

July 20, 1977

Went to see Emily □ gave her the stew which she really liked. I sang the Giveaway Song and she had me go into the bedroom to sing to Dorothy. They liked it and then Dorothy had her play a tape of themselves which they had made 3 Easters ago. Old songs which they say no one knows □ Sun Dance and a lot of Ghost Dance music. They sometimes play it before they go to bed. Dorothy was all gnarled and scratched herself with a stick. The smile on Dorothy's face as she sang along with the tape. Emily's look of concern as she looked at Dorothy. Beautiful. Their laughter when they heard a mistake on the tape.

July 21, 1977

Shoshone Sisters

Plaid kerchief on her head
The scratching stick* used to
ease her troubled brow
evoked an earlier time

Was she avoiding the wrinkles of
old age
Or was it to replace the fingers
which were now curled in
arabesques of
pain

The sisters rested on their twin beds □
listening to their breath of
Easters past
Caught on tape
the songs they learned from the
old ones

Drifting into sleep perhaps
to see the green* mountains
green grass
ripe berries
*Dame Ape,** Himself

welcoming
Dorothy and Emily
Into their Naraya* song

1. Shoshone women use a scratching stick at the time of menstruation, with the belief that if they use the stick in place of their own fingernails, they will not get wrinkles or gray hair. In the poem I am suggesting that for Dorothy, who was well past menopause, the scratching stick may have become a generalized cultural habit.
2. The texts of Shoshone Ghost Dance songs imagine scenes of nature, with special mention of pure and plentiful water, greenery, edible plants, and animals. Shoshones believed that by dancing and singing these songs, they would help to ensure the health and abundance of the natural world.
3. *Dame Ape* literally means, Our Father, a reference to God. Shoshone Ghost Dance songs include references to Our Father.
4. Naraya is the Shoshone name for the Ghost Dance as well as the ancient Round Dance of the Great Basin. My book, *Shoshone Ghost Dance Religion*, examines in depth both the Naraya and Round Dance, and the important relationship between the two.