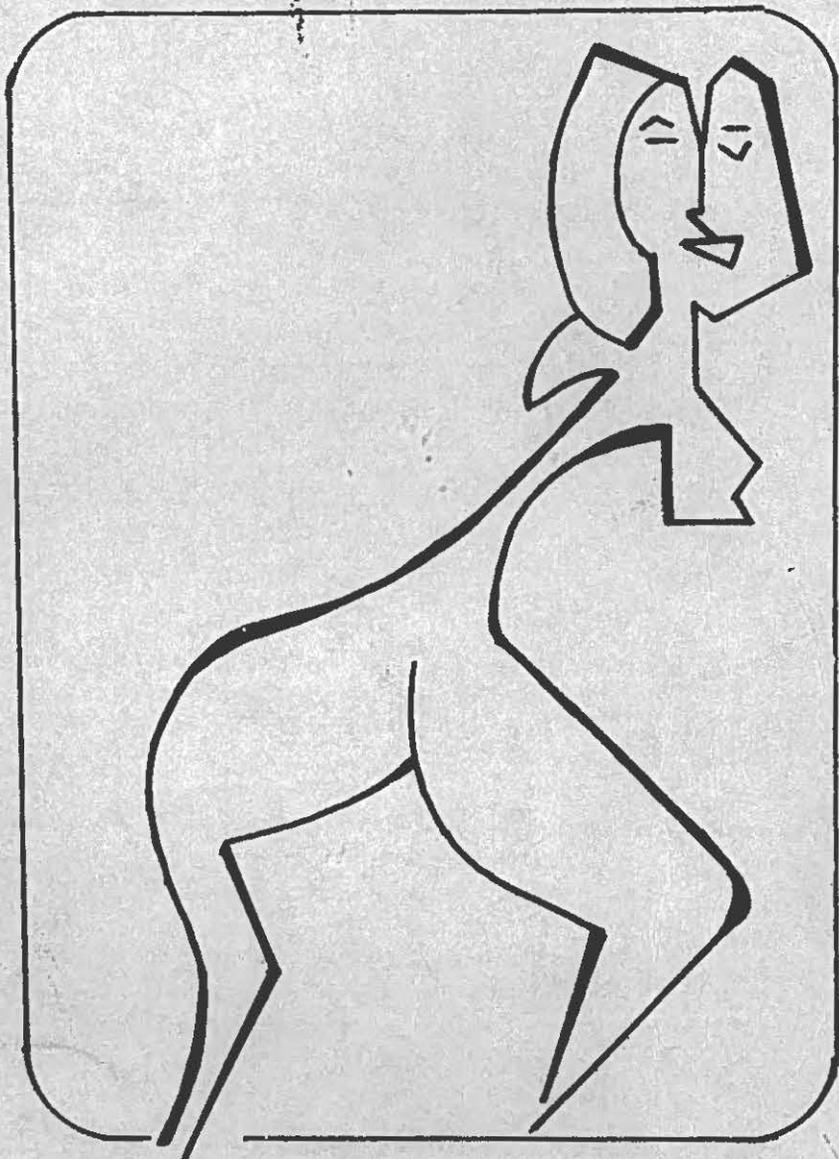


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now

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This magazine is produced with the assistance of the Institute of Jamaica, whose generous support is gratefully acknowledged here. Thanks also to Desnoes and Geddes Ltd., without whose support the magazine would not appear in its present format.

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A review supplement with reviews by Stewart Brown, Peter Virgadamo and Yorrick. And Notes on Contributors. The Cover drawing is by Lois Langenfeld.

Redress

The times come down like a shadow
And settles among the desolate towers.
Let the scruple of all who see
Large as mountains, the dazzle of horror
Standing armoured in many lands,
Carry their knowledge in a censer of prayer,
And let vespers of love be sung among them,
For love will be needed,
For love will be needed.

A great wind plucked from the stems of stars
Seeks out all breasts and speaks its cause.
Vines cannot express good grapes
Save with the dark earth's sympathy -
The harmony of roots and leaves and ground,
Black stem and seed, white sap and wood.
Thus in the colourless air, good harvest
And wine sparkling.

We who are children of charity shall build
New foundations set in a new land.
For we have suffered the manifestation
Of falling towers and barren trees.
We know now, castles whistle in the wind
Their austerity and their dull vinyards die,
Their wines, valueless in the cellars
Sour into vinegar.

For too long now have cries of agony
Climbed and clashed in thunder overhead,
Have send their thrusts of lightning to our hearts.
And yet, and yet,
Too long the lesson to be learnt has taken,
And purity has passed the other side too long.
Let redress be and let the people
Sing vespers of love solemnly among them.
Love will be needed.

A letter to my friends in the USA

Across the vinyl counter,
hands outstretched
sipping chlorinated water,
one of the many isomers of our need,
I fished three cents out
at the airport in Miami
to pay for the tainted liquid.

This was my homage paid
to that myth, not yet myth
I was to discover of my years.

In the reassurance of Newsweek covers,
the New York Times, Wrigley's Spearmint
chewing gum and good 'ole' "Guess
who is coming to dinner"
cherry pie the main course
and turkey roast crisp as the
tarred blacks of your South,
I looked for your conflicts, resolved
the defiant black gestures as
a more updated and with it
Statue of Liberty.

No trespasser, just visitor,
Carnegie Hall, Radio City, White House and
anti-war demonstrations equally familiar,
the signals covering the streets,
each stop halting the poor,
each go, your machines speed along
circuitously and the amber glow
I paused.

Even more sobered now
we who have judged you
become defendants.

There is no doubt that
your efficiency at creation
was responsible for my believing
the moon at the top of your skyscrapers
was an electric light,
your refineries refined well,
construction plants constructed totally
barges barged skillfully
and foundries founded the future
of the many graves I saw in your
cemetery in New York.

It is now night, I may not write again,
It is so much easier to use Union Telegraph.

(1972)

Progress

WHEN YOU WALK SLOWLY
DOWN A GREY WHITE STREET
IN THE MID AFTERNOON WITH
HOT FANGS BRANDING YOUR BACK
AND SPIT CAREFULLY COLLECTED
SALIVA INTO THE PAVEMENT
NEAR WHERE THE OLD WOMAN SAT
YESTERDAY WITH HER OUTSTRETCHED
HAND BEGGING A LIE FOR LIFE,
YOU REPLY WITH THE ASSURANCE
OF A CHEQUING ACCOUNT AND
WELL FILLED STOMACH.
YOU DO NOTHING NEW BUT
PASS OVER THE FOOTSTEPS
OF YOUR FATHER WHO WORE
THE SAME STIFF WHITE SHIRT
AND TIE ONLY HE WAS WALKING
TO HIS BICYCLE, YOU TO YOUR CAR.

A boyhood

(excerpt from 'A Travelogue Recalls')

You dead boy,
I can shoot faster than you
I am faster on the trigger,
Shooting a boy's innocence
into the spattered cordite
of the screen,
new fantasies like derelicts
dot this scene I stand.
A hand used to feeling
the harsh edge of cane
eyes blinded by the soap-
white glare of the sand,
feet cracked by
the gnarled roots which
like tea-leaves dot
these paths I follow,
skipping over the hills
to the sea, choking
on the bite in the wind;
these are the backdrops
a childhood unearths.
Many things, my closest kiss
of death,
a newsprint memory,
the headlines unbelieved.
Grief squeezed like toothpaste
circled each corbeau's squall.
This is the BBC calling . . .
magic which placed in the
evening's dinner Dien Bien phu
and other names recall
Algiers, Goa, some mad
pirate steals a Spanish ship
hi-jack, ship-jack my mind
in a world confused
with it's own hopes.

Maria Arrillaga

Lost baby

Lana was loony and I loved her. I found her on a street, homeless, runaway, hair curly like waves of corn electric. She came into my house and spread flowers everywhere. Circle of print expanding. I saw once in a luscious dream Japanese printlike sometimes most of the time the unbound circle of interior garden design man made like when one is high flying energy COLOR.

Lana saw the cat get killed all the way down the air shaft down and did not bat an eye. The cat gave her his eyes before he said good-bye so she would not have to bat an eye.

Lana read F. Scott Fitzgerald while she was delivering quietly read Gatsby my love to later go and fly frisbies near a tenement.

Champagne bottles exploded corks high flying (repeat) while, it was New Year's Eve. Lana threw up she was in a strange country and the food did not suit her.

Golly-gee-wow cliches are funny things sometimes as big bigger than reality not new always.

Lana met a young man painter who smelled the flowers she scattered everywhere all around places and he painted her a flower. He was from a strange country too, he too was also a magician type fellow who when he painted her a flower he painted her a flower poor flower Lana forever framed as a flower but pretty always her painter magician friend loved her truly and came into the frame sometimes. They played frisbie. He brought her the Beautiful and the Damned. She read flower painted Lana inside frame while he painted more flowers around Japanese style like.

Her cat like eyes yellow shone with delight watching him nice young man painter paint the flowers around and around.

The lion that went down the shaft was called cat by Lana. He had stayed on with Lana her eyes that he gave her big yellow cat eyes and Lana loved the young man painter so she one day came out of the frame a painted flower to embrace him with roar and claws cat's eyes. The love was so great that there they lay dishevelled the two of them among the flowers.

COUNT DOWN

Riddle: What happened to the baby that Lana bore?
(Turn page upside down for answer)

(Answer: it's you, my friend)

A.L. Hendriks

MADONNA of the UNKNOWN NATION

A new collection of poems from the well known and much loved West Indian poet, continuing the success of ON THIS MOUNTAIN. THESE GREEN ISLANDS. and MUET.

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Granville Road, LONDON N4, 4 JB. UK.

Philip Sherlock

Middle passage

Written for Frank Collymore on his 80th. birthday

Cradled
On the lullaby sea
His black body starred
With salt water,

face downwards,
free and at home
in the gentle salt water
he floats by the razor-sharp reef, looks down
on gardens of branching coral,
on living thickets of cup-shaped sponges,
using the names the fishermen use,
seafingers and horse sponge,
elephants ears and mermaids gloves
with jewelled fish at hide-and-seek,
happy the world of sea and sun,
his black body starred with salt
sings its way to the waiting sand
and the dancing leaves of the almond tree
and the sea-grapes shade.

Free and at home
He matches his mood
to the luck of the day
Black body cleaving
The green wave curling
sending his laughter
aloft on the Trades
flying feet weaving
a pattern of speed
sea crabs scuttling
trade winds drumming,
fierce waves pounding,
oh free, so free
the little body sings its way
through the ocean world,
the storm and the thundering shore.

You think it easy

to assess Trinidad and Tobago poetry

It is always difficult to say what poetry is or should be. It is always difficult to say that this is and that is not poetry, or define degrees of competence or excellence in poetry.

Where the poets have mastered craftsmanship one looks for ". . . the magical something that lies beyond craftsmanship - that intensity of vision which vitalizes the idea and spirit of great poetry . . ."

Where there is a "tangled cultural heritage" and a deep sense of history, as there is in the Trinidad and Tobago or West Indian situation, the poets may be expected to achieve and develop "a truly sensitive and compassionate awareness of people, place and history". Off and on in the early Trinidad poetry one comes upon this sensibility, sometimes in the work of Mendes, as in his 'Cadet Corps', or as in Olga Yaatoff's "House of Bondage".

A.C. Ward suggests the power of poetry / the poet when he says

But the poet is a visionary as well as a clear-sighted human creature. He sees from the heights of imagination as well as from the level of earth; he possesses something of divinity in amplification of his powers as a man.

Ward also says

If poetry does not (for both poet and reader) smash through walls of the imprisoning self and lead into new countries - whether beautiful or terrifying - poetry might as well not be written.

I would not suggest that much of the poetry written so far in this country should not have been written. Most reviewers of West Indian poetry usually see the works of the late 1920s, the 1930s and even the 1940s, as having mainly a historical importance. Edward Baugh says that "such interest as their work holds now is almost exclusively historical. In each case not more than one or two poems are still in any way memorable for their own sake".

The works of the earlier writers have been seen as so many borrowings from the English models, as watered down Romanticism and Victorianism, with some feeble attempts at what was then current being made by the few who considered themselves progressive. Speaking about the turn West Indian poetry has taken, Andrew Salkey in his introduction to Breaklight says that the present poetry is much different from the early ones. He says that

The old models, 'Euro-centred', metropolitan and approved at a chilling distance, are ignored more and more . . . (and) . . . there has been a turning away from the trite lyricism, and aimless, decorative and derivative borrowings from the School Anthology' models, and from the banality and forced nationalistic poetry of the Late Thirties and middle Forties in the Caribbean.

Writing about Derek Walcott's The Gulf and other poems, in 1969, Gordon Roohlehr noted that

The publication of Derek Walcott's In a Green Night (1962) was a landmark in the history of West Indian poetry, liberating it at once from a simple mindless romanticism, weak historicism, over rhetorical protest and sterile abstraction.

He further sees these poems as

. . . a remarkable attempt to come to terms with a tangled cultural heritage which offered both the vision of unbearable brutality, and the promise of rich variety.

There was a big difference between English poetry of the 1930s and the poetry that was being written in Trinidad. Writing about English poetry, A.C. Ward says

The poetry of the nineteen-thirties was saturated in the bloody sweat of that decade. This fact gives it a documentary importance which may seem as time passes, to outweigh its poetic merit. It was symptomatic rather than prophylactic. The poet turned politician may serve his age as a politician, but he may in so doing abrogate his more important function as a visionary.

The local poets of the decade, however, do not reflect the 'bloody sweat of that decade', perhaps because then the real bloody era broke out, publishing in Trinidad had come to a standstill, because of the censorship and other restrictions, but mainly because as a self-perpetuating elite they grouped themselves away from society, both middle and working class. Their 'higher' moments then, perhaps, spent in contemplation of their own navels.

The 1940s, saw the blossoming into publication of poetry of Neville Giuseppi, Gilles L. Cobham, A.M. Clarke and

H.M. Telemaque, whose poems all appeared in anthologies which were published by the poets themselves.

In some of the poems of these men are seen the building sense of nationalism and national identity.

Telemaque writes about his own country, extolling its beauty and uniqueness and its special meaning for him, in poems like 'Courland Bay', 'Little Black Boy', 'In our Land', and 'Riches'.

Generally, the poets of the 1950's, 60's and 70's have continued to use the traditional forms of writing, though there seems to be an increasing use of free verse forms. The younger poets are experimenting with forms and rhythms of the various activities and rhetorical traditions in the country. Victor Questel has attempted to use the stickfighting tradition and the Shouter mode in his poems 'Man Dead' and 'Only Believe' respectively. Malik and Kwesi Lasana have used the rhythms and speech patterns of the area where the steel band spawned, which also gave birth to the 1970 spiritual and political rebirth. I have attempted to use several speech patterns and musical motifs in poems like 'Cadence', 'Decision', '11 years and another policeman killed', and the 'Lovesong of Boysie B'.

In 1962, one critic suggested that of the existing Trinidad and Tobago poets, only Cecil Herbert and Tobago-born Eric Roach, were "the ones with a genuine poetic talent." This critic went on to allow that H.M. Telemaque, also Tobago-born, seems to have something behind his poetry besides words and literary poses. The critic believed that whatever poetic talent had so far appeared in this country, had "inhibited itself through a number of misconceptions of what poetry is . . ." He finds that in much of the poetry of Roach and Herbert, "you have to so ramble through a lot to make contact with the talent underneath, but he finds consolation in the assertion that "at least Roach and Herbert have both written poems which are successful". In the others he finds that there is nothing behind the poeticising. The critic goes on to

offer the explanation that "the hollowness and meretriciousness of most of the country's poetry lies in the nature of the education to poetry which is available to the young. He finds that poets have been adopting attitudes which paralyze their creativity, since in writing their poems they attempt "a recalling (of) the vocabulary of poetry to which (they have) been educated, using the same concepts and 'machinery' as previous poets have used, and producing verse semi-automatically, without a perpetually alert attention to (their) own feelings towards their material". He finds strengths in Roach when the poet writes as "a member of an idealized Tobagonian peasant race", . . . writing "what this race means to the earth and the earth to this race". Here, he finds, "the rhetoric disappears. There is simplicity of diction and a control over the movement of the verses that are absent from his academic studies . . . there is sometimes a gentle humour . . . a literalness; a correspondence between word and thing".

In 1971, Eric Roach became part of an interesting debate on West Indian poetry when he adversely criticised the younger poets in Savacou 3/4. Roach stressed the artist's need to learn his craft and to write out of the fullness of his experience, and expressed his dislike for most of the poetry in the anthology (as his earlier critic had done with Roach's poems). His assessment of Wayne Brown seems to have been somewhat correct, for the young Trinidad and Tobago poet recently won a Commonwealth prize for his first collection of poems (whatever it is that prize-winning indicates). However, Gordon Rohlehr, jumping into the literary gayelle, put forward sound suggestions for guidelines towards assessing West Indian poetry. He suggests his basic criteria in the following words:

I'd have tried as far as possible to determine how far that writing reflected and explored the tensions of the society, and would have used "genuineness of feeling" as one of my criteria. The

question of form or shape is a much more difficult one to settle, since there is no common consensus anywhere in the world today as to what constitutes proper form. I myself admire a wide variety of writing, ranging from overtly "dramatic" use of language, which may be concerned only with things like rhythm and tone, to the highly complex and concentrated use of images and symbols, and I welcome the presence of both elements in current West Indian writing. I welcome especially the confidence with which young writers are trying to shape ordinary speech, and to use some of the musical rhythms which dominate the entire Caribbean environment.

Rohlehr also stresses the need for poet and critic to have a strong sense of history, their own history and culture; the one, in order to write meaningful poetry, the other in order to be able to understand and relate to the poetic creations.

We are gradually moving towards this end. As it stands at present, I wonder how you would approach a criticism of Pan Run I and II, by Malik (Delano de Coteau), or Victor D. Questel's 'Only Believe'; or my own 'Decision' or '11 years and another policeman killed?' Eh, you think it easy?

Malik's poems can be found in Black Up (now out of print). Questel's poems can be found in Score (also out of print). Gonzolez' poems can be found in Score, the New Voices, and The Love-song of Boysie B. and other poems

Blindman's bluff

Ash Wednesday
and
No one goes for cane
in this island anymore.

Burnt out by liquor
I stumble words
that only the wind
hears
as you reach the end
of your endless journey
no end

as pink smoke rises
over the setting sun

and a discarded float

haunches with shame in a drain

its once proud dragon neck broken
like
that band's collapsed canopy
whose bassman is dead without
a shadow of a doubt.

But that's what this country is about,

the burning of flesh and cane;
the ash
of effort.

Find me that voice which
cried
"Land, Bread and Justice"

Find me that voice which
cried
"I come out to play"

and Today
I will show you
the splintered halves
of your twisted
self-
mockery.

ii.
The music in my head
is still drunk

as I replace the seventh beer bottle
on the ringed floor,
the rings of water
trapping my down-ward stare.

Remember,
the game is blindman's bluff;
but the end
is when you pin the tail on yourself.

iii.
Put on the light,
there are too many sounds
here
I cannot name.

No eyes like Heartman's
patient heroes,
I burn silently in my den,
seeing
each shaven convict's head
reflect a blind future.

Pacing the room
I go north from the Demerrara window
only to be drowned in the paper
gulf
pinned on the wall
as my hands grope between
the Dragon's tooth
and
the Serpent's pointed grin.

Its all mapped out.

iv.
Already
that raised hand
that flings your garbage,
balances the ash
on your child's forehead,

stalks his future dreams.

Look,
a staring finger paces the sun's dead centre.

rasta voice

THE MAGAZINE OF THE RASTAFARI MOVEMENT
ASSOCIATION.

NEWS, VIEWS, POETRY, ARTICLES, INFORMATION.

RMA. 53 Laws Street, Kingston, Jamaica.

Duncan Tweedale

On the head of a queen mother of Benin

(Nigeria c. 1500)

queen mother of Benin
your bronze head
is smooth cool
& unassailed
forcing itself outwards
in superb arcs
eyes a closed gate on
the many mansions of
the inner castle
not an apostrophe

an affirmation
a treasury of lost connections
corridors of the Dream
perfect as a Chinese jar
without knowledge of worm
or spider

the spirit rises
it curls like smoke through the rafters
it curls through the city
and the ten cities
of Benin

and for five hundred years
not an instant has passed
your ring that tinkled a moment ago
before all this happened
has not yet broken loose
from its echo

Disneyland

The formula was perfect-
angle-iron and peach
suffused with snow-white,
watery plum and crisp wafer of frost,
together the basic erections
of water and stone.
But the dwarf,
crosseyed with night-work,
bickered over the dialectical handbook.
In the morning we shot him
and the fountains stopped.

This time there would be no mistake:
the nave, bone-grey with pidgeon shit,
squirring roots easing up the stones,
the angle of light through the windowless window
falling on a liturgy
of leaf and rain,
the dust of the City.
But the dwarf had the stuttering book
and the mica staff
jammed into the hinges of the door.
Instead, we drank the communion wine
and hung him for a clapper.

As a last resort
a perfect structure of membrane,
the pith of a dropped pear,
the gut of a bog-rat-
not even the light banging on the sides.
But the dwarf homed in
on our almost perfect death.
We tore him to pieces
but only the landscape screamed.

The dreamer jumps out

For John Berryman.

John Berryman dies; falling through broken reality
is the stunted song, the way of outdoing irony at its
own barbed game. He dies and a friend reads a poem in his
memory and fails to get there. There cannot be another
place like Berryman's mind. It can only be an attempted
grace. Each man makes his own borrowing of references.
Occasions like this cheat us; we mirror-index what seems
momentous and it becomes casual. We chase these ghosts
of the great and skate over the merest reflexes. We are
left with small duties as we can find them. Water and air
and stone changes in our minds. Conclusions catch us out;
the same winds mould us; we are our own winter prophets.

Gil Tucker

Painting

The picture gave no details
All was blank watery and in cryptic holes
turning half as lights sank
and echoed in amputated shadows
eating out
of these dark stains dripping with cold blues &
deep yellows round the centers of the eye
there's no foreground or back grounds
between the hand and the smell of warm oranges

Burning out these unforgivable images
slamming against the corners of the mind.

Dreams

Garbage barges caterpillars in the starry night
undulating full of sorrow
as a tadpole in grey soup
penetrate my entrails
fed by waste of broken chairs.

I am no more than a living bone
a snail wanting caviar
drowning in champagne bubbles.

Eat the grass
but don't become a tree
too cold winter.

Finger tips like kissing sparrows
white magnolias exquisitely scented brain
veined diversity turned tranquil
cock robin on a perfect tree
involved threads that make you gasp
shake in awe at the stillness of creation.

Flesh deep soft pulsating knowledge
hands vibrate like the strings of a guitar
made live by children's dreams.

The moment

Lithe - snake like,
Yet with the strength of the lion-kin,
He forces his way in -
Into a sufferin' weeping frame,
Which, tortured by it's need for love
Had long since arched,
In readiness of the willing game.
The hours pass, an eternity of ecstasy,
The bodies sweat with pain;
The animal is roused -
And fire seems to fan the flame.
This night is ours -
All hell has ceased in sweet surrender!
The mould is softened, the fire burns -
It flashes, into a rare explosion!
The male cries out, as at it's birth;
He shudders, folds into her arms,
She weeps
The nature of himself drains in her sanctuary

Creation has it's birth -
Life is set free!

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Edward Braithwaite. Dept. History, UWI, Mona,

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AND HAS BEEN FOR THIRTY YEARS.

The editors. Ferney, Atlantic Shores,
Christ Church, Barbados. West Indies.

OPEN LETTER
TO THE ISRAELI CONSUL IN JAMAICA

Jewish neither by nationality nor by religion
But only by that common Adam who
Surveying the savanna with calculating eyes, thought up
the plough,
And by that modern and un-Miltonic Eve who decided
To leave the spindle to the boring spinsters,
I write,
A single human being compelled by my admiration

For courage
And spirit
And intelligence -
All of which virtues are written into the sign of two
overlapping triangles.

Bodies; arms and legs like cactus stumps, swollen,
The desert rose spilled amidst the thorns,
Bodies more silent than spent bullets voided
in the salient,
Metal monsters eating bodies,

A vision of horror.
Dragon teeth sprout here and the tongues of the unborn
Are already silently shouting,
War! War!
It is never ending. . .

And so is the stink in the wake of the world's whispers of
"Peace, brothers, while we pass the ammunition."
Jesting Pilate is busy - he has gone to the wash room.

Live, Israel,
Live, and let each Israeli citizen's life proclaim
The value of the more than vegetable,
Of the idea that milks the sand and makes the
rock yield.

Water!
Precious each single life as a flask of water
To a prisoner of war dying of thirst.

Tied here and rooted,
My navel string buried under a pimento tree,
Knowing myself to be too old, and too soft for your needs
I send this poor poem which cost some effort in the making
to say

How short is man's span on earth and how precious
How short the course of a nation's glory
Yet it lives, as a great poem lives.

Desperation in the desert.
A tree breaks through the sand.
Water!

Live, tough Israel, abstract and compact as the
star of David.

Fields of cane gleaming under the jets at Llandoverly are
my Israel,
Only just dawning in the jungle dreams of my unfocused
nation.

Here in this Israel,
Where saplings perish amidst hard clods
Ceremoneously turned over by spades of the speech making
master chairmen.

Force 12

The way of it is over trees
as a man strides over grass
indifferent to small havoc. Its
weight kills buds and leaves;
split from their sockets,
skeltered by cataract,
they fall in degrading sprawls,
splashed on piping, posts, walls,
choked in gratings with gutter-muck.

What howls is what is struck
for wind is dumb
not having to explain itself.

Birds are irrevocably wrecked,
run aground, flung, broken
by this, wing's especial trust, of whom
they most openly committed describing
and adoring its pure currents,
confess its dispassion, permanence
and implacability.

No one should ask what the wind means.

More than air's Logos or token,
it is its own thing
innocent of sentiment or cruelty.

The wind means nothing but itself.

The new earth

If I have to live elsewhere
make me there a mongoose,
a lithe brave murderess
with shoe-button shiny eyes
that read no pity nor tales of absolution;

a bitch mongoose
brisk, conscienceless,
preying on all soft and weak sent
for my survival in your creation.

Give me no anger
nor any sentiment,

only power to slaughter,
speed to escape danger,
a muzzle to dapple red where red blood flows,
strength to butcher the damning fowl before he crows -

garrotte the serpent before he makes any wise.

At every border

At every border stood a wall.
But he would not adapt
for anything: that we are trapped
he wouldn't buy at all
(until). "You think too small,"
he said, "you hopeless liar!"

He burrowed in the dark, a blind
adventurer. He surfaced. Wall behind.
Before him stood another, higher.

On the edge of the sand

Pussycat:

His conversation flattered; she said yes
and went the way his thoughts inclined.
But not content with rooting in the flesh
he stuck an amorous finger in her mind;
and now her mind lies naked to his pleasure
and hungry for possession, she's afraid:
she would have barred him from her treasure
if she had known her mind was getting laid.

Owl:

The animal gets up - and so much faster
than books had warned him, he's afraid:
a subtle tongue he cannot master
entices him into the mesh:
his lucid mind is picturing disaster
but will not break the power of the flesh.

Ad for a housing scheme

Packed tightly like
sums. Their sheer
geometrical lines oppress
architecturally, appearing
disinterested, loveless, same.

People who drive past these houses
see them as stacked

-up z -

ros to be quickly got through;
accelerate, almost
by instinct, to have them
behind their tail pipes
like bad dreams or carcasses.

Mine, positioned
in from the highway, assails
few sensitive motorists, but I,
walking toward its box-
shape this twilight,
see it as part
of a huge, grotesque tenement: my house
is ugly for being anonymous.

And now suddenly
the gray, uniform buildings
intersent like years. Poised
only for home, I cross
into a harsh, formularized future
where houses and people
flash smally and strictly alike.

The well-wishers

for Patric Dickinson

Most often in broad daylight:
a white cloak swaying at a
street corner; stillness at noon
as, somewhere, a long way off,
thunder mutters a promise.
Or, on a country journey,
from the dusty hill behind,
the flash of a mirror, held
in a watcher's hand. Smoke-trails
ahead, in the thick pinewoods.
But even at night, in sleep,
there are always signs. Do they
ever drowse, the well-wishers?
Or do they sometimes merely
hold those cloaks before their faces,
hoping to conceal from us
their next move, the full extent
of their good intentions?

Mervyn Morris

THE POND

THE FIRST COLLECTION OF POEMS BY THIS
HIGHLY TALENTED YOUNG JAMAICAN.
New Beacon Books. 2 Albert Road, London N4, 3RW
England.

Son of man

The Bronx, affectionately termed down-town-and-out Bronx by Manhattan citizens, shimmered in the evening heat haze of toxic garbage fumes. Here were the last select members of the pawn-broker belt and, most important of all, the Jews who were remembered once every two years in New York's election for mayor. At any other time they were content to live in peace and seclusion, circumstances of which other, larger minority groups approved. The whites hated the blacks, the Catholics the Communists, the Polaks the Puerto Ricans but every body united together to hate the Jews.

Charlie Schattenauser was not Jewish, he was pure American, his family going back at least two generations of pure Americans. When still young and living in Georgia it had occurred to Charlie Schattenauser that he was unimportant and, therefore, had joined the Klu Klux Klan, looking very ducky in his converted tent. But it had then occurred to Charlie that the opposition had more publicity than he had, so he travelled north and became a lay preacher. In one swift stroke he had become more important and being important was important to Charlie.

It being the July fourth season Charlie had been doing his rounds amongst the heathen flock of the Bronx. He was not successful in spiritual terms but the year had been commercially good and the humble and meek had given generously into Charlie's open hands. These donations had probably been inspired by Charlie, wearing, temporarily, a black eye patch but Charlie had been unwilling to interfere in the mysterious workings of the Lord. Some of the money had already been spent in the corner liquor stores, and now Charlie was looking for some friendly bar to spend the rest. It was unfortunate that he had to choose Arny Loewenthal's little dive.

"Gimme drink, mac. Bourbon."

Army was a negro but this was not going to blight Charlie's alcohol-inspired goodwill to all men, and blacks. Army moved with quick lethargy to get the drink. Charlie studied the tall negro's awkward movements. Eventually he got his drink.

"What's your name, mac?"

"Loewenthal, Arnold Loewenthal, sir," Army spoke without raising his hooded eyes from the top of the bar. The 'sir' had made Charlie feel even better.

"Well, Army, now don't you be scared of me. I admit I may've buckshot a few nigra's in Georgia but now I'm converted and I shall call you brother Army." Army looked up and saw a nose smeared somewhere between gimlet eyes and a fleshy mouth. Army saw bitterly-needed friendship there. "And you shall call me brother Charlie."

"O.K., brother Charlie," said Army.

Meanwhile Army's parents were watching the Ed Sullivan show on television. Their names were Samuel and Amy Loewenthal. They were white, Army having been adopted in a fit of pique by Amy when the Robinewicz's next door had adopted a Japanese kid.

"I'll castrate the bastard," said Samuel affectionately.

"Sam, why can't you speak with style and class?" said Amy.

"What the hell should you know about style and class, you who always write your s's backwards?"

"I can't help writing my s's backwards, Sam. And you shouldn't speak of your son like that."

"The sonovabitch is your son, he sure ain't mine," Samuel replied with style and class. "The louse ain't normal, he's a goddam freak."

"He ain't no freak, Sam. In what way is he a freak?"

"What happens when Mimi Bernstein across the block flashes her tits at him? He runs to the john, that's what happens, twenty times a day he runs to the john, like some crazy guy."

"He's modest, that's all Sam."

"I'll castrate the sonovabitch."

Meanwhile, back at the bar, brother Army had reversed the more traditional roles and was expounding his life story to brother Charlie.

"At the orphanage I was Catholic but my adopted parents made me become a Jew."

"You don't say? What a lousy thing to do to a guy." A fleeting memory passed through Charlie's mind of shooting up a bar-mitzvah with shotguns. A smile came to his face which he quickly erased.

"I was brought up poor, so as not to spoil me, see? But then I got to figuring that if I'm poor everybody else should be poor so I joined the Communist party." A slight frown creased Charlie's face. He had once been a fervent Goldwater supporter. Army continued.

"But when I'd become a Communist everybody still seemed richer than me so I joined the Black Panthers. On account of my skin, see, brother Charlie?"

"The Black Panthers, huh?" Charlie growled in a funny kind of way.

Meanwhile, back with Samuel and Amy.

"Why can't we have another colour television set in the kitchen? The Robinewicz's have got one."

"Cos all we got in the bank is a three grand overdraft and a filled-in form for the car wax competition at the drive-in wash." Samuel was concentrating on a particularly interesting female contortionist on the television.

"The Motschenbacher's have got one."

"Chrissakes. Shut your yap."

"The Baumer's have got one."

"We ain't got the bread, and if we had that lousy sonovabitch would spend it."

"He wouldn't spend it, Arny never spends money."

"No? What about that crazy goddamed beach buggy he bought you on your birthday? A beach buggy, Chrissakes, in New York."

"It was a nice thought."

"I'll castrate the bastard."

Back at the bar, Arny was warming up his story whilst Charlie's bourbon was turning sour.

"Anyway, the Black Panthers got canned on a rumble by the Pig so I started pushing speed in Greenwich Village."

"Drugs, huh?"

"Yeah, brother Charlie. But I didn't really mean to and it stopped when the Pig put me in Jail."

"For pushing speed?" Charlie was staring in a funny way.

"No, for raping a white woman. Brother Charlie, why are you looking at me like that?"

Charlie went berserk. With a neanderthal scream he grabbed Arny by his neck over the bar and started kicking him in a maniacal war dance.

"Lousy, "breath, "stinking, "breath, "Commie, "kick, "nigger, "kick, "white woman defiler." Charlie jumped monotonously up and down on Arny's face. The few other occupants of the bar stared on as if this was the cabaret.

Eventually three Irish-American cops came in and broke it up. They took everybody's name and listened to Charlie's statement about Arny. Then the three cops started beating Arny up as well.

A few minutes later the phone was ringing in the Loewenthal household.

"The goddam phone's ringing," said Samuel affectionately.

"Sam, why can't we have a phone that goes 'bleep bleep' instead of 'ring ring'."

"Chrissakes, we can't afford no lousy ponsy phones."

"The Motschenbachers have got one." With a groan, Samuel reluctantly rose and picked up the phone.

"This is Sam Loewenthal. Who the hell is this?" Amy turned around in her chair and listened to Samuel listening to the phone. Eventually Samuel said "O.K., O.K." in a dispirited way and then put the receiver down.

"That was the cops. They got that lousy sonovabitch in the cooler." Samuel sat down again and watched television. After a while Amy thought that she ought to say something.

"Sam, don't you think we ought to go and see him in jail?"

"What the goddam hell for? They want fifty bucks bail and that crazy sonovabitch ain't worth a cent of my dough."

"C'mon Sam. We ought to go and get him out. What will the Robinewicz's say if we don't bail our own son out?"

"He ain't my son, he's your crazy sonovabitch."

"Sam, if you don't come with me to bail him out, I'll divorce you."

Samuel's face paled at the thought of all that alimony and he got up to get his coat and homburg.

At the police station Arny was sitting on a low chair with six cops as tall as Globetrotters staring down at him with vehement hatred filtering through twelve eyes. One of the cops leant down so that his huge skull was within four inches of Arny's shattered visage.

"Now, now, son," he said kindly, "you just tell us the truth and we'll let you go. Now you weren't beaten up by any cops were you?"

"Yes I was." Arny couldn't understand. They wanted the truth yet they wanted him to lie. In the orphanage the priest had told him never to lie.

"Now, now, son. You know that ain't true. Let's just say you fell into something. O.K.?"

"O.K." Everybody breathed a small sigh of relief that the truth had finally come out. The cop who had leant down brought out a statement form.

"Now, now, son. Under no threat of intimidation you are saying you fell into something. Now what was it, a chair?"

Lull

Soldiers have played with the birds
and left them, hanging
like hands
at the storm's eye.

Funerals pass outside. The pale men fall
mewing into the wind. They give their faces
like children to a Mystery, and lie mute
under the rain.

Where are the flags now?
Where are the hawks of joy?

Yet, this clear place: a sibilance
of journeys. These two chart
love's strange, embattled country,
whispering what they know: of
frontiers and the troops of Time,
of flight, of risk, of the soaring
blind down dreamroad to the bivouacs of thunder.
How to kill. How to swing
easy on the snarled, loose air, how to be
dry, to be quick. How to be
still.

The wings mend; move

Post office

If you are alone it is best
to break the face first. Use the heel
of your hand, then the feet can be held
harmlessly. Bend them
back. Further. At the last sharp moment
the chest may move slightly
like a cough, pumping the sun out.
Wear gloves.
As for the belly, the sensitive areas,
places protected by gristle and bone;
a few quick blows against
any flat surface will soften those.
Then you may fold it, stamp it,
and into the morning mail.
No address is needed. Everyone knows
where I live.

new voices

NEW WRITING FROM TRINIDAD AND THE WEST INDIES.
POETRY. STORIES. ARTICLES. REVIEWS. INFORMATION.
Ed: Anson Gonzalez. 1 Sapphire Drive, Diego Martin. T&T

View

The room has a window. Outside that space is a courtyard. It belongs to birds. These are of two kinds. Some come in pairs courting between the irregular sunlight. Some with wings like washed cloth hang down one by one through the sky, not quite making it to the heat of the window before dying. For the most part they pretend not to notice each other.

And the sun goes patiently over, observing the quadrangle.

Sometimes a shadow chars against the wall. That is a bird arriving for one reason or another. Its cry draws a small stain on the air. I watch the window clouding or touch you, curiously. It says whatever birds say when they arrive at such places. I pretend not to notice.

Bird of passage

The poet is speaking.
The window reflects his face.
A bird crawls out of the sun. Summoned.
Its wings are like tar.
That is because it is very hot.
The poet sweats too.
There is a beak at the back of his throat -
the poem is difficult,
his tongue bleeds.
That is because the bird is not really dead. Yet.
Clap a little.

Dennis Scott

UNCLE TIME

AN INTERNATIONAL POETRY FORUM
SELECTION WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
MERVYN MORRIS AND A PREFACE BY
MRS. EDNA MANLEY.

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH PRESS.

Cricket

Proudly wearing the rosette
of my skin I strutt into Sabina,
England boycotting excitement
bravely, something badly amiss.

Cricket, Not the game they play
at Lords, the crowd (whoever saw
a crowd at a cricket match?)
are caged, vociferous partisans

quick to take offence. England
sixty eight for none at lunch.
"What sort o battin dat man?
dem caan play cricket again, praps
dem should a borrow Lawrence Rowe!"

And on it goes, the wicket slow
as the batting and the crowd restless.
"Eh white bwoy, ow you brudders dem
does sen we sleep so? Me a pay monies

fe watch dis foolishness? Cho!"
So I try to explain in my Hampshire
drawl about conditions in Kent,
about sticky wickets and muggy days
and the monsoon season in Manchester

but fail to convince even myself.
The slow hand-clap drives me out
sulking behind a battered rosette
somewhat frayed and unable quite
to conceal a blushing nationality!

Letter

Rastafari Movement Association
53 Laws Street,
Kingston.

Hail Brother Brown,

I and I have received your magazines and was happy to have received such, and have found it to be very interesting and quite different from the usual run of the little magazines that are around. Yet I and I have noticed that most of your material are of a very literary nature. I am not knocking NOW 3 aesthetic tone but I am wondering if you specialise only in straight creative writing. For as you know Rasta movement despite the spiritual and religious purists among factions, I and I of the RMA's stance is very a-political in the truest sense of the word and the world. What I would love to see is a mixture of political and cultural material. For you see brother Brown I and I believe in the whole question of the functions of art and its immediate relevance to man and his place in the very scheme of nature, and the mechanical environments that he has shaped for himself, and the evolutionary stages of his development on planet earth.

So I and I demand that art be brought back to the service of man and not just to an elite few who can invest in it as in a product like oil, steel, copper etc. Or art that titillate the fancies of the said ruling class to impress people with their snobbish superior tastes, that fosters pure self indulgence, and well honed decadence.

I am not accusing your magazine of such, but this is how I and I looks at the whole idea of art and art making, and the philosophical continuity of man's cultural identity, from an African point of view. For in order to be clear and pertinent we have got to put the historical and political in their proper perspective in order to be able to have a basis for this radical change that I and I are effecting.

Gilbert Tucker
(Editor - Rasta Voice)

Note:

We would like to know if you could sell some of the RASTA VOICE for us. Right now we are having a fund drive and we are asking you and the rest of other poets to give us some help in this direction.

AFTERWORD

This latest glossy issue of NOW goes some way towards fulfilling my original aims for the magazine; to provide a platform for young poets alongside more established writers, to present a balanced picture of what's happening in Caribbean writing now and to present all this in a suitable format and at a reasonable price.

We have been able to get this far along the way due to the generous assistance of the Institute and our one paying advertiser Desnoes and Geddes, and because of the support and encouragement of various individuals who believe that NOW is performing a worthwhile and necessary function. As this is the last issue that I shall edit I would like to say thanks to these people, especially Micky Hendriks, Cedric Lindo, Neville Dawes, Dennis Scott, Lois Langenfeld and Pete Virgadamo. Without their encouragement, and in the case of the last two, practical help, the magazine probably wouldn't have got past issue No. 1.

We have been very lucky in that Gloria Escoffery, whose work both as painter and poetess is well known to everyone, has agreed to take over NOW. I am sure that with her determination and acknowledged skill the magazine will grow to become an important voice in Jamaican and West Indian writing.

Thanks too, to our readers, especially the hardy subscribers - they are the life blood of the magazine. Our list is still rather short and if anyone would like to help NOW grow, the best way would be to take out a subscription. At one dollar for four issues in these times of rising prices it has to be a bargain!

Thanks for suffering my pretentious editorials and afterwords!

"I'd rather
have a
Red Stripe."



