

it seems as if i always  
knew the word  
even before it knew me  
tho who kept the better secret  
is hard to tell  
after so many years.  
but there was a time  
before it began and after  
it had finished  
riding down st charles avenue  
thru posters of history  
and tea-cups of manners  
in the back seat of the first  
car i remember us having  
that maroon mercury built  
like a tuba  
and me not even knowing then  
that its color and its name  
were inconsistent parentheses  
on our own human condition  
when i saw for the first time  
the billboard  
for RITZ crackers  
and i learned to say and spell  
it in one swell flap of  
tripsy mouthing  
testing knowledge like a  
musical instrument  
ritz all the way home  
ritz ritz ritz  
at bedtime  
ritz by day and ritz by night  
and ritz by the harvest moon  
oh yeah  
gimme an are and an i and a  
tea tea zeayeay  
cheerleading  
myself  
that moment and for all time  
to becoming  
both  
a poet  
and 30 pounds  
overweight

-- marcus j. grapes

Los Angeles CA