

SONG OF THE ANDOUMBOULOU: 162

Nathaniel Mackey

Siamese twins in an old book with birds
between their legs. So it was we moved
at so-it-was's behest. So it was we came
a-
gain to Lone Coast, circling, seeking
release. We wept for our estrangement as
the water withdrew, all the mash-up,
all
the run-up, all the withering spin's dis-
patch. The waves came in and they went
back out . . . Bitter beer took our tongues
into
the air. Tommy tilted his glass toward
Pee-Wee down in the ground. Better some-
thing than nothing Sophia said . . . Was it
real-
ly we wanted to know. If in the end it
reverted to nothing, something for a time but
not for all time, was it really not already
nothing we wanted to know. What about
life
ever after we wanted to know, the cap-
ital C City we'd heard about . . . So sparrows
nested between our legs as we stood, we
the
walking dead subject to summary execution,
we who'd have been twins given pause.
Myth was maybe the way we kept it all at
bay,
myth itself so kept by ythm, what to make
of it no one knew. We stood at an edge har-
vesting wind, siphoning light were light to
be
had. We stood where standing was a dance
almost, stiff-legged lament a dance almost,

cloaks doffed, caught in the wind... What any-
one had to say dropped like lead, so thick were
the
tongues outside our throats. What to make of
it no one knew or, knowing, knew how to
say, something so athwart nothing nothing as
well
wavered, sooner not be than
be

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Precarity's claim had us wary, creation day
done soon come. We wept at the graveside,
wept at ocean's edge, walled-up emotion let
out.
A shotgun wedding our rapport with death,
we studied the sand's report. The coastline
augured erosion. All there was would go...
Ragged shore, ragged wind cutting the clothes
from
our backs, naked no matter we strutted fully
decked. We who were stuck wanted the
old book shut, a travesty of twinship, a taunt
we
stuffed our ears against, a book we tore the
pages from. It was a dream of joining gone
wrong but not our worry, a book we stumbled
on...
So it was we looked out at the lights of L.A.,
packed inside a house perched on a hill over-
looking Silver Lake, lights of the carbuncular
City
we thought or we thought we thought, desperate,
we'd have done away with thought. Jacked up ex-
pecting nothing, hunched up inside our perch, high
not
knowing what to make of it exactly, the way
the
day caved
in

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Sporadic surmise confounded our late mood's
descent, destitute wish to be rid of it no end.
All the dying weighed heavy, one wanted to
steal
away, Netsanet's amenities praise and par-
take of, the boon bodily abidance could be.
Tej's bet, tej's wage, tej's waiver. Sweet
sati-
ety so soon too sweet, Itamar explained, thus
the foot in the door death wriggled in...
Bumped up above it all, tej's bounty, millet's
bit-
ter beer washed away. It wasn't Yggdrasil
we rode if only for a minute, no horse of the
hanged was it we rode. It wasn't Odin's mead
cup we sipped or even the thought of it. Smoke
filled
our chalice, burnt sweetness we sipped, branch
bent or broken we lit. It wasn't we were riders,
we were horses. It wasn't an ash we ran up and
down,
we left it in ashes. It wasn't we hanged our-
selves... We were not the white north inverted we
screamed, Itamar letting out what the rest of
us
thought. We sat upside a hill inside the scream
sipping Netsanet's brew, *Fret not*, even so,
said
inside it
all

(liner note)

The idea was it was door peep's day done.
The idea was it was a room so tight we
blew the roof off, to die was to let the air
out,
let the room air out. So it was we turned
a page in so-it-was's book, the idea we sat in
a house on a hillside sliding into the sea.
The
idea was we sat awaiting what came
next, honey wine, honey beer, sweet leaf
to take the edge off, Netsanet's medici-
nal brew. The idea was to repercuSS was its
way,
the butt end of a stick against the head of
the one who wielded it, to hit will have been
to
be hit
back

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Up high in a church balcony we sat, not the
house overlooking Silver Lake now. So
it was we accepted, it was other than before,
lay lounge we sat in listening, awaiting
un-
lay's lift. A harmonium billowed Netsanet's
cotton shift, showing bones underneath,
such what lift there was... The bellows filled
and
emptied, we laughed weeping we were so
moved, all the having-gone and the will-have-gone
bearable for once, sweet skein she pulled from
so-
it-was's book. Deep gnostic joke. Deep twist
and tangle. One foot behind the other ever after,
a stagger step repeatedly taken. Graduate before,
grad-
uate again, so without end we wept, sweet com-
edy, a cracked-billed partridge's cry... So we sat
on the learning log, so-it-was eked out, echoic, sat
schooled on what would be and what had been,
sat
giving thought to the Andoumboulou, newly
numbered among them before we knew. And
soon set out with what but bodies to reach or
relate with, soon sat reminiscing, mourning's
rue
borne out

Anima mundi's intimated axis followed our
friend gone under the ground. Yggdrasil
faded, fell away... So it was as we'd read in

so-
it-was's book, bones under cloth a revival
tent. It was new and old gospel again, soon
one morning all up over us, soon one morning
soon
come. The lived made over as myth made more
real, ythmic we so wanted it, revival ground gone
off, the
it of it the wish of it
we saw

THAT THIS MIGHT BE THAT BOOK

Nathaniel Mackey

Body and Soul
will we ever leave childhood together

— Susan Howe, *Pythagorean Silence*

—“mu” one hundred forty-second part —

“No sleep till we reach Mu,” we told ourselves. “Trek wide awake dreaming till we do.” A wash of memory egged us on... Dawn
found us north of Dread Lakes country,
spoken to by smoke, waved at by flutter,
demise made over as myth made bearable,
is
was all *ythm* it seemed. Kind of sad holding
on, trying so to hold on, the ones gone under
the ground had a say of sorts, darkening the
day
as we pressed on... History was the poverty
of time Djed reminded us, time so untimely,
him so new to our group, bodily spirit’s
re-
call come soon it so seemed, not to be known
but by reasoning, a kind of gremlin-ghost rea-
son we reckoned by. Something from Djed the
dead
might’ve said we called it, something bitten
back between front teeth and tongue, something
Djed said for the dead... So it was we bottled
up and went, bottled up, kept on going, so-it-was’s
book
gone back to, thumbed as we stood beside the
road. No one picked us up, our thumbs out
no matter, no matter the signs we held up, no one

on the way to Mu... "No sleep till we get there,"
we
said out loud any-
way

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No dreaming once we got there we dreamt,
so content we'd be, a book of so-it-was more
than a book of so-what, no matter time tore
eve-
rything up we heard Ahdja lament. Were
there none what then we wondered, so in-
ured against contentment, after it though we
were. "My foolish head, my headstrong heart,"
each
of us let out, which covered it pretty much we
heard Huff put in... Later we sat around
watching the tol'you, saw many a miraculous
thing, the glass intervention we convened
in
front of one of them, a blind piper piping us
home. Cop-show utopia, cop-show "blues"
revue, splat panoply on the tol'you screen.
It
might already have been Mu we were in...
Next thing we knew Miles was on the box,
"Stella by Starlight." I slipped away to my
niece's grave, my nephew's grave, Miles's
hesi-
tant sound a kind of tremoring, ground pried
open, purgative sky. Lay your body down
it seemed it said. We were in the Sea Islands,
far
east of Mu but Mu was with us... It would
always be and abide and bode well we testi-
fied, tongues taken out thru the gaps in our
teeth, teeth clenched tight as we could, jaws all
but
broke

On our way to being absences, the road we
were all on, we were there without knowing
it, not there before we knew it, not knowing
what being there was... Not knowing bred in-
satiety, want was all there was, the idea was
Mu meant nothing at all. So the liner note
and we sang against it. Our idea was there
was a seed of something, the idea there was
a seed or something, a seed of something there
it lay dis-
persed

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The viper life bred of slack focus, fevered
pitch had there been one but we were not
so blessed. Light gone awry, stray gambit,
the
elsewhere we'd have otherwise been... *Made*
of it my gown we read, the it of it its glare
we guessed, cloth we couldn't see a loudness
of
sorts, of late free of the ear's address. Sight
slipped away to where disaster lay, stole off but
could only bang shut suddenly, my niece's
ar-
rested heart, my nephew's collapsed lung, they
the inventors of tol'you dust... Time bumps
everything up I reminded myself, the capsule we
were
in was headed somewhere, Netsanet's name
never not with me, the sweet spin her tongue's
turn lent everything, bee stings plumped our lips.
"I wanted," we wanted to say but broke off before
we
could, the what of what we wanted erased... If
not something a seed of something, no way was
the promise less the it of it than it, forfeiture no
op-
tion its op-
tion

✕

I slipped away to where my niece and my
nephew were the abandoned ones of lore, the
abandoned girl and boy spouting prophecy,

long trill twisted their lips. They had their
own way of talking. It rang so true I wept.
The tol'you told us what to see. We looked
no thought of what else... Thus it was the
tol'you sat telling us what to look at, a post-
humous conceit come over us, an ythmic
lift always with us, myth made of our travail.

were in the kingdom of youth again, we'd
gone up against the grave and won. The
sun's light poured in, a sublime confetti, Mu's
day be-
gun

No matter it was the kingdom of youth,
Netsanet's name no matter, there was
a church and a field of grass behind it we
played
football on, two adjacent lessons we
bought... It wasn't the it but what the
it was a stand-in for, shadow-box intaglio,
time
bumped every-
thing up