

Caribbean Poems

Martin Carter

1. Death of a Comrade (1950s)

Death must not find us thinking that we die too soon, too soon our banner draped for you I would prefer the banner in the wind Not bound so tightly in a scarlet fold not sodden, sodden with your people's tears but flashing on the pole we bear aloft down and beyond this dark, dark lane of rags. Now, from the mourning vanguard moving on dear Comrade, I salute you and I say Death will not find us thinking that we die. http://silvertorch.com/c-poetry.html

2. I Clench My Fist (1953)

You come in warships terrible with death I know your hands are red with Korean blood I know your finger trembles on a trigger And yet I curse you – Stranger khaki clad. British soldier, man in khaki careful how you walk My dead ancestor Accabreh is groaning in his grave

At night he wakes and watches with fire in his eyes Because you march upon his breast and stamp upon his heart.

Although you come in thousands from the sea Although you walk like locusts in the street Although you point your gun straight at my heart I clench my fist above my head; I sing my song of Freedom!

http://silvertorch.com/c-poetry.html

3. Do Not Stare at Me

Do not stare at me from your window, lady do not stare and wonder where I came from Born in this city was I, lady, hearing the beetles at six o'clock

and the noisy cocks in the morning when your hands rumple the bed sheet and night is locked up the wardrobe. My hands are full of lines

like your breast with veins, lady -So do not stare and wonder where I came from My hands are full of lines like your breast with veins, lady -

and one must rear, while one must suckle life... Do not stare at me from your window, lady. Stare at the wagon of prisoners! Stare at the hearse passing by your gate!

Stare at the slums in the south of the city! Stare hard and reason, lady, where I came from and where I go. My hand is full of lines

like your breast with veins, lady, and one must rear, while one must suckle life. http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/do-not-stare-at-me/

4. The Child Ran Into the Sea

The child ran into the sea but ran back from the waves, because the child did not know the sea on the horizon, is not the same sea ravishing the shore.

What every child wants is always in the distance; like the sea on the horizon. While, on the shore nearby, at the feet of every child shallow water, eating the edges of islands and continents does little more, little more than foam like spittle at the corners of the inarticulate mouth of some other child who wants to run into the sea, into the horizon. *Martin Carter*

Kamau Brathwaite

5. Limbo

And limbo stick is the silence in front of me limbo

limbo limbo like me limbo limbo like me

long dark night is the silence in front of me limbo limbo like me

stick hit sound and the ship like it ready

stick hit sound and the dark still steady

limbo limbo like me

long dark deck and the water surrounding me long dark deck and the silence is over me

limbo limbo like me

stick is the whip and the dark deck is slavery

stick is the whip and the dark deck is slavery

limbo limbo like me

drum stick knock and the darkness is over me

knees spread wide and the water is hiding limbo limbo like me

knees spread wide and the dark ground is under me

down down and the drummer is calling me

limbo limbo like me

sun coming up and the drummers are praising me

out of the dark and the dumb gods are raising me

up up up

and the music is saving me

hot slow step

on the burning ground.

http://www.lakes.cumbria.sch.uk/index/english%20department/cultures/readpoems.htm#li mbo

Mervyn Morris

6. Montage

England, autumn, dusk – so different from the quarter-hour at home when darkness drops: there's no flamboyant fireball laughing a promise to return; only a muted, lingering farewell, and day has passed to evening. *I been there, sort of: New and Selected Poems – Mervyn Morris*

7. Peeling Orange

Dem use to seh yu peel a orange perfec an yu get new clothes

But when mi father try fi teach mi slide de knife up to de safeguard thumb

I move de weapon like a saw inna mi han and de dyamn rind break

An if yu have de time yu can come see mi in mi ole clothes peelin *I been there, sort of: New and Selected Poems – Mervyn Morris*

8. Granny

When Granny died I stumbled in and out her place, remembering banana porridge, fumbling her dog-eared bible, faded bedspread, musty cushions, hugging memories of her love.

From the overflowing funeral this fingled programme is a talisman I carry everywhere. Love is with me still. *I been there, sort of: New and Selected Poems – Mervyn Morris*

9. Examination Centre

Dilapidated room, paint peeling. Sufferers on edge.

The chief invigilator gives the word. The fingered papers rustle.

Outside the centre – part of my recall – trees bend and stretch and breathe. Winds, playful, tease.

We're struggling here with questions and time and longing for a life we glimpse through dust clouding the panes. *I been there, sort of: New and Selected Poems – Mervyn Morris*

Kwame Dawes

10. Time

Not too old to feel the bile, that back-breaking anger, that feeling of death in my heart.

Not too old to turn on their smiles, transparent thin things, wanting to raise an open palm; to strike.

Not too old to watch an ancient one of them lament the encasing of her man, the jutting-bellied cracker, and smile . . .

Not too old to count their grave falling like notches of God's blessing, to say; "Shit, I outlived you, I outlived you."

Not too old to still my tongue, to hum a blue gospel, while my soul wails that old cry of motherlessness.

Not too old to dream of blood, the taste of iron on my lips, the swell of power in my breast.

Not too old to hear the nightriders, to face the starched sheets of this South, with trembling, with the heart of a child.

Not too old, not too old, not too old, not too old. http://bombmagazine.org/article/2618/four-poems

11. Island Memory

Flying over Montserrat

Clear one island. The surf brings you softly to another. Stations of cratered mountains, clouds tightening around the necks Of these green monstrosities.

This archipelago is a trail of memory. On this old path I find a new poem, a new way of seeing myself. These are strange pauses young tender islands.

Below, the sea is clear,
a sharply sloping plain.
The rippled surface like a sheet
of writing paper waiting
to be scratched in clean
white trails: the remnant
of lives written on its softness.
http://bombmagazine.org/article/2618/four-poems

12. Talk

For August Wilson

No one quarrels here, no one has learned the yell of discontent—instead, here in Sumter we learn to grow silent, build a stone of resolve, learn to nod, learn to close in the flame of shame and anger in our hearts, learn to petrify it so, and the more we quiet our ire, the heavier the stone; this alchemy of concrete in the vein, the sludge of affront, until even that will calcify and the heart, at last, will stop, unassailable, unmovable, adamant.

Find me a man who will stand on a blasted hill and shout, find me a woman who will break into shouts, who will let loose a river of lament, find the howl of the spirit, teach us the tongues of the angry so that our blood, my pulse—our hearts flow with the warm healing of anger.

You, August, have carried in your belly every song of affront your characters have spoken, and maybe you waited too long to howl against the night, but each evening on some wooden stage, these men and women, learn to sing songs lost for centuries, learn the healing of talk, the calming of quarrel, the music of contention, and in this cacophonic chorus, we find the ritual of living. http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/talk-31/

13. Coffee Break

It was Christmastime, the balloons needed blowing, and so in the evening we sat together to blow balloons and tell jokes, and the cool air off the hills made me think of coffee, so I said, "Coffee would be nice," and he said, "Yes, coffee would be nice," and smiled as his thin fingers pulled the balloons from the plastic bags; so I went for coffee, and it takes a few minutes to make the coffee and I did not know if he wanted cow's milk or condensed milk, and when I came out to ask him, he was gone, just like that, in the time it took me to think, cow's milk or condensed; the balloons sat lightly on his still lap. http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/249556

14. Cane Gang

Torn from the vine from another world to tame the wildness of the juice, assigned with bill and hoe to field or factory, chained by the voracious hunger of the cane the world's rapacious appetite for sweetness

How place names of my servitude mock me: Eden, Golden Vale, Friendship, Green Valley, Hermitage, Lethe, Retreat, Retirement, Content, Paradise, Phoenix, Hope, Prospect, Providence

Each with the Great House squatting on the highest eminence the Sugar Works overlooking my master's eye unyielding the overseer unblinking not seeing the black specks floating across their finely-crafted landscape

At shell blow assembled the broken-down bodies, the job-lots scrambled into gangs like beads on a string O not pearls no just unmatched pairings the random bindings like cane trash no not like the cane pieces laid out geometric and given names and burning.

http://www.sentinelpoetry.org.uk/0106/olive_senior.htm

15. Pearl

Trophy wife, power object, your lustre fading from neglect, pull

that rope from around your neck. Don't you want to be free?

Come now, break the spell. Let each pearl be. Or cast them

before swine. What have you to lose? Honour, like the pearl,

is already used. Keep a single pearl for contemplation of the kingdom within,

or injest it for melancholy, madness, and other lunar folly.

Better yet, count it a blessing, save for longevity. Too many lives already lost for this string. http://www.sentinelpoetry.org.uk/0106/olive_senior.htm

16. Pineapple

With yayama fruit of the Antilles, we welcomed you to our shores, not knowing in your language "house warming" meant "to take possession of" and "host" could so easily turn hostage. Oblivious of irony, you now claim our symbol of hospitality as your own, never suspecting the retribution incarnate in that sweet flesh. So you plant pineapples arrayed in fields like battalions not knowing each headdress of spikes is slanted to harness the sun's explosions and store them within the fruit's thick skin on which — unless you can peel

them off quick pineal eyes watch and wait, counting down.

17. The Knot Garden

Gardening in the Tropics, you'll find things that don't belong together often intertwine all mixed up in this amazing fecundity. We grow as convoluted as the vine. Or wis. And just as quickly! Only last week as our leader left for another IMF meeting, he ordered the hacking out of paths and ditches, the cutting of swaths to separate out flowers from weeds, woods from trees. But somebody (as usual) didn't get it right (what goes on in mixed farming is actually quite hard to envision since so many things propagate underground, by division). Returning, our leader finds instead of neat trench and barricade separating species, higglers and drug barons moving into the more salubrious climes while daughters of gentry are crossing lines to sleep with ghetto boys with gold teeth and pockets full of dollars derived from songs on the hit parade. In the old days, he'd have ordered some hits himself but agencies that give aid are talking human rights now. Instead, something more subtle —like poisoned flour or raging tenement fires — is allowed to spread. While citizens are dying our leader is flying again, off to another IMF meeting in the presidential jet high above this dense tropical jungle. Meanwhile, the fertilized soil (nothing like fire to do it) bursts into new and twisted growth of such profusion by the time he returns, it proves

too impenetrable for landing. Avoiding confusion, our leader travels on, searching for unencumbered skies, over the Cayman Islands, or Liechtenstein, or Geneva.

Lorna Goodison

18. The yard man: An election poem

When bullet wood trees bear the whole yard dreads fallout from lethal yellow stone fruit,

and the yard man will press the steel blade of a machete to the trunk in effort to control

its furious firing. He will dash coarse salt at its roots to cut the boil of leaves, try slashing

the bark so it will bleed itself to stillness, and yet it will shoot until the groundcover is acrid

coffin color, the branches dry bones. Under the leaves it lives, poverty's turned-down image

blind, naked, one hand behind one before. The yard's first busha was overseer who could afford

to cultivate poverty's lean image, but good yard man says since we are already poor in spirit, fire for it. http://bombmagazine.org/article/2533/four-poems

19. What we carried that carried us

I SONG AND STORY

In ship's belly, song and story dispensed as medicine, story and song, bay rum and camphor for faint way.

Song propelled you to fly through hidden other eye, between seen eyes and out of structure, hover.

In barks of destruction, story functioned as talisman against give-up death, cramped paralysed darkness.

Remaining remnant tasting all of life, blood, salt, bitter wet sugar. Ball of light, balance power,

pellucid spirit wafer without weight, ingested, taken in as nourishment, leaven within the system.

Remnant remaining rise now.

II DANCE ROCKSTEADY

You dance upon the deck of the slaver *Antonia* named for the cherubic daughter of sea captain Fraser. Aye kumina.

You moved just so, in and out between wild notes sounded by the suicide followers, staying well within rock steady rhythm,

range of Kilimanjaro, length of river Limpopo. Respond again to higher rimshot and one drop ride rocksteady.

Travelling Mercies – Lorna Goodison

20. Fool-Fool Rose is leaving Labor-in-Vain Savannah

Grass cultivation on rooftop hot sun striking it down to chaff Rose bundling with strong effort scorched fodder fit for Jackass.

Rose securing sinkhole in river with rock salt and rose quartz to find favor with headmaster inspecting her morning tea sugar.

Sign on sign and Rose slow to heed, returning to closed bosom mountain Hope Rivers mouth spitting weeds, open lands with never enough room

for her to raise a modest rose tattoo. Soothsayers in suits well-pressed prophesying Rose-death from fatigue and consequent yield of marrow secrets

scrolled soft-tubed in her thorn bones. Headmaster teaching course on tragic heroines and citing Fool-Fool Rose. Tragedy, fear of it, was key and magic

turning Rose from housetop agriculture ending ambition to bottom and damn a river hole; farewell/hosanna, Fool-Fool Rose is leaving Labor-in-Vain Savannah. http://bombmagazine.org/article/2533/four-poems

21. Praise to the mother of Jamaican art

She was the nameless woman who created images of her children sold away from her. She suspended her wood babies from a rope round her neck, before she ate she fed them. Touched bits of pounded yam and plantains to sealed lips, always urged them to sip water. She carved them of wormwood, teeth and nails her first tools, later she wielded a blunt blade. Her spit cleaned faces and limbs; the pitch oil of her skin burnished them. When woodworms bored into their bellies she warmed castor oil they purged. She learned her art by breaking hard rockstones. She did not sign her work. http://bombmagazine.org/article/2533/four-poems

22. This Zinc Roof

This rectangle of sea; this portion Of ripple; this conductor of midday heat; This that the cat steps delicately on; This that the poor of the world look up t On humid nights, as if it were a crumpled Heaven they could be lifted into. God's mansion is made of many-coloured zinc, Like a balmyard I once went to, Peace And Love written across its breadth. This clanging of feet and boots, Men running from Babylon whose guns Are drawn against the small measure Of their lives; this galvanised sheet; this Corrugated iron. The road to hell is fenced On each side with zinc — Just see Dawn Scott's installation, A Cultural Object, its circles of zinc Like the flight path of johncrows. The American penny is made from zinc, Coated with copper, but still enough zinc That a man who swallowed 425 coins died. This that poisons us; this that holds Its nails like a crucified Christ, but only For a little while. It rises with the hurricane, Sails in the wind, a flying guillotine. This, a plate for our severed heads; This that sprinkles rust Over our sleep like obeah; This that covers us; this that chokes us; This, the only roof we could afford. http://caribbeanreviewofbooks.com/crb-archive/21-may-2010/two-poems/

23. For the girl who died by dancing

'It is a warning to young people that dem mus stop du de Dutty Wine,' said one woman who called the incident a curse on the land. 'Is like a demon sen' from de pit a hell dat is taking the lives of the youth even before dem have time to repent' Jamaica Gleaner, October 30, 2006

Forgive the old woman who only sees confusion in the wild rotations of your head & the in/out butterfly of your thighs. She could not imagine how, in the helicopter swing of red braids, you were being lifted high.

Forgive her, the selfish belief that heaven is reserved for ladies with names like Agnes or Beryl & that no *Tanisha* would ever inherit the kingdom of God.

She will be surprised soon enough to find you on a wide marble tile in front of Jesus. She will be surprised that the saviour has given unto you a tall speakerbox, filled to its brim with music, & that you continue your peculiar art – dancing *dutty wine* with a clean heart.

Poem from *There is an Anger That Moves* Kei Miller (Carcanet, 2007) http://www.poetrymagazines.org.uk/magazine/record.asp?id=24194

24. Book of Genesis

Suppose there was a book full only of the word, *let* – from whose clipped sound all things began: fir and firmament, feather, the first whale – and suppose

we could scroll through its pages every day to find and pronounce a *Let* meant only for us – we would stumble through the streets with open books,

eyes crossed from too much reading; we would speak in auto-rhyme, the world would echo itself – and still we'd continue in rounds, saying *let* and *let* and *let*

until even silent dreams had been allowed.

Poem from *There is an Anger That Moves* Kei Miller (Carcanet, 2007) http://www.poetrymagazines.org.uk/magazine/record.asp?id=24195

Edward Baugh

25. The Warner-Woman

The morning shimmers in its bowl of blue crystal. Me, underneath my mother's bed. I delight in dust and bunnies. Connoisseur of comics and the coolness of floorboards, I prolong my life's long morning.

But the blue sky broke. The warner-woman, bell-mouthed and biblical she trumpeted out of the hills, prophet of doom, prophet of God, breeze-blow and earthquake, tidal wave and flood.

I crouched. I cowered. I remembered Port Royal. I could see the waters of East Harbour rise. I saw them heave Caneside bridge. Dear God, don't make me die, not now, not yet... http://eugeniaoneal.blogspot.com/2013/02/edward-baugh-caribbean-poet.html

26. The Carpenter's Complaint (C.X.C recommended poem)

Now you think that is right, sah? Talk the truth. The man was mi friend. I build it, I Build the house that him live in; but now That him dead, that mawga-foot bwoy, him son, Come say, him want a nice job for the coffin,

So him give it to Mister Belnavis to make -That big-belly crook who don't know him arse From a chisel, but because him is big-shot, because Him make big-shot coffin, fi-him coffin must better Than mine! Bwoy it hot me, it hot me

For true. Fix we a nex' one, Miss Fergie -That man coulda knock back him waters, you know sah! I remember the day in this said-same bar When him drink Old Brown and Coxs'n into The ground, then stand up straight as a plumb-line

And keel him felt hat on him head and walk Home cool, cool, cool. Dem was water-bird, brother! Funeral? Me, sah? That bwoy have to learn That a man have him pride. But bless mi days! Good enough to build the house that him live in,

But not good enough to make him coffin! I woulda do it for nutt'n, for nutt'n! The man Was mi friend. Damn mawga-foot bwoy. Is university turn him fool. I tell you, It burn me, it burn me for true!

Doc (Download file)

Tanya Shirley

27. Let This Be Your Praise

And what is praise but the offering up of one's self, the daily rituals: waking to the stream of light seeping in under the bedroom door, dressing slowly, humming Marley's 'Three Little Birds' or a made up melody, cursing the traffic and the heat - the unbearable brazenness of the morning sun - punctuating your profanities with pleas for forgiveness. When you were a child your mother threatened to wash your mouth with soap. You have not forgotten how a mouth can sully everything, its desire to be perfect and how often it fails. At work you smile with the girl who asks stupid questions, you imagine she has unpaid bills, a wayward child, you imagine you are more alike than different. You cut your nails at your desk, laugh when someone falls, eat lunch too quickly, take Tums for the indigestion. In the evening you drink peppermint tea, watch TV and when your eyes grow heavy you say a quick word of prayer, a thank you for another full day, a request that you not be killed in your sleep. Perhaps, you squeeze in an orgasm. And if this is not praise, this simple act of living, if this is not enough, then let us lie here and do nothing and see what God has to say about that.

http://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poetry/poems/let-be-your-praise

Paulette Ramsay

28. Her Majesty's Seal

Someone at the British High Commission did not agree with my express photographer that the smile I had practiced in front of the mirror for a whole half hour made me look beautiful brought out my innocence made my lips look sexy. He or she had with firm prerogative blotted out my face with her Majesty's Seal.

The lion's head made an obscene pattern on my forehead his torso covered my two eyes and his behind sat imperiously over my nose and sexy mouth. At least my two cheekbones my vain claim to African royalty stood out on either side of his torso small assurance I had not been totally obliterated by the beast.

It's a lie I tell myself they have no interest in my photo they just could not catch me to brand my face force me to carry the mark of the beast in my forehead so they stamped it on my photo instead blotted out my face.

When I arrive at Heathrow her Majesty's Imperial seal in the place where my face should be will be enough to let me a (former) colonial subject in.

Under Basil Leaves Hansib Publications Limited Email: info@hansib-books.com

Linton Kwesi Johnson

29. Sonny's Lettah (1980)

Brixtan Prison Jebb Avenue Landan south-west two Inglan

Dear Mama, Good Day. I hope dat wen deze few lines reach yu, they may find yu in di bes af helt. Mama, I really don't know how fi tell yu dis, cause I did mek a salim pramis fi tek care a likkle Jim an try mi bes fi look out fi him. Mama, I really did try mi bes, but nondiles mi sarry fi tell you seh poor likkle Jim get arres. It woz di miggle a di rush howah wen evrybady jus a hosel an a bosel fi goh home fi dem evenin showah; mi an Jim stand up waitin pan a bus, nat cauzin no fus, wen all af a sudden a police van pull-up. Out jump tree policeman, di hole a dem carryin batan. Dem waak straight up to mi an Jim. One a dem hol awn to Jim seh him tekin him in; Jim tell him fi let goh a him far him noh dhu notn an him naw teef. nat even a butn. Jim start to wriggle di police start to giggle. Mama. mek I tell yu whe dem dhu to Jim

Mama, mek I tell yu whe dem dhu to him: dem tump him in him belly an it turn to jelly dem lick him pan him back and him rib get pap dem lick him pan him hed but it tuff like led dem kick him in him seed an it started to bleed Mama, I jus coudn stan-up deh and noh dhu notn: soh me jook one in him eye an him started to cry mi tump one in him mout an him started to shout mi kick one pan him shin an him started to spin mi tump him pan him chin an him drap pan a bin an crash an ded. Mama, more policeman come dung an beat mi to di grung; dem charge Jim fi sus, dem charge me fi murdah. Mama, don fret, dont get depres an doun-hearted. Be af good courage till I hear fram you. I remain your son, Sonny. http://www.poetrybyheart.org.uk/poems/sonny-lettah/

30. If I Waz a Tap Natch Poet

If I woz a tap-natch poet Like Chris Okigbo Derek Walcot Ar T.S.Eliot Ah woodah write a poem Soh dam deep Dat it bittah-sweet Like a precious Memory Whe mek yu weep Whe mek yu feel incomplete Like wen yu lovah leave An dow defeat yu kanseed Still yu beg an yu plead Till yu win a repreve An yu ready fi rack steady But di muzik done aready Still Inna di meantime Wid mi riddim Wid mi rime Wid mi ruff base line Wid mi own sense a time Goon poet haffi step in line Caw Bootahlazy mite a gat couple touzan But Mandela fi im Touzans a touzans a touzans a touzans If I woz a tap-natch poet Like Kamau Brathwaite Martin Carter Jayne Cortez ar Amiri Baraka Ah woodah write a poem Soh rude An rootsy An subversive Dat it mek di goon poet Tun white wid envy Like a candhumble/ voodoo/ kumina chant A ole time calypso ar a slave song Dat get ban But fram granny Rite Dung То

Gran Pickney Each an evry wan Can recite dat-dey wan Still Inna di meantime Wid mi riddim Wid mi rime Wid mi ruff base line Wid mi own sense a time Goon poet haffi step in line Caw Bootahlazy mite a gat couple touzan But Mandela fi im Touzans a touzans a touzans a touzans If I woz a tap-natch poet Like Tchikaya U'tamsi Nicholas Guillen Ar Lorna Goodison An woodah write a poem Soh beautiful dat it simple Like a plain girl Wid good brains An nice ways Wid a sexy dispozishan An plenty compahshan Wid a sweet smile An a suttle style Still Mi naw goh bow an scrape An gwan like a ape Peddlin noh puerile parchment af etnicity Wid ongle a vaig fleetin hint af hawtenticity Like a black Lance Percival in reverse Ar even worse A babblin bafoon whe looze im tongue No sah Nat atall Mi gat mi riddim Mi gat mi rime Mi gat mi ruff base line Mi gat mi own sense a time Goon poet bettah step in line Caw Bootahlazy mite a gat couple touzan But Mandela fi im Touzans a touzans a touzans a touzans http://lyricstranslate.com/en/if-i-waz-tap-natch-poet-if-i-was-top-notch-poet.html

Jean 'Binta' Breeze

31. To the Labour Party

You sold out the working classes Brought the Unions to their knees Now you want to win back the voters But it's too late, can't you see

You left me with An inborn fear of bureaucracy A fright when you talk about democracy 'Cause I'm tired of all this fallacy When things rebounding right out of control And it hard to pay the heat bill in the cold

You promised us a government of vision You promised you would hear our voice It didn't take you long to stop listening And taking away our choice

Now you wonder why there's growth in the right wing and the bankers have taken all the notes But you're still making friends with the city as they tighten the noose round our throats http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/to-the-labour-party/

Louise Bennett

32. Dutty Tough

Sun a shine but tings no bright; Doah pot a bwile, bickle no nuff; River flood but water scarce, yawl Rain a fall but dutty tough.

Tings so bad dat nowadays when Yuh ask smaddy how dem do Dem fraid yuh tek tell dem back, So dem no answer yuh.

No care omuch we da work fa Hard-time still een wi shut; We dah fight, Hard-time a beat we, Dem might raise wi wages, but

One poun gawn awn pon we pay, an We no feel no merriment For ten poun gawn pon wi food An ten pound pon we rent!

Saltfish gawn up, mackerel gawn up. Pork en beef gawn up, An when rice and butter ready Dem jus go pon holiday!

Claht, boot, pin an needle gawn up Ice, bread, taxes, water-rate Kersine ile, gasolene, gawn up; An de poun devaluate

De price of bread gone up so high Dat we haffi agree Fi cut we yeye pon bred an all Turn dumplin refugee

An all dem marga smaddy weh Dah gwan like fat is sin All dem-deh weh dah fas wid me Ah lef dem to dumpling!

Sun a shine an pot a bwile, but Things no bright, bickle no nuff Rain a fall, river dah flood, but, Water scarce an dutty tough. http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/dutty-tough/

33. NOH LICKLE TWANG

Me glad fe se's you come back bwoy, But lawd yuh let me dung, Me shame o' yuh soh till all o' Me proudness drop a grung. Yuh mean yuh goh dah 'Merica An spen six whole mont' deh, An come back not a piece betta Dan how yuh did goh wey? Bwoy yuh noh shame? Is soh you come? Afta yuh tan soh lang! Not even lickle language bwoy? Not even little twang? An yuh sista wat work ongle One week wid 'Merican She talk so nice now dat we have De jooce fe undastan? Bwoy yuh couldn' improve yuh self! An yuh get soh much pay? Yuh spen six mont' a foreign, an Come back ugly same way? Not even a drapes trouziz? or A pass de rydim coat? Bwoy not even a gole teet or A gole chain roun yuh t'roat. Suppose me las' rne pass go introjooce Yuh to a stranga As me lamented son wat lately Come from 'Merica! Dem hooda laugh afta me, bwoy Me could'n tell dem soh! Dem hooda sey me lie, yuh was A-spen time back a Mocho. Noh back-ansa me bwoy, yuh talk Too bad; shet up yuh mout, Ah doan know how yuh an yuh puppa Gwine to meck it out. Ef yuh want please him meck him tink Yuh bring back someting new. Yuh always call him "Pa" dis evenin' Wen him come sey "Poo". http://www.my-island-jamaica.com/jamaican_poems.html

34. New Scholar

Good mahnin, Teacher - ow is yuh? My name is Sarah Pool. Dis is fi-me li bwoy Michal An me just bring him a school.

Him bawn one rainy days ma'am, it Was comin awn to night -Ugly baby grow pretty fi true, For dis one was a sight.

Him bawn de week when Rufus Jack-fruit tree did start fi bear, Is dat same mont Oby pig dead - But me figat de year.

We call him Mi, Mike, Mikey, Jay, Jakey, Jacob, Jack, But him right name is Michal Jacob Alexander Black.

No treat him roughs yaw, Teacher; Him is a sickly chile: As yuh touch him hard him meck nize -Some people seh him pwile.

Teck time wid him, yaw, Teacher -If him rude an start fi rave Dis beat anodder bwoy, an him Wi frighten an behave.

For nuff time when him rude a yard An woan hear me at all Ah just beat de bed-poas hard, mah, An yuh waan fi hear Jack bawl!

Now dat yuh know him lickle ways Ah not havin no fear Dat anyting wi mel him, so Ah lef him in yuh care. http://www.jamaicans.com/culture/poems/misslou5.shtml

Claude McKay

35. Harlem Shadows (1922)

I hear the halting footsteps of a lass In Negro Harlem when the night lets fall Its veil. I see the shapes of girls who pass To bend and barter at desire's call. Ah, little dark girls who in slippered feet Go prowling through the night from street to street! Through the long night until the silver break Of day the little gray feet know no rest; Through the lone night until the last snow-flake Has dropped from heaven upon the earth's white breast, The dusky, half-clad girls of tired feet Are trudging, thinly shod, from street to street. Ah, stern harsh world, that in the wretched way Of poverty, dishonor and disgrace, Has pushed the timid little feet of clay, The sacred brown feet of my fallen race! Ah, heart of me, the weary, weary feet In Harlem wandering from street to street http://www.poetrybyheart.org.uk/poems/harlem-shadows/

36. The Castaways

The vivid grass with visible delight Springing triumphant from the pregnant earth, The butterflies, and sparrows in brief flight Chirping and dancing for the season's birth, The dandelions and rare daffodils That touch the deep-stirred heart with hands of gold, The thrushes sending forth their joyous trills,--Not these, not these did I at first behold! But seated on the benches daubed with green, The castaways of life, a few asleep, Some withered women desolate and mean, And over all, life's shadows dark and deep. Moaning I turned away, for misery I have the strength to bear but not to see. http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/the-castaways/

37. Adolescence

There was a time when in late afternoon The four-o'clocks would fold up at day's close Pink-white in prayer, and 'neath the floating moon I lay with them in calm and sweet repose.

And in the open spaces I could sleep, Half-naked to the shining worlds above; Peace came with sleep and sleep was long and deep, Gained without effort, sweet like early love.

But now no balm--nor drug nor weed nor wine--Can bring true rest to cool my body's fever, Nor sweeten in my mouth the acid brine, That salts my choicest drink and will forever. http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/adolescence/

Pamela Mordecai

38. Last Lines

This is the last line I draw. Alright. Draw the last line. But I tell you, yonder is a next. No line ever last, no death not forever. You see this place? You see it? All of it? Watch it good. Not a jot nor a tittle going lost. Every old twist-up man you see, every hang-breast woman, every bang-belly pickney. every young warrior who head wrench with weed, white powder, black powder, or indeed the very vile persuasion of the devil – for him not bedridden you know ---every small gal-turn woman that you crucify on the cross of your sex before her little naseberry start sweeten, I swear to you, every last one shall live. Draw therefore, O governor, prime minister, parson, teacher, shopkeeper, politician, lecturer, resonant revolutionaries, draw carefully that last fine line of your responsibility. http://canopicjar.com/featured-voices/pam-mordecai/mordecailast/

39. Yarn Spinner

Inside she sits and spins, decanting gold and silver from her wrists. Her fingers bleed. Day and then night. Myriad windows perch above her head, brilliant birds. Through them she cannot see the river pirouette from a valley hung high, tumble, kneel deep into a basin blue as chiming bells set in obsidian rocks. Night, and then day, but she cannot observe the stars, the sun. She scoffs air, laps sweat off her chin. Straining to listen, finds she cannot hear even the wind. The walls leach marrow from her bones. The room adjusts around her shrinking frame of mind. She teases out a winking thread, curls it about a spool, then wheels and comes again. Rich filaments bite through her skin as she construes the pile of unspun wool, rovings of thought, symbols of winding cord, strings she makes hum, imagine up a poem to twist the tongue, cable to match a letter to a sound, a drill that interweaves syntax of word and necessary word, a song to bring a measured meter to the hands that drum on ancient wood. But this can't be a life. Flapping flamboyant wings the windows preen and squawk, a flock cruising landscapes she will not see again. The river in the rising sun spits, spurts, explodes resplendent as a veil let fall to hide a bride. Marry she won't locked in this tower where time goes. Her green flesh crawls fluted as wrinkled sea. Once she was brown and curious in the world. Now her illumination is a crusted bulb on a high wire. How did she come to this, within without an inkling of out, intent on weaving meaning as she strips it from herself? And still she feeds the iridescent mound so thick and plentiful it steals the light. And are you sad alone? Not when I spin. And are you sorry for the yarns you make? No, for they keep the children warm. What if you die spinning a thread? Die, yes, but never dead ... http://canopicjar.com/featured-voices/pam-mordecai/mordecaiyarn/

Grace Nichols

40. Cat-rap

Lying on the sofa all curled and meek but in my furry-fuzzy head there's a rapping beat. Gonna rap while I'm napping and looking sweet gonna rap while I'm padding on the balls of my feet

Gonna rap on my head gonna rap on my tail gonna rap on my you know where. So wave your paws in the air like you just don't care with nine lives to spare gimme five right here.

Well, they say that we cats are killed by curiosity,

but does the moggie mind? No, I've got suavity. When I get to heaven gonna rap with Macavity, gonna find his hidden paw and clear up that mystery.

Nap it up scratch it up the knack is free fur it up purr it up yes that's me.

The meanest cat-rapper you'll ever see. Number one of the street-sound galaxy. http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/cat-rap/

41. For Forest

Forest could keep secrets Forest could keep secrets

Forest tune in every day to watersound and birdsound Forest letting her hair down to the teeming creeping of her forest-ground

But Forest don't broadcast her business no Forest cover her business down from sky and fast-eye sun and when night come and darkness wrap her like a gown Forest is a bad dream woman

Forest dreaming about mountain and when earth was young Forest dreaming of the caress of gold Forest roosting with mysterious eldorado

and when howler monkey wake her up with howl Forest just stretch and stir to a new day of sound

but coming back to secrets Forest could keep secrets Forest could keep secrets And we must keep Forest http://www.poetryline.org.uk/poems/for-forest-507

42. I like to stay up

I like to stay up and listen when big people talking jumbie stories

I does feel so tingly and excited inside me

But when my mother say "Girl, time for bed"

The is when I does feel a dread

Then is when I does jump into me bed

Then is when I does cover up from me feet to me head

Then is when I does wish I didn't listen to no stupid jumbie story

Then is when I does wish I read me book instead

("Jumbie" is a Guyanese word for "ghost".) http://www.poetryline.org.uk/poems/i-like-to-stay-up-503

Ian McDonald

43. The Edge of Night

Watchman by the seawall koker twenty years I met him on my walks seawind and sunset I see recalling him. He smoked his curly pipe, we talked fireflies sparking in the low, protected fields. I often thought what a life he's lived but what a life is any life that's lived. He was old when he began this job guardian of the tidal gates of town. Got away from a rum-soaked father's home wandered far to other lonely lands and home again he never built a home or had one woman or concerned himself with God "Ah live from then to now an' don' remember how." Eyes far away as stars beyond our counting an old man stranded on the edge of night. Long ago he was a forest guide went with Museum teams in Essequibo and made a name for his strange collections. One day he brought for their inspection a black and shiny scorpion whose helmet-head was gold They honoured him, he was named discoverer the keepsake plaque engraved in Latin script. I tell him it is beautifully done he gestures, the sea in tumult rises at our feet. http://caribbeanreviewofbooks.com/crb-archive/20-may-2009/two-poems/

44. The Bone-Trip

Bone-trip, he called it, his brutal name for dying: "The bone-trip is always hard." I remember his face lit by fire, cracked into a thousand creases as he bent over, hardening nails: he repaired boots for working men in Gentle Street. One day his smiling partner wasn't there. "Well, bruds gone to make his bone-trip now." Wiped his sweaty face with rag, went on nailing the rough, strong boots. Cruel, I remember thinking, fifty years ago. And it is now, my God, now, it is now. http://caribbeanreviewofbooks.com/crb-archive/20-may-2009/two-poems/

Christian Campbell

45. Iguana

for A.T.

My friend from Guyana was asked in Philadelphia if she was from "Iguana."

Iguana, which crawls and then stills, which flicks its tongue at the sun.

In History we learned that Lucayans ate iguana, that Caribs (my grandmother's people) ate Lucayans (the people of Guanahani). Guiana (the colonial way, with an i, southernmost of the Caribbean) is iguana; Inagua (southernmost of The Bahamas, northernmost of the Caribbean) is iguana— Inagua, crossroads with Haiti, Inagua of the salt and flamingos. The Spanish called it Heneagua, "water is to be found there," water, water everywhere.

Guyana (in the language of Arawaks, Wai Ana, "Land of Many Waters") is iguana, veins running through land, grooves between green scales. My grandmother from Moruga (southern-most in Trinidad) knew the names of things. She rubbed iguana with bird pepper, she cooked its sweet meat.

The earth is on the back of an ageless iguana.

We are all from the Land of Iguana, Hewanorra, Carib name for St. Lucia.

And all the iguanas scurry away from me. And all the iguanas are dying. http://www.peepaltreepress.com/single_book_display.asp?isbn=9781845231552&au_id=207

46. Oregon Elegy for I. H.

I once told a friend, who was going to Oregon for Christmas with his girlfriend,

he'd be the only black person there and, in fact, if you shuffle Oregon,

like a seasoned minstrel, it spells Negro but with an extra O as if to make

a groan, nearly a shout, perhaps a moment of fright: O Negro in Oregon!

He died laughing and told me that's word-lynching, and I wondered

if we could also lynch words, string them up, sever them,

tattoo them with bullets and knives; if we could hold a barbecue

for language swaying with the branches, soon picked to silence by crows—

words soaked in coal oil then set ablaze, a carnival of words

sacrificed over rivers, from bridges, from trees, too-ripe words dangling

from branches just beyond our reach. Like Alonzo Tucker in 1906,

shot twice, then hanged from the Fourth Street Bridge

by two hundred men arched into one white arm because (we wonder,

we know) a white woman said he raped her. I want to tell my boy blacks weren't wanted in Oregon at first, but what do I know, I've never

set foot on Nez Perce land where exactly one hundred years after

Tucker, he could go west to one edge of America because he loves

his woman enough to be the very last Negro on Earth. http://kinnareads.com/2013/04/05/21-days-21-poems-oregon-elegy-by-christian-campbell/

Oku Onuora

47. LAST NIGHT.

got a peek at the moon last night and didn't think of lovers got a peek at the moon last night an saw a man with a load on his back got a peek at the moon last night an cried http://thespillblog.co.uk/2012/08/14/last-night-by-oku-onuora/

Jennifer Rahim

48. Black Power April, 1970

In April she turned seven. The city was an army of arms, uplifted – fists, tight, punching hard at heaven.

What did it all mean – becoming seven, and Port-of-Spain an angry sea, heaving, demanding release?

Sister preached a mad Sermon on Hair, led blind prayers to the Virgin for peace – her lenses as black as her fear.

Corralled in a rosary of responses, she saw again the white of her father's shirt, sailing to work. More than anything,

she wanted to march beside him, cuffing against the wrong she could not tell him, shouting, "Power!" until the whole sky fell. http://www.peepaltreepress.com/poetry_display.asp?isbn=9781845231156&au_id=64

49. After Hospital Visits

She comes in like a wilted flower – spent, slightly limping on a wounded ankle that each year seemed less able to carry her small frame on her heart's ready business. Missions my father baptised her goings to care for grandchildren – days at a time. Something like pain trembled in his voice. He needed her much more than he could say, but bore her absences as he did his suffering, bravely – waiting as she once did for him when his many goings were not about love. Now, she is the woman of his sixth station. After hospital visits she collapses in his chair puts her feet up, and is no more broken bridge that bears his not too late love of home. http://www.peepaltreepress.com/poetry_display.asp?isbn=9781845231156&au_id=64

50. Anger Bakes

Some mornings she is silent. Her hymns raise no staircases to lift darkness off our backs. The kitchen is not a chapel then. It sounds of the swash-swash strokes of the broom, the rough I-mean-business handling of pots, the counter's groan as she makes smooth dough of flour and water.

Those mornings we try not to hear her quarrelsome bracelets pick bones with the blame-bruised enamel bowl, but strain our brains for her deepthroated invocations "I lift up my eyes to the mountains..." If verses fail to save, if bakes curse in hot oil we beg the sun "Please, sleep late!"

Flour cannot rise without hymns. Fried bakes, flat and hard as river stones, must be sawed open and chewed for hours while, like exacting bakers, we weigh and sift her silence. http://www.peepaltreepress.com/poetry_display.asp?isbn=9781900715270&au_id=64

51. The Felling of a Tree

When the air is a sharpened blade cutting nostrils clean like cutlass steel, the bush-planters pass the sleeping houses.

Sometimes alone, sometimes in pairs, they lumber up the mountain road tall-tops pounding the asphalt smooth.

Sometimes I awake and follow them, knowing they go beyond the road's end into the depths of bearded trees

where tallness is not neighbours' fences and bigness is not the swollen houses that swallow us all.

I follow - slowly – my thinking measured, my steps behind clobbering boots, steady certain that if I stay in their neat clearings

I will never see, and I want to see the trees. I want to hear their long silences speaking the untold plenty of leaves.

I follow, drinking the air like water, my steps a soft conversation with blades that cut paths through the asphalt.

I follow, the strength in my thighs a newness that makes my feet sprout roots, and I think: this is what tall means.

Just when my lips begin to savour my salt, he looks back. Seeing me grow branches draws out his cutting steel and slashes my feet,

since girls can never become trees. Turning, I run down the mountain weeping like leaves after rain-forest showers. http://www.peepaltreepress.com/poetry_display.asp?isbn=9781900715270&au_id=64

Derek Walcott

52. Love After Love

The time will come when, with elation you will greet yourself arriving at your own door, in your own mirror and each will smile at the other's welcome,

and say, sit here. Eat. You will love again the stranger who was your self. Give wine. Give bread. Give back your heart to itself, to the stranger who has loved you

all your life, whom you ignored for another, who knows you by heart. Take down the love letters from the bookshelf,

the photographs, the desperate notes, peel your own image from the mirror. Sit. Feast on your life. http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/love-after-love/

53. The fist

The fist clenched round my heart loosens a little, and I gasp brightness; but it tightens again. When have I ever not loved the pain of love? But this has moved

past love to mania. This has the strong clench of the madman, this is gripping the ledge of unreason, before plunging howling into the abyss.

Hold hard then, heart. This way at least you live. http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/the-fist/

Velma Pollard

54. Cut Language!

(for Stephen)

Wrapping your tongue round words Stephen manoevering "spinsters and bachelors"

how many learn to spell but never practise words my grandson

you will be wordsman claiming this English language other people's anguish

claiming our patwa

switching easy when reason calls "I saw the lightning leaping through the house I heard the thunder clap an Nanny bawl out 'Jiizas Krais'"

Children across the wall offend and you defend with "gwe bwai no bada wi"

didn't I tell them
everytime
bilingual is the lick?
http://www.peepaltreepress.com/poetry_display.asp?isbn=9781845230210&au_id=63

55. Confessions of a Son

My father lost me somewhere between the smell of leather shoes and the enchantment of untying laces

Waiting to cross swords with the tyrant who would cow her I man watched hovering over Mother

(I four feet high) standing on tiptoe

Half century later still I do not know if culture curbed concern or if he loved less than he needed love

I store for her affection without question for him respect with unlove waiting for compassion http://www.peepaltreepress.com/poetry_display.asp?isbn=9781845230210&au_id=63

56. To Gran... And No Farewell

I didnt wish to see the moth-marks where your Khus Khus smelled the high weeds crowding the forget-me-nots or alien fingers handling knives and spoons kept sheening in brown calico

and so I let the years make jumbie chain-links ages long before I brought bright florets for your grave

One room remains and one small fretwork shard among the rotted beams ingrown with baby grass remembers still the august Entry Hall tributes of broken china lean-to tables and an old man shambling out and in cursing the vultures who would snatch the land...

I round the corner eager with my shrubs the grave at last... then unbelieving shudder Corpie's tomb Naomi's garden square and yours that now my mind will never hold no single adoration no peculiar tears some well-intentioned madman with his spade... all now one vast sepulchraic mass

I crush the shrublets tramp them underfoot and with a heart too swollen now for tears descend the slope without adieu. http://www.peepaltreepress.com/poetry_display.asp?isbn=9780948833243&au_id=63

Philip Nanton

57. Punctuation Marks

Punctuation Marks Where sea and land meet, begin there. The ampersand, the join, is a fault which caused jagged peaks to rise – from the ocean's floor spanning a vacant gulf. On any map of the world there are footnotes reminders of nature's force.

Long ago, nomads, fragile as their pottery, skimming waves, trecking from south to north, stopped once too often for wood and water and perished. From the pre-ceramic Cibony to the ceramics of Saladoid and Suazoid we know them by their shards. Common island caribs, sunk in a murderous tide that flowed from east to west bearing assassin and poets discoverers of the New World.

Come nearer, focus on one dot of an island I was born there, on the rim of a volcano on the edge of a large full stop where the sand is black where the hills turn a gun-barrel blue where the sea perpetually dashes at the shoreline trying to reclaim it all. http://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poetry/poems/punctuation-marks

58. Fishing

Two boys fishing—like me—for a poem, waiting to play each line till it gets taut, hoping to hold onto it as it fights to slip away, burning the hand that wants to grasp and measure it as it leaps and dives. Often, as with all good lines of poetry, it cuts the flesh that tries to tame it, to tire it, to haul it into the light of human understanding and watch its colours sparkle as it fights the shape of the vessel in which they land it and to which they will make it yield the meaning of its capture, the scale of its hope the syllabic wonder of its form and breath.

And so with every line: some, of course must be thrown back—too tired, too weak, too hauntingly familiar, too easily wrestled into limp acquiescence... Yet, by the time the circling beam of the lighthouse, like the flash of trope and image, becomes visible, the poem will have taken shape on the crude palimpsest of the dinghy's floor and the poet-fishermen will head for shore...

And when the poem is complete, packaged, marketed, the fisherman of words is happy to let go of it and return next day to the blue sea of wonder, to seek again the fin-flash of lines of poetry, just beneath the surface of his longing. http://signifyinguyana.typepad.com/signifyin_guyana/2011/02/fishing-by-mark-mcwatt-.html

Yasus Afari

59. The Earth is Our Friend (Garden of Creation)

The earth is the garden of creation Purposefully clothed with lush, green vegetation. Roots!

Firm enough to prevent critical soil erosion, All elements working in union, For natural joy and satisfaction. The earth is a friend, we are the friends of the earth

The cyclic function of the earth's ecology is no mystery. Like the organs of the human body, Each working in perfect harmony, In this our environmental community, of which the guardians and keepers, are the children of humanity. The earth is a friend, we are the friends of the earth

The rivers, like blood streams flowing into the oceans Returning secretly to the fleshy bowels of earth's creation Evaporating to the atmospheric breath of life Sun, moon and stars Solid, liquid and gas Land, sea and air Flesh, blood and spirit. The earth is a friend, we are the friends of the earth

Like the lungs of man The trees breathe to keep the earth alive Yeah! The Sun, like a devoted Father Working from sunrise until sunset And the Moon, like a loving Mother Working from dusk until dawn Shining with the sweet embrace of her children, the stars The earth is a friend, we are the friends of the earth

If we protect the earth, Then, the earth will protect us Clothe, feed and shelter us. The earth is the garden of creation. If we keep the earth alive Then we will stay alive, The earth will keep us alive.

The earth is our friend, We are the friends of the earth http://www.yasusafari.com/index.asp?pageid=457445

60. Poetry Caan Nyam

Now if the hunter ever tell the story of the hunted Then the hunted will be robbed of it's honour and glory Soh I and I have to shape our own reality Preserve our own dignity and identity

Now I write my poetry to rewrite history Burn illusions and fantasy Shape and create my own destiny And create my own reality

Now at the College of Arts Science and Technology I mix and match Rastafari philosophy with dub poetry Only to disappoint mi friends and family And same time my girlfriend Twiggy left me Twiggy left me, Twiggy left me

Soh the summer holiday, mi goh home to mama A speng inna mi walla-be gun-foot-trousers Mi buckers and tam, buckers and tam, buckers and tam Di neighbour dem start seh But look 'pon sister Derrie good, good bwoy doh eeh!

When mi walk up to mama, mama seh But look 'pon mi good, good pickiney bwoy, doh eeh! Wonder if a education tun him inna idiot Then mama tun to mi and seh Tonie, why yu nah goh cut off yu locks and goh look wuk! Really and truly, weh yu really plan fi duh wid yu self!?

Mi seh mama, I plan fi live off a dub poetry Then mama look 'pon mi and seh Bwoy, yu eva hear seh poetry caan nyam!? Poetry caan nyam, poetry caan nyam Mi seh yes mama! Mi a goh show yu seh poetry caan nyam Bwoy a turn inna idiot Poetry caan nyam, poetry caan nyam Like 'P', fi pineapple, papaya and pumpkin' 'Cause yu grow mi as a real ole country bunkin' 'C, fi orange, ote eatie (apple) 'E', fi eggplant 'T', fi tamgerine, tamrind and tomato 'R', fi radish, rasberry and rose apple 'Y', fi yamm, like Saint Vincent, yellow yam and mosella Soh mama if yu feel disappointed It's alright, don't worry 'Cause I and I a show yourself Poetry caan nyam, poetry caan nyam And mama, I and I still love So mama look 'pon me and seh I and I!? Soh a two a onnu a walk now!?

Walla-be gun-foot-trousers Mi buckers and tam, buckers and tam Poetry caan nyam, poetry caan nyam Poetry caan nyam, poetry caan nyam Poetry caan nyam, poetry caan nyam Poetry caan nyam, poetry caan nyam. http://www.jah-lyrics.com/song/yasus-afari-poetry-caan-nyam

61. Wine Pon Paper

If reggae inna the dancehall That mean dancehall fi inna reggae And if dancehall inna the reggae That mean reggae fi inna dancehall

Mi si pen all a wine 'pon paper When girls a give out dem numba Dem seh haul and pull-up mi selecta Fah the word sound have up the power Now lata is already greater Lyrical riddim a dance 'pon paper And question a bubble wid answer And when the ink and the vibes start flow The stanzas them start fi grow So the fruits and works start show And mi people dem glad fi know

If reggae inna the dancehall That mean dancehall fi inna reggae And if dancehall inna the reggae That mean reggae fi inna dancehall

Wi have music, dance and comedy Story telling, fashion and poetry Now thoughts and words bring reality Rreality shape wi identity So wi think and make things happen Now action brings the reaction And set the whole ting inna motion So if yu don't plan to fail Don't fail to plan Just join wid mi inna the celebration Mek wi sen out a good vibration

If reggae inna the dancehall That mean dancehall fi inna reggae And if dancehall inna the reggae That mean reggae fi inna dancehall

Mi si pen all a wine 'pon paper When girls a give out dem numba Dem seh haul and pull-up mi selecta Fah the word sound have up the power Now lata is already greater Lyrical riddim a dance 'pon paper And question a bubble wid answer And when the ink and the vibes start flow The stanzas them start fi grow So the fruits and works start show And mi people dem glad fi know

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If reggae inna the dancehall That mean dancehall fi inna reggae And if dancehall inna the reggae That mean reggae fi inna dancehall

Mi si pen all a wine 'pon paper When girls a give out dem numba Mi si pen all a wine 'pon paper And question a bubble wid answer

Mi si pen all a wine 'pon paper When girls a give out dem numba Mi si pen all a wine 'pon paper And question a bubble wid answer http://www.jah-lyrics.com/song/yasus-afari-wine-pon-paper

John Agard

62. Toussaint L'Ouverture acknowledges Wordsworth's sonnet "To Toussaint L'Ouverture" (2006)

I have never walked on Westminster Bridge or had a close-up view of daffodils. My childhood's roots are the Haitian hills where runaway slaves made a freedom pledge and scarlet poincianas flaunt their scent. I have never walked on Westminster Bridge or speak, like you, with Cumbrian accent. My tongue bridges Europe to Dahomey. Yet how sweet is the smell of liberty when human beings share a common garment. So, thanks brother, for your sonnet's tribute. May it resound when the Thames' text stays mute. And what better ground than a city's bridge for my unchained ghost to trumpet love's decree. http://www.poetrybyheart.org.uk/poems/toussaint-louverture-acknowleges-wordsworthssonnet-to-toussaint-louverture/

63. Foremother II: Mary Seacole

from i was a little girl my feet itched at the water's edge watching the waves ebb ships coming and going

i observed my mother sniffing and sorting herbs forever blending and tasting her brow knitted in concentration

find your gift she insisted help someone be star or lantern my hands carried the moon even when night was dark

i would not be land-bound robbed by womanly constraints oh panama i come fingers liniment sleep on clean sheets and stomachs well fed

there is and always will be a difference between a woman and a lady but i was both my face and heart unveiled to every man my bedroom eden before the fall

i was persuasive i could charm and not even a misguided nightingale would deter me from administering what i know to ally and enemy equally

i would leave treasure map for daughters
who would surely follow on my heels
listening keenly to the winds that beckoned them
herbal plants stored securely in their suitcases
http://www.peepaltreepress.com/poetry_display.asp?isbn=9781845230449&au_id=122

Mutabaruka

64. Dis Poem

dis poem shall speak of the wretched sea that washed ships to these shores of mothers cryin for their young swallowed up by the sea dis poem shall say nothin new dis poem shall speak of time time unlimited time undefined dis poem shall call names names like lumumba kenyatta nkrumah hannibal akenaton malcolm garvey haile selassie dis poem is vexed about apartheid rascism fascism the klu klux klan riots in brixton atlanta jim jones dis poem is revoltin against 1st world 2nd world 3rd world division man made decision dis poem is like all the rest dis poem will not be amongst great literary works will not be recited by poetry enthusiasts will not be quoted by politicians nor men of religion dis poem s knives bombs guns blood fire blazin for freedom ves dis poem is a drum ashanti mau mau ibo yoruba nyahbingi warriors uhuru uhuru uhuru namibia uhuru soweto uhuru afrika dis poem will not change things dis poem need to be changed dis poem is a rebirth of a peopl arizin awaking understandin dis poem speak is speakin have spoken dis poem shall continue even when poets have stopped writin dis poem shall survive u me it shall linger in history in your mind in time forever dis poem is time only time will tell dis poem is still not written dis poem has no poet dis poem is just a part of the story

his-story her-story our-story the story still untold dis poem is now ringin talkin irritatin makin u want to stop it but dis poem will not stop dis poem is long cannot be short dis poem cannot be tamed cannot be blamed the story is still not told about dis poem dis poem is old new dis poem was copied from the bible your prayer book playboy magazine the n.y. times readers digest the c.i.a. files the k.g.b. files dis poem is no secret dis poem shall be called boring stupid senseless dis poem is watchin u tryin to make sense from dis poem dis poem is messin up your brains makin u want to stop listenin to dis poem but u shall not stop listenin to dis poem u need to know what will be said next in dis poem dis poem shall disappoint u because dis poem is to be continued in your mind in your mind in your mind your mind

65. Sistas Poem

Sistas a feel yuh pain Is a shame Sistas a feel yuh pain Some men is to blame

Suh yuh breedin agen An im gwan wid im fren Lord, wen it a guh en'

Yes a feel yuh pain Is a shame Sistas a feel yuh pain Some men is to blame

Yuh stay at home Him gwan guh roam Lef de yard Seh im gwan abroad Many years pass de luv' nah lass Yuh breedin once more Anadda man fi sure

Yes a feel yuh pain Is a shame Sistas a feel yuh pain Some men is to blame

Male an' female he made us all To gedda we stan' nun shall fall De burden of life all mus wear De joy of life all mus share

Yes a feel yuh pain Is a shame Sistas a feel yuh pain Some men is to blame

Sistas sistas 'ave no fear Som a we breddas really do care To move forward yuh afi andastan In disyah ammagiddion u afi stan' stran

Yes a feel yuh pain Is a shame Sistas a feel yuh pain Some men is to blame http://www.jah-lyrics.com/song/mutabaruka-sistas-poem

66. Wailin

juke box play ... an' "stir it up" in de ghetto yout' man "run fe cova" hot hot hotter "curfew" in a trench town gun a blaze: crack "trench town rock" juke box playin ... 'an wi sayin "long time wi nuh 'ave nuh nice time" yout'man watch yu step stop mek-kase "screwface" "lively up yuself" and "come reason now" yout'man watch yu ways "simma down" stop frown play music play in a "mellow mood" music is food in de ghetto yout'man spread out stop bungle inna "concrete jungle" watch it in de ghetto hot ... hippies smokin pot? wha dat? yout'man throw wey de molotov bomb oppressa-man man vex who yu gwine shoot nex?

hey you big tree "small axe" ready http://bombmagazine.org/article/743/four-poems

Earl McKenzie

67. For a Defeated Boxer

Doing roadwork early in the morning you imagined the music of the word "champ" addressed to you; pounding the speedball you could see the belt around your waist; punching the bag you could see the headlines announcing the glory you brought to yourself and country.

When the night came you did not see the punches that put you down; you heard the count in a daze; you saw the referee's signal; it was over in less than a round.

This failure of your manly art sent you sinking to a despair flat as the canvas.

But this is a place where we all go, floored by hooks, jabs and uppercuts. But defeat is victorious only when we do not see it a Kipling's impostor. Having dipped into all our pain you can climb in and fight again. *The Almond Leaf – Earl McKenzie*

68. On Knowing Someone: The Epistemology of Destructiveness

(After George Laming)

I know you: These are the dreaded words.

They can mean: I know you come from a small place of little significance, that you once walked barefooted and carried water on your head; that you carry still the smell of the canepiece.

They can mean: I know the decay of your ghetto address and the odour of your slums; that you have no known family tree, that you live by counting red money.

The speaker wants to wield this knowledge as a destructive power over you, he who cannot know the mansions of our mind and the power of your dreams. *The Almond Leaf – Earl McKenzie*

Jacqueline Bishop

69. A Woman In Istanbul Tells My Fortune

You will live a long life. You will get what you now so earnestly desire, for it will be a distinguished life. There will be a husband, yes; two, maybe three children. Your children will be much like everyone else's children. The same sorrows. The same joys. Always there is water around you: Tears? Travel? You will, as you already know, spend much of your time far away from home. There will be books, paintings, terrible quarrels with people you do not know it would pay for you to hold your tongue, but we both know you are not that type. Mistakes? You will make more than your fair share of them. Grief? Again more than your fair share. The restlessness that flutters constantly, caged white bird in the cavity of your chest, will never go away though time will help with the fluttering. You will outlive your husband, almost outlive one of your children – what pain, what pain. I see you an old woman, halo of silver-white hair, children all about you. I see a garden, and you wearing a dark-coloured smock, faded pink roses. You are wearing shoes much too big for you – (your late husband's?) In your hands, a pair of oversized shears, and you: the woman who is always pruning. Jacqueline Bishop (1971 -)

70. Pierre

It was a boy named Pierre Powell that was in charge of the atlas

in the cabinet. He also ended days by shaking the iron bell from Principal

William's window, a work we grudged him for very little; what cut our cores

twice a week and we had to endure, was him being summoned to fetch

the key, again from William's office, to open the varnished box with the world

map, old and laminated, a forbidden missionary gift trophied besides the Oxford

Set of Mathematical Instruments and other things seen only by Pierre and Teacher Rose,

who now only nodded to raise him to his duty. We waited in quiet

his return, Miss Rose all crinkled blouse and bones with chalk dust in her hair,

did not stir until he was back, panting at the door. Another diviner nod

and he opened it, unrolled the map expertly, kneaded out creases and held down edges

for the ruler our eyes followed, screeching out countries, and etched

in the periphery, a khaki-pillared Pierre, with a merchant's smile, a fixed blur

in our cry of Algeria, Switzerland, Chile, soon withered away, and we eyed the field

of dry grass outside, a rusty mule, statue-frozen in the punishable heat,

Pierre, a phantom sea fraying over Antarctica, Fiji, Belize, India

of those still in the rote, a liturgy of dunce, whose one cardinal point, Tropicana

Sugar Estate, so close we could smell the sugar in process, whistled its shift change,

and terminated Geography. As if punched from dream, those of us gazers, spared the map

rolling-up and cabinet-locking ceremony, saw him, with a cord-strung key, an earnest air

bearing him away in a portal of sunlight. He was absent, the week before summer,

and when Miss Rose, in rare fashion, inquired, a girl said he had gone back home.

"Home," Miss Rose sounded the strange word. "Home," the girl echoed and added, "he from Cayman,

Miss, or Canada, somewhere with a C." We turned to Miss Rose to clarify Canada

or Cayman, this elsewhere C curdled to snow in our minds, foreign always spectral,

but she pointed anonymously a crooked finger and said, "Run to the principal

for the key." The whole class scattered, paid no heed that not a single one was ordained. Ishion Hutchinson (1983 -

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71. Fire

Before there was time to pull away or shut the skin your smile cut my face. Instantly it healed. But now there's fire in my head, in the kindling of my skull.

Air

The wind wrenched at my bones. See, here, and here. I am loose, puppet, I am jointed to your hands. Articulate me gently, whispering. I swing at the air of your voice.

Earth

Draw the curtains. Like a place to bury kings the room is warm and dry. Our flesh moves to corruption quietly: achieving night at those same moments of most pure delight.

Water

I have taken the spit from your tongue. It is river. It is sea. I am drowning. Slowly the moon tides it away to lap beside your pillow. I skip my dreams like stones across its silence.

Dennis Scott (1939 - 1990)