

Caoineadh: *ethnopoetic representations in Irish panegyric tradition*

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Abstract: *It is argued here that certain literary representations related to Irish Studies, such as the oral tradition of the “Caoineadh”, or lament panegyric, as well as the “luadh”, or vigil songs, can be seen under the light of a somewhat new conceptual idea, given their marginal, if not liminal, nature, called ethnopoetics. Such epistemological tool can indeed allow the artistic representations of autochthonous practices to reflect more fully the worldview of societies to which art, as culture in general, is intrinsically linked to religious values as a whole, revealing the complexity of “primitive” as opposed to civilized. Hence, this paper evidences the Irish oral poetic tradition as its object of study, under the light of an ethnopoetic reconceptualization, given both the marginal nature of its compositions, connected to a feminine force, and the liminal quality of its interdisciplinary representations, associated to the rites of passage.*

Keywords: *Poetry; Ethnopoetics; Panegyric.*

Resumo: *Argumenta-se que certas representações literárias relacionadas aos estudos irlandeses, como a tradição oral do “Caoineadh”, ou lamento panegírico, bem como do “luadh”, ou canções de vigília, podem ser vistas à luz de uma ideia conceitual um tanto nova, dada sua natureza marginal, se não liminar, chamada etnopoética. Tal ferramenta epistemológica pode, de fato, permitir que as representações artísticas de práticas autóctones reflitam mais completamente a visão de mundo das sociedades às quais a arte, bem como cultura em geral, está intrinsecamente ligada aos valores religiosos como um todo, revelando a complexidade do “primitivo” em oposição ao civilizado. Assim, este artigo evidencia a tradição poética oral irlandesa como objeto de estudo, à luz de uma reconceitualização etnopoética, dada a natureza marginal de suas composições, ligada a uma força feminina, e a qualidade liminar de suas representações interdisciplinares, associadas aos ritos de passagem.*

Palavras-chave: *Poesia; Etnopoética; Panegírico.*

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It is in the silence after you feel you hear. Vibrations. Now silent air.

Leopold Bloom

Western thought has long considered “primitive” peoples as a minor representative of literary culture because of their reliance on oral rather than written representations. Many recent poets have sought to change this view based on a new poetics that would represent more fully human cultures the world over, including those peoples whose works have been marginalized by an exclusive range of Western traditional literary culture. This movement has been concerned with a complex redefinition of cultural and intellectual values involving the idea of an ethnopoetics. This new poetics, which paradoxically can be traced back as far as the Paleolithic, is concerned with experimental works ranging from the Romantic period up to modern poetry. Hence, it is argued here that certain literary representations related to Irish Studies, such as the oral tradition of the “Caoineadh”, or lament panegyric, as well as the “luadh”, or vigil songs, can be seen under the light of this somewhat new conceptual idea, given their marginal, if not liminal, nature. An ethnopoetics can indeed allow the artistic representations of autochthonous practices to reflect more fully the worldview of societies to which art, as culture in general, is intrinsically linked to religious values as a whole, revealing the complexity of “primitive” as opposed to civilized.

Jerome Rothenberg, the American writer and anthologist, proposes to formulate a poetics in the context of the revolutionary cultural countermovement that took place in the West as a reaction against “the official ideologies that shoved European man to the apex of the human pyramid.” (Rothenberg, *Symposium* xi) This artistic movement, which stemmed from cultures “described as ‘primitive’ and ‘savage’ – a stage below ‘barbarian,’” was born out of the work of “some thinkers and artists who found ways of doing and knowing among other peoples as complex as any in Europe and often virtually erased from European consciousness.” Rothenberg calls this poetic discourse, or rather “a range of such discourses,” ethnopoetics, which he defines thus:

The word “ethnopoetics” suggested itself almost too easily, on the basis of such earlier terms as ethnohistory, ethnomusicology, ethnolinguistics, ethnopharmacology, and so on. As such it refers to a redefinition of poetry in terms of cultural specifics, with an emphasis on those alternative traditions to which the West gave names like “pagan,” “gentile,” “tribal,” “oral,” and “ethnic.” In its developed form, it moves toward an exploration of creativity over the fullest human range, pursued with a regard for particularized practice as much as unified theory and further ‘defined’ [...] in the actual discourse (Rothenberg, *Symposium* xi).

Ethnopoetics has been around for millennia and should not be “confined to the modern world.” As Rothenberg points out, in being “maybe as old as human consciousness itself,” ethnopoetics represents a search for the primary need to know what it is to be human, and to explore the human potential to its fullest.

The explicit discourse around ethnopoetics, as Rothenberg explains, “involved the magazine *Alcheringa* (founded by Rothenberg and Dennis Tedlock in 1970) and included the 1975 gathering, at the Center for Twentieth Century Studies in Milwaukee, of the first international symposium on ethnopoetics” (Rothenberg, *Symposium* xv). A successor magazine, *New Wilderness Letter*, was founded by Rothenberg and Charlie Morrow, in order to recognize “poesis in all arts & sciences, all human thoughts & acts directed toward such ends: the participation in what the surrealist master André Breton called a ‘sacred action’ or what Gary Snyder defined as the ‘real work of modern man: to uncover the inner structure & actual boundaries of the mind.’” (Rothenberg and Guss 3)

The interest in ethnopoetics, and the coining of the term, which Rothenberg had introduced in the second issue of George Quasha's magazine *Stony Brook*, developed out of writers who drew not only on the Romantic poets and their concern with the irrational and primordial, but also on anthropology, which helped them to flesh out the Romantic idea of primitive. Rothenberg spent time with the Seneca Indians, and Snyder's M.A. thesis in Anthropology was a study of Northwest Coast Indian myths. His early book of poems, *Myths and Texts*, is actually a reference to the work of the German-born anthropologist Franz Boas, while also raising the crucial question for ethnopoetics on the relation of the oral performance, taking place in a specific tribal context, to the written text which represents and misrepresents it.¹ It is as an attempt to address these textual limitations that Rothenberg develops his theories and practice of "total translation" which involves using sound and stretching words to the semantic breaking-point in performance. The Journal *Alcheringa* included sound recordings and drew on an eclectic mixture of poets and ethnographers, as did their conferences.² Hence, in their effort to redefine the range of primitive poetry and insert it into the traditional Western discourse of the written word instead of excluding it, these writers presented not only words of songs and chants, but also picture poems, sound poetry, dreams and visions inserted in scenarios of ceremonial events. The emphasis was thus given on performances in which the singing voice gave way to ritualistic poetic narratives including laments, prayers, prophecies, elegies, etc.

Borrowing the title of his anthology from Robert Duncan's concept of "Symposium of the Whole," Rothenberg is in a way proposing the "dream of total art," that is, a complex "redefinition of cultural and intellectual values," by means of a new reading of past and present poetic representations. Duncan in fact advocates a new artistic totality that will include many of the areas that have been consistently outcast by Western society at large:

Rothenberg looks for a new primary scene for this dream of total art other than the "imperial and swollen mold... from Greece," and finds it among the proto-poets/artists of the Paleolithic past. The works of these marginal artists, which have amazingly survived the onslaughts of modernity, represent, as Rothenberg asserts, "a complexity of act and vision" which merits calling their creators "technicians of the sacred." (Rothenberg, *Symposium* xiii)

Rothenberg's allusive term here is only too conspicuous; he is clearly referring to shamanic practices in terms of their artistic representations, borrowing from Mircea Eliade's groundbreaking work on shamanism.³ Rothenberg uses his own term as the title for a book wherein he presents a worldwide range of native texts that he parallels with the writings of contemporary poets, along with his own editorial comments, providing a vast anthology of ethnopoetical material.⁴ The idea is still that of a shamanic séance, in which all the senses are summoned to perceive synaesthetically.

By means of an ethnopoetics it will be possible, as Rothenberg believes, to "show how ethnographic revelations can change our ideas of poetic form and function." (Rothenberg, *Symposium* xv) Hence, the participants, as Rothenberg calls them, are "not only poets but – in an age of intermedia works and genre cross-overs – other artists as well; not only anthropologists and folklorists but the indigenous poets and shamans for whom the others often act as conduits to the world of print and text."

The issues present in the conceptual representations of an ethnopoetics, also to be

found in the oral tradition of the “Caoineadh”, are indeed far ranging and resemble those of a human, rather than primitive, poetics:

The reinterpretation of the poetic past, the recurrent question of a primitive-civilized dichotomy (particularly in its post-Platonic Western manifestations), the idea of a visionary poetics and of the shaman as a paradigmatic proto-poet, the idea of a great subculture and of the persistence of an oral poetics in all of the “higher” civilizations, the concept of wilderness and of the role of the poet as a defender of biological and psychic diversity, the issue of the monoculture and the issue of cultural imperialism, the question of communal and individual expression in traditional societies, the relation of culture and language to mental processes, the divergence of oral and written cultures (and their projected reconciliation), and the reemergence of suppressed and rejected forms and images (the goddess, the trickster, the human universe, etc.). (Rothenberg, *Symposium* xvi)

The oral tradition of Celtic culture presents a rich and extensive literary corpus, comprised mostly of anonymous female authors, based on ancient legendry and poetic writings of a traditional nature. Until the mid XVII century, both Ireland and Scotland still shared a similar social structure, as well as a common language, Gaelic. In terms of literary representations, there had been a patriarchal elite of poets, whose power and prestige would have been fundamentally linked to the political stability, and whose poetry, basically related to the panegyric bestowed to royal figures and/or clan chiefs, has been known as Bardic or Syllabic. According to Angela Bourke (1988), with the socio-political revolutions of the XVII century, the prestige of such poets declined, along with their traditional literary activity; the English language spread out and Gaelic was then only to be found in remote rural areas, leading to a scarce formal literary production. In contrast, oral literary tradition prospered galore, namely: tales, proverbs, chants, laments, elegies, poems etc.

Ever since the Romantic interest in Celtic song and music, along with the consolidation of nationalism in the XIX century, a more systematic gaze upon oral traditions, incorporated into the studies of folklore, makes itself present, and in the very beginning of the XX century there appeared great archives throughout Europe, such as the collections directed by James H. Delargy, besides the foundation of The Folklore of Ireland Society, in 1927, with its respective journal *Béalóideas*, of The Irish Folklore Institute, in 1930, named later as Irish Folklore Commission, which, in 1971, was once more renamed as The National Folklore Collection at University College, in Dublin.

Hence, this research evidences the Irish oral poetic tradition as its object of study, under the light of an ethnopoetic reconceptualization, given both the marginal nature of its compositions, connected to a feminine force, and the liminal quality of its interdisciplinary representations, associated to the rites of passage. The Irish lament poetry, whose ancestral origins date back to Elizabeth I's reign, in the form of the howls and wails of those women hired to wake the dead (Ó Muirthe 1978), has grown into a fundamental part in the studies of Irish folklore, in its traditional form of “Caoineadh”, or “keen”, composed as a lament panegyric to be sung over the body of the dead. Thus, the “keener”, or wailer, becomes a funereal master of ceremonies, a sort of shamanic psychopomp, responsible for presiding the transition between life and death in so-called traditional communities. In this regard, one could argue that such tradition pervades Irish literature even through its most prestigious writers,

such as J. M. Synge and James Joyce.

In line with Angela Bourke, Synge's theatre might be seen as part of the "caoineadh" tradition, and she has suggested that Synge "would have known something about the Irish practice of lamentation before he heard women in Aran give voice to it", and proceeds to imply that the dramatist may have studied "caoineadh" in works such as Thomas Crofton Croker's *Researches in the South of Ireland*. (Bourke, "Keening as Theatre" 69) As for Joyce, his *Finnegans Wake*, in all its awareness towards silence, in which, despite an apparent unreadability, moments of silent reverberations and nothingness are indeed woven into the text, is also a book about the experience of loss, or, as Katherine O'Callaghan writes, Joyce's text "memorialises to the greatest degree to which prose is capable, the 'loss of loss itself.'" (O'Callaghan 140) Even though *Finnegans Wake* is ever escaping the usual classifications of a novel, as O'Callaghan goes through its myriad Irish phrases, she agrees that "it gestures continuously towards a secret and silent centre, indicative of an unspoken past, which can be read as a site of loss" (Ibid, 144). Accordingly, as Judith Butler reflects on *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, by Walter Benjamin, for whom history merges into the setting, the American gender theorist asserts that "a certain problem of loss emerges when established narratives begin to falter." (Butler 469) Joyce's book, in all its merging of content and form, which ultimately presents no actual narrative nor story-line, seems to, in following with O'Callaghan, "hold out a message of redemption in the midst of loss: the portrayal of irrecoverability is a potent and political act of art" (Ibid, 145). In terms of subject, she goes on to say that "*Finnegans Wake* revels in the notion of the 'funferall' to be had at a[n Irish] wake, while the text itself is in sympathy with the traditional caoineadh or keen, a ritualized lament performed at the graveside, which is both a lamentation and a socially licenced [*sic*] space for the cataloguing of the deceased's foibles or the perceived injustices which had been performed against the deceased, the bereaved, or the community" (Ibid, 147).

The presence of "Caoineadh" holds a significant place in Irish tradition as a form of lamentation for lost sovereignty and the classic Irish "Caoineadh" of Eibhlín Dubh Ní Chonaill (that's Dark Eileen or Eveline in English), called "The Lament for Art Ó Laoghaire", carries special ethnopoetic meaning not only for the pervading feminine voice and its performative nature, but also because her husband was of course murdered by an Englishman. "Caoineadh", which means to cry, to weep, to lament, to mourn, is pronounced "Queen-ay," also known as "keening." As indicated by Vona Groarke:

Traditionally, the lament was intoned by several, professional keening women over the body of the deceased....Eileen's is not a typical keen in that it has an identified author rather than an anonymous or even collective source....it wasn't made as most poems are, with a degree of forethought: rather, it was extemporized for performance, in the tradition of the public lament. And it wasn't written down until thirty years after it was composed, and then not by Dark Eileen herself. (Groarke 13)

Eibhlín Dubh Ní Chonaill (1743 – 1800) was born in Derrynane, Co. Kerry, one of 22 children of Dómhnaill Mór Ó Conaill, and was the aunt of Daniel O'Connell, The Liberator. In her introduction to the poem, Groarke writes that:

Eileen's was an important Irish family....Her mother kept up one of the few big Gaelic houses to survive under English rule and, though the family's first language was Irish (Eileen's mother was herself a noted poet), the children were tutored in

Latin, French and English....it seems likely that a large-scale smuggling operation between south Kerry and the European mainland allowed them to maintain considerable wealth (Ibid, 15).

She was married at 15 to an O'Connor of Iveragh, an old man who died six months after. She married again, against her family's wishes in 1767, to Art Ó Laoghaire, of Rathleigh. O'Leary was a Captain at the Hungarian Hussars and they had three children, before he was proclaimed notoriously infamous by the High Sheriff of Cook, Abraham Morris, but the charges were successfully rebutted in court. O'Leary's mare beat Morris's at the Macroom races in 1773. O'Leary refused to sell the horse to the Sheriff's offer of £5, and was shot at Carriganimmy by Abraham's henchmen after an attempted ambush on Morris at Millstreet, his blood-drenched mare returning to Rathleigh. In accordance with the poem, Eibhlín Dubh rode back to Carriganimmy to declaim the first parts of the "Caoineadh" over her husband's body and drink his blood. Ó Laoghaire was re-buried in Kilcrea Abbey in an inscribed tomb and the "Caoineadh" was then written down from oral tradition to become one of the great elegies of European culture.

Divided into five sections that range from expressions of distress to tenderness, from nostalgic reverie to personal outrage, and from vengeance to sheer dignity, the first one appears to be Eibhlín's utterances over her dead husband's body in which she recalls how she fell in love instantly at their first meeting:

My steadfast love!
When I saw you one day
By the market-house gable
My eye gave a look
My heart shone out
I fled with you far
From friends and home. (Ó Tuama and Kinsella)

It seems she is reminiscing on their days of youth when love knew no boundaries and they recognized no social restraints, living by nature's bounty in the freedom of their spirits:

And never was sorry:
You had parlours painted
Rooms decked out
The oven reddened
And loaves made up
Roasts on spits
And cattle slaughtered;
I slept in duck-down
Till noon came
Or later if I liked.

She then makes sure to remember the days of yore when he stood up before the enemy and, as if personifying Ireland, instilled fear upon those who would kill him in due time:

My steadfast friend

It comes to my mind
That fine Spring day
How well your hat looked
With the drawn gold band,
The sword silver-hilted
Your fine brave hand
And menacing prance,
And the fearful tremble
Of treacherous enemies.

Eibhlín mentions her husband's horse as a figure of resistance against English oppression and how he eventually died at the hands of his [their] rulers:

You were set to ride
Your slim white-faced steed
And Saxons saluted
Down to the ground,
Not from good will
But by dint of fear
Though you died at their hands,
My soul's beloved.

The issue of translating such laments is somewhat problematic since they belong to an oral tradition that should consider not only their being sung, or chanted, or wailed, but also their performative nature in the context of death. In fact, the very notion of Irish studies is somewhat pervaded by the central question posed by Frank O'Connor half a century ago: "Is there such a thing as an Irish literature, or is it merely two unrelated subjects linked together by a geographical accident?" (O'Connor, *The Backward Look* 1) Hence, if only as a matter of comparative style, it is also worth considering still another attempt at delivering what Rothenberg calls total translation, this time by O'Connor himself:

My love and my mate
That I never thought dead
Till your horse came to me
With bridle trailing
All bloom from forehead
To polished saddle
Where you should be,
Either sitting or standing;
I gave one leap to the threshold,
A second to the gate,
A third upon its back.
I clapped my hands
And off at a gallop;
I never lingered
Till I found you lying
By a little furze-bush

Without pope or bishop
Or priest or cleric
One prayer to whisper
But an old, old woman,
And her cloak about you,
And your blood in torrents –
Art O’Leary –
I did not wipe it off,
I drank it from my palms. (O’Connor, Kings, *Lords and Commons* 111)

As she drinks her dead husband’s blood, Eibhlín assimilates shamanic ritual practices and becomes a sort of possessed witch, establishing a dialogue with death that verges on the manifestation of madness. As stated by Gail Holst-Warhaft:

The witch and the shaman, the medium and the wailing woman are all seen, at some historical moment or in some particular culture, as being possessed by dangerous powers, but the lamenter, in her ritual dialogue with death, may be viewed as linking madness to death in a unique equivalence. (Holst-Warhaft 30)

These singing women are also called “bean chaointe” and, as pointed by Angela Partridge, they were “traditionally portrayed with disheveled hair, their clothes awry and their feet bare. Rather than following roads or paths they were said to travel “over the mountain”, leaping in the air on hearing of their loved one’s death and drinking the blood of the deceased upon finding him.” (Partridge 25)

At the end of this first section, once again by use of apostrophe, Eibhlín commands the dead to rise and find new life in her company, away from the everlasting cold:

My steadfast love!
Arise, stand up
And come with myself
And I’ll have the cattle slaughtered
And call fine company
And hurry up the music
And make you up a bed
With bright sheets upon it
And fine speckled quilts
To bring you out in a sweat
Where the cold has caught you.

According to Declan Kiberd, this lament “is a cry of passion by a woman who is before and beyond “gentility”, a true aristocrat of the emotions.” The following section has Art sister’s arrival from Cork, only to find Eibhlín in bed at O’Leary’s wake, which led to an intense and sharp verbal contest:

Art’s sister:
My friend and my treasure!
Many fine-made women

From Cork of the sails
 To Droichead na Toime
 Would bring you great herds
 And a yellow gold handful,
 And not sleep in their room
 On the night of your wake.
 Eibhlín:
 My friend and my lamb!
 Don't you believe them
 Nor the scandal you heard
 Nor the jealous man's gossip
 It was no heavy slumber
 But your babies so troubled
 And all of them needing
 To be settled in peace.
 People of my heart,
 What woman in Ireland
 From setting of sun
 Could stretch out beside him
 And bear him three sucklings
 And not run wild
 Losing Art O Laoghaire
 Who lies here vanquished
 Since yesterday morning?...

The ferocity of her language is exceeded only by the awesome control thereof, every word etched, indelible, and incontrovertible. The lines are spoken in a rhythm of such throbbing intensity as to suggest that a culture capable of this utterance can never die.

The next lines offer Eibhlín's public adulation of Art, possibly after her husband's body has been finally prepared for burial:

My friend and beloved!
 When you left through the gate
 You came in again quickly,
 You kissed both your children,
 Kissed the tips of my fingers.
 You said: "Eibhlín, stand up
 And finish with your work
 Lively and swiftly:
 I am leaving our home
 And may never return."
 I made nothing of his talk
 For he spoke often so.

The following section has Art's sister once again making her contribution to the keen and as she makes reference to her brother's female admirers, Eibhlín replies bravely:

Art's sister:
My love and my darling!
 It is well they became you
 Your stocking, five-ply,
Riding boots to the knee,
Cornered Caroline hat
And a lively whip
On a spirited gelding,
Many modest maidens
Admiring behind you.
Eibhlín:
My steadfast love!
When you walked through the servile
Strong-built towns,
The merchants' wives
Would salute to the ground
Knowing well in their hearts
A fine bed-mate you were
A great front-rider
And father of children.

Jesus Christ well knows
'There's no cap upon my skull
Nor shift next to my body
Nor shoe upon my foot-sole
Nor furniture in my house
Nor reins on the brown mare
But I'll spend it on the law;
'That I'll go across the ocean
To argue with the King,
And if he won't pay attention
'That I'll come back again
To the black-blooded savage
'That took my treasure.

Due to some legal obstruction, the body of O'Leary was not buried in the ancestral graveyard, and temporary burial arrangements had to be made. It appears that some months passed by before the body was transferred to the monastery of Kilcrea. Eibhlín appears to have uttered the following passage of her lament on the occasion of the second burial:

'Till Art Ó Laoghaire comes
My grief will not disperse
But cram my heart's core,
Shut firmly in like a trunk locked up
When the key is lost.

Women there weeping,
 Stay there where you are,
 Till Art Mac Concuir summons drink
 With some extra for the poor
 -ere he enter that school
 Not for the study or for music
 But to bear clay and stones.

We know little enough about Eibhlín – almost as little as we do about Homer. We know she might have spoken some of the lines over the dead body of her slain husband, whose blood she drank from her palms. After expressing her great pain, a formal feeling comes – and she invents a new tense, neither past nor present, which is indeed a kind of “women’s time”, dispensing with all ideas of authority, power and reverence. In doing as much, she spawns what Peter Levi has called “the greatest poem written in these islands in the whole eighteenth century” and pronounced that “Goethe, and Thomas Gray, and Wordsworth, and Matthew Arnold... might all have thought so.” (Levi 18) It seems somehow appropriate that we have been left with no picture of Eibhlín, even though the dark keener has definitely shed plenty of light across the disciplinary boundaries of our beloved Irish Studies.

Notes

- 1 For Snyder’s work related to ethnopoeitics see: *Earth House Hold* (New York: New Directions, 1969), *Myths and Texts* (New York: New Directions, 1978), *The Old Ways* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1977), and *He Who Hunted Birds in his Father’s Village: the Dimensions of a Hida Myth* (Bolinas, Ca: Grey Fox Press, 1979).
- 2 *Alcheringa* (the Australian aboriginal word for “dreamtime”) was a magazine of ethnopoeitics published between 1970 and 1980. It was edited by Dennis Tedlock and by Jerome Rothenberg and published by Boston University.
- 3 In his prologue to the extract from Eliade’s *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), presented in his anthology, Rothenberg indeed acknowledges Eliade’s authority on the subject as well as his taking off from Eliade’s title: “His [Eliade’s] work on shamanism is still the best guide to the subject, reinforcing an intuition long held of the shaman as artist and thinker as well as ‘medicine man, priest, and psychopompus.’ In the present co-editor’s book, *Technicians of the Sacred* (the title is itself a take-off from Eliade’s ‘specialist of the sacred’ who masters the ‘techniques of ecstasy,’ etc), the shaman is viewed as a ‘proto-poet’ and paradigm for the later visionary artist) Rothenberg, *Symposium*, 59.
- 4 Jerome Rothenberg, *Technicians of the Sacred: a Range of Poetries from Africa, America, Asia & Oceania* (New York City: Anchor Books, 1969). This anthology, based on a pair of readings in New York City, at The Poet’s Hardware Theater and The Café Metro, in 1964, is clearly part of Rothenberg’s first steps towards a literature of the whole and what he would later be calling ethnopoeitics. Thus, as he tells us in the preface, “the idea for a ‘book of events’ came from a discussion with Dick Higgins about what he was calling ‘near-poetry’ & from my own sense of the closeness of primitive rituals ... to the ‘happenings’ & ‘events’ he was presenting as publisher ... I’ve kept the possibilities wide open: looking for new forms and media; hoping that what I finally assembled could be read as ‘contemporary,’ since so much of it is that in fact, still being created & used in a world we share” (xxiv, xxv). For other earlier works that can be seen as foundational of Rothenberg’s ethnopoeitic discourse, see: *White Sun Black Sun* (1960), “From a Shaman’s Notebook” in *Poems from the Floating World 4* (New York: Hawk’s Well Press, 1962), *Ritual: A Book of Primitive Rites and Events* (1966); *Narratives and Real Theater*

Pieces (1967), and “Total Translation: An Experiment in the Presentation of American Indian Poetry” in *Stony Brook* [3-4: 1969].

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