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WARS AGAINST THE PORTUGUESE

by

Susan Anderson

A taut, red goatskin between poles
stuck in shadows of the moon
the last fire before the battle
The somber ecstasy of soldiers dancing
a prayer spreading under their feet
beards magic with dust and chants
The enemy to be bombarded this black
and yellow night by voices
out of the throats of guns harmonizing

The sleep of soldiers under goatskins
together with
the sleep of peasants in a thousand fields
together with
the sleep of workers brilliant with dreams
The now smooth air soon to be detonated
by the fight
The aged night
full of the croon-croon of
indigenous, conquering little birds