket falls from the rock

Do you still remember how we fished with the net the net?

Maori (New Zealand)

Tota Waka

Kiwi cries the bird

Kiwi

Moho cries the bird

Moho

Tieke cries the bird

Tieke

only a belly

rises into the air rises into the air

continue your road

rises into the air

here's the second year

Kauaea

here is the catcher of men

Kauaea

make room and drag him

Kauaea

drag where

Kauaea

Ah the root the root of Tou

Heh the wind

drag further

raging wind

drag further the root

the root of the Tou

So push, Rimo

Kauaea

go on Totara

Kauaea

go on Pukatea

Kauaea

give me the Tou

Kauaea

give me the Maro

Kauaea

stretch stretch (the hauling rope)

Kauaea

my belly

kauaea

kihi, e

haha, e

pipi, e

tata, e

apitia

HA;

together

ha

me the rope

ha

me the spear

me the silex-child

me the child of the Manuka-oar

I am I am

a long procession

dead is the thing

a long procession

goes on gliding goes on gliding

to sink you to sink you

brandish the axe

Kauaea

only a rooster

only a Taraho bird

only a duck

ke ke ke ke

only a duck

ke ke ke ke

Ntuca [Africa?]

Tropical winter

The color recomposes flows between the spaces

like a liquid hanged man sways

the rainbow

the worms of light circulate in your diarrhea

there where the clarinets grow

pregnant woman toucanongonda

like the green ball

pregnant woman culilibulala produces the satellite

the bell glides under the boat

green ball burning

the town below flame-bandages caressing the centrifugal wound

squeeze squeeze strongly — high the bellies and infuse the plants' acid

the feldspaar he in your interior speed angel mac mac mechanic

O mechanic of necrologies

she throws at her husband's head a bowl of vitriol

let's go toward other meeeeeteeeoorooolooogies

in Cambodia for example

while the sun glides tangent of the atmosphere

in poupaganda I glide aureola ganda ganda gandapalalou

skating leading to the zoo of heedless mammoths

[*Note:* This is one of Tzara's dada-ized workings, from which his own poem, "Ange" (Angel), is derived.]

Pierre Joris's translations are from Tzara's *Poèmes Negres*, gathered from ethnographic sources and announced for publication, but never published, circa 1916. The complete Joris versions appear in his book, *4 x 1* (translations from Rilke, Tzara, Jean-Pierre Duprey & Habib Tengour), recently published by Inconundrum Press.