

**SATURDAY NIGHT IN GREENVILLE:
AN INTERRACIAL TALE-AND-MUSIC
SESSION IN CONTEXT**

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As I sat under the shade of Eugene Powell's front-yard tree on a late June day in Greenville, Mississippi, I could see the heat rise from the street. It was one of those dreaded Mississippi summer days when being outside felt like being in a steam bath. And, like many other such days during the summer of 1976, neighbors drifted toward Eugene's front yard, encouraged by his hospitality and the cool of his shade tree, to exchange conversations, stories, songs, and drinks. Indeed, song and tale seemed to be integral parts of everyday life in the Black South Hyman neighborhood, and one its residents, Eugene Powell, was considered particularly adept in both genres by his neighbors and friends.

During my field research I had been recording interviews with Powell for several weeks on his song and tale repertoire, his life history, and the life of his community.¹ He told me he was born on December 23, 1908 in Utica, Mississippi, a small town southwest of Jackson in Hinds County. Soon afterwards, his parents Arma and Rosie Powell moved to a plantation at Lombardy, located between the larger towns of Clarksdale and Cleveland in Mississippi's Delta region. During their Lombardy stay, Eugene and his brother Ben learned to play guitar and mandolin from older musicians on the plantation. When

Eugene turned ten, the family moved again to another plantation at Murphy, twelve miles east of Hollandale in Washington County. When he was older, Eugene stayed in the Murphy area. He sharecropped but also operated a roadhouse. With liquor and music as attractions, members of the Black community gathered at his roadhouse, especially on Saturday nights, and exchanged traditional songs and stories. Eugene absorbed many narratives and songs from such roadhouse experiences. During the twenties, both his repertoire and ability as a narrator and singer became respected, a fact evidenced by demands for performances by Eugene and his partner, Willie "Brother" Harris, at Black and White picnics, parties, and dances. In 1936 he recorded for RCA's Bluebird label, a session arranged by a friend and actively recording bluesman, Bo Carter. Music, however, never became his primary occupation.

In the early forties Eugene moved to Greenville in Washington County, situated next to the Mississippi River across from Arkansas. He worked as a mechanic and occasionally played music for local dances. By the end of the forties, however, Eugene rarely played in public as new styles and trends reduced demands for his talents. Still, his house on South Hyman Street, in the heart of the city's Black section, acted as a gathering place for other musicians and storytellers who shared Eugene's older traditions. Since the early seventies Eugene has been retired, caring for his invalid wife, and occasionally supplementing his income by hauling trash.

My interviews drew out many traditional items, but I missed several opportunities for recording spontaneous tale-and-music sessions with Powell and his friends. Fortunately, however, my repeated presence

made Eugene and his friends more relaxed with me and with my recording equipment. On June 26, 1976, a hot Saturday night, I recorded a typical gathering at Eugene's house that included me, Eugene, George Hitt, and Joe Thomas. Eugene and Joe are Black; George and I are White.

Eugene and George did not consider this situation unusual; they had been exchanging stories, jokes, and songs for years. Yet accounts of interracial narrative sessions are rare in folkloristic literature. Perhaps the reason lies in the analytic tendency to treat lore as exclusive to a social group rather than as part of everyday communication between individuals with multiple identities. The transcription to follow, then, is a contribution toward an evaluation of instances of interracial transmission of folkloric materials. Since "racial" aspects of the session are difficult to excerpt, my comments in this preliminary report will focus briefly on the continuities and consistencies in the behaviors of Eugene and George. We cannot prejudge the identity of the lore as necessarily Black or White, as if it had an independent existence above the tellers. The lore is an expression of the participants' masculinity, their personal aesthetics, and common human concerns. The lore is dynamic, shaped by the particular actors and settings involved in this given instance. By looking at sessions like the following, we can avoid the pitfall of making categorical judgments about the group the lore belongs to; rather, we can grasp how the lore emerges from the interaction of the participants in a shared situation. Nonetheless, the transcription is intended as a document for further points of departure.

My recording of the event on this Saturday night actually occurred by accident.

Earlier that day Eugene played a variety of songs and related some preacher jokes in response to my questions. Our interview was interrupted by the arrival of George Hitt and his son. George, also a mechanic, had met Eugene fourteen years earlier when they worked together at a John Deere establishment in Greenville. Hitt is Eugene's junior by twenty years, but they both came from rural backgrounds and enjoyed "country" music, a loose term they used for older forms of music such as blues, spirituals, rags, and dance tunes associated with the life of their rural communities. In addition, George possessed exceptional storytelling abilities, a skill he developed, as he told me, from his experience "up in the Mississippi hills about thirty miles east of Grenada." That talent complemented Eugene's penchant for telling narratives as a pastime, especially when accompanied by liquor.

Eugene invited George and me to return that night, an offer we both accepted. Although he gave no indication of the activity to follow, I arrived early and set up my recording equipment, as I had done many times, in one corner of the living room. Eugene sat near me in front of a window with a fan which seemed to offer little relief from the heat. George arrived with beer which he handed out to Eugene and me. He sat next to Eugene, near the window, and placed an ashtray beside him. We exchanged greetings. Then we traded questions about our backgrounds.

Later, Joe Thomas, who lives across the street from Eugene, came in and sat across from the window fan. Thomas was a frequent member of sessions I had previously attended, although he never offered any narratives or songs. He enjoys both, however, as well as drinking, and he is considered

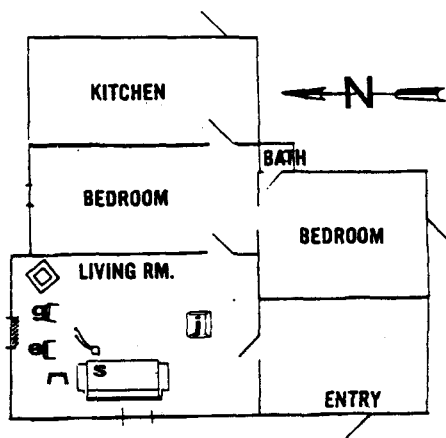
an appreciative listener. According to his account, his unhappiness with his wife also brought him to such gatherings, events which provided escape, entertainment, and companionship for him. He claimed to be the same age as Eugene, with whom he shared a similar, rural background.

Eugene lives in a modest, single-story, balloon-frame house that is comparable to others on the same street. To enter, one goes through a hallway dominated by an out-of-tune piano. The hallway leads to a living room where most evening activities with friends take place. Pictures of Jesus Christ, Martin Luther King, John Kennedy, and Eugene's children hang on the faded, painted walls in the living room. A broken television set supports a smaller, working set in one corner of the room. A couch rests against the wall facing the street, and a mismatched lounge chair is located nearby. Kitchen chairs and an end table usually fill other spaces in the room, but their position is never constant. A single, bare bulb illuminates the room. The center of the room usually lacks furniture and reveals a worn, wooden floor. During the night that the recording took place, ash trays and beer cans littered the floor. The window provided a focal point in the room since participants in this session relied on it for relief from the heat. The positions of Eugene and George, the main performers, near the window thus made them the natural center of attention.

After a few beers, the conversation shifted to old parties and gatherings that George and Eugene had participated in and the songs and jokes they had heard. I turned the tape recorder on, an action that seemed to effect no response from George, Eugene, or Joe. When I asked Eugene the next day if he realized I was recording, he

said yes; he added that he soon forgot about it once the evening began. Although my intent was to observe, I could not avoid being a participant. I not only shared their beer and reacted to their jokes and songs, but the tellers also depended on me as a listener.

FLOOR PLAN



Furniture and seating arrangement for living room only. s=Simon Bronner sitting in front of tape recorder; e=Eugene Powell sitting in front of fan with an end table to his right; g=George Hitt sitting next to television; j=Joe Thomas sitting in lounge chair.

Eugene picked up his guitar, which leaned up against the wall, and began playing the tune of "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry," a song written and recorded by Hank Williams during the 1950s. But more important than the song's history to the beginning of the session was the fact that Eugene perceived the tune as one of George's favorites; thus he hoped to evoke a reciprocal, expressive response. George enjoyed Eugene's rendition and offered a joke when he finished playing. The transcription of the evening's event begins at that point.

GH: This is about a old colored preacher.

EP: Alright, come on.

GH: Man every Sunday morning they get in the pulpit, start preaching and he would invariably start on about one of these days Gabriel was going to blow his horn.

EP: Uh hmm.

GH: That went on Sunday after Sunday after Sunday. People got tired of hearing it and this little boy decided he get up in that attic and try and scare the preacher. So he climbed up in the old attic of that church. Old building rotten anyway.

EP: Uh hmm.

GH: And he got up there and got all set up with his bugle.

EP: [laughs] Yeah.

GH: He had this little bugle with him. Got up there and preacher started preaching. He said, "One of these days, Gabriel going to blow his horn!" [mimics preacher] That little boy cut down on that bugle, "Dooo-doo-doo-dooo!" [laughter] Everybody's ears stood up you know?

EP: Yeah.

GH: He said, "Aw, children, don't worry about it!" Says, "Ain't nothing but the wind blowing." He went on preaching. After a while he said, "One of these days Gabriel going to blow his horn!" That little boy cut down on that again.

EP: Yeah.

GH: And them people started running out of the church house every which a way. [Eugene laughs] And little boy heard all that racket and he got scared. He decided he better go. He started trying to get out and he fell through right beside the preacher. The preacher said, "Get back Gabriel, I cut you!" [raises his voice in pitch and volume; everyone laughs]² [George opens beer and lights cigarette]

EP: I'll tell this one. One time a man died, he had this old stuff, meningitis--it draw you up. You know how it draws you up. They didn't have but one barber in that town. He was scared of dead people you know. He really scared. They wanted to shave him and trim his hair up, you know. He had been sick so long and so they went down and ganged around and talked to him and begged him to go down there and shave this man. He said, "I go down there and shave him if you all going to sit around close to where I'm shaving him at. I'm not going down there by myself." "Yeah, we'll all be right around." So he went down there to shave

this dead fella and they had done got him some big heavy twine and tried to straighten him out. He had the menin-gitis draw him up. And while he was trying to shave him, being nervous and everything, he cut the rope what went right under the chair and across there and was holding him. That made the dead man buck up in his face. He said, "Get back God damn you. God damn it!" He said, "I'll kill you! God damn it, get back!" [raises volume of voice; said excitedly; jumps out of seat; everyone laughs] And he just cut him, couldn't take him off it! "I'm not scared of you, God damn you."³

GH: Done dead anyway.

EP: Yeah and he killed him over again. [everyone laughs]

GH: I know so many I don't know which one to tell.

EP: Tell the first one you get to.

GH: One time this old cajun was sitting on the bank fishing.

EP: Uh hmm.

GH: Down on the bayou, you know.

EP: Uh humm.

GH: He setting there fishing and he heard this motorboat coming up the bayou.

EP: Uh hmm. Yeah.

GH: He kept setting there fishing. All of a sudden this woman--and the boat jumped out. Come swimming to the bank, gunned right by him, and hit the grounder on it. So the guy that was in the boat--he come on to the bank. Man said, "What in the world happened to that woman?" He said, "Well I tell you it's like this." Says, "We were coming up the bayou in the boat." Says, "I got to feeling around on her. I felt her titties. She like it."

EP: Uh hmm.

GH: "I felt down a little further you know and she liked it too."

EP: Uh hmm.

GH: Says, "I felt down a little further and she was really enjoying that. I reach back to turn the damn motor off--I got hold of a damn spark plug!"⁴ [said in frustrated manner; Eugene laughs] Shocked the hell out of him didn't it?

EP: Well, Say old man and his wife, they both old you know. Dick wouldn't stay hard and she was old too. So they decided to seperate. [truck rolls by; sounds of beer cans

opening and cigarettes lighting in background heard through-out narratives] They seperated but they both still stayed in the same house. Well after they seperated they didn't have but one bed. So they got the ironing board and put it down between them. Putting it up between them? So he slept with her that way for about two, three weeks and one night she woke up before he did--he had a piss hard on. [George laughs] She looked over there--she seed it. "Ummm, look like you coming back to life again." "Yeah, I'm doing all right now. I'm doing all right." She said, "Yeah, you think you can fuck now but you can't." Said, "Yes I could." [George laughs] She want to be mean, you know--and bad you know, try to stick out to it, you know. Wasn't going to fool with him never no more. So he said, "Would you mind if I stick this in there?" "No." He got up and stuck it in there. When he stuck it in there, he didn't move right away. He kept laying there. So after while he saw her move around a little bit and she farted. Boooo! [imitates noise of breaking wind; George laughs] And when she farted then he went to fucking. [George laughs] He fucked the hell out of her, you know. So they fucked and fucked and fucked on a long time. After a while he knowed he was making her like it. He said, to her, "Is it good?" She wanted to be bad, you know. Stick to what she said, "It ain't bad!" "Do you want me to take it out?" "I don't care if you let it stay in there till it rots!" [George and Eugene laugh] So all right. She said, "And furthermore I'd like to know how come you didn't start fucking me till I farted?" [Simon laughs] He said, "Well I tell you about that. I never did go to work till the whistle blow." [everyone laughs]⁵

GH: That's pretty good.

EP: Yeah.

GH: You heard that about the Reverend riding the mule, didn't you?

EP: No, let's hear it.

GH: Well old Reverend he always rode a mule and he was going around visiting his congregation. He rode up this one old lady's house and she was setting out on the doorstep shelling peas. She had them on her apron tail, you know. She had on them peas. She said, "Hey Reverend." Says, "Is your mule like pea hull?" He said, "Yes'm." So she

got up, gathered her apron up and started toward that old mule. the mule commenced to backing up you know. She said, "Reverend, I thought your mule like pea hull?" And he said, "Yeah sir, he do like them. But he scared you going to try to put that collar on him." [everyone laughs] Put him to work.⁶

EP: Put him to work.

GH: All right Eugene, tell one.

EP: Well now let me see, what one could I tell.

GH: You heard about the two Polacks?

EP: No, how'd it go?

GH: Oh they was out hunting one day. Going hunting. Got out that day and run up on some tracks. They didn't know what they was. One of them says a bear trap. One says, "No. Ain't no bear track." Says, "It's a lion's track." "No."⁷ They stood there and argued and a damn train run over them.

EP: Oh man! [everyone laughs] Standing up there arguing and the train--

GH: Railroad tracks. [George and Eugene laugh]

EP: You know there was old fella--White fella, he had a plantation. He didn't like no niggers, he said, he didn't want me on his place. So they didn't know who did it but him and his brother, the boy and the other brother was walking out to overlook the land over. The old man he was on there too so going on through the field, he found a big turd about that long. [Eugene stretches his arms apart; George laughs.] And about that big around. So the other boy says to the other one. He says, "Who the hell in the God damn nation shit shit square on the plantation?" The other boy said, he went there and looked. "It must be a nigger by the damn big tracks." [everyone laughs]⁸

GH: I really don't know all of it but anyway. This guy wanted to rent this camel to go, you know, out on the extended trip in the desert so they good for three or four days on one supply of water. So this guy wanted to go about six days. And he wanted to know if there was a relay station where he could get another camel. And he said, "No but I got one that I can fix him up where he can go six days." He says, "Man, I don't know how you're going to do it because he can only drink so much water." [door opens; Joe's wife comes in; she is intoxicated; she tells Joe, "I'm here on account of you," while George continues] He said, "All

right, come over here to the water trough and I'll show you." So the old camel went drinking water. He drank and drank. [Joe tells his wife to hush; Eugene's face appears displeased, and he stares at Joe's wife] Camel drank and drank till he got just about all he wanted. So this Arab was standing behind him with two brick bats and his balls were hanging down there you know. He had them bricks on each side of it. He said, "Pop!" And that old camel said, "Whoooo!" Sucked up that whole trough of water. [everyone laughs]⁹

This guy was over in Africa and he wanted to rent this elephant going out in the jungle. Man he rented it from told him, says, "I'm going to tell you three things that's very important on a elephant." Says, "You take this stick. When you riding him you want to turn right, you rub him behind the right ear with that stick. You want to turn left, rub him behind the left ear." This, that, and the other. "Hit him on the knees, make him kneel down where you can get on and off and all that." He says, "There's one critical thing--"

JT: Shut up baby! [yelled at his wife in response to her mumbled speech]

EP: We trying to do something! [said to Joe's wife in angry tone]

GH: Insects--if he stops, you get off and examine him for insects on his ears." This, that, and the other thing.

EP: Yeah.

GH: Says, "He just won't go if they start bothering him too bad." So he got on the elephant. Went forty miles out in the jungles. Wasn't nobody around. All of a sudden the old elephant stopped. So he got down. He walked around and around him, examined him all over--

EP: Come out of there! [said to Joe's wife; she leaves]

GH: Saw nothing wrong with him. So he stayed there and stayed there. Finally this guy came back. Asked him the trouble. He said, "Have you examined him for insects and all that?" "Yeah I did everything that the man told me to do." So the guy walked around him two or three times. He couldn't see nothing so he went out there and cut him a pole about this big around. [George stretches out his arms]

EP: Uh hmm.

GH: And about yaay long, and he walked up in front of the elephant.

EP: Uh hmm.

GH: He drewed back and hit him right between the eyes hard as he could with that big club. That old elephant farted. It blowed trees down all around him.

EP: Power of a tornado.

GH: And the guy said, "Huh. That's about what I figured. Damn vapor lovers!" [everyone laughs] Vapor lovers!¹⁰

EP: Yeah. God dog!

GH: All right. No offense to the Jews but anyway. These two Jew brothers lived together. They bought them a race horse. Going to get rich racing that horse.

EP: Yeah.

GH: So they had this big race coming up and one brother took the horse and went to it and told the other to stay home. And if he won he would send him a telegraph. He was going ot abbreviate it say, "Money."

EP: Yeah.

GH: All right. He went to the race and the other brother was there waiting on the telegram. Finally came. It said, "S-S-F-F." And he said, "Boy that is good news." The way he interpreted it, it meant, "Started second, finished first." So boy, he throwed a big party.

EP: Uh hmm.

GH: Invited everybody over and drank, eating. So the brother that was racing the horse came back later that night.

EP: Uh hmm.

GH: Walked in and man he's throwing a big party. He said, "Brother what's the meaning of all this," says, "And the horse done lost and here you are spending all this money." He said, "Yeah, but the telegram said 'started second and finished first!'" He said, "No indeed. That mean, 'started, stumbled, farted, and fell.'" [everyone laughs]¹¹

EP: All right. Here goes with this one now. A boy married a girl and he didn't know about no fucking. He went out in the woods hunting one day. The boy kept on--his old dick stayed hard all the time. Says, "You need some fucking on boy!" Says, "You sure need fucking bad. Your dick always stay hard if you don't do something for it." So he's out just getting hard. So the boy went on out there and he run up on a beehive in the forks of a tree. He snatched his dick out. He said, "That here, I'm going to get me

some. Won't nobody know it but me." He hauled off and stuck his dick in that beehive. Commenced to stinging--ate him up! He runned his ass just as hard as he could back home. [Joe laughs] Well, I reckon about a year from that day he married. When he married this girl, he slept with her every night, but he didn't stick his dick in her none of the time. The girl she wanted to fuck. Kept on edging him, says, "Why don't you stick this thing in here?" "Uh, uh. [shakes his head from side to side in negative gesture] I done stuck one in damn beehive, and it sting the hell out of me!" [everyone laughs] That's what he said. So she got said, "This is not a beehive. You put it in there." "I ain't going to do it." He wouldn't do it. So she told his mother and father that she's going to have to leave him because he wouldn't do nothing. He wouldn't do home duty. So they got behind him, told him, said, "Listen, you got to do home duty. If you don't you going to spoil that gal. Keep on, you going to spoil her." Said, "Well, I ain't going to do that." They kept on so he decided that he would do it, but he didn't do it. He went on the fields the next day out in the fields. She got so hard she want to fuck, she laid down, hold her dress up like that you know, legs wide open. He went there and stuck his hoe against it to see would that pussy sting his dick. [George laughs] If it sting that hoe, it would sting his dick. So he stuck it there and he jabbed a little too hard. Had it too far down. That made him stick it up in the ass a little bit, and he got a little yellow shit on the end of it. So, "Uh huh. I told you that was a damn beehive. Don't you see that damn wax on the end of that damn hoe handle?" [everyone laughs] "I ain't going to do it." So she kept worrying, worrying him. He wouldn't do it. The next day went to the field, she done the same thing. Said, "If you don't do it today, I'm going to leave you." And folks kept on telling him, "If you don't do it boy, you going to spoil your wife. Going to sure spoil her. She going to start doing things with somebody else." So that day she pulled up her dress. He went there and feeling it, his dick commence to getting hard. Stuck his finger in it and smelt it. "God damn, I reckon I better get it because God damn if it isn't spoiling because it smells tainted as hell now." [everyone laughs] Yeah, said,

"I better get 'cause it smells tainted as hell right now."
[Eugene laughs] ¹²

GH: Yeah, I heard it the same way except it was family tradition that the boy wasn't supposed to bother the girl for seven days. So they got married. God damn days rocked on and man, he wanted it so bad.

EP: Uh hmm.

GH: And he couldn't stand it about the fifth day.

EP: Uh hmm.

GH: He told her to...

EP: Did he tell her now?

GH: Yeah, his daddy found out about it. He said, "Son, you know its been a family tradition for hundreds of years. Why in the world did you break the family tradition?" He said, "Well daddy, I tell you it's like this." Says, "I looked at it and it looked good. And I felt of it and it felt good." Says, "I smelled of it and damn if it'd kept for seven days. [everyone laughs] ¹³ It's smelling rank. [everyone laughs] Raunchy. [Joe laughs]

EP: I can't see why's it's so good, but tainted meat is good. [everyone laughs]

JT: It is too!

GH: Pussy is just like a World's Fair. It gets bigger and better every year. ¹⁴

EP: You ain't joking. Bigger and better every day. Oh yeah, that's right.

JT: Every day is right.

GH: Bigger and better. [Joe laughs]

EP: Sort of like...

GH: I knew an old gal one time she had one on her so big she had to wear suspenders on to keep from shitting in it. ¹⁵
[everyone laughs]

EP: Another old boy he was fucking with a gal wanted to give him some behind. She didn't want much to do it. She said, "Well he just want it behind, I give you some." He went back there and stuck it in the wrong hole.

GH: Oh Lord!

EP: And he was just fucking. She said, "Uh uh. [shakes his head from side to side in negative gesture] You got it in the wrong place." "Damn if that hole as good as this is." She pulled up off it. She said, "Put it down below there in that other hole. Put it down there." [everyone

laughs] "God damn it. If that's any better than this hole that I'm already getting, damn if I don't want it!"¹⁶
[everyone laughs]

GH: Oh Lord! Sitting in the bar. There's a damn queer in there sitting down at the end of the bar. And so he says--and this big old Texan came in, you know. Sat down, stood there a while and listened to the conversation. And he noticed that queer sitting down end of the bar. He says, "I buy anybody in here a drink except that damn queer down the end of the bar." Alright. Things rocked on. He did that two or three times. After a while that little queer jumped up. He said, "Bartender [said in high-pitched voice] just give me two cubes of ice." And says, "What you want with two cubes of ice?" He says, "I'm going to put one in this jaw, and one in this jaw, and I'm going to cold cock that son of a bitch over there!" [everyone laughs]¹⁷

EP: Going to cold cock that son of a bitch! [everyone laughs]

JT: He's going to cold cock him! [everyone laughs]

GH: Alright. There was a sale, two-thirds off, something like that. Anyway it was a good deal. This lady heard it on the radio. So it's early in the morning so she jumped up, got dressed, and hurried. Going to get up there when the store opened. She forgot to put any drawers on.

EP: Oh no!

GH: Panties. So she got up there and got up on the stool. A man sitting in front of her, fitting her you know. He looked up there and sees that thing gaped open. He said, "Man, I could eat that thing full of ice cream!"

EP: Oh man! [Eugene laughs]

GH: Insulted her! She jumped up, run home, told her husband what the man says. "I want you to go up there and whip him!" He said, "Well, in the first place," he says, "You should have worn some panties up there. Second place, you didn't need no damn shoes. And the third place, that son of a bitch big enough to eat **that** full of ice cream, I ain't going to fuck with him." [everyone laughs]¹⁸ She had a gash on her...

EP: You ain't joking.

GH: Like a bootjack!

JT: That son of a bitch ain't gonna fight with him.

EP: You ain't joking.

GH: Alright. This old guy he's in this truck stop drinking beer. He's an Arkansas redneck about like I am. Sitting there drinking beer--little guy--skinny.

EP: Uh hmm.

GH: This big bruiser came in--he done been all overseas and orient--this place and the other. Foreign viewed all this fancy this, that, and the other. So he sat down beside this little guy. He hauled off and gave him one of these judo chops. Knocked him out.

EP: He did? Give me a light on your cigarette. [to Simon]

GH: Little guy come back to and got up. Says--that old guy says, "That's judo. I learned that overseas in Japan." So little guy got back up on the stool, sat down. Directly he gave him another chop.

EP: Aw man!

GH: Knocked him off again. He said, "That's Karate. [Joe laughs] I learned that overseas." So little guy got back up and walked out to his pick-up truck. Came back in and he waylaid that big guy.

EP: Oh no.

GH: Knocked him out. He told the waitress, said, "When that son of a bitch wakes up, you tell him that's an Arkansas crowbar!" [everyone laughs]¹⁹

EP: Hot dog, that was a good one! Arkansas crowbar! [everyone laughs] Alright here we go, let me say this thing here.

GH: Arkansas crowbar.

JT: Arkansas crowbar.

EP: There was a boy, he liked it the girl that he going to see and she really intelligent acting, you know. And so he's a boy that can tell anything he taste. He could tell what it was, what it made out of, what it was--meat or anything. So she--he telling her at the table, "I can tell"--at the table. "What is that you eating now?" "This is lye hominy." "What's that you eating over there?" "Steak and gravy." He knowed everything. Said, "Oh daddy!" She getting stuck on him because he could tell all anything he eat. So when he left that day, daddy was going to kill a yearling calf. [voice rises questioningly] And she told him, said, "Daddy when you kill that yearling, save that cock." [George laughs] So he said, "Alright." When he killed that yearling he saved that old cock for her. She cooked it good and nice and everything. Maked him put it

up in the stove, put gravy around it and everything. Good, you know. And got to the table they start to eating. They wouldn't eat the cock because they knew what it was. He come there and he start cutting off a slice and eating it. And that's all he likes the whole time he was at the table. Said, "Pass that dish over yonder." [George laughs] So they passed the dish to him. And he was just eating, and eating, eating and going on. He ate so much of it his dick got hard. Well his dick got hard and everything. She says, "What is that you eating? Baby, what is that you eating?" He couldn't tell what it was. He got stalled. He said, "Well, baby, you got me this time." "You want me to tell you?" So he said, "Yeah." She said, "Well that was heifer cock." [George laughs] He said, "I thought it was because I though it was some kind of cock or another because I had a hard on ever since I started eating it." [everyone laughs]²⁰

GH: Oh Lord! Now this little girl was always--well, she had a date you know. And everytime her boyfriend come over, her little brother would go down in the middle of the floor, you know, out in front of them just to aggravate them.

EP: I know.

GH: He had a little dog "Sport."

EP: Uh hmm.

GH: Little dog always fooling around, so one night little girl says, "Brother, I got a date tonight." Says, "I wish you wouldn't come in here fooling around." He says, "Alright." Says, "I'll sit down and be quiet." So boy came over. They was sitting there talking, this, that, and the other. Old dog had worms. This was an old house with pine floors in it, you know. The dog set his ass down scrubbing it on the floor, you know. [said with a rise in pitch at the end]

EP: Yeah, ass itching.

GH: Girl looked at that little boy, gritted her teeth. Telling him he better not say nothing. And he found her. Said, "Sister," says, "I wouldn't say a damn word. I don't care if Sport run a splinter up his ass a foot long!" [everyone laughs]

EP: Well let me tell you this one. [said gleefully] A little boy was at the house. He was an old bad boy. Messing around in the house all the time, getting into some-

thing all the time. And so this girl had company that day. This old man come there. I mean this boy come there that liked her. Sitting up there and they told--they got them outside and told him to be quiet. "Don't talk no nasty talk. Now you know how you is," says, "Don't you be talking around here talking no nasty talk." He said, "No, I'm not going to talk no...." Alright, the dog come in there. You know how a dog do when you run him out the house. And it was raining out there kind of drizzling, raining, one thing and another. Dog come in there. He scared they going to run him out. He setting down with a scared hard on. Old dog setting up there named Rover. Running his dick way out. He said, "Sister," said, "Look. Look at old at old Rover. He's done skinned his reddish. [George laughs] He said, "I told you to hush your mouth. You hush off on that before I tell mama to give you a whipping." Hauled off and said it again. "Mama come here and see about this boy! In here talking his bad talk." So she went in there and whipped him. "I ain't going to say no more bad talk. Never no more." So she went there commence to whipping him. Whipping him, that boy. Whipping the hell out of that boy. And so she whipping him so bad and he thought he was doing something. He said to his mother, "Mama," said, "I never saw that no more! I don't give a damn if old Rover skin his dick back to his ass, I ain't never going to say that no more!" [everyone laughs]²¹

GH: Now this little old boy was fooling around with this gal.

EP: Uh hmm.

GH: And he never could get her out of the house so he devised a plan, you know.

EP: Uh hmm. |

GH: Had a knothole in the floor there in the kitchen. And she said, "Tell you what," says, "You get out of the house and you wrung up through that knothole and I'll sit down over it and I'll make like I'm shelling peas or doing something."

EP: Uh hmm.

GH: So come supper time, little girl was sitting over that hole, and boy, he was rubbing it you know.

EP: Yeah.

GH: He getting good to her and everybody got to the table.

They kept hollering for girl to on to eat. She kept setting there on the floor. So the old man run over there and grabbed her by the hand, snatched her up off of there. Old woman said, "Lord, God damn! A snake done bit sister." Says, "It's skeeting its poison at me!" [everyone laughs] Skeeting its poison at me. [everyone laughs]²²

EP: Well they say the old lady she had cooked a lot of pies and cakes and custards and things. Then she had baked two ducks. Had them there and say...

GH: Fresh fucked ducks?

EP: Yeah. The preacher was supposed to take dinner with them that day. So he come on over to take dinner. So the mother had come. The children had done eat up everything, you know. They wanted to get out of what they had done, you know. Little old boy he smart. So mama walking around the kitchen just sharpening her knife, sharpening and going on. So he said, "Mother sure sharpening that knife. She sure can sharpen. Yeah but preacher, you know what she sharpen that knife, do you?" He said, "What?" Said, "Tell you. My mama always cuts preachers' nuts out when they come there." [George laughs] He said, "Do what?" "Mother always cuts the preachers' nuts out when he go eat dinner here." So that preacher jumped up and started to running. [everyone laughs] When he stopped to running and the old lady started whipping the boy, she said, "What you all eat them ducks up for?" And he misunderstood. He thought that she had cut somebody's nuts out and cooked them and ate them up. [everyone laughs] "What you eat them ducks up for?" The preacher standing over the hill. Everytime that old boy got a chance to say, "I told you that, didn't I?" He could hear them say ducks, but he thought they saying nuts. [everyone laughs] That preacher run his ass off.²³

GH: Oh Lord! [Eugene laughs] Alright. One time this colored preacher, he was old, he getting ready to retire and so this new preacher was going to take his place. So the new preacher was scared. He ain't never preached before a congregation. He asked the old preacher, said, "I'm nervous. What must I do?" He said, "Well," says, "When I first started preaching I was the same way." Says, "I'll tell you what to do." Says, "You go to bootlegger. Get you half pint of gin, pour it in that water pitcher--up in that pulpit."

EP: Yeah.

GH: Says, "When service starts you [George clears his throat] clear your throat and say excuse me and pour you a glass of that gin water. And when you call on old Deacon Jones over there to pray, pour you another shot of that water. Then when you sing your songs, well get another drink. By that time you be ready to preach." So he thought on it. He said, "I don't know. I don't believe a half pint will do me." So he got him a full pint of it--of gin. Poured up in that water pitcher. And man he took him three or four good drinks of that gin. He was feeling good when he started preaching. Man he laid one on them. After it was all over he walked outside and shaking hands with everybody. Come to the old preacher. Says, "Well," says to the old preacher, "How'd I do?" He said, "Well son, you did a little bit too good." Said, "Daniel slew Goliath. He didn't stomp the shit out of him!" [everyone laughs]²⁴

EP: Well now. Here we go again. This old preacher, he was fucking the deacon's wife. He went to work he did. Went over there that day, wanted to fuck. Well they caught the deacon broadcasting. He was broadcasting his ground. Deacon's wife--the preacher went over there and old Deacon breaking up his land over there. He was broadcasting it and sowing oats. His wife was sowing the oats. She out there sowing the oats, you know, and going on. He got there, he says, "Well how you doing Deac'?" [said in a low pitched voice] Deac' says, "Oh doing pretty good Reverend. How are you?" "Oh I'm doing just fine." [low pitch] Says, "Uh huh." "Well," he says, "Where you going Deac'?" Says, "Well I'm going to run up to the store and get me a little chaw of tobacco. I'm going to rush on back home." [low pitch] Said, "I'm going up there in a few minutes. You can wait, I'll go up there with you." Well he didn't want him with him. He wanted to catch him absent where he could crank his wife. So alright. He went on up there and rushed up and got his tobacco. Come on back. Old Deac' suspicious some. He said he was going up to get some tobacco in a few minutes. His wife had done got through sowing the oats so she went on to the house. It's real hot like it is today, you know. Going to the house. So old Deac' he stood around out there in the woods a while. When mind told him,

"You go to the house and get you some bricks and kill that old preacher." And so he went to the house and got some bricks. Stayed in old upstairs house. He went upstairs and hid himself up there. Preacher come back along. He wanted to know, said, "Where's old Deac'?" Said, "I left him, he still down there. Trying to cover up those old oats I planted." Says, "I stop by, came by to see if I could get a little piece." And she snatched up her dress right quick. She said, "Whooo, I'm just as hot as I could be. Been out there sowing them oats all day." And says, "I'm just as hot as I could be. I hope every one of them seeds come up is thick as the hair on this."

GH: Oh my goodness.

EP: And the old Preacher he hauled his great big dick out. He said, "Yes, I hope I can get this in right now so I can do some good." The old preacher said, "And I hope the stalk will be the size of this." [Simon laughs] That what the old preacher said. Old Deacon upstairs commence to putting them bricks side his head. He said, "God damn! I hope the seeds would be the size of these too!" [everyone laughs]²⁵

GH: He putting the bricks on him.

EP: Yeah. He said, "I hope the seeds would be the size of these." [everyone laughs] Yeah.

GH: Oh Lord!

EP: Alright. Come on with your'n now.

GH: Oh Red [nickname for Eugene], I got to think a while.

EP: You got to think a while? [Eugene picks up his guitar and plays "Calhoun Blues"]

GH: Let's sing Red.

EP, GH: Now will a matchbook hold my clothes,

I wonder will a matchbook hold my clothes;

Lord, I ain't got so many but I got so far to go.

EP: Lord, I'm here today gimme, tomorrow I may be gone,

Well I'm here today but tomorrow I may be gone;

Listen remember me after days I'm gone.

Well the sun goin' shine in my back door someday,

I wonder will--[guitar imitates voice]

Sun goin' shine in my back door someday,

Sun going to shine in my back door someday;

Lord and the wind going to change, going to blow

my blues away.

[Joe and George encourage Eugene with various vocal comments: alright, yeah, I hear you.]

I wonder will the evening sun go down,
I wonder will the evening sun go down;
But my mind gonna wonder where my gal lay down.

Tell me rider, how you want your rolling done?
Oh tell me now baby, how you want your rolling done?
Want to do it slow and easy like my old time
rider done.²⁶

GH: Hey!

EP: Oh! [plays "Big Leg Blues"]

Now wake up baby, take your big legs off of mine,
Wake up baby, take your big legs off of mine;
Lay your legs on me sweet mama, makes me
want to grind.

[George says "Oh" while others laugh]

Take your time baby, you got all night to ride,
[George and Joe laugh]

Take your time baby, you got all night to ride;
[George says, "Get it now"]

I want you to do it to me a long time, I want you
to change my mind.

[George and Joe laugh]

Yes below her navel, just above her knee,
That woman got something and it really pleases me;
I says just below her navel, just above her knees,
That woman got something, Lord, and it pleases me.
[George, Simon, and Joe laugh]

Roll my belly like you roll your dough,
Want you to roll it till I don't want no more;
Say I want you to roll my belly, want you to roll
it like you roll my dough;

I want you to keep on rolling baby till
I don't want no more.²⁷

GH: Getting wild now! Got something just below her navel.

EP: Yeah. [everyone laughs]

GH: Red you heard about these two old guys come walking
up out of the woods on a hot, scalding July day. Man it's

about as hot as it is now. They been drinking that old Pop-skull whiskey, you know. They're drunk and they walk up to this country store. Went up on the porch and went inside. Told the man they wanted two cans of sardines and a package of crackers. [Eugene laughs] They come out on the front porch. Sat down on a hard R.C. [Royal Crown Cola] case eating them sardines. Alright. They got to eating them good. This third guy, his name was Lewis. He crosseyed. He walked up about the time they were eating them sardines. He was crosseyed man. He had to lay on his back to look down to wet. [everyone laughs] He was looking straight at them but his head was turned the other way, he so crosseyed. He was watching them eat them sardines. They was getting them all up in the high brows, everywhere else, they were drunk. He stood there watching them, watching them. Man he wanted some sardines so bad. So he walked up in the store. Says, "Where is them sardines?" Man says, "Up there on the shelf." He said, "Get me a can of them. Them boys done flung a craving on me." [emphasized] [George, Eugene, and Joe Laugh]²⁸ EP: Well they say an old boy carried his wife uptown. She's a great big fat woman, you know. Carried her uptown and she got uptown, she wanted some grapes. "Why don't you call for what you want, I'll pay for it." So she got her some grapes and got about two pounds and a half, three. Went back home to eat them that night.

GH: Oh, no.

EP: Kept on till she ate them all up. He kept to her, said, "Now wife don't you eat all them grapes. They going to make you sick." "No they ain't either." She just kept eating them. So alright. He messed around. They went to bed that night and she taken sick over the bed that night. She messed around and twist around. She thought she was in the bed right. She had her head down to the floor. [George laughs] His head was down to the head of the bed. [George laughs] Messed around there. Every once in a while she said, "Fooooo," fart you know. He said, "Wife, wake up and turn over. Your breath smell like shit!" [everyone laughs] So she didn't hear him because she was sleeping bad. [George claps hands] Way after a while she said, "Fooooo," she farted again. "Alright wife. I done told you to turn your head the other way." Said, "Your breath smelling just like shit. I'm tired of your smelling." So she laid on there. He said now she done it again. He

said, "Now I done asked you nice to turn. If you don't, I'm going to slap your goddamn eyes out!" [everyone laughs] After a while she said, "Foooo." He hauled off and slapped the hell out of them there. One of them grapes jumped out of her ass, hit him back there. Said, "Lord, I didn't mean to knock your eyes out!" Commence kissing in the ass. He said [makes kissing sound], "Whooo, baby, you sure in bad shape because your jaws--you must be got the mumps." [everyone laughs; George claps hands and stomps feet] Must be got the mumps. He kissing them big fat jaws in her ass.²⁹
 GH: Oh boy!

EP: Alright, come on with one.

GH: I heard that one about Muscadine.

EP: Yeah. [plays "Boogie Chillen"]

Oh juke, now, juke.

Juke, chillen, juke.³⁰

[George dances, Joe joins him. Joe yells, "Eugene really going with it!" George claps along; yells, "Go on!" and "Whooo, hotter than the other side of hell!"³¹ Eugene stops playing; everyone laughs. George says, "You was juking on that wasn't it? You ain't joking."]

GH: Boys, it's about past my bedtime.

EP: Hmm?

GH: Where's my pistol. I must have sweated off twenty pounds.

EP: Doggone right. [Eugene laughs] Be a fine fried chicken, I give my shotgun. What are you going to sing now? [to George]

GH: I got to go Red. I got as hot as a fresh fucked fox in a forest fire. [Eugene laughs]³²

EP: [plays "44 Blues"]

GH: That T.P. and the moon running side by side.

EP: Walked all night long with my forty four in my hand,
 All night long with my forty four in my hand;
 I was looking for my woman and I found her
 with another man.

I thought I heard my baby sing that she heard
 the forty four whistle blow,
 I thought I heard my baby saying that she heard
 the forty four whistle blow;

And she said it blowed just like it wasn't going
to blow them worried blues no more.

I wore my forty four so long, Lord it made my
shoulders sore,
Wore my forty four so long and it made my
shoulders sore;
After I do what I want to do, sweet mama, I ain't
going to wear my forty four no more.

Well the shack where I'm living, well it's way
down in the woods,
The little old cottage where I'm living now, it's
way down in the woods;
I said the woods wake me up every morning,
scratching on my door.³³

Play it for me now! [plays improvisation on tune]
[Eugene stops playing]

EP: Them fours ain't it!

SB: Yeah.

EP: Now this is a little taste. I ain't going to play much
of it. Wait just a minute, then go home. [plays "Sante
Fe Blues"]

Now the I.P. and the moon, they both running
side by side,
The I.P. and the moon, they both running
side by side;
I.P. told the motorman don't you let no hobos ride.

Well I'm way down here, I'm all here by myself,
Way down here, all down here by myself;
The woman that I've been loving, she done got her
somebody else.

I ain't got nobody now to talk baby talk to me,
I ain't got nobody now around to talk baby talk
to me;

The woman that I've been loving gone back to her
old time used to be.

[George and Simon laugh]

Yeah. She left me, she left me standing here,
My woman done left me, she left me standing here;
If I can't--[guitar imitates voice]³⁴

[Eugene stops playing; tape recorder shut off] [George and Joe leave; I pack my equipment and then leave]

Several more sessions which underscored similar patterns in such events occurred during my stay in Greenville. Music and tale were always integral elements, but generic differences may suggest misleading distinctions. Eugene's version of "Big Leg Blues," for instance, was perceived as a jocular expression in the particular context of humorous exchanges at the time. At other times, music served as a delaying tactic to allow formulation of more tales, or served as a response to particular jokes. Blues structure may lend itself to similarities with jokes because of blues' use of repetition of narrative elements followed by a "twist" end line. On this night, music acted as a framing device; Eugene's playing acted as cues for jocular exchanges. Recognition of Eugene's musical abilities was countered in such instances by another expression of ability--storytelling. Thus, although reactions to music may appear distinct from tales because of scholars' separation in folkloristic classification, the genres may rather be seen as variable codes of behavior that shift according to particular situations.

In the transcript, shared concerns among the main performers led to a delimitation of content matter. Repeated references were made to religion, sex, violence, old age, agriculture, technology, and food. Environmental factors at the time of the session--especially the heat--also contributed to what subjects were raised that evening. The tales and songs, however, were not necessarily spontaneous responses to a situation. Each performer possessed a repertoire of stories that seemed appropriate to the situation, but they exercised control of the situation by introducing stories they **knew** at

times rather than what the specific context might suggest. In addition, both Eugene and George switched subjects or codes in order to introduce a new narrative situation despite the constant physical environment. We expect sexual jokes to lead to other erotic material, so one might question switches to asexual preacher jokes in the transcript. One explanation lies in the shared body of material that both tellers know, thus allowing switching because of the familiarity. One purpose of the event, after all, is entertainment, and the means of accomplishing that purpose are flexible within the context.

The technique of selection is also revealing. When George rhetorically said, "I know so many I don't know which one to tell," Eugene replied, "Tell the first one you get to." Eugene's reply indicates an acknowledgment of a shared technique: scanning of a mental list of plots. To be sure, such a list varies according to the situation. For example, a series of preacher stories that are told may bring the teller's repertoire of preacher tales to the forefront of the list. Indeed, often when I would ask Eugene a question about an aspect of his repertoire, he would reply, "I have to **get it in my mind.**" Thus, the process of selection seems to operate in this instance under the combined influence of mental technique, precedence, and environment.

Another pattern which arose out of several sessions I witnessed, including the one presented above, is the competitive framework involved in the event. Each teller responded to a joke by trying to better it--an aesthetic judgment--and thereby advanced the event. When George told the story of a boy obscenely reporting the action of a dog named Sport, Eugene responded gleefully, "Now let me tell you this one." His story

concerned a similar occurrence of a boy obscenely describing Rover's actions. Eugene's story, however, was longer and probably obscene by the tellers' standards. George responded by introducing a new focus--the sexual desires of a girl, even at the time of meals. A competitive, dyadic situation appears here, and like other traditional events, escalation takes the form of small, incremental steps.³⁵ The flow from the "Sport" story to the "Rover" narrative is one example. The escalation on this evening seemed to climax in Eugene's story about a woman who ate grapes. The intensity of laughter was highest then. The preceding exchanges culminated in this complex joke, and it was followed by music for dancing--a frame and signal for a temporary end to narrative exchanges.

The only serious disturbance to the flow of the evening came when Joe's wife entered the room. She was perceived as a disruptive figure--similar to females portrayed as disruptive in the narratives. At another session on July 8, 1976, with different participants except for Eugene and Joe, Rosa Lee O'Dell was treated similarly when she entered a session. Such events were reserved for small groups of males, usually at night, and usually accompanied by liquor.

A startling contrast emerged between my solicitation of traditional material through interviews and my recording of contextual situations. The interviews were invaluable, of course, but a far greater breadth of traditional material appeared in contextual recordings. I also become aware of significant nuances and devices. Both Eugene and George like to repeat punch lines of jokes after a rendition in order to stimulate further laughter. Eugene also listens to jokes by vocalizing his attention through

comments such as "Uh hmm," "yeah," "Oh Lord," or "go on" throughout a telling. On the other hand, his repeated use of "you know" in his jokes was often designed to elicit similar responses from his listeners. Even cigarette smoking appeared to be a visual clue: when Eugene was finished with a story and ready to hear one from George, he would light up a cigarette (George also used this technique).

Significant headway has already been made toward an appreciation of contextual, behavioristic studies in America,³⁶ but further concern for contextual research is still needed before behavioral comparisons can adequately be made--especially in the documentation of verbal behavior that contains obscenities (documentation which continues to be avoided by "scholarly" publishers). Indeed, in the last generation of folkloristics, American folklorists have shifted from vague and speculative holistic studies, to group studies, to more formally viable small group, situational studies, and ultimately to individual, behavioristic studies. We are thus effectively moving toward an illumination of the techniques individuals use to shape and reshape traditions in particular situations. Implicit in such presentations is a view of folklife as a dynamic, continuing process which manifests basic principles of human thought, feeling, and behavior.

NOTES

1. Information from these interviews can be found in my, "Bad Man Monroe Legends from the Delta Region of Mississippi," *Mid-South Folklore* 5 (1977): 53-58; idem, "Eugene

Powell Also Known as Sonny Boy Nelson," **Living Blues** No. 43, pp. 14-25. My Mississippi research was supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts and assistance from the Cooperstown Graduate Programs.

2. This joke is Baughman Tale Type 1833J, "Preacher says: 'Let Gabriel blow his horn!' Boy in loft blows trumpet, preacher and congregation scatter." In Ernest W. Baughman, **Type and Motif Index of the Folktales of England and North America** (The Hague: Mouton, 1966). Variants appear in Leroy K. Irvis, "Negro Folktales from Eastern New York," **New York Folklore Quarterly** 11 (1955): 176; Roderick J. Roberts, "Negro Folklore in a Southwestern Industrial School" (M.A. thesis, Indiana University, 1965), pp. 31-32; Richard M. Dorson, **American Negro Folktales** (1956; reprint ed., Greenwich, Connecticut: Fawcett Publications, 1967), p. 169; Roger D. Abrahams, **Deep Down in the Jungle**, rev. ed. (Chicago: Aldine Publishing, 1970), pp. 207-8; Daryl Dance, **Shuckin' and Jivin'** (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1978), p. 49.

3. Louis C. Jones in **Things that Go Bump in the Night** (New York: Hill and Wang, 1959) reports stories of corpses that "rise in their solemn place and act for a few moments--never for long and only once--as though the mortal spark were still alive....These people are really dead and have no business acting in this fashion" (p. 6). Variants of Eugene's story appear in Richard M. Dorson, **Negro Tales from Pine Bluff, Arkansas and Calvin, Michigan** (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1958), pp. 82-6, 217-8.

4. This is Hoffman motif X723.2, "Sexual tease foiled." See Frank Hoffman, **Analytical Survey of Anglo-American Traditional Erotica** (Bowling Green, Ohio: University Popular Press, 1973).

5. Gershon Legman in **No Laughing Matter** (New York: Breaking Point, 1975) discusses the fart "as the voice of the vagina asking for intercourse..." (pp. 868-80). Terrence Leslie Hansen's **The Types of the Folktale in Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, and Spanish South America** (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1957) includes tale type 1459, "Girl is very beautiful but cannot control flatulence. Friend asks her to

dance. As soon as she begins to dance, the whistle blows. Everybody looks for the fire." This tale includes the element of the fart as the blowing whistle.

6. I have not been able to locate a variant of this tale, but Thompson motif J883.1, "Man compelled to live on peas takes comfort when he sees a man once rich eating the hulls," uses similar images--but to make different points.

7. This is an example of X650, "Jokes concerning other races or nations." William Clements' **The Types of the Polack Joke (Folklore Forum Bibliographic and Special Series No. 3, November 1969)** lists E5.7, "Polish Hunters."

8. This tale belongs to a cycle of self-degrading stories found among Negroes. See Dance, pp. 77-100. Hoffman lists X716, "Humor concerning defecation and breaking wind," but Thompson motif X665, "Jokes about Negroes" is also appropriate.

9. This tale includes Hoffman motif X712.3.1, "Injury to testicles."

10. This joke contains Hoffman motif X716.7, "Disasterous breaking wind."

11. This tale contains motifs J1820, "Misunderstanding; inappropriate action from misunderstanding" and H600, "Symbolic Interpretations."

12. This joke includes J1745, "Absurd ignorance of sex" and J1800, "One thing mistaken for another." A similar joke appears in Vance Randolph, **Pissing in the Snow** (Urbana, Chicago, London: University of Illinois Press, 1976), p. 22.

G. Legman discusses numerous jokes centered on the smell of a vagina as inducement to intercourse in **Rationale of the Dirty Joke** (New York: Grove Press, 1968), pp. 406-7.

13. Similar traditions of waiting for consummation of marriage exist in Italian and Icelandic traditions (motif T165), usually indicated as twenty four hours or three days to an extreme of seven days. A similar joke to Hitt's is found in Legman, **Rationale**, p. 407.

14. In 1974 I collected a similar comparison from white male adolescents which was used during white "rank-out" sessions in Brooklyn, New York. The insult was, "Your

mother's pussy is like a World's Fair. It gets bigger and better and more crowded every year."

15. In a personal communication with Roderick Roberts in 1976, he reported collecting this boast from Blacks in Arizona during the 1960s. Hoffman motif X712.1.5.1, "Desirability of heavy pubic hair" is implied. Thompson motif X916, "Remarkable hair" is also indicated. These kinds of remarkable woman exaggerations are common in erotic folklore. Another example is, "I knew this girl once whose cunt muscles were so strong she could pick up a carrot of the table with her snatch and make it disappear," from Richard Price, *The Wanderers* (New York: Avon Books, 1974), p. 33.

16. This tale contains Hoffman motif X733.1, "Unwitting anal intercourse." Variants can be found in Randolph, pp. 118, 136.

17. Legman states in *No Laughing Matter*, "Of particular interest here is the touch as to the tough homosexual pose or contradiction, since, to the folk mind, the homosexual is the opposite of tough and is weak and unvirile indeed" (p. 82). Examples are found in Anne Ferrara, Virginia Rider, and Joyce Plaut, "What is a Dirty Joke?" (unpublished typescript, Archive of New York State Folklife, 1976).

18. This joke includes Hoffman motif X712.1.4, "Large vagina." A variant was collected in Oneonta, New York in 1975 by Ferrara, Rider, and Plaut (p. 19). The motif of eating food out of a vagina is often repeated in remarkable woman exaggerations.

19. This joke is similar to a joke reported in Ronald L. Baker, "The Influence of Mass Culture on Modern Legends," *Southern Folklore Quarterly* 40 (1976): 374.

20. A similar, but expurgated, version of this story appears in *Archie Campbell's Hee Haw Joke Book* (n.p., n.d.). Other stories that include "sympathetic erections" are found in Ferrara, Rider, and Plaut (p. 45). See also Hoffman motif X712.2.2, "Jokes about erection."

21. This joke and the previous, "I Wouldn't say a Damn Word!" are variations of a "Nasty Earnie" type cycle I often heard in New York and New Jersey. This type usually in-

volves a boy described as nasty who vows to be good according to orthodox values but fails to live up to this vow. An example of this type is the story of Ernie in the classroom. He has been reprimanded for cursing in class. The teacher is teaching the alphabet. She asks, "What is a word that starts with A?" Ernie raises his hand, but the teacher is afraid he will answer with indecencies. She calls on someone else. The same things happens again when she gets to F. The teacher continues through the alphabet refusing to call on Ernie. At R, Ernie violently raises his hand and shakes it. Since all the other children had already answered, and since the teacher could imagine any obscenity with the letter R, she calls on him. He answers, "A big fucking rat with a tail this fucking long!" Ferrara, Rider, and Plaut give three variants of the cycle (pp. 5-6).

22. Roger Abrahams collected a variant of this tale entitled, "A Remedy for Snake Bite," (pp. 241-2). Vance Randolph's collection includes another similar story, "Snake on the Bridge," (p. 55). Cf. Hoffman motif J1772.18.2, "Man's member taken for gosling's neck." See also a variant in Paulette Cross, "Jokes and Black Consciousness: A Collection with Interviews," in **Mother Wit from the Laughing Barrel**, A. Dundes (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1973), pp. 659-66.

23. As Legman notes in **No Laughing Matter**, jokes about attacks or feared attacks on testicles are common (p. 46). The story contains the motif J1805, "Similar sounding words mistaken for each other." A variant can be found in Langston Hughes and Arna Bontemps, eds., **The Book of Negro Folklore** (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Co., 1958), p. 160 in which a preacher mistakes "years" for "ears" and runs. See also Ixlaus Zobel, **Deutsche Schwänke** (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), pp. 90-92 for another expurgated version, from Germany.

24. This text is a variant of Tale Type 1827, "You shall see me a little while longer. The Parson takes a drink of liquor during the sermon (X445.1)." Roderick Roberts includes three variants of the tale: "He stooped down," "Look over yonder," and "All my fresh air," pp. 24-29. Abrahams collected a version of "All my fresh air" in Texas in 1965 in his **Positively Black** (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1970), pp. 105-6. See also Dance, p. 52.

25. I have not found variants of this tale, but it does display the traditional element of sexual rivalry between the preacher and the deacon. Cf. J1269.1, "The Parson's share and the sexton's."

26. "Calhoun Blues" is Eugene's name for this song. He learned it from Oscar Strong, a Murphy guitarist who played during Eugene's youth. The verses are found in many traditional blues. See Tommy Johnson's "Maggie Campbell Blues," Victor 21409, 2/4/28; and Lonnie Johnson's "Sun to Sun Blues," Okeh 8291, 1/19/26. Eugene previously played this song on 6/23/76. Verse 3 of Text 1 remains intact as Verse 3 of Text 2. Verse 1 in Text 2 is a variation of the same theme in Verse 2 of Text 1. Verses 2 and 5 of Text 2 are found in a version of "Meet me in the Bottom" performed by Powell on 6/24/76.

27. Johnnie Temple recorded "Big Leg Woman" (Decca 7547, 10/17/38) as did Mississippi John Hurt from Avalon, Mississippi (Okeh unissued, 12/21/28). In Hurt's version only the first verse is similar. The last verse of Powell's version is used in "Meet me in the Bottom" performed on 6/24/76. I collected "Roll My Jelly Like You Roll Your Dough" from Sam Chatmon on 11/6/73 in Binghamton, New York, although Chatmon lived in Hollandale, Mississippi.

28. I have collected a variant of this use of crosseyed problems in the form of a remarkable woman (man) exaggeration in Brooklyn, New York: "I knew a guy so crosseyed, he had to lay on his back to take a shit."

29. Abrahams in **Deep Down in the Jungle** reports a variant which contains a different setting but a similar punchline: "You ain't lying you sick, honey, you jaws are swollen like you have the mumps and your breath smells like shit" (pp. 216-17). Cf. Thompson motif J1772.19 and Hoffman IT 1436.

30. Alan Lomax and Shirley Collins collected this song from "Boy Blue" (real name is Roland Hayes) in Arkansas in 1959 (Atlantic LP 1352). Bill Ferris collected this song in 1968 from Lovey Williams (Matchbox SDM 226) in Mississippi.

31. Cathy Orr in her "Folk Comparisons from Colorado," **Western Folklore** 35 (1976): 175-208 lists "hotter than hell" as number 118.

32. Orr lists this comparison as number 117 and discusses its various forms in her introduction.

33. Eugene previously performed this song as an instrumental on 6/22/76. Paul Oliver provides an in-depth discussion of the "Forty Fours" in his **Aspects of the Blues Tradition** (New York: Oak Publications, 1970), pp. 90-127. Versions of "44 Blues" with lyrics similar to Eugene's are Roosevelt Sykes (Okeh 8702, 6/14/29), James "Boodle It" Wiggins (Paramount 12860, 10/12/29), and Butch Cage and Willie Thomas (Arhoolie F1003, 8/7/60). It is known that Ernest "44" Johnson and Little Brother Montgomery, who were known for their performance of "44 Blues," were at Eugene Powell's only commercial recording session in New Orleans on 10/16/36, but no connection was made by Powell.

34. Eugene previously performed this song on 6/21/76, but only the first verse from the first performance is in this text. "Baby talk" verse was performed on 6/21/76 in "Worried Blues." The "T.P." stands for the Texas and Pacific railroad which ran through Dallas, Texas and Vicksburg, Mississippi. A version of "Sante Fe Blues" by Smith Casey was recorded by John Lomax on 4/16/39 (issued on Matchbox-Flyright SDM 264).

35. See my, "'Who Says?': A Further Investigation of Ritual Insults among White American Adolescents," **Midwestern Journal of Language and Folklore** 4 (1978): 53-69 for a further discussion of incremental escalation in insulting events. See also transcripts of Mississippi blues and narrative sessions in William Ferris, **Blues from the Delta** (Garden City, New York: Anchor Press, 1978), pp. 115-56; Alan Lomax, recorder and editor, "Blues in the Mississippi Night," (Nixa Jazz Today Series, NJL 8, 1957).

36. Recent statements on contextual study include Richard Bauman, "The Field Study of Folklore in Context," in **The Handbook of American Folklore**, ed. Richard Dorson (New York: McGraw-Hill, forthcoming); Dan Ben-Amos, "The Context of Folklore: Implications and Prospects," in **Frontiers of Folklore**, ed. William R. Bascom (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press for the American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1977); idem, "The Ceremony of Innocence," **Western Folklore** 38 (1979): 47-52. Another type of contextual study

which predates the "new folkloristics" is the type drawn from the folklife studies movement (with an emphasis on material and social aspects of culture). See, for example, Don Yoder, "The Folklife Studies Movement," **Pennsylvania Folklife** 13 (July, 1963): 43-56; and my, "Concepts in the Study of Material Aspects of American Folk Culture," **Folklore Forum** 12 (1979): 133-172.