

a k a



Macabre Palaver

Jack-o-lantern
nimble, jack-
o-lantern quick,
it seems Jack has swallowed
an old candle-stick.

Jack has a hole
on the top
of his skull, so
no one knows
why his toothy grin grows.

Long night's crypt tick
tocks closer
each time; make
a wish on the wick:
mystery's hermetic.

Jack-o-lantern
nimble, jack-
o-lantern quick,
poor Jack's smashed to bits
by a pendulum-stick.



... this composite picture of a vehicle linked by witness
with other witnesses to produce a similar picture of ... wrole

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T

Starling Shout-Out

Drilling the mulch with its yellow
punk with short-tailed swagger and swank
unctus oils spilling the spectrum
the whole continent from first clawhold
as American as you are, chump,
can make a nest, even trash, omni-
plus a knack for bone-grinding sounds,
masticating noise-maw you'd think
speech come from, buzz-sounds
the tags & undulineaments of

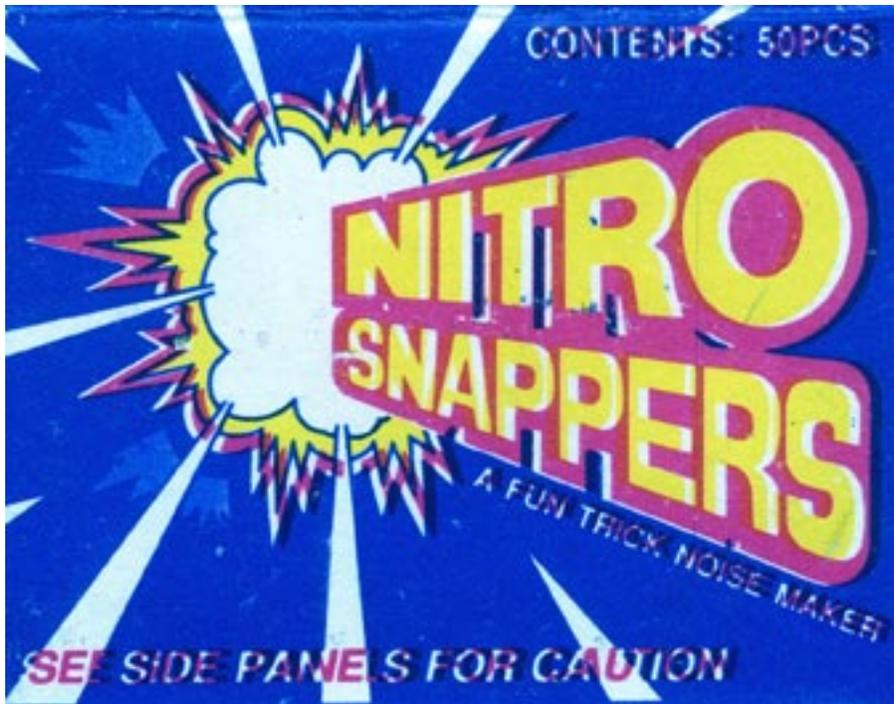
prod of a beak, gimme that, gotcha
an iridescent sheen on basic black
in the right light more, ever more, over
just another New York City migrant—
& don't you forget it, anything
vore and scavenger, take that! \$@#%~!?\$
such pops & scrunches from its
you'd got a glimpse into the raw where
break it down to pips and quawks
all that's new

CONTENTS: 50PCS

NITRO SNAPPERS

A FUN TRICK NOISE MAKER

SEE SIDE PANELS FOR CAUTION



Ghazal

—in memory, Agha Shahid Ali

Into English comes a migrant new form, the ghazal
If Time gives you drink from Eternity's well, guzzle

Diasporic diapason, dissonance made consonant
A form like desert water, or a rainbow, never fossil

Can braid in anything—politics, history
Love's thorn-tip and prick, the layers of our riddle

Full of gutturals and star-light; leaps like
Endangered chiru, bongo, or gazelle

First name means stone so though flowin' in freestyle
I offer you this soul-glow, opal ghazal



common whelk kenning

end if

flume

spirit-

whelk's

gray

of a

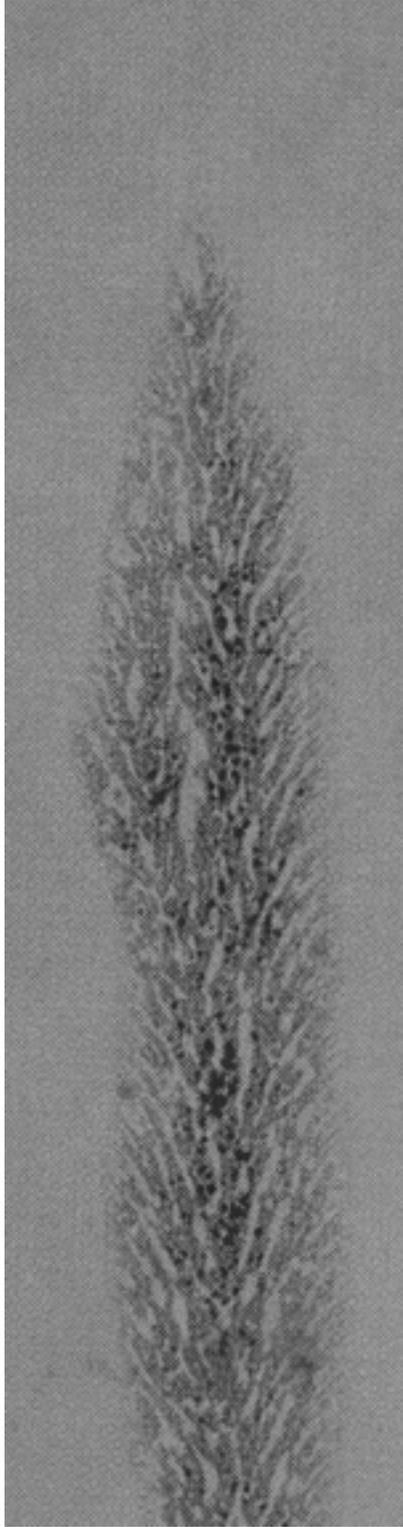
whorl

the

inside

spiral

if



ink furl

**Henri Rousseau, *The Sleeping Gypsy* Painting (1897)
North Africa**

A walking staff
for the desert road
too precious to
ungrip in sleep

night-long
pause before the
beast
approaches

tail alert
and eyes like coals
whiff of lion's
mane nuzzles

the dreamer's dreads
and then her ear
sending a deep
echo knocking

in the belly of the oud
whose strings whisper
aoouod
douooa

while the moon
gazes away
with ashes
on her face

and inside
the drinking gourd
stars tremble
gently on the water

how much
in the morning
will feet
remember?

DURO
4
TIGER

MADE WITH PRIDE BY
E. CESPEDES

9 29 97 A2

Produce

To water South Jersey beans, tomatoes, peppers, and whatnot
a large hose with a cannon-sized nozzle
is sometimes wheeled out between the rows and opened up.

At the base of the nozzle is a long metal arm
attached at its middle, with a weight
on one end and the other end spatulate and spoon-like.

As the water jets, this thing-a-ma-jig floats like a see-saw
until the spoon-y end swings from the side
and suddenly thwacks the water as it shoots from the hose.

The spoon-end is then thrown backwards until the weight
at the other end makes it swing slowly
towards the jet to crash into it again. What's it there for?

To nudge the water's angle steadily to one side?
For the hose spurts water out
at regular intervals, moving just a little to one side each time,

until it meets the limit set for its motion, when it quickly
swoops back to its starting position and
begins again. But there may be something at the hose's base

preset to handle this, to wet solely the right segment of field.
Maybe the thwacker gizmo
is there just to change the way the water spreads and falls,

so the jets don't uproot the crops. It strikes the spurts just
at their base, making the spray spritz.
But the spouts would soften anyway, never pummeling

the plants, for they lose motion swooping to the end of their flight
and fall gently in silvery sheets and veils.
Maybe instead it's there to spray plants near the rainmaker's base,

while the nozzle douses those at the far end of the arc,
rain for one and rain all around,
neither too little nor too much, no hail or lightning,

no stalk-twisting gusts, just a shower on wheels,
though not for free,
a port-a-storm complete with a watch-a-ma-call-it mister,

a clanking cumulo-nimbus cloud towable by tractor.
The produce takes it all in.
Soon there will be containers stacked at the end of each long row,

long hours and sweat from nose and chin watering the sandy soil,
quick wrists and español
rising and falling, row on row, dolores para dólares,

while it all becomes someone else's store-bought bounty
sprayed in front of mirrors
and bushel baskets as if it just spilled over.



photo: Scott Killeen
car: '54 Plymouth Belvedere
customizer: Troy Trepanier

s u a v e c i t o

To the Dead Beats (Male)

"When you don't have this dying and becoming
You are only a sad guest on the dark Earth."
—Goethe, quoted in Burroughs, *The Western Lands*

"Beatitude" you said
& "beaten down"
but you forgot to mention
what you really craved was
to be the country's beat
and riffs, alive with envy over
Yardbird's bop

Searching "negro streets at dawn
for an angry fix," even
"leaping on negroes" like some
Rimbaud on his mission to Africa
instead you sent suburban hipsters
howling to the city for a shitty
high

All of you were
gypsies from good migrant
stock: you had a lover's
quarrel with America
and hunted Blake's sunflower
in rusting railroad yards
or ozone horizons & the epileptic
Word

~~~

One a drunken William Tell  
making his wife a cut-up  
then flying away to Tangiers  
where brown cock was cheap  
a trust-fund calculation  
machine become a virus:  
"Thuggees & Deceivers  
in business again"  
yet inside your violence  
was a frightened tenderness  
your hoarse monotone  
soft to the touch as shed  
snake skin

Another a gone angel  
shining through dark Canuck eyes  
who agreed with Baudelaire  
that beauty was an accusation  
English as a second language  
helped you hear its chunky music  
though as each year passed  
your wings grew harder and harder  
to lift  
you wrote "Bop is the language  
from America's inevitable Africa"  
but your groupies thought  
dharma bum meant  
white and male  
and with your "conquered lass,  
the backlash lovely"  
what really turned you on was  
soused & subterranean  
"jungle" amours

Then there's  
that poet who lived as if Meshugah  
was a missing Book in the Torah scroll  
half Jeremiah, half Hanuman  
in Uncle Sam tophat, rabbinical beard  
whose vortex sutras of anger and light  
cut tornado swathes through the  
country's heartland  
but Godfather Walt  
haunted your every chest-baring  
move and you never could quite match  
his twenty-eight young men by the shore  
his democratic vistas and  
lacy jags

And everyone made  
guilty by Bob Kaufman's songos  
"VOOMETEYEREEPETIOP BOP BOP"  
beaten up in one cell and then  
another for peeing on a cop  
in the Coexistence Bagel Shop  
"brief, beautiful shadows  
burned on walls of night"  
the ancient rain is falling  
through SRO hotel infernos

pages singed and soaked but  
safe inside Moroccan leather  
During a vow of silence  
you dream of the day you return  
to "crackling blueness":  
"A pay phone rings as I pass it  
on the street. It's Jean Cocteau  
with a collect call for me  
I accept but all he says is  
'the blood of the poet.'"

~~~

Dying old
or young, you all succumb
to the vices that made you proud
the only one who actually got rich
tends a growing Buddha belly
& becomes a sound-check tyrant
hosts must verify again and again
your voice will carry
to every corner of the hall
if not eternity

At the end of the performance
poems that were your lives
you were forced into heaven
against your will and
suddenly stardom was not what you
wanted: restless again on your spirit road
you traverse the night
& moon us all.

Notes

Ginsberg: *Howl*, I, lines 2 and 58; "Wichita Vortex Sutra"

Burroughs: *The Western Lands*, pp. 4 and 122

Kerouac: "The Beginning of Bop" in *Kerouac's Last Word: Jack Kerouac in Escapade*, ed. Tom Clark (Sudbury, MA: Water Row Press, 1986), pp. 33-34; *The Subterraneans*, p. 25; *Visions of Cody*, pp. 38-39.

Whitman: "Song of Myself"; *Democratic Vistas*

Kaufman: excerpts from "Crootey Songo," "Bagel Shop Jazz," and "The Ancient Rain" (*Cranial Guitar*, pp. 74, 108, 139), plus stories collected by David Henderson for his "Introduction" to *Cranial Guitar*, or told at the Bob Kaufman memorial, St. Mark's Church NYC, April 17, 1996. *Cranial Guitar: Selected Poems by Bob Kaufman*. Ed. Gerald Nicosia. Minneapolis: Coffee House Press, 1996.

Thanks also to Patti Smith, "Remembering a Poet: Gregory Corso, 1930-2001," *Village Voice*, 1-30-01, p. 75, for helping out with the last line of the poem; *Callaloo* 25.1 (2002), the special issue on Jazz Poetics edited by Brent Hayes Edwards, Farah Jasmine Griffin, and Maria Damon; Daniel Belgrad, *The Culture of Spontaneity: Improvisation and the Arts in Postwar America* (Univ. of Chicago Press, 1998); and Peter Schmidt, *Very Large Array*, @ www.swarthmore.edu/Humanities/pschmid1/array/array.html



At the Sound and Word Warehouse

—Philadelphia Fringe Fest, September 2002

Poetry reading
on an empty stage,
 drumset asleep
in a corner of the room

dry words soon upstaged
by a tropical
 downpour clamoring
on the roof, calling

a milagr^o down,
a line of drops
 tap tap tapping
precisely on timbales

—I tell you no lie—

this fringe event
suddenly more
 experimental
than even the author could hope

wordhouse cargo become
conjunto y descarga—
 Ándale todos!
put that spring back in your

poem's sprung rhythm—

milagr^o: little miracle

conjunto: musical group

descarga: discharge; slang for when a musical performance moves to open improvisation

ándale todos: (slang): keep it moving, everyone

Spanish and English may coexist without italicized borders making one language, English,
the Roman-ized dominant power. Exception: italics used to mark passion.

sprung rhythm: Gerard Manley Hopkins



Not That Easy Either

nightmare rides me
head-first down a tunnel
arms pinned to sides
and grit in my mouth—
think of people

exploring a beach at night
flashlights poking
into darkness—
we seek shelter in a cave
of comforting light—

off the stone jetty
night fishermen fling
bloodworms and phosphor
floaters on the wake of
a heaving black swell

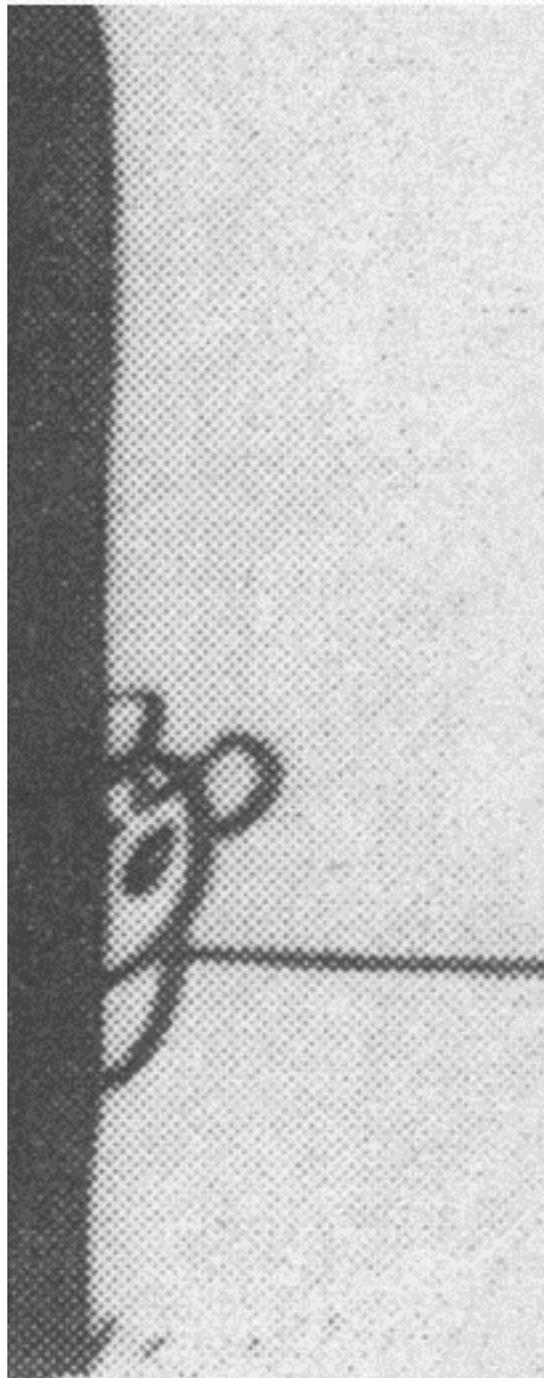
cigarette pinpoints
glow then fade—
a buoy tolls
its mourning bell—
come day, offshore,

a dredge goes down
and, hunkering,
does what dredges do—
to be liquid sand
in a dribble castle

or a glowstick
in the hand of a child—
if you want to see
Andromeda better
look a little away from it

and don't miss Dolphin arching
her back beside the Milky Way
or Orion's hearthfire nebula
dangling between his hunter's
thighs—living on the light side

and then on the dark
of all our boundaries is
not as hard as moving
at the speed of light
—but not that easy either



Incognatz Mouse

—Todo éste, es un chiste, no?

—Tal vez. Pero quizás sea también una ristra.

[—All this, it's a joke, right?]

[—Perhaps. But maybe also a string of chilis drying in the sun.]