



Splay Anthem

Nathaniel Mackey

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In a stunning new collection of poems of transport and transcendence, African-American poet Nathaniel Mackey's "asthmatic song of aspiration" scuttles across cultures and histories—from America to Andalucía, from Ethiopia to Vienna—in a sexy, beautiful adaptive dance.

Part antiphonal rant, part rhythmic whisper, Nathaniel Mackey's new collection of poems, *Splay Anthem*, takes the reader to uncharted poetic spaces. Divided into three sections—"Braid," "Fray," and "Nub" (one referent Mackey notes in his stellar Introduction: "the imperial, flailing republic of Nub the United States has become, the shrunken place the earth has become, planet Nub")—*Splay Anthem* weaves together two ongoing serial poems Mackey has been writing for over twenty years, *Song of the Andoumboulou* and "*Mu*" (though "mu no more itself / than Andoumboulou").

In the cosmology of the Dogon of West Africa, the Andoumboulou are progenitor spirits, and the song of the Andoumboulou is a song addressed to the spirits, a funeral song, a song of rebirth. "*Mu*," too, splays with meaning: *muni* bird, Greek *muthos*, a Sun Ra tune, a continent once thought to have existed in the Pacific. With the vibrancy of a Miró painting, Mackey's poems trace the lost tribe of "we" through waking and dreamtime, through a multitude of geographies, cultures, histories, and musical traditions, as poetry here serves as the intersection of everything, myth's music, spirit lift.

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