

On Reduit Beach

1.

The tame St Lucian parrot in the hotel gardens
calls foreday morning.
The beach is empty but for a solitary 'boy' raking out the sand.
He croons a wan calypso as he works, mechanically
ignoring the immense
horizon and the all-flags-flying cruise ship and the
schooners bobbing
on the morning's swell...there is nothing to see,
and he has seen it:
in the glazed disdain of the tourists, in the already knowing
eyes of his children
in the veined fortunes of the sea almond's leaves that he picks
from the tines of his rake.

2.

That afternoon, among the trees on Reduit,
Kentry, 'Small Boy', maybe just eighteen,
passes on some weed to 'Joe', a tourist,
taking his ease. "No big ting, y'know, de boy
jus mek a likkle deal." But then, it seems,
the CIA unleashed its *Drugs Enforcement
Squad*, sent down to teach the locals
'how to keep control'... "Dem say dat im
resis arres, 'e ran, an so dey shoot im
dead dead on the san'."

That night two tourists
paid some recompense, worked over
as they walked along the shore. The *Drugs
Enforcement Squad* was sent back home
and everything went hush, blacked off the news.
"The thing too spooky, man, bad story..."
No-one's quite sure what's happening to Joe.

3.

At sunset the compulsory
lone, black fisherman, erect
and dignified despite his rags,
stalking the lace trim of the sea
between the hotel and the mangroves
by the point, casting his white net
into the surf and hauling it back
indifferently as the yachts
moored out in the bay lap lap
endlessly....The island rears
behind him; *Diabollesse*.

Stewart Brown

lemmeh pass

gimmeh room lemme pass
lemmeh step in style / thru de streets
full up a dog shit an pot hole
dem streets wey ah learn
to tief fo ah livin
to get widout givin
to walk ah tight rope of survival
ah say move man gimmeh room lemmeh pass
lemmeh walk tall thru de streets
wey whores an pimps an pickpockets meet
on ah everyday beat
in de heat ah de hustle
just to make ends meet
dem streets wey ah get meh education
dem streets wey ah make meh 'first communion'
in de church of survival
wey hustlin is yuh only salvation
gwan man ah say move
gimmeh room lemmeh pass
lemmeh put ah glide in meh stride
an walk thru de streets
wid beggar an tief
wid pavement dwellin patriots
fightin off mangey stray dorgs fo food
in de rubbish bins
Of de city streets

dem streets wey dorg eat dog
in ah battle fo de bone
dem streets wey push come to shove
an slip come to slide
an de innocent pay
fo de crimes ah de guilty
all de time
so move man clear de way
ah say gimmeh room
lemmeh put anodda ounce in meh bounce

an shake meh natty dread
wid determination
to rule dis land
move lemmeh walk in dem streets
dem streets pile up high high
wid stumblin garbage
an cork wid crack heads
looking fo rock
in ah desperate cravin
i walkin thru dem streets
wid madness meh only companion
an who could stop meh from steppin out
out amongst de insanity
de indignity
de iniquity
de inhumanity
ah steppin out in dem streets
dem streets wey steamin hot
wid vice an corruption
wey pressure boilin up
to de point of explosion
dem streets wey calypso does play
sometimes fo tourist attraction
dem streets wey de pissin drunk
rubbin shoulder to shoulder
wid de gifted pan musician
chokin wid music to he eyeball
an shakin wid de zess of de jobless
so gimmeh room lemmeh pass
lemmeh dance meh arse off in de streets
dem streets wey de livin
an de dead walk like one
wey yuh life ent worth fifty cents
wey gun totin police
could arrest yuh jus so
an stab yuh to dead
like annoda Abdul Kareem
in dem same streets
wey i get meh education

is dey i go dead
fo ah change
an i done make meh decision
move
lemmeh pass
before ah knock yuh down
move ah tell yuh
gimmeh room
lemmeh rock an come in
move
gimme room
lemme rock an come in

Brother Resistance

Night Rain

for N. S. M.

Keith Jardim

The land is dry. He walks slowly up the hill to the house, his shoes disturbing powdery earth among the stones. It is late at night, cool, and the moon is high above him. There are no other houses around. He can see bits of quartz glinting on the road. The cliffs of another, smaller island are dull cream, bare. Between the islands he sees moonlight on the sea, and a sailboat, leaning, crossing the moonlight. A breeze stirs a *poui* he passes; the only sound, he can just hear it.

He stops to look at the stars. They are absent around the moon but light the rest of the sky. He stares at the sea for a while, then begins walking again.

Higher up the hill, he sees a valley where the stone ruins of a colonial villa still stand. The moonlight shows the scorched land around the walls and pillars of the ruins.

He arrives at a gate. Two dogs, wagging their tails, come to him. They do not bark. He opens the gate, leaves it open, and goes with the dogs, stroking their long floppy ears, across the gravel driveway and into the garage, where there is a jeep. A watchman is lying on a wooden table. There is a bundle of cloth under his head. He is asleep, the garage light on over him.

He opens the door connecting the laundry-room and garage. The dogs whine. They look up at him and he holds their stare. Their eyes are large, limpid and brown. The dogs wag their tails. He enters the house.

In the kitchen, in cool darkness, with the combined star-and-moonlight apparent through the shutters, he opens the fridge, gets his water bottle, and drinks fast. He sighs but is not tired.

A wind comes into the living-room through the verandah from the garden, a garden of scattered trees, plants, cactus, and bougainvillaea hedges. The acre of fenced-in land is bone-white in the moonlight; many of the plants, even some of the cactus, are almost emaciated. The bougainvillaea hedges bloom. He shivers. The sea is visible in the

distance below. No moonlight there, it is darker and immense. He takes some keys from his pocket and opens a wrought-iron door onto the verandah. He walks to the nearest hedge and picks some of the flowers close to their petals. Then, walking quickly, he re-enters the house.

Inside the bedroom there is a young woman on the double-bed. He sees her long bare leg, angled, hugging a pillow, and an arm curved above her head. Her breasts, pale and protruding, are half covered in moonlight. He rests the bougainvillea flowers on the window-sill above her head. Through the window he can see the sailboat anchored in the moonlight, and someone, silhouetted, rowing a dinghy toward shore.

He carefully removes a packed duffle-bag from beneath the bed and goes to the bathroom with it. He puts it behind the shower curtain in the bath, goes to the sink, washes his hands and face, brushes his teeth, undresses, then puts his clothes on the dufflebag. Then he returns to the bedroom, and eases into the bed beside her. She senses him, and he moves closer for her warmth. He begins stroking her back, sitting up against the headboard. Soon he moves down along the length of her and hugs her. He holds her very close and kisses the back of her neck. Again and again. He can do nothing more.

The moonlight and starlight fade. The dogs trot on the gravel outside. A wind starts, building and building until he hears a low moan around the house. Now and then, as the wind moves them, sunchairs scrape on the red-tiled floor of the verandah. He hears the wind in the trees around the house, the whine of the dogs, her interrupted breathing, and the creak of the roof.

He hears everything.

Then he hears the rain, and listens, thinking.

She stirs, whispering at him, hugging him, moving against him for his warmth now, and kissing his hand.

It's raining just like you told me it would, she says. I love the rain, she says, rubbing against him. He almost does not hear her.

The rain . . . the rain, she murmurs.

She is asleep with her arm around him.

He listens to the rain for a long time.

Toasting a Muse

One man who came to dinner
wouldn't eat,
just focussed on his hostess
instant eloquent devotion.
He'd stand and say, as if proposing
a toast, "I speak this in your honour,
ma'am, you are so beautiful,"
then chant some passionate verse,
and sit and drink some more
until the spirit moved in him
again, then stand and say
"You are so beautiful" et cetera
and do another item.
Funny fellow. Poet. Mad as hell.

I been there, sort of.
For in that ambience I too
was smitten, by what seemed
to me unusual radiance,
beauty of spirit lighting up the place,
but I kept quiet about it, made small talk,
stayed sober, and enjoyed the food.

Mervyn Morris

Painting

These strange moments he painted, so still, so silent:
Cold grass in the dark forest,
Moonlight dripping through tall clouds.
His shredded lungs, paper thin,
Rattling in the night wind.
He walked upriver in the old forest,
A summer midnight sweeter than springtime.
How he loved the green and towering trees!
The girl weeping on the forest floor
He tasted her salt tears,
Felt her beating heart under the small breasts
And her breath gasping for another.
He never saw the girl again:
Only the memory of a slip of lace,
An indrawn breath, tears salt as the sea
But as they lay, beyond her shoulder
A huge toad came flopping slowly, dully shining,
On the grey grass towards them slowly.
The helpless tumbling of things through time
Stopped forever.

Ian McDonald

Elf-Portrait

*Adieu! The fancy cannot cheat so well
As she is famed to do, deceiving elf...*

As a child he had size and stature;
vast as estuaries, he was that riparian aristocrat
whose alluvial accents sounded in the bedrooms of all rivers.

Now time has shrunk him to a smooth homunculus, a dwarf
among men. No interesting conversation.
No knowledge of political scandals or other labyrinths.

What he does have are memories—
stuffed with them...Priapic memories of river maids,
river spirits and the palpable gods of mud-flats and forests.

But gods and forests are fled into ideas
and he has lost his giant stature,
has shrunk to match his world's diminishment...

And will they say, in some bleak future,
"He's quite mad now (you know): A limp exile
Looking endlessly over the restless sea

Dreaming aloud,
And talking in tedious verse
About teaching the rivers to sing"?

Mark McWatt

Toll Takers

I

They count cars that
bead through gates
in an eternal litany of
freeway benediction.

They clutch tickets,
each an *ave* for salvation
from the ritual of muttering thanks
to thankless faces passing by

while engines drone a mantra
for transcendence through
the tunnel's hallowed ear
for food, for life.

II

Three women at the stalls
this morning keep the count.

First, lady of the perpetual smile
bares teeth at each blurred face,
the gardenia in her hair
a touch of grace.

Second, lady of lofty looks
hides behind a veil of hair,
hand reaching out to grasp at
more than just one dollar.

Third, lady of limitless sorrow
sees life drift along invocations of
ticket, take it. But an infant's
innocent face brings a fleeting
tenderness to her gaze

her shaking hand rests upon
her breast, then love then longing
then despair leap from her eyes as
she leans to take the toll.

Now her eyes are startled at
the wrinkled hand that is her own.
Could half a century have rolled by
and she hadn't known?

Hazel Simmons-McDonald

Postcard from Jamaica

Finally we come to the Miami sand together;
the months of pleas defeated by convenience,
calculation of time of trips from the dark sofa
to bed, sexual pleasure balanced
by need for intellectual stimulation
in an India you never knew but judged
in the stereotypical beat generation's
dharma bums' peace & love & sex & lies & drugs,
the longhaired Euro-sadhus in America distasteful
to your southern plantocracy madness—*Hare Rama*
Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare...

Ah, but for the daughter we would not have
come to this sand together,
black linen pants rolled up
to your coconutmilk knees,
exposing tiny redpainted toes
like decorated squares of the *puja*
bede hiding the cracked-up earth beneath
daubed with mudwatercowdung; sand hiding
the cracked-up heels I should not notice
on the bed after you had walked the dog
to pee on the lawn, barefooted on the urined
grass, heels still unwashed in cleansing seasalt as
you cuddle the dirtywhite-scraggyhaired-shrimpdog...

So we have gone out to sea with the graceful
island swimmer imaging Negril sandsun sensuality
and we are sitting on the lawns of restored
Devon House cautiously eyeballing each other;
this little touch and pressure of fingers
in surf rolling up the Demerara bar
washing up the *Ganga* delta, mingling
with the sacred confluence at *Jammuna*:
Saraswattie, goddess of learning
proud of the thousandvolumed shelves
and the bookstrewn bungalow racy with theories

and ego information not visible—in time even Gandhi
had his ashes scattered at the sacred tongueing of rivers
where the *Saraswattie* is un-named—the learning
on expensive sofa-beds forgotten as you picked
my brains (intellectual stimulation your highball)
and I trip yours on lightbrown Jamaica sugar
melts on lips, on pressed fingers floating above
South Miami sand—the water of this ocean
touching the water of all oceans...

And finally on the crystal beach we put out
to sea, and there is no glancing back
no turning back, is there?, to Euro-see.

Sasenarine Persaud

Sadhus Long-haired Indian ascetics.

Puja bede Decorated Indian altar area, often made by smearing a
square of earth with a mixture of water, clay, and cowdung.

Jammuna Flows into the Ganges (Ganga) at Varanasi (Benares),
a confluence considered sacred by the Hindus.

Saraswattie Goddess of learning, also the invisible and sacred
mythological river which flows into the Ganges at Varanasi.

Life Saving

Kilgwyn Bay, Tobago

Columbus would never have anchored in this azure bay,
as some say, bent as he was on trade, not saving
souls. Not this bay, near-stagnant, where waves break
on a reef far out at sea. Water up to my waist,
I can walk so far out the figures on shore become midgets
Then despite firm sand underfoot, I feel fear
and turn back toward shore and landfall. A man
wearing goggles, dives underwater for sea moss.
He gives some to me,
"You don't have to dry it to make the drink."

A fishing boat comes back to shore full of conch. As it anchors
I see its name: "Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread."
The conch, removed from their shining orange shells,
lie like large polished finger nails on the beach.
A small crowd gathers to buy the fine food,
but curried conch seems a slight attraction
next to the soft copper glow of the shell.
The shell seems ceramic, an imitation of itself.

A plane heads for the sky at the nearby airport;
its roar betrays the bay's calm,
its flight suggests destinies other than reef,
tides, the undertow, and the known—
shores where the glowing shell stays with its soul.
Eric Roach, a Tobago poet, walked into the sea
and never turned back; he believed his spirit would live.

Margaret Watts

from the novel Jonestown

Wilson Harris

I lay in a clump of bushes like a dead man. Scarcely breathing. My head rested on a cushion of stone. I dreamt of angels ascending and descending into Jonestown. Jonestown was above me in the skeletons of the stars. No stars now at midday. Only the sunlit dead on the ground. How incredibly soft is stone when one fears flesh-and-blood!

Jonah Jones was still alive with a gun. He would appear, I knew, at any moment in the Clearing.

There was a split leaf close to my nose through which—with slightly lowered head away from my pillow—I began to count the dead bodies on the ground. They lay not far from the rude church in which they had worshipped an hour or two ago. One swore one could hear their voices still rising into the heart of the South American Forest that seemed now in me, yet as remote from me, as the Milky Way blotted out by sunlight.

I felt a mental splinter sharp as the nib of bone; and voiced my own lament in tune with their vanished voices. The voice of bone was the art of the Word, of sculpture, of painting within the holocaust.

'Good God!' the bone sang.

The bone ceased for a while its tremulous, echoing tracery of scriptures of sorrow. It ceased yet never ceased for it continued to make silent pictures until the wordlessness of the sleeping choir of the dead in the Clearing welled up around me.

A woman whose name was Marie Antoinette was clutching a mystical cup or grail of music from which she had drunk milk and sugar and deadly cyanide. Her head lolled on the ground. Her torso wore the blind sunlight of Carnival. It was the sheer ordinariness of the cup against the lips in the head that struck me to the heart, the lips communion with Silence.

All at once the Reverend Jonah Jones, tall, commanding, came out of the rude Church of Eternity into the Clearing. His face wore an air of triumph like a general's on the field of battle. He stopped above the eloquent lips and head and the communion cup. There was a child beside her I had not seen before. A child I knew all at once. *Me! Me* in another universe, a parallel universe to this. *I was in that parallel child.* Quantum hallucination. Quantum transference of psyche.

Jones stood in the whale of the sun, he knelt, he placed a gun to Marie Antoinette's temple that seemed in a state of divorce from the trunk of her body.

What curious memorials a bone inscribes, draws, paints, builds, sings in the mind, the exiled mind, the solitary mind and soul on the margins of doomed civilizations.

One is exiled when one refuses to obey the commandments of Conquest Mission, to think or write in a certain way, in conformity with the realism of Death. I was a sculptor of the bone in exile now, a writer of the bone in exile now, a painter, an architect, a poet of the bone in exile now upon the margins of the Conquest Mission established by the cult Master of Ritual, the Reverend Jonah Jones.

Jonah and Jones are common-or-garden names which have gained ascendancy in the Forest of my age.

I sensed the great danger I was in. I had deceived Jonah. I knew there was no persuasion or plea or dialogue on my part—dialogue I might have sought to exercise with him—that could have led him back out of the great white whale of the sun into which he was determined to go, sun or whale which he wished to inhabit as the throne of conquest, and in which he sought to secrete his followers. Could one begin to explain to him that such secretion, such a symbol of conquest, was a manifestation or a prelude to the extinction of all species within the insatiable stomach of eternity?

Was this the inbuilt nature of our civilization that we scarcely understood, that we had scarcely begun to question?

I had deceived him. I had been his comrade. I had been a close associate. But—at the last moment—had broken the pact in questioning my civilization, in questioning myself.

He was sure I had been obedient and was lying there amongst the dead. *I had disobeyed his command.* Would I pay dear for such treason? Would I be thrust into a wilderness? Who was I to disobey? Had I saddled myself with the traumas of an age, the traumas of disadvantaged peoples around the globe bewildered by the commandments they were instructed to honour?

At last the Reverend Jonah Jones was satisfied that the woman had been loyal. The subject of a revolution—in favour of the consolidation of conquest—that he wished to engineer, she had surrendered to his will, she had drunk her drink to the last drop... Or so it seemed... I was to learn differently later... No need to pull the trigger... He withdrew the gun from her broken body. Was it broken? Was it miraculously whole?

He raised the cold steel, the icy metal—cold as my pillow—to his eyes. I dreamt I was in his blindness. We were already dead. We had already pulled the trigger! But he was alive. *I was alive.*

Technologies and functions of life and death seemed the most ordinary things, banal commodities of conquest. And yet my fear was such I could have vomited. Vomited the stars! The moment had arrived—Jones knew—for him to join his flock. I could not help it. My limbs began to shake. Jonah and I had been close friends within veil upon veil of sun that hid us from each other even as we thought we knew one another. We were strangers. We were at war though we pretended otherwise.

We had debated points in the world's holy books, books of Rwanda, books of Palestine, books of the fall of Jerusalem, that bore on the end of Time.

We had chosen South America, we had chosen Guyana, for our Conquest Mission.

We had chosen—as the ancient Maya once did—the very heart of the jungle, in which to re-interpret the death of the arts, pyramidal epitaphs, painting-epitaphs, poetry-epitaphs. IMAGINATION DEAD IMAGINE.

We had chosen the rainforest hinterland for our Conquest Mission because the Central and South Americas were a theatre of enigma.

No place around the globe had so mirrored paradoxes of vanished cultures, abandoned settlements, from ancient Maya cities and causeways—long deserted, drowned, wreathed in jungle—to invisible Atlantean arches and bridges upon which migrating peoples had moved from the North to the South, the East to the West, and left behind but the morsel of a flute (as though music possessed the secret architecture of ages after the collapse of frames in which conquistadorial priests of old sought to conscript the Imagination)—a morsel, a flute, a fury akin to the bone or splinter in my mind.

The Caribs ate a morsel of enemy flesh when the Spanish priests and conquistadors invaded their lands. They sought to know and digest the secrets of the enemy in that morsel. They hollowed the bone from which the morsel had come into a flute that is said to inhabit all species that sing.

Does music inhabit a quest for self-knowledge beyond all conventional frameworks?

Wherein lies the mystery of music in the densities of space, the live fossil solidity of music in the song of a blackbird or reflected rhythms and compositions in the mirrored throat of a South American apparition?

tional mocking-bird? Did the bone in a wing of the mind, a wing of the brain, inhabit a treasonable space *beyond* fixtures which sanction extinguished species, poisoned landscapes?

Jones did not approve of such questions but he humoured me, he tolerated me. He occasionally elected me to serve on panels in the church. He was convinced of my loyalty to the Conquest Mission whatever my unrest of conscience. We dined together—Deacon, Jones and I—on the eve of the holocaust.

I was his left-hand man. Deacon was his right-hand angel. I could not deny it. We were associates. I was a traitor. I began to scorn the treasures of eternity in order to salvage a morsel of time.

News had reached us that the Police were on Jonah's trail. They claimed he had defrauded the Bank of America.

'The Caribs ate a ritual morsel,' I said, 'on the eve of battle. *You* Jonah know how important such ritual is to disguise bitter self-knowledge or bring it to light when our enemies—whom we would eat—bite into our own flesh. And now that we are on the eve of the holocaust, biter and bitten alike, priest and victim alike, time has become invaluable.'

'We shall all die rather than surrender to the corruptions and lies of the Police,' said Jones.

'Die?' I said.

'Yes, die,' he cried.

My throat was dry. 'It's astonishing to have such a conversation.'

My throat was dry but the Carib ritual morsel melted in my mouth as if I were consuming the flesh of a high priest to unravel the secrets in Jonah's constitution. Food on such a day tastes like the meat of one's commander or executioner, food at such a time brings terror, the terror of self-knowledge, the terror of knowing the greed in others in oneself.

It was impossible to dismiss Jones as a fanatic. He was too solid, too bloody-minded, bloody-minded normality. He was as sane as a Napoleon of finance. DEFRAUD BANKS? I did not believe it. Pocket millions, yes, in a crusade against violence that recruits the selfsame violence in pursuit of its ends. In the light of such symmetry, violence cemented into violence, the morsel I ate burned into my tongue. Was it poison, had I already consumed violence in the name of the people, in the name of a pact with Jones? NO! A worm may turn and puncture the pages of dogma. It was the fracture of loyalty, the disruption of loyalty, it was treason. I knew now—with the morsel on my tongue—how delicate is the balance between loyalty and treason; treason may involve faith in the action of truth, time's truths at variance with eternity's command.

I was joined to Jonah Jones in the delicacy of a bone—when one pretends out of fear to be one thing but knows one is something else—bone-flute music of anguish, a bone-morsel that I tasted deep as hell in heaven, heaven in hell, in the anatomy of linked pasts and futures.

I was joined to him in the splintered disruption of a pact with eternity that I had sworn to honour at his command. I was joined to him now in the fear that I sensed on the eve of disaster. I knew more searchingly and agonizingly than I had ever known before—with the morsel on my tongue—the perversity of the harmony that he inspired in his people, the perversity of symmetry and dread closure underlying the death of the arts.

Perhaps I had known it all along, perhaps I knew my age was dying. Perhaps that was why I joined the Jonestown Church. What I had not perceived was the curious salvage of a Primitive morsel of time sprung from treason, treason's desire, *treason's asymmetry* when one breaks a pact with authoritarian virtue and dines with the enemy in a fearful but true longing to consume fortresses of hate in him and in oneself, cemented bias in him and in oneself, cemented violence in him and in oneself.

'I thought they were bloody cannibals,' said Jones. 'These Caribs of whom you speak.'

I had forgotten I had spoken of them in my conversion of a Primitive morsel into a feast of terrifying conscience within the furies of history. I had forgotten that the Caribs were the authors of the American feast beneath the Virgin statue of Liberty, authors of asymmetric hospitality granted to aliens and strangers despite their suspicion of, and antagonism to, one another...

I had forgotten... Jones appeared to remember though he spat the memory on to his plate. He hated the Caribs. He tended to loathe the soil of pre-Columbian America though he was up to his eyes in it, in its species, whale and tiger and everything else, oil and gold and wealth. He would become, if not the Bank of America, a significant agent in the Bank of Memory when I began to shoulder the trauma I would experience the following day as I lay on my pillow of stone.

His face was curiously livid, curiously bland, as he projected his rage upon the vanished Caribs in thinking of the Police. So easy to orchestrate the law into scapegoats one would murder at the drop of a hat.

I turned to Jones with tears in my eyes but he did not see... My tongue was burning as well and I was unable to speak. The Dream-book anticipated the moment when I would start to write and spoke for me from the future—

'Are we not subject to the vocabulary of death-dealing regimes? Do we not need to consume that vocabulary and change it, consume the battle-cries, the marching songs, drums that counsel assault? Death coins every phrase that spells conquest. Death's vocabulary is rooted in human discourse...'

'In counterpoint with the extra-human dissonances of the victim soul, the long suppressed, plaintive and wonderful music of the victim soul...' said Deacon. He had been silent all through the meal as if he were nursing a bullet *to be fired at Jones*... The idea sprang into my head I knew not from where... A bullet, a morsel of a bullet in himself... 'Is it not time—when time seems to be ending—to unravel that counterpoint, varieties of counterpoint, between priest and sacrificial victim, between huntsman and hunted species, between lovers and Virgins of the wild... God knows it's too late for me, I have failed, *but you, Francisco*...' He stopped. Was he laughing at me? Was he mocking me? Was Marie of Jonestown (with her dead child whom I was to identify with myself in a flashing moment on the morrow in the Clearing) a despoiled Virgin, a despoiled Liberty on the flag of Jonestown? I had helped to raise that flag on the day we began to build Jonestown. I was filled with anger at Deacon and at myself. I disliked Deacon then intensely as much as I feared Jones. Deacon was Jonah's right-hand angel. He was—I dimly felt at this stage—a signal for me of the riddle of the huntsman—in the book I was to write when I survived Jonestown (a book possessing its own life to be entitled *Imagination Dead Imagine*)—the riddle of the huntsman, the riddle of the hunted creature, the enigma or counterpoint of shared Passion between spoilers and despoiled, the riddle of the feast when one dines with enemies who are also one's close associates.

After the holocaust, when I fled Jonestown, his self-mockery, his mockery of me, gave way to truths I wrestled with on every ladder between heaven and earth, the truths of fictionality in enemy and friend, Virgin space and animal bridegroom, animal masks worn by heroes and monsters when civilization is in crisis.

He was to don the mask of the Scavenger or Vulture or Eagle. Jonah, at the point of death, *when Deacon shot him*, was to achieve guilt and remorse in the metamorphosis of the whale into a sunstriped tiger swimming in space.

But all that lay in rehearsals and stages in the Dream-book in the future. *In consuming such a rush of thoughts I am in the future now. I fear Jones but shall continue to wrestle with him. I dislike Deacon but shall continue to learn from him.*

A rush of thoughts takes me into the opening chapters of *Jonestown* long before I begin to write. I see them, those chapters, in my mind's eye, as I quarrel inwardly all over again—in Memory, in my state of trauma—with Jones and Deacon on the eve of the Day of the Dead. An infinite quarrel from which one's pen is fashioned, heart's blood, the setting sun's ink on the eve of the Day of the Dead...

That coming Day already devastates my mind. I am driven to contemplate inconsolable grief, yes, *but within a context of rare Beauty*. Why Beauty? As though the dying of an age blends sunset in sunrise, inconsolable grief in Beauty.

WHY ME? WHY HAVE I SURVIVED? Dying ages do not entirely die when there are diminutive survivors.

Let me—in this opening chapter that rushes upon me with incredible urgency (am I already writing it, or living in it, being written by it?)—give a trace or a clue to the burden of inconsolable grief in Beauty...

Light Like a Feather, Heavy as Lead

Marley, "Misty Morning"

All green light seeping into the morning
the smell of coconut oil and ackee,
lazy reggae pulsing through the thin boards.
This sleeping Sunday morning,
the hymns of the pentecostal church
tucked into the dense green of August Town
swim like prophecy in waves
threading through the faint drum and bass
of the transistor chatting upstairs.

I hear Marley's tinny voice
cut after cut until I ache
from the apprentice cicatrices,
ears now alert to the gravel thin wail
of the original shortass reggae organizer
dubbing me bloody truths from the thin
concentric grooves—round and round
maddening gyre of prophecies,
spiralling mysteries and no clue,
no vision of some monumental journey
over strewn palms fronds and the praise of believers
through holy Kingston—the prophet slips by unnoticed;
(Jamaicans have never understood the hysteria
of Beatlemania, we die, not for pop icons,
but for sweet-mouthed politicians, we die).
This black, glowing vinyl of trapped sound
is all that is left, all that is left
of the rhygin, word-weaving prophet.

My fingers stretch and flow through
the whisper of old revelations like mist
the rough of the cracked snare and one drop
sound is washed by something of a dream,
I cannot find my way through the smoke.

It is hours before a long-time-coming
sea breeze, still warm from its journeys
tickles the morning, everything giggles,
everything is light as mute anomie,
while she closes his stiff eyes.

Kwame Dawes

Creole Man

i

in the sun, this-blasted-burning. the house on fire. you really see it. hear wha' me a say. hear me miss lady, Mister man—you hear me good!

ii

this winter-place, you conversing with the weather. alone in your room. you see me from a window...outside...frosty snow. talking to you across curtains of the sun.

what chink in the rainbow is left? for whom?

remember cochineel, flamboyante, blowing in the wind. fronds everywhere...remember other trees, shrubs. a spirit's longing.

territory like no other. no amazon or rainforest. no taller tress like the bamboo, greenheart...

Only solid oak, pine, fir...you believe in them!

iii

cane ash, like tiny tarantulas, coming down. I watch from this distance only. i hear them whispering, telling of a fargone time. plantation. slavery. the silk cotton tree standstill. a man on a white horse, riding in the night. a heavy chain dangling, dragging along heavily. all talk, this night of a loathsome spirit...you hear me?

iv

we come away at once. we breathe harder, and yet smile. we make merry, children as we are. and are not. we mutter like adults in the trauma of discovery. in the place where the sun doesn't always shine. only the snow, aglitter. the ventriloquist in me makes amends. looking out. hard.

it is all...all. discovering myself anew, if you can believe it. yet the sun's splendour, or the day of reckoning really. the merry-go-round life. it is all...all!

Cyril Dabydeen

Carnival Boy

not the still sad music of humanity
but a sound—rubber pun
steel, baton beating time to a lynched
nigger-head—a sound that bangs out

child glee

at what death is and what survives
now-now, never mind all that minstrelsy
and white abstraction:
intimations of immorality—
what survives is a sturdy unkillable boy
with a peasant's hard unblinking face
who grazes his sticks in meadows of steel

and plays the rhythms of what you have done
to others, what you will do to him
and he murmurs beforehand
but he knows too that when he shudders
the sticks will move his wrists
to eden fields, to his mother's hymns
which no man can stop when she is in full
brawling flow with Jesu each church
morning, 'cause Jesu set we free
from sTavery

and we go sing clap hands and shake
we glad behinds for no wand can con-
duct nor whip philosophize we

so he plays to his own blasted
rhythms, relishing his own survival:
the child is father of the pan.
fingers that barely scoop from bowl to mouth
will reach for the spiced sticks
to wrench the city's belly
so all along the tinsel tumble-
down streets of George Town or Spanish Town
people stepping out of line, hungry
people mashing and masking
hungry people quilling their teeth

David Dabydeen

CONTRIBUTORS

Stewart Brown is Senior Lecturer in African and Caribbean Literature at the University of Birmingham, UK. His two collections of poetry are *Zinder* and *Lugard's Bridge*. He has edited critical books on Derek Walcott and Kamau Brathwaite as well as several important anthologies of contemporary Caribbean poetry, including *Caribbean Poetry Now*, *Voiceprint*, and *The Heinemann Book of Caribbean Poetry*.

Carrol F. Coates has translated numerous excerpts by Haitian writers in periodicals such as *Callaloo*, and he has translated two Haitian novels, *The Festival of the Greasy Pole*, by René Depestre (University Press of Virginia, 1990), and *Of Blood and Rice* by Paul Anvers (Éditions CIDHCA, 1994). He also translated President Jean-Bertrand Aristide's account of his exile, *Dignity* (University Press of Virginia, 1996). He is presently working on a translation of Jacques Stephen Alexis's first novel, *General Sun, My Brother* (*Compère Général Soleil*), expected out this year from the University Press of Virginia.

Cyril Dabydeen was born in Guyana and now lives in Ottawa, Canada. His recent books are *Black Jesus and Other Stories; Berbice Crossing* (stories); and *Discussing Columbus* (poetry). He edited *Another Way to Dance: Contemporary Asian-American/Asian-Canadian Poetry* (TSAR Publications).

David Dabydeen is Director of the Center For Caribbean Studies at the University of Warwick, UK. His books of poetry include *Slave Song* (winner of the 1984 Commonwealth Poetry Prize) and *Coolie Odyssey* (1988). He has also published a novel, *The Intended* (Secker and Warburg, 1991) and a number of important critical studies.

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Michael Gilkes is a Guyanese playwright, actor, filmmaker, and poet currently lecturing at the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College in St. Lucia. His plays include *Couvade* (Longman 1975) and *A Pleasant Career*, which won the Guyana Prize in 1990. He has produced and directed many documentaries and features, including the first filmed version of Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, and Derek Walcott's *Ti-Jean and His Brothers*.

Lorna Goodison teaches creative writing at the University of Michigan. She is the author of three poetry books, *Tamarind Season* (1980), *I Am Becoming My Mother* (1986), and *Heartease* (1988); and a collection of short stories, *Baby Mother and the King of Swords* (1990).

Denise Harris was born in Georgetown, Guyana, in 1950, daughter of the novelist Wilson Harris. Her first novel, *Web of Secrets*, won the 1996 Guyana Prize, and she is working on her second. She has traveled extensively and currently resides in the USA.

Wilson Harris was born in New Amsterdam, Guyana, in 1921, and came to London in 1959. As well as writing, he has taught in universities throughout the world. Since 1960, he has published over twenty novels, including *The Guyana Quartet*, *The Carnival Trilogy*, and most recently, *Jonestown*, all published by Faber and Faber, Ltd. His awards include a Guggenheim Fellowship, The Guyana Prize, and an honorary doctorate from the University of the West Indies.

Kendel Hippolyte, from St. Lucia, is the author of a volume of poetry, *Birthright* (Peepal Tree, 1996). His poetry has appeared in numerous anthologies and periodicals. A published playwright and a director, he is the founder of the Lighthouse Theater in St. Lucia and teaches at the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College.

Keith Jardim is a Trinidadian fiction writer and critic currently teaching in Bermuda at Bermuda College. His short stories and essays have appeared in *Mississippi Review*, *Trinidad and Tobago Review*, and in the Longman anthology, *Caribbean New Voices I*.

Blas R. Jiménez, born in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, in 1949, has published three books of poetry: *Aquí—otro español* (*Here—Another Spaniard*) in 1980, *Caribe africano en despertar* (*Wake Up African Caribbean*), 1984, and *Exigencias de un cimarrón* (*en Sueños*) (*The Demands of a Runaway Slave (In Dreams)*) in 1987. His fourth collection of poetry is soon to be published.

Anthony Kellman was born in Barbados and is Associate Professor of English and Creative Writing at Augusta State University, Georgia. He is the author of two books of poetry, *Watercourse* (1990) and *The Long Gap* (1996), and a novel, *The Coral Rooms* (1994). In 1992 he edited the first full-length U.S. anthology of English-speaking Caribbean poetry, *Crossing Water*. His literary awards include a National Endowment for the Arts fellowship.

Jane King, from St. Lucia, is the author of two poetry collections: *In the Center* (1993) and *Fellow Traveler* (1994), which won the James Rodway Memorial Prize awarded by Derek Walcott in 1995. A founder-member of Lighthouse Theater, she teaches English at Sir Arthur Lewis Community College.

Ian McDonald, born in Trinidad, is the author of *The Humming-bird Tree*, one of the most celebrated novels of West Indian childhood. His two poetry books are *Mercy Ward* (1988) and *Essequibo* (1992). He, along with Vanda Radzik, edits *Kyk-Over-Al*, one of the Caribbean's most distinguished literary journals.

Mark McWatt is a senior lecturer in English at the University of the West Indies in Barbados and a highly respected Caribbean critic. He has published two volumes of poetry, *Interiors* (1989) and *The Language of Eldorado* (1994).

Mervyn Morris was born in Kingston, Jamaica, in 1937. He teaches at the University of the West Indies, where he is Professor of Creative Writing and West Indian Literature. In 1993 and 1994, he was Poetry Workshop Director at the University of Miami's Summer Institute for Caribbean Creative Writing. His books of poetry include *The Pond*, *On Holy Week*, *Shadowboxing*, and *Examination Center*.

Sasenarine Persaud is the author of the novels *Dear Death* and *The Ghost of Bellow's Man*. His most recent books of poetry are *A Surf of Sparrows' Songs*, *Under the Goldenapple Tree*, and *The Wintering Kundalini*. Born in Guyana, he currently lives in Ontario, Canada.

Rohan Preston was born in Jamaica and raised in Brooklyn. He is the author of the poetry book *Dreams In Soy Sauce* (1992) and co-edited

the anthology, *Soulfires: Young Black on Love and Violence* (Penguin, 1996). His work has appeared in *Jackleg*, *Ploughshares*, *Red Clay*, and *Warpland*, and his literary awards include the 1997 Henry Blakely, Jr. Poetry Prize.

Jennifer Rahim, from Trinidad, lectures in English at the University of the West Indies in Jamaica. Her poetry and stories have appeared in several recent periodicals and anthologies in the Caribbean, England, and North America. Her first collection of poems, *Mothers Are Not the Only Linguists* was published by New Voices Press in 1992. Her second, *Between the Fence and the Forest*, is soon to be published by Peepal Tree.

Brother Resistance is the founder of the rapso movement in Trinidad and Tobago. Rapso has been described as "the rap of soca," and "the poetry of calypso," a synthesis of the poetic voice with traditional drum and steeldrum. He has released several albums with the Rapso Riddum Band, most recently *De Power of Resistance: Rapso Anthology*, Vol. 1.

Joël Des Rosiers was born in Les Cayes, Haiti, in 1951. He went to Canada as a child, studied medicine in France, and is now a practicing surgeon in Montreal. He has published three volumes of poetry: *Métropolis Opéra, poèmes* (1987); *Tribu, poésie* (1990), and *Savannes, poème* (1993); and a collection of essays, *Théories—caraïbes: poétique du déracinement*. His new book of poetry, *Vaina*, is expected out this year.

Hazel Simmons-McDonald was born in St. Lucia, read English at the Mona Campus of the University of the West Indies, and earned her doctorate at Stanford University. She teaches Applied Linguistics at the University of the West Indies in Barbados. Her poetry has appeared in several periodicals and anthologies.

Derek Walcott was born in St. Lucia in 1930. His books of poetry include *In A Green Night* (1962), *The Castaway* (1965), *The Gulf* (1970), *Another Life* (1973), *Sea Grapes* (1976), *The Star-Apple Kingdom* (1979), *The Fortunate Traveler* (1984), *Midsummer* (1986), *The Arkansas Testament* (1987), and *Omeros* (1990). He is also the author of many highly-acclaimed plays. In 1988, he was awarded The Queen's Medal for Poetry and, in 1992, he received the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Margaret Watts teaches at the University of the West Indies, Trinidad. Her work has appeared in *The Caribbean Writer* and in several anthologies. She has recently published a chapbook of verse, *Occasional Light* (New Voices Press).

Oedipus, Tourist

I wake as the flies tickle
my too many skins—I packed
some changes just to be safe;
I packed my own arrival
to unroll like a welcome rug;
I packed a crashing wave
in case of a lack of surf
and folded the sun inside
and inside the sun a rooster
crowing at all hours—
you can't be too forewarned;
I tucked away seven countries
neatly according to function
like blades of a Swiss army knife;
I lugged my ambivalence
freckled with decals
of a hundred destinations . . .

You sleep at the crossroads of four
dimensions, your inward smile
the soft orgasm of stone,
your only baggage a riddle:

What walks naked on nine
feet through the instant's door?

Philip Fried

His Poems

*Berl Pomerantz; born
in Poland, 1900, killed
December, 1942, by German
soldiers when hiding with
other Jews in the forest.
His poems buried with him.*

With what tongues shall they speak,
those poems? Prisoners dig
a mass grave in frozen ground.
Soldiers curse, then shoot.
The poems, white birds scattered
on red snow, are kicked into the trench.
A scab soon crusts the running wound.

Even in that place, that time, spring
arrives. Snow melts, seeps through loose
packed dirt. Words germinate. Green
flames lick through the crust, divide,
feather into wings, carpet the forest
with burning green.

Lovers strolling underneath the canopy
hear a strange chant. Listen, they say,
it is the song of the forest.

Sheila Golburgh Johnson

The winter she lies dying

for my father

the sleepwalker moves without compass—
the world buried beneath record snows,
sun wrapped in winding sheets.

All reference points have shifted.

He finishes work as others are waking,
breakfasts on beer at an all-night tavern,
then navigates home to an empty bed, empty rooms—
the children scattered to relatives.

From work to bar to bed to hospital,
then across the Delaware, or past the cemetery
on Old York Road to visit his daughters—
the heart's circumference a simple equation.

White afternoons, he travels
to the hospital where Christ hangs
crucified in every room, where
his life lies tethered to a steel bed.

Her soul roams an uncharted course.
He kneads fingers bloated with poisons,
seeks resurrection in fever-blind eyes,
kisses the yellow mask to call her back.

If she recognizes him, he bends to her,
whispers words in German so the black-robed
crone working her beads in the corner
won't know his tenderness.

Some evenings he stands the girls in the parking lot,
points through falling constellations against their forgetting.
They wave, four nesting dolls in woolen coats,
convinced they see her in a yellow square of light.

New Year's Eve, more snow.
The doctors say, "Six weeks."
He stumbles out into ghost-thick air,
knows himself a widower.

And yet, can't believe.

Mute before his daughters' trust
he continues into February,
hope's false courier, gathering
their crayoned talismans like roses.

He keeps what promises he can.
Two days before Valentine's,
into her coffin burdened with flowers,
he slips their paper hearts.

Mary Rohrer-Dann

Auto Lessons

Massachusetts, 1959.

The turquoise Buick gleams
in the drive. I
am twelve years old and see
muscle flex inside
those screaming holes,
chrome mouths—powerful stuff
for a Catholic girl. Everything I want:
mysteries of mechanics,
the power to escape.

Worn thin to cheap retreads
by nonstop pleas,
my father relents:
“I’ll teach you to drive.”
My butt skids
across the pin-pricked seat,
hands grab the slippery wheel,
my bud body bouncing
to see across the dash.
My father from outside
taps the windshield lightly,
beckons me out: “We start
here.” I learn hood latch,
distributor, spark plugs,
air hose, fuel line.
There is never a quiz.

Seven cars came after:
the husband who left me
his saucy MGB
and went off to war,
the falling oil gauge,
the Vietnam vet who bought it
before it finally collapsed. Mustard
yellow Fiat we ice-raced

in Anchorage. Mustang,
apple-green, spoiler, rubber-
nosed, we drove Alaska
to Manhattan. Saab 99
sold in Whittier the day
Nixon came home to roost.
Then true infatuation:
a life full of women,
dull red bosomy box
of a car, camper, home,
the Volkswagen van that ate
three engines, her giant
lips breaking a path north
from LA to Oregon.
She carried me to law
school, forgave my bad tune-
ups, went blind
in Santa Ana blasts,
threw a rod outside Compton.
The famous Lipsmobile.
Neighbors sketched me
hunkered inside, cursing the dark,
recalling the open
Buick sky of childhood.

My father drives only
in his daydreams now. Across
a continent I see
his hands alongside mine
each time I lift a hood
to make connections, fuel
myself for what propels
me through the life I have,
that I have learned to examine.

Kathleen M. Bogan

The Cost

The picture in the Children's Bible showed
the fullness of God's test: Abraham,
his upraised hand, knife poised against
a bilious sky. His sandals planted

in the dust—the human digging in
against what God requires. He stood
above his son in the neatly painted clearing,
boulders and stones pleasingly arranged,

while Isaac helpless on his back, diapered
like a baby, waited on a pyre of branches,
ready for the flames. The church hall
where we went each Sunday—

a Catholic school gymnasium
filled with folding chairs.
Behind the wooden altar, long curtains
over cinderblock, painted a sullen green.

Babies wailed above the murmured mass
and their wordless protestation
confirmed what I believed—
that every Sunday after church

the priest would choose a child
to offer up to God.
A buried misapprehension
for more than thirty years,

but I remember the prickle of my woolen skirt,
fidgeting in my folding chair
and making my decision.
The camel through the needle's eye,

the narrow path, it seemed so clear:
there was
God's way or mine.
And in my secret heart I knew
the path I would choose

would be my own pleasure,
my own sweet darkness.
I would believe in other stories
and there would be a cost.

Elizabeth Oness

Rapunzel's Clock

Of all the gifts he could have brought her
that she would seem to have no use for
in the tower—a lawnmower, a badminton set,
high-heeled shoes—

this clock was most whimsical
and harmless, at first, a toy house
carved with vines, flaunting a frozen bird
that popped in and out, and was always
whisked away at the last chime,
back through clenched doors,
as though to store up the intervening hour
in undistracted darkness.

After a night of counting every hour,
they destroyed the clock's music
to keep it secret from the crone,
though at night, while he slept,
she could still hear its lurching gears,
the tongue-less bird shuttling its muted cuckoos
inside the cupboard where she kept it hidden.

It became the tight heart
she tuned her body to—
the crumbs of afternoons, his absences,
the gaining darkness. Blood days.
Days of waiting. Nights of visitation
and violent blooming.

So that in time she grew to need
the clock's white noise
beneath her own body's story—
its given loneliness, its brief,
incredible eruptions of hope.

Lisa Russ Spaar

The Calm

It's quiet now, between the aftershocks.
I roam with care between the bricks and shards.
With my toe I push the chips, the fractured
Mirror that glistens in the fissured yard.
There lies the chimney base, the patio door,
Your oils and easels splayed across the grass
Bright pigments blending with floral shades. And look,
My ties tangle with his collar and leash.
It's dusk. A faint breeze skims the smoke and dust
From jigsaw masonry. I've called his name
Again and set his usual dish among
The smoldering debris. It's growing late.

Jay Liveson

The Shortest Distance Between Two Points

I walk from the melted glass of sleep,
pass the child in the tree.
We exchange counterfeit childhoods,
curse piano lessons, toothless grandmothers
drunk at Christmas.
I set my watch by the park's sundial.
A clerk, aproned, his whistling rife, unconvincing,
sweeps the sidewalk of a grocery store.
A grin flickers on his smallpox-pitted face—
hocus-pocus and longing,
shift of dunes, scream in a dry mouth.
He throws a tiny, wrinkled apple at a stray dog,
misses, pulp sparks on lightpost.
The dog scoots into an alley.
I toe the ballyscatter of broken glass—
tavern ruckus, bottle-heave,
cat-jab and haymaker. Argument over baseball.
I shrug. My favorite sport is bear wrestling,
but I refuse to wear that uncomfortable muzzle.
The old flower vendor,
her hands bloodied by thorns, lunges
toward my lapel with her stock in trade.
As an act of charity I palm a buck
from her money plate.
In the turmoil of the revolving door
I protect my groin from briefcases.
The lobby beckons.
The marble floor, tapestries, echoes,
all imported from Europe.
The elevator waits
like false teeth wallowing in a water glass.
Angels, overweight, slovenly, hitchhike up,
and look aside, embarrassed:
I'm more ethereal and they know it.

On the roof I go back to sleep,
pigeons chortling. In the distance
the trummy-plink of a piano tuner,
coating the air like rust.

James Magorian

At the El Vado Motel
 Run by East Bengalis in Albuquerque, New Mexico
 The front room has a parrot
 While in the back, the proprietress cooks barefoot
 And the proprietor's daughter
 Is beautiful in some unaccusing way
 She will not spend the rest of her life
 In this motel court
 Beneath the broken sign of neon Pueblo deco

At the El Vado Motel
 I lie in bed because it is so cold
 Reading a book by Chagall's wife
 About a Russia colder than this
 Where fur hats teach the law
 Where the mother of a little girl
 Sinks down into a dark pool behind a sheet

No red bride or white bride
 Flares like a lost comet
 Over the El Vado Motel
 In Albuquerque, New Mexico
 Just the proprietor's daughter
 Laying out dishes of curry for Thanksgiving dinner
 America is a lovely place
 If you can get used to it.

Miriam Sagan

Making History

You just watch the moon, a paring-sized
 crescent hanging on the bottom of a blue nail
 by a thread against a deeper blue

crazy-quilt of silver dots who want you
 to want them to say something if you can
 be bothered to string them together

into a calligraphic marvel. This pretense
 of order instead of the chaos they now
 seem to unwillingly represent.

No, you say to the smoking car tearing through
 twilight like a bad cough through light sleep,
 I won't do it. I may be pretty far gone, but not

far enough to believe the stars have intentions
 —good or bad—or that the moon
 needs my help to find a place to rest

its dark side.

And pretty soon, plowing
 the eventide traffic like a John Deere cap
 finding a seat in the first five rows
 of a chamber music concert,

you're home,
 and the car stops smoking
 and the moon's on the other side of town
 and—sure enough—you can hear it
 with its chorus of tiny silver henchmen
 running the same scam on the dead
 you know are over there trying to get
 some sleep before they have
 to get up
 and go back to work.

Paul Grant

Rembrandt Remaindered

There, among failed titles
of malfeasance and infidelity, fallen
in with garden books, self-help manuals
and promises of tax relief, Rembrandt's
self-portrait stares from another world.
"Hidden Genius," the volume offers.
That he mined image from the coal
light of chiaroscuro doesn't illuminate
the dingy corners of this subway store
or the dark looks of passing commuters.
Chronic dusk occludes the room around him—
an air of closure that light surrenders
outside its candescence. Confronted
by Rembrandt, I feel the cool bore
of his eyes and know that I will never
reach the brilliant pale of his portraiture.

His forehead gathers with brushstrokes,
darkened varnish and lines of accumulated dirt.
As our eyes near through the cheap neon
gloss, more than glass and time's palette
keep us apart. Like a Broadway extra, I
stand to the side staring at his pose and
he past me. The scene is about vision dying.
What is art, after all, but darkness rearranged
and out of its null and void, a face
almost like life. The portrait
doesn't answer, displayed there in the dust
jacket of evening traffic and the faint
quiver of blue and yellow light.

Maybe someone will notice his homeless
face in the window and take him away.
Not that Rembrandt would have cared.
He never looked beyond the dark emphatic
of his focus, let alone past its emotion.

Now he depends on the patronage of book sales
and museum fees. And I can't wait. The coming
roar ushers a wind of trains and overhead,
a concrete sky. The remaindered volume must
try its mystique on someone else. Faces crowd
the tunnel—Rembrandt would know how to paint them.
The dinge and shadow, dark brown and black,
figures worked into each other like vertical
cord wood and caught in the late light,
my face holding back, looking beyond
him, beyond recognition.

Allen Fischer

The Commuters

At the city's farthest tip, as far south
as you can go, Manhattan pushes like
a big toe poking to test the quick-
silver running in the harbor mouth.

Here, at the island's edge, a curving black
railing follows the horizon, holds us back.
Turn your head, left to right: river
churns into harbor, into river.

Cirrus clouds mute the harsh sun
like an ageing bride's veil. At five o'clock
the sun is setting over Hackensack.
Slack tide, and the harbor is spun silk,

shimmering silver as a fish's side.
Light flashes off the glassy, cold,
still water; refracts into a million
glittering splinters, and the river is beaten gold.

A big, slow, pumpkin-colored scow
trudges back and forth from Bowling Green
to Staten Island. Sleek, clean
air boats plow the river, skip like stones

over fish's, dogs' and men's bones.
At five-ten, the ferries ply the waterways,
their holds full of human cargo in dun, maize,
and dove-grey summer suits. Cell-phones

glued in place, loosening a bow or knot,
holding carefully folded jackets over sweat-stained arms,
the commuters fuss at important men at important firms,
and wish the August sun was not so hot,

as the ferries whisper home across the Hudson—
like burnished thrones—magisterial and soft-spoken,
from Wall Street to Port Imperial. Weehawken.
Jersey City. Arthur's Landing. Hoboken.

Brooke Wiese

Joy Ride

The man stares out into his littered yard:
bald tires, fence rails, skinny chickens, and the fields
beyond the yard stretching out like a golden shawl.
He could walk through the fields, feel the dry
grass touch his legs, watch the chaff-dust rise up.
Instead he listens to the wind blowing
under the foundation of his home as he stares
at the old green Chevy sitting by his garage.
For years the windows have been opened for rain
and rust has climbed up fenders
like a rare lichen staining the earth.

The man walks through the living room,
steps over his wife who plays solitaire on the floor.
The screen door is a portal he must pass through
now, right now, before his wife lays another card.
Where are you going? she calls, but he doesn't hear.
His hand is on the handle of the door of the car.
He pulls it open and now he sits inside.
In the mirror he sees faces—friends, his father and brother—
all dead, all speaking to him at once, many voices
asking, Friend, brother, son, where have you been?
(He thinks, Here, day after night after night),

and he smiles back in the mirror at them all,
calling out, Say, what do you know? Let's go for a ride.
He revs it up, drops it in gear, heads up-state for Des Moines.
Hell, from there you can go anywhere.
With his cargo at his back he can watch them—
his friends hollering and laughing, drinking beer,
his father sitting stiffly, happy in that still pose,
his brother seeking a place to rest his head.
Although he can't make out all the details
there's a story being told that washes through
in the high wind—stray words fall like flecks of chrome
and shine in the moist reflection from his eyes.

He feels a great joy seeing them happy
and riding out down the straight high-way
not caring so much about what they pass
so long as they get there with the stars over them
and the moon racing along side like a sleek white dog.
The man is running on streets of gold
like the gold of the light in the house
where his wife is waiting, watching her husband
sitting motionless behind the great round wheel.

Tal Birdsey

Contributors

M. Alexander. Théophile Gautier (1811–72) put forth the philosophy of Art for Art's Sake. M. Alexander asks, "Art Who?" He has also published in *Heaven Bone* and *The New Orleans Review*.

Deanne Bayer has published poetry in *High Plains Review*, *The Cape Rock*, and *Small Pond*. Forthcoming work will appear in *Yankee*, *Puerto del Sol*, and *Flyway*. She has just completed a novel.

Tal Birdsey's work has appeared in *Southern Poetry Review*, *Nimrod*, and *Kansas Quarterly*. He teaches at Paideia School in Atlanta.

Kathleen M. Bogan is an artist as well as poet and had her first one-woman show in 1996. Ms. Bogan studied with Philip Booth and Donald Justice at Syracuse University. Her work has appeared in *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *Seattle Review*, *Confrontation*, and *Writers' Forum*. Others of her poems will appear in anthologies from Storyline Press and Blue Dog Press.

Kurt Brown is founding director of Aspen Writer's Conference, now in its 20th year. His work has appeared in *The Ontario Review*, *Berkeley Poetry Review*, *The Seattle Review*, *The Southern Poetry Review*, *The Massachusetts Review*, *Indiana Review*, *Kansas Quarterly*, and *Crazyhorse*. His chapbook *The Lance & Rita Poems* (co-authored by Virginia Slachman) won the 1994 Sound Post Press Competition and appeared in 1994.

Shulamith Wechter Caine is the winner of the 1995 Gerald Cable Poetry Contest sponsored by Silverfish Review Press for a book-length manuscript of original poetry. She has received a Pennsylvania Council on the Arts Fellowship for Literature in poetry, and participates in its Artist in Education program. Ms. Caine's work has appeared in *American Poetry Review*, *American Scholar*, *Denver Quarterly*, *Negative Capability*, and *Southern Poetry Review*.

Jeanette M. Clough's poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *Wisconsin Review*, *Spillway*, *13th Moon*, and *Blue Satellite*. Ms. Clough's poems also appear in the 1994 and 1996 Robinson Jeffers Room Poetry Series of Carmel, California.

Mary Rohrer-Dann is a fiction writer new to poetry. Her stories have appeared in *An Intricate Weave: Women Write on Girls and Girlhood*; *The Antietam Review*; and *Sun Dog*.

John F. Deane of Dublin, Ireland, has written several poetry collections, including *Stalking After Time* (1977), *High Sacrifice* (1981), *Winter in Meath* (1985), *Road with Cypress and Star* (1988), and *The Stylized City* (1991). He is founder and editor of Daedalus Press and in 1996 was appointed secretary general of the European Academy of Poets.

Allen C. Fischer is a poet from Brooklyn, New York. His work has appeared in *Poetry*, *Indiana Review*, *Southwest Review*, *Seneca Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Poetry Northwest*, and *River Styx*.

Philip Fried has two collections of poetry, *Quantum Genesis* (1997) and *Mutual Trespasses*, both from Zohar Press. His poems and articles have appeared in *Partisan Review*, *Beloit Poetry Review*, *Paris Review*, and *Chicago Review*. He is founding editor of *Manhattan Review*, an international poetry journal.

Paul Grant, a native of Louisiana, is a typographer and assemblage artist living in western Maryland. His work has appeared in *Georgia Review*, *Sewanee Review*, and *Yankee*.

Anthony Grooms is an Atlanta poet and fiction writer whose publications include *Ice Poems*, a poetry chapbook, and *Trouble No More*, a collection of short stories. He teaches English at Kennesaw State University in Georgia.

Rachel Hadas is the author of eleven volumes of poetry and criticism, the most recent being *The Double Legacy* (Faber and Faber, 1995). Her poem "The Slip," published in *Atlanta Review* in 1995, won the Pushcart Prize. She is professor of English at the Newark Campus of Rutgers University and has also taught at Columbia and Princeton Universities.

Rachel Golburgh Johnson's work has appeared in *Poetry East*, *Kansas Quarterly*, *Wisconsin Review*, *Apalachee Quarterly*, *The Cape Rock*, and *North Dakota Review*. She has studied with British poet Ted Hughes.

Jay Liveson is a neurologist, director of EMG at Kingsbrook Jewish Medical Center, and visiting professor at Tel Aviv University. He has published two books of poetry and several medical texts.

James Margorian is the author of numerous books of poetry, children's books, and satirical novels, the most recent being *Souvenir Pillows from Mars* (1996). His work has appeared in over a hundred literary magazines including *The Sewanee Review*, *Spoon River Quarterly*, and *Southern Poetry Review*.

Elizabeth Oness' work has appeared in *Hudson Review*, *Shenandoah*, and *Organica*, and is forthcoming in *Prairie Schooner*.

Miriam Sagan's most recent book of poetry is *The Art of Love* (La Alameda, 1994). Ms. Sagan is the editor, with Karen Niederman, of *New Mexico Poetry Renaissance* (Red Crane, 1994).

R. T. Smith's new collection of poetry, *Trespasser*, was published in Ireland, where Mr. Smith spent the summer of 1994 under an International Arts Grant from the United Nations.

Lisa Russ Spaar's "Rapunzel's Clock" is from a collection of the same name, for which Ms. Spaar won a Virginia Commission for the Arts Individual Artist's Award. Other poems of hers are forthcoming in *Poetry*, *Virginia Quarterly Review*, *Ploughshares*, *Crazyhorse*, *Shenandoah*, and the *Southern Poetry Review*. She teaches writing at the University of Virginia, where she also administers the MFA program in creative writing.

Diane Wald's manuscript "The White Horse Love Poems" won the Green Lake Chapbook Award at Owl Creek Press and will be published this summer. Her *Double Mirror* is available from Run-away Spoon Press.

Liz Waldner's "Etym(bi)ology II" is from her manuscript "Saving Appearances," a National Poetry Series and Colorado Prize finalist in 1996. Other poems in the collection are forthcoming in *Denver Quarterly*, *Massachusetts Review*, and *New American Writing*.

Charles Webb is a rock singer turned psychotherapist and professor of English. His book *Reading the Water* was chosen by Edward Hirsch as winner of the Morse Poetry Prize and will be published in 1997 by Northeastern University Press.

Brooke Wiese's poems have appeared in *Brooklyn Review*, *Hawai'i Review*, *The Laurel Review*, *The Spoon River Poetry Review*, as well as *Atlanta Review*. Ms. Wiese has had poems nominated for a Pushcart Prize three times and has won the CCS Reading Series/Poetry and Fiction Competition.

Tom Williams of Newtown Square, Pennsylvania, is a teacher of English, creative writing, and poetry. His work has appeared in *California Quarterly* and *Abiko Quarterly*, as well as *Atlanta Review*. A volume of his poetry, *alive beyond blue*, appeared in 1995.

Karen Zealand is a therapist in a psychology practice in Cumberland, Maryland. Her work has appeared in *Southern Poetry Review*, *Outerbridge*, *Poet Lore*, *Nightsun*, *Antietam Review*, *Hayden's Ferry Review*, *Slant*, and *Kansas Quarterly*. She was awarded a Maryland State Arts Council Individual Artist's Award in Poetry in 1993.

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