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Recommended Citation
Available at: https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.4628

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Nathaniel Mackey

SONG OF THE ANDOUMBOLOU: 33

So bumpy a ride it was
we soon wanted out. We
were in Bahrain. “Marr

walaal
salaam,” we heard. “They
went by but didn’t
say salaam,” someone
said it meant, jook

song
sung to oud accompaniment,
what they the singer chided
chided him back . . .
Parsed out a retort, part
praise, part taunt, a
beginner again. “‘Larger
what’s
lost to you,’ they said,”
he sang.

“Yesterday I stayed awake.”
What-said meeting, met with
one who spoke of wisdom
as a hit, heft having much to
do with it, hers whom he
called
Anuncia, earlier having
called her N’ahtt . . .

A cross
adorned her chest he’d been
told. Envied it its address
of her cleavage, cleft he’d
have pressed his face to
been able, rapt, irreligious, had he
no jihad . . .
The we they'd have been, dreamt

remnant it became, what
we saw was all hearsay it seemed. Theirs the eventual
audience's, not only his, hers . . .

Audible wish to be seen. Taken
eye turned on itself . . .

"Answered in kind, sighs alone would have

cracked our ribs," he heard her
whisper, words he'd have whispered in turn had his
tongue not stuck . . .

Their's

the cast-out, eventual

crux, cornerstone. Stood

as again she went by

without speaking,
sang,

"Went by without speaking,"

out

of reach

.

Only what of it he could
put into words could he
rescind. Is remained is,
implacable. Tree was
what its
name would be, only were
wood water, he her self-described
apostle, hand cupping an abstract breast, wanting the world . . .

Ran to no end but to’ve drifted somewhere distant,
  horse whose being ridden rode them both . . . Bedded down
  in a burnt-out house,
    wicks lit to Ogun. Each a cracked egg, coaxed air, low-pitched
    ignition, hit by their below-the-belt abruptness,
      won by their below-the-waist allure . . . Said of that world,
        about to leave it, so much less than we’d been led to expect.
To’ve thought at all, thought of it as legged, what where there was reached only
  in thought, what reach remonstrant, strode as though lit within amber,
    andoumboulouous legs, fossilized light . . .
So that the dreamthing we heard spoke thru more than one mouth.

The Soon-Come Congress of Souls was now in session. Hafez blew a chicken-bone clarinet he’d brought back from Iran . . . Dreamt writ calibrated our eclipse,
what-said we. It was an out
sound we echoed, broken branch
we
reckoned by

*  

Stra Hajj the path we took, roust
what got us there. We who were the
we they'd have been, dreamt
concupiscence, the Soon-Come Congress
no sooner there than
gone . . .
Parts pulled apart, wandered,
Stral Palace the place they knew
next . . . An asthmatic wind infused
what floor lay under them.
Nay
was what their name would be,
Zra's
raw-throated flute . . . Words
don't go there, they said,
no sooner said than they were
there, albeit there defied location . . .
City they'd been told they'd someday
get to,
eventual city known as By-and-By . . .
That there was a war going
on they'd forgotten,
“Blues
for the Fallen” on the box
notwithstanding, rapt,
remnant
heat the one flame
they saw
Another he, no longer the same though related. She, of whom the same could be said . . .

An asthmatic wind underneath it all, Hoarse Chorus, they who were the would-be we she projected, hand so abruptly out from under her dress, her sniffed finger's lewd report . . .

Lifted a finger she'd stroked herself with up to just above his upper lip, whispered, "Smell it," that this would come back to him again and again come back to him, more than he could make any sense of, abrupt move the abrasive nay so insisted on, seemed it so insisted on, only, even so
And so told us how far it was
though we thought it,

return
to Stra Palace, Jah Hajj.

Madame

Zzaj the name she now took
to be done with naming,

names

no longer slide might such be
so . . .

A sudden rain, so we ducked
under leaves. Wood became shed,

meaning

Tree. Trunk, unembraceable,

beckoned,

wide girth we'd have given the
world to've been one with, run

with, roots

above ground
Stra Hajj was behind us now.
It seemed it was a train we
were on, church we were
in,
stuck voices all but
tugged us down . . .
Plucked strings made the
floorboards buckle, tenuous
hold on
what we had more tenuous.

Hoarse

Chorus the congress of souls
we exacted, soul serenade,
what-said

surmount . . .

So that the he

we heard sing stayed
with us, haunted
us, allowed us to move
like music,

but in

boxcars, hobos it

seemed