A N T H O L O G Y

Of

THE POETRY OF THE WEST INDIES

Chosen and Edited

By

W. Adolphe Roberts, O.B.E. and Wycliffe Bennett

With Introductory Essay and Appendix by Wycliffe Bennett

FOREWORD BY SIR MAURICE BOWRA

n.d.
1950's

for Cedric & Gladys Lindo
with best wishes,
Wycliffe Bennett

ANTHOLOGY OF WEST INDIAN POETRY

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J. E. Clare McFarlane.

The Poetry of the West Indies

Foreword

by

Sir Maurice Bowra

Readers of English poetry have not always paid much attention to its more distant manifestations. It took long to persuade our home-bred critics that American poetry existed powerfully in its own right, with its own spirit and its own intonations, and that it was not a pale imitation of the English article but a sturdy, native growth in its own home, from which English writers might well learn profitable lessons. This they now know, and they have turned their attention elsewhere, to Canada, South Africa, and Australia, to see if something similar can be found. Nor have they been disappointed. As the English-speaking peoples have developed new ways of life in lands far from their original island, they have turned to the most English of all arts, poetry, and sought to express in it their special experiences. Inevitably there are differences between these poems and the home-bred product - differences of spirit, of background, of landscape, of imagery, of speech, - and these are to be welcomed because they give new opportunities to a language highly trained to poetry and open prospects of experiment at a time when at home the standardising grip of a metropolitan culture has destroyed much of the strength and variety which came from local idiosyncrasies. No doubt well-informed people have known for some time that poetry was written in the West Indies, but it has not been easy to get hold of it or see it in its true character or full range. The anthology, edited by Mr. Roberts and Mr. Bennett cannot strictly be said to meet a need, since such a need was hardly felt to exist, but it does something much better: it reveals from many angles a scope of imaginative experience, a constant, devoted, wide-spread effort to put into memorable words the feelings and fancies and thoughts of the varied peoples of the islands and coast-lands of the Caribbean Sea.

It would be foolish to expect this poetry to resemble at all points the kind of poetry that is written in England. It does not, and it should not, and we may be grateful for it. From its beginnings it has reflected a physical setting which is not only very unlike our own but in its huge sweep from the Bahamas to British Guiana, from the Leeward Islands to British Honduras, has its own enthralling variety. What holds its many separate lands together is the sea, and the sea gives to its varied peoples a feeling of unity and a community of aims. It shapes characters, and outlooks and destinies, brings together the most disparate peoples into a common understanding of hopes and risks, and stirs that lively awareness, so essential to poetry, of man's inescapable dependence on nature and of the part which, in its terrible detachment, it plays in his life. While the sea is the great link between separate lands, the lands themselves have a brilliance and a luxuriance, a tropical profusion of colour, that are quite alien to northern countries and provide a setting which imposes its powerful personality on the themes of poetry. The peoples of the West Indies live in close touch with nature, and with them it is more insistent and more violent than with us. They have no large cities and know what it is to pass long hours under the open sky; their taste for bright colours and vivid effects is fostered by the gorgeous appearance of flowers and birds; for the most part their occupations bring them into lively intimacy with the earth and enrich their sensibilities with all the natural sights and sounds which are the oldest and richest source of poetical imagery. The West Indies catch the imagination of those who know them, and the poetry which they inspire is indeed their own

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its affection for visible splendours and in its response to the unrestrained moods of tropical nature as it shapes and determines the moods of men.

On this scene, in itself so challenging, human beings have played more than their ordinary share of drama. Long before Columbus came, what is now British Honduras was a home of the elaborate Mayan civilization, whose monuments still rise above the tangled undergrowth of forests. After the fantastic irruption of the conquistadors the West Indies entered on a long career of greedy ambitions and reckless risk, of merciless rivalries between Spaniards, English, French, and Dutch, of inhuman savagery to the defenceless aboriginal peoples, of the unforgotten and unforgiven horrors of the slave trade. Each of these has left its enduring mark on the memories and the mentality of the inhabitants. It is a mixed world, sprung from many sources and tested by many brutalities, and yet it is now a single world, with its own characteristics, which have been fashioned in cruel fires and have yet triumphed over the feuds of centuries, the divisions of caste and class and colour, the arrogant claims of privilege and the dark resentments of the injured and the wronged. In the last century the West Indies have found peace with themselves and become conscious that they too have their own place in the scheme of human things. They can now look around and observe themselves in their own setting and see what it brings and what it means, and in this spirit they have developed their taste and their proficiency for poetry. It is their reward and their consolation for what they have endured, but it is also much more. It gives a lasting shape to their vision of life, enables them to see themselves more clearly, and brings them into the consciousness of other peoples who have for too long known next to nothing about them. As the English language has moved to fresh fields around the world, it has kept its old pride and pleasure in itself, and in the West Indies it has found many new spheres of the consciousness for its exercise and display.

Though the poems in this anthology are all written in English, they have their own savour which is truly West Indian and makes itself progressively more felt as the poets move further away from English models and speak in their own lively words. Behind them lies the long history of English poetry, with all its exploitation of forms and themes, its response to European influence, its subtle, not too self-assertive workmanship. This was the heritage which fell to West Indian writers, and at first perhaps they were a little too impressed by it, a little too eager to feel that they must rival English poets in their own field. Yet from the start they had much that English poets lacked, not merely in their background but in their relation to literature. They had their own songs and their own music, which gave them an ear attuned to rhythms beyond the reach of more formal English songs; they had their connections with other races, each of whom had its own art of words and helped to expand the scope of poetry; they had their delightful temperaments, which burst easily into song and, in their ready response to passing events, are not afraid of the utmost candour about themselves. In recent years the enormous changes in the technique of poetry and its readiness to try new methods have encouraged West Indians to enjoy the new liberties allowed to verse, and this deliverance from the stricter methods of the old style has without doubt enabled them to speak more freely of themselves in their own idiom. They have found that self-confidence which is indispensable to the practice of the fine arts, and we may not only enjoy what they write for its own sake but look forward

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to other developments in a field which is so clearly made for poetry and, with its rich, unexploited resources, surely promises advance to new, even more striking successes.

C. M. Bowra

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THE POETRY OF THE WEST INDIES

INTRODUCTORY ESSAY
by
WYCLIFFE BENNETT

When at the Institute of Jamaica, during the month of June, 1951, The Poetry League of Jamaica sponsored the first exposition of the poetry of the Caribbean, they initiated a study of comparative themes, which was soon to be taken up afterwards by other hands. The exhibition demonstrated graphically that, of all the art forms, poetry afforded the greatest insight into the spiritual development of the emergent West Indian society. But it did much more than that. It suggested how fundamentally related West Indian culture was to those of the French-, Spanish-, and Dutch-speaking lands; and indicated that it was against the background of the other literatures of the region, and in the full perspective of world letters, that the literature of each language group could be best studied and appreciated.

A. J. Seymour, the British Guianese poet, described the exhibition as "an anthology-in-situ".[1] It embraced The Greater Antilles, The Lesser Antilles, Central America and French, Dutch and British Guiana. Poems were displayed in their original tongues by means of the printed word, lectures and recitals, and included the conscious literary and folk verse in papiamentu, patois and other dialects. Language barriers were overcome by English verse translations, dating back to the American poets, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and William Cullen Bryant.

Obviously, the cultures were more delimited by language, than by race, the sea or political boundaries. But there were several paradoxes: linguistic differences aside, there was greater resemblance between the poetry of Spanish-speaking Cuba and French-speaking Haiti, during the second half of the nineteenth century, than between that of Cuba and the Spanish-speaking Dominican Republic, during the same period; but for the fact that whereas the bulk of Puerto Rican verse, which is in Spanish, is oriented towards the sea, and that of Jamaica, which is in English, towards the hills, there was greater similarity between these two literatures than between that of Puerto Rico and, say, Costa Rica, which is Spanish-speaking; also, belated development in the Dutch countries struck a note comparable with that of the smaller British West Indian territories.

The literatures, nevertheless, had several features in common. To begin with, there was a parallel development, though not by any means a uniform one, or necessarily taking place at the same time. The chief determining forces seemed to have been, firstly, a dependence upon European influences borne across the Atlantic upon the trajectory of language, and, secondly, the Caribbean panorama itself. There were also indications of some likely courses each literature might have taken earlier in its history, had there been an awareness among writers of what was happening in the other languages.

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"Literature cannot be conceived in a vacuum", says David Daichess, "since it is the result of a society, of a special way of viewing life at a particular time and by a particular group of men".[2]

It will be to my purpose, therefore, briefly to attempt to discover a synthesis in Caribbean culture; and to show how this synthesis is expressed in our poetry, while quoting examples from the lands united by English speech. Also, in view of the growing reputation of West Indian writers at home and abroad, it might prove useful, at this stage, to show how this literature is related to the main currents of world letters, while adding a new dimension of its own. In the words of the Jamaican poet, Gerald Hamilton -

> I was salt water, washing all alien shores,
> Citizen of the world, calling no land home,
> Creature of flux and change.
> Burns in my blood the icy fire of Norway
> The hot red flame of Africa
> The even glow of England.
>
> Now tides compel into this inland sea,
> Out of my life, out of this land shall grow
> Fruit strong with the salt's sharp bitterness,
> Rose warm with the sun's red glow,
> Song for eternity,
> Song for a synthesis.

This anthology of West Indian poetry sets out to be definitive rather than comprehensive. It forms part of a larger collection, which was started some ten years ago, embracing the lands represented at the exhibition.

Apart from the considerable corpus of auxiliary poetry in English translation, by American, English and West Indian authors, there is also some admirable work originally written in English by bi-lingual poets of the Caribbean. (Salomón de la Selva of Nicaragua is perhaps the best known of them). The fact is mentioned here, but neither the translations nor the original poems in English by non-West Indian writers fall within the scope of the present collection. Conversely, Daniel Thaley ofthe British Island of Dominica, who has published several volumes in French, has been omitted.

The English-speaking Caribbean covers a widely scattered geographical area. It includes all those lands, printed in red on the map, that form part of the great arc of islands, stretching northwest from halfway up the coast of Florida, in the United States of America, southeast to Trinidad at the mouth of the Orinoco River, in Venezuela, and embraces the two mainland territories of British Honduras in Central America and British Guiana on the shoulder of the South American continent.

Selections have been included from Jamaica; Trinidad; Barbados; The Leeward Islands; British Guiana; and British Honduras. The last two named are not part of the official Federation of the West Indies. There are, however, three good reasons for including them: firstly, they share the colonial history of the British Caribbean; secondly, "West Indies" is the generic term by which people outside the region identify the English-speaking lands; and thirdly, from the West Indian point of view, culturally they complete the Caribbean scene.

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Language, Habitat, Race and Tradition

In a discussion of West Indian literature some years ago, the English writer, Phyllis Bottome, said to me: "It's a pity you haven's got your own language, isn't it?" To which I, as a Jamaican, replied: "I was born to the English language".

Her question was spontaneous, but it had an easy subtlety. She was not necessarily advocating a new language, such as papiamentu, patois or any of the other dialects in which some of our Caribbean poets have written, but she felt that West Indians had a good deal to say that could be best said in a West Indian way. Centuries of use have developed the official languages into highly polished instruments of expression, with an almost unlimited capacity for communication. At least three of them, namely English, French and Spanish, contain great literatures, the immortal works of some of history's greatest writers. The would-be author is led to believe, and his readers too, that anything he has to say must be capable of expression in a language through which so many writers before him have conveyed so much. On the other hand, this is a great challenge: for his work is automatically judged in terms of what has already been done in the language. Do the fresh experiences offered by the new habitat to which these European languages have been transplanted, lose their authenticity when served up in a conventional European manner? Do the peoples who have emerged, and are emerging, have anything to add to the already huge store of emotional and intellectual experiences that they can express not merely adequately, but inevitably in these tongues? Or must language be used in a new way, as our poets are doing when they reproduce local speech habits, write in dialect or introduce aboriginal and African words into their work?

In historical sequence, the main influences in Caribbean life and letters are the local and aboriginal, the European, the African and that of India, the East Indies and China.

In the area's modern history, which began with the Discovery and the Conquest, the European languages have been the official languages of the ruling classes. Some of the minorities still actively preserve their ancient tongues and customs and worship in the manner of their forefathers; but the Negroes who make up the bulk of most of the populations, have, in the main, lost their African languages and dialects, as an active means of everyday communication. As correct and proper use of the official languages has gone hand in hand with economic advancement and social distinction, it should not be surprising to find that at least in form, the great mass of Caribbean literature has been based upon a precise imitation of European models.

With the European languages, the peoples of the region acquired national memories, ideas, legends and traditions that pass from generation to generation through these languages. Our heterogeneous populations formed societies essentially European in character, and shared with Western Europe the classics of

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Greece and Rome and the translations of the Bible. The knowledge and wisdom accumulated in these languages is part of the Caribbean tradition. The corollary is that in so far as Caribbean writers are able to make fresh and original use of already existing models, European literature is not merely an influence, but a legitimate artistic tradition.

It is a phenomenon of Caribbean society that in general the peoples of The Greater Antilles are ethnologically an admixture, in varying degrees, of African, European and Asian types imported into the region, and have very little in their culture that is recognisably indigenous. Consequently, the word "native" has little or no real aboriginal significance. This is not true of the mainland countries, however, where the populations contain large percentages of descendants of the Indians found by the conquistadors. Anthropologists believe that the great trek of man up through Asia, across the Bering Strait, and down into the Americas may well have taken place between ten and twenty thousand years ago. What, therefore, of the local tradition, the tradition indigenous to the region?

In a true sense, this tradition derives from the aboriginees - the Aztecs, the Mayas, the Caribs, the Arawaks. Like other peoples in similar stages of development, they had their communal poetry. The Aztecs, for example, as García Icazbalceta puts it, had their ritual chants dealing with historical episodes and the study of hieroglyphics. In the words of Padre José de Acosta:

> In the province of Yucatán, where the bishopric of Honduras is located, there were certain books in which the native scholars had noted down their calendar system and their ancient customs. All were things which indicated great inquisitiveness and diligence. But it seemed to one of our priests that they were tokens of sorcery and magic, and he decided that they should be burned, a deed that was later lamented, not only by the Indians, but also by the Spaniards, who wanted to learn the secrets of the land. 2

It cannot be stated with any certainty, however, that poetry as a conscious literary effort existed among the natives. According to Professor Arturo Torres-Rioseco, scholars who have been trying to establish the authenticity of the poems of Netzahualcoyotl in Mexico and the Quechua origin of Ollanta, are unable to formulate any assured pronouncement, because it is an accepted fact that some of the missionaries wrote plays and poetry in the native tongues. What we can say is that certain oral traditions were incorporated into the compositions written by sixteenth century poets; and that these legends stimulated the writers to exercise their own imagination, thus initiating what has been called the nativist cycle of New World literature.[3]

This nativist cycle continues down to the present day. Originally, it made use of local colour, folkloric elements, and celebrated famous battles and the exploits and personalities of heroes and heroines. Because it often dealt with the aboriginal Indian, it is sometimes referred to as the Indianist cycle.

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In some South American countries, namely Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia, it has been given the more comprehensive terminology of indigenism. There is a good deal of this type of verse in Latin American literature, the most famous poem being perhaps the gauchesque epic, Martín Fierro by by José Hernández, published in Buenos Aires in 1872. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow may have been moved to write his Hiawatha by his knowledge of Chateaubriand or by his frequent excursions into Hispanic American letters. In the Antilles, this body of indigenist literature is not very great, but we may mention The Maroon Girl by W. Adolphe Roberts of Jamaica; The Ancient Carib by Geoffrey Drayton of Barbados; and Aretos (an Arawak poem) by Emilie Roumer of Haiti. There are also some poems dealing with or alluding to Anacaona, the legendary Arawak chieftainess of Hispaniola, among which may be noted those by Jose Joaquin Perez and Salomé Ureña de Henríquez of the Dominican Republic, and Luc Grimard of Haiti.

Critics have written of a specific Indian melancholy and mystical resignation in nativist literature, but as R.H. Hays has observed, melancholy is also a symbolist characteristic, and perhaps more truly Indian qualities can be found in poets of mixed blood who do not profess to be indigenists at all.[4] In this context, it might also be useful to consider the quality of mystical resignation with its inner core of irony, which one finds in the poem, Conceptio del estudiante nuevo, by the Cuban poet of Chinese extraction, Regino Pedroso; or the melancholy lyricism which informs the novel, A Brighter Sun, by the Trinidadian, Samuel Selvon, whose ancestors came directly from India.

The aboriginal tongues have been furnishing European vocabularies with names and words proper to new world experience; and overtones of Mayan and Arawak cultures are traceable in such contemporary mainland poets as Raymond Barrow of British Honduras, and A. J. Seymour, Martin Carter and Ian Carew of British Guiana. When Indianism becomes more evolved, and ceases to be concerned principally with the picturesque and topographical, aboriginal mythology might assist Nature to give a new cosmic dimension to Caribbean poetry. Perhaps Ian Carew is suggesting this possibility in his poem Aiomon Kondi :

> Aimon Kondi, dweller in the heights
> saw with his condor eye
> a blue, buck-crab sky
> and white sun blazing untamed
> like fury or pain in a jaguar,
> white sun lashing like Llanero whip,
> white sun stewing jungles green
> blinding the hunter's trail,
> white sun stalking like an ocelot
> arched and indolent with hunger,
> white sun lying on black rivers like a lover,
> white sun silvering the rain...
> and night drowning starlight
> and tinamous singing, singing
> and wind strumming liana vines.
>
> Aiomon Kondi, sculptor with crude hands
> Carved godheads on Roraima of the red rock
> and when Kabo Tano, Thunder God promised no rain,
> harvested clouds with scythes of lightning
> that he might sit for ever in the heights
> with Arawidi, spirit of the white sun.

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With the development of national consciousness and the accompanying desire to vindicate the masses as a creative force, indigenism has become a reassertion of the cultural heritage of both the Indian and Negro elements of Caribbean society. Adolphe Roberts' sonnet, The Maroon Girl, clearly has this motivation:

> I see her on a lonely forest track,
> Her level brows made salient by the sheen
> Of flesh the hue of cinnamon. The clean
> Blood of the hunted, vanished Arawak
> Flows in her veins with blood of white and black.
> Maternal, noble-breasted is her mien;
> She is a peasant, yet she is a queen.
> She is Jamaica poised against attack.
> Her woods are hung with orchids; the still flame
> Of red hibiscus lights her path, and starred
> With orange and coffee blossoms is her yard.
> Fabulous, pitted mountains close the frame.
> She stands on ground for which her fathers died;
> Figure of savage beauty, figure of pride.

Indigenism springs from geographical compulsion. It represents both a conscious and sub-conscious effort on the part of creative artists to be in contact with their environment. It fires the imagination of poet, novelist and dramatist; painter, sculptor, choreographer and musician. It appears in all types of poetry-narrative, descriptive, epic and romantic; parnassian, symbolist, vanguardist, lyrico-dramatic. Because it is either a direct or an oblique treatment of environment, it is often a manifestation of popular regionalism. In the evolution of New World letters, it has been given such names as nativism, Indianism, gaucho literature, new worldism, Negro poetry or Afro-Antilleanism; and lastly, West Indianism.

It is in the Afro-Antillean movement that indigenism comes nearest to creating a new artistic modality. Whereas Indianism was hardly ever influenced by Indian folk-song, in Afro-Antilleanism an attempt has been made to recapture African rhythms and speech patterns handed down by oral tradition, and to introduce into formal poetry such dance-lyric forms as the rumba and the son. The founder of the school, Nicolás Guillén, the Cuban mulatto poet, has had many followers, both in the Caribbean and on the South American continent. Among his more famous poems are Sensemayá (an adaptation of a traditional magical incantation to protect a man killing a snake), Balada de los dos abuelos and Diana. I have heard Sensemayá, in an English verse translation by the North American poet, Langston Hughes, performed with brilliant results by speaking choirs in Speech Festivals in Jamaica.

Guillén's work is not far removed in spirit and purpose from that of Langston Hughes. The North American bard has a similar deep disquiet and social awareness, has made comparable use of such indigenous American forms as the blues, and has successfully reproduced in his verse the speech patterns of the ordinary American man:

> So long daddy, aint you heard
> The boogie woogie rumble of a dream deferred?

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I named Nicolás Guillén's racial origin, in order to say that many of his almost equally well-known followers have no Negro blood in their veins. But whereas many of these poets, among them Emilio Ballagas of Cuba and Luis Palés Matos of Puerto Rico almost made a cult of the picturesque, of Negro sensuality and eroticism, Nicolás Guillén abandoned the movement and began writing ballads somewhat in the Spanish tradition, perhaps as a more developed instrument for expressing the soul and anguish of his race.

George Campbell, the Jamaican poet, would have been familiar with the work of Langston Hughes, but the English-speaking territories have been so isolated from the intellectual and social life of the other linguistic groups in the past, that I would hazard that Mr. Campbell was unaware of the existence of the Afro-Antillean school, when he published his First Poems in 1945. There is a primitive, often athletic quality in Campbell's verses; and in these nationalist days of heated controversy for and against West Indianism in art, one might usefully re-state that all art asks is that form should be married to content. There is economy, compression and selection in his History Makers. Punctuation marks would be redundant. It is not even necessary to have had previous knowledge of what he is writing about: the imagery is authentic -

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

ll.

No smiles
No sigh
No moan.

lll.

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

Independence, Romanticism and After

From our examination of the interaction between language, habitat, race and tradition, it seems possible to make the following observations:

(1) Writers inherit at once the freedom and bondage of language. This paradox is the creative writer's eternal challenge; but in the Caribbean and other territories, to which colonialism has brought languages from overseas, the problem is not only one of creating a new stylisation- a thing which the great artist always considers when he has something new and important

to say- but also one of adapting language to give organic[1] expression to the new habitat.

(11) Creative artists can neither escape their environment nor repudiate their past. More particularly, their past is contained in the history of their community, and in a more general sense, in the language that contains that history.

To confine our attention, therefore, to the purely indigenous aspects of our literary growth, would be to over-simplify our discussion, and to ignore the bifurcation, which has been the main structure in the development of Caribbean literature. At any time in any society there may be more than one literature existing side by side; and, in addition to what we have variously described as indigenism, there is another branch of development - the development conditioned by our attachment to the sources of Western Civilisation- a development that has been part of the story of Western man.

In the first place, there has been the long apprenticeship, the colonial period, during which writers copied the models of the metropolitan masters with meticulous care- and even wrote in Latin during the earlier period as was at that time the fashion in Western Europe. Some of these early efforts in Latin showed competence in versification, but Time has consigned them to the category of museum pieces. Students of West Indian history will have read, in Gardner's History of Jamaica, the extract from the poem in Latin by Francis Williams, the son of two free Negroes, who was sent by the Duke of Montague to England for a first-rate education (including Cambridge University)....

It seems an open secret that literatures are plagiaristic, that they must cross-breed or die. Early Latin borrowed from early Greek. The English morality play, Everyman, which appeared towards the end of the fiftheenth century may have formed the original of, or itself may have been taken from the corresponding Dutch play of Elckerlijk[2] The Faust legend appears in Calderón's El Mágico Prodigioso, Marlowe's Tragical History of Dr. Faustus and Goethe's Faust. Stendal's La Chartreuse de Parme fired Tolstoy to write his great War and Peace.[3] Scholars have written volumes on this subject.

Chauvinists might be tempted to dismiss the beginnings of Caribbean literature with a metaphorical shrug of the shoulder, but they represent a discipline through which the whole body of our creative literature had to pass; and, in any case, the colonial period is not devoid of distinguished verse of universal significance.

Scholars are agreed, however, that in a more accurate sense, the poetic history of the region opens up with the era of Independence and the beginnings of a nominally autonomous life. The movement for independence had been gathering momentum from the sixteenth century. Colonialism by its very nature contains the seeds of its own decay. Some of the more obvious causes of revolt may be mentioned; commercial monopoly, political absolutism, the evils of slavery, and

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of the times, and re-inforced by man's inborn desire to be free, produced the movement that was to bring independence to the Haitian people. The white Haitians, many of them educated in Europe, could have helped to provide the country with the intellectual leadership so badly needed after 1804, but they were annihilated by Dessalines in an orgy of blood, which drew the rebuke from Toussaint L'Ouverture: "I said to prune the tree, not to cut it down".[7] The blood-thirsty barrenness of Haitian life during the period has been set forth by the St. Lucian poet, Derek Walcott, in his chronicle play, Henri Christophe-

Christophe speaks:

I am a friend of the people.
You must avoid opportunities of separation;
You kill offenders because of their complexion;
Where is the ultimate direction of this nation,
An abbatoir of war?

Dessalines replies:

I who was a slave, am now a King,
And being a king, remember I was a slave;
What shall I live as now, a slave or king?
Being this king chains me to public breath
Worse than chains. I cannot have a masque
Before some slave scoops up a gutter tale
To fling into my face; I cannot drink
Red wine, unless the linen rustless blood; I cannot
break bread
Before an archbishop canonizes a body
Broken, stuck like an albatross on the hill of skulls.
Well, I will not listen.
White men are here; for every scar (baring his tunic)
Raw on my unforgiving stomach, I'll murder children,
I'll riot. I have not grown lunatic, I'll do it,
I'll do it.
You think I'm not aware of your intrigues,
Mulattoes and whites, Brelle and Pétion;
I am asking: Argue with history.
Ask history and the white cruelties
Who broke Boukman, Ogé, Chavannes; ask Rochambeau.
If you will not comply, I'll go.

(Exit)

This lack of literate leadership in part explains why the best Haitian anthologies are barren of any worthwhile poetry until after 1850, when Oswald Durand (1840-1906) began to write his verses. Durand wrote in French and in patois, the dialect spoken by some ninety per cent of the Haitian population. Mainly he was a romantic, but he occasionally struck the parnassian note. He is perhaps best known today as the author of the patois poem, Choucoune, an English verse translation of which has been given tremendous vougue recently by the Jamaican and American singer, Harry Belafonte. It is perhaps because of this lapse in time between independence and the resurgence of normal intellectual life that the main body of Haitian poetry during the nineteenth century, as exemplified in the works of Louise Borno (who served for two terms as President), Edmond Laforest, Seymour Pradel, Damocles Vieux and others has been parnassian rather than romantic in form and sensibility.

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The pre-romantic period of Spanish-Caribbean literature produced, among other outstanding writers, the Cuban civic poet, José María Heredia, who, in his famous poems, En el Teocalli de Cholula (1820) and Canto al Niágara (1824) was to anticipate romanticism in Spain by more than ten years.

The Hispanic American revolution ventured forth upon an ideological base. There were men of action, but there were also theoricians, scholars, philosophers and poets. There were Simon Bolívar, Sucre, Hidalgo, San Martín and other magical names to conjure with, and there was José Julián Martí, who had two fatherlands, as he said in one of his poems, Cuba and the night. Hispanic American writers grew to despise the literary dictatorship of Luzán and the Royal Academy as much as they repudiated the tyrannical policies of Ferdinand VII. In the opinion of the Argentine polemist, Sarmiento, Spain could boast neither mathematics, physics, history, nor philosophy. Such was the profound hatred against all things Spanish during the first half of the nineteenth century, that writers were beginning to feel that the Spanish language was incapable of expressing modern thought. The reaction that helped to cristalise his idea of freedom was also to provide the Hispanic American with new literary models. He grappled the French authors to his soul with hoops of steel - Voltaire, Victor Hugo, Lamartine and others, and read other writers in the original in order to reach primary sources of inspiration, rather than come into contact with them at second hand via Spain. According to Professor Arturo Torres-Rioseco, "He willingly entered into a cultural vassalage with France, and this was to impart an elegance, a sophistication and technical resources to Hispanic American writing, which have become enduring characteristics of that literature".

When towards the end of the nineteenth century, romanticism had degenerated into a pose, a reaction began to set in against the wild exuberance and orgiastic monstrosities of the disciples of Victor Hugo and Lamartine. Théophile Gautier initiated the parnassian school, and this was brought to a flowering under Leconte de Lisle and José Maria de Hèrèdia. As M. Sully Prudhomme sums it up, "it was a deliberate conspiracy against the excessively facile line, the line which is feeble and flabby, fluid as water, and as formless". The parnassian has a passion for order, harmony, organisation and clarity of idea. Another critic describes parnassian as the dialect of the great poet when he lacks the divine, authentic inspiration. And in the transition from romanticism to parnassianism, the Gallicisation of whole generation of Hispanic American writers was complete.

The general level of competence which one finds in late nineteenth and early twentieth century French-Caribbean poetry, and in the poetry of the same period in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, notably in Hojas al viento, by the Cuban poet, Julián del Casal, and in Rubén Darío's Azul and Prosas profanas, is due in no small measure to the exacting parnassian discipline. If as some authorities believe, there is a strong element of tropicalism in the French parnassian movement, it should be remarked that José Maria de Hèrèdia came from Cuba, and was cousin of his namesake, the author of Canto al Niágara.

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Born in Santiago de Cuba in 1842, the younger Heredia went to France at the age of sixteen. He adopted the French language, and was later to become a member of the Academie Francaise and one of the great stylists of the parnassian movement. Here is a translation of one of his sonnets, Le Recif de Corail, by the Jamaican poet, Vivian Virtue:

The Coral Reef

The sun discovers, probing the shingled sea,
A lurking dawn in the coral woods below
That merge, through hollows where the warm waves flow,
With bloom-like beast and flower pulsating free.
And all that the brine gives colour-anemone,
Moss, and dishevelled week, and echinus, glow
Rich-patterned, chequering with indigo
The wrinkled roots of the madrepore's pale tree.

In splendid mail dimming the living tints
A monstrous figure against the branching glints,
Warding the limpid gloom with indolent sweep;
Then, flashing suddenly a phosphorent fin
Kindles the crystal depths with exquisite thin
Fires that in gold and pearl and emerald leap.

We cannot conclude our references to the Hispanic writing of the Caribbean, without saying a few words about the Nicaraguan, Rubén Darío (1867-1916). Darío is the supreme poet of the region. He is regarded as one of the great poets of the Spanish language. In addition to the two publications already mentioned, his works include Cantos de vida y esperanza (1905), El Canto Errante (1907), El Poema de Otoño (1910), and Canto a la Argentina (1910). Darío introduced symbolism into Spanish poetry, and from his time on Spanish America challenges Spain for leadership in poetry. The fact that Darío has been discussed as romantic, parnassian, modernist, poet of America etc., and that so many aspects of his work are being discovered or claimed to be discovered, may be taken as an indication of his essential universality.

The literary development of the Dutch- and English-speaking Caribbean has been in the nature of a delayed action.

The bulk of such poetic literature as there exists in the Dutch territories has been achieved by two generations of writers: the first began writing just before and after the beginning of the present century, and the second around 1930. Of the first generation, J. S. Corsen, David Chumaceiro, Darío Salas and A. Roelschoon of Curacao are the better known. They all wrote in Spanish, the language of the neighbouring republics. J.S. Corsen did some of his best work in Papiamentu, the language of his well known Atardi (Evening). Of the second generation, mention must be made of Pierre Lauffer, Rene de Rooy, Nicolás Pina and Charles Corsen, grandson of J.S. Corsen. These poets, some of whom were educated in Holland, write both in Dutch and in papiamentu. The basic sensibility of this body of literature has been that of an awakening people- romantic.

Dr. Cola Debrot, the Curacaon writer, sent me the following note some years ago:

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> Papiamentu probably started as a means of communication- a lingua franca- between people from different parts of the world. It was a Jesuit priest, named Schabel, who gave the first known definition of papiamentu. In 1704 he wrote about it and called it a broken Spanish. Papiamentu is built up from words out of many languages, mostly Spanish, Dutch, English, French and Portuguese. Its rhythm shows most resemblance to Spanish.

It is with the abolition of slavery and the advent of romanticism that the formal poetry of the English-speaking Caribbean begins. We have been discussing this poetry against the parallel developments in the other language groups, and in the larger context of world letters. We must now pin our discussions down to the geographical area, which for purposes of this anthology we have called the West Indies. A brief break-down of the social and cultural background of the units is given in an appendix. It will now be to our purpose, with the symbols which we have defined, in Caribbean terms, to indicate the development and evolution of the body of verse presented in this anthology.

IV.

The Selections and their Authors

Oh, Captain of wide western seas,
Where now thy great soul lives, dost thou
Recall San Gloria's spice-censed breeze?

White-sandied curves where serried trees
Filed backward as thy sharpened prow
Sheared into foam the racing seas?

San Gloria's wood-carved mountain frieze
In the blue bay is mirrored now,
As when thy white sail wooed the breeze.

The thunder of insurgent seas
Beats yet the rough reef's ragged brow,
Roaring by green, far-stretching leas;

Yet through the wood the peony flees,
And frets with gold the night-dark bough
Down the long avenue of trees.

Still flowering guineps tempt the bees,
The yellow guava ripens now,
Rich-hearted ipomea please.

Dost thou remember things like these,
Hear yet the dark-robed woodlands sough,
Oh, Captain of wide western seas,
Dost thou remember things like these
Where thy great soul inhabits now?

Some of my colleagues, in the Poetry League of Jamaica, have often cited the foregoing poem, San Gloria, addressed to Christopher Columbus, as one of the attempts by Tom Redcam to help span the gap between the Discovery and the times in which he lived. Redcam has had a stronger and profounder historical sense than most other West Indian bards. His poetic drama, also called San

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Gloria, and such chronicle poems as his Orange Valley, St. Ann and The Cathedral all help to substantiate this claim. Born in 1870, he was crowned posthumously by his peers, in 1933, the first Poet Laureate of Jamaica. His nephew-in-law, Mr. H. P. Jacobs, has told me of references to such things as "Federation" or "Confederation" in the Laureate's rough work book, which, I regret to say, I have never seen. There is a good deal in his writings, apart from the few pieces included in this volume, which show how deeply he understood the West Indian society that was emerging. He was one of the "early Victorian perceivers". He was disturbed at the apathetic attitude of the great mass of Jamaicans towards their country's past. Because he believed that this was the only sure foundation upon which a vigorous and healthy social life could be built, in his poems and from his editorial chair at The Jamaica Times, which he occupied from 1900 to 1920, he sought to imbue his people with respect for their history. He combined the strength of a patriot and the intellectual balance of a philosopher with the rapture and wonder of a child. Of the timeless nature of the poem I have just quoted, Mr. J. E. Clare McFarlane, Founder and President of the Poetry League of Jamaica, writes:

> The mood is one of contemplation, touched with the strange and sweet melancholy that surrounds a dead romance, yet aware of the challenge of the unchanging scene to sight and smell and hearing. And the effect is considerably heightened by the appeal to the memory of one so far removed in time, but so intimately connected with the present circumstances. In seeking to invest with permanence the thought and emotion of the great Discoverer, the poet has succeeded in adding dignity and memorableness to his verse.[1]

Few people brought up in England or in the Colonies during the second half of the last century can have escaped the sententious moralisings of the Victorian era, and Tom Redcam was no exception. But in the same way as Lord Tennyson, that great craftsman, within the bounds of his escapist philosophy, would be carried away by his subject matter and produce lines of great moment, so was Redcam (unhappily not so often) in his Legionary of Life.

> ...true to the great host
> Of sea and sky, of stars and tides and streams,
> Existence's Grand Army, Hosts of Life,
> Soldiers of some great purpose that moves on,
> Through evolutions and developments
> To some supreme far triumph yet to be.

When just over thirty years ago, in 1929, Mr. Clare McFarlane published Voices from Summerland, which was one of the first anthologies of poetry from the West Indies to be read in other parts of the world, the Literary Supplement of the London Times observed:

> We are surprised whenever the far-flung sowing of our language and thought results in a vigorous literary growth anywhere except in the accepted centres of English culture.... Voices from Summerland suggests that the canon of "Dominions" will not be finally made up even when India and Burma are added to it....

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In no other field of cultural and artistic endeavour is the spiritual development of the West Indies revealed as clearly as in our literature. And although following the appearance in London in 1948, of the Jamaican and West Indian numbers of Life and Letters (and the London Mercury), it is the novelists, and to a lesser extent the playwrights, who have been holding the centre of the stage, and attracting the attention of critics on both sides of the Atlantic, it should be remembered that it has been the poets who, sometimes with earnest fumbling beginnings, laid the foundations for the development of West Indian literature.

Unlike the Spaniards, the English conquerors did not attempt to settle their colonies and develop a home from home: rather they regarded their Caribbean possessions as large plantations, on which they posted agents to supervise the slaves and their work[2] It would appear, therefore, that it was not until after the Abolition of Slavery in 1838, that the conditions were set in train to produce a body of conscious literature; but in trying to analyse the West Indian identity, to understand the West Indian ethos, one finds that one must go much farther back in time - back to the Discovery and the Conquest of the New World by the Western Europeans. Indeed, from the vantage point of the present, the following would seem to be the main determining factors:

1. The Age of Discovery and the Conquest, beginning in 1492, with its imposition of European upon the aboriginal cultures, and in some instances the annihilation of the original Indian populations.

2. The introduction into the region of Negroes, Chinese and Indians and people of other nationalities.

3. The Abolition of Slavery in 1838.

4. The colonial apprenticeship, and the gradual liberalisation of educational facilities.

5. The years of Unrest or 1930s, and the development of national consciousness.

6. Commencement of advanced constitutions for the colonies during the 1940s, leading to full internal self-government for some, and the Federation of the West Indies in 1958.

We have already referred to the difficulties confronting scholars, who have been trying to establish the Indian origins of poems and plays in the aboriginal tongues. There have been isolated examples of formal poetry by Negroes who were free before Emancipation: there was the Jamaican, Francis Williams, who was sent to Cambridge to be educated; in Guianese Poetry, compiled by Mr. N. E. Cameron, there are two poems, Demerara! Farewell and Lines for First of August, 1838, by Simon Christian Oliver, another Negro, who died in 1848. However, as in the United States of America, the vital contribution of the slave society to New World literature and music lay in the Negro Spirituals. They are a commentary on their times; their other-worldliness provided a spiritual escape from the contitions under which the slaves lived. Some of these spirituals have been reproduced in Mr. Edric Connor's Songs from Trinidad, arranged for voices, guitar, drum and bass by Mr. Gareth Walters, and issued in 1958 by the Oxford University Press. Mr. Connor's book also contains calypsos, work songs and other folk songs. Calypsos

are now enjoying considerable vogue as a tourist attraction, and are being exploited by singers from other lands, sometimes, alas, not so much for their intrinsic, artistic value, but as a commercial proposition. It should be pointed out that the calypso is of Trinidadian origin, and that although the genre has been taken up in recent years by entertainers all over the region, particularly on the fabulous Jamaican North Coast, it should not be confused with other West Indian folk songs, such as the mento, which is proper to Jamaica.

A collection of Jamaican folk songs was made by Mr. Tom Murray, a British Council Officer, with the assistance of Miss Louise Bennett, and was published in 1951 under the imprimature of the Oxford University Press.

It was the French writer, Chateaubriand, who pointed out that the natural song of man is sad. The Jamaican peasant usually laughs at his own troubles. When he sings of them, his attitude is not plaintive but ironic. The subject matter is usually treated allusively and elliptically, so that it is sometimes intelligible only to the initiated. Effect is gained by repetitive increments, which stress the dominant emotion.[3] One of the most beautiful and straightforward of these songs is Linstead Market:

Carr' me ackee go a Linstead Market
Not a quattie wo't' sell
Lawd! not a light, not a bite
Not a quattie wo't' sell
Lawd! not a light, not a bite
What a Saturday night.

Mr. H. P. Jacobs very kindly invited my attention some years ago to The Boatsong of St. Thomas (in the Virgin Islands), entered in the West Indian Scrap Book No. 1 page 241 circa 1822-

Hurra, my jolly boys,
Fine time o'day
We pull for San Thamas, boys
Fine time o'day
San Thamas hab de fine girl,
Fine time o'day
Nancy Gibbs and Betsy Braid,
Fine time o'day
Massa cum fra London Town,
Fine time o'day
Massa is a hansome man
Fine time o'day
Massa is a dandy man,
Fine time o'day
Him hab de dollar, plenty too
Fine time o'day
Massa lub a pretty girl
Fine time o'day
Him hunt 'em round de guaba bush
Fine time o'day
Him catch 'em in de cane piece
Fine time o'day.

It is impossible to miss the pull of the boatman's oar on the first syllable of the refrain, an effect which immediately recalls to mind the later conscious effort in The Boatman's Song in Thomas Hardy's The Dynasts.

/18....

Folk songs give an insight into the philosophy of the work-a-day world of the peasant; their rhythms are earthy, because they are the rhythms of daily physical toil. They have a tradition that goes far back into antiquity. Their history is various.

There was a time (within my own memory) when with accelerated education (and education meant European education), the West Indian turned his back upon his folk art. However, with the growth of national consciousness, these treasures are being rediscovered. That there is now a conscious knowledge and appreciation among all classes is due, in no small measure, to the emergence of arts festivals throughout the region. The modern West Indian is also indebted to those scholars and amateurs of letters - English, American and West Indian - who wrote about our folk songs and recorded what they could. It was with the patronage of Walter Jekyll, an Englishman, that Claude McKay published his Constab Ballads, a collection of dialect verses, in London in 1912.

McKay's publication is one of the first conscious efforts by creative writers to link the formal literature of the West Indies with the folk traditions of the people; and those folk traditions are as much a treatment of subject matter as they are a mode of expression. Several West Indian writers have been writing in dialect since, particularly during the last two decades. Dialects delimit societies. They vary from territory to territory, and sometimes within each unit. As yet they have no settled orthography. In the works of writers of the present generation, what is recorded is not necessarily the speech as spoken by the people. An approximation is made in which the rhythms and phrases are reproduced. In this respect each work is often a stylization of the author. Viewed as a body of literature these works are adding a new dimension to the English tongue. Notable examples of this new writing are to be found in the novels New Day, by Vic Reid and A Brighter Sun by Samuel Selvon, and in the plays, Moon Over the Rainbow Shawl by Errol John and Under the Sun by Sylvia Wynter. Mr. John's drama was awarded first prize in the Play-writing Competition sponsored by The Observer newspaper in London in 1958. When in the same year Mr. Vic Reid published his second novel, The Leopard (this time in Standard English), the critic in the London Times said: "Mr. Reid uses words as if no one had ever used them before and his prose is as fresh as spring buds unfolding". The English Stage Company accepted Miss Wynter's play for production at the Royal Court in London three years ago, but their failure with Flesh to a Tiger by Barry Reckord, another Jamaican, and the financial climate, forced them to postpone staging it. It has, however, been broadcast in the B.B.C.'s Third Programme. The pervading quality of these works is a distinctive West Indianism, a regional view of life (even when the subject matter is taken from overseas, as in the case of The Leopard), an artistic form of scale patterned or established European practice, a language at once fresh, poetic, earthy and spontaneous, and yet a treatment and composite style that could not have been produced anywhere else. Here then is one of the traditions of West Indian literature, a tradition that is indigenous in utterance and yet universal in appeal.

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It becomes obvious from a study of the objective, historical structure of our national life, that the majority of the first Anglo-Caribbean writers were not West Indians in the sense of having been born in the region.

In introducing his Guianese Poetry, Mr. N. E. Cameron writes of a collection of verses entitled Midnight Musings in Demerara, by one "Colonist", printed in the Courier Office, Demerara, British Guiana, in 1832. Mr. Cameron says that there is not a single composition of purely local interest in the book; and that the author defends his position by saying -

> that the Colony, though fertile in everything else, is barren in incidents for poetical display - not having the haze of antiquity to shroud, and yet to beautify, the records of past generations; and not possessing the novelty of a lately discovered country, on the present beauty or prospects of which, the mind would delight to expatiate.

"Colonist" was not the only one with this point of view. What he wrote was the literary answer to a question deep-rooted in the social conditions of the times. Most "colonists", who could make sufficient money off their sugar plantations, lived in great style in London, where they exercised a not inconsiderable influence on the British Parliament, in such matters of trade as directly affected their interests. Those who were forced to remain in the Caribbean, looked forward to the day when their fortunes would permit them to return home.[4]

There were some, however, who were settlers in the better sense of the word; they never turned their backs upon their native land, but they were willing to let down their buckets where they were. They had immigrated as missionaries, or to start a new life; a few held government appointments. They were for the most part gentlemen of education - identified with the impulses of their own culture. Some of them versified, and although they were Englishmen, Irishmen and Scotsmen often writing English, Irish or Scottish verse in the West Indies, they nevertheless wrote. Most of this activity took place in Jamaica. Prominent among those who threw themselves whole-heartedly into the educational and cultural life of the island were the Reverend John Radcliffe, born in Ireland in 1815, and William Morrison, educator and journalist, born in Scotland in 1832. They were soon joined by other writers, both immigrant and native-born, that is to say of European stock or mixed, born in the Caribbean. When the shackles of slavery were buried in 1838, a great creative force was released; and towards the close of the century, there were poets - white, black and coloured - singing of the Caribbean scene. On the South American mainland, Henry Dalton, a medical doctor, born in British Guiana in 1858, was the first to celebrate the aboriginal Indians and write on other local themes. Other poets in both territories followed: H. S. Bunbury, Leo, Arabel Moulton Barrett, Lena Kent, Cyril King, Arthur Nicholas, Clara Maud Garrett, Constance Hollar and a host of others. The Negro and missionary elements carried over into formal poetry the religious fervour of the times and its vision of paradise. If we do not miss the syncopation, there is more than an echo from the Negro Spiritual, All God's Chillun, in Thomas Don's Pious Effusions, published in 1873 -

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Then shall he clothed in a robe
Hold a palm in his hand
And wearing on his head a crown
Enter the Promis'd Land !!!

Nature, religion and imperial themes were among the prime sources of inspiration. Since the English tongue had not contained much that was descriptive of the Caribbean before, the poets sang as if the land were being discovered for the first time. "June has come to Kingston, Flaming June", Constance Hollar exulted like a child, while in her Yellow, we have a sustained observation of colour, which I have never met in the language before -

I will sing a song of yellow on this yellow day
All the loveliness of yellow passes in a swift array:
Yellow of bright buttercups in Kingston's dazzling fields -
Yellow of chrysanthemums that Autumn lavish yields,
Sunflowers and primroses sparkling in the sun.....

Nature poems varied from the purely topographical to the nostalgic strains of Lena Kent in her Hills of St. Andrew, to the lyric out-pouring of Arabel Moulton-Barrett (a niece of Elizabeth Barrett Browning) in The Lost Mate -

Oh, could I sing to thee
Song of the sun;
Song of the singing star,
Wandering on;
Vagabond worlds that go
Carolling through -
Would I could sing of them,
Woo thee anew.
Song of the seraphim
Deep in the sky;
Straight would I gather it,
Loitering by;
Then should I sing to thee,
Speed to thee, wing to thee,
Song should I bring to thee,
Glorious still.
Waters should roar to thee
Blossoms should fill
All the sweet path of thee,
Pasture and hill.

Much of this verse was as spontaneous as bird song. But what models were on hand when these poets began writing? There was the Bible, the source of many themes, and there were the hymns, which even the great mass of people who could not read would sing by heart. Forerunners like John Radcliffe and William Morrison had arrived with university training; others like Dalton and Arabel Moulton Barrett were sent to university or finishing school in England; many who could not afford to go abroad were given a good grammar school education in the West Indies. Also, books were being bought and privately circulated; and the newspapers would publish the odd commemorative piece. As happened in Australia and in Canada, the nineteenth-century West Indian poets wrote in the manner of nineteenth century - a fact that has often been sneered at by many young West Indians of my own generation. (They do not object that twentieth century West Indians have written in the manner of the twentieth'.) Mr. Ralph Gustafson says in his introduction to The Penguin Book of Canadian Verse:

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> Valid Canadian poets, immigrant or native-born, started where they had to: with the traditions of imaginative attack and conventions of technique of their immediate predecessors or contemporaries elsewhere.

The words "West Indian" could have been substituted for "Canadian". Since English was the language spoken, the English bards - Wordsworth, Keats, Shelley, Tennyson and Arnold - became the great exemplars. In this context, there are three points that should be re-stated: firstly, Emancipation had given new meaning to the freedom of the individual; secondly, romanticism had emphasised the importance of the past and man's oneness with nature; and thirdly, because the European writers were in consonance with the new spirit that was abroad, the West Indians took to these models as naturally as ducks to water.

We may ask with Walter Pater: "In whom did the stir, the genius, the sentiment of the period find itself? Where was the receptable of its refinement, its elevation, its taste?" Tom Redcam has long been regarded as the "father of Jamaican poetry". Because, from the vantage point of the present, we can see that he, more than any other writer of his generation, embodied and expressed the spirit of the awakening West Indianism, we may justly re-christen him "the father of West Indian poetry".

In the West Indies poetry seems to have become a talisman of long life. Nearly all the practitioners have lived beyond the age of sixty. Arabel Moulton-Barrett, who was born in 1860, died at ninety-three; and Lena Kent, who was born in 1870, the same year as Tom Redcam, is still alive and writing. The result is that in Jamaica, and to a lesser extent in British Guiana, there has been opportunity to consolidate the gains of the past; and to create the climate in which poetic activity may thrive. The fact that in Jamaica there was more than a score of practising poets at the time led to the founding of the Poetry League of Jamaica in 1923. Towards the end of this decade a similar association was launched by Mr. Cameron in British Guiana, and during the late 1930s another small group of writers began meeting in Trinidad, under the sponsorship of Judge Hallinan - described by George Lamming in his Pleasures of Exile as a "connoisseur of the arts". Edgar Mittelholzer, who was born in British Guiana in 1909 and has now published some fifteen novels, went to Trinidad in 1941, and was a practising member of Judge Hallinan's coterie before leaving to settle in England.

A good deal of the fin de siecle and early twentieth-century poetry was bad - in fact, execrably bad. Because of the difference in social context, because from the very beginning the Spaniards had tried to create a home from home in the Caribbean, it was possible in Cuba, for instance, for José María Heredia (1803-1839) to anticipate Spanish romanticism by more than ten years. When the world-wide movement reached the English-speaking Caribbean, the English prophets had already been dead, Wordsworth poetically so, for some time. Edmund Blunden in his essay on Matthew Arnold said:

> A great many young men and women of the necessary fineness of spirit existed and wrote; but over them seemed to hang the shadow of their inefficacy. Greatness had flourished. For them, the after-comers, the day of little though delightful things; and if they attempted big things, they were inclined to avoid the main roads of style and subject and to grow fantastical.[5]

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This is one point of view. Another is that the structure of English society was being radically altered, and that as a consequence the area of poetical sensibility was being enlarged. As Professor C.H. Herford has put it, "poetry was to give expression not only to the elemental emotions of men, Earth's common growth of mirth and tears, but to the complexities of the cultivated intellect, and its infinitely varied modes of impressing its own rhythm upon the dance of plastic circumstance, in art and science, in statecraft and citizenship, in philosophy and religion".[6]

Romanticism persisted in the West Indies well up to the nineteen-thirties, but in the rather thread-bare form of Victorianism and in the Georgian cult of respectability. It took the unrest of the 'thirties, the period which more than any other marked the development of national consciousness, to give birth to the authentic new voices that could proclaim West Indian nationhood, individuality and significance.

Before we discuss these new writers, however, there are four names which merit more than a passing reference, not only because two of them have achieved international reputation, but because of the resonance they bring to the main body of our poetic literature. I refer to Arthur Nicholas, born in 1875, and to Claude McKay, 1890, both of whom are no longer alive, and to W. Adolphe Roberts, born in 1886, and to J. E. Clare McFarlane, 1894. They are four very strong and highly contrasting personalities. They help to typify the diverse patterns of culture, which before 1930, were converging to create the new West Indies.

The picture one gets of Arthur Nicholas is that he was one of the last Victorians, English or colonial. Although a Negro, his loyalties were decidely Anglo-Saxon, and he saw his Tropic land through Northern eyes. However, he had a wonderful ear and often transmuted magic, even though his verbal equipment was not always equal to the demands of his message. His poems, particularly The Gift and Arcadia, show a preoccupation with the vertical relationship between man and his Maker, and his own mission as a poet. September, which is in a profound sense, the most English of his poems, invites comparison with Keats' Ode to Autumn, the latter an adventurous foraging into nature by a young man at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the former a spiritual stock-taking by a man mellowed by the years at the end of the Victorian era. In the following lines from The Gift we come into communion with what was undoubtedly a great soul:

> I hear deep organ notes
> Ring through the diapason of the storm;
> And many a high celestial sonnet floats
> Upon my ear as tempest-breezes form.
> And more-than-mortal music fills my soul
> As o'er the rugged beach the billows roll.

Claude McKay left Jamaica in 1912, the year in which his Constab Ballads was published in England. Defiant, often rebellious, "the Bobby Burns of Jamaica" he has been called, "his genius was rooted in the manners and emotional qualities of the common people". He became widely known in the United States of America as a novelist, following the publication of Home to Harlem, a national best seller, in 1928. He never returned to Jamaica, but his native land never failed to inspire

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his muse. His nostalgic lyric, Flame-heart, is one of the gems of West Indian writing. Max Eastman, in a biographical appendix to the posthumous publication of his Selected Poems, describes him as "the first great lyric genius of his race". His challenging lines

> If we must die let it not be like hogs
> Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot

represent a point of transition in the poetry of the American Negro, in the words of Alain Locke, "from the anti-slavery appeal to the radical threat".[7] His sonnet The Lynching is a searching indictment of the race-riots in that great democracy:

> All night a bright and solitary star
> Hung pitifully o'er the swinging char.
> Day dawned, and soon the mixed crowds came to view
> The ghastly body swaying in the sun:
> The women thronged to look but never a one
> Showed sorrow in her eyes of steely blue;
> And little lads, lynchers that were to be
> Danced round the dreadful thing in fiendish glee.

Almost thirty years before the University College of the West Indies was established in 1948, in fact long before any of the present voices was heard, J. E. Clare McFarlane was preaching the doctrine of literary nationalism. He was a real missionary and his position in West Indian letters was unique. He had for many years been the only authority on Jamaican poetry, and in addition to launching the Poetry League, he went up and down the island lecturing. He edited the only two "full" anthologies of Jamaican poetry - Voices from Summerland, which we have already noticed, and A Treasury of Jamaican Poetry (1949).

Although today some of his opinions as expressed in his critical essays, A Literature in the Making, appear somewhat dated, he is a man of uncommon perciponce, and he is the first literary critic and essayist of any importance that the West Indies has produced.

Of his poetry, Daphne and The Magdalene are his major works. They are both long philosophical pieces, and we can do no more than mention them here. He fashioned his poetry closely on the artistic credo of Wordsworth. He often achieves fine passages of lyricism, but like his master, he has also been accused of long passages of dullness. His sonnet On National Vanity, shows him at his best: it combines clarity of idea with sureness of diction -

> Slowly we learn; the oft repeated line
> Lingers a little moment and is gone;
> Nation on nation follows, Sun on Sun;
> With empire's dust fate builds her great design,
> But we are blind and see not; in our pride
> We strain toward the petrifying mound
> To sit above our fellows, and we ride
> The slow and luckless toiler to the ground.
> Fools are we for our pains; whom we despise,
> Last come, shall mount our withered vanities,
> Topmost to sit upon the vast decay
> Of time and temporal things - for, last or first,
> The proud array of pictured bubbles burst,
> Mirages of their glory pass away.

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Mr. Roberts is one of the first West Indian "men of letters", that is to say, in the meaning of the term as set forth by Alexandre Beljame in his Men of Letters of the Eighteenth Century: a man who makes his living by his pen alone, and by his pen alone achieves distinction. His reputation rests on his histories, his novels and his poetry in that order; but it is as a poet, first and foremost I think, that posterity will remember him. I have already quoted one of his sonnets in part (ii) of this essay. He has an admirable command of English, French and Spanish, and is perhaps as fluent in French as he is in English. The most un-English of West Indian poets, he is Gallic in sensibility and republican in sentiment. He may be described as the father of the independence movement in Jamaica.[8]

He served in France as a war correspondent during the First World War. He is deeply read in French literature, and is also an authority on the other literatures of the Caribbean. He was not to be satisfied with the work of Austin Dobson, W. E. Henley, Lang and others, who in the 1870s and after re-introduced early French forms into English verse: he went to the primary sources of inspiration.

A parnassian, he is in poetical succession to Leconte de Lisle and Jose Maria de Hèrèdia.

He rendered a particular service when he introduced the villanelle into the Caribbean. He went back to the works of Jean Passerat, whodied in 1602, and whose posthumous poems included several villanelles which became popular, especially his J'ai perdu ma tourterelle, that set the standard for subsequent writers. Whereas the English used it to convey light and often frivolous sentiment, in the Caribbean it has been employed as a vehicle for more serious poetry Mr. Roberts' Villanelle of the Living Pan and his Villanelle of the Sad Poet and Mr. Vivian Virtue's Villanelle Sequence King Solomon and Queen Balkis represent the high water mark of achievement in this verse form in English.

The transition from Victorianism to West Indianism has been clearly marked in the collective works of writers, who were born during the first two decades of this century, and who began publishing, let us say, just before and after 1930. There is also a distinction between the collective spirit of these poets and the orientation of those, who were born after the 1914-18 World War, and whose poems began to appear just before or after 1950. (My classification is, of course, a matter of convenience, for the human spirit may not be fitted into rigid chronological compartments).

Those who belong to the generation born before 1920 include H. A. Vaughan, Philip Sherlock, Una Marson, Roger Mais, Gerald Hamilton, Vivian Virtue, A.J. Seymour and H. M. Telemaque. Although he was born in 1893, a year before J. E. Clare McFarlane, Frank Collymore's work belongs in spirit to this group.

The post 1914-18 group includes M.G. Smith, George Campbell, Geoffrey Drayton, E. M. Roach, H.D. Carberry, Basil McFarlane, C.L. Herbert, Ian Carew, George Lamming, E. McG. Keane, Kenneth Ingram, Martin Carter and Derek Walcott.

Individual collections were published invariably at the poet's own expense, but several outlets began opening up. We have already noted that the newspapers

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would publish pieces from time to time. When Tom Redcam edited The Jamaica Times, he gave considerable space to creative writing and started a literary supplement. Una Marson bore Vivian Virtue, Gerald Hamilton and others into print in her monthly Cosmopolitan, which ran in Jamaica for three years, 1928- 31. Then other media followed, periodicals, year books, anthologies and radio programmes: the Year Books of the Poetry League of Jamaica, compiled by Archie Lindo, from 1939-1943; the B.B.C.'s Caribbean Voices Programme, started by Una Marson during the Second World War; Bim, edited by Frank Collymore and W. T. Barnes in Barbados since 1942; Focus, an anthology of contemporary writing compiled by Edna Manley since 1943; Kykoveral, edited by A. J. Seymour in British Guiana since 1945; Best Poems from Trinidad (anthology) chosen and published by A.M. Clarke in 1943; and the several issues of Caribbean Quarterly sponsored by the Extra Mural Department of the University College of the West Indies. In addition there has been a number of overseas publications, including Overseas Anthology collected in England in 1924 by the Empire Poetry League (now defunct); Robert Herring's Jamaican and West Indian numbers of Life and Letters issued in London in 1948; The Caribbean section of The Poetry of the Negro, compiled by Langston Hughes and Arna Bontemps in the United States of America in 1949; and the West Indian collection of The Tamarack Review (1959) published in Ontario, Canada, on the recommendation of Mr. V.S. Reid.

It is with the appearance of Bim, Focus and Kykoveral that the new West Indianism began to gather momentum.

The world had been shaken by the 1914-18 World War, when the first generation of poets of this century began writing, but the beliefs which their Victorian fathers had handed on to them were not shaken. Britain had won the war, as everybody had righteously expected, and the foundations of Western civilization had thus been preserved. The return from active service overseas of many West Indian sons had helped to develop a consciousness of the existence of lands other than Britain outside the Caribbean; and many had gone to seek fame and fortune in the neighbouring Caribbean Republics and in the United States of America. World events were making a greater impact upon West Indian thought. There was now a greater tendency to examine things for one's self, and the field of subject matter available for poetic treatment was consequently being extended.

Other factors were also at work. The West Indian was developing pride in his ancestry, whether that ancestry was European, African or Asian, or a mixing and blending of these races. The acceptance of self, for the Negro at first tentative, became, in the oratorical flights of Marcus Garvey, a bold and positive assertion. Things were now sorting themselves out. It was no longer a matter of transplanting the seeds of decay from other lands, but rather a selective use and blending of such strands of culture as our writers could make inevitably their own. The masses were being liberated as a creative force; the West Indian intellectual was now discovering the West Indies, and identifying himself with legitimate aspirations of his community. The riots and mass demonstrations that began in St. Kitts in 1935 and spread like fire in a cane piece to other parts of the Caribbean, were symptomatic of the changes in political thinking that had been percolating down to the masses. The dramatic conversion of the intellectuals that followed,

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was to provide the movement for the rectification of economic ills with the philosophical basis of self government.

The new dynamic produced voices that formal West Indian poetry had not known before - voices that were immediate and urgent, and more in consonance with the emotional qualities of the common poeple. If there was new melodic power, there was also greater spiritual compulsion. A. J. Seymour took a contemporary view of the continential landscape in his Over Guiana, Clouds. In A Beauty Too of Twisted Trees, Philip Sherlock gave symbolic treatment to the Crufixion, and in Jamaica Fishermen he sang of the nobility of the black man. Una Marson wrote on the subject of love in a manner that West Indian womanhood had not dared before. H.M. Telemaque praised Adina, the peasant girl, and spoke of

examining the island in his hands.

H.A. Vaughan, with a classical eye, saw new beauty in Dark Voices. All Men come to the Hills, finally, said Roger Mais, as he acknowledged the orientation of the bulk of Jamaican poetry to the hills. Gerald Hamilton explored afresh the depths of Port Royal, and fashioned a new Song for a Synthesis. Frank Collymore walked Beneath the Casuarinas and wrote his nocturne By Lamplight. Vivian Virtue continued his experimentations in verse forms, old and new, and translated into English verse from the Spanish and French of such poets as Rubén Darío of Nicaragua and José Maria de Hèrèdia of France.

In the works of these writers, particularly in that of Mr. Vivian Virtue, the close observation of nature, which we discussed earlier in Constance Hollar, has been carried further. When one compares Virtue's I have seen March, for instance, with Constance Hollar's Flaming June or her Yellow, one feels that Virtue could have been present when the Divine Artist was mixing the pigments to paint the trees with their particular colours. Is it not by virtue of the particularity of their observation that poets are able to write for the generality of man? And how else could Mr. Martin Carter, writing a generation later, have saluted his comrade in I am No Soldier:

I am my poem, I come to you in particular gladness.

When the second generation began writing after World War II, a revolt had already been started against the tradition established by Tom Redcam and the earlier school of poets; and the novel was now increasingly to claim the attention of some of the best literary talents. I think that some of the novelists - Roger Mais, V. S. Reid, John Hearne, Ian Carew, Samuel Selvon and George Lamming are really poets writing in prose. Which explains in part why there is so much lyricism in the contemporary West Indian novel. It is of especial significance, that one of them, Mr. John Hearne, should have said: "The greatest novelist is only the tomb of a poet sacrificed".

In the years following the conflict, some of the most radical changes in West Indian society were to take place. Coinciding with the development of national consciousness, the Industrial Revolution, which had begun in Europe over a century and half before, was now gathering momentum in the Anglo-Caribbean; and the constitutional advances, which were to bring independence, were now in train.

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The geographical constants of time and space were to be altered further by the technological advances of the war.

Hostilities had taken the flower of West Indian youth to the Front. When following the Peace many sons and daughters returned home, some of them felt that they had been displaced, but, nevertheless, went back to Europe "to a wider indifference".

At home the work of the literary societies and other cultural groups was being reinforced and widened by the founding of the University College of the West Indies. Dr. G. R. Coulthard of the Department of Modern Languages collaborated with Wycliffe Bennett, then Secretary of the Poetry League of Jamaica, to organise the first exhibition of the poetry of the English-, French-, Spanish- and Dutch-speaking Caribbean. Poets of different generations did some of the translations. It is significant that when Dr. Coulthard, an Englishman, wrote his first book on the Caribbean, it was entitled Raza y Color en la Literatura Antillana ( ), written not in English, as might have been expected, but in Spanish. It is also noteworthy that when Dr. J. H. Parry and Dr. P.M. Sherlock, Professor of History and Vice Principal respectively of the same University, wrote their Short History of the West Indies (1957), they found it necessary to include in their study the parallel developments in the other language groups of the region.

I have followed this comparative treatment in discussing the poetry of the West Indies, and have tried to trace its development in the context of world letters. There are many short-comings, which only the leisured amplitude of a full book can rectify. I have taken the view that, in all the circumstances, an introduction to the first definitive anthology of the poetry of the West Indies required even the beginnings of such a study. I am confident that the subject will be taken up by more competent hands than mine.

Since this is principally an essay on West Indian poetry, important writers like H.G. DeLisser, author of Jane, Susan Proudleigh and The White Witch of Rosehall, and Mr. C.L.R. James, who wrote Minty Alley, have not been discussed. Along with W. Adolphe Roberts they are among the first West Indian novelists.

The writer born after the 1914-18 World War is more conscious of his position in the Caribbean as a whole than any of his predecessors could have been. I have avoided discussing this group at any length. I belong to this generation, and need more time for an objective assessment. I hope too that I have not yielded to the temptation of pointing a didactic finger at the way I think West Indian poetry ought to develop: for the creative mind has its own laws, whose application will vary from writer to writer. Suffice it to say that in so far as its development is concerned, the present period shows many signs and portents. It awaits a meteor.

H. S. Bunbury
(1843 - 1920)

THE WEST INDIES

In waters of purple and gold
Lie the islands beloved of the sun,
And he touches them one by one,
As the beads of a rosary told,
When the glow of the dawn has begun
And when to eternity's fold
Time gathers the day that is done.

No rosary, Isles of the West,
Isles of Antillean agleam,
But a necklace strung out on the breast
Of the seas breathing low in a dream;
In the trance of a passionate rest,
A rainbow afloat in its gleam.

ooo ooo ooo

Henry Dalton
(1858 -)

FIVE INDIAN TRIBES

Five tribes dwell on this sunny land*
Each Chieftain rules his own small band;
The Arawak,/ or tiger men,
Chase that wild beast from den to den,
Known to the rest by bearing bold,
Free in their life, to vice unsold;
Unfetter'd limbs, and painted face,
Bear yet of savage art the trace.

The Caribee, a dwindling clan,
Still show the marks of savage man,
Once noted as a warlike race,
Yet scarcely showing now a trace
Of what in former times they were,
The lords of the creation here
Of cunning habits prone to learn,
Their bosoms yet with freedom burn,
They quit the towns and civil strife,
To lead a roaming, careless life.

The Accawai, of warlike name,
Are men of strength, and stouter frame;
A slender thread round ankle worn,
Is by each male and warrior borne;
No artificial vestments grace
The woman's form and modest face.

Next comes the wild Macusi tribe --
Their simple minds receive no bribe;
No promis'd gift, or stern command,
Can tempt them from their mountain land,
For where Piara's plains are met,
There dwell they in their freedom yet.

Last of the tribes, the dark Warrow
Lives by the streams and marches low;
He builds the boat, and seeks the wave,
And, like the rest, is bold and brave;
Amid the marsh his hut he'll place,
And live the sailor of his race.
Such the chief tribes which here are shewn,
But minor tribes are likewise known.

* The Guianas

/ The Guianese Arawaks are now of mixed blood. The poet portrays them as being radically different from the pacific Arawaks of the islands.

ST. MARY'S, NORTH SIDE

Baron Olivier of Ramsden*
(1859 - 1943)

away South-westerly, four thousand miles and more away,
corals ridge the strand to fret the ceaseless surf;
wind-shorn commons there Green Castle looks on Robin's Bay
empty ruins stare across the tawny turf.

on mile of moving blue that thunders ineffectually;
on jet of dazzling sprays that lash the reefs imperiously;
and hiss of broken waves whose smoke goes up perpetually,
deep through hidden caves and whispering out mysteriously.

the terraced limestone bluff that lifts into the rushing air
of black pimento-bays to battle with the trade-wind's blow,
there walks the ghost of one that ate his heart in exile here,
Cristoforo Colon -- four hundred shameful years ago.

and East the watchful headlands question an unaltering heaven,
Lilac distances of mountain faint into a sail-less sea:-
Out of those great emptinesses endlessly the sea-wind presses
Columbus heard it calling -- calling as it calls to me.

You and I were here together -- long before the Earth had age --
Loved them and could not forget them -- reefs and commons, hills and skies;
Born not yet of Adam's race, uncumbered of Eve's heritage,
We were happy in this place, when all the world was Paradise.

Long before the Spaniards' Devil taught the Arawak good and evil --
Long before these slave-built ruins built their builder's own undoings -
Long ere you for twice-born pilgrims hallowed this enchanted level --
Long ere clumsy mortal lovers scared your soul with turbid wooings,

Used I to lie here and watch you -- poised above the bitten ledges --
Hear the babble of the sea-nymphs round their hidden tables sitting,
Watch, like drifting thistle down, between the Earth's and Ocean's edges
Sapphire-blue and russet-brown, your slender, shining figure flitting?

Did you bend above the caverns, where the prisoned waves were straying?
Listen close against the crannies, hear their stifled sighings issue?
Leaning outward from the verges, arms uplifted, body swaying,
Did you lure the laughing surges, till they leapt, with shouts, to kiss you?

Was it then that something seen through the rainbows of the spray --
Freedom of your flying hair, -- swiftness of immortal eyes --
Flashed into transfiguration soul and body's interplay --
Dared me to the immense migration, the unending enterprise?

Down away South-westerly, four thousand miles and more away,
Rocky ledges ribbed the sand to sift the rustling surf;
Under drifts incarnadined Green Castle flamed on Robin's Bay;
Swifts and rain-birds wheeled and whined along the shadowy turf:-

Past the blackening western ranges shafts of farewell splendour driven
Laced the skies with rose and scarlet; mute we lay, and watched together,
Till across that conflagration, league on league along the heavens,
Every dove in all Creation laid a gold and purple feather:-
Down away South-westerly -- Oh! countless years of years ago!

* Sydney Olivier, the noted Fabian, was Colonial Secretary
( ) and Governor of Jamaica, W.I. ( )

Arabel Moulton-Barrett
(1860-1953)

THE LOST MATE

Two singing birds have come flying across the sea;
but only one has reached land. He mourns his mate:

Answer me, sing to me,
Mate of my heart,
Tho' I call out to thee,
Silent thou art.
Leaves of the forest tree
Leap to thy song;
Rock of the mountain-side
Echoing on.
God of the summer storm,
Sunny and wild!
God of the singing stream,
God undefiled!
Sing to me, turn to me,
So I may learn of thee;
Song-god I yearn to be,
Song to regain.
Give to me, tell to me,
Sing me again
Song of the running brook
Song of the rain.

Oh, could I sing to thee
Song of the sun;
Song of the singing star,
Wandering on:
Vagabond worlds that go
Caroling through -
Would I could sing of them,
Woo thee anew.
Song of the seraphim,
Deep in the sky;
Straight would I gather it,
Loitering by;
Then should I sing to thee,
Speed to thee, wing to thee;
Song should I bring to thee:
Glorious still.
Waters should roar to thee:
Blossoms should fill
All the sweet path of thee,
Pasture and hill.

Lost to me, lost to me,
Witherward fled?
Gone from me, gone from me,
Shadow-ward sped,
Hearing thy voice, to me
Echoing still;
Seeing the flight of thee,
Will of my will.
Beat of thy flying wing,
Flashing of blue;
Throb of thy eager breast
Dipt in the dew.
Lost the wild song of me,
Notes that belong to thee;
Love-torn and strong, to be
Mute in the sun.
Shame to me, shame to me
Summer is run;
Silent thou art to me
Singing is done.

H. C. Bennett
(1867 -)

ON A CERTAIN PROSPECT FROM THE HILLS OF JAMAICA

Wonderful, yea, beyond all thought,
Wonderful are ye, O Lines of Beauty!
To the East and the West, before me
And beneath, far-streaming,
Lines majestical, rhythmic, bold yet lovely.

Lines, though with uttermost strength abounding,
Etched minute, multitudinous; speechless
With a last refinement;
Thro' innumerable grades of distance wavering
Far, far to the South, and away
Leagues on, to the round sea-rim of this Earthball.
And each step
Of thy gradual infinite glory -
That play of white gold fire
Mid the limbs and the green hair of the hills
As they dance flowing down
To the locked calms of the plains and the waters
Flecked afar, afar and along,
By the ivory lace of the reef-foam -

Each step
Of that gradual infinite glory
Melts as with the light of a rose, plucked
Before noon, and the dew upon it;
Shines with the radiance of That
Which shapeth: then
Dies to be born again
Hour by hour, morn after morn,
Ever new, ever renewing.

ooo ooo ooo

Nellie Olson
(1869 - 1956)

LIKE JOHN TO-WHIT

Hear him practise John to-whit,
"Sweet John to-whit!"
At bright dawn he pipes his lay,
And through sunny summer day
Hear his cherry roundelay!
"Sweet John, John to-whit,
Sweet John to-whit!"

Does he tire - John to-whit?
"Sweet John, John to-whit!"
O'er and o'er right merrily;
Piping oh, so cheerily!
Singing oh, so airily!
"Sweet John, John to-whit,
Sweet, sweet guinep!"

Love your music, too, like John,
"Sweet John, John to-whit!"
Love your music, girl and boy,
Practise cheerily, gifts employ;
Fill like John, your world with joy!
"Sweet John, sweet guinep,
Sweet, sweet guinep!"

ooo ooo ooo

Tom Redcam
(1870-1933)

SAN GLORIA *

Oh, Captain of wide western seas,
Where now thy great soul lives, dost thou
Recall San Gloria's spice-censed breeze?

White-sanded curves where serried trees
Filed backward as thy sharpened prow
Sheared into foam the racing seas?

San Gloria's wood-carved mountain frieze
In the blue bay is mirrored now,
As when thy white sail wooed the breeze.

The thunder of insurgent seas
Beats yet the rough reef's ragged brow,
Roaring by green, far stretching leas;

Yet through the wood the peony flees,
And frets with gold the night-dark bough
Down the long avenue of trees.

Still flowering gyneps tempt the bees,
The yellow guava ripens now,
Rich-hearted ipomea please.

Dost thou remember things like these,
Hear yet the dark-robed woodlands sough,
Oh, Captain of wide western seas,
Dost thou remember things like these
Where thy great soul inhabits now?

* Columbus was ship-wrecked at St. Ann's Bay, the Santa Gloria of the Spaniards.

Tom Redcam
(1870-1933)

EXTRACT FROM SAN GLORIA

(Act 3, Scene 1).

On the shore as before, Columbus soliloquises:

Moans on the reef the deep sea's hated voice;
Surging and sapping on the rough reef's rim;
It speaks of death, dead faces and of woes,
Unnumbered, past and sorrows yet to be;
It is the pulse of sad eternity;
It is the prophet voice of grief and pain;
It is the judgment voice of things to come,
When, at high heaven's throne, the dead shall meet,
And, small and great, make answer for their deeds;
In those sad moanings come the widow's tears,
The orphan's anguish and the hopeless hope
Of watchers, from the white sands, far to sea.
Mendez, what fate is thine? Perchance, now, now
The body that enhoused thy soul is flung,
And tumbled o'er and o'er, amid the wrack
And slime of ocean's bottomless abyss.
Here, it was here, on such a day as this,
The sea-surge sounding in the self-same way
Through these wind-whispering trees, that your young heart
Leapt to the service; once did you essay
The perilous passage, and were driven back
All but yourself killed by the silent hate
Of staring suns upon a stirless sea;
So thirst to fury grew; to frenzy past;
And madness whirled to death. Again you tried,
Then, from the sea swept back by storms, you came,
But yet, undaunted, for the third time dared
To cross that sea of lurking death; long weeks
Have dragged their slow way towards Eternity.
The sea smiles, moans, and keeps its secret.
Where art thou?
My heart misgives me, dead; there is a dirge
In the soft whisper of these moving trees;
The sun gleams cynic unconcern, and the sad reef
Sends its deep murmur flooding through my mind,
As if there crept a shadow slowly on,
And dark-robed mourners trod through Memory's halls.
Suddenly I feel old; the weary body lags;
Pain closes on the brain; thought foot-sore goes;
The long, long way trails backward into gloom;
Dies into darkness there; 'tis night before.

(Through the drowsy stillness of the day the sound of the reef comes monotonously; doves in the wood coo now and again plaintively; there is the sudden sharp scream of a hawk wheeling over-head).

I see a vision of those savage men
In fury rushing on us, trampling dark
By their brute numbers, Life, Killing its flame,
Each spark of evidence that in this place
We suffered; so our story, it will pass
Like clouds that aimless sink in shapeless air.
A dark foreboding haunts me lest I die
Amid the careless beauty of this isle,
And these great heights, blue, forest-garmented.

/That...

EXTRACT FROM SAN GLORIA (Cont'd.)

That wave slow signals to the mighty deep,
Callous to smaller things, across my grave
Stare; while the green things tangle on the plain;
While the soft waters lip the sandy shore;
While dawns, arriving, spread their crimson flags;
And passing day gives all her tents to fire,
Seeking a new encampment; doves will coo
When, into deep oblivion sunk, my grave
Lies in the flood of life that blots out all,
While the great hills stare on, o'er shrub and vine,
Heeding my resting-place and me no more
Than slow grey lichens heed the rock they stain,
Or this huge trunk they moisten to decay.

(He rises and paces slowly, then stooping picks up the body of a small dead bird.)

Then will I not be in the world of men
Worth more than is this little silent frame,
This empty hut of feathers, whence hath life
Evicted been by some chance flick of Fate.
True! 'tis an empty house, its tenant gone,
My tent of flesh, yet would I have it lie
In some dear, well-loved and familiar spot
On earth's vast amplitude.

Tom Redcam
(1870-1933)

SPANISH TOWN

Beloved ancient town, by Cobre's stream,
Where in thy dim Cathedral's central peace
His glory Effingham hath laid aside
And stormy Modyford hath found release

From plot and battle, and where, pure of soul
And ever looking up in faith's deep calm,
Elgin's girl wife waits for the whitening dawn
Of day eternal, past death's dark alarm.

War-darkening skies, the tramp of armed men;
See the stout regiments march through the town.
Death: in the funeral majesty of woe,
In long-drawn pomp, Trelawny lays him down.

There priest and lawyer, sailor, king's viceroy,
About thine altar-stone have lain them prone,
Pilgrims that slumber round a bivouac fire,
Till night be spent and God's good pleasure known.

Death is life's bivouac round the fires of faith.
Grey town and time-worn church, we come to thee,
Shrine of our history; about thy tombs
The patriot's spirit lingers reverently.

Tom Redcam
(1870-1933)

CUBA (1895)

Sister! the sundering Sea
Divides us not from thee,
The Ocean's homeless roar
May sever shore from shore:
Beneath the bitter brine,
Our hand is locked in thine.
Cold Custom chides us down
And stills us with a frown;
But we like lovers twain
Are one in joy and pain,
Whose mutual love is known
But may not yet be shown.
With clasped hands we convey
The love we may not say.

Tom Redcam
(1870-1933)

ORANGE VALLEY, ST. ANN

In front a mighty Ceiba halts
To sentinel the land.
Far as dim, distant muted tides
Wash round a silent strand
Like clouds in dreams the white foam grows
Faint on the far-off reef;
Sound founders in this space of air,
Freighted with Ocean's grief;
And all is silent, save the wind's
Soft sighing harp of trees,
And some wayfaring village shout,
A vagrant on the breeze.

By grass-fields gold-entinctured green
The darker Guangos tread,
The forest ranks enmarshalled sweep
O'er yonder mountain head.
The westering sun, a shivered lance
Hath struck through quivering leaves,
Where a wide grove of Cocoa Palms,
With shimmering impulse heaves.
Ackees flaunt garish, gypsy gems,
Dark-robed Pimentos gloom,
Crimson through feathery leafage gleams
The Poincianas' bloom.

The billowing tides of Life outpour,
The generations pass;
Made void by time, the woodland fails
As dies the bladed grass.
Gray walls are here, amid green boughs
Lush, long-stretched Creepers climb;
Great Cedars and the wind-worn Palms,
Their body-guard through time.
Gray walls where dragging shadows mark
The Year's low-swooping wing;
Quaint roofs, along whose shingled slopes
The moss and lichen cling.
As one clear foot-print marked beside
a gray, lone-sounding main
Declares a presence on that strand
By naught besides made plain:
Gray walls, amid the greening boughs,
A foot-print on Time's shore,
An unseen Presence round you steals
Of days that are no more.

For, brave, with flag and pennon spread,
Hath History passed this way,
While yonder coast re-echoing spake
The Privateer's affray;
This loop-hole, wide in angle-room,
Speaks spacious Spanish days,
When the brown Arawak went by
On leaf-dark forest ways;
And stately Dons, in languorous ease
Looked northward to that shore,
Saw, o'er the cane-fields' varied green
The Hawk, strong-pinioned, soar,
Heard Mocking-birds' melodious notes
Fuse with the moonlit hour;
Great beetles, mailed in shining black,
Boom round the Cereus flower.
Slow for the labouring feet of Toil
White roadways crossed the plain,
Nature's sweet-fluting solitude
Throbbed to the [illegible] pain.

The Spaniards pass, the Indians die
Like mists that fade afar,
And Britain's blood-dyed battle flag
Breaks through the storms of war.
A sterner pulse from Cromwell's band,
The British soldier came,
And on this pleasant northern land
Graved deep-enduring claim.
And many a summons found him here
To Council and to Board,
With sudden mandates of command
That bade him bare the sword
To meet the corsair at the Bay,
The rebel in the night,
Or follow where the fierce Maroon
Haunted the mountain height.
Between these walls, now rough with age
Men talked of Benbow's fight,
And Rodney's fame the courier told
Who crossed Diablo's height,
And at the Tavern quaffed a glass,
And hard by Huntley spurred,
Till far Trelawney from his lips
The news of Victory heard.

From this green lattice eyes once watched,
And bright with faith they shone,
While through Morn's silver porticoes
Came the gold-armoured Sun.
Has faith been lost? to emptiness
Pass not a country's brave;
The pure, the noble and the true,
Their home is not the grave.
Invisibly with us they toil,
When perils round us sway;
The unseen spirits of our dead,
They shape their country's way.
O changing years! unchanging life !
From age to age the same,
Through a wild future's storm-filled gloom
The soul's clear torch shall flame.
The valour of the silent Past
The Faith, the gallant pride,
With unseen tributaries feed
Strength to that radiant Guide.

Gray walls, quaint roofed, amid green boughs,
A foot-print on Time's shore,
The unseen Presence of the Past
Lives round you evermore.

ooo ooo ooo

Tom Redcam
(1870-1933)

A LEGIONARY OF LIFE

Where with green fields St. Ann the ocean meets
And barrier reefs roar white with plunging foam,
Upon the shore hard by the river's mouth
Stands a poor fisher's weather-ridden hut.
'Tis placed beneath the Palms, the tall grey Palms,
Whose strong and sinuous trunks, uplifted high,
Battle and bend before the blustering breeze,
Swaying and stiffening, sloping, then erect;
With curve, obeisance, stately courtesy;
But still their stations keeping, aye upborne
Against the impetuous impulse of the wind;
Like men, goodhearted, patient, resolute,
Gracious in kindliness but firm of will,
Who, with all pleasant custom meet the foe,
Yielding and pliant in life's frip and frap,
But never budging when the issue joins,
And when the stake is final victory.

Earth's patrol, set upon her farthest verge,
Day after day dawn finds them clustered here
Through dewy hours when perfect stillness soothes
Both air and sea, and when the reef is heard
But in faint far-off moaning, sad and low;
While, from the white sand, northward, lies the bay
Smooth as a maiden's cheek and still as thought
That stands in meditative mood entranced.
Then as the sun to Day's young manhood grows,
Swept o'er that glassy surface, stirs the wind;
The depths are roughened and with boisterous might
Spring the strong Sea Breeze, rushing on the Palms
All day the contest lasts, till golden stars,
As evening gathers shadow, gleam on high,
And see the western avenues to Night
Resplendent burn, with far-flung crimson sheen,
Deep amber, blue intense, and bars of silver light,
Then motionless they stand, the tall grey Palms,
Save that aloft the long-ribbed leaflets purl
And slowly whisper in the ear of Night
Secrets too subtle for man's clumsy wit.
Blazes the South's great Cross, Orion's blade
Glows from the Zenith and his jewelled belt.
As Night's magnificent procession moves,
Silence the ocean holds, stillness the wind;
Then, slow subsiding into rest complete,
The grey boles move not, nor the leaflets stir.

Upon the sudden, bellowing from the deep,
Booms the bud thunder, savage as Death's eye,
Glares the red lightning as the storm puts forth;
But these grey folk, with their strong pliant height,
And graceful crown of leaves receive the shock,
Unshrinking, bending but not flinching, fearless all;
Earth's steadfast patrol at her farthest bound.
Mid myriad empty husks and withered leaves,
The hut stands, brown as these, with roof of straw,
Mud walls with stones embedded, wattle-veined,
Window and door rough board, on clumsy hinge;
This was a home and here there dwelt a man
To whom life brought sudden, insistent doom.
In a high post he dwelt, comfort secure;
Secure, he thought, nor dreamed at his right hand
Invisible but imminent, the hour of Fate was nigh.
It came, demanded answer; swift the call;

No room for aught but act, or failure, then;
Never from his imperishable self,
Never from Memory's mystic discs withdrew
The scene and deed. The river dark and swift;
Deep, voiceless power; Bamboo and Mango there
With shade o'er-hanging darker made the stream,
Beside him want his child, a beam of life,
A flash of sunshine from the mind of God;
Upon the bank she sought the pure white bloom
Of the slow-flowering Dagger; from its leaf
Stripped off the thin transparent outer skin,
Filled to her lips with joy, unrippled joy
That lives with those whose mortal years are few.

Her years were seven, and she was his all,
His all on earth. How was his eye withdrawn
The instant when Fate closed and struck her blow?
A plaintive Ground Dove cooed its soft, sad note.
This drew his gaze. That instant was his doom.
Too near the edge of the steep bank she pressed;
Downward she slipped, "My dadda," as she fell,
This was the baby cry that with the swish
And whirr of hurrying water smote his ear.
Forward he sprang, from the bank's edge beheld
The troubled surface, dimly saw his child;
Then for a second paused. Fear drove him back;
He dared not plunge; that instant triumphed Death.
Shattering the pause, he leapt, too late, he knew,
Too late it was, and he had failed his child.
The deadly current seized him; hard he fought
And long he battled; his blood-bursting heart
And blinded eye his deep exhaustion told.
In that swift silent stream his child was gone,
And he at last, but dimly conscious then,
Was flung, he know not when, like river drift
The roots among of Wild Calladiums, huge,
That, vine-entangled, barred in part the stream,

Each sight and every soul let into thoughts
That entered Memory's alleys, focussed all
On that one scene, that deadly point in time,
The fraction of a minute's pause when, fear enchained,
He dared not act.
Why sought he not relief
From Death, whose ever open-standing door
Offers forever rest to those who grieve,
And whose deep, awful eyes invite with lure
Of sleep eternal and oblivion's calm?
His was a frame corporeal charged with health;
No scanty tide of blood his veins possessed,
Or fed his brain and nerves with beggar's fare;
So no distortion veiled his view of Death.
He was convinced that whereso'er he fled,
Though down he laid his flesh for evermore,
His being survived, and with survival went
Remembrance of that instant's shameful pause.
Out from his comrades, from his rank in life,
He came, to this poor level where his paid
Ached on and ever, but, he thought, ached less
Than it had done in grander spheres of being.

The slow delivery of the river's flood
To the great ocean, near his mud-built hut,
The reef's unending sorrow, and the lap
Of brimming tides on the white-sanded shore;
These, with the Palm Trees' struggling and the shriek
Of wheeling sea-birds brought him no release
From that one memory; but to him it seemed
Here did he find the place in all the world
Where his great agony could best be borne.

/3...

So was his home the fisher's humble cot;
So were his comrades the grey sinuous Palms;
So camped he here with lonely skies above,
Great star-eyes peering through the night's profound.
Ever, above, the bending Palm leaves swayed,
Shivered and whispered, while the supple boles
Bowed to the Sea Breeze, bade obeisance low,
And held their patrol post with flinchless faith.

Persistent through his life's monotony,
One variation only reappeared;
A dim assurance that since life he chose
And Death's temptation to her dark embrace
Refused, its promised peace and rest,
He was no final traitor to the world.
So far he yet was true to the great host
Of sea and sky, of stars and tides and streams,
Existence's Grand Army, Hosts of Life,
Soldiers of some Great Purpose that moves on,
Through evolutions and developments
To some supreme far triumph yet to be.
So with the palms, Earth's Patrol on her shore,
He tabernacled, and his lonely soul
Found there no happiness, no joy, indeed;
But for its deathless pain vague soothing had.

ooo ooo ooo

Tom Redcam
(1870-1933)

"NOW THE LIGNUM VITAE BLOWS"

Now the Lignum Vitae blows;
   Fair-browed April enters here,
In her hand a crimson rose,
   In her eye youth's crystal tear;
   Moonlit nights serenely clear,
Rock the lilac-purpled bloom:
   Robes the Lignum Vitae wear,
Fashioned at some mystic loom.

And the brown Bee comes and goes,
   And his murmurous song I hear,
Like a dosing stream that flows,
   To a drowsy unseen mere,
   Deeply hid, but very near.
Rare the robes the trees assume;
   Robes the Lignum Vitae wear,
Fashioned at some mystic loom.

The grey Mocking Bird he knows
   Music's mazes for the ear;
O'er the tinted petal snows,
   He, of Spring th' inspired Seer,
   Sings melodiously clear;
Rare as souls of soft perfume,
   Robes the Lignum Vitae wear,
Fashioned at some mystic loom.

L'Envoi

Of all April's fancy gear,
   None excels thee, fold or plume,
Flowers the Lignum Vitae wear,
   Fashioned at some mystic loom.

Lena Kent
(1870-)

THE HILLS OF ST. ANDREW

St. Andrew's hills, St. Andrew's hills,
That happy, happy hours
My childhood knew, among your rills,
Your unforgotten flowers!
Methinks once more I hear the roar
Of rushing Mammee River,
As down the rocks its torrents pour,
Hurrying on forever.

The solitaire's wild plaintive cry
I hear, and in the distance
Far off, her mate's long low reply,
With tender, soft insistence
Each calling each, (How Memory keeps
That interval entrancing!)
The awesome Blue Hole's dangerous deeps,
The sunbeams o'er it glancing,

I see as though 'twere yesterday
We played there in the wildwood,
And watched the waters haste away
(As hasted happy childhood!)
Can I forget the bamboo bowers
Wherein we loved to rest us?
And laugh away the lightsome hours
Ere yet life's cares oppressed us?

St. Andrew's hills, St. Andrew's hills!
'Tis there the gold fern groweth,
The silver fern beside the rills;
'Tis there the dog rose bloweth.
The star fern and the filmy rare
Deck glades and dells, bird-haunted,
There blackberry boughs droop low, and where
The blue quits build undaunted.

A bank beside the Coratoe
I see at my desire,
There scarlet achemenes blow,
And yellow fuschias, higher.
Arborea bells o'erhang the stream;
I hear the gurgling water
Flow down the gorge; as in a dream
I hear our gleeful laughter.

St. Andrew's hills, St. Andrew's hills!
I would not dwell among you.
Your very name my being thrills
For memories sweet that haunt you.
I would wake those happy days again,
Now dead and gone forever.
Ah! no, it would be too much pain,
The roar of Mammee River.

Lena Kent
(1870 -)

THE MEASURE

Measure thy moral worth not by the dream
But by the deed; not by the high desire,
The beautiful intent, the lofty fire
That lights thy spirit with a fitful gleam.
Take heed lest thou deceive thyself, and deem
The duty done because thou didst aspire
Unto the doing. Be life whole, entire;
The dream subservient, the deed supreme.

Nevertheless, dream on, dear heart; dream deep.
Acres of roses yield one drop alone
Of precious attar, and to one poor deed
A thousand dreams conspired. Wherefore keep
Thy spirit-roses; thou canst spare not one.
Keep thou thy dreams -- but follow where they lead.

Cyril N. King
(1872 -)

I SAW LIMONTA SLEEPING

I saw Limonta sleeping,
And one dim sail below,
White as a phantom, creeping
Up from Bellagio.

I thought, "Though evening borrows
For other lands the light,
All things on endless morrows
Return to lake and height;

"Glimmer of surf and shingle,
When day is newly born;
The gold and green that mingle
On mulberry and corn;

"Silver of olives ranging
In clouds along the hill;
Where paths, their courses changing,
Wind upward, upward still."

But though 'tis summer weather
On all the heights again,
We'll seek no more together
The small red cyclamen,

Nor watch for beauty burning
At dawn's first overflow,
Nor see a sail returning
Down to Bellagio.

Arthur Nicholas
(1875-1934)

SEPTEMBER

Month of the tinted leaf -
The year's sure warning of the ending day;
An emblem, thou, of glories passed away -
Of passion faded into coming grief.
And in thy mellowness of form and face
The hectic beauty of decay shines bright -
Like spurts of speed in a near-ended race,
Or dying candle, flick'ring in the night.

Deep in the silent glade
I seek from human company a rest,
And breathe in sacred solitude so blest,
'Mid scenes that watched strong August's manhood fade.
I sit and see the golden noon-tide sun
In tracery delicate fall through the trees,
While wanton sephyrs, as in gentle fun,
Pile the dead leaves to form my couch of ease.

Oft, at thine eventide,
Thy tender glory will awake my muse;
And with the coming of the night's soft dews,
Call wraiths to rise and gather at my side;
Dear, gentle ghosts of the long-buried years,
Brought from their graves to meet my raptured gaze,
That multiplies them through a mist of tears -
These ghosts of long-forgot September days.

And to my tortured heart
They bring relief by their own tender calm,
And for my soul provide a healing balm
Unknown to all the skill of earthly art.
They tell, in tones unheard of grosser ears
Than those of spiritual and finer sense,
That Grief is useless, and more useless, Tears,
That Pride is nought, and Greatness hurries hence!

They tell that earthly power -
Which can from longing souls their joys withhold,
And crush their dreams of bliss, more prized than gold -
Is an ephemera of life's short hour!
Wreck'd aspirations, precious hopes delayed,
While Time flies onward on relentless feet
To life's September, sere-leafed and decayed -
All, all, may find a solace fit and meet.

And my soul upward flies
To range the Ether at its own sweet will,
Strong, on the wings of Faith, - unshaken still -
A radiant spirit of the darkling skies,
Hope springs again within my gladdened breast -
There is no room within my heart for fear;
And these dear ghosts of other years seek rest,
And with the failing twilight, disappear.

Arthur Nicholas
(1875-1934)

ARCADIA

Beneath the midnight moon silent I stand,
Bath'd in the tender silver of its beams;
A quaint, fantastic being -- such as dreams
Portray to infant minds; by faery wand
Fashion'd of light -- unpalpable, unreal,
Like the dim hero of a ghostly tale.

O mystic Hour! how more mysterious thou,
When from Night's Queen descends her fullest ray,
And, night no more, a softer holier day
Broods o'er a world, silent and sleeping now;
And exquisite, the lights and shadows fall
A glorious mantle, beautifying all.

In yonder cot, do not bright spirits dwell?
That stately mansion -- what but aerial things
Could e'er inhabit? Who but faery kings
Tread that white road, silent as 'neath a spell?
Nay, these are common in the glaring noon;
But oh! how beautiful beneath the moon!

Mid such a scene, what mortal man is great?
What head that bends not to a higher Pow'r?
Who doth not feel the influence of the hour,
When none is poor, and none of high estate?
When, for the nonce, ends man's ephemeral strife
In peace like Death, but fairer far than Life.

'Tis then I love to muse and ponder long
On this existence, and on that to come;
When, borne to some eternal, changeless home,
Some other unresisting souls among,
I pass the gates whence man returneth not
"The world forgetting, by the world forgot".

I ask not that Life's river flowing on,
That bears me helpless to that soundless Sea,
Should have no shoals or ever smooth should be --
Its course eventless and unruffled run:
Be mine the thrills that other men must feel
In alternations of their woe and weal.

But oh! when to the "darkest shades" I come
'Tis not for noon-tide brilliance I shall pine --
Give me a region of soft light divine,
A noon-lit land for my perpetual home.
Sweeter for me that Eden's bowers shall bloom
Seen through the moon-beams -- robed in light and gloom.

With kindred spirits, 'midst celestial groves
There may I wonder 'neath eternal trees:
The murmur of the soft spice-laden breeze
To make sweet music for our holy loves;
And the high Moon its tender beams to pour,
A gentle light, on us for ever more.

Arthur Nicholas
(1875-1934)

THE GIFT

Lord, let Thy Gift not die!
Where'er Thy Hand Thy Servant's path may lead --
On breezy upland, opulent and high,
Within the vale, or in the lowly mead;
Oh! never may these living eyes behold
The grave wherein Thy Gift lies dead and cold.

Brief is the life of earth,
And faintly gleams the golden hope afar
Of that blest after-life, that second birth,
And that fair land beyond the farthest star --
Yet, with Thy Gift, amid the toil and strife,
There comes sweet foretaste of that other life.

And to the Poet's heart
Each season brings its offering of joy;
The tender travail of a soul, apart
From all the cares that earth-born peace destroy:
That soul dwells in a country all its own --
To earth-bound sight and hearing all unknown.

Oh! may I never miss
The sweet communings at the mid-night hour
With unseen hosts, or lose th' ecstatic bliss
Of angel-voices, heard when storm-clouds lower,
To which I listen at the window-pane,
Amid the soughing of the falling rain.

I hear deep organ-notes
Ring through the diapason of the storm;
And many a high celestial sonnet floats
Upon my ear as tempest-breezes form.
And more-than-mortal music fills my soul,
As o'er the rugged beach the billows roll.

'Reft of Thy Gift, I were
A wild-bird straying from the woodland choirs,
Amidst the city's dust, and din and glare,
Its brick, and stone and mass of tangled wires --
Until, with fluttering wing and glazing eye,
It falls upon the stony street to die.

Still let Thy Gift be mine,
The solace of the days that yet remain,
Pain to assuage and pleasure to refine,
Though bringing nought of earthly fame or gain;
Till, in the Great Beyond, my eyes I lift,
To see the Glorious Donor of the Gift.

WHEN NATURE CALLS

(A Rondeau of the Early Morning)

"Tropica"

When Nature calls, at dawn of some bright day,
And gives the invitation -- "Come and play!"
With sweet imperious cadence, felt and heard
In cool blue skies, wet grass, and fresh-voiced bird,
We leave all else her summons to obey!

For as of old the Piper's witching lay
Charmed every child from Hamelin town away,
So Nature's children heed the first soft word
When Nature calls.

Green woods cry "Come!" and distant sea-notes say:
"The waves are warm, the white ships dance and sway!"
By some vague longing is the spirit stirred;
The room grows close, the book's dull page is blurred;
All out-door beckons, and we cannot stay --
When Nature Calls.

CLARA MAUDE GARRETT
(1880-1958)

DEDICATION

To My Island, Jamaica

By the flowers that unfold
Far from human touch or hold,
Wine that never mortal knows
Wreathing into red or rose,
Lilies where no vulgar gaze
Breaks the perfume of their praise;
Little Island of my birth,
Here upon your Shrine I heap
All the petals that I keep
Woven of your dreamful earth.

By your due-veiled vestal hills
Where a mystic Presence thrills,
Where no footfall ever goes
To disturb the dreaming rose,
And no song is ever heard
Save the chant of hidden bird*
Little Island of my heart,
Here I consecrate anew
All my being unto you,
Born of you, of you a part.

By your woods untrod by man
That primordial ages span,
By your secret springs that rise
Innocent of mortal eyes,
Where unharmed the mullet runs*
Silver 'neath the golden suns;
Island of the deathless days,
To your altars now I bring
All my spirit's offering
Spices, attars, from your ways.

By your Arawaks who found
Xemes† in each tree, each sound;
All your ancient sons who heard
God in every singing bird;
By the flaming sword of Spain
Scourging but to pass again;
Island of the mystic past,
I too felt the frou of wings
From your far-off, scarce-sensed things,
You my first love and my last.

Not your loveliness that's known
But the god behind the stone:
Not the treasure that we hold
But the gleam beyond the gold,
Beauty that unseen we see
Shining through futurity;
Island, mother of my soul,
I but give you back your own,
I your flesh, and I your bone -
Re-absorb and make me whole.

Hidden bird: the solitaire of the high mountains.

Mullet runs: the mountain mullet is found in many streams in Jamaica. "Runs" is used in British North America for fish hurrying through water.

Xemes: semi-divinities like the Greek nymphs, etc., to whom the Arawaks prayed rather than to their Chief God.

Clara Maude Garrett
(1880-1958)

NEW BORN

When I would shrive my soul of sins
I seek no mortal priest;
But where the day in dawn begins
I climb from out the beast.

As lifts the dawn so lifts my thought
To colour with the sky;
Till where the rose of day is wrought
Fades out my tainted I.

There, in that glorious burst of sun
Upon the night-washed world,
My infant soul is newly spun
From virgin air impearled.

I am the blosson freshly blown;
I am the half-furled leaf;
I am the spear of grass that's grown
From out the withered sheaf.

And with the bird I take the air
All earth, all heaven, is mine:
My soul is but a shining prayer
Fresh from the press divine.

Constance Hollar
(1880-1945)

FLAMING JUNE

June has come to Kingston,
Flaming June!
And the hot, white noon
Has become a scarlet poppy;
While the night, a silver moth,
Sleeps beneath the moon
Of Flaming June.
June has come to Kingston
In a sun-red car,
Scatt'ring petals far;
Every street a carnival,
Every day a Festival
In Flaming June.
Like a red Venetian glass
Twined with gold: like a gipsy lass
I have seen her pass.
On the trees she swings
And her mantle flings
On the cloud-birds' wings.
You can see its rich folds clear,
On land and sky and air.
While a flaming prayer,
Like a banner bright unfurled
From the red heart of the world,
Throbs amidst the glare
While her tapers flare,
On the Earth's broad altar old,
With its frontal red and gold.

She has tied the blue-bells of the sea
With silver ribbons: and each tree
Draped with Gobelin tapestry,
In the grass her carpet she has laid
Of amber velvet shot with jade;
All the swift-winged winds have flown
As her heralds - and their trumpets blown
In merry tune
For Flaming June!
'Tis a royal progress day by day:
Like a Queen she passes on her way;
Like a Persian bride's her bright array;
And her steeds in rainbow housings gay,
Prance and curvet to the magic tune
Of Flaming June.

All her red wine overflows the brim
Of her jasper bowl. Its rim
Beset with golden butterflies
Who sip its honeyed sweetness,
And with langourous fleetness
Through the scented gardens skim,
To tell the insect choir
Who in places dim
Hide from Day's insistent fire,
To tune its many stringed lyre
To hymn the song of June,
Flaming June!
Underneath the moon
She has made her bed
In a pool of stars!
While Red Mars
Flames o'erhead
And soft breezes croon
To June -
Flaming June.

Constance [illegible]
(188[illegible])

THE CUP OF LIFE

1 I shall drink deep of the Morning -
My cup all blue
And pearl-enwrought;
The water from a rock-hewn grot -
Its springs high in some Morning-land,
A strand
Untouched by sun's caress,
The water rich with tenderness,
So cold and crystal clear;
No wine was ever quite so rare;
An azure cup to pledge the day
I'll drink - then take the open way.

13 I shall drink deep of the Noon-tide; -
My cup all red
And coral bright
Shall glisten in the strong white blaze
Of Noon's effulgent rays:-
My heart, a flame of lustre high
Shall leap beneath the blazon'd sky;
A royal draught,
Press'd from the red grapes of rich life,
I'll drink,
Amidst the din and strife,
Where trumpets rend the startled air
And banners blush; and, still more fair,
Dream faces half-divine
In sudden beauty shine:-
With hand within
The bridle, I shall drink full deep,
18 Then in the saddle leap.

19 I shall drink deep of the Evening -
My cup soft gray
And rose entwined,
With silver memories lined:
The water from some deep, cool stream
Of fair forgetfulness
Shall be a soft caress,
A grateful boon for parched lip;
Deep in the full-brimmed stream
I'll dip
My cup with ease
And drink to star-eyed Peace.

31 I shall drink deep of the Night;
No cup
But flagon bright,
And golden as a dream
That fades with Morning's beam,
Shall hold this draught.
Fair set, it gleams with many a gem
That formed in day a diadem
To tempt my eager feet.
But now they rest upon the flagon's brim,
And strong desire grows weak and dim.
A draught for sleep,
Fair, soft and very deep:-
I'll drink a stirrup-cup to tender night;
For in the East -
There cometh Light.

Constance Hollar
(1880-1945)

YELLOW

I will sing a song of yellow on this yellow day
All the loveliness of yellow passes in a swift array:
Yellow of bright buttercups in Kingston's dazzling fields --
Yellow of chrysanthemums that Autumn lavish yields,
Sun-flowers and primroses sparkling in the sun --
The sheen of children's hair like sunbeams golden spun.
I can sing of yellow - almost endless - the refrain
But best of all are alamandas dripping in the rain.

I will sing of butter in the dairy clean and cool --
I will sing of gold-fish in the crystal pool --
Or of amber in a necklace carved, of beauty rare
Or topaz shining, with a light, deep, soft and clear.
Of honey in a jar that lets the daylight through,
Of oranges and limes and brilliant mangoes too.
There seems no end to all the rapturous yellow train
But best of all are alamandas dripping in the rain.

Sulphur and saffron light the drug-store that I pass.
Canaries flit and sing -- this gold-finch gleams like glass
The pumpkin is so rich and luscious in a pie;
The paw-paws, with their black seeds, with golden apples vie --
Siena Marble is a golden glory I dare not compare
With any other yellow -- I but name it here.
Yellows flame on yellows -- Cockatoo and crane --
But best of all are alamandas dripping in the rain

I can sing of fairy cassia and cosmos in a ring,
Of "Little Pages" in the sand -- of cowslips in the Spring --
Of cheese and cream and shining yellow corn --
Of ficus blossoms -- sweet potatoes -- sunshine in the morn.
The yellow jewel of the egg set in its crystal band
And all the yellow beauty of English sea-shore sand.
Bring all your yellow glories; not one will I disdain
But best of all are alamandas dripping in the rain.

Yellow Poincianas light this dew-wet glade
Holding yellow black-eyed Susans in their shade.
Like candy is this vase of deep Venetial gold,
And yellow gleams this feather-robe of chieftains old.
I dream of yellow yacca, ivories and shells
Of Temple music and of mellow wedding bells.
I know not what is loss or what men count as gain
But best of all are alamandas dripping in the rain.

For alamanda gathers up the yellow of each living thing
And stores it in its golden cups for glad remembering.
It is no hoarding miser -- it spills it far and wide --
It pours it on the garden and on the bleak hill-side.
So deeply yellow are the flowers, their chalices held up
I often wonder that the rain does not drip yellow from each cup.
Yellow is a golden bounty, vast I know -- but still maintain
All yellows live in alamandas dripping in the rain.

Reginald M. Murray.
(1883 -)

THE SONG OF A BLUE MOUNTAIN STREAM

In a cleft remote
Where white mists float
Around Blue Mountain's Peak,
I rise unseen
Beneath the screen
Of fog-clouds dank and bleak;
I trickle, I flow
To the hills below
And vales that lie far under,
From babblings low
I louder grow,
I shout, I roar, I thunder.

I fall with a rush
In the morning hush
While the mountain sleeping lies,
There swift I sweep -
Here slow I creep,
Till the sound of my motion dies:
Oh! I rejoice
In the night-wind's voice
As soft it kisses my stream,
And dance and glimmer
And glance and shimmer
Where moonlit reaches gleam.

With ice-cold wave
I gently lave
The flowers as I wander,
I gloom and glide
'Neath Mountain Pride,
I murmur and meander
Thro' fern-arched dells
Where fairy-bells
And violets scent the air,
While calls above
The soft blue dove
Or lone-voiced Solitaire.

And here I crash
With silver flash
Over a mighty crag,
And the echoes sing
As I headlong fling
The trees I downward drag -
Till last I pour
With deafening roar,
A mountain stream no longer,
O'er plains below,
And seawards flow
A river broad and stronger.

Reginald M. Murray
(1883 -)

THE ROAD

The moon sails o'er Long Mountain, and lights a sand-strip lone,
Where surf swims, silver shimmering, and shoreward breakers drone:
Along the forlorn stretches the night winds sweep and moan:
A shadow moves, slow creeping, athwart the whiteness thrown:
It speeds, it stops, and peers: a lance uplifts and stabs:
An Indian, silent, naked, hunting and spearing crabs.

A brigantine rides dipping, beneath the tropic moon,
With Spanish loot full laden, mantilla and doubloon,
For Morgan makes Port Royal, and bottles clink and clash,
And sailormen are cheering to see the shore-lights flash,
Carina, dark eyes glittering, bedecked with jingling rings,
Flutters to greet a gallant lad who many a moidore brings.

The self-same moon is lamping that gleaming arm to-night
Fanned by Caribbean breezes and curved for heart's delight,
But with the salt wind's sighing the sounds of laughter come
From dance-hall and from night-club, and motors throb and hum.
For man has built a roadway, a thoroughfare, you know,
Where Indian chevied scuttling crab a mort of years ago.

000 ooo 000

Walter Adolphe Roberts.
(1886 -)

PEACOCKS

They came from Persia to the Sacred Way
And rode in Pompey's triumph, side by side
With odalisques and idols, plumes flung wide,
A flame of gems in the chill Roman day.
They that were brought as captives came to say
To flaunt in beauty, mystery and pride,
To preen before the emperors deified,
Symbols of their magnificent decay.

Then there was madness and a scourge of swords;
Imperial purple mouldered into dust.
But the immortal peacocks stung new lords
To furies of insatiable lust.
Contemptuous, they loitered on parade -
Live opals, rubies, sardonyx and jade.

W. Adolphe Roberts
(1886 -)

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
(1886 -)

MORGAN

"NAME of Harry Morgan," said the bold Welsh freenan,
Signing at Tortuga with a cutthroat crew,
Done with plantation toil, wild to be a seaman
And carve his way to glory a'sailing of the blue.

Young Captain Morgan, swaggering at Port Royal.
Pricing of his cargo on the Halfmoon Beach,
Roaring for a keg of rum, to share it with the loyal
And drink damnation to the rogues beyond his reach.

Henry Morgan, high admiral of the buccaneers,
Ravishing with fury the island and the Main;
Conqueror of Panama, home to a storm of cheers,
His fists full of emeralds, and beauties in his train.

Gorgeous Sir Henry! Egad, it is the same man!
Governor of Jamaica in a broidered coat,
Swearing loud and hearty to show he's not a tame man,
And pouring kill-devil down his thirsty throat.

W. Adolphe Roberts
(1886 -)

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
(1886-)

NEW YORK

She the young despot, the prodigious jade,
Has she not builded her a proper throne!
In miracles of steel and glass and stone,
It looms above the world. The thunder made
By wings and engines is her accolade.
They that have wooed her overlong have grown
Wroth at her adamantine flesh and bone.
She knows her beauty and she flaunts unswayed.

Though they should die with mockery on their lips,
Saying it is not true that they adored
Her city of the towers and the ships
Or sought to revel in her golden hoard,
She is the one inexorable lust
Her worshippers take with them to the dust.

W. Adolphe Roberts
(1886 -)

VIEUX CARRE *

This city is the child of France and Spain,
That once lived nobly, ardent as the heat
in which it came to birth. Alas, how fleet
The years of love and arms! There now remain,
Bleached by the sun and mouldered by the rain,
Impassive fronts that guard some rare retreat,
Some dim, arched salon, or some patio sweet
Where dreams persist and the past lives again.

The braided iron of the balconies
Is like locked hands fastidiously set
To bar the world. But the proud mysteries
Showed me a glamour I could not forget:
Your face, camellia-white upon the stair,
Framed in the midnight thicket of your hair.

* In New Orleans

W. Adolphe Roberts
(1886 -)

LA GLOIRE
(1914)

That spring we lived in Paris and adored
  Beauty and love as one. A magic room
    With windows on the Seine. A magic loom
Of poetry to spin the dreams we stored
Forever in our hearts, a precious hoard.
  Little we cared when chestnuts were abloom
    That on the right hand soared Napoleon's tomb,
And on the left the Arc de Triomphe soared.

But we knew Paris deeper on the day
    When the old challenge touched the far frontiers
As summer died. Along the Élysees
    Ghosts of the armies marching down the years
And muted in the blue autumnal haze
A golden rumour of the Marseillaise.

W. Adolphe Roberts
(1886 -)

VILLANELLE OF THE SAD POET

He who has held so many springs in fief
Is lonely under this November sky.
Autumn has crept upon him like a thief

He mourns the flower falling, and the leaf,
And all old pomps that march away to die!
He who has held so many springs in fief.

He grieves the clover withered, and the sheaf,
The rusted vineyards and the streams run dry.
Autumn has crept upon him like a thief.

He had forgotten spring could be so brief
And dusk so sad when early snows drift by
He who has held so many springs in fief.

He is a valiant and defeated chief
Whose band went southward as the swallows fly.
Autumn has crept upon him like a thief.

Poets and maids, remember in his grief
Your brother Pan, whose world is all awry.
He who has held so many springs in fief
Autumn has crept upon him like a thief.

W. Adolphe Roberts
(1886 -)

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 cicadas make
    Comes to him faintly, like forgotten lore,
Ah, flute to him, Beloved, he will wake.

Let not the enemies of Beauty take
    Unction 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 Belowed, he will wake.

Claude McKay
(1890-1948)

I SHALL RETURN

I shall return again; I shall return
To laugh and love and watch with wonder-eyes
At golden noon the forest fires burn,
Wafting their blue-black smoke to sapphire skies.
I shall return to loiter by the streams
That bathe the brown blades of the bending grasses,
And realize once more my thousand dreams
Of water rushing down the mountain passes.
I shall return to hear the fiddle and fife
Of village dances, dear delicious tunes,
That stir the hidden depths of native life,
Stray melodies of dim remembered ~~tunes~~. runes ?
I shall return, I shall return again,
To ease my mind of long, long years of pain.

Claude McKay
(1890-1948)

AMERICA

Although she feeds me bread of bitterness,
And sinks into my throat her tiger's tooth,
Stealing my breath of life, I will confess
I love this cultured hell that tests my youth!
Her vigour flows like tides into my blood,
Giving me strength erect against her hate.
Her bigness sweeps my being like a flood.
Yet as a rebel fronts a king in state,
I stand within her walls with not a shred
Of terror, malice, not a word of jeer.
Darkly I gaze into the days ahead,
And see her might and granite wonders there,
Beneath the touch of Time's unerring hand,
Like priceless treasures sinking in the sand.

Claude McKay
(1890-1948)

IF WE MUST DIE

If we must die, let it not be like hogs
Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot,
While round us bark the mad and hungry dogs,
Making their mock at our accursed lot.
If we must die, O let us nobly die,
So that our precious blood may not be shed
In vain; then even the monsters we defy
Shall be constrained to honour us though dead!
O kinsmen! we must meet the common foe!
Though far outnumbered let us show us brave
And for their thousand blows deal one death blow!
What though before us lies the open grave?
Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack,
Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!

Claude McKay
(1890-1948)

ST. ISAAC'S CHURCH, PETROGRAD (pub. in Hughes Anthol, P. 334 as "Russian Cathedral"

Bow down my soul in worship very low
And in the holy silences be lost.
Bow down before the marble Man of Woe,
Bow down before the singing angel host.
What jewelled glory fills my spirit's eye,
What golden grandeur moves the depths of me!
The soaring arches lift me up on high,
Taking my breath with their rare symmetry.

Bow down my soul and let the wondrous light
Of beauty bathe thee from her lofty throne,
Bown down before the wonder of man's might.
Bow down in worship, humble and alone,
Bow lowly down before the sacred sight
Of man's Divinity alive in stone.

Claude McKay
(1890-1948)

THROUGH AGONY

All night, through the eternity of night,
Pain was my portion though I could not feel.
Deep in my humbled heart you ground your heel,
Till I was reft of even my inner light,
Till reason from my mind had taken flight,
And all my world went whirling in a reel.
And all my swarthy strength turned cold like steel,
A passive mass beneath your puny might.
Last night I gave you triumph over me,
So I should be myself as once before,
I marvelled at your shallow mystery,
And haunted hungrily your temple door.
I gave you sum and substance to be free,
Oh, you shall never triumph any more!

II.

I do not fear to face the fact and say,
How darkly-dull my living hours have grown,
My wounded heart sinks heavier than stone,
Because I loved you longer than a day!
I do not shame to turn myself away
From beckoning flowers beautifully blown,
To mourn your vivid memory alone
In mountain fastnesses austerely gray.
The mists will shroud me on the utter height,
The salty, brimming waters of my breast
Will mingle with the fresh dews of the night
To bathe my spirit hankering to rest.
But after sleep I'll wake with greater might,
Once more to venture on the eternal quest.

Claude McKay
(1890-1948)

THE HARLEM DANCER

Applauding youths laughed with your prostitutes
And watched her perfect, half-clothed body sway;
Her voice was like the sound of blended flutes
Blown by black players upon a picnic day.
She sang and danced on gracefully and calm,
The light gauze hanging loose about her form;
To me she seemed a proudly-swaying palm
Grown lovelier for passing through a storm.
Upon her swarthy neck black shiny curls
Luxuriant fell; and tossing coins in praise,
The wine-flushed, bold-eyed boys, and even the girls,
Devoured her shape with eager, passionate gaze;
But looking at her falsely-smiling face,
I knew her self was not in that strange place.

Claude McKay
(1890-1948)

BAPTISM

Into the furnace let me go alone;
Stay you without in terror of the heat.
I will go naked in - for thus 'tis sweet -
Into the weird depths of the hottest zone.
I will not quiver in the frailest bone,
You will not note a flicker of defeat;
My heart shall tremble not its fate to meet,
My mouth give utterance to any moan.
The yawning oven spits forth fiery spears;
Red aspish tongues shout wordlessly my name.
Desire destroys, consumes my mortal fears,
Transforming me into a shape of flame.
I will come out, back to your world of tears,
A stronger soul within a finer frame.

Claude McKay
(1890-1948)

FLAME-HEART

So much I have forgotten in ten years,
So much in ten brief years! I have forgot
What time the purple apples come to juice,
And what month brings the shy forget-me-not.
I have forgot the special, startling season
Of the pimento's flowering and fruiting;
What time of year the ground doves brown the fields
And fill the noonday with their curious fluting.
I have forgotten much, but still remember
The poinsettia's red, blood-red, in warm December.

I still recall the honey-fever grass,
But cannot recollect the high days when
We rooted them out of the ping-wing path
To stop the mad bees in the rabbit pen.
I often try to think in what sweet month
The languid painted ladies used to dapple
The yellow by-road mazing from the main,
Sweet with the golden threads of the rose-apple.
I have forgotten - strange - but quite remember
The poinsettia's red, blood-red, in warm December.

What weeks, what months, what time of the mild year
We cheated school to have our fling at tops?
What days our wine-thrilled bodies pulsed with joy
Feasting upon blackberries in the copse?
Oh some I know! I have embalmed the days,
Even the sacred moments when we played,
All innocent of passion, uncorrupt,
At noon and evening in the flame-heart's shade.
We were so happy, happy, I remember,
Beneath the poinsettia's red in warm December.

Claude McKay
(1890-1948)

OUTCAST

For the dim regions whence my fathers came
My spirit, bondaged by the body, longs.
Words felt, but never heard, my lips would frame;
My soul would sing forgotten jungle songs.
I would go back to darkness and to peace,
But the great western world holds me in fee,
And I may never hope for full release
While to its alien gods I bend my knee.
Something in me is lost, forever lost,
Some vital thing has gone out of my heart,
And I must walk the way of life a ghost
Among the sons of earth, a thing apart.
For I was born, far from my native clime,
Under the white man's menace, out of time.

Frank A. Collymore
(1893-)

BENEATH THE CASUARINAS

We walk slowly beneath the casuarinas.
Our feet make no sound on the thick pile spread
Beneath the trees' shade: all is silent:
We walk with muted footsteps and no word is said.
Overhead the casuarinas strain upwards to the sky,
Their dull green plumage vainly poised for flight;
Around us everything is strange and still
And all is filled with an unreal light:
We might be walking along the timeless floor
Of a sea where desolate tides forever creep
Or roaming along the secret paths
That wind among the twilight plains of sleep.
And then... what is that sound which falls
On the ear in the stillness? Is it the beat
Of the blood in the pulse, or the sigh
Of the casuarinas in the midday heat?
The sound of the sea in the curled shell pressed
To the eager ear.... hearts' lost content....
The empty mouthing of the long-forgotten dead...
The winds' secret.... the old lament
Of all creation..... silence made manifest
In sound? We shall never know
We pass from their shadow out into the sunlight,
And the silence echoes and re-echoes within us as we go.

Frank A. Collymore
(1893-)

RETURN

We too shall come down to the sea,
Past the gay green gardens of the heart's munificence,
Past the lichened pathway where the rust
Stains the stone and the forked tree stands desolate,
Down to the sands
Where the shattered bones of leviathan
Are strewn with coral splinters and the wrack of lands.

We shall come down to the sea again
Whence we once crawled landward
To rear our gardens and palaces and temples;
For always there has lingered, echoing the ancient memory
Within the bone,
Persistent, the song of the sea-shell:
And naught shall silence that insistent monotone.

We shall return. See,
On the bright sands her waves have strewn
Golden coronals to welcome us!
Crowned as kings we shall return --
We who have fled
From her dark embrace, back to our mother, the sea,
The crowding sea, vomiting her living and her dead.

Frank A. Collymore
(1893-

BY LAMPLIGHT

Remembering those evenings when for us
The echoing forests of Sibelius
Gleamed in the lamplight, remembering
Naught of their secret whispering,
Naught of their cold loneliness,
Only the warmth and friendliness
Of you sitting there beside me; recalling
Only the frozen echoes falling, falling
Upon the curtained shadows where the night
Had stolen the pattern from the bright
Lettering that flecked the long bookshelves --
I saw the ghosts of our forgotten selves
And know now why the shadow crept
Into your wandering eyes and why you wept.

Frank A. Collymore
(1893-)

PORTRAIT OF MR. X

I should like to paint you a portrait of Mr. X:
Not, you will understand me, such a portrait
As might be effected by camera or brush,
Pencil or pen. That has been done,
That has been accomplished. No,
I should like to present that which Mr. X is,
The Mr. X not seen by human or by camera eye:
Mr. X himself, X, as always, the unknown

And, first and foremost, his viscera would have to be presented:
All the tremendous implications
Of that unseen, improbable metropolis --
Its remarkable storehouses of energy,
Its sewerage system, its marvels of communication,
Its workers busy on repair, its slum areas,
Its arterial highways, its chemical laboratories,
Its alternating periods of inflations and depression,
Its longwave stations -- all these the background.

And sprawling haphazardly around
Would be the Mr. X you might have seen:
The appurtenance of flesh, the forked symbol.
The knobbly knees, the pale and flabby hands,
The sloping shoulders and the modest paunch,
The mild defective eye behind the lens,
The prim demeanour, the unassuming tie:
These the social pattern, like his underwear.

Yet all these not as colour; perceived rather
As texture and temperature. Colour I should keep
For other matters: for his motion through space and time,
The delicate blue theme of his breathing, his gamboge
Slumber; and to illustrate his dreams,
The golden mystery of hidden suns,
Each sun a wild and glittering stallion,
Tameless by night,
But gelded for diurnal thoroughfare.

And there should be dim green dells for memories
Of lost playthings, of magic swords and invisible cloaks;
And one would be able to lick the paint
And it would be chocolates in silver paper,
Redcoated wooden soldiers,
And moonstain through a broken pane of glass.

But from these dells strange flowers would thrust,
Strange hothouse flowers skewered on wire
By means of appropriate catchwords
(Sing yo-ho for the status quo)
And tinted with the sober shades of respectability
(And a yo-ho-ho for the libido)
And silver in the plate on Sundays,
And a flag --
A flag, his country 'tis of her, the irresponsible archangel.

/2...

And then superimposed upon these primaries
(A bit woolly around the edges
As most of these productions are)
His workaday reactions: shaving, etcetera,
The morning newspaper, two fried eggs
As befits the father of a family, boy and girl,
And schoolfees for the children;
Accountant or what not with a dash of bitters,
And a refrigerator, and people dropping in of an evening,
And a radio and gossip and a ghost
Of something, somewhere, refusing to be laid
(O wind, O sea, O stars), rising sometimes
At inopportune moments from the next twinbed,
And prime beef and indigestion on Sabbath afternoons --
The indignity of idleness.

Perhaps
These would be done in mauve and pinkish greys
With here and there a touch of sepia . . .
A tinge a twinge a fringe to round off the portrait:
Securities for security, and a life insurance
For death's assurance,

Also, pale and thin,
A halo, slightly phosphorescent, like the leavings
Of a sunset, a halo of self-sacrifice; and a cross,
The wooden whisper of a tree that never bloomed.
For Mr. X's portrait is not to be sketched in merely,
Nor is this adumbration an afterthought;
He must be presented in every possible dimension,
Capable of infinite extension. But until
Such a portrait can be effected,
Caught within some bottleneck of x,
His individual talents wither, fade,
And float unharvested upon the swift and sterile air.

Frank A. Collymore
(1893-

SO THIS IS LOVE

Yes, the Little Fellow used us remarkably well:
Brought us together most aptly,
And a certain fortuity in the occurrence
Achieved a remarkable completeness
Which the romantic approach
Might well have failed to accomplish.

The spell woven, the charm proceeded
To work in the approved manner,
And soon the emotional reaction
Quite outstripped the senses' entertainment.
Indeed there was a singular intensity
About the entire incident which may perhaps
Account for its peculiar perfection
(For you will admit, I have no doubt,
That the affair was of comparatively brief duration).

And so, instruments of the inscrutable,
We performed the duet in harmony --
The old, old theme, but how unwearying the melody,
Capable of what infinite variation,
Presaging what transcendental revelation!

We performed the duet, I say, with distinction,
And have now returned to our respective Lares and Penates:
You to the wonted domesticities of your station,
And I to forgetting.

A. H. Clarke

THE RICE PLANTERS

The mermaids rose from out the water into the glare
Shaking their hair
From drops of brown muddy water
Hovering there:
Their long-legged wooers flashing short curved arcs
Of steel, erase the smiling pastel green
That roof the flooded parks,
Unfeathered pelicans
Wading on human feet, of unknown hue
You semaphore
No strange tongue
Save that which Pharoah knew
Who built the sphinx.

W. Therold Barnes

SONG OF THE PEDLAR

"Needles and pins, virtues and sins
Raging and ranting, psalm-singing and chanting,
Rich man and poor man and beggar and robber,
Devils and fire, and saints and cold water,
His own mother's son and her own father's daughter.
And who is to catalogue virtues and sins,
Marking where lust leaves off, where love begins?
Crimes that are great, good deeds that are piddling,
Soul-searing hate and love fair to middling,
Old sinners turned saints and young saints a-sinning,
When half of the losing comes back with the winning,
Life is confusing, alas and alack!
Nothing is white and nothing is black.
Does day end with night? Is night day's beginning?
Debit is credit and losing is winning,
One and one's two, and one and one's seven,
And one and one's hell, and one and one's heaven...."

So sang the pedlar plying his trade,
Selling the things that his old hands had made.
He was old, he was daft; but I paused as I laughed
Briefly to wonder: What would he have sung
Had he been younger, had he been young?

Agnes Maxwell-Hall
(1894-

JAMAICA MARKET

Honey, pepper, leaf-green limes,
Pagen fruit whose names are rhymes,
Mangoes, breadfruit, ginger-roots,
Granadillas, bamboo-shoots,
Cho-cho, ackees, tangerines,
Lemons, purple Congo-beans,
Sugar, okras, kola-nuts,
Citrons, hairy coconuts,
Fish, tobacco, native hats,
Gold bananas, woven mats,
Plantains, wild-thyme, pallid leeks,
Pigeons with their scarlet beaks,
Oranges and saffron yams
Baskets, ruby guava jams,
Turtles, goat-skins, cinnamon,
Allspice, conch-shells, golden rum.
Black skins, babel - and the sun
That burns all colours into one.

J. E. Clare McFarlane
(1894-

VILLANELLE OF IMMORTAL LOVE

Love will awaken all lovely things at last.
One by one they shall come from the sleep of Time,
Bearing in triumph the deathless dreams of the past.

Hard on their fair designs came the wreck of the blast;
Where they lie scattered in every land and clime,
Love will awaken all lovely things at last.

Gathered from out the ages, a concourse vast,
These shall return once more with arms sublime,
Bearing in triumph the deathless dreams of the past.

Lo, in what manifold moulds is their beauty cast!
Ah, with what colours bedecked in the new Springtime,
Love will awaken all lovely things at last!

Now shall the Earth emerge from its wintry fast,
And music flow again in powerful rhyme,
Bearing in triumph the deathless dreams of the past.

For out of the welter and dust of the holocaust
Rises the promised glory of our prime:
Love will awaken all lovely things at last,
Bearing in triumph the deathless dreams of the past.

J. E. Clare McFarlane
(1894-

REMEMBER NOW:

Dear Friend, if Memory serves thee now,
Aught of the glorious years remain,
The gladness they have known take thou;
Leave me the pain.

So many things we did together,
So many paths our feet have known! -
But now, in fine or stormy weather,
We go alone.

And I have winced at those reminders
That crowd our late abandoned ways:-
The eager, resolute pathfinders
Of yesterdays! -

Green banks where yellow blossoms cluster,
The wooden seat beneath the vine
Where oft we watched the heavens muster
And fall in line;

The rocks that guard the ancient scene,
The old stile and the sea's low wailing,
Whence little love-barques that have been
Went forth a-sailing --

The moon o'er distant waters rising,
The sun making his parting bow
'Midst splendours beyond Man's devising --
Remember now!

These know not any yesterdays;
Nor will they share the thoughts I borrow
To win my fond heart from its gaze
Beyond tomorrow.

For these the eternal dream will last; -
The floundered, riven barque, for me,
'Twixt endless future, endless past,
Divides the sea.

But the mad world will never know
That here was precious cargo lost;
Some legend from this grief will grow
And reach the coast --

A bantering jest, a false surmise,
Of wanton humours, lightly gone:-
They looked into each others eyes
And, then, passed on!

PORT ROYAL

J. E. Clare McFarlane
(1894 -

A Reverie

Now gleams the golden half-moon overhead;
Beneath, the vaguely mirroring sea; the lap
Of welted waves; Port Royal's steel-grey blade
In threat'ning admonition guards the gap;
Far to the westward glow the sunset skies -
The rosy memory of Love's latest kiss,
Framing the jewelled tears of broken bliss
That whelming start to Iokaste's eyes.

Twilight forever lives, forever dies;
The generations pass, Youth runs its race,
And Age comes tottering back with bootless sighs,
Or cynical contempt; - but in thy face
No wrinkles tell of baffled wanderings
Among the shattered fragments of a dream;
Ere sorrow claims thee passes forth thy gleam
To shadowy depths and countless whisperings.

And not unlike thee in its hectic bloom
This buried city that my fancy rears
With mighty levers from its watery tomb -
The vanished loves and griefs of other years;
The Darling of the Nations, whose caress
Men fought and bled and died for; to whose smile
The crimson'd pirate gave his blood-built pile,
Swept from the ocean's farthest wilderness.

And in this gilded anteroom of life,
Brilliant alike with glory and with shame,
The warrior sought distraction from the strife,
The coutier jested and the heart-sore came
To hide within the shadow of her flame
A cankered bloom, a fragrance passed away,
Or in the golden casket of decay
To store the rotting remnants of a name.

But in the glow, the pulsing warmth of youth,
Amidst the splendour of desire-fill'd eyes,
The joyous gurgling of her wine-moist mouth,
The blush, the glimmering lure of Paradise,
A hideous night engulfed her in its womb,
A swift and double darkness o'er her fell;
And from the very gates of Heaven to Hell
She pass'd, a meteor-flash within the gloom.

Unlike to thee, she cometh nevermore;
No second youth is hers, no footsteps fall
About her echoing courts, or sanded shore,
Where once the evening sunlight played, and all
Her ravishing embraces paid in kind.
The wind sweeps whispering southward to the sea,
Warm with the love of mountain, vale and lea;
The waters stir - but leave no trace behind!

And now thy casement darkens in the skies;
Pale Niobe thy flaming love must fold
Within her dusky skirts; the splendour flies
The ashen fingers of the night - behold
Thou, too, must die, fair offspring of an hour!
So Time's enclouded glories fade and die
On the deep bosom of Eternity:
A presence, brief- a memory evermore.

QUIA MULTUM AMAVIT
(From The Magdalen)

J. E. Clare Magdalen
(189[illegible] -

Scarce knowing what she did, like the blind worm
Hollowing a path through earth's resisting crust,
She bored into the mass; her glorious hair
She parted from behind and joined again
Beneath her throat and twisted down her bosom;
Else it were but a hindrance to her fate.
Of all that throng she only had an aim
Defined, and knew her goal to be beside him;
Yet not without much struggle of her will
At last prevail; not without tears and prayer
And loud appeals for mercy and help from those,
Indifferent to his fate, who blocked her way.

She stood at length where Pilate's judgment hall
Reared its forbidding front and saw him led
With military escort down the stairs.
Out of the throng she broke and with a cry
Fell at his feet. "My Lord! My Love!" she wailed.
And the rough soldiers found no easy task
Loosening her grappling fingers. He stooped down
And touched her hair. "Mary," he said, "arise,
Be of good cheer for I have overcome;
'Tis but a little while and I shall see you."
And the rough soldiers marvelled at what he said.

Silence as sudden as the waters knew
When on Gennasaret he commanded peace
Fell on the multitude at sight of this:
The Man condemned; the ransomed Woman's love;
There, in that space, for all the world to see,
Acknowledged; for not all Hell's spite prevailed
To smother in deluded hearts the spark
That owned it kindred to that sacred Flame.

J. E. Clare McFarlane
(1894-

EXTRACT FROM DAPHNE

Unto this spot of Earth once more he came:
A vale deep set between opposing peaks,
But high above the straggling haunts of men;
Fair Nature's bowl wherein the rain and dew
Gather'd in crystal pools and singing streams;
And mists spun out fantastic dreams between
Sunshine and shadow; where sweet peace abode
Like infant slumber; and e'en Nature's wrath,
As now it shook the valleys and hills
With thunder and the levell'd cedar's might,
Possess'd a central calm. Somewhat of this
Had pass'd into the making of the man
Who stood within the door-way of the hut
That served for shelter, with dark eyes intent
Upon the scene below; and in his mind
A grander; which he knew now lay beyond
Rain-curtain'd hills; for on the distant plain,
Even unto th' horizon's edge where sea,
Headland and cloud merged and were lost within
One wild embrace, majestically robed,
The storm's proud pageantry in order moved
Across the world; a spare but sinewy frame
The lightning's glow discover'd with a scar
Deep furrow'd on a cheek of bronze; one hand
Clasp'd the rude door-post while the other strok'd
His chin in meditative thought; the scene
Not strangely to his senses spoke; in days
Long past each object that the eye beheld,
Far off or near, was a familiar friend
A guide to joys and intimacies sweet
That like the fragrance of un-number'd Springs
Haunted the shaded walks of memory.
Now as occasion offer'd he repair'd
To this lone spot, this cabin by his hand
Uprear'd; a lowly outward monument
To sacred things enshrined within the soul,
And guarded jealously from prying eyes
And kindly, prattling tongues; a lov'd retreat
From the world's importunities, the world's
Repulses; where the bruis'd and broken spirit
Might find a balm in hallow'd memories,
And win new inspiration from the face
That changed not through the changing chance of years.
Between these two, the human soul, the place,
There grew a likeness: so the man perceiv'd
In the grim visage of the storm, the grey,
Bleak heights above him, the stern rocks that frown'd
In silence, in the music of the wind,
The tumult of the waters, what to him
Were echoes of the life that surg'd within,
And kindred harmonies, and rival heights
Of toil and sacrifice; and there had pass'd
Into this place that held his dearest dreams
A human heart, it seem'd, that felt and knew;
A mind that recollected.

ON NATIONAL VANITY

J. E. Clare McFarlane
(1894 -

Slowly we learn; the oft repeated line
Lingers a little moment and is gone;
Nation on nation follows, sun on sun.
With empire's dust fate builds her great design,
But we are blind and see not; in our pride
We strain toward the petrifying mound
To sit above our fellows, and we ride
The slow and luckless toiler to the ground.
Fools are we for our pains; whom we despise,
Last come, shall mount our withered vanities,
Topmost to sit upon the vast decay
Of time and temporal things -- for, last or first,
The proud array of pictured bubbles burst,
Mirages of their glory pass away.

J. E. Clare McFarlane
(1894-

AWAY TO THE WOODLANDS

(from Daphne)

Away to the woodlands, away! Come away!
For the banners of night are furled;
And the feet of youth seek no trampled way
When dawn commands the world.

O haste! for the magic hour will last
But the space that a bird may trill;
For life is astir at the trumpet's blast
And beauty's awake on the hill.

Away to the woodlands, away! Come away!
Where the cataracts plunge and roar,
Gay butterflies dance in the cloudy spray,
And little winds play on the shore.

Oh haste! for the magic hour will last
But the space of their foam and frill;
For life is astir at the trumpet's blast,
And beauty's awake on the hill.

Away to the woodlands, away! Come away!
The dawn is far afield;
And the conqueror's crown is his today
To whom her secrets yield.

Oh haste! for the magic hour will last
But the space that a dream may fill;
For life is astir at the trumpet's blast,
And beauty's awake on the hill.

J. E. Clare McFarlane
(1894-

VILLANELLE OF CEASING SHADOWS

The shadows cease, and this is left to me:
The laughter of the little waves that break,
The murmur of the wind upon the sea.

Once sailed I where the boisterous winds blew free;
Now in that haven which the mind can make
The shadows cease, and this is left to me.

Not Sappho's art can make such melody -
Or Swinburne's magic lyre such rapture wake -
The murmur of the wind upon the sea.

Here, from the press of tyrant passions free,
I reach the citadel no storms can shake;
The shadows cease, and this is left to me.

Yet scorn I not the fires of memory,
Whose wistful shadows for companion take
The murmur of the wind upon the sea.

In the warm glow I turn my files to see
How much had love surrendered for love's sake.
The shadows cease and this left to me:
The murmur of the wind upon the sea.

HOW SHALL I SIT IN DREAMY INDOLENCE. Harold Watson (1896 -

How shall I sit in dreamy indolence,
When circles sure the seasons' sad completion,
Nor pluck one fruit from out the gold repletion
Of Autumn's ripe abundance? To the sense,
A thousand flowers in wayward wild profusion
Burden the trembling air with perfumed breath;
Yet here I linger till the blast of death
Shall spoil the prospect with its dissolution.

Waneth the day -- the west is slowly dying
In solemn twilight silence. Ere the night
Consumeth all, I know I am commanded
To garner, yet with unavailing sighing
I squander th' irrevocable light --
And tarry sad of heart -- and empty handed.

FROM OUT THE LONELINESS....

Harold Watson
(1896 -

From out the lowliness in which I creep,
From out the weakness of my strong right hand,
From out the fruitlessness of bearing land,
From out the wakefulness in which I sleep,
From out the empty joys in which I weep,
From out the knowledge I misunderstand,
From out the sting of my own reprimand,
From out the shallowness of being-deep;

I know some day that rising I shall see
Transfiguration of this entity;
Behold this heart, unconquerably free,
In new-born beauty blaze immutably.
Feel courage surge across the soul's vast span,
And dare the fight -- a recreated man.

W. O. Mc Donald
(1896 -

LET US BEWARE LEST WE TOO FIRMLY HOLD

Let us beware lest we too firmly hold
That only he is poet who can set
Fragments of beauty in the writer's mould.
All life yields poetry; and some who let
The gems of their conceptual worlds go by
Moving no pen to bind them to a page,
Are like bird lovers who let their plumed friends fly,
Too free themselves to countenance a cage;
Are divers who with deep fathomed beauty bound
Froget the pearls they sought. Painters are they
Whose palettes lie bathed in evening dew, so gowned
In beauty is the entrancing end of day.
Their very wealth in what rich life affords
Precludes these poets bequeathing woven words.

Ah, Beloved! Are you dreaming
Of those pathways steep and fair?
My beloved, are you dreaming
Of those heights where stars are gleaming?
Are they lost to memory's seeming?
Do you miss them? Do you care?
Oh! Beloved, are you dreaming
Of our mountains tried and dear?

When at last Death's Angel calleth
And we answer -- rise to go,
When at last Death's Angel calleth,
When the Star of Life down falleth,
And the vision that enthralleth
Will be ours at last to know,
When at last Death's Angel calleth
We shall see the long ago!

For all life's delightsome gladness,
All the ripple of its rills,
All life's joy and gleam and gladness,
All its oft-recurring sadness,
All youth's brief springtime of madness
Cling around those ancient hills;
All the pain, the loss, the gladness
That our cup of life o'erfills.

Mountain passes, may God bless you,
Keep you ever proud and free!
Belov'd pathways may God bless you!
Misty wreaths of love caress you,
Never man's rude force distress you,
From your crowns remove one tree;
Mountain passes, may God bless you
For your gifts to mine and me!

Barbara Stephanie Ormsby
(1899-

A CERTAIN BEGGAR, NAMED LAZARUS

Lazarus lies at Dives' gate,
Content with crumbs from Dives' plate
His servitors are sisters twain -
Sweet Poverty, and the Sibyl, Pain.

Lazarus lies at Dives' gate,
For him the skies unfold their state,
And irridescent hours run
The golden gamut of the sun.

Folding great wings, Time sits with him
Until the laggard day grows dim,
Through wakeful glooms the spheres unite
In starry song for his delight.

Hidden redes of the dusty grass
He learns, and marks the wise ants pass;
Or, in a brief, Spring-chanced hour,
Frequents the shrine of a wayside flower.

Trees are his tutors, nodding high
In tranquil talk against the sky;
The rain is his interpreter
Of doubts that wake, of dreams that stir.

Gossip of winds that rove the earth
And town-bred birds, is his for mirth;
And ancient wisdom, strong, profound,
He gleans from cobble-stones around.

His the answering love that lies
Within a dog's adoring eyes;
The sympathising tenderness
That wells within a mute caress.

God's almoner he of treasure rare
To each street-urchin paused to stare;
When crude young laughter yields its place
Before Compassion's holy grace.

Lazarus lying in Abraham's breast
Hath won of either world the best,
And proved the promise sent from Heaven -
"To him that hath shall more be given".

TO THE UNBORN LEADER

H. L. VAUGHAN
(1901 -

You who may come a hundred years
After our troubled bones are dust,
Farseeing statesman, born to lead,
And worthiest of the people's trust,

Turn these few pages in that hour
When by dark doubts you are assailed
Of what it boots to shape their power --
Read what we won and where we failed;

And barb the word with wisdom fit,
And build, O build, where we but dream:
Expose, undo, repair, extend,
As you, O master, best may deem.
But whatsoe'er of ours you keep,
Whatever fades or disappears,
Above all else we send you this --
The flaming faith of these first years.

DARK VOICES

H. A. Vaughan

(1901 -

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.

IN ABSENCE

H. A. Vaughan

(1901 -

What golden years were visioned for her sake
She must not know, nor what delights were planned;
She must not know what joys have fled the land
To mark her absence, nor what longing make
This dull month still more leaden, nor what ache
Now burdens siging. Silence must withstand
Her cold forgetfulness, and Love's own hand
Must write this vow although his proud heart break.
And so no wail, no tears, no wish, no sigh
Must come from him. Silence alone is meet.
For he must rise above remembered things
As common men fix tyrants with their eye
And failing, try to tower in defeat,
And captive, still acquire the air of kings.

THE TREE

H. A. Vaughan
(1901 -

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 the 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.

JAMAICAN FISHERMAN

Philip Sherlock
(1902 -

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 snad I saw him naked stride;
Sand 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.

A BEAUTY TOO OF TWISTED TREES

Philip M. Sherlock
(1902 -

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 cliging 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.

POCOMANIA

Philip M. Sherlock
(1902 -

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 alter 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.

PARADISE

Philip Sherlock

(1902 -

Peacock strutting bold as brass
Dragging Esdras by the hand
Sextant waving, quadrant counting
Ruddy-faced and ruddy-minded
Colon offered Isabella
Worlds of gold and full salvation
Paid with minted days of storm
Nights of sweating fear and doubt
Sea-snakes dragons ghostly fires
Senseless searching, homeward longing
Ships bells counting off the years
to the strange and burning fountain
Of the hope for Paradise,
Europe sick and in confusion
Caravels oh seek salvation
Where the waters touch the skyline
Westward sail for Paradise.

Cha-cha Rumba Jump and dive
Holy Rollers Hallelujah
Jump God's chilluns, live it up
Shake you legs boy
Twirl you hips girl
Live it up
Segregation Television
Bubble gum and cellophane
Live it up
Rock and Roll
Oh Columbus Hallelujah
Save me Soul.

NIGHTFALL AT SAUTEURS

Philip Sherlock
(1902 -

"Eight miles beyond Victoria in Grenada is Sauteurs (Pronounced Sooters; population 1,200). It is of interest as having been the scene of a ruthless massacre of the Caribs, a number of whom, pursued by the French under Le Compte in 1650, rushed up a narrow and difficult path known to themselves alone, and threw themselves over the edge of the cliff (Le Morne des Sauteurs or the Leapers Hill) overlooking the bay. The French who lost one man only then set fire to the cottages and provision crops of the Caribs, and having destroyed or taken away everything belonging to them returned as Du Tertre naively describes it 'bien joyeux'."
(Aspinall's Guide to the West Indies.)

Some golden boy perchance
His glowing skin a mirror for the sun
Himself the first in diving from the rock
That buttresses this cliff; so keen of eye the first
In searching out the lobsters with his bone-tipped spear
Or racing his small craft across the bay
With flashing oar; from this gaunt cliff
That flame and fury brought to birth, this field
Long tamed with toil, so gentle now with grass
He first discerned against the morning sky
A tiny cloud that slowly grew into
A monstrous sail. Swift sprang to life
The nightmare tales his father told of men
With shining spears and sharp dividing swords
That never dulled, more purposeful in hate
More hotly fierce in their intent to kill
Than Huracan who strips and breaks the trees
And howls his maniac way across the raging seas
With stillness in his steps
And other days to come.
Through field and forest breathless fast he speeds
To shout his fearful news of sails against the sky.

I see the sails against the evening sky
And know them for the fishing craft that homeward drive
Before the constant Trades, this cliff
The mark for home to those
Who now with red-rimmed eyes and sweet content
Bring in their jewelled harvest: on the beach
The slanting bamboo poles with dripping nets
And lines, the boys
That dig for shell fish in the sand
The wood-smoke softly blue, I watch
The women busy with the evening meal
The diver poised upon the rock below
A skiff asleep upon the rose-red bay
And lift my eyes to see against the dying light
A swiftly growing cloud
O mushroom shape.

A SWORD OF FLAME

Philip Sherlock
(1902 -

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
And the blazing sky and the melting hills
Uncover the roots of being that lay
Buried beneath the crust of clay.
Fire leaps headlong from the sky
And the rock and the light and the weaving stream
Join in the flaming dance that thrills
Through the earth and the firmament
For that which was fixed is fluid now
And the shaken are the shrivelled skies
Ablaze with the thousand lunatic eyes.

The black rocks twist and writhe and run
Red with the blood red light of the sun
The fire has claimed its ancient place
The fire which slept within the rock
The fire which slept within the earth
The fire which slept within the trees
The fire which slept within the clouds
The fire which slept within the skies
The fire that slept has come to birth
And seals with flame the shaking earth.
And leaps with quivering flanks of flame
Through the woods and through the rocks
And leaps from cloud to crested cloud
And flames across the shrivelled sky.
Fire that flamed where Eden stood
A sword of flame.

Eden stands by Gordon Town
Cool with the green of leaves and cool
With gleaming water and dripping rock
And cool with the tangled black of roots
Where the river leaps from the tangled rocks to the sand
and pebbles.
Green and black and flash of silver.

And around and beneath and about the place
The flash of a flaming sword
The fire holds still its ancient place.

SLEEP TIME, BOY

Philip Sherlock
(1902 -

(For Noel Nethersole)

Sleep time boy
Hush a bye;

Sleep time, boy,
Sun gone down
Travelling fast
Light all drained from out the sky
Greenness drained from all the world
Names now taken from the trees
Cedar, yoke wood, Spanish elm
Separate no longer stand
Nameless shapes trees come together
Hush a bye.

Sleep time, boy,
Night dew falling
Cricket singing, tree frog whistling
Night breeze stirring
Through the corn field and the yam field
Down beyond the barbecue
Feel the breeze from Dallas Mountain
Rich with cerasee and mint
Hush a bye.

Bitter word
Bitter song
Breaks the bough the cradle falls
And who shall name this darkness night
Or sleep this quietness
Round eyes closed against the light?

O grown man, go rub your eyes
See the darkness feeding life
While the round eyes close in sleep
As the buds with night dew fed
Burgeon at the light of day
As the tender leaves renewed
Meet the challenge of the light
O grown man, go rub your eyes
Go behold how yonder tree
There beyond the shining lawn
Gleaming green as polished glass
Carries still its share of night
Hush a bye.

So gentle
Sleep time now;
Sleep time to follow waking
Begetting then departing
Time, grown man, to turn secure
To the soft enfolding night
Hush a bye.

TREES HIS TESTAMENT
(A Goodbye for Daley)

Philip Sherlock
(1902 -

Daley's dead; dust now, gone for good
Far over Jordan side
Left his body this side
Of the cold river.
Dead now, gone for good
Nobody see him till Kingdom come
And the trumpet call beyond the river
And the roll call.
Gone for good.
Lips greedy once for a woman's breast
Still now and silent
Pasture for the worm
Then dust.

Daley was a plumber,
Served his time to Hard Up,
Hungry Belly walked beside him
Never left him quiet,
Through the slum he had for home
From door to door he asked
If they wanted toilets fixed
And they laughed for the toilet wasn't theirs anyway.
Walked and tramped from door to door
Raising cash for peace of mind,
Pocket full is belly full
Belly full is peace of mind.
Hungry Belly never left him,
Grinned and gnawed and never left him
Plumber's dead now, gone for good.
Daley's dead.

Hungry Belly restless talked
When he saw his Daley buy
Paint and canvas for a picture
For a picture when a plumber had to live.
But the painter was a-seeking
For the something that he couldn't tell about
That he knew inside himself he must search and search and find,
Knock and knock until he find
Past the questions and divisions
Past the doubtings and the troubles
Past the doors and rows of doors
Till at last he saw it all in the trees;
They were quiet and at peace in the pastures
And beside the waters still
And upon the mountain side
Where the drought would parch the roots
And the hurricane would walk in the summer.
Trunks and roots were hard and torn
Branches broken short, and twisted,
Just to keep a footing there
Just to be a living tree.
Plumber's hand and painter's eye,
Plumber's dead and gone for good,
Daley's dead.

TREES HIS TESTAMENT CONT'D.

Over now the search for silver
Gone away is Hungry Belly
Off to find a fresh companion;
Dust the feet that walked beside him,
Turned to dust the plumber's hands
But the trees still stand together
Like they're shouting over Jordan,
And upon that skull-shaped hill top
When the eye of day is clean
Stand two trees with bitter bearing
And between the two a tree
One between the two that lifts
Bright flowering.

NIGHTFALL

Una Marson
(1905 -

How tender the heart grows
At the twilight hour,
More sweet seems the perfume
Of the sunless flower.

Come quickly, wings of night,
The twilight hurts too deep;
Let darkness wrap the world around,
My pain will go to sleep.

THE WIND IS NOT A LYRE.....

Roger Mais
(1905 -

The wind is not a lyre nor a lute
Nor any wind instrument nor any stringed
Instrument.
Nor any instrument like piccolo or flute.
The wind is a great maestro, with long
Streaming hair,
And mad with the madness of a great Maestro.

Roger Mais
(1905-

A CHORUS FROM GEORGE WILLIAM GORDON

(An Historical Drama)

The tree was a long time growing
Naked man with his God
Alone on a mountain
Walking a mountain
Out of his loins the seed

Dew is good to the grass
And the stars are tears
On the eyelids of night, night
Black like her brother.

Out of a strong man's side
The blood, the seed
Out of eyes burning in madness
The tears, like stars
On the eyelids of night.

Take courage, brother!

For the good of the seed
One man went under the ground
One man and a million.

One man dying in India
A million of famine
O flesh to succor
And hands to bleed!

One man out of Africa
A million out of Africa
Singing their songs they came --
And clanking their chains

One man out of Africa
A million out of Africa
With blood hot to love
And to kill at need ...

The tree was a long time growing

One man out of a mountain
Naked black son of Africa
In his loins the seed.

Roger Mais
(1905-

MEN OF IDEAS

Men of ideas outlive their times
An idea held by such a man does not end with his death
His life bleeding away goes down
Into the earth, and they grow like seed
The idea that is not lost with the waste of a single life
Like seed springing up a multitude

They hanged Gordon from a boom
Rigged in front of the Court House
They hanged him with eighteen others for company
And Jesus had but two
But the ideas for which Gordon lived
Did not hang with him
And the great social revolution for which Jesus died
Did not die with him
Two men they nailed with Jesus side by side
Eighteen went to hand with Gordon from the new-rigged boom
But the idea of equality and justice with Gordon
Went into the ground and sprung up like seed, a multitude
A hundred years the seed was a-growing in the ground
A hundred years is not too long
A hundred years is not too soon
A hundred years is a time and a season
And all things must wait a time and a season
And the time and the season for each growing thing
Is the way, and there is no other
The time and the season of its growing and bearing fruit
Are inherent in the nature of the seed
And inherent in it is its growth and its fruit
And this is the way there is no other
A hundred years is not too long
For the seed to burst its husk under the ground
And cleave a path and press upward
And thrust a green blade in triumph at the sun
Do not be anxious for the house that is a-building
For the unsown acres under the plough
For all things await a time and a season.

Roger Mais
(1905-

ORCHARD

Gold are the fruit of night,
Golden for laughter ...

Star-apples on laden boughs
Little cosmic apples
Gay in the frown of night
Their wise light dapples.

I saw one shaken down
From its branch to-night.

It fell without sound
Far, Far out of sight -
Beyond, beyond the rim
Of night's dark bowl;

(God grant that His net was by
Saving its soul!)

Yet, why weep for fallen stars -
Fruit of Infinity -

Who planned the orchard there,
Planned their hereafter ...

Gold are the fruit of night,
Golden for laughter.

Roger Mais
(1905-

ALL MEN COME TO THE HILLS

All men come to the hills
Finally...

Men from the deeps of the plains of the sea -
Where a wind-in-the-sail is hope,
That long desire, and long weariness fulfils -
Come again to the hills.

And men with dusty, broken feet;
Proud men, lone men like me,
Seeking again the soul's deeps -
Or a shallow grave
Far from the tumult of the wave -
Where a bird's note motions the silence in...
The white kiss of silence that the spirit stills
Still as a cloud of windless sail horizon-hung
above the blue glass of the sea -
Come again to the hills...

Come ever, finally.

G. A. Hamilton
(1910-

SONG FOR A SYNTHESIS

I was salt water, washing all alien shores,
Citizen of the world, calling no land home,
Creature of flux and change.

Burns in my blood the icy fire of Norway
The hot red flame of Africa
The even glow of England.

Now tides compel into this inland sea,
Out of my life, out of this land shall grow
Fruit strong with the salt's sharp bitterness,
Rose warm with the sun's red glow,
Song for eternity,
Song for a synthesis.

G. A. Hamilton
(1910 -

PORT ROYAL

Seek not here now the startling incident,
Fire on flashing brass, the formal splendour,
Nor violence clustering suddenly at street corners.
The measured ebb and flow
Leaves no obstruction in the oyster shell
Round which to build your pearls.

Here glory is buried under the fallen stone.
In the dim twilight of the ocean bed
Only the sea crabs crawl the darkened streets,
And in the silent halls
The many-branched candles burn around the sleeping,
Forever quenchless, shedding their fitful light.

And the bells toll,
And the bells toll, forever calling,
Calling for the final approbation,
Calling for the garlands of fresh flowers,
The shed tear and the melancholy music,
Calling for burial in the afternoon,
Sleep in warm earth, with the long shadows slanting.

O white are the flowers the wind throws on the water,
Blossoming suddenly and as suddenly fleeting,
And golden the tendrils of light, and various its roses.
O sad are the feet of the sea on the shore in the evening,
Mournful its songs, their music a murmuring prayer.

Only the narrow lanes remember
The secret assignations,
The silks and satins spurning the filth and mud,
The music and the laughter,
The hasty dagger and the red blood flowing
And mingling with the spilt wine in the gutter.

The bright day falling on the broken houses
Discovers only
The ginger-lily's unexpected beauty
Blossoming in the festering desolation
Perfection of young flesh grown tall and straight,
Sucked upwards by the sun and full of laughter,
And moulded to the sea's will.

Discovers only these,
And old walls stained by a thousand afternoons
Remembering their glory.

Gerald A. Hamilton
(1910 -

THAT SUMMER

The summer was calm and assured,
Relaxing with carefully composed limbs on the beaches
Under the stylized palms, for the tourist poster,
Or striding with confidence across its lawns
And beautiful gardens, secure in sunlight.

And certain in the great strength of its trees,
So tall, with the athlete's grace, the cathedral's stately splendour,
And wearing the fig's virility of leaves,
Fit eyrie for the poised hawk's arrogant assurance.

O time of nice precision and known dimension
Bright light and shadow quartering the grass,
Punctuating time 'twixt work and play,
And play and dreamless sleep,
With only the laughter knitting the moments together.

Moonlight was pleasant fancy
Turning flesh and blood to marble
To inaccessibility, to greater desiring.
So the pale loiterer by the water's edge,
Awaiting the metamorphosis, distrait,
Wept through the medium of the saxophones.

Yet the fond maiden wailed not for her lover,
Knowing no chasm stood between them, only
The width of a hand, the depth of a petal's fall,
The length of time it took to change the record,
An interlude the radio soon would fill
With cars, refrigerators and mattresses.

And knowing, while she turned her head,
No leaping tongues of fire would muss his hair,
Nor would he ride a moonbeam over the hill
Seeking a fistful of stars.

There was no need for speculation,
No time for the faltering outline,
For crepuscular beat of wings, or the timid knock on the door.

Mary Lockett

WEATHER IN ACTION

Calm weather is for calm souls;
But the light that comes through the whirling trees
When the wind is high
Stirs the blood of the wild creatures,
Who dance to the rhythm
And sing with the singing leaves.

Weather in action
And the heart bounding --
Joyful outcry, mocking the wail of the wind!

Calm weather is for calm souls;
But the soul of the outcast
Gathers wild weather into itself
And rides the rim of the world!

Vivian L. Virtue
(1911 -

REX POINCIANA

Now, when June's flashing blade
Wounds deep again
These gladiator trees that bleed in slow, proud dying,

I go afraid
To gaze, lest I should hear the long lone crying
Of Beauty's endless servitude to pain.

CRICKETS AT NIGHT

Vivian L. Virtue
(1911 -

Hear the wild elfin instruments
Under my window sill --
The small metallic rhythm shrill
Innumerable
  Dancers shake
With sheer Castillian art,
Ceaseless and tantalising, swift of beat,
Keeping the stars awake
Above their hectic feet!
.....For I fancy, should I start
Stealthily up and peer,
I'd see with their giddy castanets
Imponderable
Creatures of dewlight, star-mist, whirling there
In the charmed nocturnal air!

THE WEB

Vivian L. Virtue
(1911 -

Parting my window to the light
that flooded up an April dawn
I saw it, like a dream in flight,
Upon a bough across a lawn:
A spider's jewelled filigree
Suspended high between the sprays,
All perfect in its symmetry
To catch and hold my wondering gaze.

There, dew-bediamonded afar
So light - though laden - every line,
It hung as lambent as a star,
Unutterably frail and fine;
Or as a rosary untold
That waits for prayerful hands, each row
Quickened within a blaze of gold,
Caught in the sun's upclimbing glow.

I rose and hurried out to win
A nearer view, increasing bliss;
Faint iridescence woke within
Its filaments beneath the kiss
Of sunrays, and the clinging dew
Shimmered like pendants opaline.
So rare a pattern, strange and new,
No lore of Euclid could define.

And in that palace intricate
The lonely little architect
Throned in the centre held its state...
Only with awe could I reflect
Upon the matchless miracle
Wrought by this least of soulless things:
Here was the crown and pinnacle
Of Art - the web the spider strings.

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
Unstrung your pearls, a vandal wind
Had torn away your splendour soon -
Forever you enmesh my mind!

RIVER AND SEA

Vivian L. Virtue
(1911 -
(Dunn's River Falls, North Coast, Jamaica)

River and Sea in joyous marriage meeting
Under the palms! Impetuously fleeting
Down the great rocks in broad spumescent pride
She comes, the glad Sea's everlasting bride,
In sheer abandonment of love's completing!

What half-heard voices full of strange entreating,
What griefs and glories of the Past's defeating
Secrets unsearchable in these confide,
River and Sea?

Our joy and sorrow born of joy's retreating
Will in this place be mirrored; others greeting
These wedded waters over Time's divide
Will know, Beloved, what aeons cannot hide——
How love to love leaped, down all barriers beating,
River to Sea.

NOCTURNE

Vivian L. Virtue
(1911 -

The sea forever drives his weary herd
Stumbling home to the shore:
The dusk is lonely with a calling bird.
God's gradual hands fling out the starry store
Like stone on shining stone,
Till heaven seems over-strewn ...
And now my soul calls, troublous and alone

Now would I have you, silent at my side,
Your speaking hands in mine!
Gathered beneath the Dark wings folded wide;
With all love's glory -- human, half-divine --
What was, and what shall be,
Kindled in the eternity
Of one rich hour, beside this starlit sea.

VILLANELLE OF THE DREAM

Vivian L. Virtue

(1911 -

Beyond Impermanence the Dream is set.
Though part it seems of all the flux and flow,
Its nature is unchanging, deathless yet.

Before the morning stars in chorus met
It was with God, the great creative glow!
Beyond Impermanence the Dream is set.

There is no darkness but its star shall fret,
Nor any reaping where it did not sow;
Its nature is unchanging, deathless yet.

Mocked of the world its lovers are: but let
Their glory be to suffer and to know
Beyond Impermanence the Dream is set,

Beckoning where their eyes shall not be wet
With sorrow more, but joyous they shall go...
Its nature is unchanging, deathless yet.

And what though, wrought of all our tears and sweat
Its image lies about us shattered, low;
Beyond Impermanence the Dream is set:
Its nature is unchanging, deathless yet!

I HAVE SEEN MARCH

Vivian L. V...
(1911 -

I have seen March within the Ebony break
In golden fire of fragrance unsuppressed;
And April bring the Lignum-Vitae dressed
In dusty purple; known pale rust awake
The Mango's boughs; the Poinciana take
Immortal wound of Summer. I have pressed
The Cassia's spendthrift yellow to my breast:
I could love Earth for one tree's royal sake ...

I could find faith, abandoning despair
For all Time's unfulfilled, unblossomed hopes,
Watching the long, green patience of a tree,
How, undiscouraged, uncomplaining, bare,
It waits until the vernal secret gropes
Up to the efflorescence that shall be.

ATLANTIC MOONRISE

Vivian L. Virtue
(1911 -

The new-washed moon drew up from the sea's dark rim.
Naked and unsuspecting on my sight
Her bosom dripped till, struck with virgin fright,
Catching my gaze, she snatched a cloud-fold dim
Across the delightsome shame that flushed each limb,
Mocking the hunger in me to possess her bright
Divinity with proper, prudish spite,
With beauty's conscious sovereignty and whim.

Baffled I waited, burning with desire;
Then with such slow magnificent pretence
As though I were not there, she stripped again...
I stood like David on the roof, the fire
Of young Bathsheba torturing his sense,
Bartered, like him, my peace for Beauty's pain.

BEAUTY

Vivian Virtue
(1911 -

Beauty falls back upon the final bone,
Her stubborn fastness, battling undismayed
Though blood and flesh have failed her and betrayed.
Nakedness is her armour now alone,
Obdurate her defiance as a stone;
She asks no pity or that peace be made:
Prouder she grew behind each barricade
That fell, nor will she yield though spent and prone.

Death but availed to press her back upon
A sterner front; brave to the bone she clings.
Invisible armies muster at her gate
To lay the last long siege ----she knows her fate---
But even in this crumbling bastion
Beauty confronts her enemies and sings!

Vivian Virtue
(1911-

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 youngmen press.

CHORUS: A queenlier pomp hath Israel never seen.

KING SOLOMON AND QUEEN BALKIS (Cont'd)

CHORUS OF THE KING'S MINSTRELS (Contd.)

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!

lll

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!

Where sunset 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!

lV

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: 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!

3.

KING SOLOMON AND QUEEN BALKIS (Contd.)

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 remenberings!
Take we again the burning desert way.
O pain today! for joy was yesterday.

Vivian Virtue
(1911-

BALLADE

Quem di diligunt adolescens moritur

Ask sooner why a kindling rose
Before it blazes into bloom
Is quenched - the answer no man knows:
Except that beauty, its own doom,
Is sentenced from the very womb;
Except that ecstasy is brief;
Perfection hastens to the tomb;
For whom the gods love come to grief.

Let that suffice - although it leaves
The mystery more mysterious yet
That in Catullus ever grieves,
On Schubert, Keats and Shelley set,
A dark immortal seal; they met
The blight while still in April leaf,
Died young, consumed with lyric fret;
For whom the gods love come to grief.

The gods are niggard - slow to give,
Quick to repent and take again
The splendid spirits fugitive
That fire the dark of mortal pain
Like meteors of disordered train....
And they are jealous past belief;
Their blessing also is their bane:
For whom the gods love come to grief.

L'envoi

Then, since this odd ironic fate
The favoured know, I would as lief
Provoke the proud Olympians' hate -
For whom the gods love come to grief.

Harold N. Telemaque
(1911-

TO THOSE, HAIL....

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...

Harold M. Telemaque
(1911 -

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 skyscrapers' 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
Storms do not strike
They have not seen Adina in the breeze
Blazing effulgent in the Caribbean.

Harold M. Telemaque
(1911-

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
And April rain,
Who measured the young morning
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.

A. J. Seymour
(1914 -

EVENSONG

Glory of white wings against the cathedral
Birds going home.

Brilliance of birds in a hollow of sunlight
Out of the evening sky, beating up eastward
Birds going home.

Clamour of wings come high over the river
Flashing quick white on the cliff of cathedral
Birds going home.

A flurry of rhythm, little stains of delight
High up on the sheer brown cliff of cathedral
Home for the night.

A. J. Seymour
(1914-

THERE RUNS A DREAM

There runs a dream of perished Dutch plantations
In these Guiana rivers to the sea.

Black waters, rustling through the vegetation
That towers and tangles banks, run silently
Over lost stellings where the craft once rode
Easy before trim dwellings in the sun
And fields of indigo would float out broad
To lose the eye right on the horizon.

These rivers know that strong and quiet men
Drove back a jungle, gave Guiana root
Against the shock of circumstance, and then
History moved down river, leaving free
The forest to creep back, foot by quiet foot,
And overhang black waters to the sea.

A. J. Seymour
(1914-

TO A LADY DEAD

These are the features - but the light gone out
In the unpeopled chambers of the eyes.

Root up the roses, let the myrtle rise,
Murmur the hoarse dirge and forget the shout.

There should be lovely lanthorns hung about
Her passing, but four candles now suffice
At head and feet,
and the swallowing darkness lies
Ready to leap when those four lights go out.

There are no words, no charts sent back, to guide
Through the new regions where the bodiless wing
Or if new substances and shapes they take,

But I am sure as I were by her side
That now she does a glorious singing make
Standing new-dressed in light before the King.

A. J. Seymour
(1914-

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.

*Slavery was abolished in the Anglo-Caribbean on the 1st August, 1838.

A. J. Seymour
(1914 -

OVER GUIANA, CLOUDS

Over Guiana, clouds.

Little curled feathers on the back of the sky.
- White, chicken-downy on the soft sweet blue -
In slow reluctant patterns for the world to see.

Then frisky lambs that gambol and bowl along
Shepherded by the brave Trade Wind.

And glittering in the sun come great grave battleships
Ploughing an even keel across the sky.

In their own time, their bowels full of rain
The angry clouds that rage with lightning
Emitting sullen bulldog growls
And then they spirit themselves away in mist and rain.

Over Guiana, clouds.

And they go rushing on across the country
Staining the land with shadow as they pass.
Closer than raiment to the naked skin, that shadow,
Bringing a pause of sun, over and across
Black noiseless rivers running out to sea,
Fields, pieced and plotted, and ankle-deep in rice
Or waving their multitudinous hair of cane.

It scales the sides of mountains
Lifting effortlessly to their summits,
And fleets across savannahs, in its race,
And there are times that shadow falters
And hesitates upon a lake
To fix that eye of water in a stare,
Or use its burnished shield to search the sun,
Or yet as maids do,
To let the cloud compose her hurried beauty.

And then upon its way to Venezuela
Across vast stretches where trees huddle close
And throw liana arms around their neighbours.

Over Guiana, clouds.

...

Forest night full of drums
Death-throbbing drums
For shining-breasted invaders of the shores.
Immemorial feuds shake hands
And Indians come,
Death's harvests swinging in their quivers.

A cinema of rapid figures
Thrown by wood-torches on the trees,
Impassive faces with passion forcing through,
Then the hard treks, and the long full canoes
Rustling down the river-night.

A horror of nights for Spaniards
Keen arrows biting the throat above the steel
The Indians flitting like actors in the wings
The swamps, the heavy marching, the malaria.

/2...

OVER GUIANA, CLOUDS (Contd.)

A trail of burnt villages and tortured men and treacheries.

Wave after wave, the white-faced warriors
Then weary of war,
The Indians talk of trade.

...

Indians knew the bird calls in the woods
Before Columbus sailed
The swallow songs
- Arrows of longing for the northern Summer days -
The clamorous-winging wild ducks and the choughs
The merry kiskadees and the pirate hawks
The cries of little frightened doves,
The brilliant and unmusical macaws.
And they can tell the single hours to sunset
By the birds cheeping, cheeping overhead.

This wildwood and untroubled knowledge still
Cradles the dying tribes
For death has laid his hand upon the race.
They know the wisdom of all herbs and weeds
Which one to eat for sickness, which to shun
And which to crush into an oil that pulls
The cramping pains from out the marrow bones.

They hear the river as it courses down
And they can tell the rising of the tide
From river-water lapping, lapping softly
Slapping against the wooden landing-stage.

The impassivity of silent trees becomes their own
And they will watch the wheeling of white birds
For company.

But still they have their dances and at nights,
When the drums trouble the dark with rhythm
The violin takes a voice and patterns the air
And then the Indians find their tribal memories
Of victories and war and dim old journeys
That brought them from beyond the Bering Strait.

...

Raleigh comes to Guiana

The wind had dropped, the giant hand
Of night was shrouding up the land
From where the thick couridas stand
On the Guiana shore.
And when the ships their anchors weighed
Men went below, but one man stayed
The distant jungle's roar.
These musings fed on his far stare
"I have been bold the King to dare,
And will my expedition fare
As falsely as of yore?

These secret forests left behind
Will I in that star-peopled south find
The image stamped upon my mind,
The city built in gold?"
-Where golden streets threw back the light,
And roofs gleamed dully through the night
But like an auburn head blazed bright
When earth to morning rolled -

OVER GUIANA CLOUDS (Contd.)

But deep within the mountains' breast
The city lay; there was no rest
Until he and his men had pressed
And won a conqueror's way
Through jungles where death stung and leapt
Or in the tree-black midnight crept
And claimed each tenth man as he slept
And therefore could not pray.

And to Sir Walter came the thought
Perhaps the destiny he sought
Would never shine, be gold,
Perhaps this kindly fitful breeze
He'd no more feel, nor see these seas,
Perhaps his men would feed the trees
Changed to a rotting mould.
He pulled his cloak around his knees
Because the night was cold.

...

Slaves
Humming in the twilight by the shanty door
Oh Lord Jesus.

Slaves
Pouring out heart-music till it run no more
Oh Lord Jesus.

Slaves born in hot wet forestlands
Tend the young cane-shoots and they give
Brute power to the signal of the lash
It curls and hisses through the air
And lifts upon the black, broad backs
Roped wales in hideous sculpture
"Oh Lord Jesus".

Some slaves are whipped
For looking at the Master's grown-up daughters
Picking their way across the compound,
And other slaves for trying to run away.
"Oh Lord Jesus".

Some few found kindly-hearted owners
And they were used like human beings
But those were rare, Lord Jesus.

Before, it was the shining yellow metal
And now, the dark sweet crystal owned the land
And if the chattel and the cattle died
There always would be more to take their place.
Till, in its deep sleep
Europe's conscience turned
And strenuous voices
Broke chains and set the people free.
"Oh Lord Jesus".

But there were other chains and earth was not yet heaven
And other races came to share the work
And halve the pay.

...

So with a stride down to the modern times and
Random villages dawning between the plantations
The sea pounding away to break the dams.

/4...

OVER GUIANA, CLOUDS (Contd.)

And the railway pencils a line to the Berbice River
Villages broaden shoulders and, sugar booming,
Schools spring up suddenly to dot the coast.

Men get eager for the yellow metal, shooting
Down rapids for diamonds and quick wealth, returning
Bloated and drunk to paint the villages red.

Plantations thicken, spread, and they web together,
The angry sea batters the concrete defences
Scooping a grave for them to bury themselves.

Bustle and industry on the coasts but inland
Few echoes shake the forests from their silences
And nothing wakes their strong cathedral calm.

Their tops like plumes, the years grow old with forests
And sleep upon the broad, short-shrubbed savannahs
Painted and free from suffering like the stones.

The races fade into a brown-stained people
And the Guiana Spirit arises, stretching
As a young giant begins to open his eyes

And sees his country with its waiting promise
Fair and unraped, and lifts his head to the heavens

Over Guiana, clouds.

Over Guiana clouds still lift their beauty
And pace the sheer glad firmament by day
They seem to halt, lay anchor when the night
Distains the heavens and pours thick darkness in
Its bowl, but on their pilgrimage they go
And weave themselves strange pagan arabesques
Or subtle unimaginable shapes
Before they pass on to another land.
High symbols, that behind the brow of history
Dim objects brood and hugh hands shape events
From here, a little actuated dust
And there, the blind collisions of the stars.

Over Guiana, clouds.

A. J. Seymour
(1914-

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
Of 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.

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.

FOR CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS (Contd.)

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 civilization, 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.

FOR CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS (Contd.)

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 civilization 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 bast Atlantic Vast
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.

George Campbell
(1917 -

RELEASE

Let my dreams hang intact round my tree
And let my branches reach in every land,
So all the peoples of the world might see
The beauty and the tear-drops from my hands.
Let there be loftiness
And sun-lit sky
And over all blue unity of space
And there be world possession of my trunk,
Spread thus my dreams.

George Campbell
(1917-

ALL WOMEN I HAVE LOVED

All women I have loved
Were tigered in a rose.

No colour nor shape,
Hot flame yield
Shaft softness.
Ecstasy and hurt.

Everlasting loving
On sliding rules
Of flaming hurt.

Animal flower
Yielding crispness
Strangest budding.

Fruit,
Dying and growing,
And flowering.

All women I have loved
Were tigered in a rose.

HISTORY MAKERS

George Campbell
(1917-

in his First Poems, 1945, p61.

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.

ll.

No smiles
No sigh
No moan.

lll.

Women child bearers
Pregnant frocks
Wilful toil sharers
His tory makers
Hammers and rocks.

V.

George Campbell
(1917-

LITANY

in his First Poems (1945)
p. 14

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
(1917 -

MAGDALENE

It was his serenity
Brought me sanity.
There was no lust in his eyes
No look of surprise
At my naked flesh
No willingness
To be caught in the mesh
Of the loveliness
That had bored my ears.

I felt secure
As I knelt at his feet
And had no fears
That at dead of night
I would hear the beat
In an outside room,
Creak of a door
And demand of my womb.

It was his serenity
That held me so
I would not go
Away from the side
Of man enticed
His passions denied
For his way of life.

George Campbell
(1917-

WE TEAR OUR LEADERS DOWN

We tear our leaders down
Like a man who hates nature
Turns from trees, love, offering,
And lays bare the day
For material gain.

We suspect our leaders
Like a man who will rape
The woman rather than love her;
For he is too circumspect
For the oneness of love.

We say our leaders
Are false,
We say bend lowly,
Leaders,
To us.

We say many things
And tear our leaders down.

And yet the nightingale
Sings best in the night
For the passing ear,
And the lion hunts best his own way.

Wounded in the wing the song bird
Sings only suffering
And the wounded lion hates the day.

George Campbell
(1917-

OH! YOU BUILD A HOUSE

Oh! you build a house as a woman
Builds a child in her time, building
With the inner vision of her eyes
The knowingness of her being
The whole of her living, turned inward, creating.

Here you build a cottage in the hills
And raise up trees every leaf of them
As parents build up their children, wilfully.

Who would construct the sky?
Do you know how many visions
Of space to fill the view of your vision?
Where are the unseeing hands that would
Lift up one transfiguration of space
That a child would dream?

Yet you build like the builder of space
The weaver of silences, the construction of hills
With hands of existence, your purpose, the light of your way.
I would not tell you that, were it not natural,
Else I would turn away, mad like a man
From a mirror who sees the sky in his face
And the resolutions of horror and peace in his face.

Here you build your peace in your hills
Reconstructing your silences, like a child
Being endlessly born in its mother.
Here you construct your space, every forgetfulness.
Every pocket of silence, every atom of thought.
Here is the reconstruction of peace, never outside one,
But where a man can turn his energies
To his innermost being, to his own infiniteness.

Where are the succession of stars that are
The glory to one's mind,
Where is the space and the time that can be
The peace that man should know?
Yes! it's good that you build your cottage
And the external comforts of home.
'Tis the same process and reality backward.

The man in his own inner mind, on his own inner road,
On the most communal journey in the world,
The journey through one to the world of men.
Here, creatively, in the depths of silence
Amidst atonic laughter, the forestry of death,
Elusive simplicity of peace
Must a man build finally...

The reconstruction that is rebirth in motherhood,
The working of a plot of land,
The building of a house in the dirt,
The growing of grass, warm roses and trees
Reconstruction of the hills, mass upon mass
Resurrection of the sky, space beyond space:
The infinity of peace.

Barbara Ferland
(1919-

EXPECT NO TURBULENCE...

Expect no turbulence although you hold me fast --
    For this, where late my love lay, beats no more.
Confute, perplex not ... Only shield me from the past.
    What might have been is lost, not gone before.

Though in the night your surgent need impels
    Your body to seek comfort, bruising me awake,
I will not shrink, though all your flesh repels,
    Nor sanctuary deny, while we communion take.

For we, two lost, two hungry souls, will meet
    At common board, with common need for bread.
You, in the wood, will gather berries sweet;
    I, in the dark taste the salt flesh of the dead.

Barbara Ferland
(1919-

AVE MARIA

From a church across the street
   Children repeat,
"Hail Mary, full of Grace."
   Skipping the syllables; follow-the-leader pace.

A little girl, (the Lord is with Thee),
   White in organdy,
Lifts her starched, black face
   Towards the barricaded altar
Meadowed in lace.

(Blessed art Thou among women.)
   Her child's fingers rove the coloured beads
One after one.
(Blessed is the fruit of Thy womb;)
Yea; and blessed, too, ripe fruit on trees
   Window-close, under a tropical sun.

Bend low the laden bough
   Child-high; sweeten her incense-laden breath
With food, good Mary. (Holy Mary, Mother of God,
Pray for us sinners.) And for the blameless,
   Now, before the hour of their death.

Raymond Barrow
(1920-

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-criticized 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!

K. E. Ingram
(1921-

SHEEP

God made sheep in the early morning.

In His hands He caught the clusters
Of the fleecy clouds of dawning
And tied them in bunches
And fastened their feet and their noses
With wet brown clay

And into their eyes He dropped
With reeds from a nearby river
The light of the dying morning star
And the light of the dying moon.

And then on that creation morning
When the sun had flooded the peaks and plains
And the dew lay thick on the rushes
Man saw sheep on the grazing grass
And heard the sadness of their bleating.

ooo oOo ooo

K. E. Ingram
(1921-

THERE WERE THOSE

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.

oOoOoOoOoOo

H. D. Carberry
(1921-

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 logwood
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.

M. G. Smith
(1921-

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 bubbles
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.

H. G. Smith
(1921-

THIS LAND

Under this rhythm
Beats the voice
No one will notice.

Under this rock
Is the flame
No one sends freedom.

Under this island
Is the land
No one desires.

But in the time of drought
Is weeping
And in the time of harvest
Is weeping
And at the funeral
Is weeping
And in the marriage-bed
Is weeping.

Look O my Sun
Over this island
Look O my stars
Into this island.

For it sits upon the doorstep
And waits
And there is bleating in the dawn
And there is bleating in the night
For it sits upon the doorstep
And waits.

This land has no centre
Neither direction.
There is smoke without fire,
Life without movement.

This! Oh my land.

M. G. Smith
(1921-

EXTRACT FROM TESTAMENT

Strong sunlight recalls my youth
The warm land of my birth
The fulfilment
The days of unbroken sun.
The sunlight was ceaseless with us
It bathed and cupped all in light
It soaked into the core of all things
And came to the dark secret hearts
To enter when all was unhidden.

Because I opened my heart to the sun
Knowing no better
A world was born within me
A vision of splendid light
Light of a sense of freedom
And complete identity
Light of a sense of union
And communion in touch
Fearless and sure and free light
Without which
Was no immediacy of being
And no identifying touch.

Strong sunlight washed the village
And the hills
And clothed my people in their purple robes
And danced and rippled in the laughing limbs
And streamed and welled within them.
Darkly strong
Streams that no sea could gather and give peace
Days which no light could shut off from the sun
Which was their wombhead of original birth
And final consummation flowering
Into a consaneity with light
And splendid growing oneness with their source.

Strong sunlight shows my youth
It walks with dreams
And all the village and the hills awake
From lit and finished days to prophecy
The dark and forward time when all is still
And nothing known, but dark beyond the Sun
And the increasing oneness with the Sun.

But if my village and my hills remain
From the broad sunlight of their birth cut off
And from all consummation or the hope
Of harmony and power which flows down
From the identifying light -
Then there shall be
Wells that are waterless
And wasted wells
And blindness searching to be healed in vain
And the election of a living death
Far from identify like cut off hands
Without the touch of source or light or self
Or sense of oneness being in the whole...

M. G. Smith
(1921-

THE VISION COMES AND GOES

The vision comes and goes
Light does not last
Nor yields the tropic night
That swims with stars
A clearer insight that this furtive mist
Nor gives the sun more flaming truth than snows

Let the wind walk
Where the wind will
Let the streams flow
Where the sea calls
The crags and trees
Sprung from the hill
Are buds and stalks
Of all the vision
Wind would know
And water leaping from the falls.

Circle us endlessly
Spin wheel and dance
Touch that is destiny
Touch that is chance
Who shall deliver
Infinite, free
Which wind will tame thee
Boundless past dream
Into what distance
Travels the stream?

Not all the stars
Nor suns
Nor dawns so bright
Nor all the heavens
Quivering with day
Attain the purpose
Or reflect the light
Each is a shadow
Let fall on thy way

Inward and outward
To create and show
Faith
Where the darkness obliterates all form
Faith like a river
Down which all life must flow
Faith
Like the rainbow
Encircling storm on storm.

O lonely Spirit
Wandering through the glades
Sensed
Near in mountains
Music
And with friends
Glimpsed
And lost sight of
Felt and never known
Long is thine absence
Bruised
Torn
Thick with shades
Blind
All about us
Yet here where reason ends
Come
Enter gently

M. G. Smith
(1921-

EPSTEIN'S "LUCIFER"

O mightiest spirit of the morning rise
Winged and sad-eyed
Bronzed, poised on high to strike
Out of thy dark defeat that never dies
A purpose and a pattern brighter far
Than ever vision lit in human eyes
Than ever was declared by morning star.

O mightiest spirit of the morning, rise
Unloose thy being
Wrench from out the rock
Thy fate of failure, pain and purpose hurled
Intact
To crash upon a crashing world
Proud lift thy wings
High
High beyond all cries
Still let thy fingers gently hold the shock
Mightiest spirit
O dear wound of life
More beautiful than beauty are thine eyes.

M. G. Smith
(1921-

THE HARPS OF DAWN

The harps of dawn
Were gold
And flame
With music
But now
My sorrow has
No voice to bear its pain,
The flutes of dawn
Were subtle
Blood streams
Silver
But now
My loneliness
Knows no voice
That can pour out its pain.
I move to you
You further
Find a lost further home
My land has died away
Wind
Waste wind
Wind alone.
The lights of dawn
Are marble
I carved my hands of pain
But now
This losing darkens
Lone streams my song of pain.

M. G. Smith
(1921-

AND I WILL LIFT UP TO THE LIPS OF LIFE

And I will lift up to the lips of life
The white horn of that heifer
I left bleeding in the morning.

And where the flames burn in me
A fine wind shall rise darkly
Pour through my lips my horn
For all the world to hear
While the piercing testament
Pouring dark streams of music
And the pure soul of things
That live and move in sound.

And I will keep that white horn at my lips
Blowing forever with my head thrown back
Till the flame ceases
And the wind within me falls like a body in the darkness.

And life
Dark grief
Whose horn I stole away
Comes to my side
And kneels
And asks if she may listen.

And I will take my horn
My white theft of this morning
And put it to my lips for one last song.

Mystical
Virginal
Spiritual
Eternal.

And life will waken after
In a strange world
The blue beyondness
For the wind of light
And darkness
Will have blown past through my song.

Basil McFarlane
(1922-

THE FINAL MAN

This is the final man,
Who lives within the dusk
Who is the dusk
Always.

To know birth and to know death
Is one emotion
To look before and after
With one eye
To see the Whole
To know the Truth
To know the world
And be without a world;

In this light that is no light;
This time that is no time
To be
And to be free:
This is the final Man
Who lives within the dusk
Who is the dusk
Always.

Basil McFarlane
(1922-

ELEGY, FOUR O'CLOCK

The land is full of echoes; all the bright
company of men the dumb
land uttered in prophesying tongues are gathered
in the constant afternoon. Flame licks the hills.
It is enough that I am here, one
with the maimed and dead and utterly victorious
citizens of the moment. Here is
perfection in a calm miniature of hills the leaden
sea the desolate street the tidy
burgher addressing himself to evening
and the suburbs. Day is shuttered and done.
Who is lonely as the wind? None sees his shadow.

A. L. Hendriks
(1922-

ON THIS MOUNTAIN

Here on this mountain, noting
as it were for the first time,
that we cling involuntarily
to a globe smaller than stars, floating

on a tide of space determined
by no familiar government,
we are roused, and thought's warm bones
are chilled by an intemperate wind.

This wind's last echo is not heard
in our land nor at the edge
of our planet where we clutch
the scant clothing of the human word

desperately to cover our despair.
For we have learned to mingle
with each other, to find solace
in bodies, to idolize and care

for an image, shaped and made
with the frail ingredients
of our dissolution, by which
we are finally betrayed.

2.

Here on this mountain, division
of time is convenient, thus
in an afternoon we travel
the globe. Print, radio, television

bring us to strange brotherhood.
I read your newspapers
while the curious camera roams
indelicately through the neighbourhood

of my country, rooting garbage.
I hear tales of your land's corruption
while you observe candidly
rottenness in my loved village.

We no longer belong to a private
society and cannot hide
private misdemeanors, we are
one people in one house and cannot leave it.

3.

It is quiet upon this mountain;
first panic stilled; the tide rides
steadily; the earth, a ridge of land
closed about by a fountain

of sea and ocean balled by a force
we barely perceive, into a sphere
we may cling to, is strong! even
its great unmanageable course

into an expanding unknown
formulated by mathematics
is predictable, and we lie quietly
in our mountain; we are not thrown

/2..

ON THIS MOUNTAIN (Contd.)

haphazardly, but at calculable speed.
That we should lie quietly is a small
request for creatures in common predicament
to ask of each other, but this breed

of man may not lie quietly, kept
restless by his own inadequacy,
helpless to navigate this swift craft
through star-voyaged space, swept

by a chilling wind that never dies
he gathers debris from his little earth,
binds it in engines and with dedication
builds hot highways to the sun. Reason cries

that you will tell him to stop building
vain engines, you a few words
hugged close about you, clothed
raggedly in a shawl of words, crying

like a prophet in the wilderness,
you would try to turn him
back from his brave, near, occupation
that hides from him the face of loneliness.

You would become another Lot
leading us out of gregarious cities
to a forsaken mountain; you would
take our commerce from us, offering what?

4.

Leaning out from the world's edge
you know the gap is not
bridged by extrinsic highways,
and the fine thread of this knowledge

is not woven here. O slender skein
spun on impalpable looms
held in a land no eye has seen
in a place nearer than this mountain

we shall awake from this slumber
and know clearly that we shall not
on a bridge of deciduous dreams
escape cowardly, nor blindly clamber.

5

Now upon this mountain, housed
with our one people, wrapped
in a clean, frayed shirt of words
warming thought's bones, roused

from a deep sleep and quietly lying
in the dark, aware dimly
of the swift coursing of the earth
outwards in a galaxy flying

beyond time, we are comforted
by the certainty within, and calm
certainty from your slender skein. O
how could we have ever doubted!

A. L. Hendriks
(1922-

OLD JAMAICAN HOUSEWIFE THINKS ABOUT THE HEREAFTER

What would I do forever in a big place, who
have lived all my life in a small island?
The same parish holds the cottage I was born in, all
my family, and the cool churchyard.
I have looked
up at stars from my front verandah and have been afraid
of their pathless distances. I have never flown
in the loud aircraft nor have I seen palaces,
so I would prefer not to be taken up high nor
rewarded with a large mansion.
I would like
to remain half-drowsing through an evening light
watching bamboo trees sway and ruffle for a valley-wind,
to remember old times but not to live them again;
occasionally to have a good meal with no milk
nor honey for I don't like them, and now and then to walk
by the grey sea-beach with two old dogs and watch
men bring up their boats from the water.
For all this,
for my hope of heaven, I am willing to forgive my debtors
and to love my neighbour....
although the wretch throws stones
at my white rooster and makes too much noise in her damn backyard.

Dorothy E. Whitfield
(19

THE SAINT

I am the flight of the silver dove
Flying mid naked spears.
I am that leaf on the Tree of Life
Whose veins run wine and tears.

I am the incense mystical,
The secret of the rose,
Deep in her dreaming heart I sleep
And sweet in my repose.

Mine is the mantle of the sky
Laced with love's scarlet flame,
A seamless garment woven out
Of ecstasy and pain.

My sandal sole is on Earth's sod
Blithely I bear her scars,
My soul a golden melody,
My crown a crown of stars!

Louis Simpson
(1923-

JAMAICA

Far from your crumpled mountains, plains that vultures ponder,
White gulches, wounded to pythons from gunshot of thunder:
What should I sing in a city of stone,
Drawing the bow across skull, across bone?

On phosphorescent furrows drifting from the dark sand,
We felt the fish pluck, keel grate, were laughed at by the land,
Saw searchlights comb corpses' hair in mangroves
Malarial birds beat to quiet coves.

The gull shudder plashing from sharks and under green glass
Delicate needles to death twitched in terror's compass;
Crimson on blue blade, gaping like hooked gills
The sun was drawn bleeding across the hills.

By the sunk schooner, the nets, canoes with broken backs,
Was a cathedral, now choral to currents: now shacks
Show a negress, children swollen with gas,
A man cuts coconuts with a cutlass.

This island seemed emerald in the steel furnace flame
To the pirate... Port Royal... his ship shed clothes as she came
To lie in the bay's blue arms, lazy, lean
And gold glowed through the hull with a death sheen.

He lay on the shore with a black and a gold-hearted girl
Whose laugh unhinged like a box of red velvet and pearl.
She gave his enemies the Judas word
Who came at cock-crow, each one with a sword.

Still she cherished in womb the chromosomes for whiteness.
Fish flittered about the father's bones, but she could press
Her hands to the high jumper there, the warm
Mulatto, ambitious in lizard form.

This got the start of my bestial, indolent race
With coarse skin, crazy laugh, nostrils like swords through the face:
Athletes at sixteen, they dive deep and lie
In women like waves: in such dark caves die.

Bitter pale beauty, the small salty jewels of sun
Fade by the ocean. But the fruit of the valleys run
From plump bourgeois banana's yellow skin
To the cruel cane, cutlass-bladed, thin.

Life is a winter liner, here history passes
Like tourists on top-decks, seeing the shore through sun-glasses:
And death, a delightful life-long disease,
Sighs in sideways languor of twisted trees.

Louis Simpson
(1923-

TO THE WESTERN WORLD

A siren sang, and Europe turned away
From the high castle and the shepherd's crook.
Three caravals went sailing to Cathay
On the strange ocean, and the captains shook
Their banners out across the Mexique Bay.

And in our early days we did the same.
Remembering our fathers in their wreck
We crossed the sea from Palos where they came
And saw, enormous to the little deck,
A shore in silence waiting for a name.

The treasures of Cathay are never found.
In this America, this wilderness
Where the axe echoes with a lonely sound,
The generations labour to possess
And grave by grave we civilize the ground.

Geoffrey Drayton
(1923-

THE ANCIENT CARIB

We voyaged from land to land, tireless across
untrespassed seas, voyaged till the ships
that months of toil had bellied from the red-
grained trunks grew thin, as the oar-sped
waters peeled them thinner, layer by layer.
Generations of our children, born with the hungry
colour of sea before their eyes,
bore in their hearts its blank unreason.
No longer the green-wet vegetation
that was the faith and emblem of our race,
but a godless blue, and the sun, unsifted,
lining their tender lids with crimson,
so that the colour of blood was on their sleeping eyes,
and opened, the black dispassion of the sea.
They that should have sucked the lore of forests
with their mothers' milk and in the forest-sap
have tasted knowledge of their being,
nursed instead the parching nipples of the waves;
and knowing nothing that might scourge
their ignorance, thought all was known.
It was not that they scorned their heritage,
grew deaf to rhythms that had led their fathers
making them humble. But perpetual motion
left no time for thought beyond that which
they did to save themselves, depending on none.
Such pride was born of circumstance not calculation.
They had never known the tattered royalty
of trunk and leaf fighting to repossess
their pilfered lands, the pendulous
brown-winged seed that warned how short a time
we lingered, how soon their armies
would entangle fleshy hands amongst our bones,
and hide, unmonumented, the frail
encampments of our great creation.
Under this green dominion the old had spent their youth,
and in its challenge found an inward discontent
that feeding on their unused vigour turned it
from their fellowmen; since he who fully lives,
has will nor power left to fret a common discord.
Then dying with an equal peace they gave
their strength to unawakened loins,
that waking them they might be born again.
So was the love of man for woman sanctified,
and sanctified, the life of every man.
Peacefully they died, under the clean-edged
shadow of the plantain-leaf, under the shadows
where their mothers loved and they were born.
But violent now the forms of death that children see.
Some they have seen, thirst-maddened, leap
between the oars and sink with the plunging blades;
and others, woken from this frenzy
by the cold contagion of their grave
gain wilder frenzy, swimming in hopeless wake
until exhaustion sucked them back
or slant-eyed monsters tore their screaming limbs.
Violent the shapes of death the young have learned
to witness, coldly, with the bleak indifference
of the sea; so that coming to this fertile shore
where bird nor beast enflamed the single green
with colour, they knew no better than to fight
among themselves, and killing, ate the flesh
they killed. Then when their company was halved
the plangent fear that had become a part
of living sped them on again -

THE ANCIENT CARIB (Contd.)

leaving the senile, like the priests of some
ungodly faith, to clean the stones of blood

Yet somewhere are forgotten islands, close
to the morning sun, or close to the blue-
veined moon that walks in her sleep.
And day and night in those islands are
the silver and gold that women wear for feasting;
and after the feast they are cast aside.
Their fragrance is gone, returned to the forests,
to the winds that give the trees their perfume
and flowers behind their ears. So are they born again,
as the daughters are born who shall wear them.
Somewhere the cliffs are cauldroned with foam,
and unstaired cliffs look down on the passing ships.
There is my people's respite.
Fearlessly our men will die, knowing they leave
a seed of whom they shall be born again.
And in the short-lived days, when night
puts out an early hand to light the stars
and lovers laugh at the quartered moon,
the old will sit by firesides and talk.
And in their talk perhaps they will forget
the white-skinned men and the scarlet galleons,
and all who spilt their lives upon the sterile waves.

Geoffrey Drayton
(1923-

THE COBBLER

The cobbler, cerebral in flight,
Tests density of air with wing
Tight on the lifting flood. A kite,
He sleeps between twin heavens, on string
Of wind - or darts, a bird again, to swim
His oceans, of fish and star.
Only the storms unsaddle him,
Sky-rider; with seraph lightnings bar
His solitary Eden... That he
Who companies with wind and clouds,
Choosing for world the incurious sea,
Becomes a weather-cock of crowds,
Steepled on fingers' stare.

But watch
Him gear against the tempest, bend
Again to froth of shore and scotch
His landward running; rear and rend
The arras sky - the wind this once
A foe. Sheerly he mounts, to scale
The thunder, and high, from turret sconce
Outstares the guttering squib of gale.
Lamely he turns at last, where solace is,
To space, aneling trespasses
Against his proud identity.

Geoffrey Drayton
(1923-

OLD BLACK BEGGAR

Her age none but her god could know.
The years had thrown long shadows in her brain,
Patterned in timeless disarray.
For some their own immortality to speak,
Unhonoured, through her dotard's tongue --
Their wisdom like familiar sounds
That seem a part of silence.
The moon, they said, had shone upon her face
And made it crooked. Her feet were bare,
Dark and rheumatic like mahoganies,
And on her breast forever the tarnished crucifix.
The weary brain that coffined much of man
Was windowed for her god
Like some bright chapel-aisle.
White money, she asked
Bending in benediction.
And laughter and pity checked at her blessing.

Geoffrey Drayton
(1923-

SPECULATIONS ON URANIUM

Perhaps were many beginnings before the cell,
Alga, and sponge, of that pre-Cambrian shell,
Before our first crustacean dug its tail
And wrote crude history in the burrowed shale.
And many endings there were - in a tulip fire
That scorched the flying things, and fuelled higher,
Ticked at the stars; that fell in blackened petals
On soil that writhed. And molten rock and metals
Bubbled a coiling gas. Again the earth
Was sun - its substance purged for purer birth.
Perhaps those deaths were autumns in greater time;
Then came the winter of rocks, and the careful climb
From the cell. Perhaps the earth fulfils its span
Like trees, and, using the foolish wit of man
Renews itself. The fire is never dead.
It smiled in the stone of axe and arrowhead,
Spoke in the steel, and laughed outright in the gold.
But its heart is in secret graves, in dusts that hold
Beginning and end. And they shall be named and sought;
Priests will be given them, and crusades fought;
They shall be feared, and loved, in the market place
Looked at and loved for their god-great face.

Cecil Herbert
(1924-

THE PARROTS

O flight ecstatic O screaming birds

Always when evening stains the skies
With its rich hibiscus shades
Westward you wing your way in ecstasy
Carving your curves on clouds
And curving mingle your raucous cries
With the resonant tone of the sea.

O birds O birds in ecstasy flying

Confess your fear of forest strife
Where tongue and heart of singing bird
In a flash by fanged death are smothered,
And cleave to trees clawed vines
Continually seeking to leech the veins
Of the flesh that gives them life.

O birds ecstatic O screaming birds

At the water's edge where the tansy grows
Where waves pick at rocks incessantly
And blosson into flowers of foam
Strides one who flees with a scream
From the fangs and claws of his fellows
And from bitterness tries to wring beauty

O birds O screaming birds O birds

Note how he trembles and turns,
As if in a dream and with piercing moans
He burns to the bone and fiercely mourns
For the ancient bird men once called love
Is a tangle of feathers tossed and torn
And the rude hawk, hate, rules above.

O birds O birds in ecstasy flying

Follow this fellow and scream your cry.
Pierce his heart with your vivid hope
That the ancient bird dead does not lie,
Restore his radiant tongue;
And then O birds O screaming birds
From tongue and heart will be wrung.

What words ecstatic what singing words.

C. L. Herbert
(1924-

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
(1924-

LINES WRITTEN ON A TRAIN

If, in response to the sobbing
Of wheels consuming miles of rail
Or the spirituals the peasants sing,
My heart was to flutter and reel

And my eyes to fill with tears,
He would not understand who sits
At my side and silently shares
The display of commonplace sights:

The fields where restless fires
Cause a horse to break his rope
And flee erratic, through the choirs
That moving sing and singing reap

The canes; for mine and mine alone
Is the thought, that through the peasants' hearts --
Though they seem as callous as stone --
Some river runs which soothes their hurts,

While willy-nilly hearts like mine
Must roam ten thousand years of days
Afraid, lest with intractable whine
The river absorb the fire that slowly dies.

Jan Carew
(1924-

DREAM SPINNING

The crows that speck my tropic skies
soared over valleys of my green days
and time, the gambler time
flung clouds like dice in windy vortices that tunnel skies;
while I crossed the wide Atlantic seas
where seagulls diving to the arched sea swell
startled to bells that rang farewell to Cancer.

But herons still fly to Ichillibar at day-clean
and Potaro spins whirlpools
to entomb a boatman's dream.

Jan Carew
(1924-

GREEN ZOMBIES

Green zombies of the wild-cane reeds
live in sleepy hollows of the West Wind
fluting crazy tunes
that reach the crinkled sand dunes by the amber sea,
where wild black fishermen
use castanettes
to lure the mermaids from their muddy caves,
And crabdogs like the hounds of hell
stand sentinel
gnawing at bones of dreaming men
which floated for a while on ocean tides
and plunged down fathoms deep and cool
to the mermaid's caves.

Green zombies who intone
from blacksage groves
where watermellon vines run wild,
call on the drummer men to thump strange tunes,
and flash-eyed ghosts who never sleep
part bisi-bisi reeds
to watch a fire higue
dancing with the moon in the deep of lotus pools;
the fire higue swoops, pirouettes
and lips the cold white moon with fire.

Green zombies live by night
to scatter lazy fireflies
from lily beds
and mock the fluting owl.
Green zombies never sleep
until the dew is sucked away by humming birds
from the deep chalices of balsa flowers.

Jan Carew
(1924-

AIOMON KONDI

Aiomon Kondi, dweller in the heights
saw with his condor eye
a blue, buck-crab sky
and white sun blazing untamed
like fury or pain in a jaguar,
white sun lashing like a Llanero whip,
white sun stewing jungles green
blinding the hunter's trail,
white sun stalking like an ocelot
arched and indolent with intense hunger,
white sun lying on black rivers like a lover,
white sun silvering the rain . . .
and night drowning starlight
and tinamous singing, singing
and wind strumming liana vines.

Aiomon Kondi sculptor with crude hands
carved godheads on Roraima of the red rock
and when Kabo Tano, thunder god promised no rain,
harvested clouds with white scythes of lightning
that he might sit for ever in the heights with
Arawidi, spirit of the white sun.

Jan Carew
(1924-

THE CHARCOAL BURNER

The charcoal under grave-mounds
is my heart,
black and born in fire
My heart when green is a bough of wild mango
rocking in the wind in the forests of Canje.
Canje is a black river
which sucks its water
from the maracage beyond Manarabisi,
its water is bitter with the sap
of manicole and ite palms.

Martello the charcoal burner
chops down the green limbs of my heart
heaps fresh spaded earth on them,
stands like a sentinel,
watching the wood-smoke reach up
to touch the bright wings of cranes and herons.
Martello waits until my heart's a midnight black.
Someday my heart will glow again
in coalpots and sacrificial braziers
and Wind like a sacred shango broom
will sweep away the ashes.

Martello the black sentinel
has a diamond heart,
in seasons of bright sun and drowning rains
he'll burst asunder pale ramparts of heaven
with bare hands and bare feet
to pluck wild orchids
of ultinate release.

Barnabas Ramon -Fortune
(19

THE SEA -REAPERS

Through the long, fallow months of spawn
They wait, who with their scythes of nets
Sally in fishing boats at dawn
To reap the sea. They wait until
The bounding fish like comets leap
And streak across the dull-blue deep
To dive amidst the heap of stars
That sparkle beneath the minarets
Of light that flame out of the sea
Beyond the golden boundary,
And wish upon the shooting stars
That in the harvest-time, their nets
Will drag the gunwales of their ships
Like grateful and thanksgiving lips
To kiss the bosom of the sea.

Then will they row out to the bars
Where fishes flounder, prance and fling
Their tails in vivifying dance,
And pray with every Christ-turned breath
That once, as at Genesareth,
The fish-nets broke, so they will bring
With straining keep and creaking oar
Great herds of fishes to the shore.

But now they wait and let the fish
Run through the channels of the sea
To find their marriage-bed of rocks
Deep in mid-ocean, or blue nooks
Far from the lure of the baited hooks
And roam the waters as they wish:
While, in the sun, they mend their nets
Or laze and lurch about the docks
At home in all the noise and grime
Or spend their hours carelessly
Half-drunk outside the rum-shop doors
From dawn until the red sun sets.

Thus they await the harvest-time
When they should see the shoal of stars
Out yonder on the fishing bars:
When, setting out as silhouettes
Against the dawn, they take their oars
And, shouldering their swinging seine,
With a loud sea-song in their throats
They troop the beach down to their boats
And go to reap the sea again.

R.L.C. McFarlane
(192

THE CATERPILLAR SHEARS THE LEAF

The caterpillar shears the leaf,
Barns the sweetness which he reaps,
In the long brown house.
Through the winter's siege, relief
Rocks the cradle where he sleeps
Gathered from carouse.

He shall wake just as the year
Turning slowly on its side
Starts to find him fled.
And as suddenly reappear
To deny he ever died
Or comes now from the dead.

Hugh Popham
(19

W. I.

The waterfront smells of rum
copra, molasses, tar,
the black-hulled schooners come
from the near islands and far,
the sloops with their lee-rails wet,
and all with a crisp white wave at their water-line,
"Nita Juanita", "Zenith", "Annandale", "Caroline".

The painted mountains lean
over the painted town,
against the trade-wind sky,
mauve and jungle green.
The jade fields and the brown
the low lands and the high,
support their palm-thatch huts, their shacks backed
with rusty tin,
and fade, all fade, as the smudging rain sweeps in.

Behind the bay-front stores,
the bank and the cinema,
the well-paved roads dissolve.
The cart-tied donkey snores;
the man at the rum-shop bar
watches the day revolve
through the slats of the half-door shutters, and
yawns and drinks,
and a mongrel watching a lizard, shifts into the
shade and blinks.

But beyond the town, and back,
where the wild banana grows
and the tree-ferns' sculptured bark
pillars the climbing track
steep fields the farmer hoes
from dawn to lazy dark,
in valleys where once the arms of the Caribs
clashed and rang,
where now the menacing years of volcanic silence hang.

The women stride, straight-backed,
Upright and big of breast,
baskets upon their heads
with all the bright fruit stacked.
Stride without pause or rest
by the side of the river-beds,
the fifteen or twenty reeling miles that take the town,
Squat and haggle at market, and return when the sun goes down.

These are forgotten days
of hewers of wood and stone,
of the squealing six-ox cart;
island of long delays,
indolence bred in the bone,
of animal ease at heart.
Only the grass grows fast, and the scarlet tree and the green,
the separate, red hibiscus flowers splashed like fresh blood
between.

E. H. Roach
(19

HOMESTEAD

Seven splendid cedars break the trades
From the thin gables of my house,
Seven towers of song when the trades rage
Through their full green season foliage.
But weathers veer, the drought returns,
The sun burns emerald to ochre
And thirsty winds strip the boughs bare, (CG has a pause here)
Then they are tragic stands of sticks
Pitiful in pitiless noons CG omits this
And wear dusk's buskin and the moon's.

And north beyond them lie the fields
Which one man laboured his life's days, (CG no comma)
One man wearying his bone
Shaped them as monuments in stone,
Hammered them with iron will
And a rugged earthy courage, CG "earthly"
And going, left me heritage.
Is labour lovely for a man
That drags him daily into earth
Returns no fragrance of him forth?

The man is dead but I recall
Him in my voluntary verse, CG "Song"
His life was unadorned as bread, CG semi colon
He reckoned weathers in his head
And wore their ages on his face
And felt their keenness to his bone
The sting of sun and whip of rain.
He read day's event from the dawn
And saw the quality of morning
Through the sunset mask of evening. CG has 'in'

In the fervour of my song
I hold him firm upon the fields
In many homely images.
His ghost's as tall as the tall trees;
He tramps those tracks his business made
By daily roundabout in boots
Tougher and earthier than roots;
And every furrow of the earth
And every wind-blown blade of grass
Knows him the spirit of the place.

He was slave-son, a peasant one, CG has "A slave-man's Son"
Paysan, Paisano, any common
Man about earth's fields, world over,
In the cotton, corn and clover
Who are unsung, but who remain
Perpetual as the earth winds pass,
Unkillable as the earth's grass,
Who from their graves within their graves CG has "Their"
Nourish deep arteries of earth CG has "deep mothers"
And give her substance, give her worth.

O Sons, O strong ones from their loins,
Boldly inherit the good earth CG "the wide"
Though you keep their homespun traces
Or run in splendid gilded races.
O poets, painters, tinkers turn CG has "thinkers"
Again and take new craft from old
Worth and wisdom however cold. CG has "on the wold"
O cornerstones of the crazed world,
O nourishers of earth's best blood
Reclaim the weary dying good.

Neville Dawes
(1926-

ACCEPTANCE

(From "Report on a Village")

I praise the glorious summers of pimento
Sun-purple, riper than the wet red clay-smell
Of my youth by cornlight and river-run
As dog and I, we screamed the small green hill
And the salt smooth wind from the leaping sea
Sang in the yellow sunflower.

I praise the dumb scared child made me
In coffee-groves, and the barbecues of graves,
Smelling of ghosts' old country flesh, laid
By my father for his tribe (fictitious as angels);
A small all-alone boy riding to harvest hymns
In the green of the day as the shackle-bell tongued
On the churchy hill-top.

I praise the legends we made
When the drunk hawks and worse were merry
Waltzed up the day
Hallooed the mountains of birds and the nestling curve of the
reeling river
Swam, those eyes reading the first garden's blush and Adam's
When weathers twisted the old thunder-voice
I was King Arthur's irrelevant steed on the lightning page
Castling
All races, all men, the drunk hawks and worse
Climbing together the top of the colourless rain
To the dappling sun.

I praise all this
Returning in a shower of mango-blossoms --
The creaking village, the old eyes, the graves, the sun's kiss --
And lonely as ever, as the bare cedars,

I walk by the stream (where boys still plash
Dusking and falling in a star-apple sunset,)
And find her there, ancient as the lost lands,
Bandannaed and gray and calling:
Then I read the monumental legend of her love
And grasp her wrinkled hands.

Neville Dawes
(1926-

FUGUE

Have seen the summer convex of the wounded sky
want to catch it and clutch it and make it sing
of the wild wind's whisper and the hard-boiled sun
and the blue day kissing my mountain away
where the hawks dip wing-tipped diving.

Have seen the curved mane of the wind-whipped cane
want to snap it and squeeze it and make it rain
on the roots of the summer-tree withering
where my mountain mouths lie sleeping
and the hawks dip wing-tipped diving.

Have seen the curving prism of the rainbow's shaft
want to pluck it and plait it and make it bend
to pattern in the brain of the mountain top
where my grief is sighing like a fingered stop
where the hawks dip wing-tipped diving
and the graves are green at the world's end.

E. H. Roach
(19

HE PLUCKED A BURNING STYLUS

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. H. Roach
(19

AT GRAFTON BAY

A greenery of arching fronds
Top these littoral palms;
Soft breezes stir a susurrus in them,
But high seawinds tease and torment them
Tossing their columns under the sky.
Their green round chalices of fruit
Hold bread and wine of earth and sun,
A sweet cool eucharist for all.

The tide rolls foam into the bay,
And with the wind speaks in the scene
Hear as you may what other voices:
Through wind and water, faith and prayer,
Whisper of growth and cloud's soft drifting,
The glittering melody of light,
The lyric of each wheeling world,
The epic of the universe.

Rooted in sand, long ropes to the sea
Reap the bones of the sea; rope-tough
Sinews, Peter's and all, hauling at ropes.
For a seacatch of Christ, for the meal of a miracle
Multitudes hunger, for peace on the waters.
The shoal of life drowns in the air
Till the fullness of death, the stillness of rock
Possess and restore them, sepulchre from pain.

All's relative, reciprocal;
Death scythes down the sinewed reapers;
Lo, they fall to earthen bins,
To the bitter shark-tooth burial;
Their dole of labour, hunger, pity
Stumbles on empty tragedy;
The ceaseless, ruthless, sullen sea
Snarls at their rock of destiny.

Samuel Selvon.
(19

SUN

Will we ever discover tropic? Sun, insisting in the sky,
You make us wet with red dreams of freedom, burning
Whereas we will not burn. By what simple means
Your fire flames on these green islands,
To what purpose you there in sky we on earth
We cannot fathom. We squint back at you
In the canefield, slaving under your venomous fist,
We in streams bathe in your heated face,
And those who are a little wise ask
The old questions and watch the sky for rain. Sun,

Grinning on my shoulder, I with back bent
You with June's immortelle crawl in thick jungle
Deceiving with the promise of another day,
Priming my children for my death
And the catastrophe of their own lives. Knuckle
Of fire in my eye, yellow glare in air spinning
Over these green islands to attract people from the north,
Knowing as we turn earth how viciously we whisper
Comforting words to our neighbours to keep their chins up
Though their knees buckle at the nothingness of things.

George Lanning
(1927-

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 lane, 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
(1927-

THE ILLUMINED GRAVES

Annually the mourners make their procession
To where their departed parts were stalled,
Over the sobbing leaves distressfully sprawled
Their quick affections trip,
And eyes lean towards the sky
In customary dissolution of cares
As some ceremonially ate their dead
To renew the contagion of living,
So these by similar assertion of love
Promote their faith in flame,
Remembering the ceremony of undying souls
With a meek congregation of candles.
Light leaps along the marble images
Of saints ascending in prayer
Or birds descending in a twitter of grief.
And over remembered allotments of earth
A pale illumination proceeds.
Beneath these grave and deciduous decorations,
Solemn as a midnight soiled with suspicion
Lie the late and dissolved dead.
The cemetery quivers with a waking memory,
Shadows embrace the trees,
Through our thick and habitual evening
The wild hallucinations scurry;
As leaves suffering the season's fancy
Settle on their receiving soil,
Those who continue their death in life
Remember this annual retreat
Where custom carries its consoling fictions.
And a decorous decrepitude is all.
Stranger to these meek commemorations.
Of faith in a legend of candle flame
Who through curious eyes considers
In tangled thickets in the mind's far corners
All palpable contradiction of being,
Consider now and in these fields
Of flaming lilies on the dear wreathed dead
The act of prayer in lean cracked throats
Whose utterance through tears proclaims
This seasonal paradox of real and ritual.

Annually these mourners make their procession
To where the departed parts were stalled,
Their hands in piteous postures probe
The liquid guilt all eyes secrete.
For every love securely lodged
Within these tapered curves of earth
Their worshipping deaths decree a living lie.
All innocent existences that awake
Mechanically to carol of bird or clock alarm
Crossing some frontier foreign to the senses' reach
Cause public crucifixion of former faiths.
So here in this secluded corner
Of the sobbing world that totters
Through twenty centuries of ordered grief
An innocent tribe habitually enact
In the mourning month of a year's late turn
The heart's perennial slump.
The fabulous mountains are dissolved,
And faiths as rootless as the ravaged weed
To these illumined graves have fled.

George Lamming
(1927-

FOREST HILLS

There is a mountain of fear in a backward glance
And secret dells of wonder cleave like magnet
To the traveller's trepid step.
Look where human strength silly as a child
That blows faint bugles in the dying fire
Has eaten its way across the sinister blades of grass
And the pale, corroding print of human feet
Has mapped a track for those who feel adventure
Bob and weave about their finger-tips.
But, follow, O stranger follow
Those tracks that move with painful, twisted ease
Like snakes whose courage is built upon a venemous lust for blood,
Cling to your strength and tread upon the line of scars
Made here by human feet. Follow, O stranger, follow,
And you shall feel fear in the touch of a leaf.
Sprawled upon the lawn in the coolness of an April evening,
The sun half-hidden between the leaves, and the wash of the waves
Chanting your freedon to the sun-stained rocks,
You look upon the tangled network of these hills
And let your fancy play at hide and seek
Around the unordered mystery that dwells beneath their greenery.
But, follow, O stranger, follow
The tracks heaving and limping like a crutched figure,
Muffle your fear and slip defenceless as a dove
Within the foliage that waits upon you
Like the silence of a bramble-net.
Close the eyes and let the sunlight filter through the lids
Until the leap that quickens your blood
Becomes the steadied rhythm of a forest pool.
And when the wind comes waltzing through the leaves
That form a shroud about your fear
You'll hear the brittle tunes that make
The crackling music of forest fires.

L. E. Brathwaite
~~192~~ -
193- -

MACHIAVELLI'S MOTHER

La Porta de L'Assandria: so we rang the bell,
Staring up the hot grey wall to the twisted
Grills of the balcony, where no flowers grew,
No lion-haired young women laughing down.
No flat signora's voice within
Asking why all the racket
Coming herself to peep and pulling her daughters in.
There was a large clay pot on this balcony,
But broken: the last black gritty soil
Chunked to its shattered sides. No hope for flowers there.
We rang the bell again, looking to the balcony,
Hoping to see some tall romantic woman, mistress
Of the place, lean down to us, placing a hand
Upon the balcony, the other
On the cool brown rift of breasts
She'd try to hide, as she leaned down to us.
But looking up, we saw no door, no window
Opening on the balcony: what entrance-out was there
Was now walled up, and to the flaking sun
The house presented stolidly, a monochrone of clay.
Then all at once the great street door was opening
On creaky hinges, turning from within: but no one
Stood there in the crack it made: it
Opened of its own accord, impelled by some infernal agency:
So stood in sunlight on the threshold for a little longer
Before we entered in: and found:
Antonio Machiavelli:
Pimp and sometime railway porter
Standing in the hall:
Who grinned, showing tobacco teeth and
Bony gums: and
Took us up the dusty stairs
To meet his mother.

This shy suspicious lady, renting rooms,
Moving all day about the house in cold blue slippers,
Tousled hair and tiny pink kimono;
Leaving her door ajar so she could peep her lodgers out
And in; who muttered to herself and shook her rumpled head
So that the papers clinging to her curls became undone,
And she would catch at them and absently begin to roll them in
Again, peering the while beyond her working fingers
As if she anxiously were seeking family diamonds:
Some fine dynastic jewel that was lost:
Was all day -- sweeping the rooms
And pulling the sheets -- trying to find her son,
Antonio: our pimp and railway porter.

Antonio Machiavelli
Had not always been the hollow six foot vulture
That we knew. This pin-point-eyed cadaver,
Who frothed and slobbered while he talked, had once been
Choir-boy and acolyte at the Chappella San Lorenzo:
Slipping clean surplices across his glossy hair:
Clean as a candle and as cool.
But time soon lit his little candle, by whose light,
He saw strange visions: himself a smiling cardinal,
Robed in red velvet, lifting his glittering rings
In benediction over the kneeling kings and temporal
Princes of the world, whom he aneled at shrine,
Advised at council table. And sometimes,
With the incense from his censer travelling up
In blue amorphous trails past the spiked cross
And past the yellow dove, he felt himself

MACHIAVELLI'S MOTHER (Contd.)

Saint Michael the Archangel, cleaving a path of smoke
And wreakage through all the brothels of the town,
Smashing the Day of Judgement in the lechers' cups,
Yelling from house to house his sensual apocalyptic news.
But his voice broke, and he awoke from sanctuary dreams
To find himself a porter at the local railway station
Toting the tourists' bags for tips and working overtime
Among the leaky barrels and the sharp-edged boxes on the sidings:
Heaving and hefting, sweating and trolley carting
All of his dreams away.
At evening
Grew morose and thin, learning his melancholia
Like a plotting child stood in his sulky corner;
And in revenge, sharpened a dangerous whip of wit and tricks,
Cracked it among his friends, flicked it in wicked tongues
Among the local publicans, and posed among off-duty
Prostitutes as an unusual raconteur:
So one day lost his job, spitting a hot white spider
In the boss' face; got drunk; come home; and slapped his mother.

And she, adhering still to her Antonio,
The visionary boy, became preoccupied
And shy, sweeping the chapels of her lonely hopes
To find the boy she lost. So greeted us,
Still muttering to herself, and shook her poodle hair,
And turned aside, still searching, to her room.
And there, among the sewing and the bric a brac,
She kept a bamboo casket
And pulling her kimono tighter round her
This little lady tip-toed shyly by;
Slid back the blue lid of the bamboo casket
With its picture of Lake Como,
And peering mildly in the rustling dark,
Sniffed the warm straw saw
Little pink eyes turned to her, wink and blink out;
Wink and blink out; saw the soft heads,
The minute wet inquisitive pink noses squinting at her;
Turn and delve back, turn and delve back;
Making small cosy noises;
Leaving the curled tails trailing.

And while her son grew
Vulture-eyed and vulgar, tall with disease and drink,
This broken lady
Preserved his cassock and his candles and his holy book.
And though the pain she tried to hide was more than she could bear,
She kept her white mice warm within the casket.
And every time she peeped at them, this mother smiled.

Martin Carter
(1927-

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
(1927-

WEROON WEROON

I came to a benab
sharpening my arrow of stone
knitting my hammock of air
tying my feathers all around my head.

Then I drank from the calabash of my ancestors
and danced my dance of fire
Weroon Weroon --
Land of the waters flowing over me
Weroon Weroon.

And I prayed to the blue ocean of heaven
dreaming of the voyage of death
and my corial* of paradise paddling forever.

Now I climb toward the hole of heaven
and my hands are stretched to the altar of God
O wonder of all the stars departed
Weroon Weroon Weroon . . .

* Pronounced Kree-all

Martin Carter
(1927-

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
(1927-

THIS IS THE DARK TIME MY LOVE

This is the dark time, my love
all round the land brown beetles crawl about.
The shining sun is hidden in the sky
Red flowers bend their heads in awful sorrow.

This is the dark time my love.
It is the season of oppression, dark metal, and tears.
It is the festival of guns, the carnival of misery.
Everywhere the faces of men are strained and anxious.

Who comes walking in the dark night time?
Whose boot of steel tramps down the slender grass?
It is the man of death, my love, the strange invader
watching you sleep and aiming at your dream.

Martin Carter
(1927-

NOT HANDS LIKE MINE

Not hands
like mine
these Carib altars knew --
nameless and quite forgotten are the gods
and mute
mute and alone
their silent people spend
a ring of vacant days
not like more human years
as aged and brown their rivers flow away.

Yes
pressing on my land
there is an ocean's flood --
it is a muttering sea.

Here, right at my feet
my strangled city lies
my father's city and my mother's heart
hoarse groaning tongues
children without love
mothers without blood
all cold as dust nights dim there is no rest.
Ah!
Mine was a pattern woven by a slave
Dull as a dream encompassed in a tomb.

Now still are the fields
Covered by the flood
and those rivers roll
over altars gone.
Naked naked loins
Throbbing deep with life
rich with birth indeed
rouse turning to the sun.

and more fierce rain will come again tonight
new day must clean have floods not drowned the fields
killing my rice and stirring up my wrath?

E. McG. Keane
(19

THE PALM

We came upon you suddenly, naked
In a moon-bath, and you started from the broad
Pool of shadows, and shook
Your tears of shining on us
As we halted in the gazing road,

Hushed under reclining tallness of you
That sighed busily on the hill's rustling shoulder,
And the quiet army of grass
That clambered up your roots
Thinking your moist sorrow bolder

Than theirs; but we knew as we passed on,
That the dew would dry on your bosom, and the sleeping
Rain awake from your hair, but the wind
Would never dissolve your tears, nor
Wrinkling sun your sighs, nor time your weeping...

E. McG. Keane
(19 -

A CAROL IN MINOR

When you have wrapped the last packet
Sealed the last message, signed
The last wish, tucked
The last forgotten friendship in the envelope;
When you have finished trying to bind
This year's sins in pretty little
Confessions of red paper,

Then pause once or twice
Under the gay fragments
Of tinsel Christs
That you have hung about you,

And confess yourself
Ready for everyman's goodwill . . .

Does it matter if you fell
Bored of your own worshipping
When your rubbled stars could tell
Of no new saviour purchasing
Unto his blood your poverty?

Does it matter if after
Two days of love you will sweep
All your broken pints of laughter
Into the last flaccid heap
Of this year's garbage of prosperity?

We are not wise enough for sorrow,
And our confessions come
Only to clear a path
For the next sin.

So next year's proffered candy
Will take care of its own atonements,
And the tinsel gods will briefly tide
Your quick devotions, and wine
Will be handy to hide
The Christless glare
Of your rubbled star-in-the-east;
And you will --
Under new fragments -- confess yourself
Ready for every man's good-will.

E. McE. Keane
(19

PERHAPS NOT NOW

Perhaps not now the crop's comfort.
The chair with its deep harvest of rest.
Afternoon's unhurried naps.
Not now the day,
Some Other Time perhaps;
As yet only work, and waiting, and dreaming and the dust.

They say we must forgive the soil's sins,
Dry echoes of neglect that lurk
Still in its bones. Dumb yet
Is the red clay,
Unlivened by our blood's breath,
For sweet is blood is life to the cold veins of fields we work.

And yet this soil is ours.
And toil is love; for our hearts,
Hardened as bones by the sick blight of prayers unanswered,
Have known no other wooing . . .
Save in the dust our harsh hands are dumb,
And idle our tears, no leisure for lament.
For toil, not tears, our love . . .
So with the clod's naked caress on our feet
We can hate in silence the sun laughing
At our bent backs, knowing
That the same fingers that hollow out the seed's grave
Will nurse soon arisen spirits of a tender vengeance,
Sprouting green-winged over the dust:
And the recompense of fat furrows
Waiting in deep shade of tannia leaves,
Yams and cotton, the cane's generous blood,
And the white dust binding the veins
Of arrowroot in season, -- these will in time
Shelter our children's backs from the sun's slaughter . . .

So if not now the reaper's boon of rest
The crop's beatitude,
And dry echoes still harry the bones of earth,
Tell soon the day --
The Other Time - when love and our toil
Shall quicken the sick crust, and give our waiting worth.
And hope nourish our dreaming in the harvest-hoarding dust.

Derek Walcott
(1929-

A MOTH AND A FIREFLY

A moth and a firefly
Are locked here in the dark.
They butt against the wall
As impatient fingers will
Drum on a window sill.
So then may the eyes
Of a blind man flit,
His will never tires,
But flaps against despair.
Light is what dark allows;
Firefly, give my soul such
Rare resolution, and give it
A light in a veined house.

Derek Walcott
(1929-

A CITY'S DEATH BY FIRE

After that hot gospeller 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 of fire.

Derek Walcott
(1929-

THE ABSOLUTE SEA

Multiply time, O sea of magic mirrors,
Let winds whip bandages from memory,
Blue steamers, masts like delicate visitors
To palms that saw the air in mummery;
Alan, follow the sweep of terns and scissor
Birds, and on the shuddering shoulder,
The bridge of exiles, hear the singing wires,
Follow the gulls' shriek over crumpled water
Jailing the air with cries, stitching with cries
The loose lace of the wake.

Though you grow older
That wide swung sea of wrinkles never dies,
The drilling birds that scream out in white laughter
Sail to that shape, Cythera in indigo,
An island like a whale, tethered to horizons,
For bows in moving seek a greener zone
Where naked boys and yellow apples grow;
That port is not the navigator's chart
But the blue praries where the dolphins dart,
That is the antique island of the heart.
A wilder love than Colomb or Amerigo
Cleans you as white and hopeful as a deck.
This is discovery, from a dark birth we start,
Scatter a blueflecked sea, scuttle at dusk
On the huge continent of original dark.

The engines underfoot, above the wires,
The pointed spears of masts where gulls are thick
Trail currents of air like flags, false hills and spires
Dance on the eye like an illusory fin,
Young as you are, the Ulysses never tires
To search under the glass for what has been.
The skeleton's music was always too slick
The bone too smooth an answer, no replies
Shall please you but the grey sea's shanty tune
And the white wandering ignorance of the moon.

Derek Walcott
(1929-

EXTRACT FROM HENRI CHRISTOPHE

(A Poetic Drama)

Dessalines: Every slave dreams in extremes,
And we were both, Henri.
You think I am tricking you? I am your friend.

Christophe: I am the friend of the people.
We must avoid opportunities of separation;
You kill offenders because of their complexion;
Where is the ultimate direction of this nation,
An abbatoir of war?

Dessalines: I who was a slave, am now a king,
And being a king, remember I was alave;
What shall I live as now, a slave or king?
Being this king chains me to public breath
Worse than chains. I cannot have a masque
Before some slave scoops up a gutter tale
To fling into my face; I cannot drink
Red wine, unless the linen rustles blood; I cannot break bread
Before an archbishop canonizes a body
Broken, stuck like an albatross on the hill of skulls.
Well, I will not listen.
White men are here; for every scar (*baring his tunic*)*
Raw on my unforgiving stomach, I'll murder children,
I'll riot. I have not grown lunatic, I'll do it, I'll do it.
You think I am not aware of your intrigues,
Mulattoes and whites, Brelle and Pétion;
I am asking: Argue with history.
Ask history and the white cruelties
Who broke Boukman, Oge, Chavannes; ask Rochambeau.
If you will not comply, I'll go. (*Exit*)*

Christophe: That is the crazy graph of power,
The zenith of his climb; he thinks himself Colossus, but size
Spells ruin, the earth is cracking now under his girth.
We must look after us, or he will ...
A lunatic king.

Sylla: If I could only warn, a grey haired harbinger,
Helpless as time to warn her pupils;
There is nothing more to life, gentlemen,
Than to find a positive function for the money in the blood
To culture peace.
The meeting is over,
Nothing gained again...

* Italics

Derek Walcott
(1929-

AS JOHN TO PATMOS

As John to Patmos, among the rocks and the blue live air hounded
His heart to peace, as here surrounded
By the strewn silver on waves, the wood's crude hair, the rounded
Breasts of the milky bays, palms, flocks, and the green and dead

Leaves, the sun's brass coin on my cheek, where
Canoes brace the sun's strength, as John in that bleak air
So am I welcomed richer by these blue scapes Greek there
So I will voyage no more from home, may I speak here.

This island is heaven away from the dustblown blood of cities
See the curve of bay, watch the straggling flower, pretty is
The winged sound of trees, the sparse powdered sky when lit is
The night. For beauty has surrounded
These black children, and freed them of homeless ditties.

As John to Patmos, among each love-leaping air,
O slave, soldier, worker under red trees sleeping, hear
What I swear now, as John did,
To praise lovelong the living and the brown dead.

Derek Walcott
(1929-

LETTER TO MARGARET

Each day the calendar unlocks the tired crowds roaring
For fun; clerks with inkstained souls, children, women with blonde hair
Moving in the compulsion of touring
The paper-wrecked lawns, the dirty, the debonair,
And cricketers, advancing before the language of applause,
Are cheered by yellow, pink, black hands,
Suspiciously united in one cause,
As though the gunman, Duty, behind them stands.

Bravado of brass, and the holiday band,
Lulls or punctures their sunpatched boredom. Barefoot
Black laughter from those who cannot understand
The wrongs of the social ladder. Pluck from the root
This flowering evil of those divided by coins,
The blonde who shrivels when a seat
Is taken by an eventual husband whom death joins
And nibbles. The nigger she will not eat

Near to, is hardly as repulsive to the worm.
Both suffer an anonymity of bone,
His body's image, stiffened out of harm,
Is the one comfort to allay his groan.
Daily my gift to a nervous crowd of roars
Conceals my anger under lip-thin laughter,
And when the pavilion of pigments applauds after
Some skin-surpassing stroke, I itch to scratch the sores

Under the green epidermis of the lawn.
But single, I am helpless, so rather Margaret,
I remember chaperoned afternoons of fun,
And one pavilion, equally replete
With the three hues occasion disciplines,
And send this in print to you to read
In payment for that gravest of all sins
Not answering my letter. You must heed

Because respect for habits of praise compels
Applause to talent on cricket field or pages.
Now read again, and I feel this repels,
The twisted speech, the difference in ages.
From that dark prose, you nurtured the suspicion,
Wondering innocently, if I was as dark.
Lady, I offer to make one remission,
For kicking my heels in chastity's trimmed park.

I swear to restrain the choleric adjective,
Harangue my dreams, discharge amorous recruits,
Solicit your smiling graveness and behave
As poets should, insipid as their fruits.
Helpless I studied apart, the conniving
Saboteur, Terror, distort the heart's destination,
As men with paunches watch an appetite for loving
Constrict to hobby and habit, I lost my station.

So since I loved you, the tracks have been smothered
By creepers, reconsideration, lost desires,
Like cruel thorns inherit the rose road.
Hate lies entangled in its own barbed wires,
Still I retain the unreason of remembering
Simplicity in plaits, your snowy teeth.
And the grey ignorance of your unschooled eyes,
And time that wore your freshness like a wreath.

LETTER TO MARGARET (Contd)

Hidden in the green conversation of hedges,
I sketched our house, the smart suburban shrubbery,
Your proud and brittle family would trim the edges,
And roses keep your father quiet, (Very.)
A river's lights flickering in nursery wall.
Under that careless sky, the strolling clouds,
Would envy the green trimmed union of the will.

And once combined there, charm and hardihood,
No longer cautious except to the crude.
You would be clean as streams and scour the prude
And from our union channel all delight
Like a bright river to a murmuring calm,
Brave and obedient when the nigger night
Has laid its head to sleep on day's blonde arm.

Derek Walcott
(1929-

IN A GREEN NIGHT

The orange tree, in varying light,
Proclaims her fable perfect now
That her last season's summer height
Bends from each overburdened bough.

She has her winters and her spring,
Her moult of leaves, which, in their fall
Repeal, as with each living thing,
Zones truer than the tropical.

For if at night each orange sun
Burns with a comfortable creed,
By noon harsh fires have begun
To quail those splendours which they feed;

Or mixtures of the dew and dust
That early shone her orbs of brass
Mottle her splendour with the rust
She seemed all summer to surpass.

By such strange, cyclic chemistry
Which dooms and glories her at once
As green yet ageing orange tree
The mind enspheres all circumstance.

No Florida, loud with citron leaves,
Nor crystal falls to heal an age
Shall calm our natural fear which grieves
The loss of visionary rage.

Yet neither shall despairing blight
The nature ripening into art,
Nor the fierce noon or lampless night
Wither the comprehending heart.

The orange tree, in varying light
Proclaims her fable perfect now
That her last season's summer height
Bends from each overburdened bough.

Dennis C. Scott

LET BLACK HANDS GROW

Let black hands grow sinews of silk to spin
bright visions for a world. Let there be drums,
the sea-proud hill-joy dance-high strength that comes
from a dark line of kings, and exiled kin
of peasants from spiced India, and thin-
lipped orientals with their lotus dreams,
and dignity and laughter, and rich themes -
black bodies burning in the sun, and sin.

But to forget this is to fret our fate:
we are not separate; the tales we tell,
our statues, music, all our culture's streams,
can not be great without that Truth which seems
the fabric of great fables. Song must swell
from native throats, but tell of all men's state.

A P P E N D I X

Federation, the Units and their Culture

The ancients believed that education and culture were not a formal art or an abstract theory separate and distinct from the objective, historical structure of a nation's spiritual life. West Indian thinkers are generally agreed that if the federation of the widely scattered British West Indian territories is to be a success, there must be a dynamic application of this fundamental concept. Education connotes training and development, and enables the individual to take his rightful place in the community. Culture begins when the individual is permitted to enter into and share the thoughts of his fellows. Education and culture create a norm of conduct: they evolve a formula of expression which is the very genius of a people The supreme expression of this genius is in the living works of the creative artists - the painters, the musicians, the writers.. ..

It has been the custom among nations to celebrate their outstanding events by mammoth displays by their armed forces. The West Indies, the new nation rising in the Caribbean, has, as yet, no navy, nor air force, no established army of its own - in fact none of the outward trappings of other nations of the modern world. Historians will probably record that the Munro Doctrine, enunciated by the United States for the protection of the Americas, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, respect for an evolving British Commonwealth of Nations and enlightened world opinion, have made the new nation a practical possibility in the present context of world politics. Other recent Commonwealth examples of comparatively defenseless nations include the Federated States of Malaya in Asia and Ghana in Africa. They help to demonstrate the fact that any people who have seen their generations come and go, and are developing their own way of life and their own culture may be considered a nation. They also indicate how regional the world has become in its thinking and in its organisation; and administer a mild rebuke, in these "outer space" days, that nationhood consists not so much in material acquisition as in spiritual development.

It is a happy augury, therefore, that West Indian political leaders should have agreed that an Arts Festival, the first to be organised on a regional basis in the British Caribbean, should co-incide with the launching of the Federation of the West Indies and the opening of the first Federal Parliament in April, 1958. It is also note-worthy that the planners of the Arts Festival should have decided that contributions to the Festival should have a West Indian motivation.

The Festival was designed to present the best exhibition of the cultural and artistic achievements of the British West Indian people; to encourage a healthy national sentiment by emphasising the indigenous aspects of our culture and art; and to indicate the cultural contributions which the West Indies can make. There were plays depicting West Indian history, mores, problems and aspirations, including an epic drama, Drums and Colours, which the young St. Lucian poet, Derek Walcott, was commissioned to write, and a musical drama, Busha Bluebeard, based upon the Jamaican pantomime by the celebrated actress and folklorist, Louise Bennett; there were concerts by musicians, singers and choral groups; modern creative dancing; a carnival

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cavalcade featuring outstanding steel bands, calypso and dance groups; exhibitions depicting Caribbean architecture and West Indian history, the latter entitled "The Growth of a Nation"; and a display of sculpture, pottery and ceramics. The exhibition of paintings included contributions not only from the British Caribbean, but also from Cuba, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Martinique, Guadeloupe, Puerto Rico, Venezuela, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

It seems only natural that national pride should seek for indigenous artistic expression. In the Caribbean, distances between the English-speaking units are considerable. Generally speaking, the West Indian territories are closer to the French-, Spanish- and Dutch-speaking lands than they are to each other. There are men of goodwill who believe that some of the territories have nothing to gain by Federation, just as there are men of goodwill who are convinced Federalists. The people who do not believe in Federation feel that as between Jamaica and the Eastern Caribbean there has been little or no intercourse among the units, and that the distances between them are too great. When one considers the binding and effective organisations of the great religious and linguistic empires of the world, and the far-flung nature of the British Commonwealth and Empire itself, clearly distance is no deterrent. Furthermore, with the advent of air travel, radio, television and other scientific and technological advances, the geographical constants have been greatly altered by the time process.

But what are the peculiar characteristics of the British units of the Caribbean? What are their salient features, and what do they bring to the totality of West Indian culture?

To assist me in the following brief, if crude, breakdown of the units, my distinguished colleague, Mr. W. Adolpje Roberts, poet, novelist and historian, has prepared some notes, which I have since augmented from his books, The Caribbean: Our Sea of Destiny, The French in the West Indies and Lands of the Inner Sea, as well as from other sources.

> BARBADOS was formally taken over by the English in 1625, thirty years before the capture of Jamaica. The aboriginal inhabitants, the Arawaks had been killed off by the warlike Caribs, who had failed to establish settlements of their own. The island was, therefore, uninhabited when pre-empted and settled by Englishmen. The first Irish, Scots and Welsh brought there were bondsmen. They were followed by Negro slaves, who added the only other racial strain. Barbados was never occupied, even briefly, by a rival power during the many wars that raged for the possession of Caribbean territory. It nurtured sober English customs, which all sections of the population came to share. The sobriquet, "Bimshire", on which the island has prided itself has real significance. It boasts the oldest school of university standing in the British Caribbean, Codrington College, named for its benefactor, Christopher Codrington, a planter, who had served as Governor General of the Leeward Islands, and died in 1710. The island has the highest literacy rate in the West Indies. Its culture has, nevertheless, been primitive, if unified and tranquil. The population is predominantly Negro with a white minority.
>
> DOMINICA and ST. LUCIA are more French than English. These islands have changed hands several times, and were not finally annexed by England until after the middle of the eighteenth century. The earlier French settlers had intermarried with the Caribs, and were responsible for the first impress of European civilization upon the islands. The common people today speak a French patois, and the St. Lucian poet, Derek Walcott, has reproduced this dialect, with signal success, in some of his plays, notably in his Ione, and in his prize-winning entry, The Sea at Dauphin,

in the Adult Drama Festival of Jamaica in 1956. As mentioned earlier, Dr. Daniel Thaley, native-born writer of Dominica, does his best work in French. It should be noted here that there is a Carib reservation eleven miles inland from Marigot in Dominica, and that this is the only place in the West Indian island, where a self-contained community of aboriginees can be seen. The inhabitants of these two islands are mainly of the Roman Catholic persuasion, and are, in varying degrees, an admixture of aboriginal, African and European types with a white minority.

ST. KITTS, ST. VINCENT and GRENADA also show Gallic influences, but to a less marked degree. The populations are predominantly Negro.

TRINIDAD was never French, but the Spaniards allowed a large French immigration before and after the revolution in Saint Dominigue now Haiti. There were probably more French-speaking than Spanish-speaking residents when the English acquired the island in 1797. The population is approximately one-third East Indian, one-third Negro, the rest Spanish, French and other European creoles, a small Chinese and English minority, as well as varying admixture of these races.

ANTIGUA never belonged to any power other than England, and next to Barbados it is the most British of the islands.

JAMAICA is larger than all the abovenamed islands put together, and it has about half the population of the entire British Caribbean. It had been Spanish for 145 years, and had already developed some culture at the time of the English conquest by Penn and Venables in 1655. Many other influences of European origin seeped in. French planters and their families came as refugees after the slave revolt in Haiti. There was a desultory interchange of traders with Cuba, only ninety miles away, and with Central America. After the abolition of slavery, Chinese were brought in as indentured servants to work in the cane fields, but as this policy did not prove very successful in the Caribbean, the authorities turned to India. The Indian migration to the region continued until 1917, when after a bitter attack by Mahatma Ghandi, the British Government acceded to the request of the Government of India that indentured migration should cease. The Indian, Chinese and European minorities are very small, the overwhelming majority of the inhabitants being of Negro origin. After the conquest, Jamaica did not develop an intellectual life of its own until the nineteenth century, but the wealth of many of its resident planters and merchants had caused imported books to be circulated, and a few art objects purchased for homes. Jamaica, however, ranked as a country, in which a homogeneous culture was rapidly taking root, and as such was bound to achieve individuality. The University College of the West Indies was sited there twelve years ago.

BRITISH HONDURAS, which is the only remaining European possession in Central America, was recognised as a British colony in 1862, after centuries of intermittent claims by the Spanish. Its population has been described as 48 per cent Maya Indians, 8 per cent Carib and 16 per cent Spanish Indian, with a sprinkling of Europeans. The English tradition is, therefore, not as strong as in some of the other units, and as H.V. Wiseman has pointed out, its "people possess an emotional warmth and tone which come from Spain rather than from Britain".

BRITISH GUIANA was Spanish, then Dutch, then British, then Dutch, then British again after 1814. It is four times the size of all the other British Caribbean possessions put together, or about that of Great Britain, but its inhabitants number only about three-quarter million souls. By census and by estimate, the ratio of East Indians to Negroes 44 per cent : 38 per cent, which makes British Guiana the only country in the New World in which Orientals outnumber blacks. Dutch, Portuguese and English settlers arrived in that order; and their descendants and other whites or pure strain account for about 3 per cent of the population. The remainder of the poeple consists of mixed bloods and aboriginees. The original Indian population was composed of Arawak until the warlike Caribs came on their strange migration northward from a point of origin believed to have been in Paraguay. Wherever the Caribs

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went in Trinidad and in the Lesser Antilles, they exterminated the Arawaks, but the wide reaches of mountains and forests offered a means of escape in the Guianas. Descendants of both races live as neighbours today. The Guaraunos are the swamp Indians; their habitat has always been the coastlands. Not many years ago explorers discovered a tribe of very pale complexion in the back country: they are the Woyaways. All the aboriginal races put together constitute about 3 per cent of the total population. What is now British Guiana was once Dutch Guiana, and what was once British Guiana is now Dutch Guiana. The Dutch have left their stamp upon the social structure of the territory. When the British took over, with their genius for compromise, they carried on the existing pattern of administration with very little change until in recent years. It seems logical to assume that sooner or later, there will be waves of migration fron the overcrowded islands. My own view is that with migration and development of the rich, untapped hinterland of British Guiana, the British Caribbean seems likely to become de facto a British Guianese empire, with Trinidad as the island city. Sir Walter Raleigh's description after his arrival in 1595 in search of El Dorado still holds good, despite the changes of imperial hands and the political turmoil of recent years: a land "that hath yet her maidenhead, never sacked, turned nor wrought, the face of earth not torn, nor the virtue and salt of the soil spent by manurance".

Of all the territories, Trinidad and British Guiana are the most conmopolitan and have the largest number of non-Christians. The East Indians, whose indentured migration ceased as recently as 1917, represented in the main three major religions, two of which have been important in world history for their numerical following, and all three for their influence upon other faiths. These latest settlers were either Muslims or followers of Islam; Hindus with their federation of faiths and worship of many deities; or Parsees, who embrace Zoroastrianism, and venerate "the spark of the sacred fire". Since it came to be believed among Parsees that people should be born and not converted to Zoroastrianism, as in the Middle East and India, the number of Zoroastrians was, by comparison, very limited. However, the great majority of the people of the Caribbean are Christians. In the English-speaking lands, they share the several denominations of Great Britain, and have been proselytised for some years now, by missionaries of more recent sects in the United States of America. Whether Anglicanism and non-Conformism, on the one hand, or Roman Catholicism, on the other, has been the dominant force, has depended upon the duration of the British or Gallic and Iberian occupation in the past. In the units where the African element is strong, there have been countless revivalist sects or cults. Some of these may be broadly classified as Christian; but others have had their genesis in pagan beliefs in the spirit world, and in the rituals which crossed "The Middle Passage" from Africa up to 1807, when the Slave Trade was abolished. The practice of obeah, which possibly derives from Obboney, "the malicious deity in the Kromanti religion, who pervades heaven, earth and sea", is rapidly dying out and hardly exists in Jamaica today. But there have been curious blends of obeah, revivalism and Christianity in Jamaica, producing what has been known as pocomania. Parallel developments are the shango of the Yoruba tribe in West Africa, which has undergone invention and contrivance in Trinidad and The Leewards, and voodoo which has been merged with Roman Catholicism in certain cults in Haiti. When one adds all these religions, sects and cults to those found among the aboriginees, and takes into consideration those observed among the Jews and the Chinese one might be

pardóned for hazarding that the English-speaking Caribbean has had more religions, denominations and cults than any other place of comparable size and population in the history of man.

Some one thousand languages and dialects are spoken in Africa, but the descendants of the Negro slaves, who were brought from West Africa to the Western World, have lost the languages of their African forefathers. This is the result of a policy which separated and divided up the slaves in such a way as to make communication among them difficult. With the disappearance of these tongues were lost the main body of memories, legends, traditions, customs and religions which the languages came into existence to express. Culturally, this has made the Negro lean very heavily upon those with whom the business of keeping body and soul together has brought him into contact. His memory of his African past may be muscular, emotional atavistic or even intuitive, but it is not a factual or sensual memory, even though some critics like to speak of a Negro sensuality. Historically, his employment has been that of a labourer in the field, and his daily contact with the earth and the rhythm of physical toil have attuned his emotions to the pulses of the land. All these things have conferred upon the Negro the role of cultural medium in the Caribbean. Not having a culture of his own, he shares, mixes, fuses and blends the cultures of the other ethnic groups - the aboriginees, the Europeans, the East Indians, the Chinese, the Jews...

Another occasion must serve for a discussion of such practices as John Canoe, the Hussein Festival, Canboulay and Carnival. They have been finding their way into our literature and our art. If the region's literature is to have any integrity, if it is to interpret West Indian life in West Indian terms, if it is to give the people an image of themselves, these things we have been discussing are its roots, its strength and its weaknesses. They constitute, too, our cultural heritage - one of the richest and most varied in the history of the world. The story of the Caribbean was once the story of master and slave. Today, it is an unfinished epic of partnership and high adventure. The West Indies provides an example of how people of different races, creeds and colours can live together in peace and amity, not one lording the other, but together, rising side by side. Indeed, as Harold Stannard has said, "the Caribbean is the only region in the modern world in which Europe, Asia and Africa meet. In the ancient world they met in the Aegean, and there issued from their meeting the superb civilization of Greece. Who can say what lofty Caribbean destiny is now beginning to weave itself on the loom of time"?

Wycliffe Bennett.