

MONSOON

a choreographic essay for performance

This work, this score, has been written as an essay, a cluster of poems, and a score for performance. For performance production, this work may be edited by a director as they see fit for whatever performance context in which they find themselves. In other words, parts of this score may be omitted or repeated as need be. Additionally, this may be read with an indeterminate flow, and so, no one section or part of this work, must be first, or follow a sequence.

This order follows the authors sense of what is important to their corazón, but your heart may wish for something else.

Directing Notes:

1. [...] indicates extended rest or breath.
2. Right *italics* are stage directions or corporeal directions for an artist to make as they need with information provided by the score.
 - a. Please note, this score is very much an ‘open-score.’ And thus, a choreographer for this work, uplifted by the support of a director, should look at this whole text to inspire movement. There is are no direct ways to produce this work. Consider the *italics* as heavy directions.
3. As a suggestion, this work may be best done by one or four performers. Consider this work a chorus. You may want to layer lines or passages.
4. Left **bold** headings are section titles, and they are numbered, as a way to mark Cuauhtémoc corazón score, nothing more.

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1. Monsoon

Place script downstage right.

Place chair upstage right.

Place medicine by a laptop, for when music is to be played.

The laptop should be on a table or podium somewhere on the edge of the stage.

Wear pants, shoes, a bear shirt and glasses.

Sit center stage.

Do happy baby dance, you know, the one you learned in early yoga.

Crawl to the script and stand.

Read poem with a pow-wow 2-step beat.

There is a storm inside me
The storm came from many years ago
Many years of genocide
Many presents, here, now
Many moments of neglect
And confusing expectations
The storm is contained in my soul

It is my spirit

It is the shade

It is my love

It is my kindness

It is my fear

It is my mitote

And now I sit in the eye of Tlaloc
The rain god

in the eye of my storm

I am listening to

New songs
New words
New dances

¹ Whatever “medicine” you believe you need to live a healthy life, you should use on stage, as a prop, no, really, a co-performer.

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To weave
Into new futurities

2. Visibility

*Stand at podium.
Put on a poncho.
Present this text by reading it out loud.*

Identity is political.

Visibility is identity being seen, and seeing identity, which is political.

Are we seeing with judgement, critique, mercy, or something else, or nothing else, or a combination of all that?

Are we resisting telling you how we are seeing, so that we never land in something comfortable, lest we resolve into a rut, stuck, normative, oppressive...

If liberation and freedom is the political orientation I desire, what does that mean for our adaptation, consideration, and innovation with each other? What does that mean for our futurities?

[...]

In the text, *Trap Door: Trans Cultural Production and the Politics of Visibility*, the editors write that the work “examines the paradox of this moment: seeming embrace paired with violent rejection. Debates around trans representation take on a special urgency in the current political climate, with its escalating violence, daily roll-back of rights, and increasing discrimination” (xii). It is of no coincidence that this text is of utmost importance to me, my work, vogueing, and my communities right now. It is providing a platform for stories of my kin to be held, embraced, and also critiqued. It is a portal allowing our ideas to be studied and considered of value to be studied. It is a stepping-stone for more work to come forth and enter debates. It is a chance to say: “yes, everyday it seems one of my trans* siblings are dying in the streets, but we are still here, holding each other, refusing to conform, and living the dangerous choice, which is to live in our truth.” This is the essence of realness, a theory and praxis that lives in the in-between spaces of real, unreal, virtual, valid, respect and rejection.

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It is in this space, this space of werking, *yes, with an “e”-see chapter 1,2* werking the work of trans* labor, reality, and lived experiences that I find no ground to land.

I never seem to find a conclusion or way to summarize this work.

My work is so wrapped up in code weaving gender non-conformity of indigenous and House Ballroom Scene identifications, which is my two-spirit butch queen self, I find myself searching through trans* studies for a resolution for constructing self; for my movement, for my storm.³

And *Trap Door*, find this as a trap of conformity, and disallows the magic of transformation.

[...]

Looking to S.T.A.R. House, the pioneering Street Transvestite Action Revolution House, and the work of founding mothers Marsha P. Johnson and Silvia Rivera with the start of Gay Pride, there is a dire urgency to remember that resolution is actually quite dangerous, and it requires compromise, and often falls short of what is needed, what is required for truly revolutionary, radical, transformational life. It fails our openness—like open arms, open embrace, open minds, open legs, open backs, and open arms *por abrazo de espíritu*. This text remembers, and surfs the wake of the mothers, to call out and in, “the 1973 Gay Pride rally—the infamous and first “nonpolitical” iteration—during which Rivera broke out onstage to remind people about their gay brothers and sisters who were still in jail, despite the progress being made in the larger cultural context. [This text, this work] at least in part, [...] aspires to similarly resist resolution” (xvii). This work, this book, and the work of all trans people, and perhaps the work of those engaged in trans studies must resist the impulse of resolution.

² Ellison, Treva, “The Labor of Werqing it: the performance and protest strategies of Sir Lady Java”, in *Trap Door (2018): 1*.

³ Cuauhtemoc, P. Dante, *Fieldnotes- Critical Reflections & Responses*.

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Today, there are still revolutionaries, trans* people living their life—which itself is a radical act, given our current political context in the United States of America—and, they are in jail for living, if not murdered. Trans* people are being killed, locked up, and forced into slaveries of body trafficking. Today, in honesty, any sort of resolution, is not only selfish, but dangerous. *It fails our abrazo de espíritu.*

So how do we hold this? How do we hold all of this? With such a burden of sustaining a survival in active oppression, why not just refuse to continue, and shy away?

No!

There is work to be done, there is life to live, and transformations to experience. And so, perhaps it is necessary that we return to ideas of embrace, of a kind of uplifting, yet careful relationality of relationship. And so, with the words of Morgan Bassichis, Alexander Lee, and Dean Spade, I reiterate the question and implore: “what would it mean to embrace, rather than shy away from, the impossibility of our ways of living as well as our political visions? Such impossibility, however, should be seen not as dire nor as a state of crisis, but rather as radical invitation to fantasize and to dream otherwise.” And so then, perhaps, our work is to “point unflinchingly to a cultural context that has little use of the impossible and yet is forced to grapple with its existence and persistence (xx).” The grappling, the struggle, the working of the work, is the labor that yields the transformation we so desire.

[...]

[...]

[...]

I have been asked to put down my swords, to not be so fierce and full of rage. Yet, the rage of my ancestors surge through me. And, I do not know if it possible, but I am catalyzing it,

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slowly, into tenderness with feminism. What I have found, was that I do not hold the swords, I carry them, I am them, it. In the Mexika Calendar, I was born on the time of Tecpatl, the obsidian dagger, and Cali, the house, I am a House of Daggers. Tecpatl, is not only the dagger, to cut, flay, and wound, but a scalpel to open and heal, a tongue to speak sharply and accurately, an artifact of knowledge, wisdom and experience. A transformation must take place, to make this, what I carry a tool, useful to my path in academe. With all that I am, and tecpatl signifies, I need to practice “corporeal reading de tecpatl”—but one, that is not focused on attacking (I am already strong there), but on healing, opening, and creating new notes/artifacts/dances/expressions/texts for use later.

[...]

3. Unclean

Take off shirt.

Take off all clothing but pants, maybe.

Play Diamanda Galás': This is the law of the plague, excerpt by David Wojnarowicz in "Fire In My Belly"

Dance with the feeling of pain. This is how you will performatively show us the music.

Choreography should be planned to be in circles, crosses.

The choreographer or performer should source their movement from the sacred Apache Mountain Spirit Dance.

Your dance should be jumpy, swayed, pattering, stoic, like old men trees...going about their business.

This section will require you to do dance/choreographic research: you should be able to oscillate between the walk, the dance, and the performative emotive pain.

Maybe it would be easier if you did a Pow-Wow Woman's Straight Honor Dance towards the east.

Dance.

[...]

After dance is done when the song is complete,

Go to the shirt and put it on the body, your sacrifice.

Walk to podium or music stand

And speak this following poem.

My boyfriend broke up with me.
I was untouchable.

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Unlovable.
Anti-affectionate.

On apps...
In person
They told me that I was dirty
They told me that I was unclean
Worthless
Wrong
Unworthy
Dangerous
Ugly and unattractive
This fueled my storm.⁴

In the wrath
In the hurricane
Mi El Niño
I stood as a little boy
Crying for help
Crying
Crying
Crying
Help
And I found it with the addicted
Help
And I found it with the addicted with recovery
Help
And I found it with the homeless
Help
And I found with those with chronic illness, like me.

I found love from the forsaken
And they lifted me up,
to the world of books,
archive,
repertory,
and iconic experimentation.
My place, as young star,
amongst the icons,
stars and
legends of
study and academe.

[...]

⁴ Cuauhtémoc, *Fieldnotes- Critical Reflections & Responses*.

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4. Oak straw

Create and perform a sort of 'Gathering Choreography.'

*This dance movement, this choreography, of gathering should be like harvesting wheat or wild rice—or
flowers.*

The performer should dance with sweetgrass.

This text should be recorded, and then played over the performer to allow the body to dance.

If there is more than one performer, some could speak this while others dance.

Speak very slowly.

Pay attention to indicated breathes and pauses to increase the weight of the words.

It likes water

[...]

It likes me

[...]

It shines like glitter

[...]

I love glitter

[...]

I think glitter is the magic of quare peoples⁵

[...]

Avena Sativa lubricates the body⁶

[...]

Makes lot of mucus

[...]

Which is not good when infection already does the same

[...]

It helps lubricate life

[...]

It helps let go of obsession

[...]

It helps the addicted, the dependent obsessive-compulsive user-abuser

[...]

Let go, try another way

[...]

Let go

[...]

Flow

[...]

Let go

[...]

And be still

[...]

Let go

⁵ See Johnson, E. Patrick, "Quare" studies, or (almost) everything I know about queer studies I learned from my grandmother, *Text and Performance Quarterly*, vol. 21 no.1, (2001): 1-25.

⁶ *Materia Medica Cuauhtemoc* (2019): Oakstraw's scientific name is Avena Sativa.

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[...]
And flow

[...]

5. Eye of The Storm

*Stand on the chair.
Speak this text.*

Maybe the issue is that I am code weaving and not code switching. That is what I have had to think about for a while. That I speak in indigenous languages, codes, slang, traditional indigenous knowledge, and speak. That I speak in the House Ballroom Scene languages, codes, slang, shade, read, werk, carry, and *speak*. That I speak with academic rigor, insight, deconstruction, critique, eloquence, and poignant prose. That I speak with emotion, confusion, feminism, masculinity, queerness, non-conformity, and the raw poetry I cannot silence.⁷ I speak through Facebook, books, responses, posts, instgram memes, gram crackers, over cheesecake, with coffee, and tea. Oh the Tea, the sweet Tea. The tea, and all it's various codes and interlocking poetics that make it all it is... my truth, my tea, is that like tea, I am all those things at once, and none of those.⁸ I am a material thing, and also absolutely abstract. And, at the moment, I am in a time of illness, I am sick, and this, is my healing: my healing tea...

[...]

As I think of myself, in times of illness, work of Malidoma Patrice Somé in *The Healing Wisdom of Africa*, on illness speaks loudly to me. "Treating the illness, in the indigenous view, means conjuring up an energy that will repair the spiritual state so that the spiritual healing can be translated into healing of the physical disease... the illness is a physical manifestation of

⁷ Cuahtemoc, *Fieldnotes- Critical Reflections & Responses*.

⁸ Johnson, E. Patrick, *No Tea, No Shade: New Writings in Black Queer Studies*. Duke University Press, 2016.

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spiritual decay” (73). As I think about my co-occurring diseases, I know that spiritual decay is at the root. Lack of support, understanding or listening. But also, there is a listening to myself.

I write that there is a storm inside me, and that it is the source of my energy, my creativity, and my intellectualism. It is my mitote, my dreaming together of my spirits, my ancestors, my legacy in genealogy, that is the spiritual force, inside my body. And, the storm is great, shady, scary, and mysterious to those who do not understand that it is a storm. I had to listen to it, show its eye, sit in the eye, and explain it to others. Others had to listen, and know that the storm can be gentle, generous, and destructive—but too, directed, and expanded. In doing this, I can be supported, and my illnesses, which are based out of isolation, fear, and rejection, can be absolved. From neglect, to loving embrace, from tsunami, to flood of gentle sunlight—the storm is in me and is me.

I am not my illness, the illness is the spiritual decay of care from non-indigenous practices.⁹ With the energy of listening, and my storm, my healing can be brought forth, and so can the healing of others.

In looking closely to the work of healing, the goal for me is to “sew myself together”: bring back the dancer-scholar in me, the dancer who thinks through movement, and writes through dancing and choreography in an open and honest way. By this, I create a tool, or a few tools, by which I can do my research, and scholarship, in a way that is not only fun and engaging for me, but honest, open, dynamic, rigorous, and studied. And, by doing this, I feel as though I have contributed something useful to the academic Field of Dance—something also, uniquely created and of myself (which is important to me).

⁹ Somé, *The Healing Wisdom of Africa*.

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Here are some questions I will ask myself as I proceed:¹⁰

1. What are the materials I need for my research?
2. How can I look at this, my writing, expressions, reflections, and analysis with mercy and radical healing love?
3. In research, how does my body respond to the artifact, text, or experience?
4. In research, how does my voice respond to the artifact, text, or experience?
5. In research, how does my embodied self (Cuauhtémoc the choreographer) respond to the artifact, text, or experience?
6. In reflection, what mercy do I give myself to allow this composition to flow, heal, and be what it needs to be?
7. In editing and sharing, at the crossroads, how can I use the wisdom of the 4th direction, of children, and let this young life lead me: how can I follow the work, and not lead it?
8. In presentation, how will my body arrive, move in, and exit, with the words, ideas, and display, to not distract, but focus the message I now carry?

[...]

6. Weave

*Walk to music stand.
Vogue hands, serve HANDS PERFORMANCE into a weave.
Speak poem.
This dance should be like a conjuring of ancient queer blackend indigenous magic.*

Just throw the shade away...
It takes work

¹⁰ Questions to Consider in doing the work of critical dance studies and critical dance praxis, within, around, and through queer and trans* people of color community traditions of art and culture.

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Werk.
Werk.
Werk.
Werk.
A labor of love
A labor of being here
A labor and not
Is and isn't
On the edge
Between
Around
And in withdrawal, if not also refusal
The high-femme of blackness
Of transformation
Taught me how to weave this way
Away
In a throw
Of shade.

*Play song
"Throw the Shade Away" by Electric Fields
Vogue to song, the old way...*

The end of dance is the end of piece, without a clear resolution—do this by exiting the room and going outside. But, if this dance is not the end of the piece, this dance marks a shift in the performance, and the director should indicate some sort of shift that changes this work in a way of even more healing and love.

This dance is best done to the East, which is the direction of Sunrise and new beginnings according the medicine circle practice in American Indian Church. Yellow colors or items should be a part of this dance.

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Appendix A

Performance Script, edited for 10-minute final performance on Tuesday 12th, 2019, at UCR, studio 300.

P. Dante Cuauhtemoc
Under Professor Ni'Ja Whiston, M.F.A.
March 11th, 2019

Performance Monsoon Score/Script

Materials:

1. Script
2. Medicine in mason jars: balance & flow, & goal digger
3. Academic poncho, for reading
4. Wear bear shirt, or elder's shirt
5. Have mesh hoodie ready, or red hoodie, to represent HIV battle/House of Lauren
6. Wear academic pants, dance belt, and fancy shoes
7. Laptop to play music for dance in 2nd part of the piece
8. Speakers for sound
9. Rain stick for summoning storm
10. Glasses so that I can read script
11. One chachayote for dancing and reading
12. A Chair
13. A music stand

Place script downstage right.

Place chair upstage right.

Place medicine by laptop, for when music is to be played.

Wear pants, shoes, bear shirt and glasses.

Sit center stage.

Do happy baby dance.

Crawl to the script and stand.

Read poem with 2-step beat.

Monsoon

There is a storm inside me
The storm came from many years ago
Many years of genocide
Many presents here
Many moments of neglect
Of confusing expectations
The storm it contained in my soul
It is my spirit
It is the shade
It is my love
It is my kindness
It is my fear
It is my mitote

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And now I sit in the eye of Tlaloc
The rain god
And in the eye of my storm
I am listening to
New songs
New words
New dances
To weave
Into our new futurities

Breath.
Walk over to chair.
Sit in chair.
Put on poncho
Present this text by reading it out loud

Visibility

Looking to S.T.A.R. House, the pioneering Street Transvestite Action Revolution House, and the work of founding mothers Marsha P. Johnson and Silvia Rivera with the start of Gay Pride, there is a dire urgency to remember that resolution is actually quite dangerous, and it requires compromise, and often falls short of what is needed, what is required for truly revolutionary, radical, transformational life. *TRAP DOOR* remembers, and surfs the wake of the mothers, to call out and in, “the 1973 Gay Pride rally—the infamous and first “nonpolitical” iteration—during which Rivera broke out onstage to remind people about their gay brothers and sisters who were still in jail, despite the progress being made in the larger cultural context. [This text, this work] at least in part, [...] aspires to similarly resist resolution” (xvii). This work, this book, but the work of all trans* people, and perhaps the work of those engaged in trans studies must resist the impulse of resolution. Today, there are still revolutionaries, trans* people living their life, which itself is a radical act, given our context, are in jail. For living, Trans* people are killed, locked up, and forced into slavery. Today, any sort of resolution, is not only selfish, but dangerous.

So how do we hold this. How do we hold all of this? With such a burden of survival in active oppression, why not just refuse to continue, and shy away? No. There is work to be done,

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there is life to live, and transformations to experience. And so, perhaps it is necessary that we return to ideas of embrace, of a kind of uplifting, yet careful relationality of relationship. And so, with the words of Morgan Bassichis, Alexander Lee, and Dean Spade, I reiterate the question and implore: “what would it mean to embrace, rather than shy away from, the impossibility of our ways of living as well as our political visions? Such impossibility, however, should be seen not as dire nor as a state of crisis, but rather as radical invitation to fantasize and to dream otherwise.” And so then, perhaps, our work is to “point unflinchingly to a cultural context that has little use of the impossible and yet is forced to grapple with its existence and persistence (xx).” The grappling, the struggle, the working of the work, is the labor the yields the transformation we so desire.

*Take off clothes except pants as you walk over to press play.
Pick up medicine.
Play music*

Unclean

*Play Diamanda Galás':
This is the law of the plague,
excerpt by David Wojnarowicz in “Fire In My Belly”
Dance with the feeling of pain.
Choreography is planned to be in circles, crosses, and Apache Spirit dance.
Dance.
Place medicine down.
Find mesh shirt upstage center, put it on.
Walk to downstage right
Read Poem*

Weave

Just throw the shade away...
It takes work
Werk werk werk werk
A labor of love
A labor of being here
A labor and not
Is and isn't
On the edge
Between
Around
And in withdrawal, if not also refusal

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The high-femme of blackness
Of transformation
Taught me how to weave this way
Away
In a throw
Of shade.

“Throw the shade away” should play right after previous song, after poem.

Start old way vogue to music.

Be more direct with revolutionary self in ovahness.

VOGUE.

Exit into the outside.

End of Monsoon.

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Appendix B

Lyric text to "This is the Law of the Plague," by Diamanda Helena Galas.

Leviticus, Chapter 15. from the Old Testament

When any man hath an issue out of his flesh.
Because of that issue he is unclean.
Every bed whereon he lieth is unclean
and everything whereon he sitteth, unclean.
And whosoever toucheth his bed shall be unclean,
And he that sitteth whereon he sat shall be unclean.
And he that toucheth
the flesh of the unclean
Becomes unclean.
And he that be spat on by him unclean
Becomes unclean.
And whosoever toucheth anything under him
shall be unclean.
And he that beareth any of those things
shall be unclean.
And what saddle soever he rideth upon is unclean
And the vessel of earth that he toucheth, unclean.
And if any man's seed of copulation go out from him,
he is unclean.
Every garment, every skin whereon is the seed, unclean.
And the woman with whom this man shall lie
shall be unclean.
And whosoever toucheth her will be unclean.
This is the law of the plague:
to teach when it is clean and when it is unclean.
And the priest shall look upon the plague
for a rising, and for a scab, and for a bright spot.
And the priest shall shut up he that hath the plague.
He shall carry them forth to a place unclean.
He shall separate them in their uncleanness.
This is the law of the plague:
To teach when it is clean and when it is unclean.

excerpt from Psalm 22

Many bulls compass me, Lord
Strong bulls of Baashah do beset me round.
They gape me with their mouths
as a ravening and a roaring lion.
But thou, O Lord, shall bring them down.
Thou shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction
greedy and deceitful men shall be exposed as vermin
And their days as iniquity.

*excerpt from Psalms 58 and 59,
and text by Diamanda Galas*

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Deliver me from mine enemies, O My God
Deliver me from the workers of iniquity
and save me from bloody men.
For lo, they lie in wait for my soul
The mighty are gathered against me
not for my transgressions, not for my sin, O Lord
They run and prepare themselves without my fault
Awake to help me and behold:
Swords are in their lips, for who, say they, doth hear.
But thou, O Lord, shall laugh at them
The God of my mercy shall let me see my desire
upon mine enemies
And at evening, let them make a noise like a dog.
and go around about the city
Let them walk up and down for meat
and grudge if they be not satisfied.
Break out the great teeth of the young lions,
Oh My God,
and when they laugh at the trial of the innocent
Let them be cut as in pieces!
Bring them down, O Lord, our shield.

text by Diamanda Galas

The Devil is an impotent man
He says it nice and plays himself off as the friend.
He tries to make you uncertain
so your hands shake
and then he tells you you're insane
when you call him by his rightful name:
Impotent homophobe and coward!
So you will miss when you aim at this evil man
who cannot get it up
except
in the T.V. public operating room
of another man's misfortune!

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Appendix C

Lyrics to “Shade Away”

Shade Away

Oh Tili - you got my feet to dance in
Oh Tili - you raise up the day
Oh Tili - you got my feet to dance in
Oh Tili - you just throw the shade away

Tili na ngangu, tili na ngangu
Tili na ngangu, tili na ngangu
Tili na ngangu, tili na ngangu, tili na ngangu

Have you seen the light shining in the ghetto?
You seen the light shining through the night?
Have you seen the light shining in the ghetto?
You seen the light shining through the night?

Oh Tili - tili na ngangu - you got my feet to dance in
Oh Tili - tili na ngangu - you raise up the day
Oh Tili - tili na ngangu - you got my feet to dance in
Oh Tili - tili na ngangu - you just throw the shade away

You just throw the shade, you just throw the shade
You just throw the shade, you just throw the shade away

Oh you seen the day chase away the shadow?
And you seen the day throw the shade away?
Oh you seen the day chase away the shadow?
You seen the day throw the shade away?

Oh Tili - tili na ngangu - you got my feet to dance in
Oh Tili - tili na ngangu - you raise up the day
Oh Tili - tili na ngangu - you got my feet to dance in
Oh Tili - tili na ngangu - you just throw the shade away

You just throw the shade, you just throw the shade
You just throw the shade, you just throw the shade away
You just throw the shade, you just throw the shade
You just throw the shade, you just throw the shade away

Tili na ngangu, tili na ngangu
Munganguru lu wiyaringu - oh tili
Ngayulu pukulpa, watjilpa wiya
Tili na ngangu, tili na ngangu – oh tili
Tili na ngangu, tili na ngangu
Munganguru lu wiyaringu
Watjilpa wiya, watjilpa wiya