

## Danse Nan Tèt

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J.L.'s Song 144, pg 175

I have something in my head,  
It's when I'm in trouble.  
They will see what's in my head.  
I'm going to see what's in my head.  
But when I'm in trouble,  
My mother's lwa are unchained.

This song refers to the presence of the *lwa* inside the head of a Vodouist during a possession ritual. The first line, “I have something in my head,” is alluding to the belief that when a *lwa* chooses to possess a Vodouist, it “mounts” the *chwal* (horse) and is said to *danse nan tèt* or “dance in the head” of the possessed individual. The next lines speak of the *lwa* being able to see the trouble in the speaker’s mind. Practitioners of Vodou view the *lwa* as protectors, healers, and providers of insight. This section of the song is an expression of confidence that the *lwa* will see the speaker’s problems and provide assistance. The next statement, “I’m going to see what’s in my head,” makes a transition from the *lwa* seeing into the speaker’s mind to the speaker engaging in internal reflection. This calls to mind a passage from *Vodou Songs* that explains that the *lwa* do not provide examples of behavior for humans to follow, but “hold up mirrors that clarify certain aspects of the lives of those who serve them” (Hebblethwaite 2012: 7). Possession by a *lwa* is not just a performative action for the benefit of the community, it may also provide the possessed with an opportunity for introspection. The song concludes with, “But when I’m in trouble, my mother’s *lwa* are unchained,” the song circles back to protection by *lwa*, which is the primary focus of a Vodou ritual, and the central motivation for hereditary passage of *lwa* from parent to child.