



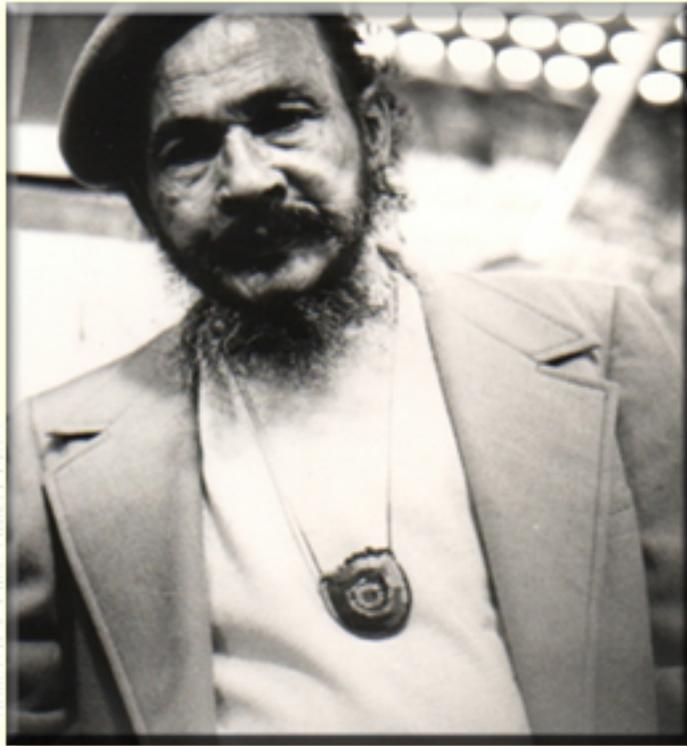
Bob Kaufman

West Coast Sounds

10 Selected poems

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Bob Kaufman, City Lights Books, 1984

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Fragment

I HAVE FOLDED MY SORROWS

I have folded my sorrows into the mantle of summer night
Assigning each brief storm its allotted space in time,
Quietly pursuing catastrophic histories buried in my eyes,
And yes, the world is not some unplayed Cosmic Game,
And the sun is still ninety-three million miles from me,
And in the imaginary forest, the shingled hippo becomes
the gay unicorn.

No, my traffic is not with addled keepers of yesterday's
disasters,

Seekers of manifest disembowelment on shafts of yesterday's
pains.

Blues come dressed like introspective echoes of a journey.
And yes, I have searched the rooms of the moon on cold
summer nights.

And yes, I have refought those unfinished encounters,
Still, they remain unfinished.

And yes, I have at times wished myself something different.

The tragedies are sung nightly at the funerals of the poet;
The revisited soul is wrapped in the aura of familiarity.

AFRICAN DREAM

In black core of night, it explodes
Silver thunder, rolling back my brain,
Bursting copper screens, memory worlds
Deep in the star-fed beds of time,
Seducing my soul in diamond fires of night,
Faint outline, a ship-momentary fright
Lifted on waves of color,
Sunk in pits of light,
Drummed back through time,
Hummed back through mind,
Drumming, cracking the night.
Strange forest songs, skin sounds
Crashing through—no longer strange.
Incestuous yellow flowers tearing
Magic from the earth.
Moon -dipped rituals, led
By a scarlet god,
Caressed by ebony maidens
With daylight eyes,
Purple garments,
Noses that twitch,
Singing young girl songs
Of an ancient love
In dark, sunless places
Where memories are sealed,
Burned in eyes of tigers.

Suddenly wise, I fight the dream;
Green screams enfold my night.

Walking Parker Home

Sweet beats of jazz impaled on slivers of wind
Kansas Black Morning/ First Horn Eyes/
Historical sound pictures on New Bird wings
People shouts/ boy alto dreams/ Tomorrow's
Gold belled pipe of stops and future Blues Times
Lurking Hawkins/ shadows of Lester/ realization
Bronze fingers—brain extensions seeking trapped sounds
Ghetto thoughts/ bandstand courage/ solo flight
Nerve-wracked suspicions of newer songs and doubts
New York altar city/ black tears/ secret disciples
Hammer horn pounding soul marks on unswinging gates
Culture gods/ mob sounds/ visions of spikes
Panic excursions to tribal Jazz wombs and transfusions
Heroin nights of birth/ and soaring/ over boppy new ground.
Smothered rage covering pyramid of notes spontaneously
 exploding
Cool revelations/ shrill hopes/ beauty speared into
 greedy ears
Birdland nights on bop mountains, windy saxophone
 revolutions
Dayrooms of junk/ and melting walls and circling vultures/
Money cancer/ remembered pain/ terror flights/
Death and indestructible existence

In that Jazz corner of life
Wrapped in a mist of sound
His legacy, our Jazz-tinted dawn
Wailing his triumphs of oddly begotten dreams
Inviting the nerveless to feel once more
That fierce dying of humans consumed
In raging fires of Love.

Afterwards, They Shall Dance

In the city of St. Francis they have taken down the statue of
St. Francis,
And the hummingbirds all fly forward to protest, humming
feather poems.

Bodenheim denounced everyone and wrote, Bodenheim had
no sweet marijuana dreams,
Patriotic muscateleer, did not die seriously, no poet love to
end with, gone.

Dylan took the stone cat's nap at St. Vincent's, vaticaned
beer, no defense;
That poem shouted from his nun-filled room, an insult to the
brain, nerves,
Save now from Swansea, white horses, beer birds, snore
poems, Wales-bird.

Billie Holiday got lost on the subway and stayed there
forever.
Raised little peace-of-mind gardens in out of the way
stations,
And will go on living in wrappers of jazz silence forever,
loved.

My face feels like a living emotional relief map, forever wet.
My hair is curling in anticipation of my own wild gardening.

Poor Edgar Allan Poe died translated, in unpressed pants,
ended in light,
Surrounded by ecstatic gold bugs, his hegira blessed
by Baudelaire's orgy.

Whether I am a poet or not, I use fifty dollars' worth
of air every day, cool.
In order to exist I hide behind stacks of red and blue poems
And open little sensuous parasols, singing the nail-in-
the-foot song, drinking cool beatitudes.

Cel estial Hobo

For every remembered dream
There are twenty nighttime lifetimes.

Under multiplied arcs of sleep
Zombie existences become Existence.

In night's warped rectangles
Stormy bathtubs of wavy sex

Come hotly drawn.
Everyday, confused in desperate poses,
Loses its hue, to Dada prodigies to black
There never was a night that ended
Or began.

Battle Report

One thousand saxophones infiltrate the city.
Each with a man inside,
Hidden in ordinary cases,
Labeled FRAGILE.

A fleet of trumpets drops their hooks,
Inside at the outside.

Ten waves of trombones approach the city
Under blue cover
Of late autumn's neo-classical clouds.

Five hundred bassmen, all string feet tall,
Beating it back to the bass.

One hundred drummers, each a stick in each hand,
The delicate rumble of pianos, moving in.

The secret agent, an innocent bystander,
Drops a note in the wail box.

Five generals, gathered in the gallery,
Blowing plans.

At last, the secret code is flashed:
Now is the time, now is the time.

Attack: The sound of jazz.

The city falls.

Bagel Shop Jazz

Shadow people, projected on coffee-shop walls
Memory formed echoes of a generation past
Beating into now.

Nightfall creatures, eating each other
Over a noisy cup of coffee.

Mulberry-eyed girls in black stockings,
Smelling vaguely of mint jelly and last night's bongo
drummer,
Making profound remarks on the shapes of navels,
Wondering how the short Sunset week
Became the long Grant Avenue night,
Love tinted, beat angels,
Doomed to see their coffee dreams
Crushed on the floors of time,
As they fling their arrow legs
To the heavens,
Losing their doubts in the beat.

Turtle-neck angel guys, black-haired dungaree guys,
Caesar-jawed, with synagogue eyes,
World travelers on the forty-one bus,
Mixing jazz with paint talk,
High rent, Bartok, classical murders,
The pot shortage and last night's bust.
Lost in a dream world,
Where time is told with a beat.

Coffee-faced Ivy Leaguers, in Cambridge jackets,
Whose personal Harvard was a fillmore district step,
Weighted down with conga drums,
The ancestral cross, the Othello-laid curse,
Talking of Bird and Diz and Miles,
The secret terrible hurts,
Wrapped in cool hipster smiles,
Telling themselves, under the talk,
This shot must be the end,
Hoping the beat is really the truth.

The guilty police arrive.

Brief, beautiful shadows, burned on walls of night.

Unhol y Missions

I want to be buried in an anonymous crater inside the moon.

I want to build miniature golf courses on all the stars.

I want to prove that Atlantis was a summer resort for cave men.

I want to prove that Los Angeles is a practical joke played on us by superior beings on a humorous planet.

I want to expose Heaven as an exclusive sanitarium filled with rich psychopaths who think they can fly.

I want to show that the Bible was serialized in a Roman children's magazine.

I want to prove that the sun was born when God fell asleep with a lit cigarette, tired after a hard night of judging.

I want to prove once and for all that I am not crazy.

West Coast Sounds – 1956

San Fran, hipster land,
Jazz sounds, wig sounds,
Earthquake sounds, others,
Allen on Chestnut Street,
Giving poetry to squares,
Corso on knees, pleading,
God eyes.
Rexroth, Ferlinghetti,
Swinging, in cellars,
Kerouac at Locke's,
Writing Neil
On high typewriter,
Neil, booting a choo-choo,
On zigzag tracks.
Now, many cats
Falling in,
New York cats,
Monterey scene cooler,
San Franers, falling down.
Canneries closing.
Sardines splitting
For Mexico.
Me too.

Fragment

. . . All those dead movie stars, peanut-buttered forever,
Do they kiss famous horses on the nose?
Do they see all of the latest horror movies?
How do they like the exclusive tombs, renaissance
 mailboxes,
With Bela Lugosi moving around down there
In his capeman Agron suit, sleepless walker,
With his arms full of morphine, his eyes suggesting
Frozen seesaws in cold playgrounds of yesterday.
What came first? The chicken or the spike?
What came last? The needle or the haystack?
That scream was a rumor and remained unscreamed,
Unnoted among narcotic breakfasts and raving love fiends,
Sexy rides on Gothic streetcars and Buddha lost
 in a phone booth,
Cold talking wind-people, three-dimensional valentines,
Torn from magic tenements in the long Decembers of today.
Easter-faced skylarks, low-flying Mexican birds,
The oracle of the crickets ticking off jazz *Te Deums*,
Our Lady of Nicotine, madonna without child,
Releases her pale balloon, snatched from the folding year,
All the daring young headhunters, traumatic in inflammatory
 bathing suits,
Shriek grim fairy tales, while convenient needles fall
 out of haystacks.
Charlie Parker was a great electrician who went around
 wiring people.

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