

FRONT PORCH

Lullaby in Lagos Nathaniel Mackey

—“mu” fifty-seventh part—

We were above Lagos before
we knew it. Roofless buildings
looked up expecting tips. It was
lay not low I thought as we
descended. Sprawl crowded
the
eye as we looked out the airplane
windows, lay ghost and holy, caught
as catch could, etch no architect
had
seen fit... We'd been there before
we got there, unlay's day was back.
Weak legs lifted heavy feet, we were
exhausted... Horns were drooping
lilies
had the horns we heard been there. No
horns
readied our way... It wasn't Airegin
we were in, it wasn't backwards, ana-
grammic. Sonny was nowhere to be
found...

Music's where had evaded us, elsewhere's
elsewhere. It still wasn't music we were
in... It wasn't rightside left, it wasn't
upside down. Fela was nowhere to be
found... Somewhere else's elsewhere
attended us. *I dug a hole in the sand*, it
said,
*I buried my thoughts. Next I jumped
in*, it said, *so no one else would suffer...*
So spoke St. Sufferhead, St. Sufferhead's
bulería. Again we were in southern
Spain.
The it of it its moving on, its noncoincidence,
the
it of it had hold of us again... Not since two sevens
met had we been so fretful. Lejos we thought we
heard, we misheard lejos. Again we were in southern
Spain... Lagos lay ahead, Spain faded, came up
short,
back not being there from the start... It wasn't
lay, it wasn't low, it wasn't lie, we were lejos.
Not that we were there, we'd be there soon, we'd

be there later, more than we'd been before...

Neither lay nor low, we heard it said, blow ghost.
Soul what we rode, we heard it said, blow
ghost, soul to be about to explode... We walked
on ball joints beginning to go flat. We dreamt
a dream we kept dreaming, the one that would

make
it right, knew it was all smoke but embraced it,
onliness's wish well met... We sat at the table that
had been set for us, gave eating a new name, drank
with the thirst of the dead, called eating "chop."

There
was no doubt we were there. The way it was
and the way we thought of it met. The lay ghost
went away... Not the say or the sign but the it
of it again, like but unlike before. The lay ghost no
longer stalked us we thought, "mu" as in mouth

again...
Roasted peanuts bordered on burnt. "Ebolachi"
rolled off every tongue... It was "mu" as in muse
again, not as if but the is of it, loud Atlantic stretch,

Yemaya's
arch embrace... We bit kola nut, pursed our lips, loss
the astringent whose taste we had a taste for. Kola
nut was all there was left... Nub's hand was in the
till, Quag's hand. Oil flowed away, flew north.

The
lay ghost hounded us. Place wasn't space enough.
Spirit flew thru the cracks... Lay was to low as low
was to lie. Unlay banked itself... Thought's lag
behind arrival resounded. What we said's lag
answered not in kind but parallaxic, the is of its

it
an exact, empathic scat, "mu" as in "mu"
again...

Fires light-years away leaned in. Traffic piled up
out of earshot. Up and down stairs we went...
Ritual was all we had, iterativity's it the it of it. We

sat
sipping beer, the is of it a was of it, lay suddenly
washed away... We were there but not there, not
exactly nowhere... Guitar ping resounded for days...

Guitar ping rang and regaled us. Inside each
wave there was another wave... One wave rocked
us
to sleep, the other roused us. Unlay's proximity exed
or annexed us. No doubt, barely begun, we were there...

The
awaited blow arrived, Yemaya's warning. A rogue
wave
pushed us farther in... Gristle intimated eternity, we
chewed
gristle, happy to have survived the
night