

KYKOVERAL No. 22.

Anthology
OF
West Indian Poetry

Edited by
A. J. SEYMOUR



1957.

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THE

KYK-OVER-AL

ANTHOLOGY

OF

WEST INDIAN POETRY.

REVISED

by

A. J. SEYMOUR

GEORGETOWN, BRITISH GUIANA.

1957

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Preface to the First Edition

In the original Greek, an anthology is a collection of flowers. From more than a score of gardens up and down the British Caribbean, I have gathered poems and put them together within the confines of this special issue of *Kykoveral*, as a selection of the beauty which West Indian poets have created and continue to image forth, as they come to a sense of their powers, look upon the environment around them, or on the heart within, and celebrate what they find there in disciplined emotional reaction.

Nearly everyone in this region has heard of some at least of these poets; for instance, the work of Derek Walcott, Lamming, Forde and many others has been presented weekly by the B.B.C. The little Reviews like *Kykoveral*, *Bim* and the occasional compilations like *Focus* have been a vehicle for work by others, and the West Indian press from time to time has carried reviews of West Indian poetry and prose. But there are few who have seen the poems, so striking or delightful to the ear or attractively quoted in reviews, and of these fewer still have attempted to collect the individual booklets and the magazines in which they have been printed. This selection of poems is therefore a link between the people and their poets, preserving for the people the poems they have lost or never found, and furnishing the poets with an audience of a size and quality some have perhaps lacked, but certainly all would desire to have.

Once it had been decided that the purpose of the anthology would be to introduce the poets of the region to the people of the British Caribbean, two things followed. The poems had to be chosen for delight and hence were unlikely to be experimental and may not include a poet's work in his latest phase; again, there being a relative dearth of published work in the West Indies, apart from magazine articles, generally condemned to early oblivion, a compiler may not be able to include pieces fully representative of the poet's distinct personality as if he had had a book of the poet's work before him.

What else would the West Indian reader look for in an anthology prepared for his delight? He may want to know that the poets are among the best in his region, that their individual range of perception is more or less represented, and that if possible they express the rarer moods, the more elevated thoughts and the more impassioned feelings of the West Indian scene. It is for pleasure that these poems have primarily been chosen, but there is also the possibility that a collection of this kind may express the spiritual and intellectual identity of the West Indies and may help us to win the feeling of being spiritually at home in these imaginative writings which have their birth in the peculiar conditions of our West Indian people, a feeling that no other literature, however splendid, can give us.

I should perhaps say something of the history of the anthology idea.

It is remarkable that in the past three or four years persons in various territories have expressed their desire to produce a West Indian anthology of some kind or other. It must have been mooted before, but the idea was certainly mentioned to Philip Sherlock as early as 1944 when he first came to British Guiana. BIM, however made the first practical step in 1946 with the Little Anthology included in its issue of mid year 1946. Langston Hughes and Arna Bontemps produced a British Caribbean compilation in 1949, in the nature of a footnote to the predominantly American writing collected in their "Poetry of the Negro", and W. Adolphe Roberts and Wycliffe Bennett are at present preparing a large-scale Anthology of poetry in the Caribbean, designed to present work of the writers of the British Caribbean together with poems from the French, Dutch and Spanish-speaking countries in, and around the shores of the Caribbean. These latter poems would be in the original languages with translations. The Pioneer Press in Jamaica and the Readers and Writers Group in Trinidad have also stated their intention to compile anthologies.

We must also include a reference to the exhibition staged at the Institute of Jamaica by the Poetry League of that island in August, 1951, when books, photographs, lectures, etc., all added up to an anthology-in-situ of Caribbean poetry. I wonder whether Clare McFarlane and Bennett and Coulthard were conscious of the interest of the poets in the area.

This interest in anthology-making is healthy and worthwhile because a collection of poems finally rests on the personal choice and even the taste of its editor, and the shortcomings of one anthology are made good by its contemporaries and successors, while the reader, that ultimate consumer, is better able to compare and contrast and exercise his critical faculty when he has before him many men's bouquets.

There is one tendency in West Indian poetry at the present time which may bear emphasis. It is a tendency common to all colonial literatures developing emotional lives of their own and shaping their unique voices, that they pass through the phase of a certain pattern before they find a local habitation and a name. First of all, there is identification with the gestures and attitudes of the home country to which allegiance is held, then the literature rebels against them, although acutely conscious of the absence of new loyalties to put in their place, and in the third phase, the land in which the people live and move and have their being, begins to assert its presence and to supply the dynamic necessary for developing the new voice. This pattern does not necessarily synchronise with the growth of the community from dependent into independent government. Although they are both dominions, and in spite of the difference between the origins of European settlement and a slave society, I have the impression that New Zealand and Australia are only now finding their authentic literary voices, in the same way that the West Indies is finding its own.

We said just now that the land in which a community lives begins to assert its presence after a while, at the same time that the community is modifying the environment. Not that there is a poetry of geography in the simple sense of the term, but that the apprentice tongue of the poet and the community seems to begin by calling the names of things that lie round about. There is much direct statement of the West Indian scene to be found in West Indian poetry, as if the poets feel the need of supplying the background of their emotional response together with that response, in some unconscious desire, to bridge the gap between themselves and the people for whom they are writing. (this is the assumed audience so much in a poet's mind that when he describes things he experiences, he uses the form of words likely to share that experience with others). Together with this statement of environment, other themes running through West Indian verse are the great commonplace of love, and a certain preoccupation with religion.

When one remembers the plastic theocentric tendency of the African mind, through whose corridors pass the ghosts of old gods and spiritual unseen influences, it seems clear that one influence which would shape the gathering imagination of the West Indian poet would be religion. Somewhat like England in the days of Bunyan, the Bible was one book which linked the African slave with the thought of a new world to remedy the topsy-turvyness of the one he knew, and in gratitude both to this book of hope and to its messengers, the Church, the half-empty and hungry imagination of the African nourished its springs on religious tales. Perhaps one off-shot was the development of a fatalistic attitude ("the Lord's will be done") but certainly there was created a reservoir of striking religious imagery.

There was a temptation, fortunately resisted, to compile this anthology on the model of the "Spirit of Man" by Robert Bridges. The collection would have begun with George Campbell's "Litany", followed by Raymond Barrow's "Dawn is a Fisherman", Telemaque's "In our Land" and Derek Walcott's "As John to Patmos", and then wandered its way through a group of love poems by Clare McFarlane, Keane, Una Marson, Herbert and Roach. There would have been a middle section of "Madonna and Child", "A Beauty too of twisted Trees", "Jacob and the Angel", and "Magdalen" with other groupings of cognate poems. But to have adopted that model would have been to let the poems tell their tale — a fine tale, mind you — at the expense of the poets themselves.

It is a matter for regret that the anthology does not include any of the long poems or narrative poems written in the region — e.g. Clare McFarlane's "Daphne", the writer's "For Christopher Columbus" and "The Legend of Kaieteur", or "Epitaph for the Young" (Derek Walcott).

A long poem is a flower bed after all, not a single flower; it is a collection in itself with its own reason for being, and its own integrity. Nor have I entered into the field of dialect and folk tales where Louise Bennett in Jamaica and Quow in British Guiana are still the delight of hundreds of readers. This selection of poems is an introduction to the

work of these living West Indian poets, in the hope that this will stimulate interest in their work and create a demand to see more of that work in print.

When all is said and done, the maker of an anthology is always assailed with doubts and beset with fears. In his individual approach to poets and their work, has he co-ordinated every possible feature, for instance, has he given poets space in his collection according to his assessment of their importance, and has each important phase of the poet's work been represented? He he, from the context of his own age-grouping, been unsympathetic to the work of the older poets and lacking in appreciation of the work of those younger than he? Or has he, in his anxiety to do all justice, leant over backwards? Of the published poems that he has seen, has he made a fair attempt to correct his own proclivities and see the best, and with poets whom he has asked to assist him by selecting from their unpublished work, has he given them an advantage over those whose selections he made himself? But a choice must be exercised and a decision taken, unless one is to deny that special human quality of taking one's stand, and this anthology with the shortcomings so evident to its maker goes on its way to readers. The successes belong to the poets, who have so willingly co-operated in this venture but the imperfections to the editor.

In this personal harvest, I have had to forego many single poems of distinction of which I have knowledge (such as Alwyn Rodway's "Telephone" or Cleveland Hamilton's "Symbols"). There would be many such singles scattered about the British Caribbean of which I would not know and which belong to another and more comprehensive collection.

I have omitted a section-by-section analysis of this anthology because I am too near to it at present to contrast, properly, say the romantic movement in W.I. poetry as exemplified by trends in George Campbell and Derek Walcott, with the classical trends in Vaughn and Virtue and Roberts. My main purpose has been to reproduce the poetry now for later examination, comment, and discussion at every level. The juxtaposition of this mass of West Indian writing will raise its own succession of differences and resemblances in the reader's mind. And as I said before, I have resisted the impulse to devote very much space to the experimental phases of our poetry, that marginal land of imaginative creation which is always being put under cultivation by the pioneering poet. I could enlarge the list of problematic questions which arose, but they are a measure of my responsibility only. So let us make an end of them and before we turn to the poets themselves who are arranged roughly in order of age so far as that is possible, let us remember the function of the poet,

In any community, the poet shares with the painter and the musician (and in a degree greater than they, in a young community where he has an importance he has lost in older societies) the task of supplying an imaginative record of the experiences which all the members undergo. In his images they discover their hopes and their shortcomings detached from

the daily round. He creates out of his sensibility the positive and encouraging view of human life necessary for the development of the community and as B. Ifor Evans puts it, he points "beyond the range of the observed to all that imagination can achieve." Perhaps the responsibility is not always fully realised by the poets, or clearly recognised by the people, but there is a deep need for a bridge of communication, so that a unique way of life may be won and a culture made in which they may all rest.

The poets in this volume have been seeking to express their personal experiences in the only ways possible to them. But what they say is of value to us all. Adolphe Roberts who opens the anthology has his own classicist and Greek-tinged reaction to the beauty of animal form and historical fact, and the awareness of awakening beauty in the Caribbean brake ("Pan is not dead, but sleeping") and at the end Derek Walcott who closes the collection, invokes the resemblance of love for their lands common to himself and John of Patmos, sheds his tear over the ashes of Castries, protests colour prejudice and meditates upon that other great commonplace of death. Between them lie the individual experiences of our British Caribbean poets, each revealing some single facet of our West Indian life and relating it through the unifying power of metaphor to other facets, and, collectively among them, providing the inner and spiritual structure of what will later be the history of the British Caribbean.

—A.J.S. (1952)

The voices are surer and I have changed some of the songs; the Federation is a reality and nationhood is gathering rapidly.

The order is now alphabetical.

—A.J.S. (1957)

Acknowledgments

I wish to acknowledge gratefully the kindness of authors in granting me permission to include their poems in this anthology.

Some of the poems in this Anthology have already appeared in print in publications which include:— The Poetry of the Negro, A Treasury of Jamaican Poetry, Poetry for Children, the periodicals Life and Letters, Focus, Bim, Kyk-over-al, and Caribbean Quarterly, and the various publications of the poets, nearly all of which have been privately printed.

KYK-OVER-AL

Raymond Barrow

DAWN IS A FISHERMAN

Dawn is a fisherman, his harpoon of light
Poised for a throw—so swiftly morning comes:
The darkness squats upon the sleeping land
Like a flung cast-net, and the black shapes of boats
Lie hunched like nesting turtles
On the flat calm of the sea.

Among the trees the houses peep at the stars
Blinking farewell, and half-awakened birds
Hurtle across the vista, some in the distance
Giving their voice self-criticised auditions.

Warning comes from the cocks, their necks distended
Like city trumpeters: and suddenly
Between the straggling fences of grey cloud
The sun, a barefoot boy, strides briskly up
The curved beach of the sky, flinging his greetings
Warmly in all directions, laughingly saying
Up, up, the day is here! Another day is here!



Raymond Barrow

THERE IS A MYSTIC SPLENDOUR

There is a mystic splendour that one feels
Walking this shore in the half-light of dawn
Placing one's footprints on the sands where keels
Of ancient vessels must have beached and drawn

For there are tales that speak of glorious days
When martial shouting rang within our Bay,
And cannons thundered, and black battle haze
Clouded this sickle isle with dark affray

Those were the times when privateers fled
The predatory Brethern of the Coast;
Pirates and buccaneers—all these are dead
And all their lordly sway seems but a ghost

But even now the surf's loud thunder brings
Sound strangely clear like battle cries of old
And palm trees murmur of deep-sunken things
Of buried treasure chests . . . and Morgan's gold

Raymond Barrow

LOW IS THE WIND

Low is the wind upon your English moors;
 Dark is your city with its midnight sleep;
 And I unbraced must wander out-of-doors
 Walking your highways where the snow lies deep.
 For when the darkness falls I needs must keep
 A rendezvous with my most treasured things;
 And in your solitudes I fain would weep
 At memories the silvery silence brings

Of bamboo groves and waving sugar cane ---
 Savannahs stretching wide to distant hills ---
 Blue droning reefs, and misty summer rain ---
 Picados' blossom-strewn, and forest rills;

But most of all, the yearning, waiting plea
 On faces brown beside a tropic sea.



George Campbell

LITANY

I hold the splendid daylight in my hands
 Inwardly grateful for a lovely day.
 Thank you life.
 Daylight like a fine fan spread from my hands
 Daylight like scarlet poinsettia
 Daylight like yellow cassia flowers
 Daylight like clean water
 Daylight like green cacti
 Daylight like sea sparkling with white horses
 Daylight like tropic hills
 Daylight like a sacrament in my hands.
 Amen.

George Campbell

HISTORY MAKERS

Women stone breakers
 Hammers and rocks
 Tired child makers
 Haphazard frocks.
 Strong thigh
 Rigid head
 Bent nigh
 Hard white piles
 Of stone
 Under hot sky
 In the gully bed.

II

No smiles
 No sigh
 No moan.

III

Women child bearers
 Pregnant frocks
 Wilful toil sharers
 Destiny shapers
 History makers
 Hammers and rocks.



George Campbell

WORKER

Why praise him lightly when he turns to die?
 Maybe the night is bright, his fiery court;
 Maybe the darkness for a night of mourning.
 New day: the sun's eternal sport
 Watching the earth of life and death and sorrow.
 Now he is dead. Is there for him tomorrow?
 His Earth which claims him for her own
 Full knows the lover she has sown.

Measure him? His death is living,
 Living for the land which knows no death:
 He wears the silken day, the veils of night
 His hands that hungered at your heart a time
 Are now the trees and paths, his epitaphs.
 The stars can tell with their sphinx eyes
 He's Earth, her lover, and surmise.

George Campbell

A CLOUD

A cloud that was the faintest breath
 Within a time of gentian blue,
 And telling more about the sky
 Than any dreamer ever knew.

A cloud that was a thing of light
 Which any wind would take from sight
 Had everything transfigured there
 Beyond the sky and everywhere.

A being that was full of grace,
 Right through the blue and mixed with light
 A cloud that would be lost at night.



George Campbell

DAWN

Dawn, O strange wild horse
 Rushing forth,
 Darkness of night in your mane
 Wildness of life in your eyes.
 Seeker who leapest
 Into your dancing song-lights
 In all the sorrow of the world:
 Dawn is the waves of the sea.
 O strange wild Dawn rush on
 Over the breadth of the land,
 Promise the height of the sun.

Today who lookest down
 Thy ways of weary time,
 Thy ways of weary time,
 O death will arise from shadows
 To-morrow ride forth with thee.
 To-morrow come tranquil, Dawn,
 Come peace blest.
 Dawn, with thy choir-lights
 Bring for the seekers flights of rest.

George Campbell

HOLY

Holy be the white head of a Negro
 Sacred be the black flax of a black child.
 Holy be
 The golden down
 That will stream in the waves of the winds
 And will thin like dispersing cloud.
 Holy be
 Heads of Chinese hair
 Sea calm sea impersonal
 Deep flowering of the mellow and traditional.
 Heads of peoples fair
 Bright shimmering from the riches of their species;
 Heads of Indians
 With feeling of distance and space and dusk:
 Heads of wheaten gold,
 Heads of peoples dark
 So strong so original:
 All of the earth and the sun!



Owen Campbell

WE

In the whispering cane,
 In the heat,
 And the fits of rain,
 And the soil clinging
 To our feet
 With the turned hoe-stroke;

WE

In the white glamour
 Of cotton,
 And the quick colour
 In waves of petals
 In the sun
 Soft on the ripe lime;

WE

On a sweep of beach
By the sea,
With sway and the reach
For rope and the fish
Twined surely
In their last boredom;

We have dreamt of cities
Tall as tales in smoke of industries;
And the rumours of gold
We heard were hard on our failing faiths.

We have had word from far,
Over windswept islands and a sea,
Of a rich land calling;
And we felt its summons in the wind.

But we are fish, roped fish,
Dragged slowly to the definite doom
On the sand there waiting
The last fevers of our hot gasping.

We are prophets, knowing
Our next turnings in bewildered arcs,
Or the meek surprises
Rare in the warm swelter of hours.

Yet we are duped often
By the passage of the too rich hope
That lures this sight and hides
From us our true selves while it crosses.

So we have decided
Not to construct hope on continents,
Or leave lost hearts to rove
In the quick air, on oceans of dream.

We have decided,
To build here, on our slender soil.

Owen Campbell

THE WASHERWOMEN

Down where the river beats itself against the stones
And washes them in clouds of frothy spray,
Or foaming, fumbles through them with the thousand tones
Of an orchestra,
The women wash, and humming keep a sort of time;
And families of bubbles frisk and float away
To be destroyed,
To be destroyed,
Like all the baffled hopes that had their little suns,
Tossed on the furious drifts of disappointments.
But all the tide.
Cradles these clinging bubbles ever still, alike
The friendly little hopes that never leave the heart.

In this big hall of rushing waters women wash
And with the sound of washing,
With the steady heaving of their slender shoulders
As they rub their stubborn rags upon the boulders,
They keep a sort of time

With their thoughts. These were unchanging
Like the persistent music here,
Of swirling waters,
The crash of wet clothes beaten on the stones,
The sound of wind in leaves,
Or frog croaks after dusk, and the low moan
Of the big sea fighting the river's mouth.

The ever changing patterns in the clouds
Before their dissolution into rain;
Or the gay butterflies manoeuvring
Among the leafy camouflage that clothes the banks
And hides their spent remains when they collapse and die;
Are symbols of their hopes and gaudy plans
Which once they dreamt. But finally they learn to hope
And make plans less elaborate.
It was the same
With those that washed before them here
And passed leaving the soap-stained stones
Where others now half stoop like devotees
To pagan gods.

They have resigned themselves to day long swishing
 Of wet cloth chafing the very stone;
 And the big symphony of waters rushing
 Past clumps of tall stems standing alone,
 Apart, like band-leaders, or sentinels,
 They must hear the heavy hum
 Of wings of insects overgrown,
 Cleaving the air like bombers on a plotted course.
 They must hear the long 'Hush' of the wind in leaves
 As dead ones flutter down like living things
 Until the shadows come.



Owen Campbell

PHOTOGRAPH

Island hiding in the haze there,
 Ripple population,
 Shades of light and colour,
 Dip and splash of quick oar,
 And the fast foam-fever
 Trembling in a harbour,
 Find a lodging in a moment's breath.

The crisp wisp of slender smoke too,
 Climbing from the funnel
 Of a ship idle there,
 Up-penciling the air
 Until it wears aloft
 To fading like the soft
 Dreamings that are always found with us.

And that ship strangled on the beach
 Drying at each sun-pour
 Or rotting in the wet
 Of broken wave and fete
 Of foam is fortunate
 In its unsensing state
 While we recover for more whippings.

Owen Campbell

“UBI GENTIUM”

After the flood, lightning,
And no dove, no olive leaf,
The raven of despair goeth forth without returning.

After blood, after the march,
Sacrifice and the burnt offering, yet where is Moses?

Lost in the mist, gone,
Lost in the cloud on the mount,
Let us break from our faith, build us a calf to lead us on.

II

Here is no hope now,
Here are all bleak faces,
Here all dreams are cracked in the ground under the sun,
Here all heart runs purple in rivers under the rain.

III

But we have found out
All about mirages,
And in our seasons of drear no flash could fake us;
In our deserts of wandering, we expect no pools.

And this one who dared,
Who dared hope, suffers now,
Utters his last wish fainting,—the Columbus cry;
“Give me my men but three days, give me time my masters”.

IV

. . . . Wait! There are birds now bearing
The tall-tale bush, and on the sea
The token, the bough floating
And fresh-green.

Under the wet of waiting
May be ground, may be Ararat;
And some wait, not with knowing
But despair.

Just beyond our trust, beyond
The edge of the dwindling acre
May be land, may be the fat land,
Few have faith.

Only time now while we wait on the wind
To find what only the sun and the wave
Knew and whispered about,
After doubt and drifting
Had broken our hearts.

H. D. Carberry

NATURE

We have neither Summer nor
Winter
Neither Autumn nor Spring.
We have instead the days
When the gold sun shines on the
lush green canefields—
Magnificently.

The days when the rain beats like
bullets on the roofs
And there is no sound but the
swish of water in the gullies
And trees struggling in the high
Jamaica winds.

Also there are the days when the
leaves fade from off guango
trees
And the reaped canefields lie bare
and fallow to the sun.

But best of all there are the days
when the mango and the log-
wood blossom

When the bushes are full of the
sound of bees and the scent
of honey,

When the tall grass sways and
shivers to the slightest breath
of air,

When the buttercups have paved
the earth with yellow stars
And beauty comes suddenly and
the rains have gone.

Martin Carter

DEATH OF A SLAVE

Above green cane arrow
is blue sky—
beneath green arrow
is brown earth—
dark is the shroud of slavery
over the river
over the forest
over the field.

Aie! black is skin
Aie! red is heart
as round it looks
over the world
over the Forest
over the sun.

in the dark earth
in cold dark earth
time plants the seeds of anger

this is another world
but above is same blue sky
same sun—
below is same deep heart of agony,

cane field is green dark green
green with life of its own
heart of slave is red deep red
red with life of its own.

day passes like long whip
over the back of slave
day is burning whip
biting the neck of slave.

but sun falls down like old man
beyond the dim line of the River
and white birds
come flying, flying, flapping at the wind
white birds like dreams come settling down.

night comes from down river
 like thief —
 night comes from deep forest
 in a boat of silence —
 dark is the shroud
 the shroud of night
 over the river
 over the Forest
 over the Field.

slave staggers and falls
 face is on earth
 drum is silent
 silent like night
 hollow like boat
 between the tides of sorrow.

in the dark floor
 in the cold dark earth
 time plants the seeds of anger.

Martin Carter

●
VOICES

Behind a green tree the whole sky is dying
 in a sunset of rain, in an absence of birds.
 The large pools of water lie down in the street
 like oceans of memory sinking in sand.
 The sun has committed itself far too soon
 in the trials of conquest where triumph is rain—
 O flower of fire in a wide vase of air
 come back, come back to the house of the world.

Scarlet stone is a jewel of death
 to be found in the sand when the ocean is dry
 And the life of the light will stay somewhere else
 near the rain and the tree when these are alone.
 O first sprouting leaf and last falling fruit
 Your roots came before you were given to air.

Sky only blossomed because man grew tall
 from the edge of the water where stones fell and sank.
 And that strange dissolution of shape into spirit
 was traced from a snail and was found in a word:
 O flower of fire in a wide vase of air
 come back, come back to the house of the world.

Martin Carter

WORDS

These poet words, nuggets out of corruption
 or jewels dug from dung or speech from flesh
 still bloody red, still half afraid to plunge
 in the ceaseless waters foaming over death.

These poet words, nuggets no jeweller sells
 across the counter of the world's confusion
 but far and near, internal or external
 burning the agony of earth's complaint.

These poet words have secrets locked in them
 like nuggets laden with the younger sun.
 Who will unlock must first himself be locked.
 Who will be locked must first himself unlock.

Martin Carter

UNIVERSITY OF HUNGER

is the university of hunger the wide waste
 is the pilgrimage of man the long march.
 The print of hunger wanders in the land
 the green tree bends above the long forgotten
 the plains of life rise up and fall in spasms
 the huts of men are fused in misery.

They come treading in the hoofmarks of the mule
 passing the ancient bridge
 the grave of pride
 the sudden flight
 the terror and the time.

They come from the distant village of the flood
 passing from middle air to middle earth
 in the common hours of nakedness.
 Twin bars of hunger mark their metal brows
 twin seasons mock them
 parching drought and flood

is the dark ones
 the half sunken in the land
 is they who had no voice in the emptiness
 in the unbelievable
 in the shadowless.

They come treading on the mud floor of the year
 mingling with dark heavy waters
 and the sea sound of the eyeless fitting bat.
 O long is the march of men and long is the life
 and wide is the span.

is air dust and the long distance of memory
 is the hour of rain when sleepless toads are silent
 is broken chimneys smokeless in the wind
 is brown trash huts and jagged mounds of iron.

They come in long lines
 toward the broad city.
 Is the golden moon like a big coin in the sky
 is the flood of bone beneath the floor of flesh
 is the beak of sickness breaking on the stone.
 O long is the march of men and long is the life
 and wide is the span.
 O cold is the cruel wind blowing
 O cold is the hoe in the ground.

They come like sea birds
 flapping in the wake of a boat
 is the torture of sunset in purple bandages
 is the powder of fire spread like dust in the twilight
 is the water melodies of white foam on wrinkled sand.

The long streets of night move up and down
 baring the thighs of a woman
 and the cavern of generation
 The beating drum returns and dies away
 the bearded men fall down and go to sleep
 the cocks of dawn stand up and crow like bugles.

is they who rose early in the morning
 watching the moon die in the dawn
 is they who heard the shell blow and the iron clang
 is they who had no voice in the emptiness
 in the unbelievable
 in the shadowless
 O long is the march of men and long is the life
 and wide is the span.

Frank A. Collymore

HYMN TO THE SEA

Like all who live on small islands
 I must always be remembering the sea,
 Being always cognizant of her presence; viewing
 Her through apertures in the foliage; hearing,
 When the wind is from the south, her music, and smelling
 The warm rankness of her; tasting
 And feeling her kisses on bright sunbathed days;
 I must always be remembering the sea.

Always, always the encircling sea,
 Eternal: lazylapping, crisscrossed with stillness;
 Or windruffed, aglitter with gold; and the surf
 Waist-high for children, or horses for Titans;
 Her lullaby, her singing, her moaning; on sands,
 On shingle, on breakwater, and on rock;
 By sunlight, starlight, moonlight, darkness:
 I must always be remembering the sea.

Go down to the sea upon this random day
 By metalled road, by sandway, by rockpath,
 And come to her. Upon the polished jetsam,
 Shell and stone and weed and saltfruit
 Torn from the underwater continents, cast
 Your garments and despondencies; re-enter
 Her embracing womb: a return, a completion.
 I must always be remembering the sea.

Life came from the sea, and once a goddess arose
 Fullgrown from the saltdeep; love
 Flows from the sea, a flood; and the food
 Of islanders is reaped from the sea's harvest.
 And not only life and sustenance; visions, too,
 Are born of the sea; the patterning of her rhythm
 Finds echoes within the musing mind.
 I must always be remembering the sea.

Symbol of fruitfulness, symbol of barrenness,
 Mother and destroyer, the calm and the storm!
 Life and desire and dreams and death
 Are born of the sea; this swarming land
 Her creation, her signature set upon the salt ooze
 To blossom into life; and the red hibiscus
 And the red roofs burn more brightly against her blue.
 I must always be remembering the sea.

Frank A. Collymore

MUSIC AT NIGHT

Out of the silence
 Music strays
Winding softly
Down the ways,
 The ways that wander,
 The ways that creep
 Down the curled
 Stairway of sleep;
 The twining ways
 That turn and twist
 With burnished gold
 And amethyst.
 Amber and violet,
 Viol and lute,
 Oboe, emerald,
 Oldrose, flute
 Mingle, and
 The distant drum
 Throbbing its deep
 Chrysanthemum.
 The convoluted
 Archway teems
 With all the protean
 Stuff of dreams:
 Music and memory
 And the light
 That shines behind
 The veil of night
 Darkness and light,
 Silence and sound,
 With deep peace
 Are woven round:
 Winding softly
 Down the ways
 Into silence
 Music strays.

Frank A. Collymore

HAZY DAYS

The days are very lovely now,
All's wrapped in tender haze;
A group of upstart little clouds
Speed on their lonely ways
Across a sky where bigger ones
Too gross and wise to run
Gently conspire to shield and soothe
A not unfriendly sun,
And sometimes shed a little of
Their moisture just in fun.
Shadow and light are interfused,
The white roads doff their glare,
That eyes once blinded by it now
May travel everywhere,
From gravelled path to far-off hill,
And, rested, feast again
Upon the strange midday twilight
Paving the sleepy lane.
Although the mills no longer spin,
The winds remembering
That little boys must fly their kites
Haste with rich offering,
And tree and bush and shrubbery
Clad in their best array
Sway to this choreography;
An evergreen ballet
That one may gaze upon throughout
The livelong lazy day.
Hazy days, dear days!
Each passing moment seems
Wrought from the cloudy pageantry
Of childhood's idle dreams,
When elves and gnomes were sometimes seen
Peering from hidden lair,
And from the bougainvillea hedge
A princess would appear
Wrapped in a dusky cloak of green
With flowers in her hair.

Frank A. Collymore

LULLABY

Darkness broods on earth and air
Spilling shadows everywhere
Love lies dreaming Love is near
Lay your head to sleep

The crooked shadows bound and leap
Headlong through the looking-glass
Into nothingness they pass
Lay your head to sleep

Light will break in other guise
Colour blossom beneath skies
Where lamb with tawny lion lies
Lay your head to sleep

Yesterday and distant Now
Slowly through the night will creep
All their harvest yours to reap
Lay your head to sleep

All the nightlong loveliness
Yours my darling to possess
And your sleeping eyelids bless
Lay your head to sleep

Frank A. Collymore

SCHOONER

By the dip of the sky, runaway water under the stars,
The ship's prow drips with the kiss of the wave, and
The sails' saga is told in slow syllables as we plunge onward
Towards the shore of the horizon where the clouds are wrapped
About a shadow. The helmsman's face, old as stone,
Is etched upon the darkness by the cigarette's glow, his cap
Pulled low about his ears. Voyaging is slow,
And mists spiral through the waiting mind; the night is long.
And the sails' song interminable; moments glide
From darkness into darkness. Fugue of forgetting,
While stars rush silently in swooping curves, and the night
Is hooped around the sea's endlessness. The cigarette stub
Shrinks into nothingness, the hub of thought recedes,
And tattered shreds are scattered upon the silent deck
Lost among unfamiliar shadows. Wan as forgotten dawns
The lantern in the binnacle. Where the huddled hatch
Catches the threading light, thought's snails leave slimy tracks
As meaningless as the newsprint of a dream. There is
No meaning here but the song of the sails, no end
To wandering. And across the waters strides the wind
To lay its reckless head upon the bosom of the night.

A. N. Forde

DAY BEFORE ASH WEDNESDAY

There is a bee
this morning
feeding on the pollen
of my breast
as the sun
with professional touch
brings colour to the limbs
a warm flood to the warm blood.

Pain is
impanelled
in the clenched heart:
for this day is gay
and warm with music-weather
and air-rhyme.

There is a heat
in my temples
and in the stream
of mad pounding
my pulse leaps
with its message
to the waiting lips.

The limbs take
power and triumph
from the beating hands
and the bands
of trivial maids
tie their modesty in a fling.

No more here
the pull of gravity
but the soul steeped
in the stimulant
of a tune.

And after all
the wine and wandering
through hectic streets
and sun
night comes
and the moon sheds
grains of silver
from the sheaves
in the clouds.

And on the seashore
 the artistic waves
 ply their brushwork
 on the sands
 and memory nods
 to wake on the shoulder
 of Ash Wednesday.



A. N. Forde

CANES BY THE ROADSIDE

Time was
 you tossed in a delirium
 of whispers near the roadside:
 now your last whisper
 is a treasury of lost sound

Months ago
 you were a **handful**
 of green ribbons teasing the wind:
 now **dead strips** tell
 where the colour and the sparkle go.

In the cycle

of things you will submit
 to the tyranny of shining teeth
 and the remorseless murmur of the mill
 and all your once-green pride will not console a bit.

Heaped up
 in your pyre ready for
 the yearly sacrifices to power
 you lie robbed of the majesty
 of your plotted earth
 bared of the eagerness of your dream.

SEA BIRD

A. N. Forde

Scrawling a signature across
The map of the sky you fly
With the grace
Of a warm memory
Touched with the scalpel of time past.

In the mosaic of the clouds
At sunset you fold proud
Wings to lie
Upon the palpitation of the waves

Leaving behind a tender trace
Of your lightness on the sand
For the careless sea to trod
On and erase.

Or in powered dives
With taut limpness down
The shafts of air your limbs
Sink in a sharp plunge
To the rocky ground.

Or rising from the catacombs
In an equipoise of wonderful
Propulsion your arms
Climb the tiers of the air
With an upward roll.

Your nest left huddled
In the ear of a rock
Mid the blast and wrack
Of fretful billows
Clamouring to be heard
You ride into the silence of the sky.

And far below you
As you soar
I envy your freedom
From the tug of time
Your glory
In the welfare of the air.

Martin Gray

ANTS

Obstinate scribblers, they twist and cross
 Their frail circumference, a distant force
 Of gladiators seeking salt and quanta
 Wingless locusts, waves of constant hunger,
 They have no carnal wish within their sheen
 But titillations of antennae
 Guiding their Rivers over grass and bark.

Their solar asterisks of energy
 Roam solitary, a series of ends
 Designed into a single smooth machine,
 Nouns shuffled around by a verb
 And folded in endless layers as a brain
 How many decimals
 Would bring their sum to one?

These pygmies scurrying electrons
 Turn as hard rain down fissures of the earth
 To work into each crevice so that everything
 Is seen. They tumble into numbers.
 Everywhere for them is an arena
 For trials of strength, and if they had
 A mind and method all else would be death.

The dry torrent continues day and night
 To drain down vortices. No part escapes
 Inspection and comparison,
 A primal impetus to cover surface.
 Yet with their harsh indifference
 They have the quality of art —
 Lacking only the selection.

Martin Gray

CIRCUS

Within an angry Ring
 Silent lions turn
 On supple paces

And icing-sugar bears
 Innocent of snows
 Look out upon the faces.

The muted animals
 In their steel jungle
 Are dazed by the applause

Of those other thousands
 Whose faces open
 As they clap their paws.

Wilson Harris

THE DEATH OF HECTOR, TAMER OF HORSES

Over the mountains and over the sea
 runs a black horse, his hoof
 Pounds the mountains and unsettles the sea.
 His hoof grounds the mountains
 Like the bones of the sea.
 Like Death runs so swiftly, his black limbs remember
 my very vain breath and my boast in the stars.
 I mount him and I hold him
 with the sun for a saddle and a bit made of stars.
 I mount him and I hold him
 with my breath on the bridle and my boast in the stars.
 I mount and I hold him
 with my breath turning silver like a bridle of stars.
 Far up on the mountains and deep down in the sea
 I ride my black horse up and down and far.
 My breath now deserts me,
 I spit saliva and stars, I stop breathing the gore and mud
 I grow breathless, ride faster and ride far. My ultimate horse of
 darkness leaves earth's doors ajar.

I am kneaded into a star.

I am kneaded in a cave of darkness
 where Death's hoof ploughed a scar.
 I am kneaded on the mountains near heaven
 where Death's hoof cut a scar

 like a grave for a man and a mortal
 the mud and spit of stars. The mud and spit of stars are
 in the mixing

 and in the kneading
 Of every mortal being
 Who rides the black horse far.



Wilson Harris

THE STONE OF THE SEA

(Ulysses to Calypso)

Muffling time and muffled by time
 ironed out to surrender the light or like a star
 is the deep bed of the sea like sunshine
 crushed to yield blood in darkness. This night of ocean
 is its own star of memory, waving gently
 the vast water reflects an eerie life and solitude
 majestic, strange, an experience of hollowness and yet
 of solid mass like substance. The minstrel balance of fins
 is feet of dancers, whose poise or quality
 is the web of destiny, the organ of reunion
 and separation. Every inclination to crawl or creep
 upon immensity is nameless. Yet it is sometimes called Birth,
 it is sometimes called Death. It is like a stone that melts
 into flesh, it is like a colour mysterious in half-light,
 equally solid as melting, internally shaded, externally bright.

It appears black, it appears white, merman or mermaid, deeper
 than primitive desire in life, it has no footing, it has no ledge.
 but in appearance like doom
 in a cold spray it sometimes rests or is blown over the range of the
 immortal deep.

Immortality is part of its nature, the stone of fire
 which is resting and yet never rests like the sea.
 The whirling chasms of sensation are fixed
 like pyramids of immobility, a mindless fixity
 in every instant of time. Only the immortal fluid
 of stone as star
 can turn a succession of waves into light (This is the prayer
 of earthly love
 to move the stone of the sea
 for Glory and its invaluable human spouse, a mortal
 being, like Penelope)



Wilson Harris

CHARCOAL

(epilogue to the senses: the heart)

Bold outlines are drawn to encompass
 the history of the world: crude but naked emphasis
 rests on each figure of the past
 wherein the golden sunlight burns raw and unsophisticated,
 Fires of brightness are sheltered
 to burn the fallen limbs of men: the green
 spirit of leaves like smoke
 rises to mark the barrow of earth
 and dwindles to perfection. The stars
 are sparks
 in space and time, the fury of fire
 that blackens the limbs of each god who falls:
 spendthrift creation. The stable dew-drop is flame.
 The sun burnishes each star in preparation for every deserted lane.
 Time lies uneasy between the paintless houses
 weather-beaten and dark.
 The Negro once leaned on his spade
 breathing the smoke of his labour,
 the arch of his body banked to shelter or tame
 his slow burning heart
 like a glittering diamond:
 or else like charcoal to grain
 the world, lines of a passionate intention.

Wilson Harris

TROY

The working muses nourish Hector
 hero of time: like small roots that move
 greener leaves to fathom the earth.
 This is the controversial tree of time
 beneath whose warring branches
 the sparks of history fall. So eternity to season, it is converted into
 an exotic roof for love, the barbaric conflict of man.

So he must die first to be free.
 Solid or uprooted in pain, his bright limbs
 must yield their glorious intentions to the secret
 root of the heart. And musing waters dart
 like arrows of memory over him, a visionary: smarting tears
 of the salty earth.

The everchanging branches of the world, the green
 loves and the beautiful dark veins in time
 must fall to lightnings and be calm in broken compassion:

but the wind moves outermost and hopeful
 auguries: the strange opposition of a flower on a branch to its dark
 wooden companion. On the gravel and the dry earth
 each dry leaf is powder under the wheels
 of war. But each brown root has protection
 from the spike of flame. Each branch
 tunnels to meet a well or inscrutable
 history

shows the mortality of man
 broken into scales that heal the strife of god.

The petals of space return
 in a gnarled persistence like time.

To claim eternity as its own
 time is this tree of the past
 still grows from a mortal bosom.

So now when Hector dies, the creation of a hero
 kills a father, a husband and all. What frail succession continues!

Why must he fall
when still a green branch

why shoulder a war with the sulky sky of god

To be truly mortal—
must Hector
to the immortals climb?

or to be truly fateful
to Hades lean before time
and be dusty and forgetful?

What glory has the almighty promised him?

only this—
capricious lightning of victory
while Achilles rests beside the ancient sea
while death waits in the guise of immortality.

Far off the clouds are tinged with pink and purple
the fire and darkness, the passion and the gloom of storm
the unearthly sense of valour subdued: but the caves of death
wait for the mortal
who turns in brightness to the immortal
blandishments of fame or fire!
the wild contest and the atrocious end
must dapple the world with flame and extinction
like still shadows moving in the memories of god.
Save for this tree that continues out of the breast of love,
shelter for what is beleaguered, the struggle that lives and shines!

So Hector knows the trunk of man, the branches of heroes and gods
foreshadowing the labour of all.

Loses his spear and groans to leave his love:
so is he pursued by a contradiction. The fine blades of grass
point their green arrows to his heart: the sun marches
to meet his young night,
his red flowers burning like inexorable stars: his roots serve
to change illusion and forsake
blossoming coals of immortal imperfection.

Cecil Herbert

SONG

Night's end and bird song. Bright birds,
 All through the morn from the child's waking hour,
 From perches high in, with cascades of chords,
 Drenched the leafy dew-starred hair of trees.
 When the gradual, vivid dawn was done
 The filigree of dew drops disappeared,
 Bird song of the past was blurred
 And fumbling the hairless trees
 Came time's haze of dust-laden years
 Which makes future and past so vague;
 And also came the fear that stunned
 The fear that I'd grown into stone.
 But to-day, bright thoughts have scoured the brain
 And I try for the happy words
 To express my hope, large as the sun,
 That violent as the poui
 Which explodes into flowers when earth is cast iron
 I shall rend my veil of fears
 And burst into song with the radiant tongue
 Of the birds, in the trees, in the dawn.

*Cecil Herbert*

THE SEA AND THE HILLS

For Jo:

Waves slithering over brown-skinned rock,
 Hissing of waves as they mount the rocks—
 By a pool appropriate with coral,
 Caught in a column of sunlight I see you
 A girl, and yet more goddess than girl,
 Brittle in beauty and bright as coral,
 And words rage in my heart's darkness.
 Midst the sibilant statements of the waves
 A voice calling back from the future
 Skewers the heart on a shaft of love,
 The perennial pain no prayer assuages—
 The sunlight fades, the vision perishes,
 All is darkness.

But that was another day.

Hillside studded with rocks and bramble,
 And I have come into these high hills today
 For I would carve you a song.
 I am out of the sound of the sea,
 I have come into these bird-infested hills
 For today is a day of prayer and praise
 And I would carve you a song
 More lasting than marble, more beautiful
 Turning in pain as the waves tormented her?
 Goddess or girl whichever you are, hear me:
 But rock-coloured girl first tell me
 Was it you that I saw? Was it you?
 Was yours the bird-shaped voice that called me?
 Or was it some goddess trapped in the coral
 Confined in rock for an ancient wrong

From high on this heavenward hill
 I gaze on the bay below me
 Where waves, instinct with violence,
 Crawl towards the woman-bearing rocks,
 And wishing to thank you (my girl, my goddess,
 Who afraid of the smart of her aching blood
 Still brings me back my singing voice)
 From the crest of my love I shape this prayer:

Though a poet approach her rayed in love,
 His fond, fond words, through her foliage of flesh
 Through her branching veins, swiftly winging,
 May her arms never know the torment
 Of encircling this obdurate lover
 For his grief is as old as Adam and Eve,
 And his heart is ringed round with raging words.
 Than any goddess caught in alabaster.

If she, embayed in his arms,
 Turn in pain and cry for the moon,
 Though her crime be as ancient as woman,
 O let her not know confinement in rock
 For the sea is within us, is intractable;
 Rages in a twitch of the heart and traps us
 With promises of a more auspicious season:

And all men know that the too hot heart
 Shall ache into stone ere this ancient rock
 Chafes into blood once more.

The prayer ends,
 The singing perishes, vision and sunlight
 Are shattered by the raging dark.



Cecil Herbert

AND THE POUIS SING

In far days in happy shires
 In the perfumes that all day creep
 From virgin moulds, in the fires
 Of a sullen but tolerant sun, deep,
 Our roots drilled deep and found
 In caverns underground
 Sweet water
 Rich as the laughter
 That slept in Carib eyes before fierce slaughter.

Through the soft air falling,
 Swifter than the sleek hawk dives
 On the dove, on silent wing
 Pilfered their caciques lives
 At our feet in our shade
 Where once they had played
 In childhood
 Children of the sun
 Who prayed to the sun to avenge their blood.

Hostile grew the sun and pitiless
 Spear sword arrow of light grew fiery
 And in the blindness of their bitterness
 Bored bird and beast and tree;
 Under the whip of savage winds
 And intricate with wounds
 Necrotic flesh
 Fell fold by fold from flanks
 That never before had known the driver's lash.

Old, we are old before our prime
 (Springs of laughter ran dry
 And hearts atrophied) and in our time
 Have heard lips lift their cry
 To the stone-deaf skies, have seen
 How the hawk has been
 Stripped of pride
 In necessary propitiation;
 In vale on hill where slave and cacique died

Have seen from the blood arise
 The cactus, live columbarium
 Of the winged tears of indignant eyes,
 And from its flowers come
 Dim odours, sweetening the air
 Through the desolate years
 And bringing barren hearts
 Auguries of new days, new faith, bright singing.



K. E. Ingram

POEM

There were those who were walking mountain paths by night
 In search of stars

And those who strayed amidst the flowers
 That held the glowing sunset caved within their open lips
 Many by chance have met with sprig-eared goat kids on the
 slippery rocks
 And loved their wild glass eyes
 And their catapult trips

But I, coming around the corner of dirty streets
 Have met upon small negro boys
 Little dirty chips
 With stars in their eyes
 And flowers between their lips.

K. E. Ingram

POEM

The hills are like great waves of music
 But of a still and soundless music:
 The hills are silences.
 Dark silences on moonless nights
 Silver silences on moon-nights:

The hills are pure silences
 Seen from other silences.
 The hills are the great silences
 That follow when the clear ripples
 Of bird-song and bird-flute
 Have ringed away in that blue and greatest
 of all silences.



K. E. Ingram

OKRA FLOWERS

You little yellow cups of witchery
 You little cups stained at the core with blood
 Crimson with a mad joy
 Crimson with a fertility
 That will to-morrow burst forth
 In a green shoot.
 I see you laughing wildly
 At my window in the morning
 Holding up your cups of blood and
 morning sunlight
 An offering to the day
 Day of fiesta and glorious gala
 And still you revel in the offered wine
 Till the drunk day
 Shall purse your open lips
 Into a wrinkled bud.

You wear auras of joyfulness
 You wear auras of wild bliss
 In your deep stains you say 'Kisses for sale
 If you have full lips come and prevail.'

E. McG. Keane

MY LOVE ARE YOU STRONG

My love, are you strong?
 I will bring my life to you like a bundle of washing;
 And all they say is my soul
 I will bring
 Like washing to your sweet rivers.
 And will you say this?
 Drink deeply
 Sink deeply
 Dream deeply of cleansing
 In the rivers' bones

My love, are you strong?
 I will bring my sins to you
 On the breast of your rivers, like stones
 I will bring my sins
 Prayerful to be swept along and away
 And will you say this?
 Will you say,
 Sigh sweetly
 Die gently
 Dream deeply of cleansing
 In the rivers' bones



E. McG. Keane

FRAGMENTS AND PATTERNS

ONCE the sea
 Said to the wind
 I am sad
 Heed me
 I am unwanted
 Need me
 I am blind
 Lead me
 And out of a pattern of tides islands became
 (And out of the eater came forth meat)
 Oh my islands
 And out of a pattern of blood
 Came forth we
 Came forth we

Oh my islands
 Will the sins of the sea
 Eventually
 Find us out

You there
 If you see Moses or Columbus
 Tell him there is nothing here
 That a person may not discover
 In a glass of wine or the tint of a hair
 Or the explosion of a little wave

(If you would commemorate anything....)

I talked once with one who was not dead
 And he said
 Why doesn't Chatoyer write home any longer
 Out of a pattern of blood....

I walked with my lover near the cliff
 In the clinging shadows
 And she threw a flower out of the shadows
 And we watched it settle on the silken sea
 And she said

The sea grows nothing
 The sea knows nothing to grow
 The sea is sad
 Is dry and unwanted

Once the water said
 To the wind
 I am unwanted
 Need me
 I am unplanted
 Seed me
 And out of the sweep of the wind's hands
 Out of a pattern of tides
 Came forth islands

Mountains remember our dawn
 And rivers rumble of a time
 Before Columbus
 Before the bushed beards and red eyes
 That spoke of a land long sea-days northward
 And the little rippling efforts of memory
 That make brows of our blue bays
 Know with the wind
 Tales of a ghost time's far telling

And time and her captains sailed west
 Into a pattern of blood
 By a pattern of tides possessed....

Go to, Drake
 Go to, Penn
 Venables, go to.
 Rum and blood and the quake
 Of a thousand broadsides

(If you would commemorate anything)

Oh Abercrombie rides the flood rides the flood
 Into a pattern of tides
 Tides and blood
 And the sins of the sea
 That may eventually.....

This was the temptation:
 That they who daring the lips of the ocean
 Had found Canaan without benefit of light
 Or pillar of cloud
 Should bring home the grape
 And gorge without thanks

If you see Columbus or Cain
 Or Philip of Spain

Tell him

And this is the condemnation:

That they who gorged grape did not stop to consider

The shock of the vine, that they finding gold

Did not stop to consider the rock they had raped

That they making history did not stop to consider

The flesh they had undone

I talked with the flower

That settled on the silken sea

And the flower said

I know the last brave cacique

Have known him head mountains and eyes tides

Have seen him ripples spreading

Out of tides

And out of a pattern of tides

Islands

And out of a pattern of blood

We

Oh my islands

And out of a pattern of tides and blood

History.

E. McG. Keane

INTERLUDE: CALYPSO

You should have seen them
dancing the Calypso,—
the whirling
strutting
sidling
shuffling
jumping
twisting
tripping
turning
leaping
crossing
capering
crashing Calypso!
Now with a whirl and a toss and a turn
and a tumbling;
Calypso!
Now with a slipping and a shouting and a sliding,
Ecstasy!
And then with a mock-slow
sinuous winding,
tortuous rhythm translated into body.
To see them is to see the wind
as ocean sees it,
frenzied.
To touch them
is to touch the ocean
horizon-like, ever and never.
To join them is to let the senses perish
or swelter in a hot coagulation
of joy and drunken stupor,
to lose all consciousness of having self or sinew—
headless,
armless,
legless,
bosomless,—breathless—
retaining only
a vague, yet wildly burning
Sense of Rhythm.

Music is fire,
and rhythm is the smoke
that leaps from it,
wetting the eyes,
drugging the veins,
threading a delicate poison
in, through, between the rapid folds
of mind, like—in a grey noon—
beyond the mist, round a mass of brain-cloud—
coiled—
a skein of lightning,—but hotter—
a web of warm pulsation—
Sensuous Calypso!

Look at their faces,
 each a sweating mask,
 a frozen crescendo of passion.
 Look at their eyes,—
 Can you read your way into a teardrop?—
 Heaven!
 There are mirrors of emotion fretting the quivering lids. .
 A smile snakes its way
 round and round
 their mouths,
 loading the flesh with ripples,
 ripples, ripples,
 ripples everywhere; from the greasy chasms
 on their foreheads
 to the hairy palisades
 drawn up about their eyes, protecting
 prism beyond prism,
 each gushing a spectrum of radiating madness.

Music is a demon,
and rhythm is the spell
that sits upon his eye
and looks
a happy frenzy into mortal bones. . . .
Maddening Calypso!

Look at their hands—
 shoving
 twisting
 striking
 clutching hands.
 Look at their bodies,
 Lurching closer closer
 then dissolving, each—
 spiral after spiral—
 into each; and then
 resolving themselves into a twain
 convulsive—
 lurching farther . . . farther
 These are not men and women, entities
 divorced, diverse, or free.

These are one rolling
 rollicking
 weaving, winding,
 sweating, shouting,
 expression
 of a passion universal,
 urged, quickened and controlled
 by an insistent blast
 Of wild resistless rhythm.

Music has form and colour,
Rhythm has force—
Music is a river,
men are the strengthless stones
swept on and on.

Music is a wave,
men are the bubbly foam
rising and falling through infinitudes of cadence.

Music is a call, men are the echo.

Music is a whip,
and men are slaves
groaning in a spasm of vibrant toil.

Dynamic Calypso!

They cannot stop,
 These dancers, until it stops,
 until it has expressed the final drop of awakened passion.
 Men say the earth is a vital graveyard
 of its own history,
 that every fold of rock
 teems
 with imprisoned residues of an exhausted age.
 So is music. . . .
 so is the music of the Calypso—
 centuries of warm compulsion
 spinning a woof of fire—
 screaming, wriggling, whirling, flexing fire—
 around the hot commotion
 of dancing feet;
 welling up
 in crazy crescendos
 through crevices of maddening sound,—
 pulsating aeons instantly unwombed,
 charred passions, fossil emotions
 cast up in
 rhythmic spurts of undulating dance.
 It will not stop,

They cannot stop.
 Forever
 you shall see them dancing
 The Calypso.

George Lamming

SWANS

By no other name are these
The imperturbable birds more beautiful,
No likelier image for the summer's curl
Of white light caught from the sea's
Arterial cells; or the moon's wry
Face carved on the curved aristocratic sky.

Sailing the solitude of their customary waters
Dark and dimpled, in the windy morning,
Instinct prompts a ritual of preening
The rude arrangement of their feathers,
And leaping with the leaping light of dawn
They crown the river with a white perfection.

Later the circus arrives
With its ready-made apparatus of pleasures,
Dogs and women and the dutiful masters
Of small boats swimming their lives
Through charted areas of water
And chuckled warnings of the wind's laughter.

The birds thoughtful, decorous, austere,
Retreat to a far side of the river,
Their eyes held in a puzzled stare
Measure their recently arrived spectator.
Some cluster to a deep deliberation
Or ponder in amazement their own reflection.

Leisurely the evening ambles,
Through the stained air, on torn leaves,
Over the lame, dry grasses,
Sadly, silently the late light falls,
And the waving curl of water dies
Where the winged white quietude at anchor lies.

Now blank desertion fills the senses,
Over the howling city
Louder than the cry of industry,
The moon sheds a contagion of madness,
And water fills the eyes of the visitor
Entering the legend of this historic river.

George Lamming

BIRTHDAY POEM FOR CLIFFORD SEALY

Today I would remember you whom birth brought no lucky dip
 From which to pluck a permanent privilege,
 And pain pushed prematurely into prose.
 The photograph that recreates a child whose glance
 Cast on the rescuing rock reads tyranny
 His body bare to the bellowing wind
 Has proved your former existence,
 So when the season of awareness came
 Passion made politics a serious game
 And poverty your partner. How well I understood
 The intolerant gesture, the juvenile lust to murder
 An evil that had forged your life.

My birth records a similar story:
 The freezing bastardy, the huddled tenantry,
 Where children carry parents' pains like a uniform
 Articulate only in their loyalty to life,
 The individual desire or despair mocking most faithfully
 Barometers that measure another's will
 And happiness as time indeed has shown
 Absolved by the evil, intelligent question:
 Was that piece of land a paying concern?

Those who start life without a beginning
 Must always recall their crumbling foundations,
 Rushing past affliction of the womb's unfortunate opening,
 Reconsider now and again their earliest ambitions,
 Or poised somewhere between loss and a possible arrival
 Question their precarious present portion
 What new fevers arise to reverse the crawl
 Our islands made towards their spiritual extinction?
 Do you still patrol the city's unsavoury sites
 Probing the prostitutes' hearts? Setting your intelligence
 An exercise in pity as the warm nights
 Drift their human flotsam before your questioning glance?

Nothing is changed in the news that reaches me here:
 Papers continue to print the impossible, and rumours telegraph
 Whatever falls within the sense' gauge,
 Young poets are decorated with foreign approval
 For precocious statements in a borrowed language,
 Fashionable women whom comfort couldn't bless with sense
 Still flock to applaud lectures by men
 Who've a soft spot for the sound of their voices,
 Corruption is keen: time throbs
 With the ache of the proud and the sensitive like you

Who angrily wade through the vacuum
Forever afloat with oily seas,
While politicians posing incredible paunches
Parading their magical and primitive power
Fit the incompetent into jobs

Life is similar in (what some call) the Mother Country
Where our people wear professions like a hat
That cannot prove what the head contains,
Success knows what grimace to assume,
Mediocrity is informed by a bright sense of bluff,
And Democracy a convenient attitude for many.
Students whom the huge city has shorn of glamour
Divorced from their status by a defect of colour
Find consolation in Saturday nights
With eloquent white whores that dance;
Or at nightfall over their new habit of tea
Argue with an elephant's lack of intelligence
Our culture must be spelt with a West Indian C.

We must suffer in patience whom life received
On islands cramped with disease no economy can cure,
Go with or without our lovers to the quiet shore
Where the reticent water weaves its pattern
And crabs crawl with a peculiar contemplation of the land,
Move through the multitude's monotonous cry
For freedom and politics at the price of blood,
Yet live every moment in the soul's devouring flame,
Until we fold with the folding earth,
Erect our final farewell in tree or cloud,
Hoping (if possible) for a people's new birth.

So you who care little for festival,
The seasonal sports, the carnival
Of barren souls in the February noon,
Preferring to inhabit your room, hoping to lean
On some durable solace in pages that justify
Your honest but innocent worship of the Russian regime
May not question why your exiled friend,
Seldom at ease in the habits of his time,
Never understanding why people pretend
To manufacture good wishes at certain times of the year,
Should yet try sincerely to offer you
A gift in words on your birthday.

Ferdinand Levy

THE CARIBBEAN

O I have seen the Caribbean . .
 In all her wild
 And raging forms
 And I have seen her
 Often
 When her soul was quiet
 And her ways were gentle
 And her manner
 Serenely calm
 Like a madonna

I have seen her
 Resembling a maiden
 Her body lying
 Quiet
 With a rainbow
 Draped
 Across her gentle breasts
 For sheer adornment
 A nymph

I have seen her too
 Not unlike an Amazon
 Fighting hard
 Against perilous winds
 With bosom heaving
 And voice roaring
 And mouth white
 With froth
 A lovely tigress

I have seen her
 At the break of dawn
 And heard
 Her quiet rippings
 Along pebbled shores
 And heard
 The waking birds
 Chirp
 The accompaniment
 Like musicians

I have seen the tropic sun
 All crystal in colour
 Creep noiselessly
 Out of her womb
 And steal
 To a majestic height
 In the blue of the heavens
 And I have seen
 That tropic sun
 Sink to her feet
 And die
 A glowing ball.

Una Marson

THE IMPOSSIBLE

You ask me just to be a little wise,
 To half subdue the ardour in my eyes,
 To find some unseen power that can restrain
 The heated blood that rushes to my brain.

Ask then the wild wind on its furious course
 To half subdue its mighty unspent force
 And ask the troubled sea that she no more
 Will dash her waves against the placid shore.

Ask of the fire that blazes ever higher
 Of its consuming appetite to tire,
 And ask the sun that moves towards the west
 To stay its course, subdue its heat and rest:

Ask on, your chiding is so sweet to me
 I have no wish to ask for clemency.

Una Marson

CONSPIRACY

Listen, little wild violet,
 Your heart beats wildly as mine,
 When you hear the feet of your lover
 Stop by the Celandine.

My lover he halts by the wayside,
 He works far away from the streams,
 And has no time for my music
 Or the magic of my dreams.

I'll bide with you, sweet violet,
 And we'll banish our loves for aye,
 For why should we dream of lovers
 Who come not when it is May.

Una Marson

WHERE DEATH WAS KIND

Long had I thought
Of Death
And then they told me
You were dead.

I had seen him
Sitting in the ante-room
Eager to be summoned,
So when I heard
You had received him
I was silent.

I went to see you
Lying in death's embrace.
I was afraid —
I thought the sight
Would tear my heart
To pieces,
And my anger would rise
Against death the intruder.

But when I looked
Into your lovely face
And saw the sweet peace
That his kiss
Had implanted,
I could not weep,
And I could not be angry

Ah, sweet is death,
And kindly,
To those who suffer
Unbearable agony:
Sweet was death's kiss
Upon your lips —
Beloved one
To whom
He gave His Peace.

Hilda McDonald

DAWN

Like giant brooms the palm heads sweep
 The star-dust from the dreaming skies,
 As through half-opened gates of sleep
 Bird carols of the morning rise.

Where sea meets heaven in misty blue,
 The dawn fires leap through rosy spray,
 And armed outriders of the morn
 Flash burnished spears in bright array.

Westward their wind-whipped coursers sweep,
 Hailing the shore to greet the day,
 Then turn and toss their flying waves
 In rippling silver o'er the bay.

Their trumpets sound from reef to reef,
 Their gold-red pennons flaunt the skies
 As mailed in silver, girt with jade
 Dawn comes up with flaming eyes.

*Hilda McDonald*

EVENSONG

Sunset had called in the colours
 But not yet was it dark,
 The pool lay a mirror of silver
 Without spot or mark.

When out from the green mirrored mangroves
 Stepped a wonder of white
 A great heron wandering homeward,
 Before it was night.

The pool held the moon and the heron,
 And the first white star,
 In a beauty beyond all imagining
 As I watched from afar.

And my heart sang aloud to its Maker
 In thanks and delight,
 Who gave me that moment of beauty,
 Before it was night.

Basil McFarlane

POEM

Music a kind of sleep
 imposes on this weary flesh
 wind beyond silence
 speech of the God who ordered
 trees flowering of dark earth
 light, essence of darkness
 birth

Lucifer massed
 in arrogant disorder all about
 pale quiet strength of stellar presences
 hears in a wonderful dread
 music a calm
 persistent tread
 above the wild torment of nameless waters.

Basil McFarlane

JACOB AND THE ANGEL

And shall a man
 mortal though the mind
 covets eternity seek only
 this seek only to endure
 whether failings of breath and bone
 corruption of flesh and faith?

Too thin too thin the wind
 of consolation here
 the outer edge of prayer
 the unexorcised inexorcisable knife
 selfknowledge is closer to distant stars
 whose stare is lonely and unexplained
 solemn and keen and unwinking like regret

than to old Earth estranged now
 a pillow of cold stone.

J. E. Clare McFarlane

SWEET ARE THE NIGHTS OF MAY

(From *Daphne*)

Sweet are the nights of May, the balmy nights
 When crescent moons slant southward, and the stars
 Glimmer from violet skies, and jasmine blooms
 Scatter their fragrance over sleeping fields.
 Sweetest to love, and youth's first taste of love,
 The gold of moon-dreams and the silver sheen
 Of dew-wet forest trees, and misty hills,
 Dim and remote, like unexplored desires
 That rise in distant regions of the soul.

Sweet are the dawns of May, dew-moist and borne
 Upon the odorous winds that nightly sleep
 In flowery coverts, and at morn spread wide
 Their wings before the day; where snowy mists,
 From the lone peak diverging, nestle down,
 Like curtains parted at the touch of Love,
 To valleys deep below; and these to them
 Pure joy and wonder were, whether beneath
 The star-gemmed mantle of the night they roamed,
 Or, standing on some wooded slope, beheld
 The liquid sphere float free and pour its flood
 Upon Cinchona's height.

J. E. Clare McFarlane

MY COUNTRY

If e'er I tread the highways of the world,
 'Twill be for thee, my country! for thy name
 I am most zealous; unto thee I owe
 All the imaginings of beauty sown
 Deep in my soul; and unto thee I bring
 What thou hast given. While on thy breast I lay
 In helpless childhood I have felt thy breath,
 Moist with the mountain-dew, and seen thy face
 Aflush with Eden's earliest dawn; have heard
 Thy whispers 'midst vast silences, when noon
 Held breathless earth and sea.

And thou hast nursed me
 From season unto season, year to year,
 Till dawning consciousness in me revealed
 The graces of thy form. Well I remember
 The vague and subtle sense of joy which stole
 Into my pulses as I gazed upon
 Thy fields of flowering grasses, 'neath the wind
 Rising and falling, like a reedy pond
 Half-blown to life; and well do I recall
 Thy first sweet favour, my first love: a flower,
 Star-like and tender, whose perfumed breath
 Wafted my soul into the enchanted land
 Of dreams and fairies.

Or thou would'st lead me
 Through labyrinthine ways where murmuring flowed
 The shadow-full waters of some lonely stream,
 Dappled with golden glimmerings where the sun
 Pierced with his prying eye the sanctuary
 Hallowed by solitude.

Alone with thee,
 And in such mood as each sequestered spot
 Would lend, and with the gathered presences
 Of years whose summers lay beneath my feet,
 I heard thy wondrous story, saw thy tears,
 Thy laughter 'midst thy tears I heard and saw;
 And with entranced vision did behold
 Phantom romances that at noon-tide dream
 Upon thy hills, and in thy valleys sleep.

There is a world-old pain within thine eyes
 E'en while they sparkle mirth; a shadowy trouble
 That sits on thy fair brow; a spectral langour
 That cleaves to thine immortal youth, and casts
 A damp upon thy warmest impulse. Oft
 In the still watches of the night I've heard
 Warring against opposing shutters, oft
 Thy sighs have come to me.

And I have sought,
 Uneasy with thy hidden pain, the woods
 On summer nights, to listen to the leaves
 Whispering in solemn conclave, or to scan
 Their black and golden tracery, images
 And symbols of thine own mysterious fate,
 Dark with forebodings, golden with lure
 And promise of thy matchless loveliness;
 And baffled, I have lifted searching eyes
 Unto thy mist-veiled mountains, where the peace
 And majesty of heaven linger yet.
 They loom against the sky-line; seem to yearn
 Pulsating t'ward high heaven; are silent still,
 Tense with an anguished waiting.

And now I sink
 Vanquished, beneath the burden of thy grief,
 And now a deathless impulse bears me on
 To dare for thee, to spend myself for thee,
 To take the rugged path, nor heed the pain,
 To grapple with the thorns of sacrifice,
 The sneers of cowards, the malice of the proud,
 If I might win thee to a nobler self,
 And see thee stand triumphant on the heights,
 Steadfast like thine own mountain-range and flushed
 With the bright splendour of a new-born day.
 O bless me now, my mother, bless me now!
 And be the music of thy thousand streams
 In me a song of triumph! The fleet winds
 That haunt thy shadowy passes be the wings
 That shall upbear my fancy; let it glow
 Like thine own ardent noonday, and resound
 With the o'erpowering harmony that swells
 From thine encircling seas.

And that strange peace
 Be mine, that broods above thy mist-filled vales
 At twilight, and upon thy purple hills;
 Not silence, but a hushed expectancy,
 A brimming joy that greets night unafraid,
 When life stands tiptoe on the brink of time
 And waits with fluttering pulses for the last
 Sweet benediction, and the touch of hands;
 And hope aspires toward the evening star.

E. M. Roach

HOMESTEAD

Seven cedars break the Trades
From the thin gables of my house:
I know the green demonic rage
When gales are trapped in their thick foliage
But weathers turn, the drought returns,
The great sun burns the green to ochre
Dry racking winds knock the boughs bare
Till they are tragic stands of sticks
Pitiful in pitiless noons
But know dusk's bounty and the moon's

Beyond the cedars there are fields
Where one man sweated out his days
Wearying his stubborn bone.
He'd bought thick woodland for his own,
Set his axe of hope upon it
With his rugged bones of courage
And left his sons an heritage.
This heavy drudgery for a man
But plants his spirit in the earth
That blooms no fragrance of his worth.

So I write his epitaph
In his own blood of hope and faith:
"His life was simple peasant bread,
"He wrote his memoirs in his head,
"His heavy labour drained his face,
"He felt to his arthritic bone
"Both our weathers of the sun.
"God was his good friend on his fields
"In changing skies and wind and rain;
"He harvested his faith in grain".

Though his heavy days are done
He is present in the fields
In natural holy images.
He's girth and growth of all his trees,
He's on these tracks his goings made

In his slow to and fro in boots
 As earthy as his nurtured roots.
 To every furrow of the land,
 To every shaken grace of grass
 He is the spirit of the place.

An un-named, unknown slaveman's son;
 Paysan, paisano; of all common
 Men time-long in fields world over
 In the cotton, corn and clover
 Who are not told, but tell their breed
 Through history's book, as passive, as
 Unkillable as common grass;
 Whose temperate and patient soul
 The heavy loam of human earth
 Feeds woods of wisdom, art and faith.

E. M. Roach

TO MY MOTHER

It is not long, not many days are left
 Of the dead sun, nights of the crumbled moon;
 Nor far to go; not all your roads of growth,
 Love, grief, labour of birth and bone
 And the slow slope from the blood's noon
 Are shorter than this last.

And it is nothing. Only the lusty heroes
 And those whose summer's sweet with lust
 And wine and roses fear. The children do not;
 Theirs is young Adam's innocence.
 The old do not; they welcome the earth's suction
 And the bone's extinction into rock.

The image of your beauty growing green,
 Your bone's adolescence I could not know,
 Come of your middle years, your July loins.
 I found you strong and tough as guava scrub,
 Hoeing the growing, reaping the ripe corn;
 Kneading and thumping the thick dough for bread.

And now you're bowed, bent over to the ground;
 An old gnarled tree, all her bows drooped
 Upon the cross of death, you crawl up
 Your broken stairs like Golgotha, and dead bones
 Clutch at your dying bones.

I do not mourn, but all my love
 Praise life's revival through the eternal year.
 I see death broken at each seed's rebirth.
 My poems labour from your blood
 As all my mind burns on our peasant stock
 That cannot be consumed till time is killed.

Oh, time's run past the time your hands made bread
 To this decrepitude; but in the stream
 Of time I watch the stone, the image
 Of my mother making bread my boyhood long,
 Mossed by the crusty memories of bread.
 O may my art grow whole as her hands' craft.



E. M. Roach

POEM

Pray that the poem come out of the dark
 Like clear spring water jetting from a rock,
 Like blossom crowning the green blossomer,
 And go with the white pride of cumuli,
 And sing like light dawn's silver villanelle;
 Pray for the phrases of the wheeling Trades.

Praise out of heart her whole and hybrid beauty
 Now that her bone stands up among upstanding
 Beauty of boughs blossoming flame and flames
 Leaping and falling in fields, on hearths, in hearts
 Tender and kind in their first uttering love;
 Praise her great rose among the season's roses.

A viking roving from his temperate island
 Greeted our islands where the intemperate sun
 Hurl'd darts of torrid light against his eyes,
 Kindled wild torrid passion in his heart
 For dark desire whirling through her drums:
 She is their seed, the passion and the dark.

She's not what you have seen — that Doric stone,
 Those flanks and breasts amazing gods and men;
 That form was cut for a coarse artisan
 Who was half blind from soot in his black forge —
 She is the dancer in dreams, the grace in the tides,
 The flower of foam that gleamed at Paphos, goddess,
 Goddess, eternally woman, legend and living.
 Lancelot and Tristan drank a dolorous wine
 From golden beakers through audacious days.
 Abelard prayed his sin round a swan's neck.
 And Goya's duchess blazed, and Rembrandt's wife;
 And each new poet speaks new sonnets to her.



E. M. Roach

POEM

He plucked a burning stylus from the sun
 And wrote her name across the endless skies
 And wrote her name upon the waxing moon
 And wrote her name among the thronging stars.

If the pale moon forgets he will remember,
 Lovers remember though love's ghost sigh in the sun
 Or whimper in despair in the large dark.

The seas are sorrows
 And the seas accept the moon's dark tragedies.
 The seas reflect the yearning of the stars.
 His heart is weary as the endless seas.

His soul is wearier than the flowing wave,
 O dark tide of no hope,
 O blood of tears still sings the sun.
 No cloud can blind the memory of the moon
 Or blot the legend from the ageless stars.

E. M. Roach

I AM THE ARCHIPELAGO

I am the archipelago hope
 Would mould into dominion; each hot green island
 Buffeted, broken by the press of tides
 And all the tales come mocking me
 Out of the slave plantations where I grubbed
 Yam and cane; where heat and hate sprawled down
 Among the cane—my sister sired without
 Love or law. In that gross bed was bred
 The third estate of colour. And now
 My language, history and my names are dead
 And buried with my tribal soul. And now
 I drown in the groundswell of poverty
 No love will quell. I am the shanty town,
 Banana, sugarcane and cotton man;
 Economies are soldered with my sweat
 Here, everywhere; in hate's dominion;
 In Congo, Kenya, in free, unfree America.

I herd in my divided skin
 Under a monomaniac sullen sun
 Disnomia deep in artery and marrow.
 I burn the tropic texture from my hair;
 Marry the mongrel woman or the white;
 Let my black spinster sisters tend the church,
 Earn meagre wages, mate illegally,
 Breed secret bastards, murder them in womb;
 Their fate is written in unwritten law,
 The vogue of colour hardened into custom
 In the tradition of the slave plantation.
 The cock, the totem of his craft, his luck,
 The obeahman infects me to my heart
 Although I wear my Jesus on my breast
 And burn a holy candle for my saint.
 I am a shaker and a shouter and a myal man;
 My voodoo passion swings sweet chariots low.

My manhood died on the imperial wheels
 That bound and ground too many generations;
 From pain and terror and ignominy
 I cower in the island of my skin,
 The hot unhappy jungle of my spirit
 Broken by my haunting foe my fear,
 The jackal after centuries of subjection.
 But now the intellect must outrun time
 Out of my lost, through all man's future years,
 Challenging Atalanta for my life,
 To die or live a man in history,
 My totem also on the human earth.
 O drummers, fall to silence in my blood
 You thrum against the moon; break up the rhetoric
 Of these poems I must speak. O seas,
 O Trades, drive wrath from destinations.



W. Adolphe Roberts

THE CAT

Pleasures, that I most enviously sense,
 Pass in long ripples down her flanks and stir
 The plume that is her tail. She deigns to purr
 And take caresses. But her paws would tense
 To flashing weapons at the least offence.
 Humbly, I bend to stroke her silken fur,
 I am content to be a slave to her.
 I am enchanted by her insolence.

No one of all the women I have known
 Has been so beautiful, or proud, or wise
 As this angora with her amber eyes.
 She makes her chosen cushion seem a throne,
 And wears the same voluptuous, slow smile
 She wore when she was worshipped by the Nile.

W. *Adolphe Roberts*

ON A MONUMENT TO MARTI

Cuba, dishevelled, naked to the waist,
 Springs up erect from the dark earth and screams
 Her joy in liberty. The metal gleams
 Where her chains broke. Magnificent her haste
 To charge into the battle and to taste
 Revenge on the oppressor. Thus she seems.
 But' she were powerless without the dreams
 Of him who stands above, unsmiling, chaste.
 Yes, over Cuba on her jubilant way

Broods the Apostle, Jose Julian Marti.
 He shaped her course of glory, and the day
 The guns first spoke he died to make her free.
 That night a meteor flamed in splendid loss
 Between the North Star and the Southern Cross.



W. *Adolphe Roberts*

VILLANELLE OF THE LIVING PAN

Pan is not dead, but sleeping in the brake,
 Hard by the blue of some AEgean shore.
 Ah, flute to him, Beloved, he will wake.

Vine leaves have drifted o'er him flake by flake
 And with dry laurel he is covered o'er.
 Pan is not dead, but sleeping in the brake.

The music that his own cicadas make
 Comes to him faintly, like forgotten lore,
 Ah, flute to him, Beloved, he will wake.

Let not the enemies of Beauty take
 Uction of Soul that he can rise no more.
 Pan is not dead but sleeping in the brake,

Dreaming of one that for the goat god's sake
 Shall pipe old tunes and worship as of yore.
 Ah, flute to him, Beloved, he will wake.

So once again the Attic coast shall shake
 With a cry greater than it heard before:
 "Pan is not dead, but sleeping in the brake!"
 Ah, flute to him, Beloved, he will wake.

A. J. Seymour

FOR CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS.

Music came thundering through the North-East Trades
Fuller than orchestras, and bent the masts
All through the nights and made them sorrow-laden

For green-graced islands that the ships had passed.
Each day broke on an ocean like a wheel
Bound to a hub of ships though driving fast

Deep to the westward under a sky now steel
Blue-gray and fatal, and now sapphire blue
Buttressed with golden evenings men could feel

All of their fears come mellow with the hue.
Behind them lay the far and wistful heights
Ferro and the Fortunate Islands and they knew

Back of these Spain, and widowed women, and lights
From lovely Palos glittering on the sea.
This ocean's only jewels on the sight

Were foreign stars that happened suddenly
Upon the dark, burnt fiercely through the hours
Then shrank to pale ghosts with dawn's light, eerie

Upon the lightening day, small silver flowers.
Then desolation came upon the crews
The emptiness men feel of crumbled towers,

Spent arrows falling, and the slackening will to do
Of men who wander to the world's edge and fail
In a doom of ocean with winds blowing true

And deep to westward in their office. Sails
Could never hope for Spain once more, they said,
Against these winds — — then, marvellous as a tale,

Small birds came singing at morning and they fled
When night approached.

Men in the ships took heart
Watching each feathered snatch of song and paid

Eagerest heed. But morning's eyelids parted
 On miles of ocean meadow, golden weed
 Spotted with berries and showing as if by art

Bright green leaves in the water. Then indeed
 The crews made clamour against the Italian's will
 Of holding course to India.

(2)

At night Columbus paced the poop alone.
 Hard to hold men to a vision.

The faith fails

Sometimes even in the dreamer.

Signs, signs.

Today a little branch full of dogroses
 Drifted along the ocean's breathing bosom
 Imagine roses in ocean
 Roses at the edge of the world

The sea was calm like the river of Seville
 A day ago and breeze as soft as April
 Made fragrant wing to our weary caravels.

Vision, yes, vision.

I, an Italian

Holding three Spanish crews to an unknown land
 After how many desert years.
 A young man, poor, dreaming on Ptolemy
 With his globe, and the maps of Marinus of Tyre,
 And the opinion of Alfraganus the Arabian
 That the world is not as large as people think

And living in the pages of Marco Polo
 The Venetian feted once by the Great Khan.

Sometimes dreams harden and blaze into a vision
 That leads the man to hostile courts and wars.

Fighting against the Moors — — but the vision blazing
 In the warrior's head.

Answering bald-headed friars
 Within the Salamanca Council Room.
 What St. Augustine and the sages said

How Adam's sons never had crossed the ocean
 And peopled the antipodes — — answering friars
 With the vision burning.

Man must endure the crumbling powers, the crack
 Of another's will but hold his vision fast,
 Whip muscle and nerve to keep appointed pace
 Drive wheel for westward to the couching sun.

Man must adventure to the Sun's declension
 Translate his vision into a tower of fact
 Despite the loosening limbs, the unstable powers
 Failing about him.

Vision moulds clay into a hero despite the man
 Cuts him to the brains and drives him hungry
 To bring an inviolate star down to the earth
 Vision may break a man to make a city,

Vision's an edge to civilisation, carving
 Beauty from wilderness and charting seas.
 Visionless, man falls back into the animal
 With Nature striding in her ancient places.

And look, look—look, a light,—Quick, Pedro, come.

(3)

And so they came upon San Salvador.
 When the dawn broke, the island floated ahead
 Thick with the wind-swayed trees upon the shore.

Men shouted and cried for joy to see instead
 Of waving waste of ocean, that tangled green,
 The shrub and tree all dark with the bright red

Of foreign flowers on the leaves' glossy sheen.
 The ships cast anchor with a triple crash
 That startled seabirds, whirred them winging, lean

Neck stretched, to bank upon the trees. The splash
 Died quickly into winking patches of foam
 Widening out upon the swelling wash.

Men crowded boats. The Indians watched them come,
 Riding upon the breaking waves to shore.
 Until they feared and ran to find their homes

Deep in the woods. His mail Columbus wore,
 The glittering cloaked in scarlet, and he sprang
 Out on the sea-stained sand and kneeling, poured

His heart to God. On that beach dawn there hangs
 A heavy caul of reverence, for kneeling there
 The others felt vast choirs of angels sang

Within their hearts to hallow them many a year.
 Rising up sworded, Columbus spoke again
 And claimed San Salvador for the royal pair
 Fernando and Queen Isabel of Spain.

(4)

He dreamed not that the ocean would bear ships
 Heavy with slaves in the holds, to spill their seed
 And fertilize new islands under whips

Of many nail-knotted thongs—dreamt not indeed
 Massive steel eagles would keep an anxious watch
 For strange and glittering fish where now was weed.

He knew not that a world beneath his touch
 Springing to life would flower in cities and towns
 Over two continents, nor guessed that such

A ferment of civilisation was set down
 Would overshadow Europe whence he came.
 He could not dream how on the nations' tongue

Discovery would marry with his name.
 That to these simple Indians his ships brought doom
 For cargo; that the world was not the same

Because his vision had driven him from home
 And that as architect of a new age
 The solid world would build upon his poem.

(5)

And so the day beginning,

In the vast Atlantic

The sun's eye blazes over the edge of ocean
 And watches the islands in a great bow curving
 From Florida down to the South American coast.

Behind these towers in a hollow of ocean
 Quiet from the Trade Winds lies the Caribbean
 With the long shadows on her breathing bosom
 Thrown from the islands in the morning sun.

And as the wind comes up, millions of palm trees
 Weave leaves in rhythm as the shaft of sunlight
 Numbers the islands till it reaches Cuba
 Leaps the last neck of water in its course.



A. J. Seymour

SUN IS A SHAPELY FIRE

Sun is a shapely fire turning in air
 Fed by white springs
 and earth's a powerless sun.

I have the sun today deep in my bones.
 Sun's in my blood, light heaps beneath my skin.
 Sun is a badge of power pouring in
 A darkening star that rains its glory down.

The trees and I are cousins. Those tall trees
 That tier their branches in the hollow sky
 And, high up, hold small swaying hands of leaves
 Up to divinity, their name for sun,
 And sometimes mine. We're cousins.

Sheet light, white power comes falling through the air,
 ---All the light here is equal-vertical---
 Plays magic with green leaves and, touching, wakes
 The small sweet springs of breathing scent and bloom
 That break out on the boughs.

And sun has made
 Civilisation flower from a river's mud
 With his gossamer rays of steel.

II.

These regions wear sharp shadows from deep suns.

The sun gives back her earth its ancient right
 The gift of violence.

Life here is ringed with the half of the sun's wheel
 And limbs and passions grow in leaps of power
 Suddenly flowing up to touch the arc.

Upon this energy kin to the sun
 To learn the trick of discipline and slow skill,
 Squaring in towns upon an empty map
 Hitching rivers to great water wheels,
 Taming the fire to domesticity.

III.

Sun is a shapely fire floating in air
 Watched by God's eye. The distance makes it cool
 With the slow circling retinue of worlds
 Hanging upon it.

Indifferently near
 Move other stars with their attendant groups
 Keeping and breaking pace in the afternoon
 Till the enormous ballet music fades
 And dies away.

Sun is a shapely fire
 Turning in air
 Sun's in my blood.

A. J. Seymour

FIRST OF AUGUST.

Gather into the mind
Over a hundred years of a people
Wearing a natural livery in the sun
And budding up in generations and dying
Upon a strip of South American coastland.

See a prostrate people
Straighten its knees and stand erect
And stare dark eyes against the sun.

Watch hidden power dome the brow
And lend a depth of vision to the eyes.

Gather into the mind
Over a hundred years of a people
Toiling against climate
Working against prejudice
Growing within an alien framework
Cramped, but stretching its limbs
And staring against the sun.

(2)

Sometimes the blood forgets the flowering trees,
Red with flamboyants in the hard clear sun
And traces memories from hotter suns,
Other green-brilliant trees beneath a sky
That burns a deeper and more vital blue.

The blood goes back—

Coming across to land from Africa
The winds would close their mouths, the sea would smooth
And leave the little ships gasping, then the Sun
Would stand above and gaze right down the masts.

Children dying in dozens below the decks
The women drooping in clumps of flowers, the men
Standing about, with anger carved upon their foreheads.

A ferry of infamy from the heart of Africa
 Roots torn and bleeding from their native soil,
 A stain of race spreading across the ocean.

Then the new life of chains and stinging swamps
 Whips flickering in the air in curling arabesques.

(3)

Gather into the mind
 Over a hundred years of a people
 Wearing a natural livery in the sun
 And budding up in generations and dying
 Upon a strip of South American coastland.

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A. J. Seymour

THE LEGEND OF KAIETEUR.

Now Makonaima, the Great Spirit dwelt
 In the huge mountain rock that throbbed and felt
 The swift black waters of Potaro's race
 Pause on the lip, commit themselves to space
 And dive the half mile to the rocks beneath.
 Black were the rocks with sharp and angry teeth
 And on those rocks the eager waters died,
 Lost their black body, and up the mountain side,
 Above the gorge that seethed and foamed and hissed
 Rose, resurrected into lovely mist.

The rock He lived in towered a half mile high
 So that it seemed a rival to the sky
 And over it this living mist He drew
 To curtain off Divinity from view.
 He gave it too the privilege to choose
 To take the glory of the rainbow's hues
 To wear at morning, and for changed delight
 The marvellous sunsets of the tropic night.
 From day to day, behind this rainbowed screen,
 The Father, the inscrutable, unseen,
 Would ponder on His domain of the earth
 And all the nations He had given birth.

And He caused flowers to weave upon the ground
 Their rich embroideries, and He set around
 The village where each tribe worked all day long
 A veritable tapestry of song
 From birds that in the branches built their bowers
 And spent within the shade quick musical hours.
 So every wind blew peace and fortune down
 From the sweet heavens, and everywhere was sung
 A song of praise to the Great Spirit above
 That fathered them in kindness and love.
 And every moon each tribe would come and float
 Upon the stream a sacrificial boat
 New-carved and painted, laden with fish and fruit
 And watch it gain speed as it neared and shoot
 Over the rock into the gorge below.

And as the waters, so the centuries flow
 Until the savage Caribishi came
 And put the Patamoona to the flame.
 They came by night and took them in their sleep
 Slaughtered the guards and drove away the sheep
 Ravished the women, burnt their huts and fields,
 Despite their warclubs and their wooden shields.
 A few, the merest remnant, took to flight
 And under shelter of the friendly night
 Escaped from the pursuing torches sent
 To slay them in the caches where they went.
 These took the terrible tidings of the raid
 To the far camp their restless kin had made
 On the Potaro—that the feud was awake
 And counsel what defences they could make.

Old Kaie was chief in counsel. He was wise
 Over a hundred seasons had those eyes
 Seen in their passage. Time had made them dim
 But with its wisdom compensated him.
 He knew the cures for all men's ills and fears
 And he had words for women in their tears
 To comfort them. He sat all day and talked
 Unto the tribe, for painfully he walked
 On legs like rotten trunks wherein chigoes
 Had nested and made caves of all his toes,

Just now he counselled, "Since our arms are small
 I and another to the mountain wall
 Will go to question Makonaima's will
 What He requires that we must fulfil
 In sacrificial offerings. He is kind
 His orders will chase fear out of our mind."
 Then someone murmured "But can Kaie's feet stand
 The troublesome journey through steep, rocky land?"
 Flame sprang to Kaie's eyes, "Will you never learn,
 From what the mind wills, body will not turn?"

So the next morning laboured up the slope
 Kaie and the one other with their ropes
 Strapped round their backs, their bags of magic art
 With all the stuff that in their spells had part.
 Kaie's feet off staggered and the westering sun
 Was swallowed up by night, the day was done
 Before they came upon the slab of stone
 That ends the path to the Great Spirit's home.

Alone

They stood while the vast starry night was full
 Of falling water. Kaie felt his fellow pull
 His arm. "Look there," "Yes, Makonaima's birds,
 They are His messengers, they speak His words.
 These small black cruiser birds, they fly in flocks
 And feed on lana seed among the rocks."
 And now the birds made swoopings round the pair
 And chattering, brushed Kaie's cheek and kissed his ear.
 Twice, thrice, they did this. Then with sudden flight
 They wheeled and veered off through the seeing Night.

Then in a voice that swelled and sank and broke
 With the great wealth of joy he felt, Kaie spoke
 "Oh, great is Makonaima and the words
 That He has spoken by message of His birds
 I must go down the passage of the river

That I may sit before His face for ever
In His great house, the everlasting rock.
And He has promised that no harm, no shock
Shall bruise our people, for His watch and ward
Shall circle us and He shall be our guard.
I am accounted for a sacrifice
For all the tribe. You with your younger eyes
Shall see the offering that you may tell
How boldly Kaie clasped such a death, how well
He lost his life to save his threatened race
And shadow them with the eternal peace."

So in the morning, while the dim mist wreathed
And the fall thundered and the deep gorge seethed
That other sat at vantage by the wall
And scanned the river to the waterfall.
He saw the sun o'er-peep the world and throw
Tide after tide of golden ray and glow
Against the fall, flood full on its attire,
Its misty veil, and catch that mist afire.
Amazed, he stared. The opalescent light
Deepened and sank and changed. . . . Then in his sight
Below the point that Kaie had bid him mark
He saw Kaie in a sacrificial bark.

The frail boat bobbed and bucked within the grip
Of the live waters that hurried it to the lip
Over the abyss. Kaie then raised his tall
Huge bulk in the boat and towered over the fall,
A cruciform over the flaming mist.
Then with a force that nothing could resist
The boat rent all that misty veil in two,
Drawing a dark line down the rainbow hue.

But of Kaie's body never showed a trace,
He sat with Makouaima before His face.

Philip M. Sherlock

POCCMANIA

Long Mountain, rise,
Lift you' shoulder, blot the moon.
Black the stars, hide the skies,
Long mountain, rise, lift you' shoulder high.

Black of skin and white of gown
Black of night and candle light
White against the black of trees
And altar white against the gloom,
Black of mountain high up there
Long Mountain, rise,
Lift you' shoulder, blot the moon,
Black the stars, black the sky.

Africa among the trees
Asia with her mysteries
Weaving white in flowing gown
Black Long Mountain looking down
Sees the shepherd and his flock
Dance and sing and wisdom mock,
Dance and sing and falls away
All the civilised today
Dance and sing and fears let loose;
Here the ancient gods that choose
Man for victim, man for hate
Man for sacrifice to fate
Hate and fear and madness black
Dance before the altar white
Comes the circle closer still
Shepherd weave your pattern old
Africa among the trees
Asia with her mysteries.

Black of night and white of gown
White of altar, black of trees
"Swing de circle wide again
Fall and cry me sister now
Let de spirit come again
Fling away de flesh an' bone
Let de spirit have a home."

Grunting low and in the dark
 White of gown and circling dance
 Gone to-day and all control
 Now the dead are in control
 Power of the past returns
 Africa among the trees
 Asia with her mysteries.

Black the stars, hide the sky
 Lift you' shoulder, blot the moon.
 Long Mountain rise.



Philip M. Sherlock

CLEAR AS THE CLEAR SUN'S LIGHT

Clear as the clear sun's light
 So clear is the water's flight
 From the black rocks down
 To the waiting sand eager and brown,
 Near Gordon Town.
 And clear through the broad green leaves
 And the shining spears of the water reeds
 Through the tangled web of vine and root
 Of tangled roots black and wet
 With the shining water drops
 As swift in its crystal flight the river
 Leaves the rock for the sand and pebbles.

The rock and the light and the weaving stream,
 Fluid and fixed and fervent.

Trumpets blow and the dead arise
 Clanking bones and dead men's cries.
 Shiver the mountains huddled close
 Beneath their shivering coats of green
 Fluid now where once was rock
 Melting now where once was stable
 Liquid flows volcanic rock
 And the brazen sky is mad with sound
 And the sun and the moon and the stars appear

Philip M. Sherlock

JAMAICAN FISHERMAN

Across the sand I saw a black man stride
 To fetch his fishing gear and broken things,
 And silently that splendid body cried
 Its proud descent from ancient chiefs and kings
 Across the sand I saw him naked stride;
 Sang his black body in the sun's white light
 The velvet coolness of dark forests wide,
 The blackness of the jungle's starless night.
 He stood beside the old canoe which lay
 Upon the beach; swept up within his arms
 The broken nets and careless lounged away
 Towards his wretched hut. . . .
 Nor knew how fiercely spoke his body then
 Of ancient wealth and savage regal men.



Philip M. Sherlock

ASCENSION

(Lines written after seeing a drawing by Edna Manley)

This is the ascension
 This upward moving from the encaging flesh
 Freedom and winged exaltation
 Of that first moment when the spirit stirs
 And moves with certitude
 From the fair world till then so all-engaging.

At the resurrection
 There is a breathing of life
 Into the dead.
 Earth shakes, tombs open
 Coffins break asunder.
 That which was lifeless comes to life,
 At the word.

This is the greater wonder of the ascension
 That the living, warm with home and love,
 Feet firm on the solid earth
 Set about not with dark corruption

But with the light of the stars, the splendour of the sun
and moon

With the ageless beauty of sea and land
That these living ones should in a moment
Aspire, aspire
From sight to perception, hearing to heeding, living to life
At the word.

Within the room there was light,
The drawing against the books,
Outside was the day

Who speaks the word
And whence the light?

See Lincoln at Gettysburg
Tight-fisted, hard headed
Country bred peasant's son
Light bearer, light giver
His words fall upon the men and women who crowd
about the monument

The light shines round about them,
Hearts weary beneath the dragging burden of sorrow
Grow light at the word, crutches fall away from the maimed
Widows, mothers without sons
Men returned from the wars with bitter hopelessness
Fathers broken by nameless graves
Exultant move with calm certitude
Into this exaltation at the living word.

In time
Perchance one man speaks the word, the word
Not fashioned in the mind, the heart of one man.
Through him, through his responsive spirit
The generations speak, through him
The timeless agonies endless crucifixions
Enduring and sorrow and all
The unseen and hidden faithfulness
Of the sons of liberty
These made the words that Lincoln spoke
The words of the ascension at Gettysburg.

Philip M. Sherlock

A BEAUTY TOO OF TWISTED TREES

A BEAUTY too of twisted trees
 The harsh insistence of the wind
 Writes lines of loveliness within
 The being of this tortured trunk.
 I know that some there are that spring
 In effortless perfection still,
 No beauty there of twisted trees
 Of broken branch and tortured trunk
 And knotted root that thrusts its way
 Impatient of the clinging clay.

John who leapt in the womb has fled
 Into the desert to waken the dead,
 His naked body broken and torn
 Knows nothing now of Bethlehem's peace,
 And wild of mood and fierce of face
 He strives alone in that lonely place.
 Ezekiel too saw the dry bones live
 The flames and smoke and conflict give
 A lightning flash to the dead man's sight
 And Moses smote the rock, no rock
 In a weary cactus-land to mock
 Hollow men stuffed with straw, but a rock
 That freely pours from its riven side
 Water for those who else had died. . . .

And hangs on a twisted tree
 A broken body for those who see,
 All the world, for those who see
 Hangs its hope on a twisted tree.
 And the broken branch and the tortured trunk
 Are the stubborn evidence of growth
 And record proud of strife, of life.

A beauty too of twisted trees.

M. G. Smith

MELLOW OBOE

The wind breathes a mellow oboe in my ear
 I from the seas of life
 Have filled my cup with foam.

The tension of Time's waves has broken on
 These cliffs
 The menace is resolved in foam.

O beautiful
 O beautiful
 The cruelty.

Soon the suave night's surrender
 And the mass music of the dark
 Falls fragment into foam.

To apprehend the foam the waves declared
 And drink the milk pure from the farm of Time.

Nebular and luminous
 The stars the peaks achieve
 Found foam of peaks and stars.

So bracket the stars with bubble
 Fill baskets of white berries from the sea
 All is a rich donation
 The waves are lines of epic
 The sea a deep quotation
 The foam the complete poem.

I hear the sea's half-breath half-moan
 Sweep in fugues through me
 And the wind breathes an oboe in my ear.

M. G. Smith

MADONNA AND CHILD

Out of that mortal darkness flamed the cross.

It was not this the stranger prophesied
 The star intended or the three old men
 Kings of the east some said marking their state
 Had by obeisance and rarest gifts
 And worship in a strange unmusical tongue
 Signified as the delivering light
 When he as yet a babe beyond her teats
 Knew nor cared nothing and no inkling shewed.

That was a strange beginning long ago
 Too bright was promise in its glorious dawn
 To bear a day as bitter as his birth
 Broke open to her in the twisted light.

Now all was passing, world and light and time,
 Into apocalypse with such a swirl
 Of frenzied shapes and shrieks whose pain and joy
 Burned indistinguishably one that horror bound
 Her spirit numbly to it and compelled
 The tribute of a pain surpassing all
 But love as witness. And so summoning
 The white inhuman ashes of her will
 And with a countenance as cold and set
 In preparation for the falling blow
 As stone or metal she raised her head again.

Yet for her eyes shut she saw more clear
 Than at that hour sight was possible
 Through tears and gathering darkness the white stark
 And dreadful angularities his limbs
 The human shape of pain had given but did not see his peace.

For in his eyes was such a peace it seemed
 He was a thoughtless little boy again
 And wandered heavenwards up dusty roads,
 Or caught shrimps in the hill-streams with his mates,
 Or went bird-nesting, or on a solemn start
 Thanked God for Nazareth and his mother's home.

The white drawn mouth winced with its still-born cry.
 Her head tilted defiance of the hurt.
 She stood and waited by the wooden cross
 Beyond appeal or hope, a graven wound,
 Carved with such care and pain that could she keep
 Intact and motionless though all the world
 Break and come toppling downwards on her head
 And all the firmament her birth and death were one
 And the door open at last to understand.

The meaning. Yes, the meaning. Where the throne
 So clearly promised? Where the golden throng?

Because she had been but a peasant girl
 More used to do without and toil than dream
 Of joy or glory she had distrusted all
 Even the stranger who had been the first
 To mention this with mouth and eyes aflame
 In that still dusk of autumn by the well.

So when he came she watched him narrowly.
 Where had she missed or failed to understand?
 That evening she appeared between two men
 After he had been three days lost with John
 Whose death in prison had been such a blow
 Unto them all, lost in Jerusalem
 Had she not spoken kindly out of love
 And thankfulness for his return unharmed?

But could love be enough? When she had asked
 Perhaps a little plaintively that he admit
 His truancy and negligence had been unkind
 To her and a grave breach of faith, promising
 To forgive and forget all, he had said,
 "I was about my Heavenly Father's business."

Then first she knew, yet knew not what she knew
 "My Heavenly Father's Business." As he grew
 Further and further from her, quite beyond
 The place where speech had meaning or touch flowed
 Even at work together in one room
 Nothing remained for her but love and pain,
 Such love, there was no movement free from pain,
 Such pain, it was the soil and birth of love.
 How could there be acceptance? Day on day
 Like prophets of inevitable doom
 Burst with a storm of darkness on her world
 And full of instance made the silence peal
 With his rejection and all light terrible
 With apocalyptic vision of the end.

"My Heavenly Father's business." Still she watched
 Hopeful of the winged hosts descending to set right
 Her days again and give her back her son
 Counselling carefulness and fearing too
 The time when he would rise and snap the last
 Invisible associations of her love
 Like threads and go with his unfaltering steps to meet
 Out in the darkness that unknown thing she feared
 And leave a crown of thorns for memories.
 Where was the understanding? He was wise
 And he had said when she had asked for peace
 And pleaded that among the Pharisees
 He could sufficiently perform and teach
 The love and good he longed to give to all,
 "Be in peace
 The peace that passeth understanding
 Make that thine."

And so one morning when he answered not
 She came and found his straw upon the floor
 Cold and the goatskin untouched. Martha said
 "Jesus has gone into the wilderness."
 Since first she knew that prayer had not ceased.
 "Oh God Almighty Give me back my child
 Take this cup from me. Thou hast many sons
 Oh Father Father Give me back my light."

This was a land where rumour like the wind
 Bathing the cedars swept the villages
 With a great mounting tide of mood and dream
 Disabling the judgment of all fact.
 And so the news came in blue rolling waves
 That surged up suddenly and rushed and broke
 Upon her cliffs and thundered till the deep
 Swallowed the echoing heavens in their wake
 And gave all calm the unreal sense of trance.

Capernaum, Gadara, wave and wave
 Wrothfully surging from an unknown world
 And Galilee and Bethphage and the names
 Each name a new wound the names of all his friends.
 Was not her love sufficient? Still she hoped
 For peace or glory and unceasing prayer
 "O God Almighty, Give me back my Son."

Then Martha said that he was coming down
 For the Passover at Jerusalem.
 There was no need to say more for she knew
 Even beside the cross the memory of that
 First moment of the foreknown light
 Terribly blazing with ecstatic death
 Wrung from her cold white lips one last fierce cry
 "O Father Father thou hast many sons
 But he is all my peace. Give back my child."

One of his friends called John who stood close by
 Moved out of pity at the sudden shriek
 Drew near and saw how tear flowed past on tear
 Under her eyelids down the wrinkled cheeks
 And whispered broken comfort to a wound
 Carved with such pain and care that could she keep
 Intact and motionless though all the world
 Broke and came toppling downwards on her head
 And all the firmament, her birth and death were one.
 And as he whispered she was overcome
 With tiredness and turned and leaned on John.
 And shut the door of understanding fast.
 For in that hour Jesus raised his eyes
 And saw them both and spake clear as a bell
 "Son, behold thy Mother;
 Woman, behold thy Son."

Harold M. Telemaque

IN OUR LAND

In our land,
Poppies do not spring
From atoms of young blood,
So gaudily where men have died:
In our land
Stiletto cane blades
Sink into our hearts,
And drink our blood.

In our land,
Sin is not deep,
And bends before the truth,
Asking repentently for pardon:
In our land
The ugly stain
That blotted Eden garden
Is sunk deep only.

In our land
Storms do not strike
For territory's fences,
Elbow room, nor breathing spaces:
In our land
The hurricane
Of clashes break our ranks
For tint of eye.

In our land
We do not breed
That taloned king, the eagle,
Nor make emblazonry of lions;
In our land,
The black birds
And the chickens of our mountains
Speak our dreams.

Harold M. Telemaque

ROOTS

Who danced Saturday mornings
Between immortelle roots,
And played about his palate
The mellowness of cocoa beans.
Who felt the hint of the cool river,
In his blood,
The hint of the cool river
Chill and sweet.

Who followed curved shores
Between two seasons.
Who took stones in his hands
Stones white as milk,
Examining the island in his hands;
And shells,
Shells as pink as frog's eyes
From the sea.

Who saw the young corn sprout
With April rain.
Who measured the young meaning
By looking at the moon.
And walked roads a footpath's width,
And calling,
Cooed with mountain doves
Come morning time.

Who breathed mango odour
From his polished cheek.
Who followed the cus-cus weeders
In their rich performance.
Who heard the bamboo flute wailing
Fluting, wailing,
And watched the poui golden
Listening.

Who with the climbing sinews
Climbed the palm
To where the wind plays most,
And saw a chasmed pilgrimage
Making agreement for his clean return.
Whose heaviness
Was heaviness of dreams,
From drowsy gifts.

Harold M. Telemaque

ADINA

They hunt chameleon worlds with cameras.
 Their guides avoid the virtue of our valleys.
 They have not seen Adina's velvet figure
 Swimming uncovered in our rivers' bubbles.
 They have not seen the bamboo's slow manoeuvre,
 The light refracting round her shapely ankles:
 They have not seen Adina's dancing beauty
 Blazing effulgent in the Caribbean.

They stalk with telescopes the larger precincts.
 Their view ascends sky scrapers' hazy regions.
 They have not seen the silver sun on green leaves,
 Adina's basket starred with fruit and flowers,
 The bird sung matinee, the dancing palm-trees,
 Beside her rhythmic swinging arms and feetstride.
 They have not seen Adina in the breezes
 Blazing effulgent in the Caribbean.



Harold M. Telemaque

LITTLE BLACK BOY

Sprightly little black boy
 Playing by the shore,
 Mild of eyes, and laughing
 By the white surf's roar.

Hello, little black boy,
 Heaping sand on sands;
 What may you be doing
 With so small dark hands?

Laughing little black boy.
 Answer me will you?
 "Building castles surely
 As other boys do."

Ah, sweet little black boy
 Playing by the shore,
 As the ships are passing
 Through the dark sea's door.

Harold M. Telemaque

POEM

To those
 Who lifted into shape
 The huge stones of the pyramid;
 Who formed the Sphinx in the desert,
 And bid it
 Look down upon the centuries like yesterday;
 Who walked lithely
 On the banks of the Congo,
 And heard the deep rolling moan
 Of the Niger;
 And morning and evening
 Hit the brave trail of the forest
 With the lion and the elephant;
 To those
 Who, when it came that they should leave
 Their urns of History behind,
 Left only with a sad song in their hearts;
 And burst forth into soulful singing
 As bloody pains of toil
 Strained like a hawser at their hearts
 To those, hail

H. A. Vaughan THE TREE

Leave me to my little land
 Tethered like a tree,
 Near the loves I understand —
 Loves that nurture me.

Let my roots go deep, go deep,
 Seeking fabled streams
 While the trade winds sound and sweep
 Through my leafy dreams.

Let the fierce wide noontide heat
 Haunt my sap with pain;
 Afterwards will seem more sweet
 Revelry of rain,

And the stir of all wild things,
 Hares, and bees, and birds,
 Turn my faint imaginings
 Into golden words.

Then above the day's vain noise,
 Strong, secure, at peace,
 I shall spread essential joys
 For the world's release,

Save that in the light or dark
 When two lovers come,
 I shall tremble as I hark,
 Tranced like them and dumb,

H. A. Vaughan

FOR CERTAIN DEMAGOGUES

"We love the people, sir," You do?
 You ought to; nay, indeed, you must:
 Shouting their needs has brought a new
 Elation to your fickle dust.

You have the keys of all their hearts,
 Yet neither charity, good sense,
 Nor truth, nor tolerance imparts
 One sparklet to your eloquence.

You prey, but not like beasts of prey;
 The cobblers fly too far to be
 Your emblem; in a higgling way
 You have a place in history.

Like blackbirds in their shiny coats
 Prinking and lifting spry, proud feet,
 Bickering and picking sodden oats
 From horses' offal in the street.



H. A. Vaughan

TO A TUDOR STREET GIRL

You, too, seek beauty. Past the unlovely smells,
 The aching days, the sweet but tawdry nights,
 Past all the impatient shoppers' shouts and fights
 Past smirks and saucy words and titters, bells
 Still ring for you in some fair land where dwells
 Your gay young dream of interweaved delights
 The Prince still waits you there amid the lights
 And festal music your desire compels.

And yet, each evening, must you still prepare
 To meet him should he pass your homeward way;
 But not with sophistry of painted lips,
 Prim speech or step, — only the unruly play
 About your forehead of some wisp of hair,
 Your happy laughter and your swinging hips.

H. A. Vaughan

DARK VOICES

There's beauty in these voices. Do not base
 Your judgment purely on the affrighted street,
 The howling mob, the quarrel, or repeat
 Your scathing strictures on the market place.
 There's beauty always urgent in this race
 That baffles bondage from its sure retreat
 Of song and laughter. Loud and low and sweet
 There's beauty in these voices, by God's grace.

Detect two lovers underneath the stars,
 Hear the lone worker as he works and sings,
 The Christmas choirs whose joyous martial bars
 Go forth to greet the new born King of Kings,
 And, after this life's numerous frets and jars,
 The friends who mourn the end of terrene things.



H. A. Vaughan

REVELATION

Turn sideways now and let them see
 What loveliness escapes the schools,
 Then turn again, and smile, and be
 The perfect answer to those fools
 Who always prate of Greece and Rome,
 "The face that launched a thousand ships,"
 And such like things, but keep tight lips
 For burnished beauty nearer home.
 Turn in the sun, my love, my love!
 What palm-like grace! What poise! I swear
 I prize these dusky limbs above my life.
 What laughing eyes! What gleaming hair!

Vivian Virtue

THE WEB

Parting my window to the light
 That flooded up an April dawn,
 O, I beheld a vision bright
 Upon a bough, across a lawn—
 A spider's jewelled filigree
 Suspended 'twixt the sward and sky,
 All perfect in its symmetry
 To catch, to hold my raptured eye.

There, dew-bespangled from afar
 So light—though burdened—every line,
 I saw it, radiant as a star,
 Unutterably frail and fine;
 Like hanging rosaries untold
 Of prayerful saints of long ago,
 It flashed within a blaze of gold
 Beneath the mounting orient glow.

I rose and hurried out to win
 A fuller view, a deeper bliss;
 Faint iridescence woke within
 Its filaments beneath the kiss
 Shimmered like jewels opaline
 Such figured pattern 'neath the blue
 Not lore of Euclid could define.

And in that palace intricate
 The wondrous little architect
 Throned in the centre held its state,
 With what but awe could I reflect
 Upon the matchless miracle
 Of sunrise; and the tasselling dew
 Wrought by this least of soulless things.
 Here was the crown and pinnacle
 Of Art—the web a spider flings.

Herein was Beauty justified,
 Out of the weak was strength ordained;
 So in the common, glory, pride
 And love are by her might sustained.
 Fair web, what though the sun by noon
 Had robbed your pearls, a vandal wind
 Had torn away your splendour soon—
 Forever you enmesh my mind.

Vivian Virtue

KING SOLOMON AND QUEEN BALKIS

A VILLANELLE SEQUENCE

And when the Queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon
she came to Jerusalem with a very great train

With camels that bare spices, and very much gold and
precious stones. . . . (1 Kings x. 1, 2.)

I

KING SOLOMON'S WELCOME TO THE QUEEN

AT THE GATE OF JERUSALEM

Welcome, great Balkis, with thy queenly train!
Enter the joyous City of a King
On this most glorious day of all my reign.

I saw thy pageant like a rainbow stain
Up from the desert's edge slow entering;
Welcome, great Balkis, with thy queenly train.

I smelt thy spices o'er the desert main
Wafted upon the south-winds tropic wing,
On this most glorious day of all my reign.

Are stables for thy camels and courts twain
For eunuchs and thy brave slaves following.
Welcome, great Balkis, with thy queenly train!

O come, the eventide is on the wane
With western clouds thine advent rivalling
On this most glorious day of all my reign.

The high feast waits; thrice welcome, once again.
Glad minstrels will my people's greeting bring,
Welcome, great Balkis, with thy queenly train,
On this most glorious day of all my reign!

II

CHORUS OF THE KING'S MINSTRELS

ACCOMPANIED WITH TABRETS AND DANCES.

LEADER: Fling wide the City Gate to Sheba's Queen
Who comes in splendour from the wilderness!

CHORUS: A queenlier pomp hath Israel never seen.

LEADER: O glorious riot of her jewels' sheen!
Opals and rubies, diamonds, gold's excess.

CHORUS: Fling wide the City Gate to Sheba's Queen.

LEADER: Strange-sweet her perfume, and what peacocks preen
Magnificent before her stateliness!

CHORUS: A queenlier pomp hath Israel never seen.

LEADER: What ranging hills are these our walls between?
Her camels, heaped with royal plenteousness.

CHORUS: Fling wide the City Gate to Sheba's Queen.

LEADER: Her crown is like full corn the daughters glean,
Her robe like vintage that our young men press.

CHORUS: A queenlier pomp hath Israel never seen.

LEADER: Pass where the Kings' embattled ranks convene,
And take the homage which their swords express!

CHORUS: Fling wide the City Gate to Sheba's Queen:
A queenlier pomp hath Israel never seen!

III

THE QUEEN'S REPLY TO KING SOLOMON

AT THE CITY GATE

Hail, glorious King, whose fame hath travelled far!
Doubting, we braved the long, lone desert way,
To find a sun-burst where we dreamt a star!

Matchless in wisdom and all lores that are,
To whom fair lands their gathered tributes pay,
Hail, glorious King, whose fame hath travelled far.

Thrice hath the young moon hung its scimitar
Over the desert, since our starting-day
To find a sun-burst where we dreamt a star!

When sunsets gloried o'er the western bar,
Dreamed we thy royalty would be as they?—
Hail, glorious King, whose fame hath travelled far.

So now we come to where thy splendours par
The peacock's most magnificent display—
To find a sun-burst where we dreamt a star.

The half had not been told; for words but mar
This loveliness no mortal tongue can say!
Hail, glorious King, whose fame hath travelled far
To find a sunburst where we dreamt a star!

IV

THE QUEEN PRESENTS HER GIFTS TO THE KING
 accompanied with Chorus of Attendant Maidens
 IN THE PALACE STATE-ROOM

- QUEEN: Accept, O King, the gifts we bring to thee:
 Of Ophir's gold a score of talents here.
- CHORUS: Would they were worthier thy majesty!
- QUEEN: Sardonyx, rubies, jade, chalcedony,
 Jacinth and diamonds, emeralds without peer;
- CHORUS: Accept, O King, the gifts we bring to thee.
- QUEEN: Chrysolite, topaz, beryl, porphyry;
 Ivory, spotted skins—the leopard's gear;
- CHORUS: Would they were worthier thy majesty!
- QUEEN: Myrrh, attar, cassia, ambergris here be:
 Frankincense, cinnamon, and spikenard dear.
- CHORUS: Accept, O King, the gifts we bring to thee.
- QUEEN: Lo, gorgeous peacocks, apes of mimicry,
 Bales of soft purple for thy royal wear;
- CHORUS: Would they were worthier thy majesty.
- QUEEN: Yea, take them with the homage of my knee,
 O Very wise and Glorious, Worthy Seer!
- CHORUS: Accept, O King, the gifts we bring to thee:
 Would they were worthier thy majesty!

V

THE QUEEN'S WONDER AT THE COURT OF SOLOMON
 IN THE PALACE

My soul is filled with rapture and amaze;
 O for a thousand ears, a thousand eyes,
 To hear of all thy wisdom, see thy ways!

White stones, gold, cedar-wood and silver raise
 Thy palace, roofed like star-embedded skies.
 My soul is filled with rapture and amaze.

Twice three-stepped is thine ivory throne whence gaze
 Twice three gilt lions which insensate rise
 To hear of all thy wisdom, see thy ways.

Thy vessels are of Ophir's gold a blaze;
 Thy victuals rare; thy servers skilled and wise.
 My soul is filled with rapture and amaze.

Thy palace tower spies out the sun's first rays;
 There would I muse with thee when evening dies,
 To hear of all thy wisdom, see thy ways.

My lips are dumb with overwhelming praise,
 At these the courts wherein thy greatness lies.
 My soul is filled with rapture and amaze,
 To hear of all thy wisdom, see thy ways!

VI

QUEEN BALKIS HOMING FROM JERUSALEM

BEYOND THE CITY GATE

Take we again the burning desert way,
 After the shading palms, the living springs,
 O pain today! for joy was yesterday.

Now on the glory creeps the after-grey:
 Unutterable loneliness it brings!
 Take we again the burning desert way,

Seeking the Springs our going was swift, was gay;
 Now ours are wounded, heavy, homing wings.
 O pain today! for joy was yesterday.

When beauty and all gorgeous display
 Prove a mirage elusive, vanishings,
 Take we again the burning desert way.

How sadly wise the words the King did say,
 That vanity are all sublunar things,
 O pain today! for joy was yesterday.

O sorrow-bartered bliss that cannot stay,
 Save in the heart's sad-sweet rememberings!
 Take we again the burning desert way.
 O pain today! for joy was yesterday.

Derek Walcott

A CITY'S DEATH BY FIRE

After that hot gosseller had levelled all but the churched sky,
 I wrote the tale by tallow of a city's death by fire.
 Under a candle's eye that smoked in tears, I
 Wanted to tell in more than wax of faiths that were snapped
 like wire.

All day I walked abroad among the rubbled tales,
 Shocked at each wall that stood on the street like a liar,
 Loud was the bird-rocked sky, and all the clouds were bales
 Torn open by looting and white in spite of the fire;

By the smoking sea, where Christ walked, I asked why
 Should a man wax tears when his wooden world fails.

In town leaves were paper, but the hills were a flock of faiths
 To a boy who walked all day, each leaf was a green breath

Rebuilding a love I thought was dead as nails,
 Blessing the death and the baptism by fire.

Derek Walcott

THE YELLOW CEMETERY

"They are alive and well somewhere
 The smallest sprout shows there is really no death
 And if ever there was it led forward life, and does not wait at the
 end to arrest it."

Walt Whitman.

All grains are the ash to ashes drowsing in the morning,
 Wearing white stone. I passed them, not thankfuller to be
 Their living witness, not noisy in salt like the near sea,
 Because they are spaded to the dirt, our drowning.
 As lovely as the living, and safer, to the bay's green mourners
 They will unkeening bones, and they are happy.
 Lost the candle and censer mysterytale, the swung smoke
 of adorners

Of dying. Could they speak more than bramble, they'd be
 One in the language of the sun and the bibleling froth.
 Their now bread is broken stone, their wine the absent blood
 They gave to days of nails.

It is enough

And greater is no grace, no surplice more serviceable than
 the lap and hood
 Of the seasons that grew them, and now mother them to sleep.
 And you alive, speak not of the unlucky dead, the sunless
 eyes rotten

Under downs and saddles in a kingdom of worms.
 Speak of the luckless living, that are gnawed by a misbegotten
 Moon and memory;

It is a blessing past bounds to miss the dooms
 Of the vertical fathom, at each suncrow
 To know no anguish, cool in clothstones that flow,
 The sleep in the bone, all weathers.

But we, each

Flapping boast of the crowing sun, turn in our linen graves,
 Face stale mornings, old faces, but these dead on the beach
 Are joyed at the dawn's blood skyed on their dearth of days.
 We cocky populations fouling the fallow plans of heaven,
 Shall find perfection in a cemetery under a hill.
 For we have suffered so long, that death shall make all even,
 There shall the love grow again that once we would kill.
 This is no place for the eater of herbs and honey for beads,
 Here are water, crops, seabirds, and yet here do not be brave,
 Seek no fames, and do not too often pray to keep alive,
 Against the brittle wick of wishes the wind in the clock strives
 And wins. Was not your father such?
 Gay in the burning faith of himself, but melted to forgetting?
 Thank time for joys, but be not thankful overmuch,
 The sun a clot of the wounded sky is setting.
 Delve no heart in the sound of your soul, a man's speech burns
 And is over; the tears melt, colden and stales the fallow.
 And the story of your ash to ashes breath that the wind learns,
 The bushes from your eyes will tell in a deeper yellow.

II.

And there at sea, under the wave,
 The sea-dead, the legendary brave,
 Under the windmaued horses of the sea
 Float the bulged trampled dead, nudged by whales;
 Their wicks windkilled too, by salty gales,
 And they were so braver, less alarmed than we.
 For we want to run, who do not want to drown where
 There is no angel or angelus or another's helphand;
 But they too ride easy and the nunnery of brown hair
 Of the white girl of walls, shall be no more in the pardoner sand
 Black man's denial. Heart, let us love all, the weeds
 That feed the sea-herds, miracler than man's tallest deeds,
 For here the living are blinder than the dead, ah
 Look a rainbow sevencoloured wakes glory through the clouds and
 Breasts sea and hill and cemetery in warning,
 And the chained horses thunder white, no more adorning
 The harbour that grows truculent at the sevenhued sky,
 A canoe scuds home quickly, and indigo reigns.
 Praise these but ask no more the meaning of mourning.
 Than you ask a moral from the seven glory of the clouds, and

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