

“Song of the Andoumboulou 148
& Sweet Safronia’s Wave Unwoven”
by Nathaniel Mackey

Song of the Andoumboulou: 148

A would-all-were-otherwise look spiked
her nostril, something seen in his face an
unlikely funk from who could say where.
So
strange a phase they found themselves in,
tenuous coherence they inured themselves
to, Sweet Safronia the name she now took,
whose
name had been Ahdja before... They set a
place for knowing knowing stayed away from,
rocks piled up at their door. They heard one
dead
man mourn another, a choked, broken lowing
it was. Bodily life what balm there’d been,
lost if no other now. Someway they would know
she
opined, spirit’s keynote address... He as well
named himself anew, Godfrey the name he
now took, Brother B what we called him before.
Yet
another his-and-her story we sighed, Names
Anonymous it turned out we were turning in-
to, relapse number none of us could say. So it
was
and so it went... Sweet Safronia wrote God-
frey’s name on her dance card, dance a coded run
for office, him her running mate, president of
New Not Yet. A new sensorium he and she were
run-
ning for, necromantic tilt, necromantic away-
ness, blent sentience, kingdom come... So the
joke went. So they joked. Grim jest it fell to us
to
abide. They heard one dead man mourn another.
His limbs were made of sticks and they crackled,
makeshift music he inflected his lament with, long
on
bodily de-
mise
•
Long since in some room reminiscing, long on
something said said again. A symphonette
of beaks, bits of wood scrap, wheeze what
there
was of it left... We looked on, planetary
choir, feet in the ether, feet in the dirt. Chano
Dominguez, Rubem Dantas on the cajón,
was
on the box, backdrop his and her platform
rayed out from... So it was the Andoumboulou
lived again, finding their way or not finding
it,
finding their way in the not, not short for an-
other, be weaned of what’s not recondite
Safronia taught. At that we fell back, weary
of
preachment, mortuary chorale, nonsonant re-
frain what said it best... Such as it was we
sat sweatless, heaven, angels in the ourkestra
pit. Godfrey took Safronia’s arm by the wrist
and
raised it. Did, would, will, it said, win... We
sat catechized, rallied, millennial phlegm in
our throats, won respite now to be legion, won
sus-
tenance, One Love run late come. There was
a long leg lifted us off the planet, a short leg
stranded where we were. Leg on leg we ran,
work-
ing our way out, One Love’s couriers. Leg ani-
mated leg, anointed leg, borne between leg and
leg, straught... Godfrey and Sweet Safronia
lift-
ed us from the pit, lift our stropped interstice,
One
Love blade-edge
thin

Sweet Safronia no sooner lifted us than
faded, Godfrey no sooner there than gone.
We were calling it O.L., we were calling it

Olé.

Horse hooves kicked up water, slapped
conga heads carried them away... Names Anon-
ymous made it namesake synonymy. Names
Anonymous held sway, leftover lift, a kind of rem-
anence. Possessed we'd've been had we let
ourselves
go

•

I wanted to make a place apart, I sought sol-
ace, head wrought with whatsay, wrapped in
lay-lift array. I sat among them in the pit,
o-
vercome by hiccups, a big bell strapped
around my neck. The accident waiting to hap-
pen would happen we averred, protuberant
discs
hung from the sky, were the sky... Sweet
Safronia and Godfrey ran for office in the
air, the lift our politics needed they insisted,
a coded way they said it it seemed. The limbs
they'd
gotten next to each other with were long since
gone, phantom hoist, phantom hold, phantom
heist... Gallop and trot ran thru it, the orishas'
re-
peated stitch, step so suffusive water welled
it seemed, on and of itself, walked on water. We
called out corpuscular, intrusive, coalescent,
step so multihoofted, multifoofed, we flew, of late
got-
ten beaks and were
gone

Sweet Safronia's Wave Unwoven

—turning out to be to Ogun—

Brother B's work with would stood
among us, comrades and compatriots
at a point none but we saw, would we
could

reach out and feel, would've did we
dare. Atavai it came to us to call them,
atavai we walked around among, would
pieces, totem nowhere near naming
them,

avatar as well... Gouge's address was
one we knew by heart, grain's obsequy
of sorts. Wood's play on would parlayed
of

late, play never not evident, loft we strode
among tree trunks in, Brother B's largesse...
I stood on shaky legs, a wobbly walk it was,
lucumí horses ran the track my head had
be-

come. So close a walk it was, Brother B's
arcade, Brother B's arbor. Saunter had
something to say of it. A staggerly waltz
it

was... I reminded myself it was not a-
bout me, Brother B's would-be Godfrey let
go, Sweet's weave unwoven, all the grav-
en lines let go. I reminded myself would
was

hylic, head knocked on by fingers, cal-
luses, carved head kicked by hoofs. So close
a walk, stiff, rickety, wood where bones
had

been, Brother B glad to be Brother B again,
gone though the good times were... "Please,
please, Brother B," we heard Ahdja weep,
"dead

what had been so alive, how could that be?
Please, Brother B, be Godfrey again." So I
saw and I reminded myself it was not up to
us,

handed our heads on a tray no matter what,
learn
from Brother B as we
could

Belly to back the way dogs do they
were dancing. Titanium rods ran thru
the dance announcing Legba, Brother
B's
would, tree trunks driven ashore on
Lone Coast... Soaked wood tutored what
aplomb there was, not much though it
was,
next to none... "Yes, yes, Brother B,"
we put in, "please reconsider," advocates
against our will, Ahdja's acolytes, an
un-
awares gambit,
gruff

•

The atavai loomed numberless in the
gallery whose walls we lost, sad glad
goodbyes abraded by salt Safronia's

wave

brought in, buffed by Aphroditean
froth. Might awkwardness be grace the
beautiful goodbyes piled up at our
door... We heard flutes that were birds

hov-

ering above hoofprints. We were in
the Nod House record annex. We laughed
at Easy Listening, we jigged among

the

reggae bins, chided by Brother B don't
look back, which we couldn't help, the
store the way it was back when... So it

was,

as we could see, and so we said, we said
it again, "Yes, Brother B, be Godfrey again,"
the words a wet pocket of sand. So it was

and

so we said, Brother B's dead ear not-
withstanding. We knew it wasn't up to us.

We knew it was a game. We enjoyed it...
High chiming strings way back in the mix

re-

buffed us, a remote broadcast it seemed.
Brother B sang like a bird meanwhile, an
appellate brief in stop time it seemed. He

was

singing was the way Ahdja put it. He lay
back as though he brought the past forward, a
strategic retreat, "Don't look back" no mat-
ter. "Can I sang with you, Brother B?" she

was

asking. "Can I sang with you, Brother B?"
Ahdja begged... We were caught up in some
kind of code, wanting to say what was real

not

wanting to, wanting not to hem ourselves
in. Sweet Safronia's own republic loomed, ad-
vance one with relapse it seemed, as would

our

way out be we thought... Meanwhile it ca-
reened, leaderless, his and her putative

rule

rescinded, his and her yth-
mic run

•

Next we were begging Ahdja to be Sweet
again, pleading she run for President, we
the people the we we espoused. Crackpot

ex-

tremity grew poignant we so wanted it,
glimpse Brother B and she gave as much
as got, split we saw the alternate world go

thru...

It wasn't we expected we'd get out unscathed,
no matter art ply politics, awkwardness
be grace, straight light inoculate blush. The

jit-

tery watch we kept kept at us. The alter-
nate names were a way of calling them notes,
Godrey and Safronia sonic flavor. Our re-
solve was to not be caught offguard... We the

peo-

ple the we we were, deep ensemblist wish,
loose among the atavai, Brother B's would's
release. Ungainliness be grace was cut on the

tree

trunks, graving we swore we saw we saw sur-
rounding us, incision Brother B let sing...

So, we saw, sang the singer. So, we saw, ran

the

song, song that wasn't really but were lytic
and lyric one, Brother B's woulded remake.

There was a book we took ourselves to be in,

heat

we were caught up in. The Various Burning
we thought to call it, would it were ours to name,
Brother B's conflagrant book or conflagrant

chis-

el, flame his mallet broke out in... He was O-
gun of the Heavenheaded Ax Ahdja insist-
ed, wanting to change his name again, a weave

we

broke bread with, iron's intertwinement salt,
wave's ax's edge, sea-steeped would we supped...

A crust of bread it might've been but wasn't,
spent solemnity's high perch, dry purchase. A

crust

of bread, stale as it was, it wasn't, Ogun's fur-
rowed brow, sweating brow. "Ogun, we salute
you," we sang, biting back phlegm as we let go.

Cer-

tain woulds were in. They had their
way

By this time we were another we, *Political Rubber Handbook* in tow. Why not run for office we'd woken up asking, tongues lost up the side of each other's neck no sooner we said it, tongues lost along one another's thigh... It wasn't about us we reminded our-selves, remanded back to ourselves notwithstanding. Ogun and Odwalla, Ahdja and Brother B, atavai all ad infinitum, all in the transposed alleyway Brother B conducted us thru

They who made their peace prepared a
place, wave unraveling as though it were
cloth, fabric they rolled up in. Ensemblist
ad-
vance they gripped or got a glimpse of,
promised were wish to preside... They
for whom intimacy felt full but fell short,
inwardly calling public or bust, outwardly
spun,
lights of the centrifugal thrum they were
on their way toward, lights of their eventual
re-
lease