

W. S. Burroughs, Brian Jones and the Pipes of Pan of Joujouka by Eleonora Cavallini

The *Pipes of Pan* of Joujouka (Marocco) are a musical group, which it would be unfair to label as “folklore music”. In 1950, they were discovered by American writer and painter Brion Gysin, who was stupefied by the stunning attitude of the group to create a mystic state of *trance*. Gysin conveyed his impressions to his friend, the *avant-garde* writer, essayist and painter William S. Burroughs (1914-1997) who, on many occasions, expressed his special admiration for the band. In his opinion, the group was able to render the spirit of the classical god Pan (the god of Panic, and ecstasy). Burroughs refers to the Pipes of Pan in his novel *Nova Express* (1964) and in his essays about *Apocalypse* (1988, with painter Keith Haring). In 1968, Gysin returned to Joujouka with the rock star Brian Jones (guitarist of the Rolling Stones), who made a precious recording of a performance of the *Pipes of Pan* and released it under the title *Brian Jones plays with the Pipes of Pan at Joujouka* (1968). After Jones’s death (1969), the album was reprinted as *Brian Jones presents the Pipes of Pan at Jajouka* (1971).

Jones was allowed to listen to a celebration of a pagan ritual dedicated to Pan: during this performance, fifty flute-players intoned a series of circular, repetitive tunes, in order to get in touch with Bou Jeluod, the deity who protected them and could be interpreted as an hypostasis of the Greek god Pan. Jones, by means of a tape-recorder, produced a sound document of more than an hour of “trance music”, but afterwards realized that the voice of the female soloist had not been impressed on the tape. According to the explanation given to Jones by one of the musicians, that voice was not for profane ears.

About the attitude of African peoples to spontaneously recreate the choral atmosphere of ancient Greek Tragedy, I would like to refer the reader to P. P. Pasolini’s *Appunti per un’Orestiade africana* (1968-69).