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# Arabic Music and Burroughs's The Ticket That Exploded

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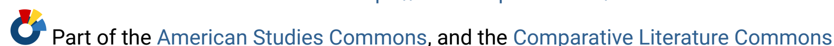
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**David Holzer,**
**"Arabic Music and Burroughs's *The Ticket That Exploded*"**
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**Abstract**: In his article "Arabic Music and Burroughs's *The Ticket That Exploded*" David Holzer discusses how the experience of hearing Arabic music in Tangier and being exposed to the healing music of the Master Musicians of Joujouka, a remote village in the foothills of the Ahl Srif mountain range in Northern Morocco, significantly influenced both the writing of William Burroughs and his multi-media experiments. This essay considers what Arabic music and specifically that of Joujouka meant to Burroughs, with particular reference to *The Ticket That Exploded* (1962). Drawing on *The Ticket*, Burroughs's letters, critical studies and biographical material, it demonstrates that his understanding of what the music was and did was fundamental to his creative mission.

**David M. HOLZER**

## Arabic Music and Burroughs's *The Ticket That Exploded*

In this study I discuss the influence of Arabic music, particularly that of the Master Musicians of Joujouka, on William Burroughs's *The Ticket That Exploded* (1962, revised 1967). Joujouka is a village in the foothills of the Ahl Srif mountain range in northern Morocco roughly two hours' drive from Tangier. The Master Musicians use pipes, drums and stringed instruments to create music that that has been passed down from generation to generation for centuries. It is believed to heal people possessed by djinn, the supernatural creatures that are part of Islamic mythology and theology. Burroughs first heard the music of Joujouka in 1957 at the 1001 Nights restaurant in Tangier owned by the painter and writer Brion Gysin. From late 1958 onwards, when Gysin and Burroughs became friends and collaborators at the Beat Hotel in Paris, Burroughs listened to recordings of the music. His first documented visit to Joujouka was in 1963. When Burroughs arrived in Tangier in 1954, he was desperately searching for a way forward with his writing. Tangier became a "sanctuary of noninterference" (*Interzone* 69) that offered him the freedom to progress toward "complete lack of caution and restraint" in both his life and work (*Letters* 294). He writes: "The fragmentary quality of my work is *inherent* in the method and will resolve itself so far as necessary. Tanger novel will be Lee's impressions of Tanger, discarding novelist pretext of dealing directly with his characters and situations. *I include the author in the novel*" (251; emphasis in the original). What Burroughs wrote in the city, the routines he offered up to Allen Ginsberg in his letters and the material that would become *Naked Lunch* (1959) superseded anything he had written before. Hearing Arabic music in Tangier was a major part of this creative breakthrough.

Burroughs's first significant use of Arabic music comes in a Feb. 7, 1955 letter to Ginsberg when he rehearsed "The Talking Asshole" routine that would end up in *Naked Lunch*. After describing the fate of a "novelty ventriloquist" who taught his asshole to talk, with the end result that asshole and brain became disconnected and died, Burroughs moves on to the "Arab boy who could play the flute with his ass" (*Letters* 260, 261). The boy is described in a way that is surprisingly tender: "He could play a tune up and down the organ, hitting the most erogenously [sic] sensitive spots, which are different on everyone, of course. Every lover had his special theme song which was perfect for him and rose to his climax. The boy was a great artist when it came to improvising new combines and special climaxes some of them notes in the unknown, tie-ups of seeming discords that would suddenly break through each other and crash together with a stunning, hot sweet impact" (261-62). In *William Burroughs and the Secret of Fascination* (2003), Oliver Harris writes of the Arab boy: "The child-artist doesn't exploit his own anal, erotic, and artistic talents for anonymous popular entertainment but gives playful, uninhibited pleasure for money. Using his ass to make music, the boy's greatness as an artist is defined by his ability to improvise" (237). Surprisingly, then, Burroughs's references to the erotic possibilities of Arabic music in "Lee's Journals," draft *Naked Lunch* material later collected in *Interzone* (1989), are not wholly enthusiastic: inspired by hearing "some Arabs singing in the next house," he describes the sound in terms of "colonic undulations," leading to "an orgasm produced mechanically without emotion, a twanging on the nerves, a beating on the viscera" (75). And yet, Burroughs also clearly saw something in the music he could use: "A novel that consists of the facts as I see and feel them. How can it have a beginning or an end? It just runs along for a while, and then stops, like Arab music" (73). This description of the music, as Burroughs understood it, can be applied to *Naked Lunch* and *The Ticket That Exploded*.

When Burroughs first encountered the music of Joujouka at Brion Gysin's 1001 Nights restaurant in the Marshan district of Tangier, he wrote an account in "Lee's Journals," describing how he watched a boy of "about fourteen" with the face of an old child, doll-like with a monkey's acquisitiveness" who "twitches his hips not only sideways but up and over in a peculiar, double-jointed movement" (*Interzone* 75). Although Burroughs makes no mention of the actual music played by a "three-man combo," he pays attention to and gives an accurate description of the movements of the boys who dance with the Master Musicians of Joujouka. In Paris in October 1958, Burroughs remet Gysin and suddenly found they had much in common. He invited Gysin to move into the Beat Hotel where an intense, collaborative relationship began. The most significant outcome was, of course, the cut-up method. In October 1959, Gysin was in Room 25 of the Beat Hotel "cutting mounts for some drawings, slicing through the mat boards with his Stanley knife and simultaneously slicing through the pile of old copies of the *New York Herald Tribune* he was using to protect the table" (Miles, *Call Me Burroughs* 362). When Burroughs saw the results, he immediately grasped the potential of this "project for disastrous success" (qtd. in Miles 363). But why did Burroughs seize on what was for Gysin, the former Surrealist, simply an amusing accident?

Despite the breakthrough in Tangier that enabled Burroughs to produce the material collected in the *Naked Lunch*, he was still not satisfied. Around the time he bumped into Gysin in Paris, Burroughs writes to Ginsberg: "Unless I can reach a point where my writing has the danger and immediate urgency of bullfighting it is nowhere, and I must look for another way" (*Letters* 398). Both Oliver Harris and Joanna Harrop in an unpublished thesis, have argued that what Burroughs was searching for was a method that replicated the experience he had when he took yagé. Yagé, aka ayahuasca ("vine of the soul") is an Amazonian jungle vine. The bark is made into a tea that, combined with chacruna or chagropanga, which contain the psychedelic DMT, induces altered states of consciousness. Burroughs's first novel, *Junky* (1953), ends with the line, "Yage may be the final fix" (128). Burroughs was obsessed with finding the drug "rumoured to have visionary healing powers" (Harris, Introduction, *Yage* xiv). As he writes to Ginsberg in 1952, "it seems a sort of final attempt to 'change fact'" (*Letters* 127). When Burroughs drank yagé tea, he claimed it showed him "a new state of being," and concluded: "I must give up the attempt to explain, to seek any answer in terms of cause and effect and prediction, leave behind the entire structure of pragmatic, result seeking, use seeking, question asking Western thought. I must change my whole method of conceiving fact" (qtd. in Harris, Introduction, *Yage* xxiii). Burroughs saw yagé as "space time travel," and this became both his definition of writing and the effect he wanted to produce for his reader: to induce non-chemical alterations in consciousness (xxiv). He took a giant leap forward with the intense creative relationship with Gysin that formed "The Third Mind" and his exposure to the avant-garde experimentation with combining different media taking place in Paris. But Burroughs had already begun attempting to reproduce the effects of taking yagé when he was in Tangier and writing what would become *Naked Lunch*. Music was a fundamental part of the process, as is clear from the "Composite City" vision inspired by yagé in 1953 and carried over from *The Yage Letters* (1963) to *Naked Lunch*: "The cooking smells of all countries hang over the city, a haze of opium, hasheesh, and the resinous red smoke of cooking Yage, smell of the jungle and salt water and the rotting river and dried excrement and sweat and genitals. High mountain flutes and jazz and bebop and one-stringed Mongol instruments and Gypsy xylophones, and Arabian bagpipes" (*Yage* 51-52; *Naked Lunch* 90). But, although he wrote in *Naked Lunch* "This book spill off the page in all directions, kaleidoscope of vistas, medley of tunes and street noises" (*Naked Lunch* 191), Burroughs was still frustrated by the limitations of the word *on* the page.

When we are considering what music and sound meant to Burroughs, we should remember his connection to Ginsberg and, more broadly, Jack Kerouac, also experimenting with words, sound and performance, and indeed his place within "hip" culture. Hip culture was primarily concerned with sound because: "For the intellectuals of postwar hip culture, sound itself was a medium for the energetic process of life itself, a stencil from the real. By getting in touch with the sounds of things, the writer could achieve a new kind of literary communication and make literature responsive to life in the concrete—life as it is lived by actual people at particular times and places … A commitment to sounded immediacies meant commitment to living a certain way of life and being a certain kind of person. By the same token, it meant resisting an abstraction of human experience and personality that lay at the root of a calamitous modernity" (Ford, *Dig* 7). Burroughs may have had personal reasons for wanting to write books that "spill off the page" but he was not alone. We must also bear in mind the purpose of the music that Gysin played obsessively at the Beat Hotel night and day. The music of Joujouka is a special kind of Arabic music that "does" something. It's not meant to be easy listening. Gysin first heard the Music of the Master Musicians of Joujouka at the "midsummer moussem of Sidi Kacem, in a sacred grove on the Atlantic coast a few miles south of Tangier" (Weiss, *Back in No Time* 279). He was subsequently taken to Joujouka by Gysin's friend Hamri, a Moroccan sometime smuggler whose mother was from the village. Hamri was to become Gysin's connection to the Master Musicians. In a piece for poet, photographer and publisher Ira Cohen's journal *Gnaoua*, first published in 1964 and reprinted as the liner notes for the 1971 album *Brian Jones Presents the Pipes of Pan*, Gysin writes: "Magic calls itself the other method for controlling matter and knowing space. In Morocco, magic is practiced more assiduously than hygiene, though, indeed, ecstatic dancing to music of the brotherhood may be called a form of psychic hygiene. You know your own music when you hear it one day. You fall into line and dance until you pay the piper. My own music turned out to be the wild flutes of the hill tribe Ahl Serif" (Gysin, qtd. in *Back in No Time* 122). For Gysin, there was no question that the music played by the Master Musicians was Pan music. Pan is commonly shown playing the flute, like Burroughs's "Arab boy who could play the flute with his ass." Also, Pan is associated with misrule, which corresponds with Burroughs's use of the Arab boy to symbolise the improvisatory creative freedom he sought. As Burroughs and Gysin began to meld and form their Third Mind, the Pan connection must have struck them profoundly.

But what, specifically, is the music of Joujouka intended to do? The Master Musicians claim it is music with a healing "Baraka" or spirit. The Baraka was given to them by the wandering Sufi saint Sidi Hamid

Sherq, whose tomb is in the village. Joujouka musical tradition is "derived from a bond that formed between him and the Attars in which secrets exchanged. In return for teaching him their old music, Sidi Hamid Sherq taught them metaphysical techniques of spiritual healing" (Davis, *Jajouka* 52). Here, healing means removing the djinn or the supernatural creature from a person possessed. The music heals by sending listeners into a trance, an altered state of consciousness. Trance is achieved through effects like the use of rhythms that, as musicologist Andy McGuiness puts it, "seem to involve hemiola—subdivisions of the beat grouped differently at different times—that speed up over the course of a few minutes and spatial disorientation caused by 'false cues' to the brain mechanism that determines the direction of sound" (private email to the author). Once in that altered state of consciousness, it is possible to drive out the djinn. Gysin may not have been aware of how Joujouka music worked technically but he would have known its purpose. This, then, is the context for Burroughs's use of Arabic music in *The Ticket That Exploded*. Ever since he had taken yagé he had been looking for a way of writing that would replicate the experience of "space time travel." In Tangier he had heard Arabic music which, to him, seemed to neither begin nor end and this suggested the possibility of a novel that "just runs along for a while, and then stops." With the Arab boy, first introduced as part of "The Talking Asshole" routine, he associated Arabic music with a certain kind of improvisatory ability he felt was purer than western, anonymous popular music. Gysin had given him the cut-up method, liberating him from the conventional writing forms he felt incapable of working within. Simultaneously, the cut-up method offered the opportunity to induce the sensation of "space time travel" in himself and his readers and so recreate the alteration of consciousness brought on by yagé. As Harrop points out, Gysin also bought to Burroughs the notion of "writing as a practice, as imagery, and as action … used for its magical capacity to influence and alter the state of things, to make something happen" (Harrop, *Yage* 174). Writing magically, to change reality, was to become more and more important for Burroughs. Collaborating with Gysin had also begun to open him up to the influence of another mind than his own, inevitably altering his consciousness and practice. Lastly, at the Beat Hotel, he was "in an environment of experimental practice that opened up to Burroughs the possibility of working in other mediums, enabling him to review his practice as defined not by the activity of writing but by experimentation" (Harrop 162). Everything was in place for Burroughs to make use of the music within his expanding sense of what creative work could be.

Burroughs began work on *The Ticket That Exploded* at the Hotel Muniria in Tangier in March 1962. As he told Alan Ansen that summer, he "wrote at the rate of ten pages a day while writing a film scenario with the other hands, making recordings" (Burroughs qtd. in Harris, Introduction, *Ticket* xxxv). It was finished at the Beat Hotel in November 1962 and first published in December of that year. To understand how Burroughs used Arabic music and the music of Joujouka in *The Ticket* we should first establish why music is so important to the novel. As Oliver Harris says in his introduction to the revised edition, "*The Ticket* is by far the most musically-minded of all Burroughs' books, referencing the Beatles and the Rolling Stones and mixing fantasies of drum-plying Sex Musicians with a World Music sound-track that ranges from Moroccan flutes to the call of the Irish bagpipes" (xi). In 1962, thanks to radio and television, there was more popular music in the air than ever before and it was poised to be the soundtrack of the culture and counterculture to come. Radio and television needed to be filled with content to entice consumers, especially newly cash-rich teens, to where they would hear and see the advertising that paid for the media to operate. Pop music was the perfect narcotic. Burroughs's suggestion that, as Harris puts it, "love lyrics communicate love sickness" and that "the essential human activities of communication and love *are* both a sickness" (xii; emphasis in original) is a response to the fact that pop, at its most asinine for him, had become ubiquitous and, for this reason, a more effective way of spreading the word virus than the written word. Burroughs was also in the company of Ian Sommerville and Mikey Portman, who were the perfect age to be pop music fans, as was his son Billy.

*The Ticket* builds on a connection that Burroughs had already made in *Naked Lunch*. Early on, in the "and start west' section, Burroughs writes: "I know this one pusher walks around humming a tune and everybody he passes takes it up. He is so grey and spectral and anonymous they don't see him and think it is their own mind humming the tune" (6). As Harris comments, "A drug in itself, the music of love is used to sell other drugs, and this nexus of addiction, contagion, subliminal advertising and brainwashing through popular culture is captured in the seemingly mundane act of humming a tune" (Introduction, *Ticket* xxiii). (The relationship of music to sex is not so simple. In *The Ticket* "The Sex Musicians drift through streets of music trailing melodious propositions" [89]. We must not forget that the creative power of the Arab boy is allied to his sexuality not to love.) The starting point of *The Ticket*, then, is that popular music is a highly potent carrier of words in the form of lyrics devoted to love, usually unrequited or lost. Love, in pop music, is almost invariably allied to yearning or desire unfulfilled. Desire

sells, fuelling the western mass culture that serves capitalism. This is why, as Burroughs told an interviewer in 1965, he was "concerned with the precise manipulation of word and image to create an action, not to go out and buy a Coca-Cola, but to create an alteration in the reader's consciousness" (in Lotringer 81). Burroughs's use of the music of Joujouka functions within this context, not simply in opposition to it. It triggers "an alteration in the reader's consciousness" but one which liberates rather than enslaves, achieving a "precise manipulation" over time while disrupting temporality.

In his introduction to *The Ticket*, Harris observes that Burroughs had to write novel length books to produce the experience he was after, described as "a unique and beautifully disorienting sensation" (xli). Writing to a certain length for effect aligns Burroughs's cut-up books with his experience of hearing Arabic music on the radio, or indeed the recordings played by Gysin, being unable to follow it and having no idea how it would end. This sensation is familiar to anyone who experiences the music of Joujouka performed for the first time. The music ends when the leader feels its job of healing is done but the casual listener isn't to know that. Burroughs may have been limited by material considerations, but *The Ticket* ends as and when he decides it is meant to. A further key strategy for producing a "beautifully disorienting sensation" within the experience of reading is synesthesia. Burroughs's use of synesthesia in *The Ticket* is fundamental to the effect he was attempting to create. Synesthesia refers to the experience of the senses becoming blended so that synesthetes, for instance, hear colors or feel sounds at the same time. It is a common side-effect of taking yagé and, as Harrop points out, "the association of letters of the alphabet with particular colours is the most common form" (Harrop 193). Although Burroughs couldn't write in color in his printed novels, he was constantly suggesting synesthesia, attempting to release the "color … trapped in word" (*Ticket* 164-65). *The Ticket* is filled with examples of synesthesia, with characters "talking in color blasts" and smelling "odors and whiffs of music" (100, 108). This disrupts the way reading happens but is also highly evocative in a more conventional sense. Blue, to give the most emphatic example from the text, has a host of potential meanings. It implies the blue note of jazz and the blues derived from the African music which is an element of Moroccan music and expressive of a certain kind of longing and sadness, as well as the associations of the color itself: cold, or perhaps more appropriately *cool*. So, the phrase "blue notes of Pan" (29, 35) conjures up African music, jazz, blues and cool in the literal and hip sense. For readers familiar with Gysin's writing on Joujouka, it also evokes the little Djebala hills in which the village sits that appear blue at sunset, as well as the blue haze of kif smoke. Most of all, it refers to the music of Joujouka itself as Burroughs understood it.

Although Burroughs refers again and again to the "blue notes of Pan" originating in "a remote mountain village" (*Ticket* 29, 34, 35, 36), Joujouka is not itself named in *The Ticket*. How, then, do we actually know Burroughs is referring to the village and its music? Gysin didn't publish any writing on Joujouka until 1964, two years after *The Ticket* appeared, which makes it impossible to identify a letter or text that proves conclusively what Burroughs saw. Gysin does, however, describe "the wild flutes of the hill tribe Ahl Serif," "Pan … dancing in the Moroccan hills," "his hill village Jajouka" and "Bou Jeloud … He is wild. He is mad. Sowing panic" (Weiss 123). These references clearly relate to Burroughs's descriptions in *The Ticket*. The possible answers are that Gysin described Joujouka to Burroughs verbally, that Burroughs saw something Gysin wrote that has never been published or, more intriguingly, that Burroughs actually visited Joujouka before he began assembling *The Ticket* in 1962. Whatever the real story, Burroughs is thoroughly consistent in how he uses Joujouka music in the book. When the music of Joujouka first appears in *The Ticket* it is associated with the childhood of Bradly and enables him to escape from the "prison with transparent walls" after he slips into a "forgotten nightmare of his childhood—a large black poodle was standing by his bed—The dog dissolved in smoke and out of the smoke arose a dummy being five feet tall—The dummy had a thin delicate face of green wax and long yellow fingernails" (27). This is "Poo-Poo" and he has come to warn Bradly. When Poo-Poo fades out he leaves a "little bamboo flute on the bed" (28), a combination of images that recalls "The Talking Asshole." Pipes, referred to by both Gysin and Burroughs as flutes, are also prominent in the music of Joujouka. Armed with the flute, Bradly leads the attack against the Garden of Delights (GOD) ("waiting with orgasm death") where he has been imprisoned, presumably by the Logos (word) group and, "Towers and ovens went up in a nitrous blast of burning film—A great rent tore the whole structure of the garden to the blue sky beyond—He put the flute to his lips and blue notes of Pan trickled down from the remote mountain village of his childhood—The prisoners heard the pipes and streamed out of the garden" (29). Here, Bradly is explicitly associated with Joujouka. It's where he spent his childhood and the music of the village is an enormously powerful liberating force, aligned with the natural power of Pan. Later, Bradly is "Standing on a Moroccan hillside with his troops and around them the Pan pipes calm and impersonal as the blue sky … He moved away on Pan pipes to the remote mountain village of his childhood where blue mist swirled through the streets and time stopped in the slate houses—Words fell from his mind" (34). Further

on, in order to underline the power of the music, Burroughs writes: "The whole structure of reality went up in silent explosions under the whining sirens—Pipers from his remote mountain village loosed Pan God of Panic through streets of image" (35).

In *The Ticket*, the flute is always associated with some form of liberation. For instance, "In bath cubicles of a rotting pier over tide flats a boy played the jade flute while Bradly screwed him following the notes out of his body into birdcalls lapping water and distant music in the trade winds" (89). Here, Burroughs's lyricism again recalls his description of the Arab boy in "The Talking Asshole." In the final section of *The Ticket*, Burroughs appears to suggest he is the one playing the flute, that he is himself the piper: "Remember i was the ship gives no memory pictures…played the flute of Ali – played in the flute in Kiki" (226). Since Ali and Kiki were the names of his Tangier boyfriends, the personal and erotic associations are fused with the aesthetic. This sense of the flute offering freedom from enslavement to western pop music, a single sensory or aesthetic modality and ultimately control is consistent with its place in the healing practice of Joujouka.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to attempt to define what the healing aspect of the music of Joujouka meant to Burroughs when he was writing *The Ticket*. But in the "showed you your air" section he invokes a crucial context when writing that "Controllers of word and music monopolized and froze the earth—kept the Djoun forces in film," and "Put in your own sound track faces—bulletins free the Djoun forces" (200). "Djoun" obviously recalls "djinn" or "jinn," the magical beings that are a fundamental part of Islamic theology. "Djoun" is close enough to "Djinn" to suggest that this is what Burroughs is referring to. Given that this is the case, we can perhaps assume he is also referring to the connection between the music of Joujouka and its healing power, to release the Djinn that cause spirit possession. Equally, if we accept that words are the means by which we are controlled and possessed, it can be argued that Burroughs is attempting to heal his readers. He is alerting the reader to the dangers of blithely surrendering to the seduction of words, especially in the form of song lyrics. But Burroughs was also experimenting with creating an effect that takes the reader into a different state. This observation, from his description of "Fold-ins" in *The Third Mind*, can be applied to *The Ticket* and the repetition of key phrases throughout the text: "When the reader reads page ten he is flashing forward in time to page one hundred and back in time to page one—the déjà vu phenomenon can so be produced to order—This method is of course used in music, where we are continually moved backward and forward on the time track by repetition and rearrangements of musical themes" (95-96). Throughout *The Ticket*, Burroughs reintroduces variations on the phrase "Blue notes of Pan" that tug the reader's attention back to earlier in the book, breaking into the experience of reading as a linear progression and indeed creating the "déjà vu phenomenon." For example, references to "Pan God of Panic Piping blue notes through empty streets" (34), "Pipers from his remote mountain village loosed Pan God of panic through streets of image" (35), "Blue notes of Pan trickled down silver train whistles" (35) and "Pipes of Pan trickled down sleeping comrade of his childhood—pure blue jabs" (35) are echoed later on in the book: "Close-ups wrote the ticket to yellow and blue dawn trailing Pan Pipes" (83), "Reverse all your gimmicks—your heavy blue metal fix out in blue sky—your blue mist swirling through all the streets of image to Pan Pipes" (152) and "The image fell out through the glass screen and spread Pan God of Panic piping blue notes loud and clear" (207). In his introduction, Oliver Harris points out that Burroughs's additions to the text for the 1967 edition use what he calls "two-dot ellipses" and not the em dashes of the first edition (xliv). This distinction indicates that all Burroughs's references to Pan, blue notes and panic were there from the start.

In summer 1963, Burroughs visited the village of Joujouka and heard the music performed live for the first time. Of the experience, he simply writes that it "was great" (*Rub out the Words* 125). Later, he would go into more detail. In 1973, when he went back to Joujouka, he writes "the music that emerged as the session developed was a palpable force felt by everyone present. Magnetic spirals spun through the room like clusters of electronic bees that meet and explode in air releasing the divine perfume, a musty purple smell of ozone and spice and raw goatskins, a perfume you can hear smell and see" (*Oui* 94). The phrase "Magnetic spirals" in *The Ticket* (29) also appeared in the 1962 edition of the text; it was not added after Burroughs's supposed first visit in 1963, which suggests that Burroughs came to Joujouka and its music with certain ideas already formed by Gysin's influence. With *The Ticket That Exploded* Burroughs acknowledged the liberating power of music made outside the mindlessly consumerist "Garden of Delights" of Western popular culture. He anticipated the pilgrimages to places like Joujouka taking place today by aficionados looking for music that feels more authentic than that of the west. His teeming gangs of blue boys, green boys and fish boys resemble the tens of thousands of teenagers who heard freedom in music, joined rock and roll bands and made the pop and rock that fuelled the cultural changes of the 1960s and beyond, even if the control machine remains undented. Viewed in relation to his other work, *The Ticket* expands on the distinction in *Naked Lunch* between the

talking asshole and the Arab boy that was so profound for Burroughs; between art made for money and that which is pure and improvised, but also between west and east. He uses music as a way to disrupt writing, in line with his yagé experience and experiments with Gysin—whose calligraphs "wrote back into the brain metal patterns of silence and space" (*Ticket* 71)—to make reading active. While it may be going too far to say that Burroughs was trying to heal his readers in the way that the Master Musicians of Joujouka believe they do, he was engaged in a struggle to free us from the word virus sickness and from control; "arab drum music in the suburban air" (137) was one of the devices he used.

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