

Two Poems from *Night Coffee*

By Wanda Coleman

Night Coffee (14)

The life of my cup begins with his rose-hipped
lips pursed to blow things cool, a smooth texture with
stubble at the edges. Filled with dark sob-sweet brew,
I go for the lift. He follows the contour of my flow.

We percolate

In the east, dark-nippled mountains loom. The
western horizon is a field of tongues licking the stars
out of the night. Down river, on the silt bed,
trembling erupt. Sleep will arrive as late as ever,
red-eyed but

satisfied. In the morning I will invite the wind,
take out the filter and feed the grounds to the white-
blossomed oleander, wash my cup clean in chamomile
and lavender

Night Coffee (8)

no chicory, please

down the ill-lit hall someone watches television in a realm exuding cigarette smoke
and laughter. in this reality they still use metal keys, dead bolts and chains. the high-
tone girl who tends the cleaning cart is exceptionally feline- eyes straight out of an
Egyptian tomb. outside, the wind-driven branch of a ficus scratches its way into
memory. windows rattle beneath black-out shades, the kind that went out with
gingham oil cloth. inside, they're flanked by dingy abbreviated lavender drapes.
inside, there's a bed that beckons like a siren. inside, there's a wall calendar on
which every day is a Saturday, every month a June. there's a drip-drip-drip that
hangs at the edge of consciousness. the thermostat is spastic. under the colt

automatic, there's a dresser with one broken drawer. the clock no longer functions.
the radio is a thing of hotels past. the ceramic ashtray on the nightstand offers up a
blank glossy red matchbook. the Devil behind the bathroom door promises Heaven

no chicory, please