GRANT COUNTY, INDIANA, SPEECH AND SONG

By W. L. McAtee

Supplement 2
(Folk Verse)

Obscenity is not something to be decried or denied but to be recognized as part of life. In folk speech it should be recorded as an element of the whole and neither magnified nor minimized. It deserves study as much as any other part of the language and should be approached without prejudice.

With my views as expressed in the Supplement of 1942 and as here manifested, it may be asked why I segregate the obscene material. I have even been told that mixing it with the remainder might make the paper passable through the mail, regulations concerning which I so chided in my earlier publication. However, I have friends who enjoy reading the decent dialect, but not the reverse and under no consideration would I thrust it upon. They are esteemed, even revered, people, and while our mental orbits intersect they do not coincide. I would no more expect them to give up their views than I would abandon my own.

As with all assemblages of material, there is some doubt as how best to organize it, lines being hard to draw anyway, but it may be safe to start with clearly juvenile verses.

1. Childhood ditties:

Admittedly in the realm of childhood are counting-out rhymes. One of ours was:

Ass-hole, touch-hole, my old hen,
She lays eggs for the railroad men,
Sometimes two and sometimes ten,
Ass-hole, touch-hole, my old hen.

Doggerel certainly learned in early school years included:

The woodpecker pecked on the schoolhouse door
And he pecked and he pecked
till his pecker was sore.

L. L. Buchanan tells me this was prevalent in Iowa and involved several verses, referring to the schoolhouse loft (soft), the schoolhouse yard (hard), and perhaps other places, the whole thing ending—

"And whenever he thinks of the schoolhouse yard,
His head gets red and his pecker gets hard."
The following was taught me by a girl acquaintance of about my age (8-10), so I class it as juvenile:

Fire in the mountain,
snakes in the grass,
The old woman died
with a rag in her ass;
The rag blew out
and the wind flew in,
And the old woman
came to life again.

A chant used as one means of persuading others to join a gang was:
All going my way,
join my class;
All going the other way,
kiss my ass.

2. Parodies on play party songs:

PIG IN THE PARLOR
The old dog pissed on the bedpost,
[Thrice repeated]
And that was Irish too.

[I believe there were a good many indecent supplements to this song, but this is the only one I recall.]

CHASE THE BUFFALO
The crow fucked the buzzard,
And the buzzard fucked the crow;
We're marching in procession,
Down on the Ohio.

3. Parodies on patriotic airs:

Yankee Doodle had a cat
And it was double-pointed;
Took it to the blacksmith shop
To have its pecker pointed.

Hail Columbia, happy land!
Baby shit in papa's hand;
Papa went to get a switch,
Baby called him a son-of-a-bitch.

Tramp, tramp, tramp, the boys are marching,
Cheer up, Comrades, and be gay,
For beneath the starry flag,
Mary had a little lamb,
And its fleece was white as Old Black Joe.

4. Parodies on hymns:

At the bar, at the bar,
Where I smoked my first cigar
And the money in my pocket rolled away;
It was there by chance
I slipped it up her pants
And now I do it every day.

Let this man here kiss that man's ass,
And let that man kiss thine,
And when you all have kissed around,
Then each of you kiss mine.

5. Parodies on popular songs:

The Irish and the Jews
They don't amount to much,
But they're a damned sight better
Than the god-damned Dutch.
Oh, the Dutch companion
Is the best companion
That ever came over from old Germanee.

Coon fuck to change the luck,
French fuck am fine;
German screw, I like that too,
Chinese am divine
But of all the fucks of a fuckin' life
From woman down to man,
The fuck that tickles my pecker the most
Is hand, hand, hand!

The train was coming down the track,
She blew, she blew;
The train was coming down the track,
She blew, she blew;
The flagman went to turn a switch
And cut his foot in a pile of shit,
She blew, blew, blew.

Also the following narrative lines:
The conductor he fell off on his guts
And three cars and the caboose ran over his nuts.

6. Miscellaneous:

Three spaces from the chin
Is the place to put it in.

Chippy get your hair cut,
Hair cut, hair cut,
Chippy get your hair cut,
Fifteen cents.
[In Dialect Notes 4(5), 1916, p. 321, is the same with the last line reading "Pompadour"; no locality given.]

Mama, Mama, what is that,
Hanging down like a baseball bat?
Oh, shut up, you little brat,
That's what makes your Mama fat.

When a man grows old,
His stones grow cold
And the head of his pecker turns blue;
When he goes to diddle
It bends in the middle
Did this ever happen to you?

Fly flew in the grocery store,
Flew right in the very front door,
Shit on the cheese and shit on the ham,
Shit all over the grocery man.
[When an actor started this one time I wondered which version he might let slip; the decent one has "lit" for "shit."]

One of those rambling ditties allowing full scope for individual invention had the following framework:
I tickled her toe and she began to know
(Other pairs of words that might be used: shin, grin; calf, laugh; knee, pee; thigh, cry; cunt, grunt.)
Finale: "But I slipped it in clear up to her chin."

The whipstock had been broken
And I took that for a token;
The laprobe had been trailed along the ground;
A wet spot on the cushion
Showed there had been pushin';
There were footprints on the dashboard upside down.

My name is Joe Taylor,
My prick is a whaler,
My ballocks weigh 99 pound;
If I ever catch Hanner [i.e. Hannah]
I'll fuck her, god damn her,
I'll pin her old ass to the ground.

THE WILD IRISHMAN
Oh, Mollie and Maggie, now come her right quick
And see the wild Irishman skin his prick;
It's long as your arm and thick as your wrist,
With a head on the end as big as your fist.

They tell me, my dears, that once it is in,
It tunnels a girl from her slit to her chin,
And feels so damned good she only can grin
To have that great tool aboring within.

It fills her inside with a feeling so warm
As to-ing and fro-ing, it works like a charm
And Paradise gates she sees open wide
Before the wild Irishman's through with his ride.
[First stanza or most of it heard as folk verse; remainder supplied.]

7. Back-House (or Shithouse) Poetry:

This is a recognized department of folk verse, which has had at least one scholarly treatment, namely, "Lexical Evidence from Folk Epigraphy," etc., by Allen Walker Read (Paris, 1935, 83 pp.) I have been reminded of some Grant County ditties by that publication and have had aid in completing fragments in both this and the preceding section by K. B. W. Keith.

Perhaps as an invocation we might quote:

Of all the ports beneath the skies,
The shit-house poet I most despise.

Probably the most commonly inscribed ditty was:

If you want to shit with ease,
Put your elbows on your knees,
Square your ass across the hole,
And shit away, god-damn your soul.

Run-of-the-mine items:

Here I sit, all broken-hearted,
Came to shit, and only farted.
Here I sit in silent bliss,
Listening to the dribbling piss;
Now and then a fart is heard,
Now and then a dropping turd.

Mercy! mercy! what a blessing!
Girls can shit without undressing
While as for us poor sons-of-bitches,
We must undress or shit our britches.

Some come here to sit and think
But I come here to shit and stink.

Joe Baker, Joe Baker, the candlestick maker
He wiped his ass on a piece of brown paper;
The paper was thin and his fingers slipped in,
And oh! what a fix Joe Baker was in.

Tread softly and speak low,
For many a noble dinner
Lies interred [in turd] below.

Prose, but of the same sphere:
Those making deposits in this bank, please leave no small
change on the counter.

By way of epilogue, some real or pretended objector usually got in
this scribble:
Fool's names like their faces
Are always seen in public places.

A worth-while addition, though it has nothing to do with Grant
County is the almost Shakespearian:
'Tis not the weight of my burden that brings me here,
But the slightness of my hold upon it.
[Collected in Western Canada by P. A. Taverner.]

8. Postscript:
Although the lowest conversation I have ever heard has been that of
small town barber shops, I would record that most of the material in
this Supplement is of town, not rural, origin. Probably the most pro-
life source of shit-house poetry was the walls of latrines in the County
Court House.

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