JAZZ TALES
FROM THE
GHOST REALMS

KIRPAL GORDON
Jazz Tales from the Ghost Realms
Kirpal Gordon
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"Ganga Runs the Voodoo Down," originally entitled "Gutteral" in honor of that place in the back of the mouth where certain Sanskrit words are pronounced, was first presented in a much different form at the Brooklyn Bar Reading Series hosted by Tzaura Litsky. A nod of thanks to certain friends, unmentionable by name, who live in Brooklyn, Queens & New Orleans.

"Raid Kills Bugs Dead" nods in deep gratitude to the jazz festival community in San Miguel de Allende.

"Ghost Radio," previously published in a different form, owes an enormous debt to the many musicians in many cities over many years who have accompanied its recital.

Big props go out to Paul Rosheim, master mind of Obscure Publications, of which this is one in a larger series. Whatever the reader may think of this humble booklet, this author is telling ya: the others are worth reading.

_Jazz Tales from the Ghost Realms_ is dedicated to my daughter Blake & her consort Eric, my nephew Pete & his consort Ro, my niece Christine & her consort VinMan.

First edition

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Paul Rosheim, Series Editor
307 River Street, Apt. 18
Black River Falls, WI 54615

"Watch Out for Obscure Publications"
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...the world spins by
as the stars cross the evening sky
and spirits move mountains
when you call them out.

—Cassandra Wilson, “Resurrection Blues”

1.

No question, this waiting has taste.
Sweet almost, something forbidden.
A strange fruit.
Like where his tongue clumped its stumpy beginning back behind his
throat. Not evil, just thick and dark, down deep in the guttural. Like where
he pronounced her name from, Ganga Ghost, the other side of the drive-
by, not ungodly but a bad moon rising, a sense of reckoning.

Rec-koning starts with rec, he mused behind the wheel of a red
convertible.

As in getting my rec. What the brothers in the slammer called
recreation. Koning is to run a con, which he acknowledged he was doing
right now. And immediately he began to perspire.

As for other meanings, like the dead reckoning navigators do when
they’re far away at sea, he obliterated the worry and thought: No, this job
is a cakewalk.

Nothin’ rec-jerkin’ about it.
He told himself the only unreckoned-for-event that could slow down the deal was someone pulling into the parking lot and jumping into the store before he could persuade them not to.

But then, he could be very persuasive.

As for the crime, it could hardly be called stealing.

Yes, he had frozen all the security gizmos, their cameras and safety paraphernalia with his elaborate computer system spread across the passenger seat.

But anyone watching this store through a surveillance camera would be seeing just another routine of everyday purchases.

It wasn’t a difficult maneuver.

It was all on tape.

And tape was easy to disguise, replace or mutate.

He thought of himself, after all, not as a sociopath.

Sure he did illegal things all the time—who didn’t?—but when it came to the law, he thought: safety first. The cop on the beat, the detective on the take, the turn-key knucklehead in the House of D: the lack of imagination emanating off the heat—now that was pathological. That could ruin your day.

He had paid those dues already.

In his mind he was but an entrepreneur in a laissez-faire economy and 7/11 was from Alien Nation, that counter-Amerika disguised as an impersonal franchise from far away trying to replace the local deli/general store with mass produced images of consumer need dreamed up by People Magazine. If they could run such a deliberate con on John Q. Citizenry and get over, getting state-of-the-art slick with their crime-stopping gear wasn’t a high priority.

He knew the limits of their interest.

They would always bust the punk and the brat, entrap the impulse shoplifter, the lunatic lurking in every unlucky lotto player who tried to sneak back an attack at the prospect of having to pay for something they didn’t really want in the first place.
No, the suits didn’t go toe-to-toe with a crime they had no record of.

Still, when he lost audio contact with Ganga now, his worry was all out front.

Contact had been their only area of contention. After their third job, she didn’t see the need for continuous audio/visual exchange throughout a heist. He agreed to let the camera go. But he felt communicating to one another was crucial.

“You’re boring,” she said, yawning.

“Safe is not boring,” he countered.

“Where’s your sense of adventure?”

He didn’t have an answer to that. She was his sense of adventure.

Incarnate.

They had met last winter at the Hackers’ Conspiracy Conference held at the Wetlands in lower Manhattan. Part trade show, part teach-in, part put on, part dance party, the gathering made no judgments about who it invited. It indulged outlaw groups like Geek Underground, which smuggled FBI-arrested computer radicals out of jail, as well as the unspeakable vision of individuals like Ganga Ghost, editor of Paranoids Anonymous: A Newsletter For Those Who Know Big Brother is Watching.

He had the booth next to hers, and he made a lot of money selling almost legal radar detectors that plugged into the car’s cigarette lighter.

“I like your way,” she said and looked him over.

“Me too. Ugh. Not me too I like my way, but no: I like your way, too.”

The romance began as a mutual admiration society.

Though their approaches were different—she loving danger and disorder, he preferring logic and planning—they thought the ideal con was one nobody knew had even gone down. The used car salesman in New Jersey she “borrowed” the Chrysler Le Baron convertible from a few days ago was no doubt still waiting for her at the motel.

She had a knack for drawing the larceny deep in a vic’s heart to the surface.
As for his skills, sure, he knew what to do with a stolen car. He had grown up in Flushing, among chop shops and good fellas, and he ran fresh name-a-state license plates and VIN numbers. He had a new paint job good to go across the Hudson River and a car buyer in Philly prepared to purchase whatever he brought.

And he knew a few things about computers, too.
Not bad for a high school drop-out.
So when it came to giving props, it was an even deal.

Now, outside of a small town in south Florida, late in the afternoon, he reflected on how unlikely his life was turning out. His father had always told him that a job that makes you nervous is a job you should avoid.

This waiting that started so sweetly was growing old and troubled quickly.

He could feel something rumbling back there where his tongue and tonsils met. He hoped it wasn’t the late lunch at Mickey Dee’s. It had gone down without much taste, and he didn’t look forward to tasting it again mixed with bile and bitter coffee.

To hurl or not to hurl—what a bitch.

He watched her glide smoothly out of the 7/11 across the parking lot, arms at her sides, her long fingers around plastic grocery bags.

He swallowed. He started the car.
The bounce in her walk thrilled him. Her breasts up and down in her dress.

It was spring. A pear tree was blossoming.
Kissing bees were singing the beginning of the world!

II.

“Drive,” she said.
Fuck, she thought. Let’s put a move on.
She squirmed in the seat.
This fuckin’ Anthony! His computer shit is all up under me.
She grabbed what she could and threw it in the back seat.

It landed next to the two bags of 7/11 tribute: a couple of six-packs of cold beer, Reese's peanut butter cups, fried chicken, a carton of Bali Hai clove cigarettes, a couple of bologna sandwiches, a *Cosmo*, a nail file—whatever she could get her hands on as she left the store and the desperate shouts of that hapless attendant, naked and handcuffed to a pole inside the walk-in cooler, calling out her alias, “No, please, Simone, take whatever you want, only take me with you! I don’t want this job. I want you!”

“Faster,” she insisted, still looking straight ahead, her ears a ring of radar pinging for sirens.

She opened a beer and drank it in two gulps.

For her aliases she took the names of her feminist heroines.

Simone (for de Beauvoir), Margaret (for Mead), Germaine (for Greer), Sylvia (for Plath), Susan (for Sontag), Zora (for Neal Hurston) and Camille (for Paglia). It was a collection of names for which she chose a range of outfits and dialects, even scenes from their work.

So much for being ABD (all but dissertation).

So much for her cross-disciplinary Gender Studies/Guerilla Theater Ph.D.

In the beginning, she called herself Joni, Aretha, Chrissie, Ofra and Selena. But these women and their work were more well known than she had anticipated. She now stuck with writers and scholars.

“Faster,” she repeated.

“What did you do, Ganga, lock the mothafucka in the bathroom?”

“Really, Anthony, let’s just fuckin’ go!”

She studied his profile as he drove north on the little used road.

Anthony Facciabella—his name, “beautiful face” in Italian—matched his looks. But with a name like that, she knew he was never getting out of the neighborhood. She hated the neighborhood.

She saw hints of clitorectomy in the aluminum siding.

She saw men on the corner plotting who to kill, who to make pope.
Had she made a mistake, she wondered, pulling him out of Flushing? He may not be the most connected guy, but he had enough friends in the right places so he never worried.

Now he looked pretty worried.
“Do you love me, Anthony?”
“Take the fuckin’ wig off, Ganga, for Christ sake.”
So, he was worried—and pissed.
She opened another beer and drank. She removed her wig, wiped off the thick mascara and the dark lipstick with a moist towelette, took out her hazel-colored contact lenses, put her glasses on and her nose ring back in and combed her long dark hair. The transformation from Simone, the French Algerian, to Ganga, the Irish American-East Indian, was complete.

She was having trouble coming down.
She was still shaky from the scene in the cooler.
When she turned off her audio contact with Anthony, she talked the clerk out of his clothes in no time at all.
She opened a third beer.
She credited herself with knowing men.
She knew how to throw her head to one side, how to lean against a door, how to moisten her lips, how to lift her dress slowly, how to read the name on his tag.
“Oh, Ernest.”
In her mind the world was a dope fiend loser trying to score a little relief, and everyone had a jones. Men had a penetration jones. She had a place for penetration. This was inescapable, a con built into the gene machine: biological imperatives told you to squirt your little seed inside a beautiful woman. That elevated the race, got you off the hook, gave you a sense of having done your destiny duty.

The ultimate game, she thought, was not to incarnate the self, but few played.

It turned out Ernest was new on the job.
While he matched her, item for underclothing item that she wiggled slowly out of and threw in the cooler, she listened to his tale. He was stupid and hard working. Went to community college at night. Had hoped to get a degree so he could propose to his girlfriend like a man who was going somewhere. But she ditched him last month for a wealthier guy.

Ganga liked him enough to mercy fuck him right there in the cooler.

She had reasons to have sexual intercourse with the people she robbed. Not just to make sure that he would first have to incriminate himself for rape if he were to give her up.

No. She had reasons that reason knew nothing of.

But something unexpected happened.

She grabbed a fourth beer, put her favorite CD in the music box. Traveling Miles, Cassandra Wilson’s tribute to Miles Davis.

While Cassandra sang, “The night of my conception/the stars were fixed,” Ganga Ghost felt the first remorse of her young life.

“Conjure woman told my mother/she’s gonna turn and twist.”

Remorse not for the crime, which was impersonal, nor for the results which insurance agencies would make even more impersonal.

“Don’t have to worry ‘bout her learnin’/she’s gonna get around.”

It was for Ernest.

“And when it comes to makin’ love/she’ll run the voodoo down.”

She could still hear that sad sack crying. She finished the beer.

“Faster, Anthony, please.”

It had been a slow day at the far-away convenience store.

After Ernest broke out a six-pack and locked the front of the store in order to insure them a little privacy, he had agreed to be handcuffed in exchange for her thong panties. She slipped them off, naked but for her push-up bra and high heels, and slid them over his head as he put his hands in cuffs that were wrapped around the pole.

Such a situation provoked the most playful, erotic impulses in her.

But while she stroked the backs of his thighs up to his buttocks with her long fingernails and he moaned in pleasure, “Simone, it’s you alone I want and need,” she craved Anthony inside her. So she headed for the
cash register, grabbed her dress, unlocked the front door and headed out, leaving the poor bastard unfulfilled.

I ought to have slipped him inside me anyway or blown him right then and there, she decided now, opening her fifth beer, and then I wouldn't feel so guilty.

As for feeling turned on, she leaned across the front seat and opened Anthony's fly.

"He loves me," she whispered to his profile, peeling off a twenty from a thick roll she pulled out of her purse, compliments of lucky 7/11.

"He loves me not," she said, stuffing the twenty into his open zipper.

Roll those dice, babygirl. She continued to build that bulge.

He got bigger.

He drove faster. She finished her beer.

When she buried the last twenty dollar bill in his crotch, he still hadn't looked over at her. So she began to caress his nipples through his summer shirt. First with her fingers. Then with her tongue.

He checked the rear view mirror.

By the time Cassandra sang, "Here and now our love/circle is never broken," her eerie version of Miles' "ESP," Ganga had escaped that absurd shot of Ernest—naked, erect and handcuffed, crying her name from the depths of the cooler. But as Anthony's neck and arm gave way to goose bumps, the image of Ernest, whose whole body had given way to goose bumps, returned.

She opened another beer and then unbuttoned his shirt.

Anthony slowed down.

"What are you fucking doing?" she asked, startled.

"Making a left," he said.

The force of the turn threw her even closer to him. She was already pretty moist down there. Now that she was pushed up against his trouser leg, this made rubbing herself against him easy and delightful.
They headed west on Alligator Alley, the route he had planned, a straight shot across the Everglades and into Naples, destination: New Orleans.

She opened the buttons that ran the length of her short, sleek blue silk dress.

Up ahead the sun was getting swallowed by the sea, the clouds on the horizon gloriously crimson and violet.

Her turn-on was all out front.

Mounting his right leg while he used his left to push down on the accelerator, she ripped off his shirt and poured the remainder of the beer on his open muscular chest. She liked his definition. She licked the beer with her tongue, his nipples hardening under that caress, the taste in her mouth mixed with his sweat, the rest of the beer soaking down into his pants. Where the money was.

They were in the clear.

Suddenly she was biting his neck which went gloriously crimson and violet. The strength of her rubbing increased. And then her mouth found his.

He drove and tried to swallow.

But she grabbed his tongue with the muscles of her mouth and wouldn’t let go. She pulled his tongue up almost by its root, so deep into her was she sucking it.

And when his jaw finally clamped down on hers, the little string of flesh that held her tongue in the mouth ready to tear, she thought: this craving is nothing more than going beyond the gutteral, source of all sound.

And when that sun finally set into the sea, only then did she let her tongue fly free in her head, the sounds of her orgasm piercing the sounds of the funky Florida swamps that surrounded them.

III.

It was an odd sensation. And a first.
To come by rubbing herself against his leg.
It was just like loving Anthony Facciabella.

She remembered meeting him. Talk about computer nerdy and trap shy. Like the orgasm she didn’t calculate on having, his appeal came from its being unexpected. Oh, she had read *Cosmo* even when she lived in India and hoped for love like any teenage girl. But now that it had actually appeared to her at the age of twenty-seven, it had nothing to do with his fashion statement or the size of his lips or the choice of his career or his being two years younger than her.

She wanted him to stop the car right then and there.
She wanted him inside her.

He braked hard.

He pulled the car off the road at a little turn-in under a gigantic magnolia tree in bloom. While he undid the latches to the convertible and took the top down, he thought: Fuckin’ bitches, who can figure ‘em? All this moony bullshit about, “Do you love me?,” and she needs nothing from me but my pants leg.

What a sad hustle love was.

He zipped up his trousers, jumped out of the car and opened the trunk.

“What now?”
“Texas,” he said.

While Ganga took a razor blade to the Delaware registration and inspection stickers, rummaged through the glove compartment and then attached the appropriate new stickers, he pulled out his crimie’s special detergent and rinsed off the fake red paint until the car turned white.

While Cassandra sang, “Time After Time,” a send-up to the ethereal Miles rendition of Cindi Lauper’s classic, he changed the license plates and in the tropical twilight thought: this tune is so Ganga. It wasn’t just the Queens connection between the singer and his girlfriend. It was the spookiness of the interpretation which matched the spookiness of Ganga Ghost herself.

He didn’t know anything about the concept of no-self in Indian philosophy.
And it was only later that he discovered she was from a famous south Indian family whose best known relative was Aurobindo Ghose, the yogi who turned his back on Gandhi’s cry for independence and opened an ashram with the wealth from his first-world devotees. By then she had told him there was a curse on the family. In spite of his Cambridge education, her father ended up marrying a mad American hippie beauty, a gal who went looking for enlightenment but found instead Baba Bhoga, the king of the international scam. Of course, she was also a player, and after Babaji’s fall from grace, she found a new guru and left Ganga’s dad holding the bag for customs fraud. He grabbed Ganga and promptly fled India for Flushing where the Ghose clan had done very well in real estate. He spent the next ten years getting back into their good graces. By then Ganga had officially changed her name so that it matched the incorrect version the know-nothing American official had typed on her visa: Ghost.

And she was so ghost-like in her hustles as well—not just the disguises or the noir-driven intrigues, but the sense that there literally was no one there. She had an uncanny knack for becoming whatever the vic wanted to see.

She threw the glance and the sea parted.

The charm was in her nonchalance, the permission she gave men to fill in their own version of events, as if her appealing body might be as big a joke as the sexual longings the men projected onto it, as if she were winking behind the disguise to say, “Yes, let’s take off these masks now that we’ve found each other backstage and the show is over.”

However, when she got scared, she confessed to him that she often saw a ghost. It was the ghost of Aurobindo, that droopy-eyed, gray-bearded, white-robe-wearing holy man, pointing his finger at her.

Paranoids Anonymous: big brother was watching, indeed.

Anthony finished and closed the trunk of the car.

“Ready?” he asked.

Ready?
Yeah, I’m fuckin’ ready, she thought.
Ready or not, here I come.
She kneeled and spread her body the length of the front seat until her feet touched his door. When he opened it, she arched her back, stuck her rump high in the air, parted her silk dress and said, "Please quit fuckin' around, Anthony, with all this Safety First bullshit and fuck me, please, as hard as you fucking can."

"Come on, Ganga, scoot over."
She started to weep.
"What is the matter with you, girlfriend?"
"Can't you see how wet and fucked up for you I am?"
"Not exactly."
"You're the only one I want and need."

Now that was a new twist, he mused. Getting personal on him! And then crying! "You're the only one I want and need."
What was up with that?
What had she done to that poor bastard in the 7/11?
Marona mia, women were whack.
But damn that beautiful Dravidian skin in the Florida twilight. The heart-shaped gorgeousness of that ass moving up and down. And then his finger there in her mound: she was really wet. Sloppy wet.
"Come on, sweetie, scoot over."
"Anthony, please fuck me, you big-dick guinea bastard," she shouted at the top of her lungs.
"Ganga, get a fuckin' grip. My dick isn't even hard."

In one motion she turned and opened his fly—like her, he had "gone commando," without underwear—and twenty dollar bills now went flying in all directions into the everglades. He tried to retrieve them, but she slipped his excuse into her mouth.
"Okay, come on, you big fuck, let's go," she said, a moment later, holding his erection in her hand and a cheek of his ass in the other.
She slipped and fell backward overturning her beer whose foamy contents spilled across the seat as she managed to pull him on top of her. In he slid in one motion.
She was so worked up to have him there inside her finally, and with the cold beer sliding between the cheeks of her buttocks and into her rectum, she came even before she could get her bearings. Yet in finally fulfilling the craving deep within the walls of her uterus, the suction itself produced even deeper craving.

"Don't stop," she told him. "Whatever happens, don't stop."

He pulled out of her. He looked up. 
There was no one around for miles.
He was awash in sex and twenty dollar bills! He collected the money—-from his pants, from under the seat and from the soggy grog mix of beer and sweat and mucous and labial fluid.

"Please, Anthony, don't stop."
He put the bills in his pants pocket and collected his computer from the back seat and put it in the trunk.

She couldn't come down.
She usually crashed hard from the high a robbery gave her, but this was six beers later and a taste of sex, and she was just getting crazier.
She took off her dress and bra and heels.
Her naked skin felt electric in the gentle balmy Gulf breeze.
She climbed over the front seat and then into the back. Then she climbed up onto the trunk just as he closed it.
She crawled toward him.
She pulled his pants down to his knees, and grabbing him by his neck, slid right down on his erection. He had no choice but to catch her buttocks. Then she pushed off with her hips and slid back down. Though she was tall, he was taller. And he had the advantage of a powerful upper body which she now made full use of.

"Please, Anthony, whatever happens, I love you and just don't stop."

And then he loved her.
And he didn't stop.

He knew this kind of sex was wrong.
It went way beyond how this scene might look to the heat, he said to himself, as she slammed down on him with greater and greater intensity and his delight moaned up out of him to match hers. He was buck naked off the side of this road: a piece of fresh jail bait furiously getting fucked. He could live with that.

It was the sex itself.

This was not Flushing, houses set against vitamin-enriched lawns, cramped apartment buildings and the run down shack, all those working families providing their little Anthonys with the necessary Boy Scout Science Project Community Chest. This was not even Sicilian secrets, the hustle the family ran thanks to Uncle Vincenzo’s Get Out of Jail Free card.

This was what all the men in the family were afraid of, the love motion that didn’t silence the woman to the husband’s will but compelled the man to admit the call of love would always be more, the answer the female anatomy gives. No need to stop and breathe and pee and lay down again and wait for his little Anthony to grow big again. Love was instantly renewable, consumed in itself, its truest expression would always be more more more. As in I love you, don’t stop, no matter what.

He had only to switch focus from getting his to getting hers.

Maybe it was the frenzy in the motion.

Or how hard she could throw herself down on him.

Or how her leg muscles shook as she strapped them around him in standing position. Or the way he grabbed her ass so tightly. Or held her up, defying gravity. Or put his forearm against her chest and shook her up and down on his erection.

“Don’t stop, Anthony, whatever happens.”

Her whole body jiggled in delirium.

Then her orgasm was so violent that her bowels opened uncontrollably. She would have shit on herself had he not bent his knees and held her close.

He had fucked her so hard she hadn’t known if she should shit or go blind.

He wanted to scold himself, but he only became more aroused.
He laid her back on the trunk. Now he could use the full force of his legs to continue. He didn’t know why the thrusting he required was so intense and furious. It occurred to him that he was so far inside her that he could break himself in half and, for a half second, he felt he understood what the craving was all about. Something locked up inside him was shaking loose.

 Sweet almost, something forbidden.

 A strange fruit.

 Like where his tongue clumped its stumpy beginning back behind his throat. Not evil, just thick and dark, down deep in the gutteral. Like where he pronounced her name from, Ganga Ghost, the other side of the drive-by, not ungodly but a bad moon rising, a sense of reckoning.

 IV.

 He would come to quite a reckoning regarding what happened next.

 But that reckoning was way later, after they had been in New Orleans awhile and Ganga was already pregnant. That was after the Ifa lady who lived in a shack on Elysian Fields had done her divination. That was when he learned the man he saw handing him a razor was the ghost of Buddy Bolden, cornet player and barber, the man the old timers at Preservation Hall said invented jazz music, the guy who could outplay everyone before he got sent up for killing the man who was fucking his womans.

 But right now a bad moon was rising.

 He shuddered so uncontrollably from his own orgasm that he blacked out as the apparition hovered above Ganga Ghost.

 She would come to discover there was more to his story.

 Olive-skinned Anthony Faccialbella had quadroon relatives in New Orleans.

 But that was way later, after he stopped denying her ghostly vision of Sri Aurobindo, after he had dragged her to every mucumba woman in the French Quarter and the Faurborg Marigny in his search of an explanation for the ghost he had seen. And then, much later, as if by
accident, they stumbled upon an old man playing banjo in Jackson Square who saw her pregnant and told her of the child's destiny.

"Slouching toward Bethlehem" was the term he used.

But right now she shot awake as the heat pulled up to their stolen car.

She managed to slip on her dress and heels, walk over and kneel down next to the open window of his Dade County patrol car just before he thought to radio in the incident.

"Officer, I know how this must appear. But you must allow me to explain."

Ganga Ghost looked up at him with the damp, demure eyes of a young newlywed.
Raid Kills Bugs Dead

Take me back on Hyndeford Street
where you could feel the silence
at half past eleven on long summer nights
as the wireless played Radio Luxembourg
and voices whispered across Beachy River

—Van Morrison, "Hymns to the Silence"

1.

She never expected her radio to talk back to her.
"Go ride the music."
What was that supposed to mean?
Lying in her bed, she heard the clock tick and thought of him.
She talked the words of the Cyndi Lauper tune her favorite station
played, "Caught up in circles/confusion is nothing new."

She had been addressing the radio.
But that was nothing new, either.
Her boyfriend was so long, her family so far away and the people
she worked for so utterly stupid that she just needed to talk back at
something. So a few weeks ago, she began bitching up at the radio,
reprimanding it for playing the love songs that brought memories of her
boyfriend back to her. But when she got over what a pathetic jerk he had
been, the need to talk or sing or squawk didn’t go away.
It only increased.
She focused at first on the commercials that drove her nuts, especially those insipid jingles for insect repellant or soap suds. But soon she was commenting on everything.

She found herself looking forward to these chats with her radio. After she put to bed the two spoiled brats she nannied, she would repair to her garret above the rest of the family’s second floor bedrooms. There she would turn on the most obnoxiously chatty station she could find, light up a reefer and go at it with inspired monologues embracing themes of love’s regret and thought control, the nature of time, the relationship between emotional repression and the pop hit.

Then at half past eleven, she would ring a bell and like Van Morrison sitting in the silence that befell the city of Belfast, she would wait in her lonely London tower for her favorite radio program, “The San Francisco Sixties: Music Out of Time, Time Out of Mind.”

She would hum along for a while. Then she would fall asleep.

But now she was wide awake. She could not deny that the radio had spoken to her. Maybe she better change stations.

Justina Sotheby was unprepared for ghosts whispering incomprehensible imperatives across invisible airwaves. Born in Little Compton in Cornwall, she was shy and tall, twenty-seven years old and never had been to church. Though she thought London was a great town, her days were spent like this: she cooked, she cleaned, she walked the ingrates from Hyde Park to Portobello Road. She used to go to Ronnie Scott’s to listen to jazz with her boyfriend Shivji Lingam on week-ends. He was great fun to be out with, and she learned to love him. But that was before he had got deported for interpreting too freely the phrase “public domain.”
His video business went from boom to bust overnight.

So come night time, she put the kids into their pajamas, persuaded them to give their unresponsive parents a peck on the cheek, tucked them into bed and read to them until they fell asleep.

Then she would slip up to her solitude.

There she would piss and moan to the radio until the Grateful Dead, Santana, Ali Akbar Khan, It's a Beautiful Day, Thirteenth Floor Elevators, Big Brother and the Holding Company, Quicksilver Messenger Service and the Jefferson Airplane came up over the airwaves.

She would fall asleep to their inspired, genre-defying anthems of the era.

But tonight she remained awake.

II.

"Pardon me, Justina," the man of the house said, shaking her gently.

She had fallen asleep in his study.

"I say," he said.

He looked over the titles of the books that lay strewn all about the desk where her head lay as well and added, "Quite an interesting bit of research you're doing. May I ask what for?"

Among the cases of auditory hallucinations that she had read, an interview in the London Times with the American poet Allen Ginsberg was particularly fascinating. Not only had he claimed to have heard the voice of William Blake speaking to him out of time in his Harlem apartment! He further suggested that the late eighteenth century London poet and engraver, who also dealt in rare and obscure manuscripts, held the connection to secret mystical traditions that began in ancient Persia and spread everywhere over the centuries, flourishing in India and at least in the West until the Vatican's Council of Nicea got hold of most of the books and had a bonfire. Chief among these officially discredited notions was
that the unifying principle of all life could be transmitted from the mystic to the world through word and music.

Later she would discover the East Indians called it “riding the laya” (Sanskrit, for the sound current) and the West Africans/Haitians called it “riding the loa” (Creole, for the god who lives in the rhythm of the drum).

But that night all she knew was she had stumbled upon something important.

When she read that Ginsberg thought “Howl” had found such success on the West Coast because in his estimation San Francisco was the only American city laid back enough to hear clearly what had broken through his long-lined rants and invocations, she knew this was somehow related to the secret message the radio had whispered.

Now awakened from a dream of tribes of people gathering in a beautiful park as the sun burned off the fog, she asked her employer, “What does it mean if the radio says, ‘Go ride the music?’”

“I’m afraid it means you better start looking for another job. You’re fired.”

At another age or in another life, Justina Sotheby might have been crushed. Or furious. Or full of self-pity. Or frightened that she were losing her mind. Or pleading with the moron for more time.

But she took it all in stride.

Packed her two bags and said to the kids, “Good-bye.”

And she didn’t start looking for another job either.

She rented a flat near the library.

Every day she poured over books by or about Ginsberg and Blake.

Every night she told the radio what she made of it all.

Every aspect of their lives—libertarian politics and religious experiences, bohemian lifestyles and wild sources of inspiration—seamed a conviction that the universe and herself in it was all-of-a-piece, what the Indian philosophers called non-dual, what the Chinese called tao.

Before the first week was out, she stopped worrying about being nuts.
Before the second week was out, she felt inextricably related to her field of cognition, not fragmented into the conveniences of language like perceiver/perceived.

By then her readings had shifted from mediums and séances and apparitions and the occult to clairvoyance and extra sensory perception.

The literature was confirming her suspicion.

It turned out that many normal people in normal lives with normal jobs experienced para-normal events. It wasn’t that odd things happened, it was what people made of it. Most people were afraid. So they denied it.

And then the odd things stopped happening.

But not in her case.

Although the radio gave no more messages, things in her life got more related, woven together, almost as if filling in a pattern or plan. Later she would wonder if this had more to do with pouring over Plotinus and Jacob Boehme, Shankara and Nagarjuna, Lao Tzu and Li Po.

But now she felt that what she was looking for was also looking for her.

Had she conversed with anyone on a regular basis besides her radio, it would have been clear that she was changing.

For one thing she stopped complaining.

Even at the radio’s silly jingles and banal commercials.

She had never thought of herself as a pout, but a generic woe-is-me used to spring up as if a reflex to accompany certain little things that didn’t go her way. Especially in matters of love and work.

But now she wondered if this reflex were not the real problem.

And as for things going her way, she was profoundly glad to have no idea what her way looked like any more. She thought such a phrase not just mere arrogance or ingratitude at being alive but a refusal to consider opportunities hidden within apparent adversity.

The world was full of omens.

She drifted within preparations she could not fully comprehend.
It wasn't that she had proof that things were turning out for the best. Or that God really loved her or that piety was the best policy. It was that the tyranny of "for the best" stopped having any validity. It all balanced out.

As for God, the idea of a personal savior seemed like legs on a snake. And as for piety: sentimental and compensatory. Let pass but a few of the ego's never-ending, nanny-spoiled demands, and the fear of death stopped running the bloody show.

One could take a deep breath and everything fell in place!

No, the only outward sign that anything was happening to her at all was that she grew less fastidious about her personal appearance. It wasn't that she became a smelly, pimply misfit, only that she didn't meet her smell or her pimples with horror.

She had begun to take it all in stride. And to stop thinking about how others wanted her to look when she dressed for the day.

"That's a lovely sun dress you're wearing," the librarian said to her one day.

Was he flirting with her?

"This old thing?" she said and smiled.

"Pardon me, but we here at the library have taken notice of you. We have a proposition for you to consider. Would you care to join me for tea?"

Later that afternoon, over a pot of Earl Gray, scones and clotted cream, the head librarian, a gaunt and quirky man whose name pin read Humphries, smirked.

"May I be candid?"

"Please."

"You were weeping yesterday as I passed. Are you all right?"

"Yes, of course."

"I must say, with the sunlight streaming through the window over your face, it left a singular impression."

"Tears of joy then."
"Inspired by something you read perhaps?"
"Yes, actually. A remark the Buddha was alleged to have made."
"Do you recall it?"
"'When I attained enlightenment, don't think anything was attained!'"
"Indeed. Puts the whole bloody bullocks to rest, that."
"Sorry?"
"All this frightful ambition to get something. Deadly business, really. Especially in matters of religion. Please, have another scone. When the only admission we can make with any certainty is that we don't know a damned thing. Speaking of which, I don't believe I know your name."
"Justina Sotheby."
Humphries paused, looked very grave and considered what to say next.

"Odd."
"My name?"
"Yes. I'm the president of a meditation society known as Just So."
"I thought you were with the library."
"Yes, well, would you like to hear about Just So, Justina Sotheby?"
"All right."
"We take our name from the state the Buddha dwelled in—tathagata—that is, a condition we might translate as suchness, or as we like to say, just so."
"That is an odd coincidence, the first syllable of my names," she admitted.
"Coincidence? Odder still, the remainder of the letters of your name."
"How's that?"
"Well, after Just So, all you have left is the bay in. Cockney for the Be In."
"Be In? What's that?"
"The first Human Be In took place in San Francisco, also known as the city by the bay. At Golden Gate Park, gateway to enlightenment."
“I should like to go there then.”

“To San Francisco? The Just So Society would like you to represent us there.”

“And how ought one to represent you?”

“We need someone of an agreeable and calm nature, you see, one who won’t take sides at this sure-to-be argumentative conference, one such as yourself who could greet regret as one would happiness, who might ‘cast a cold eye on life, on death.’”

“As in, ‘Horseman, pass by?’ she quoted Yeats’ last line of his epitaph.

“Yes, exactly, I should say. Is traveling tomorrow okay?”

III.

The next day, given the address of the Drake Hotel, Justina kissed Humphries on the cheek and boarded the noon flight for San Francisco out of Heathrow Airport, compliments of the Just So Society.

Traveling first class in a bold new mini skirt, sipping Scotch, she looked down on the Atlantic Ocean, all blue in green, from the height of 25,000 feet.

Was this what an embryo feels, she wondered, floating in the womb? She felt serendipitous.

She had never flown in a jet before.

A voice came over the public address.

“Cooperate and you won’t die. We are hijackers in the name of the Council of the Pure Ones!”

Then she heard what sounded like a gun shot.

A moment later the door separating first class from the cockpit opened.

“You,” a bearded man said to her at gunpoint, “get in here.” He handed her a first aid kit and pointed to the bleeding leg of the captain.
While Justina stopped the blood, cleaned and dressed the captain's wound in the tiny compartment, the three hijackers argued among themselves.

"You shouldn't have shot him, asshole!" the tall one said to the beard.

"Shut the fuck up!" the woman added, "Don't let the passengers hear you."

"Look," the beard said, "only in the face of catastrophe can we know if our devotion is sincere."

It soon was discovered by everyone on the flight that the three were American Buddhists practicing a radical meditation technique called Contra-Tantra. Acts of terrorism were performed to help the practitioner confront the Madyamika doctrine that every proposition is ultimately unknowable. Only by an act of faith can one "swim across the ocean of fire, into the company of the holy."

It also was discovered that the flight was full of Buddhists of all stripes.

Unlike the quietistic Humphries, many of these people were boisterous, full of official and contradictory opinions as well as religious paraphernalia—mala beads, incense, holy pictures, little shrines that popped out of attaché cases.

"Council of the Pure Ones? What the hell is that?"
"I've never heard of such a thing."
"They're performance artists, not Buddhists."
"Artists? They're bullies."
"Who are we to judge?"
"They don't even meditate."
"Maybe not the same way you do."
"The path is easy for those without preferences."
"Meditate, schmeditate! You can't go having a jihad to prove you're pure."
"Who said anything about jihad?"
"Don't hak me a chaynik, who do you think invented hijacking?"
"So now the Arabs are to blame for this. Will wonders never cease!"
"Listen to me. Condoning this in the name of any religion is nuts."

Before long, the hijackers got involved in the discussion. Perhaps it was their automatic weapons or the fact that they had shot the captain in the leg or the eloquent logic of their predicament, but the hijackers were not interrupted, even by this kevitchy audience. They told their whole story. The passengers tended to sympathize most completely with them. "We understand you don’t want to meditate in a cave."

"The world is out there ready to test the limits of your practice."

"But don’t be a luftmensch. Shouldn’t there be limits to testing the limits?"

"Your teacher wants you to land the plane on his island in the Caribbean?"

"So how did he get a private island in the first place?"

"Don’t you think he may be trying to use you?"

There was no end to their midrash on that old story of teacher/student. And their questions were breaking down the certainty of the Pure Ones.

"All right," the beard said, noting the desperation of his partners, "we’ve heard from everyone but the nurse here. What do you think?"

"Well," Justina smiled, "I recently heard a radio talk to me. You have every right to think I’m bloody bonkers, but I say it’s not the event that matters as much as what we make of it. We all have noted, in spite of our differences, your remarkable commitment to your practice. I would venture that we each have a personal gift to bestow to you to demonstrate how much we think of your bravery. Something given may mean more to your teacher than something taken. So rather than land the plane on his island, which could result in unforeseen problems with the airline officials, why not let us fly over your teacher’s island and then you can parachute out, proving at once your devotion to your teacher, your good will to us and—since you’re bringing no wealth but yourselves and the gifts we have
freely given you—your skill in testing the very limits of your teacher’s sincerity as well?”

And so it came to pass that all three hijackers jumped out of the sky. Needless to say, she never arrived in San Francisco.

IV.

Cameras hunted Justina for a photo op.

Having wished the Contra-Tantras Godspeed somewhere west of the Cayman Islands in the Greater Antilles, the passengers had de-planed in Vera Cruz to great fanfare. Hailed by the captain as a heroine, Justina was awarded a cash gift by the airline’s president.

She made the evening news around the world.

But the next day she did not board the flight.

Her only explanation was that the limits of her own practice had been tested by the event. In response the Mexican government gave her a visa and a rented car and asked her, as a representative of the Just So Society, to tour their poor country and bless their Catholic shrines.

She got as far as San Miguel de Allende, a charming colonial town in the mountains, whose chief industry seemed to be putting up with expatriate gringos. Preceded by her reputation and recognized immediately, she was invited to stay free of charge at the Hotel del San Francisco.

“Hoo-stina,” the owner said to her after she signed in and was given the presidential suite which overlooked the main cathedral and zocalo, “please join the Americanos in our jardin. In keeping with our festival de jazz which opens tonight at the teatro, they are having a service for one of their own.”

She walked in and sat down amidst bougainvillea and sweet-smelling jasmine that climbed the walls of the garden as a circle of Americans listened to a lively alto saxophone play a bit of Charlie Parker’s “Yardbird Suite.”
"That's was one of Neal Cassady's favorites, and why we here at the annual jazz festival like to say, 'Bird Lives,'" a wizened ponytailed old man with a minister's collar said to the crowd. He bid Justina welcome and added, "As some of you know, Neal died on the railroad tracks right outside this city in 1968. As for his cause in life or the cause of his death, let's just say he rode the music as far as it could take him. I'd like to play one of the only recordings we have of him."

Justina was glad to be sitting down. Hearing Cassady's improvisational chatter in which he connected Sri Aurobindo, the power of a 1948 Packard engine, Jackson Pollack's theory of action painting, the virtues of Denver school girls and Edgar Cayce's theories on ghosts while the Grateful Dead riffed playfully in the background gave her pause.

"What do you mean, 'Go ride the music?'" she asked the minister when the service ended.

"What did it mean to you?" he asked her back.

"Who are you?"

"Just an old conga player from North Beach."

"Yes, but you're a priest."

"Well, you know, there are official authorities representing official points of view of official churches and then there are folks like me. Do you have a car?"

"Yes."

"I've got some unofficial church business to conduct just outside of town. For a ride, I'll tell ya everything you want to know."

But on the ride out to Aguas Calientes Justina did all the talking. This old timer seemed so utterly without pretense that her whole story just rolled off her tongue in one long ramble. He didn't blink an eye at details that even Justina found hair-raising in retrospect. He was as "just so" as she!

She followed him out of the car and down to the office of the hot springs so he could seal the deal that would allow jazz festival attendees a free pass on Sunday. Even when she stripped off her clothes and invited
him to join him, he got naked as if it were the most natural thing in the world to do.

Hand in hand, they followed a canal built labyrinth-style. As the water got deeper, the elevation changed. Soon the ground was twenty feet above them and mesquite trees shaded the brutal afternoon sun. They lingered there a while in a large pool and then he said, “Let’s explore the cave.”

He swam ahead, entering a long, narrow tunnel.

Halfway in, when she could no longer see either end, she knew he was just ahead, but she couldn’t see him.

She got nervous and thought about turning around.

This was more chilling than any radio talking to her!

She felt herself in her mother’s birth canal. She wanted to scream.

She wanted to go back to being a nanny. She wanted her little bedroom in Cornwall.

“Justina,” a voice whispered, “just a little more.”

She didn’t know why she was weeping.

She lay next to him on a rock in the center of the back end of the cave which was a perfect circle. Light filtered down from a turreted window forty feet above.

“You know that famous advertising phrase, Raid kills bugs dead?”

“No,” she said and sniffled, “I grew up in England.”

“Well, only in America would an exterminator name his product Raid. Anyway, the poet Lew Welch wrote that line on his last day of work as a copy writer for Montgomery Ward. From that day on Welch, like Cassady, just rolled the dice. No more straight-job-sit-stand-security-ennui-pension-plan, and his life tumbled through every kind of breakdown. Then every kind of breakthrough.”

“How do you know that?” she asked him suspiciously.

“Because I helped him build his shack in the Sierra Nevadas.”

“And you?”
“I was a young pastor for a progressive Sunnyvale congregation, but once I heard Ginsberg read at the Gallery Six, everything opened. I began playing with the poets and the congueros in Golden Gate Park. The Be In had gathered these tribes of people, so I moved my ministry to the street.”

“To ride the music?” she asked.

“That’s just a phrase Marty Balin of the Airplane liked to sing at the end of ‘Wooden Ships,’ a Crosby-Stills song that expresses the lost-at-sea sense we shared. Ironically, that song came out when Miles Davis opened for Crosby, Stills and Nash. All those rock guys knew they were just the red haired stepchild of jazz, and Cassady was a reminder there’d been Bird and Diz and Trane and Monk, a bridge to that other America the Forties and Fifties tried to stamp out. You know, Raid kills bugs dead! Prophetic, if ya think about it. To kill what bugs you, like a napalm raid over Vietnam, which in the Oriental sense is a form of suicide as all life is connected so to kill a bug is to also kill oneself. But also in the old jazz sense: hip music kills bugs, folks who are bugged out. Nuts to rhythm. Gone to wigged. Crushed with joy! And in the Christian sense: died like Mahalia Jackson sings, to be reborn in glory, Lord, I’m goin’ home one day to tell my story.”

Later that evening in the Teatro de Musica she would hear the San Francisco Sixties music she loved giving birth to a new sound the padre called acid jazz played by a band named Raid composed of Bay Area musicians her own age.

Later she would get lost enough inside the waves of that sound to see the ancestors of unknown spiritual traditions dancing in the air above the band’s heads.

Later she would accept the padre’s invite to become the new unofficial minister at Padre Rama’s Lost and Found Church.

But right now she saw the garret of light above and her crying stopped. She realized why she had ventured this far out of her way.

In her naked skin she had finally come home.
Coda: Ghost Radio

And what rough beast.../Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?
—William Butler Yeats, “The Second Coming”

I.

Hey jazz fans of the way-laid Five Spot peanut gallery rough trade
I say on the sweet downbeat: slouch this way
with hybrid-order border-crossers walkin’ with a dip in the hip
& octofoon lunatics rockin’ steady as Gibraltar.
I invite, I invent, I invoke all realms of Bethlehem
so I’m callin’ on momzas, misfits & mutants
from the renegade realms of inner space wizardry
inside the orange tubes of old radios
‘cause I want to speak-spake-spoke
about dee lime in dee coconut
  the jewel in the lotus
  the woe in the rational
  & the multi-national wheel
we call rag time & swing time & funky monkeyshines
in the elegant joy rime of be-bop to leave behind us
the so-called problems of existence
& dwell in all that’s divine
about Mile’s muted version of “My Funny Valentine.”
I’ll mention Stan Kenton
‘cause I want June Christie to “Play ‘Misty’ for me”
so let's call up the ghosts
from "Way down Yonder in New Orleans"
on spectral radio waves playin' on through slaughter & sorrow
down through the drum beat wonder at Conga Square
& the round full sound from dark Dahomey & Ibo-Land
& mama coh mamasa mama coh cohsa
up through Oshumare & the mystery river
that gurgles in our jiz-jaz & razzamatazz release into oneness
male & female combined...
As for why "The room's swayin'
& the band's playin' one of your old favorite songs
from way back when" or where Willie Nelson is from
I speak-spake-spoke of the technically impossible
from a Parisian gypsy named Django
who missing three fingers plucks miraculous chord-riffs
even the full-fisted can't follow
    wonderful unplayable notes
the mind-heart we hold in common wants to swallow
with the delighted bass weight of a disbelieving eyebrow!
I'm talkin' about chops yo
the row row row your boat gently into the queen of slipstream-ment
so I invite, I invent, I invoke extreme forms of logic
from Thelonious Sphere Monk
& I got it all figured out "Ruby My Dear"
on the slam dunk rear wheel & 'round midnight hubcap deal
 'cept where went the rent.

II.

Hey young noodniks from Nedick's & master blasters on the good nod:
if I can't put a lid on Symphony Sid
I'll be sellin' out the bleachers for Lenny Bruce seekers
& peyote-peakin' to Bird's "Ornithology"
while advocatin' Lester-Young-for-President & What-Me-Worry Reeferology
& while I'm waitin' for Mezz Mezzrow
invitin' his recitin' on the blue corner of Lenox Avenue & 125th Street
I got Dizzy Gillespie's recipe "Night in Tunisia" to greet me
though I'm actually shoe laced to my suitcase for a free fall into Union, New Jersey!
Got a rent party in progress
so I invite, I invent, I invoke Baba Lou Baba Lou Baba Lou-i-yeah
& to the dancers of the drum I say, "Ride the loa, ride the music wave"
& so I'm jitterbuggin' & nickel-pluggin' Bessie & Ma Rainey & Lady Day
got Ella & Lena & Sassy & Dinah Washington & Carmen McRae
got Blossom Dearie & Helen Merrill & Anita O'Day
got Flora Purim Miriam Mekeba Sweet Honey in the Rock Lakshmi Shankar
& in the virtuosity tag team signifyin' tradition even Sade.
Got evict-me, don't dick-me & more restrict-me's
than you can shake a hickory stick at but okay:
my lover is laid out

lovin' the splayed out
reachin' for the way out

& makin' me play Angelique Kidjo "Runnin' the Voodoo Down"
'cause we set to graduate from the Bill Evans Meets Gil Evans School of Cool.
Got to reach down into "Afro-Blue"
with Mister Mongo Santamaria
got to get through what Bud Powell knew
got to meet the street in Mandingo as in mamayo guyambo
translate: I speak-spake-spoke da deep mumbo jumbo & improvisational hoo doo!

III.

Got to believe Art Tatum's version of "Willow Weep for Me"
'cause we've all seen bleak creepin' up on trees
with a new reward-&-regret ye
got a planetary trend to tend toward homicide
& your aside is to tell me they're mass producing test tube babies!
Fool: what about Screamin' Jay Hawkins and "I Put a Spell on You?"
Got good-bye lazy lusty afternoon breezes gone to sneezes
only to ask if radioactive diseases can come out in the wash!
Got good god oh-my-gosh a rash from eating greenhouse mish-mash
in Staten Island diners as in “What’ll it be, doll?”
“How ‘bout polluted skies over easy
skin scratch so head bashed
even my shaman stash can’t deliver me from!”
Got cavities from gum drops & depravity from gun shots
& lumps of snot so tubercular
they’re actually taking up space
in a parking lot they want me to pay twice for!
Now that I’m dead I got to dance to Eddie Palmieri
& Tito Puente & roots of ritmo that won’t quit me
‘cause I know what love is & I don’t just mean those flatted fifths!
So I invite, I invent, I invoke revolution
as the dancing of the brain waves
under Havana smoke stacks with Buena Vista Social Club lightning!
Got Mahalia Jackson on Black, Brown & Beige singin’ “Come Sunday”
& Mel Torme & Betty Roche wingin’ Stray’s “Take the A Train”
& four sides of A Love Supreme
playin’ in the palace of my xylophone ribcage
& if that don’t incite a change of scene
then I’ll tell you I’ve seen changes
from mean & creepy gangster-run joints
& skagged out skels gropin’ with dope
to like when in walks Jobim’s Bassa Nova “Girl from Ipanema” mulata queen
who songs me “only a poor fool/never schooled
in the whirlpool/of romance could be so cruel”
& pulls my coat to the one world Afro-Cuban-Euro-American-Brazilian music
such that the buck of the black & blues Pops stops here.

IV.

Hey gene pool human race & waiters-in-the-wings
from remotest galaxies in Outer Space to incarnate the swing of natura naturans
as in Benny Goodman & Gene Krupa’s “Sing Sing Sing”
which is one sing more than the Big House upriver
as in Ossining, as in don’t go there.
I invite, I invent, I invoke the 26 letters that sell a Better Tomorrah
‘cause I’ve got certain unmistakable urges & more than a Sodom & Gomorrah notion
to turn this great nation unfolding the karmic opportunity Napoleon set in motion
upside down inside out as in mutatis mutandis.
Got a damned-if-I-do-&-damned-if-I-don’t double-bind imperative
to categorically internalize or infernalize any hedonist’s helluva good time
so to the Rasta hummers of the heart chakra number & I-ray lovers with no-bummers
I speak-spake-spoke of “Good God, ya’ll”
& gimme James Brown on the chitlin circuit
& let Lawrence Welk work it from the back of the bus for a change!
What a shame it got misnamed jazz
‘cause it’s all about the muse helping us hear the keys
slippin’ through the chains to allow for the changes.
Call this whore house music & you miss the story of Storyville, Will.
It’s the tale of two things meetin’ & matin’ so don’t be waitin’
‘til you’re dead to dig it
‘cause the song plays on across the streets of your funeral parade
if only to help us realize
life & death are just doors in a hallway that music made
& to ensure everyone with an ax remains related I’ll call you cuz
but to elevate the great I’ll use the royal we
as in Duke Ellington Queen Ida Sun Ra & Count Bas-ie!
& if King Pleasure is any measure
then loyalty is to royalty as the truth is to the wobble
so I invite, I invent, I invoke those sub-atomic particles
you tell me only have a tendency to exist
‘cause I want to hobble & gobble with the wobbliest electron
since uranium by-gone: Charlie Yardbird Parker
& you got to know his children have pushed the immortal envelope
further out than Further Out could ever go
& before you straight-jacket my verbal tennis racket
remind me that their ratiocinated okee-dokee chillywhack tactic
goin' speak-spake-spokey on the old *reductio ad absurdum*
is but one component in an ever-expanding abra-cadabra
that "passeth our understanding om shanti shanti" & even T.S. Eliot dug that one!
Forget the fetters that bind thee
& join the Eric Dolphy-Coleman Hawkins-Stan Getz-James Moody-
Sidney Bechet-Wayne Shorter-Cannonball Adderly anarchy of the free
I say peel away the bruise of what a music-less world reduces you to:
blood, the Holy Ghost is in the drum!
I say fee-fi-fo-fum    I say one mani padme hum
I say best not to hesitate but to investigate
the pure spontaneous bop prosody that is you & yours truly
I say with Cassandra Wilson: "the blues move through/
resurrecting the old to new/ & spirits
move mountains/when you call them out!"
I say it's kooky to be this spooky
so I agree loudly & proudly with Van Morrison:
"Let go into the mystery/let yourself go/
there is no other place to be/baby this I know"
& as for other people's certainty about heaven & hell
or where we go when one end becomes another beginning
that's way too much for me to tell
so I say instead: dwell in the eternity of "When the Saints Go Marchin' In"
because dee lime, Mrs. Sublime, is in King Tut's coconut
     & the woe, Jane Doe, be deep in the dead mule bastard's rationale
     but the jewel, Ms. Otis—
even Cole Porter knew that's in the lotus.
Born and raised and currently residing in New York City, Kirpal Gordon has lived in Arizona, Mexico, the Texas Hill Country, New Orleans, the Florida Keys, and the Hudson Valley. In addition to his eleven compilations of poems, parables and fiction, he "wordsmiths" books on small business management, art and music. The founding editor of *Empire* and the *Arthur Kill Alliance*, two prison publications, he currently serves as a contributing editor for *Heaven Bone* magazine. *On Love in Sanskrit*, his 25 year collection of poetry, is forthcoming from Pegasus Press.
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