

# INDIGENOUS AND SHAMANIC POETRY

## Recommended Books and Recordings

### ***Technicians of the Sacred***

A Range of poetries from Africa, America, Asia, Europe and Oceania.  
Edited with commentaries by Jerome Rothenberg  
University of California Press 1985  
ISBN 0-520-04912-8

*Visions, creation myths, stories, sound poetry, spells and ceremonies in this indispensable compendium of Sacred and Shamanic poetry from all over the world*

### ***Goddesses, Ghosts and Demons***

The Collected Poetry of Li He  
Anvil Press - London 1983  
ISBN 85646-109-1

*Li He (790 -816 A.D.) was a poet of the T'ang Dynasty, the golden age of Chinese poetry. Known as a Taoist mystic and shaman, he writes of goddesses, the supernatural and the demonic, of time and of alchemy. Despite their age his poems feel incredibly modern.*

### ***Trekways of the Wind***

Nils-Aslak Valkeapää,  
University of Arizona Press. 1994  
ISBN 82 90625 21 9

*Beautifully produced book of poems and drawings from Sami (Lapp) poet and song writer who died in 2001. He takes the ancient shamanistic traditions of his people and brings them up to the present day.*

### ***Shaking the Pumpkin***

Traditional Poetry of the Indian North Americas  
Edited with commentaries by Jerome Rothenberg  
University of New Mexico Press 1991  
ISBN 0826312462

*A poetic gathering of the tribes of North America in this brilliant anthology including Eskimo, Cherokee, Navajo, Maya, Crow, Sioux, Nez Percé, Hopi and others. With stories, events and informative commentaries.*

### ***The Wishing Bone Cycle***

Narrative Poems of the Swampy Cree Indians  
Gathered and Translated by Howard A. Norman  
ISBN: 0883730464

*This collection of "oral narratives" includes naming stories, trickster poems and tales that range from the sublimely lyrical to the totally wacky and give insights into the everyday life and wild imagination of this tribe that lives in Manitoba, Canada..*

***The Tablets***

Armand Schwerner  
Atlas Press, London 1989  
ISBN 0-947757-17-1

*This purports to be a book of translations of 26 tablets from ancient Sumeria with exegesis and appendices. Yet Schwerner, a Belgian American poet, has translated nothing. Rather these are parodies of translations of ancient texts that are at the same time profound, infuriating (the idiosyncratic comments of the scholar-translator), erotic and wildly funny. Blows away any ideas of what poetry should be.*

***Indaba, My Children***

African Tribal History, Legends, Customs and Religious Beliefs  
Credo Mutwa  
Payback Press, London 1998  
ISBN 0 86241 758 9

*Credo Mutwa, healer, diviner and guardian of the traditions of the Zulu people of Southern Africa presents a compendium of poems and legends.*

***The Lords & The New Creatures***

Jim Morrison  
Omnibus Press 1985  
ISBN 0711905525

*A twinning of the only two books published by Jim Morrison (lead singer of The Doors, aka The Lizard King, aka Mr Mojo Risin') during his lifetime. The Lords explores the way the society of the spectacle has turned us into voyeurs of our own lives. The New Creatures is a tour-de-force of fragmented imagery pushing at the edge of reality, kicking open the doors of perception.*

***Absolutely Live***

The Doors  
Elektra Records 7559619722 1970  
*Best live album of The Doors. Includes a complete recorded version of "Celebration of the Lizard" by Jim Morrison as well as other poetry and songs.*

***María Sabina, her life and chants***

Alvaro Estrada  
Ross Erikson, Santa Barbara, CA 1981  
ISBN 0-915520-33-X

*María Sabina was a Mazatec Indian shaman and healer from a small village in Mexico who used "saint mushrooms" as she called them to enter trance states where she did her healing. This book tells of her life of poverty, her initiation and healing practice leading to her discovery by American, Gordon Wasson - which discovery shone the light of publicity on her work and inadvertently brought about its end.*

***Mushroom Ceremony of the Mazatec Indians of Mexico***

Various Artists  
Folkways Records  
FW08975 1957

*Includes a recording of a healing ceremony by Mazatec shaman, María Sabina.*

**Song of the Broken String**

Poems from a lost oral tradition - after the /Xam Bushmen  
Stephen Watson  
Sheep Meadow Press, U.S. 1991  
ISBN 1878818430

*The /Xam Bushmen were a stone age people who survived more than 5000 years in what is now the Cape Province of South Africa until they were destroyed by the European settlers. These texts are part of a collection made towards the end of the 19th century by a German linguist then re-Englished as poems by Stephen Watson to make this exquisite collection - the only legacy of a once powerful oral tradition.*

**Flower and Song**

Poems of the Aztec Peoples  
Translated and introduced by Edward Kissam and Michael Schmidt  
Anvil Press Poetry, London 1977  
ISBN 0856460184

*The oral poetry of the Aztecs was first recorded and translated by the priests who accompanied the conquistadors. This book re-translates the Spanish of the missionaries to give us an insight into a lost civilisation with its imagery of eagles and jaguars, flowers and battles. Also included are translations from other Meso-American cultures, notably poems from the Incas and shamanic peyote songs from the Huichol.*

**Native Mesoamerican Spirituality**

Ancient Myths, Discourses, Stories, Doctrines, Hymns, Poems from the Aztec, Yucatec, Quiche-Maya and other Sacred Traditions  
Edited and introduced by Miguel León-Portilla  
Paulist Press International, U.S. 1980  
ISBN 0809122316

*As well as the scholarly introduction to the cultures of Mesoamerica by León-Portilla, this book includes sections from the Mayan Creation epic, The Popul Vuh, and the Aztec legend of Quetzalcoatl, the feathered serpent as well as songs by the Aztec poet-king Nezahualcoyotl.*

**Native American Songs and Poems: An Anthology**

Brian Swann  
Dover Thrift Editions  
ISBN 0486294501

*Budget price collection of authentic traditional songs and contemporary Indian verse by Seminole, Hopi, Navajo, Pima, Arapaho, Paiute, Nootka, other Indian writers and poets.*

**Symposium of the Whole**

A Range of Discourses Toward an Ethnopoetics  
Jerome Rothenberg and Diane Rothenberg  
University of California Press 1983  
ISBN 0-520-04530-0

*An indispensable book for the explorer of the imagination. It is a collection of excerpts and short articles about the nature of language, symbols, magic and psychology from writers of many disciplines. These include William Blake, Federico García Lorca, Robert Graves, Bronislaw Malinowski, Ruth Finnegan, Maria Sabina, Antonin Artaud, Carl Jung and Mircea Eliade.*

### **Taliesin: The Last Celtic Shaman**

John Matthews

Inner Traditions, Bear and Company 2002

ISBN 0892818697

*Taliesin, Chief Bard of Britain and Celtic shaman, was a historical figure who lived in Wales during the latter half of the sixth century. Encoded within his work are the ancestral beliefs of the Celtic and pre-Celtic peoples. John Matthews, one of today's pre-eminent Celtic scholars, presents completely new translations of Taliesin's major poems in their entirety, uncovering the meanings behind these great works for the first time.*

## **Websites**

### **ubuweb**

*As part of this modernist connoisseur's playground, Jerome Rothenberg (see many references above) curates an ever-expanding collection of sound files, poems, visual images and articles relating to what he calls ethnopoetics, in other words the poetry of people of indigenous cultures.*

<http://www.ubu.com/>

### **The Poetry of Galsan Tschinag**

*Tschinag is a shaman-poet from Tuva in Central Asia who received a university education in Leipzig, Germany. This site has an introduction to his worldview and poetic craft and a selection of his poems translated into English.*

<http://webpub.byu.net/rdh7/tschinag/intro.htm>

### **Defence of Poetry 1999 by Galsan Tschinag**

*This talk by Tuvan shaman-poet Galsan Tschinag says all that needs to be said about shamanic consciousness in relation to poetry.*

<http://www.poetryinternational.org/cwolk/view/18458>

### **Alcheringa**

*An anthology of excerpts from a magazine that was published between 1970 and 1980. Now available as a downloadable pdf file.*

<http://www.durationpress.com/archives/ethnopoetics/alcheringa/alcheringa.pdf>

### **Jerome Rothenberg**

*A selection of recordings of native american poetry (in English) including the 17 Horse Songs of Frank Mitchell is downloadable at this site in mp3 format*

<http://www.writing.upenn.edu/pennsound/linking-page/Rothenberg.html>

### **Armand Schwerner**

*A complete recording of Schwerner's masterpiece "The Tablets" read by the author is downloadable here in mp3 format. Also an hour-long interview with Schwerner.*

<http://www.writing.upenn.edu/pennsound/x/Schwerner.html>

### **Words without Borders**

*An online magazine for international literature with a good range of poetry in indigenous languages and English from Africa, America, Asia, Pacific Rim and the Middle East. I've got my favourites here like contemporary Mayan poet Humberto Ak'abal.*

<http://www.wordswithoutborders.org/>

**Humberto Ak'abal, Poet**

Poems in translation by this Maya K'iche poet from Guatemala.

<http://akabal.com/>

**People's Poetry Gathering**

Dedicated to the documentation and preservation of New York's and America's folk culture.

<http://www.peoplespoetry.org/>

Check out their Declaration of Poetic Rights and Values at

<http://www.peoplespoetry.org/declaration.pdf>

**Naropa Institute**

Archives from the Naropa Institute (aka The Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics) including:

Anne Waldman

Recordings of Waldman's classes from 1979 "Poet as Shaman" 10 x mp3 files

Class on Shamanic Poetries from June 1986.

Lectures on Performance Poetry and Shamanism from July 1987 mp3

Class on Spirit in Poetry from July 1989.

Jerome Rothenberg

Class on Ethnopoetics and Performance. August 1981

Class on Shamanism August 1985.

Simon Ortiz

Acoma Pueblo Poet. Reading from May 1984

<http://www.archive.org/details/naropa>

IF YOU KNOW OF ANY OTHER BOOKS, RECORDINGS OR WEBSITES THAT SHOULD BE ON THIS LIST, PLEASE LET ME KNOW. [info@nakedlight.co.uk](mailto:info@nakedlight.co.uk) THANK YOU

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