

IN TRANE, IN THE GROOVE

1.

I settle in the groove
of your soprano again;
easily, from habit.
“My Favorite Things”
& “Everytime We Say Goodbye”
comes from the box
& slows my pulse.
Things flash before me,
favorite things,
a hip history of good times.

Unwilling & unable
to move out of this groove,
I sit frozen, hypnotized,
wide open to your horn.
Wrapped in this jazz,
I go back to the block,
the Village,
to the way-out shit
we said & felt & did,
the good times we made
with our spirit & fury.

2.

The days & times we had—
our fights & loves & stolen fruit;
green peaches & belly aches;
Grand Dad & Ripple, cock & konks,
gigs & games & our sweet names:
Scooby & Shug, Punkin & Sparky,
Fritz & Wako, Dip & Bobo, Bae-bae
& Spoon, Tap & Giz, Duck & Doc,
Buggy & June Bug, Lish & Poo-poo,
Jojo & Lep, Mack & Bro, Dit-dit
& Cool, Cat Fish & Dizzy, Newt

& Cowboy, Fatso & Worm,
No-man & Pencil-man, Stewda-man
& Rabbit-man, Blue & Capone.
We were the boys, the brothers,
schemin' on the bitches, bustin'
pop bottles under street lamps;
midnight harmony & fast feet—
each of us Sam Cooke,
each of us James Brown,
all of us The Miracles & The Contours,
The Impressions & The Olympics.

Bad Man Brown & Big Boy Pete
throwin' blows on the corner again;
Staggolee & Billy gamblin'
in the dark; winos
up at the front
puking on their shadows
in front of The Rendezvous;
Hong Kong, Russian & Bullet;
sweet old brothers, sweet old wine.

People & places, the names
& the faces all easing
through my mind,
all moving with me, warm
in this groove—
Blow, Trane, blow!

3.

I turn to the music
& try to pay attention
but can't. Thinking it unheard,
missed or gone by me,
I play the side over
& over again;
a jive attempt to really listen;
you blow a few bars out
& send me off again,
back to the colors of those days;

wind & trees & sidewalk broken glass,
the summers & the snow cone truck,
the ice cream men & ice cream women,
the turf & the wars,
cool & uncool, the Esquires
& the Milk Mans in their
white coveralls & gassed heads,
bad & scared, cool & supercool,
spitting through their teeth
& sucking on tooth picks,
clowning & signifyin' in the dark:

“Suck out my nostrils, chump.”

“Suck out Yamma’s, suckaaaah.”

“Who’s Yamma, chump?”

“Yamma’s yo mamma, suckaaaah.”

4.

I slip & slide, trip & glide
back to the days
when we were closer to the ground,
screaming at dog fights,
girl fights, meditating
on a dead cat behind First Baptist,
the maggots in the ribs
& eye sockets teaching us
the way of death
through our sharp eyes
& willing noses.

Grasshoppers & bees
teased us then & gave us sport;
we hunted & killed them
& threw their bodies
up into the wind; we pissed
on fences, old tires, trees
& hot ash cans, giggling
at the stink.
We won trophies & races & games,
& lost marbles, grandparents,

eyes & limbs—Earl's right arm,
Sherman & Lavaughn an eye apiece.

5.

Blow, Trane! Blow that breeze
through my knee-patched jeans
& my talking tennis shoes.

Blow that wind & rain
over me & the boys,
it feels good.

Blow me away for secretly
locking Sam's dog, Frankie,
in the garage & peein'

all over him
to pay him back
for leaning against my leg

& peein' all over
my new Buster Browns
while I snoozed in the sun—

Blow, Trane!
Gone on melody, lost in jazz,
I go back & back & back

to & through those days
& spin in their sweetness.
Go 'head, Trane!

"My Favorite Things"
f'days—dig it!
Trippin' back in Trane.

The music is the groove:
I do it & feel it
& play it all over again.

*for Willie, one of
the boys*