

BLACKBERRY JUICE

from

BLUES BONES

David Patrick Bickham

Salt-Works Press

BLACKBERRY JUICE FROM BLUES BONES

To my loved ones and friends

at Tougaloo College and home

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THREE STANZAS TO JAZZ POEM

I

Magnolia sprigs sassafras azalea color-heads
come out of greenness as Mahalia Jackson
sings
Satchmo. thelonious Monk. Holliday.
she died lord
as voices cried for her like spirituals
from ativistic lillies as trumpets:
play blues hymns jazz reggae beethoven
 bebop
 bop
 bop...

II

Pardon me, hail Mary! hail Mary!
praise allah! Praise god! kiss Ma-ha-li-ah's body
for last time she's dead
the gospel sound came and
voices from azaleas (brother Prophet Moses)
to needles of Mississippi pines tops
pointed high and fused with the wind, crazy
blues in a wind and in a sorrow.

III

Let my people go made
Makes jazz(music)
 bamboo flute
 whistle
 piano
 pang
saxophone moo wheeze hollow blow

DANCE PROGRESSION

I

quince-tight smiles
black girl

II

afraid to show pubescent hips,
how they can eloquently preach the testimonial,
ceremonial, tribulation,
how they speak.

III

Until the speaking overbears the speaker,
and that which is spoken, is poetic dance

IV

dance liberally
in streets, and jazz funerals,
in bathrooms, in the mind

such free movement is allowed
with bright flower
and bright nipples

dance woman,
to the slip- dramatic silence of motions'
communication
raunchy, bawdy, old, born-again, tight, loose,
naked, clothed

in the vortex of your curvacity,
the space where the calf is,
where the fingers flee

bass
thung, thung
de thung
de lord

percussion
beat drum drum
bop de bop

(orchestra together)
pang whistle
de thong
de thung
de christ de lord sweet georgia sweet georgia
and i know nothing but dancing
from black sorrows
(dispositions and creation wrought from flowers)
and my soul made high-spirited wrought song
Sweet Jesus of Nazareth.

sing
sang
sung
flung hips
fling flank
fling this and thataway
to a flirt, in boss of dirt
chink,
chank
rises dirt like humidity on the nape
fling dance, hip to the sky, tongue to
the Mississippi,
ankles in sporadic dance,
Hallelujah.

DAUGHTER'S GRIEF SONG

lawd,
lawd
What Am I
gone do
without my mama.

lawd,
lawd
Keep me as yo'
Daughter.

lawd,
lawd,
lawd
Steady me
when I
Falter.

Lawd,
lawd,
lawd,
lawd
What Am I
gone do
without my mama.

BLUES GRIEF SONG

Babe is Gone
She left Me

to Stare at the Wallpaper
colored paper
Flowered on the Wall.

O Babe.

be Merciful Unto her Soul.

O lawd i Can not Stand
O lawd i am a Lame Man
i can not move Grief

Lawd, move on ME.

WHEN I DRAG THEM HOME

Rancid breaths
from

Rancid stomachs
fall
strongly

from
drunk men

Rancid with
catfish and gin

onion

which soaks
mind

takes
them back
to war time

when Drunk men

were of france
germany

When drunk men
were

happy, Promiscuous
and gay with
money
and drank gin Socially,

Drinkable with
broad calved
women

sang
to negroe boys

with urbane rosary
in teeth, breath,

breasts.

sang
to boys now Inveterate

drunk men
and i
wear
rancid Breaths

on my Shoulder

when i drag
Them home.

INTRUSION OF MUSIC-WOMAN

when you enter
my soul

it is brass sound protracted into
black stillness

when i sing of this

it is
chaos
in silence
made into copious sound.

SOLDIER TO DEAD MOTHER

Mama, you shole is Dressed
Mama, you shole is Lookin nice
tonight

you must be dressed for some
reason.

I'ma lit' late
but don't worry.

Imade it home, mama
mama
mama

I made it home.

ALONE

Can i sing alone
If the bird Sings, itself
Can i sing alone.

Can i dance alone
If the tree shakes by the Wind
Can i dance alone.

Can i sit alone
If the moon goes by the Sky
Can i sit alone.

Can i pray alone
If the christ sat at the Stone.
Can i pray alone.

THREE STANZAS AND EPITAPH FOR HOEBABY

Hoebaby was born
today (least that's what his mama
say)

Hoebaby lost
his mind today
(least that what they say)
he was
cussin
cryin
and shootin
cause somebody
stole his
social security
check

Hoebaby died today
fell on the bed dead
and moved from this earthly
tabernacle

only heart knows
what tear to bear
what burden to bear.

JAR OF WINE

big head Woman
what ya doin' here
on my purch

in yo' dress
when you was here
yo' apron was dirty and Unpressed
yo' apron strings hangin' down

on my porch
with that boy you
say is mine but aint
my son.
'fo it's too late
and i'll git my gun
and be sent to police Station
or the Pen

over a nappy headed Woman

over a nappy head Woman
watch ya doin'
watch ya doin' brangin'
biscuits and Chicken to my
house.

O nappy headed Woman
get away to yo' own
place.

When my rent was paid
and my tater bank was high

You sat on yo' ass
lookin' big, big head Woman
primp like the school teacher
in her class.

When my well was dusty and low
and my taters started to go
from all these mouths

You ran with that son of yo'rs
you call mine.

so leave
big Woman

gittin close to
midnight time

when my lady
my lady, lady
is comin' by

to take yo' place
and jar of Wine.

STEAL AWAY

move yo' leg
you ain't dead

move yo' arms
ain't no harm

sang high/low
you got the whole day to rest

do yo' best
you got the flo'

Today is goin' to rest
in haste

drink yo' juice
sang the blues

get naked woman
rubbin' yo' stomach

keep belly cool
with glass of water
so you won't vomit
a stankin' pool

eat mo' food
sang the blues

check the turnips
fo' you burn em

check the bread
fo' you burn it

go sleep now
bowels need restin'

yo' man is pestin'

sang the blues

sky booms with
mornin' dawn

Push away yo' licker in a bowl
time for keepin' the soul

steal away
bow to pray.

FIRST DRAWL OF MORNING

(Woodworth Chapel, Tougaloo College)

Immersed in
slow drawl and sulking
of morning's first
well, spilling in the
liquid pinks, yellow, blues

emerges steeple
from tired veils of
motionless moss, gathered like bee hives,
whipped by wind

steeple in her
rigid thrust,
fusing with
eternal blues of sky,
in marriage of
day and architecture.

Chapel, our holy Mother,
slumbers in divine massiveness
to stir in full song,
soul and edifice converge in the blues of
morning.

Who will take this holy Mother
to a bath of inner spirit
and bathe, take this Mother
from the vicinity of unlive oaks,
cedar, crepe myrtle
to an internal tabernacle?

CAROLLING THUNDERS

I, you, we
take

Chapel, looking on her purity,
as divine giver of light,
holy sister of birth

and solemnize
upon the
altar of our co-existence,
this dwelling,
immovable structures within.

O' child, who sings the unknown bard
and weeps the gifted tear

Where has your song
gone?

Is it here, is it here
among the wretched?

O' child who sings the peculiar Hosanna
and laughs the melodious rasp

Where has your universal song
been

has it been here, has it been here

among the desicated bones of
nightingales, among the mockingbirds'
melody?

O' child who sings the
blighted hymn
and expels the carolling thunder
about the soul of this universe,

Where has your
beautiful power been,

has it been here, is it here
among the abject deprivation, ignorance and
cudgled bodies of your ancestral sojourn?

Beautiful Child who sings
the spiritual waters have landed you on

the substance
of your
melody
and the passion of your soulful flower

and the epochal evolution:
love, exploitation, travail,
waste, abundance,
joy, sorrow,
trial, and deliverance...

O' child, Beloved, you are the Lily in the Valley
in early morning's moving darkness.

REQUIEM

where your
glass of cold
ice water
set

a stale plastic
white vague bird
taken from a floral piece
sits

when you sang
there is nothing

when i was little
you said this silence would come
and the cry would be jesus.

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RFD 1 Box 141
Grenada, Mississippi 38901