

Nathaniel Mackey's *Splay Anthem*: travelling as a «flight and fugivity»

by Giovanna Scatena

The road is a metaphor for most human pursuits as well as for life itself, and it is also a topic for memory. One can cast «a backward glance o'er travel'd roads», as Walt Whitman did, or as Bruce Chatwin wrote, paths are the *first* of our memories, even before persons or events. Such remarks may suggest roads as recovery, as routes to the past. Literal travel, by contrast, carries one away, roads link to other roads and those in turn to others: on the other hand, travel is one of the most basic and important features of human being and odeporic poetry becomes an essential aspect among a wide variety of poetic categories. The idea of travel as a connection permeate every page of Mackey's work. All his collections of poems – *Eroding Witness* (1985), *Whatsaid Serif* (1998), *Splay Anthem* (2006), *Nod House* (2011) – are made of small stanzas, unhinged from the left margin, often coupled like train cars by single words. As you read, you travel widely through geography, memory and history, but always with the sense that you're heading in one direction.

To ride was a well gone to too often, a
dry world we circumambulated suddenly
awash, Anuncia's belated largesse.

The
road was all therewas and ride was all
we did. Curves and bends kept at us, we
giggled,
giddy anyone was
at the
wheel'

In discussing the kind of identity formation suggested by Chamoiseau and Confiant, the word *errancy*, linked to travel, may be useful since it retains the *error* but also the drift that more romantic and politically charged categories such as *exile* and *expatriate* do not offer². *Errancy* is also appropriate for a study of poetry, since, as Charles Bernstein writes, «poetics must necessarily involve error. Error in the sense of wandering, errantry, but also error in the sense of mistake, misperception... as projection (expression of desire unmediated by rationalized explanation): as slips, slides»³. Travel is, in fact, an expression of that perpetual displacement of meaning in which the work of Nathaniel Mackey⁴ seriality's jagged edges are employed to address those wandering, preternaturally exiled others of historical and cultural consciousness⁵. The hold of 'home' on the travellers becomes weaker, and the process of substitution and displacement that constitutes identification becomes simultaneously less stable. Increasingly, travellers live, inwardly as outwardly, in such ambiguity, in a somewhere made up of many elsewheres that Mackey has described in his collection of poems *Splay Anthem* (2006), in which he weaves together two ongoing serial poems he has been writing for over twenty years, *Song of the Andomboulou* and *Mu*:

Every arrival outrun
by the image we had of it, begged

it be the where we'd been after, there
 there be nowhere we'd rather
 be...⁶

The world was ever after,
 elsewhere.
 Where we were they said likkle for little, lick
 ran with trickle, weird what we took it
 for... The world was ever after, elsewhere,
 no

way where we were
 was there⁷.

Dread Lakes
 alias, cavewall inside out, dotted
 bodies bespoke 'immanent elsewhere'⁸,
 half again 'all but already gone'⁹.

These poetic series, inspired both by improvisatory jazz and traditional African songs, includes various versions of many poems separated by black lines, a poetic technique intended to keep the writing open to differences even after publication. Each is the other, each is both, announcedly so in the preface of the book. By turns visibly and invisibly present, each is the other's twin or contagion, each entwines the other's crabbed advance. They have done so, unannouncedly, from the beginning, shadowed each other from the outset, having a number of things in common, most obviously music. Each was given its impetus by a piece of recorded music from which it takes its title, the Dogon *Song of the Andoumboulou*¹⁰ in one case, Don Cherry¹¹'s *Mu First Part* and *Mu Second Part* in the other. Mackey explains the overlap of the two projects in a preface - itself a virtuosic work of self-criticism. The Andoumboulou are, in the Dogon cosmology, «not simply a failed, or flawed, earlier form of human being, but a rough draft of human being, the work-inprogress we continue to be»¹². It is, Mackey notes, a funeral song that moves from song to eulogy and back, a lone voice «reciting [the deceased's] genealogy, bestowing praise, listing all the places [the deceased] set foot while alive». Ultimately it marks «the entry of the deceased into the other life, the wail of a newborn child into a terrifying world»¹³. Likewise, 'Mu' refers to the lost continent. So the meeting of these two works constitutes what Robert Duncan has called in grand seriousness, a 'world-poem'¹⁴, but a specifically utopic and prehistoric world. *Splay Anthem* is a blue

gnostic / loop, a choral return to creative origins that echoes back to the future. *Song of the Andoumboulou* is addressed to the spirits. Part of the Dogon funeral rites begins with sticks making time on a drum's head, joined in short order by alone, laconic voice – gravelly and raspy – recounting the creation of the world and the advent of human life. Other voices, likewise reticent, dry, join in, eventually build into a song, a scratchy, low-key chorus. From time to time a yodeling shriek breaks out in the background. Concerning *Mu*, it is not only music: this place-name is a two-letter nub of a word overflowing with significance. For Mackey «any longingly imagined, mourned, or remembered place, time, state or condition can be called *Mu*»¹⁵. As the poet and literary critic Norman Finkelstein has claimed,

The two series offer a productive tension, a movement between shamanic dreamtime (*altjeringa*) and what Mackey calls historical 'rendition'. The diasporic travels that regularly punctuate *Song of the Andoumboulou* poems always lead us both toward and away from the Atlantean/Utopian domain that is 'Mu'. The result is a continuous, recursive, sideways movement as the two poems veer between the extremes of catastrophic fall and ecstatic redemption, travelling through landscapes and dream scapes variously shaded by idealism and foreboding¹⁶.

'Mu' is also a Greek letter and pictogram for ocean-waves that carried slaves across the sea; 'Mu' is oblivion in Japanese *kana*, a productive 'non-being' or vacancy in Zen art, akin to the absence that haunts Mackey's arenas of discovery and dispute, and the human beings become a set of warring passions independent of time and space¹⁷. In his odeporic poetry *Splay Anthem*, Mackey records an experience of diasporic restlessness among African American subjects, a tidal ebb and flow of unrecuperating hope, a *movement the / one mooring we knew*¹⁸: his travellers are seekers, wanderers toward a utopian no-place, who move together – as 'we' and not 'I' – looking for this no-where, but carrying with them memories of the past and their movement providing occasions of transcendence. They are «a lost tribe of sorts, a band of nervous travellers, know[ing] nothing if not locality's discontent, ground gone under. Sonic semblance's age-old promise, rhyme's reason, the consolation they seek in song, accents and further aggravates movement. The songs are increasingly songs of transit»¹⁹. More than any other

contemporary poet, Mackey is deeply inspired by jazz, especially Ornette Coleman, Miles Davis, Don Cherry, and John Coltrane, all of whom informed his belief that black ontology need not be tied to testimony or narrative but can be felt through what Mackey calls 'a communication of inference'. This language is improvisatory, paratactic, his lyric strands drifting through time, place, and persona. Mackey is also inspired by an avant-garde lineage of poets ranging from William Carlos Williams to Robert Duncan, as well as by his friends, the poets Fred Moten and Ed Roberson. Mackey's poems are hypnotic praises, dirges, feverish dream songs of an unnamed diasporic voyage, songs that are always reaching for, but never arriving at, a destination. If Mackey has aimed to bring what he calls the 'sympathetic strings' of jazz into language, a richly reverberate, connotative field that is politically engaged in sophisticated ways, it was Amiri Baraka's early jazz writing that served as his point of departure. Araka, as a New York-based poet/critic in the late fifties and early sixties, was a literary pioneer in his attempts to explore the liminal space between post-bop jazz and poetry²⁰. For Mackey, Baraka's liner notes, such as for *Coltrane Live at Birdland* (1964), and his first two poetry volumes, *Preface to a Twenty Volume Suicide Note* (1961) and *The Dead Lecturer* (1964), provided stunning instances of what might be possible in jazz-inflected writing²¹. This is lyric verse that obeyed, in its most restless and hermeneutically irreducible form, what Mackey calls «an aesthetic analogous to that of music — mercurial, oblique, elliptical»²². A musically attentive 'I', pronominally expands, Whitman-like, into a 'we', who respond with a mix of emotions: personal hardship, loneliness, and nomadic survival initially register collective distress, but the arrival of Coltrane's bass clarinet, via musical flashback, provides relief in a way akin to a warm 'anabatic' wind for the previously chilly surrounding environs²³. Inspired by the recognizable, if rare, sound of Dolphy's clarinet in Coltrane's expert hands, the uprooted 'we' launch into an outpouring of hand-slapping revelry that makes them feel 'young again'. For the travelling 'we', Coltrane's music thus functions as what Wilson Harris would call a 'phantom limb'²⁴. It provides a sense of felt advance, felt recovery, a partial compensation for catastrophic severance. Yet the 'we' are also cognisant of how ephemeral, and dependent on this ameliorating impact of music, this relief will be. Reading Mackey, we join him as members of this tribe/band: our inchoate, previously unrealized sense of

existential and cosmic exile is gradually revealed to us as we experience 'the flight and fugitivity' of his haunted song. Then again, 'flight and fugitivity' remind more specifically of the plight of runaway slaves in the years before the Civil War. In Mackey's discourse, 'flight and fugitivity' are linked to a ghostly historical reference and, in this way, the conditions of diaspora, both historical (the African diaspora) and spiritual (gnosticism's view of a generale spiritual exile) come to define Mackey's poetry. Under these conditions, which he so elegantly, so urgently describes, we become strangers to ourselves; in wandering with him, we meet ghostly versions of ourselves in whom we recognizes long-suppressed truths, grounded in a history of oppression and loss but also point to gnosis, knowledge of the exile that defines our spiritual being. Mackey uses a quote referring to the followers of Simon Magnus from one of his favourite books, Jacques Lacarrière's *The Gnostics*, as a revealing epigraph to *Song of Andoumboulou*: 17: «to remove the very categories of I, Thou, He and to become We, such must be the meaning of the so-called 'mysteries of the Simonians'»²⁵. Removing pronominal categories to form a collectivity grounded in both history and myth is fundamental to Mackey's poetic and, toward this end, the poet/shaman plays all the roles at once²⁶: shamanism in tribal, oral culture; exegetical mysticism in religious, literate culture; poetry in modern, secular culture, and all call equally for initiation leading to gnosis.

Debris bumped our heads, rubble
hurt our feet. Fingerless, if not
without hands, drew back from
reaching,

Nub the new kingdom come...

[...]

Somewhere someone
chanted,

an echo we looped and relooped. Dub it
was as much as it was Nub we were
in, ersatz eternity looped and infinitum,
loop

given reverb to. Echoes flew close to the
earth, bleak reconaissance. Tape ran
away in reverse, took us with it, beginning
to be alive it seemed...²⁷

Movement and travel in Mackey's serial poems is both a compositional principle and an open set of thematized situations or scenarios. Travel is dangerous in

the poems of *Song of the Andoumboulou* where the 'we' are constantly in a state of jeopardy, determined they are to reach the utopian spaces variously signified, as we said, by and in 'Mu'. The strange sense of movement, the disruptions in space and time that we experience in reading Mackey's poems is the same in Ellen Basso's work on Kalapalo narrative performance²⁸. Indeed, according to Basso,

Kalapalo notions of time are closely connected to ideas about space, and spatial imagery in Kalapalo myths is complementary to that of time. It is constructed by means of the ubiquitous device of travelling that lends a sense of contrast between qualitatively different experiences while distinguishing between different places or sites as, on the one hand, social, predictable, and ordinary, and on the other, antisocial, magical, dangerous, and liminal. The distinction emerges from the language describing the journey, which is a way of establishing boundaries that are both geographic and psychological and that are treated less as visual objects than a spatial relations experienced through human temporal sensitivity. Travelling modes, involving active experience of time and the contrasts experienced in different places, thus serve as symbols for different consciousnesses²⁹.

In regard to Mackey's poetry, two ideas in this passage are particularly striking: that travel leads to the distinction between the «social predictable, and ordinary» and the «antisocial, magical, dangerous, and liminal», and that travel or movement through space/time is experienced as «both geographic and psychological» and produces «symbols for different consciousness». In the *Song of the Andoumboulou* and the 'Mu' poems, both places and the modes of travel between them – train, bus, boat, metro – are experienced as 'psycho-geographic'³⁰ phenomena; likewise, the situation of the travellers at any given instant can shift dramatically from safe and ordinary to dangerous and magical.

*A boat that sails to
heaven on a river that
has no end*³¹ [...]

We lay on
our backs looking out at them looking
in, cigar smoke swelling the veins of
our necks, the boat of which
they dreamt

a dreamt we beyond our
reach³²

Peru now as Paris it seemed, a
train
what it was we were on wherever it
was, a train whatever it was we
were on... In the city's insides
albeit we were in Egypt, high-breasted
Sekhmet statuesque at the metro
stop...³³

Sipped sand, so long without
water. Lone Coast elixir, mouths
drawn shut... Euthanasic lip-stitch,
loquat liqueur, Oliloquy Valley it
was
we came to next... We were
each an apocryphal Moses, feet
newly fitted with sandals, we
strolled, scrolls long thought to
be lost unrolled in front of us,
dubbed
acoustic scribbling, skanked...³⁴

As Finkelstein writes, it is arguable that everything that takes place in these poems is magical, that all movement from place to place is magical. Psychally speaking, the goal of such movement is ultimately ecstatic, however much it may be blocked or impeded by foreboding, depressive, even demonic forces³⁵. And, as Mircea Eliade observes of the shamans' cosmic travels, «only they transform a cosmotheological concept into a concrete mystical experience... In other words, for the rest of the community remains a cosmological ideogram, for the shamans and the heroes becomes a mystical itinerary»³⁶. Taken together, Mackey's two serial poems constitute such a mystical itinerary, an elaborate, endless logbook of spiritual travels that constitute a 'book'

What we rode was a book. We
fell out of it, scattered³⁷

and so, travels occur not only on the geographical and psychological levels, but on the tropological level as well. Mackey's 'lost tribe', his 'band of nervous travellers', moves from one place to another, from one psychic state to another, and from one set

of tropes to another, in an endless web or network of language:

It wasn't we were
prey,
buzzing fly, flying fish, wasn't we
were inside Ananse's web, Anuncia's
net. Web it was we were, it wasn't
we were caught. It wasn't we
were web's, we were web...³⁸

In this broader perspective, the poet imagines a purgatorial people running in place on a treadmill caused by obstinate injustices and torments. And this limbo is frequently portrayed in oceanic terms: *when adrift/off Cantaloupe Island's/lotus/coast/* history itself is unanchored and sites lap into one another like wayward waves. In the *Braid* section of *Splay Anthem*, one is *taken in by/dreams* when one is not taken in by a homeland, and so one is *never done/saying goodbye/once begun*³⁹ because existence is a matter of moment-to-moment exiles. Despite such a rapidly transformable notion of place - there is no really an answer to the cosmic question of 'here or there?' and not even that deliberately misunderstood: 'go or stay?' since home is finally impossible to locate, Mackey's response is a rejection of the choice and of the pressure to make that choice - there remains the memory of *plains we/spent millennia crossing*, and so the ancient saying 'by and by' is used as a recurring motif to portray forever-unfurling landscapes on which the good in goodbye curdles and the biding of time is a bait for new traps⁴⁰. As Mackey walks - in a verbal gait frequently pitched between stagger and sleepwalk - across these books' plains, he gestures backward to unknowable ancestors and forward to some hoped-for oasis at once. A deep dualism between «here» and «no-here» haunts much of his verses: geographic polarities swiveling on a conditional or propeling forward and drags back at once. Asked by Donahue about his perspective on home and arrival and recognition, Mackey answers that he has

repeated experiences of and senses of home, and one of the things these poems are registering is multiplicity—that home is not just the manifest geographic place that we're born to, grow up in, and in many ways want to return to. It's something

else. It's a sense of arrival, but to have that sense of arrival you have to come from some place. You lose the sense of arrival when you sit still. It's the getting home that strikes so deeply for me, that sense of having gotten home. But there's also a sense that home gets up and leaves after you've gotten there that propels the agitation and unrest that you talk about in the poems. It's as if you get there and home gets up and leaves and you have to go chase it. It keeps moving on. That's the kind of agitation and wandering spirit that runs through the poems⁴¹.

Mackey refers to a «sense of arrival» that is more important than any notion of security or belonging, and updates the Homeric Odissey so that homecoming is less linear and teleological and more flickering and beckoning⁴². For experimental diasporic writers as Mackey, the reconfiguration recreates and deconstructs historical injustices and silenced identities caused by the reality of colonization. As an interpretive art free of construction and conventionalization, experimental writing needs to reoccur and recreate. Wilson Harris calls this the unfinished genesis of the imagination: the place where artists find their unexpected, but meaningful words from an undefined language of experience and invisible memory⁴³, and in *The Womb of Space* he writes that «exile is the ground of live fossil and sensuous memory within uncertain roots that are threaded into legacies of transplantation... We begin all over again the pursuit of enduring cross-cultural spirit in arts of dialogue with unsuspected and supportive myth»⁴⁴. In Mackey, exile is a part of a relentless spiritual pursuit of remembrance and transpersonal union that simultaneously goes nowhere fast: *It wasn't / wander what we did, we circled*⁴⁵. It is the journey's feeling of ineluctable loss that pushes travellers to search an «alternate world» *walking with his house on / his head is heaven*⁴⁶. In the final section of *Splay Anthem*, the narrator and his companion arrive at a region dubbed 'Nub'. As terrestrial-astral travelers, they've traversed numerous spaces real and imagined, exterior and interior, and have now reached a devastated landscape where «debris bumped our heads, rubble / hurt our fee». In the book's helpful preface, Mackey relates Nub to current political conditions in the United States and across the globe, although many of the places his liminal figures visit

during the course of the book are equally desolate. 'Nub', moreover, metonymically describes the post-9/11 United States under President George W. Bush. As Mackey explains, it refers to the 'shrunk-en', increasingly globalized world at large ('planet Nub'), and carries overtones of ancient African civilization ('Nubia') and Harris's phantom limb ('Numb') as well. Mackey writes of his desire to cure this condition, but 'homeopathically', via his poetry's own 'recourse to echo' rather than, say, through Baraka's later, more instrumental language. Yet this desire cuts both ways: while yearning for a better future, Mackey laments poetry's limited capacity to effect

political change. The only way out of the purgatorial condition of 'andoumboulouousness', Mackey proposes, is by confronting the problem and starting all over again. And in advocating this return to first principles to achieve societal regeneration, post-bop jazz again leads the way. Mackey tells us, in his *Splay Anthem* preface, that he was thinking of Don Cherry's 'Teo-Teo-Can', the fourth track from 'Mu' Second Part, a 1969 'world music' recording that helped inspire the whole 'Mu' serial poem. In this track Cherry resorts to «a sort of coo-baby talk», which Mackey hears as a call for new beginnings.

Notes

- ¹ N. Mackey, *Song of the Andoumboulou: 51 – cargo cult* – in *Splay Anthem*, A New Directions Book, New York 2006, p. 80.
- ² P. Chamoiseau - R. Confiant, *Letters créoles: Tracées antillaises et continentales de la littérature 1635-1975*, Hatier, Paris 1991, pp. 275-276.
- ³ C. Bernstein, *A Poetics*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1992, pp. 153-154.
- ⁴ Born in Miami in 1947 and raised in Southern California, poet, novelist, editor, and critic Nathaniel Mackey is the author of numerous books of poetry, including *Blue Fasa* (2015), *Nod House* (2011), the National Book Award-winning *Splay Anthem* (2006), *Whatsaid Serif* (1998), and *Eroding Witness* (1985), which was chosen for the National Poetry Series. He has published several book-length installments of his ongoing prose work, *From a Broken Bottle Traces of Perfume Still Emanate*, beginning with Bedouin Hornbook in 1986. Two of his poetic influences, William Carlos Williams and Charles Olson, wrote multi-volume epics devoted to a single city – Paterson and Gloucester, respectively – but Mackey, with his devotion to epochal vagrancy and transience, refuses to focus on a singular place. In his work, the 1960's Black Arts Movement rallying cry *Nation Time* is jumbled and annexed and safe harbor is always teasingly located just around the next bend in the trail.
- ⁵ A. Mossin, *Collapsed Aura: Nathaniel Mackey, Robert Duncan, and the Poetics of Discrepant Subjectivity in Song of*

the Andoumboulou, Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2010, p. 160.

- ⁶ Mackey, *Song of the Andoumboulou: 44 in Splay Anthem*, cit., p. 36.
- ⁷ Mackey, *On Antiphon Island – 'mu' twenty-eight part* – in *Splay Anthem*, cit., p. 65.
- ⁸ For Mackey, 'elsewhere' is an ever-advancing horizon, an Africa scattered and felt primarily as a mocking residue and a womb turned inside out. In an interview with Christopher Funkhouser, the poet claimed that his cadences are «cut to my voice and my sense of placement and space», and said «cuts» are sliced of history used to illuminate both incongruities and continuums. See Christopher Funkhouser, *An interview with Nathaniel Mackey*, «Callaloo» 18 (1995), p. 328.
- ⁹ Mackey, *Song of the Andoumboulou: 56*, in *Splay Anthem*, cit., p. 97.
- ¹⁰ The name of this series comes from a recording, *Les Dogon*, an ethnic group in Mali, on which an example of the referenced funeral song appears.
- ¹¹ Donald Eugene Cherry (1936 –1995) was an American jazz trumpeter. Ron Wynn, a music critic and author, writes that «[Cherry's] technique isn't always the most efficient; frequently, his rapid-fired solos contain numerous missed or muffed notes. But he's a master at exploring the trumpet and cornet's expressive, voice-like properties; he bends notes and adds slurs and smears, and his twisting solos are tightly constructed and executed regardless of their flaws». R. Wynn, *All Music Guide to Jazz*, Miller Freeman, San Francisco 1994, p. 147.

- ¹² Mackey, *Splay Anthem*, cit., p. xi.
- ¹³ *Ibidem*, p. ix.
- ¹⁴ Mossin, *Collapsed Aura: Nathaniel Mackey, Robert Duncan, and the Poetics of Discrepant Subjectivity in Song of the Andoumboulou*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2010, p. 170.
- ¹⁵ Mackey, *Preface*, in *Splay Anthem*, cit., p. x.
- ¹⁶ N. Finkelstein, *On Mount Vision. Forms of the sacred in contemporary American poetry*, University of Iowa Press, Iowa city 2010, p. 193.
- ¹⁷ H. Vendler, *Soul Says*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1995, p. 5.
- ¹⁸ Mackey, *Song of the Andoumboulou*: 46, in *Splay Anthem*, cit., p. 47.
- ¹⁹ D. Hadbawnik, *Interview with Nathaniel Mackey-Front Porch*, September 14, 2007.
- ²⁰ A. Baraka, *Class Struggle in Music*, in *The Music: Reflections on Jazz and Blues*, William Morrow New York 1987, p. 320.
- ²¹ Mackey, *The Changing Same: Black Music in the Poetry of Amiri Baraka*, in *Discrepant Engagement: Dissonance, Cross-Culturality, and Experimental Writing*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1993, p. 40.
- ²² Mackey, *Interview by Paul Naylor*, in *Paracritical Hinge*, cit., p. 345.
- ²³ Baraka, *Coltrane Live at Birdland*, in *Black Music*, Greenwood Press, Westport 1980, p. 66.
- ²⁴ Mackey writes about Wilson Harris's 'phantom limb' figure in *Limbo, Dislocation, Phantom Limb: Wilson Harris and the Caribbean Occasion*, in «Criticism» 22, no. 1 (Winter 1980).
- ²⁵ P. Naylor, *Poetic Investigations: Singing the Holes in History*, Northwestern UP, Evanston 1999, p. 340.
- ²⁶ Finkelstein, *On Mount Vision*, cit., p. 185.
- ²⁷ Mackey, *Song of the Andoumboulou*: 58, in *Splay Anthem*, cit., p. 109.
- ²⁸ Mackey quotes Ellen B. Basso's study of Kalapalo myth and ritual performance, *A Musical View of the Universe*, as an epigraph to *Whatsaid Serif*: «in order for the story to be told at all, it must be received by a responder or 'what-sayer', who is a crucial actor in the situation. The what-sayer may be someone who asked to be given the narrative or the recipient of a story that exemplifies explanatory principles needing clarification during the course of some other discussion; the person serving as what-sayer can change during the course of a telling» (Basso 15). Thus the stranger in *Andoumboulou*: 18 simply repeats the word 'So' as he confronts the poet, whereas later, in *Andoumboulou*: 20, the two change places: «I was the whatsayer. / Whatever he said I would / say so what» (*Whatsaid Serif* 22). Mackey elaborates on what saying in his interview with Paul Naylor: «'Whatsaidness' ups the ante on witness, not wanting to adibe by simple oppositions between narrativity and reflexivity, espressivism and constructivism. The what-sayer is the recipient of the narrative and a co-producer of the narrative, a weave or tangle of roles the Kalapalo, I think, usefully acknowledge» (*Paracritical Hinge*, cit., p. 399.).
- ²⁹ E. B. Basso, *A Musical View of the Universe: Kalapalo Myth and Ritual Performances*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia 1985, p. 125.
- ³⁰ Psychogeography, as the term suggests, is the intersection of psychology and geography. It focuses on our psychological experiences of the city, and reveals or illuminates forgotten, discarded, or marginalised aspects of the urban environment. Both the theory and practice of psychogeography have been around since 1955, when French theorist Guy Debord coined the term. Psychogeographers idolise the *flâneur*, a figure conceived in 19th-century France by Charles Baudelaire and popularised in academia by Walter Benjamin in the 20th century. A romantic stroller, the *flâneur* wandered about the streets, with no clear purpose other than to wander. In his book *London Orbital*, Iain Sinclair describes a walk around the M25 and the 'unloved outskirts of the city'. He observes: «I had to walk around London's orbital motorway; not on it, but within what the Highways Agency calls the 'acoustic footprints'. The soundstream. Road has replaced river. The M25 does the job of the weary Thames, shifting contraband, legal and illegal cargoes, offering a picturesque backdrop to piracy of every stamp». Sinclair describes his walk as having a 'ritual purpose' to «exorcise the unthinking malignancy of the Dome, to celebrate the sprawl of London». He also describes walking as a virtue. Self sees walking as «a means of dissolving the mechanised matrix which compresses the space-time continuum». He describes the solitary walker as «an insurgent against the contemporary world, an ambulatory time traveller». Psychogeography is therefore useful in showing that walking is not only an art form in itself. It is also crucial in understanding the complication between the histories and myths of urban landscapes. I. Sinclair, *London Orbital: A Walk Around The M25*, Penguin, London 2003.
- ³¹ Mackey, *Beginning with lines by Anwar Naguib – 'mu' sixteenth part* – in *Splay Anthem*, cit., p. 8.
- ³² *Ibidem*, p. 12.
- ³³ Mackey, *Song of the Andoumboulou*: 42, cit., p. 32.
- ³⁴ Mackey, *Go left out of Shantiville – 'mu' twenty-second part* – in *Splay Anthem*, cit., pp. 34-35.
- ³⁵ Finkelstein, *On Mount Vision*, cit., p. 194.
- ³⁶ M. Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, Princeton UP, Princeton 1992, p. 76.
- ³⁷ Mackey, *Song of the Andoumboulou*: 42, cit., p. 29.
- ³⁸ Mackey, *Song of the Andoumboulou*: 56, in *Splay Anthem*, cit., p. 95.
- ³⁹ Mackey, *Andoumboulouous Brush – 'mu' fifteenth part* – in *Splay Anthem*, cit., p. 6.
- ⁴⁰ Mackey, *Blue Fasa*, New Directions, New York 2015, pp. 3,

14.

⁴¹ See Mackey's interview *Epic World* with Joseph Donahue, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/articles/70116/epic-world>.

⁴² *Ibidem*.

⁴³ W. Harris, *Selected Essays: The Unfinished Genesis of the Imagination*, Routledge, London 1999, p. 211.

⁴⁴ Harris, *The Womb of Space: The Cross-cultural Imagination*, Greenwood, Westport 1983, p. xx.

⁴⁵ Mackey, *Song of the Andoumboulou: 60*, in *Splay Anthem*, cit., p. 124.

⁴⁶ Ch. Olson, *The Songs of Maximus: Song 1*, in *The Maximus Poems*, University of California Press, Berkeley 1987, p. 78.