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Abstract

Asked his name, he said, "Stra, short for Stranger." Sang it. Semisaid, semisung. "Stronjer?" I asked, semisang, half in jest. "Stronger,"

Nathaniel Mackey

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Asked his name, he said, "Stra, short for Stranger." Sang it. Semisaid, semisung. "Stronjer?" I asked, semisang, half in jest. "Stronger,"

he

whatsaid back. Knotted highness, loquat highness, rope turned inward, tugged. Told he'd someday ascend, he ascended, weather known as Whatsaid Rung... Climb was all anyone was, he went

want rode our limbs like soul, he insisted, Nut's unremitting lift...

Pocketed

rock's millenarian pillow...

Low

throne we lay seated on, acceded to of late, song of setting out rescinded, *to the bone* was what measure there was. *To the bone* meant birdlike, hollow. Emptiness

kept us

on,

afloat. What we read said there'd been a shipwreck. We survived it, adrift at sea... An awkward spin it all got,

odd

aggregate. Occupied. Some said possessed... Buoyed by lack, we floated boatlike, birdlike, bones emptied out

inside.

We whose bodies, we read, would be sounded, *We lay on our backs'* low-toned insinuance tapped,

siphoned into what of what aroused us arrested us, tested us more than we could bear ... Loguat highness's goat-headed look's unlikely lure... Lore made of less-than, more than he'd admit, muse made of wished-it-so... Ubiquitous whiff had hold of our noses, nostrils flared wide as the sky. Gibbering yes, that must have been how it was, what there was at all a bit of glimpsed inwardness, buffeted cloth, bones in black light underneath... To the bone meant to the limit, at a loss even so, eyes, ears, nostrils, mouths holes in our heads a stray breeze made flutes of, rungs what befere had been water, bamboo atop Abakwa drum... An acerbic wine dried my tongue, my top lip quivered. "Perdido...," I sang, offkey. So to lament beforehand what would happen... Rope what would before have been breath

35

Whatsaid sip they lit Eleusis with it seemed. Barley mold made them wince... Heartrending sky, held breath held high

as a cloud, Hoof-to-the-Head knocked hard,

no bolt from on high but their lips' convergence came close,

Maria

ruing the movement of ships... The sunken ship they at times took it they were on no sooner

sank

than sailed again. Failed or soon-to-fail form, sisyphean

rock,

rough, andoumboulouous roll.

Serpent

wave, serpent wing, hoisted rag snapped at by wind. Flag she saw he lay bound up in, insisting they'd meet again. Lag anthem suffused every corner, music

more

the he she saw, we the escaping they, calling out names no where

we'd

arrive would answer to, nowhere the

louder

we'd shout

Dark wintry room they lay shivering in...

Late would-be beach they lay under the sun on...

Sarod strings dispatching the fog from Lone Coast, fallaway shore they lay washed up on...

Their

lank bodies' proffered sancta

begun to

be let go, Steal-Away Ridge loomed larger than life. Extended or extinguished it, no one could say which, the soon-to-be

saints

arrayed in rows at cliff's edge, our motley band uncomfortably among them. A school of sorrow seeking

sorrow's

emollient, albeit seeking may've meant something more, older than seeking, remote coming-to, barely known, of a piece,

beginning

they broke taking hold