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Arts for the 21st Century


Bim

Creative Moon (detail) ***Vonnie Roudette***

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***BIM*: Arts for the 21st Century** is produced twice each year and publishes creative works, essays and critical expositions that meet the needs of the literary and artistic community. It accepts submissions that focus on literary, artistic and cultural phenomena within the Caribbean and its diaspora. *BIM* accepts and publishes academic articles that are of high quality, but which are not too heavy with jargon to the exclusion of the wider reading public. *BIM* accepts non-academic contributions of high quality, including book and other reviews, poetry, short fiction, photographs and cartoons. In future issues, it will also accept digital art, electronic sound and digital video files, and critical comments on these. In all cases submissions will be subject to scrutiny by the editorial committee.

Manuscripts should be forwarded in double-spaced format, preferably with an accompanying electronic text file in Microsoft Word format. Endnotes are preferred. Photos should, at a minimum, be 300 dpi in quality. Submissions should contain the name of the author and title of the contribution on a separate page, but the author's name should not appear on subsequent pages of the actual manuscript. Correspondence should be sent to:
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Blue Moon (Cover shows detail) ***Vonnie Roudette***

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Austin Clarke

Born in St. James, Barbados. In 1955 Clarke moved to Canada, where he attended the University of Toronto. He was a reporter in the Ontario communities of Timmins and Kirkland Lake, before joining the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and eventually became a freelance journalist. In 1998, he was made a Member of the Order of Canada. He won the Giller Prize for 'The Polished Hoe' in 2002, as well as the Commonwealth Writers Prize in 2003.

Brenda Flanagan

Trinidad born Brenda Flanagan is a novelist ('Allah in the Islands', 2009; 'You Alone Are Dancing', 1996), short story writer ('In Praise of Island', 'Women & Other Crimes', Fall, 2010, and in numerous publications), playwright (the prize-winning 'When the Jumbie bird Calls'), poet and essayist. Having earned a PhD from The University of Michigan, Flanagan teaches creative writing, African American and Caribbean Literatures at Davidson College in North Carolina, and serves as a cultural ambassador for the US State Department.

Cecil Gray

Cecil Gray was born in Port of Spain, Trinidad, in modest circumstances in 1923. He obtained a teacher's certificate and an external degree from London University.
He taught at UWI St Augustine, training secondary teachers in teaching English. In 1976 he was awarded the Medal of Merit, Class One, Gold, by the Trinidadian Government for his meritorious service in education and culture.
He has had poems published in 'Bim', 'Kyk-over-Al', 'Trinidad and Tobago Review', 'Savacou', 'The Greenfield Review' and 'Caribbean Quarterly'.
His published works include 'The Woolgatherer' (Peepal Tree, 1994), 'Lillian's Songs' (1996), 'Leaving the Dark' (1998) and 'Plumed Palms' (2000).

Colin Dayan

Colin Dayan is the Robert Penn Warren Professor of the Humanities at Vanderbilt University. Her books include 'Haiti, History, and the Gods'; 'The Story of Cruel and Unusual'; and the forthcoming 'The Law is a White Dog'. She is currently at work on a memoir of her mother's life in 'Haiti: Between the Devil and the Deep Sea'.

Dana Gilkes

Dana Gilkes' award winning poetry has appeared in journals at home and abroad. A past winner of the Frank Collymore Literary Endowment Award, and the Commonwealth Short Story Award, she currently teaches Literatures in English at the Barbados Community College, and is the author of 'Anatomy of a Scream', a collection of sequential poems published by Pudding House Publications in Columbus, Ohio.

Esther Phillips

Esther Phillips was awarded a James Michener Fellowship to attend the University of Miami where she completed an MFA and won the Alfred Boas Poetry prize. She also won the Frank Collymore Literary Endowment Award in 2001. Her publications are chapbook 'La Montee', UWI, Cave Hill, 'When Ground Doves Fly', Ian Randle Publishers, 'The Stone Gatherer', Peepal Tree Press. Esther Phillips' work is published in the Caribbean, USA and the U.K. and anthologized in 'The Whistling Bird: Women Writers of the Caribbean and Blue Latitudes: Caribbean Women Writers at Home and Abroad'. She is Head of the Division of Liberal Arts of the Barbados Community College, founder of Writers Ink Barbados and editor of 'BIM: Arts for the 21st. Century'.

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Dean of the Faculty of Medical Sciences, UWI Cave Hill, but describes himself as a medical research scientist (100 plus peer reviewed publications), an artist (one man London show and group shows), a writer (250 Sunday columns), architectural historian (books and TV films, and President Emeritus of the Barbados National Trust). His most prized publications? An article and a painting in BIM in the 80s!

Hilary McD Beckles

Professor Sir Hilary Beckles was born in Barbados in 1955.
Sir Hilary has served The University of West Indies as Head of the History Department and Dean of the Faculty of Humanities. He became UWI Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Principal of Cave Hill Campus in 2002.
Sir Hilary is an internationally reputed historian and serves on the editorial boards of several academic journals including the 'Journal of Caribbean History', 'Sports in Society', and as an international editor for the 'Journal of American History'. He is also the Chair, Board of Directors of the University of the West Indies Press.
Sir Hilary has published over ten academic books, including: 'Liberties Lost: The Native Caribbean and Slave Societies' (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 'Centering Woman: Gender Discourses in Caribbean Slave Society'; (James Currey Press); 'The History of Barbados' (Cambridge University Press, 1990); and more recently a two-volume work on West Indies cricket, 'The Development of West Indies Cricket: Volume One, The Age of Nationalism'; and 'Volume Two, The Age of Globalisation', (Pluto Press 1999).
Sir Hilary Beckles was awarded Knight of St. Andrew, the highest national honour in Barbados, for his contribution to "Higher Education, the Arts, and Sports" in 2007.

Jennifer Rahim

Jennifer Rahim is a Senior Lecturer in Literature in the Department of Liberal Arts, The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago. She is a critic, poet and short story writer. Her articles on Caribbean literature have appeared in 'MaComere', 'The Journal of West Indian Literature', 'Small Axe', 'Anthurium', 'The Trinidad and Tobago Review' and 'The Woman, the Writer and Caribbean Society'. Ed. Helen Pyne-Timothy (1998). She edited with Barbara Lalla a collection of Cultural Studies essays entitled, 'Beyond Borders: Cross Culturalism and the Caribbean Canon' (UWI Press 2009).

Her creative publications include three poetry collections: 'Mothers Are Not the Only Linguists' (1992) and 'Between the Fence and the Forest' (2002) and 'Approaching Sabbaths' (2009). She has one collection of short stories, 'Songster and Other Stories' (2007). 'Approaching Sabbaths' was awarded the 2010 Casa de las Américas Prize for best book in the category Caribbean Literature in English or Creole.

Karen Lord

Karen Lord is a research consultant with academic publications in the field of sociology of religion. She won the 2008 Frank Collymore Literary Endowment Award (FCLE) with the novel 'Redemption in Indigo', which will be published in 2010 by Small Beer Press. The excerpt in this issue of BIM is from the sequel, 'Labyrinths of Midnight'. Karen also won the FCLE for the second consecutive occasion in 2010.

Kei Miller

Kei Miller's most recent books are the novel, 'The Last Warner Woman' (Wiedenfeld & Nicolson, 2010) and the poetry collection 'A Light Song of Light' (Carcanet, 2010). He has been an International Writing Fellow at the University of Iowa and presently teaches at the University of Glasgow.

Kendel Hippolyte

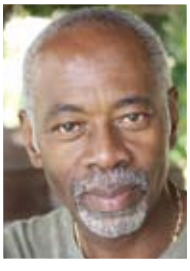
Kendel Hippolyte is a poet, playwright and director and sporadic researcher into areas of Saint Lucian and Caribbean arts and culture. His poetry has been published in journals and anthologies regionally and internationally as well as in five volumes between 1980 and 2005. His plays have been performed locally and regionally and three of his plays have been published in drama anthologies. Recently retired, his present focus is to use his skills as a writer and dramatist to raise public awareness and contribute to active solutions of critical social issues.

Mark Mc Watt

is from Guyana and has been publishing poetry for more than three decades. His first book of fiction, a collection of stories entitled 'Suspended Sentences', was published by Peepal Tree in 2005 and has won four literary prizes, including the overall Commonwealth Writer's Prize for best first book, 2006.

McDonald Dixon

Born on the Caribbean Island of Saint Lucia, McDonald Dixon has been writing for some 40 years while pursuing a full time profession in Banking, Trade and Commerce. He has published poetry, prose and plays. His published work includes – 'Pebbles' 1973, 'The Poet Speaks' 1979, 'Collected Poems' 1961-2001, 'Season of Mist' 2007, 'Misbegotten' 2009 and most recently his collection of short stories – 'Careme' 2010.



Ronnie Carrington

Ronnie Carrington is a leading Barbadian photographer, and producer/director, who is known for his stunning, thought-provoking black and white images. His work chronicles Barbadian folk life and landscape during the last quarter of the 20th century. He has documented many aspects of life in Barbados and the wider Caribbean on film and video, and has been photographic exhibitor and judge nationally and internationally.
Ronnie is the CEO of Carrington Photo-Creations & Corporate Imaging.

Ronald Williams

Ronald Williams was born in Barbados and attended Coleridge and Parry high school where he was an athlete, representing the school and, later, the nation, in the 1960s and 1970s. He is currently a vice president of the College Board, best known for its SAT® and Advanced Placement® tests. Williams attended Lehigh University, where he earned a doctorate in literature.

Summer Edward

Born and raised in Valsayn, Trinidad, Summer Edward currently lives in Philadelphia. She is a Master's student in the Reading, Writing, Literacy programme at the University of Pennsylvania. She blogs at www.well-lovedtales.blogspot.com. Her poetry and art have appeared in 'Philadelphia Stories, tongues of the ocean' and 'St. Somewhere'. In 2010 Summer was selected to be a Roothbert Fellow.

Vonnie Roudette

Vonnie Roudette received an MA in Manchester UK and spent 3 years at Kyoto Arts University, Japan, researching traditional aesthetics. She worked for Japanese designer Issey Miyake before returning to the UK to practice as a freelance designer where she was also a part time Art lecturer on BA Textiles course (Manchester UK,) and Foundation Art Course(Reading UK). Her design experience includes-theatre design,(UK) film and video,(London, SVG) textiles,(Italy, Japan, London). Since 1992 she has designed and taught creative educational programs for children and craft producers.(SVG, St. Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis) and was handcraft development consultant in St Vincent to the OAS Heritage Tourism Project, '96-2000. In 1996 she co-founded SVG CREATE, an NGO of artists and craft producers. A certified farmer (SVG 1997) and manager/design director of Fibreworks Inc. a craft factory in rural St. Vincent established in 1997. Trained in natural building techniques in Colombia, Ohio and Mexico (2003), Vonnie currently teaches A level Art and Design at St Vincent Community College and coordinates Hand2Earth, a rural educational sustainability lifestyles youth project in Penniston SVG.

Earthquake 2010

Jennifer Rahim

Tues. Jan 12th : 2.30p.m.

Before the earthquake rocked
Port-au-Prince with more fury
than an autonomic bomb,
BW 610 from Port-of-Spain
was safely on the ground
and my sole shake down
was from a customs officer,
young, hardened by his job,
who asked me twice
if I had "anything
that was not in Canada before."
Each time I answered,
"No, sir" to a question
that struck me as an anachronism
in an age of travel,
oddly strung for a country
that flags its cosmopolitanism
like a creed.
He was bent on a confession
so on the third round
I thought hard of the contents
in my single roll-on,
then admitted, like a revelation:
"one coconut fudge, two
toolums and a sugar cake,
pink" and added, "I mean candy,"

sensing the qualifier
was necessary.

Winter entered his eyes
at my declaration.
They were sweets of home,
a small comfort I allowed myself,
but an entire history
that travelled with me –
one I shared with the Guyanese woman
in trendy metropolitan wear
who sat taciturnly in 12C
guarding a phantom ascendancy;
and with the elderly Trinidadian man
a few rows forward
in a grey Fedora
and black leather coat
he never removed,
already feeling the cold;
a history that gave me
an Islamic name the officer
pronounced with the long *e*
and looked quizzically
from my face to my I.D. –
9/11 reruns as fresh as Washington's,
terrorizing his hidden screen.

When tectonic plates,
began secretly negotiating
their catastrophic shift,
the officer was asking,
"How much did you pay
for your sweets, miss?"
I said, after a pause, "Three dollars"
and to defuse what I caught
of his doubt injected,
"That is Canadian."
He stamped me in, then,
with no further question.
He understood fully,
accepted, blindly,
like a believer the dogma
of his salvation
that the currency of islands
(where the sugar in my sweets
made the rum of hot places
where people could escape
to roast their limbs on beaches
like the barbeques
of pillaging buccaneers,
only browning themselves
for their tropic feast,
like commercial cannibals)
should be worth less,
much less than his own

and could crumble and fall
like the frail shanties
of Port-au-Prince. Cathedral,
Presidential Palace and all –
rent like a judgement –.
Everywhere: rubble, white dust –
like an upturned sepulchre.

3.35p.m.

A grave:
it was the image that registered
when I tugged my luggage
off the Airport Rocket,
journeying the cheapest way,
and paying three Canadian,
the price of my candy,
to get first to Kipling,
the western end of the subway
that recalled the injurious poet
whose verses pined for *Home*
being sentenced to a hellish India
in the season of good cheer.
Heaven, believe me, is a location.
So coming from my south
(with the undeclared slices
of my mother's black cake,
that had never been to Canada before,
safely stowed away
in good Brazilian leather,
a bargain from a Rastaman
on Fredrick Street,
who called out to me
on Christmas Eve,
"Sis, a small sale please
to buy something nice
for the yout' man," and I agreed
to meet his need),
I saw the powdered crimson tiles
of Kipling and revelation
rained afresh on me: ash,
the traffic of winter.

The earthquake was a nightmare
tossing in Haiti's consciousness,
when my train sped, resolutely,
to Castle Frank and the woman
I first saw on the Rocket
filed past
in search of a seat,
though the carriage
was half-empty.
She dragged her duffle bag
behind her like a corpse. –

I remembered, she was last
to board the bus
and had said something, softly,
in her Créole to the driver
who didn't or couldn't answer,
but he waved her further in
with defensive impatience.
I saw her that second time
on the train whose final stop
was Kennedy.
I saw her lumbering
against its thrust,
like someone climbing a hill.

4.50 p.m.

It must have struck
as I boarded the No.65 to Parliament.
I entered behind two
knapsack toting teenagers
plugged into their I-pods
and nodding their heads
to private rhythms
with the zoned-out look
of deliberate disconnect.
Having no news,
I put on the wide-angled gaze
of public commuters
as the bus rattled along a street
named after its buildings
in the third year
of Toussaint's rebellion:
the time of a different split –
for Canada –.We suffer
our differences,
unequally.

So as I walked east
towards the Distillery, at six below,
with my *embark* rumbling
in my wake like a wounded love,
taking the cold
after a brief respite
of staying with the bus
as it swung west on Front
then doubled back
along the Esplanade's decent poverty,
I thought only of the *jadda*
fenced by thin plastic bags.
Distrusting the automated street stops,
she had made a ritual of half-
standing at intervals, bowing
forward to see ahead of her,
afraid of missing her stop, –
the soiled fringes of her dress

far more streetwise.
At Parliament and Queen,
she stood, frozen, a stranger
to what should have been familiar.

5.26 p.m.

When, at last, I switched on
the blessed heat,
then the TV and heard,
"My God, the world is coming
to an end!" and saw the cloud
envelop Port-au-Prince,
the woman's rehearsed plea,
"Please, let me off!"
her panic bypassing the bell,
resounded like an aftershock.
More than 200,000 dead.
And a pastor with the faithless
tongue of new grief lamented,
"Haiti is a cemetery."
Yes, there is a world
that must end, and Haiti,
our first light, is now
its grim apocalypse
as Obama's slick neighbourliness
descends like a vulture
on its long-injured soil
where an unholy advent
slouches forth to re-incarnate itself,
its agenda secreted
in the stench of death
and provoked desperation
as pregnant carries arrive
like Trojan horses with arms
empty of real need.

This is not a time
for sleep. Not now,
when the evil Toussaint fought
and fights, yet, resurrects its head
like Revelation's cosmic beast
with might to sweep
the very stars from heaven.
This is the time
Carter portended, when dreams
must birth, again, revolution,
for Haiti,
misused child
of our freedom, lies helpless
is at the very door
of the dragon's jaws
and her betrayal
is already our condemnation.
Hell, believe me,

is also a position,
and why Robertson,
that deluded evangelist,
could preach the devil
freed then cursed Haiti,
as if the will to liberty
must seek absolution
from what holds us unfree.

Wednesday 13th: 10.21a.m.

Trinidad called to say
that in St Augustine,
where the literati gathered
to honour Walcott,
Rudder's penitent prayer
Haiti I'm sorry,
opened the proceedings,
pleading for all our abuses
to your earth,
demanding reparation
for your losses
from a Caribbean
that moves on
the strength of your steel.
Haiti, I see the kaleidoscope
of your make-shift tents stretched
like a crude quilt of solidarity
that shames us, silences
our insipid religion
and hand-out politicking.
I see each hoisted square,
an SOS to winged ancestors
who stormed you free
of Napoleon's twisted heaven.
They will not, now, deny you
presence.
You are the best in us
we, too, must save
lest we all die
bankrupt of spirit
while the spangled stars
rule our fate.
If poetry means anything,
let this be a sword, precise
as Ogun's justice, a mouth
charged like Jeremiah's call
to rebuild with much more resolve
the temple of our selves.

Haiti, or What is a Metaphor a Metaphor For?

Colin Dayan

Photograph by Ronnie Carrington

Haiti has always suffered from a plight of representation: experiencing the extremes of idealization and denigration. "Black France" for Jules Michelet but "a tropical dog-kennel" for Thomas Carlyle, Haiti forced imagination high and low. Carlyle's biographer, the historian James Anthony Froude, described his first impression of Port-au-Prince as a smell of "active dirt fermenting in the sunlight." For V.S. Naipaul, a later connoisseur of caricature, the "desert of Haiti" is the source of the "nothing" that he claims as a West Indian legacy.

In their coverage of the earthquake, the media represented Haiti as a passive, neutered object of disaster: with no history, no culture, nothing except images of rubble, pain, dirt, and misery. How did the news media dare to show piles of bodies being bulldozed into mass graves after the earthquake? To talk about the smell of urine? To focus on decay and women in postures that could only be abject? What do the representations of Haiti tell us about the force of metaphor? And why are these metaphors so crucial to North Americans? What is a metaphor a metaphor for?

Showing images when dealing with a country alternately sentimentalized and brutalized is a dangerous business. It risks succumbing to what Michel Rolph Trouillot called the language of Haitian exceptionalism. That is, Haiti as radically unlike any other place, as grotesquely unique. But we must remember that both processes, whether idealization or degradation, involve displacement of the human element. We face a process of sublimation, up or down. Amid evocations of a desperate people and festering landscape, the media and the "humanitarian" community continue to ignore the history and culture of Haiti. Without reference to the foreign occupation, intervention, and exploitation that define the Haitian political experience, we cannot appreciate the sinister politics of Clinton and Bush's promise of "compassion."

During the American Occupation of Haiti, which lasted from 1915 to 1934, the U.S. government rewrote the Haitian Constitution to permit foreign investment; dissolved the Haitian army and replaced it with a police force, known as the *garde*; seized peasants' land; imposed martial law; and instituted the *corvée,* a program of forced labor to build roads throughout the countryside. In 1918 the peasantry, under the leadership of Charlemagne Péralte and Benoît Batraville, began a revolt. A year later, more than 3,000 peasants had been killed. Another 5,000 died in labor camps that the garde supervised for the occupying forces. When the United States left, she saddled the country with foreign debt—a massive $40 million—which destroyed any possibility that Haiti might enjoy a stable financial regime.

Through stereotypes and sensationalism, the media have created an image of

Haiti that suits powerful outside states and their financial interests. Generalizations about criminality and barbarism have always been a good way to avoid the particulars of history. In the gritty world of politics and power, a retrograde Haiti—the portrait of pathos—derails our attention from the real causes of suffering and poverty there. Whenever the repression of the peasantry became more violent than usual, due to the necessities of export, the appropriation of lands, or the use of captive wage labor in multinational assembly industries, vodou practices were described as superstition and black magic. A mythologized Haiti of zombies, sorcery, and witchdoctors screen the ongoing economic greed, color prejudice, political guile, and the sheer weight of military force.

Every text about Haiti has not only a context, but also a pretext and a subtext. With Haiti, it has always been about representation: how Haiti is perceived, written about has shaped the destiny of the nation. Representation has a dual meaning: to depict and to present again. People usually depict and re-present things for some more or less specific purposes, literary, political, or historical. On the one hand, representation is necessary in order to think and talk about what is real, what already exists, as well as to act on it: as with cultural constructs such as race, class, or gender. On the other hand, representation is contestable. All representations are partial: they only depict and present again parts of those meaningful units and relations, building blocks of reality. Clearly, representation, literal or metaphorical, involves appropriation.

Representations of Haiti are largely negative; they entail violation of the integrity of the thing represented. The facts of history disappear in fantasies of the unspeakable: the unthinkable revolution of slaves, the threatening spectacle of vodou, which is most often used by outsiders to signal the backwardness and indolence they feel describe Haitian history.

I recognize again the force of Michel-Rolph Trouillot's argument in *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*: "The Past—or, more accurately, pastness—is a position. Thus, in no way can we identity the past as *past*." It is too easy, perhaps, to accommodate ourselves to what Trouillot called the "silences" of history, too comforting to claim that the facts of misrepresentation no longer exist. Because of a cursedly mimetic and heavily metaphorized Haiti, events do not seem to move forward but keep repeating themselves, backtracking the past.

The colonized, the dispossessed, are not necessarily "outside the game of history," in the words of the writer and sociologist Albert Memmi. Gods were born in the memories of those who served and rebelled: a history gained by those who were thought to have no story worth telling. Let us think about vodou as social history, inextricable from the fate of the Haitian masses. Created out of the remnants of civilization from thirty-eight different regions of Africa, vodou continues to inspire

intense art, to give courage and hope to its people. Those transplanted to a strange land brought their gods with them. Slavery, in wrenching individuals from their native land, from their names and origins, produced communities of belief that would ever be distinguished from the mood or character of Western religion.

Vodou, a word used by the Fon tribe of southern Dahomey to mean "spirit," "god," or "image," is usually exploited by foreign press and travelers in myths of sorcery and zombies. We all recall Pat Robertson's obscene response to the earthquake—punishment for what he called the "pact with the devil" that brought about Haitian Independence. In vodou things are never simple. History, even the most oppressive, whether slavery before 1804 or the American Occupation from 1915-1934, is reinterpreted. Vodou, constantly redefined by the practitioners themselves, is further complicated by the finite, temporal predicaments of those who suffer. Fear or love of the spirits exacts services that entangle money, sex, and the sacred and compels devotion in what looks to some like the junkyard. Yet ritual *konesans* (knowledge) remains pragmatic, incorporating new practices into old belief structures.

What is the relationship between dead bodies, haunting spirits, and political authority? God and servitor narrate the memory of colonial relations in all its caprices of power. To serve the gods is to be obsessed with details and fragments, inspired by the very things that might seem to hinder belief. This sense of invention goaded by thought working itself through terror leads me to emphasize that vodou practices should be viewed as ritual reenactments of Haitian history—and a recasting of the laws, tortures, and customs of a brute neo-colonial world. Never static, but adapting itself to the quirks of history and the drive of capital, vodou combines African belief, Catholic practices, and the newest objects of consumption into its subversive mixture. The appearance of the gods—even the cult of the ancestors—operates only in a social world. The spirits are always, for better or for worse, functions of urgent socio-political situations, and thus they guarantee a political history both rigorous and visible.

How political then is the continued deformation of Haitian culture, the maligning of this distinctive practice? In Haiti, material dispossession has always gone hand in hand with cultural domination. A crucial reciprocity exists between vodou and the working of the land. The participatory nature of the religion is paralleled in the *coumbite,* the traditional shared harvesting—the kind of communal effort and grassroots successes seen after the earthquake. The land and the lwa (spirits or gods of vodou) give the majority of Haitians their identity: the coumbite and vodou alike operate as support networks of beliefs, ceremonies, and friends. So oppression has proceeded as a double deprivation of property and psyche.

In his *Discourse on Colonialism,* published in 1966, the poet and playwright Césaire opposed the ideal of modernity to his own awareness of violation. "They talk to me

about progress, about 'achievements,' illness cured, improved standards of living...I'm talking about societies emptied of their soul, of cultures trampled down, of institutions undermined, of lands seized, of religions crushed, of artistic splendors annihilated, of extraordinary *possibilities* obliterated." Cesaire was quick to recognize a tradition of colonization that re-natures a country by destroying its past.

Jean-Jacques Dessalines—the founder of Haiti, who tore the white out of the French tricolor and reclaimed Haiti for those he called "my poor blacks" has been excised from most accounts of Haitian Independence or worse: exaggerated into hyperbole or denigrated as a brute. He is the only one of the "Black Jacobins" turned into a god by Haitian serviteurs. There is something to this. Christophe and Toussaint enter into Western accounts of the Haitian revolution, while Dessalines—his ambiguities and contradictions – resists such inclusion. I want to lead us into the particulars of his very local history as lwa or god. Treating Dessalines as unspeakable, erased from the particulars of history, turns him into nothing more than a metaphor for savagery, for irredeemable blackness. Moreover, analysts both past and present accomplish a double disappearance: both of land – and the long-standing occupation of it by the majority of Haitians – and of vodou.

The gods are not only in your blood but in the land. In parts of Haiti the sacred plot of land marks a spiritual heritage as inviolable as it is cherished. Serving Dessalines reinspirits what many believe to have been his legacy: the indivisible land of Haiti, never to be used or exploited by foreigners. First, in his Constitution of 1805, he declared that no white, whatever his nation, could set foot in Haiti as master or owner of property. And, second, he attempted to redefine the ownership of land. This cost him his life. In 1804, he rescinded all transfers of property made after October 1802, thus removing mulatto claims to valuable plantations. By making peasants owners of land, Dessalines made the genuine independence of the peasantry possible. That ownership—and the self-possession that culture-history made possible—has usually been ignored by the symbolic order of Western scholarship. So when poor Haitians are represented as so much material exposed to violence and in need of the salvation that sweat shops will offer them, we need to rethink what survival means, how subsistence mattered to the identity of those who worked their own land.

How, then, to speak about Haiti? How to find a language to recognize its past, the continued obstructions put in the way of its survival, unrelenting from the 18th century until the present. Haiti is not an exception, although the media like to treat it as such. Instead, it is a place where the contradictions of colonialism, the horrors of occupation, and the truths of resistance can be seen clearly, as if under a microscope. Haiti was the earliest testing ground for capitalist power. The richest French colony in the New World, with a trade that far outstripped that of the thirteen North American colonies

throughout the eighteenth-century, Saint-Domingue was the most cherished sugar-producing colonial child of France. As Sidney Mintz told us nearly thirty years ago, "Haiti was being force-fit into the First World before anything called a Third World ever existed."

The long tradition of exaggeration must be seen for what it is: A way to turn Haiti and its inhabitants into a metaphor for what the New York Times, roasting Frederick Douglass's performance as Minister Resident and Consul General to the Republic of Haiti from 1889-1891, called "a black mob pretending to be a Government." In 2010 it is still too easy to blame Haiti for bad government, or, as we keep hearing, for no government.

What is perhaps more difficult to understand is how every disaster and every coup—including the numerous coups abetted by the U.S. government, such as those against Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 1991 and 2004—never ceases to inspire an old vision for the country: a site for multinational investment, once a colony, then an occupied territory, then a land under the thumb of US AID, the World Bank, and Haitian entrepreneurs and multilateral lenders such as the Washington-based Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).

During the February coup of 2004 that finally removed the democratically elected Aristide from office, I wrote countless letters in response to Tim Weiner's reports in the New York Times. They were not printed. One of his articles, called "A Nation Scarred," took its place in the long tradition of treating Haiti as emblem of lawlessness. Blaming Haiti for 200 years of "bad government," Weiner ended with the image of millions of mahogany trees planted by the French in the 19th century. They, he explained, have suffered the same dismal fate as the pigs, the poor, and the soil. Weiner's view needs some correction, or, perhaps, just a bit more history.

After the revolution, which left Haiti, in the words of Thomas Carlyle "a monition to the civilized world," France bequeathed to Haiti an onerous financial burden. France would recognize its former colony only on condition that the Haitian government agree to pay one hundred and fifty million francs indemnity over five years to the dispossessed French planters of Saint-Domingue. The royal edict of Charles X in 1825 conditionally recognized Haiti as "free, independent, and sovereign," but left no doubt that such sovereignty would be threatened with force if necessary. France conveyed its recognition to President Jean-Pierre Boyer with a fleet of fourteen warships bearing 494 guns. Weiner ignores this legacy, and instead focuses on the Haitians' lack of good husbandry, blaming them for the decimation of their landscape, and he concludes with those fallen, rotting mahogany trees in a blighted landscape.

Outside forces have long had something to gain from the poorest country in the Western hemisphere. Right before Frederick Douglass took up his post in Haiti in 1889,

after a decade of rebellions sustained by New York speculators who gained from the traffic in munitions, the US State Department planned to obtain a naval station at the Mole St. Nicholas. Others in the government hoped to get steamship concessions. Douglass resigned in 1891, after Rear Admiral Bancroft Gherardi tried to force the Haitian government to give up the Mole. Douglass described the use of force in his lament in *Life and Times* as a squadron of large ships of war with a hundred cannon and two thousand men. The pliant New York press reported daily on Haiti's "relapse toward savagery," "a reign of terror," just as they recited stories of Aristide's thugs, rigged elections, and massacres during the recent destabilization.

Now, looking back over the years since the removal of "Baby Doc" Duvalier, I realize that the dispossession I feared would be the result of that installment of "operation democracy" in Haiti has come to pass with a vengeance. US AID projects in the 1980s ultimately displaced farmers from the countryside and created a captive labor force in Port-au-Prince. The people lived in the shantytowns on the hillsides, only to become victims of a natural disaster made worse by the endless, quite unnatural programs promoting "democracy."

Less than a decade after the United States pronounced the restoration of democracy in Haiti with the return of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, accompanied by the Marines, the international community again financially repudiated the nation. Dr. Paul Farmer, a Harvard medical professor, founder of Partners in Health and author of *The Uses of Haiti* and *AIDS and Accusation,* lamented the US's continual blocking of international loans. The "blocked $146 million in IDB [Inter-American Development Bank] loans are for health, water, and education. It's insane for the richest country in the world to hold up financing of these projects in one of the poorest." Curiously, he has been appointed—co-opted? – by Clinton as United Nations Deputy Special Envoy to Haiti.

After the campaign of disinformation that demonized Lavalas and Aristide and led to Aristide's forced ouster on February 29th, 2004, a new militarization followed, which prepares us for what we are seeing now in the wake of the earthquake. The scramble for Haiti and the weakening of its government and infrastructure began then: Brazilians, Chileans, and Argentineans took the lead in the UN forces in Haiti, while the US, Canada and France kept a role in the command structure of these same forces.

The story of Haiti must be told by standing with our backs to moral injunction, reasonable consensus, or secular ideals of progress. In a terrain ravaged by greed, and portrayed as pitiable, let us recognize something like grace: the intense art of ritual and survival against the odds, and beyond the laws or rational expectations of humanist culture. When history turns into nothing more than a metaphor, as powerful as it is empty, rationales of violence become a mandate for the subjugation of a

population stigmatized as lawless, primitive, and superfluous.

But if Haiti is a metaphor for all kinds of bad things—degradation, demons, destruction, and dirt—all of them representations of what is antithetical to our treasured western (or do I really mean "western"—where does Haiti sit, after all, mediated as to the bones by colonial schemes?)—antithetical to our treasured western notions of culture and civility, we have to ask what this metaphor is a metaphor for.

A metaphor is a representation, but it is always and necessarily a representation in the service of something else, something larger than itself. So too with Haiti. Precisely because a metaphor (as distinct from a simile) is a representation, it contains, it represents, it actually is, a falsity: a metaphor is, by definition, not the thing it represents. What it stands for is by definition not it. The dirt and the degradation and the destruction—even now—and the demons are not Haiti. If Haiti is a metaphor, then what is it a metaphor for? Not, "what does it represent?" or "what is it a representation of", but "what does this representation exist for?" What does it exist in order to do? Why does it exist at all?

In good dialectical form, it exists in the service of our cherished ideals of "civilization" – which are of course notions of self. Our selfhood is mirrored, as in a distorting mirror, in our notions of Haiti. The metaphor exists, as the long sorry story of its genesis and historical development demonstrates, to serve a purpose. And that purpose is connected with, and deeply rooted in, our notions of self and identity—which means also our notions of the other. Blackness, black freedom, black political independence, black cultural expression and specificity—all these are fundamental notions; and all are represented—not metaphorically but really—in Haiti. But fear, contempt, and hostility to this blackness all come to expression in the way we formulate our metaphors. If Haiti stands as a metaphor for misery, for helplessness, then outsiders can assume that such a nation needs the United States to save it. Though the particulars of history prove otherwise, the capacious and constantly shifting uses of metaphor bring us to that critical point where compassion becomes pity: taking care of people who cannot take care of themselves. What remains certain here is that narratives of protection are conducted by the free in the name of the bound, or to put it another way, definitions are in the hands of the definers.

Photograph by Ronnie Carrington

POSTCARDS

McDonald Dixon

St. Pierre, Martinique 1902

Gray clouds grumble, harnessing rain that clings to
the mountain's side. A gray cloak blots out the sun.
Refusing to fall on this "Pearl of the Antilles"
where fetes from dusk till dawn on Rue Monte-au-ciel
flow with lava into Rue Levassor. Water;
the Roxelene is stone. Time translates its tears
in foam.

Rum swells the fires in every crevice: in
the bilge of this town, rejected by the sea,
doomed to repent, or face « la fin de monde » – « fin
de siècle » style, waiting for the vote due in
three days.
In any other season they would have fled,
fly and ash to Fort-de-France, shawled by the day's
gray mist.

Buried in hell, Syllbaris hears nothing. Not
even the habitual scorpion's twirl.
Not heat searing flesh; not bone, whitening to
stone. Nothing… the red hot cloud saunters down
the mountain's slopes. Nothing, life is a sculpture
preserved in stone. The sea 'live in its earthen
pot simmers.

After the market clock stopped at quarter to
nine, the rains came, the canes grew tall and rum flowed
in the vats. There is a song stuck to the river's
past, too weak to dislodge its stones, floating on
tongues of grass, it swirls through the blackened limestone
like a dirge that never fades, walking upright
to prop its dead.

Castries 1904

Colliers cling to the harbour's edge, cables
strain against the tide that tugs like the Tyne,
only this place is not Newcastle:
The women's chants swell my ears as long lines
necklace precariously across the scaffolding;
necks craning under hundredweight panniers
of black anthracite to earn one hay penny
for the quarter mile from slag to ship, or ship
to heap, depends on which phase of the trade
they are paid.

Some relative dying of silicosis
is ignorant of the rage this black dust raves
inside her, instead, believing - true to her faith –
unholy hands have raked an evil trick
spawning the devil's offspring in her lungs.
The people here are marionettes, no eyes,
no face, only their swaying hips timed
to their chants, attune to life. Dust files past
street lamps on vacant streets, the alchemy
of death creates its living dead.

It's forty years before the year I was born.
I am at pains to breathe life into this poem,
although the sea is alive with the clarion
of ships, queuing at the pier, to refuel
    for the journey back home with cargoes
of indigo and brown sugar. Harrison
liners and tramps at half steam, blackening
their funnels to ape this human misery
exploited on this wharf, by hands that held the whip,
a mere seventy years before, still itching
            for moments to inflict the past.

This is our history, boy, on this black and white
            tabloid. Remember, it returns
like a recurring decimal with its amphora
of blight to where it all began, at the centre
of my world: April 7th, the year, 1904,
            naked and unmasked.

McDonald Dixon

The Dual Haitian Revolution as An Archive of Freedom

Anthony Bogues

> *Let the sacred flame of liberty that we have won lead all our acts.*
> Toussaint L'Ouverture, May 18, 1797.
>
> *Independence or death … Let these sacred words unite us and[be] the signal of battle and of our reunion.*
>
> From *The Haitian Declaration of Independence,* January 1. 1804.

Introduction.

The construction of an archive is not only a matter for historians and historical research; it is deeply connected to questions of politics and power. To think about an archive is to grapple with the conditions under which materials are preserved; it is to ask the question about the exclusion and inclusion of materials in an archive. It is to agree with Foucault that archives are "both documents of exclusion and monuments to particular configurations of power." But this is, if you wish, the first order of thinking about an archive. The second order is the issue of the relationship of historical knowledge to the archive. We are aware that claims to what is sometimes called "historical truth," are anchored in archives. It is the archive which buttresses what is said to have happened, that becomes the 'facts' on which historical knowledge as interpretation occurs. Of course the issue we want to explore here is what happens when so called "historical facts" in the archives are constructed through the processes of exclusions and inclusions and thus of silences? The answer is fairly obvious. When this

happens then the result is an interpretation of history in which significant details/events /occurrences are erased.

We in the Caribbean are very aware of this process since it has long been the practice of historical writing as colonial and racial power obliterated the historical lives of the colonized and racially dominated. As Hegel, one of the most important Western philosophers of history remarked in his 19th century lectures on the philosophy of world history, "Africa proper … has no historical interest of its own, for we find its inhabitants living in barbarism and savagery in a land which has not furnished them with any integral ingredient of culture."[1] So we are aware of historical silences in which the colonial subject is erased as part of the process in which the colonial native is born. However there is another process of historical erasure, of archival exclusion ; one in which a new archive is constructed in order to erase the significance of an historical event. In such an archive the event cannot be silenced but becomes framed as something to be forgotten or so grotesque that it must never be repeated. I want to suggest that the dual Haitian revolution was the object of both these forms of archival erasure.

In the first instance the revolution was what Michel-Rolph Trouillot called "unthinkable" and therefore was excluded from any major historical accounts of the late 18th and early 19th centuries.[2] In the second form of erasure a new distinctive archive on the Haitian Revolution was created. It was an archive in which art, literature, newspaper accounts and finally books were deployed to represent the dual Haitian revolution as the "horrors of St Domingo."[3] At the core of these so called "horrors" was, what the Harvard trained historian, T. Lothrop Stoddard writing in 1914 observed, "the French Revolution in San Domingo – the first great shock of white supremacy … and initiated that most noted attempt at negro – self-government, the black republic of Haiti."[4] For many commentators the revolution represented not a successful slave revolution but was an exemplar of a black failure of self-government. In a world of plantation power and racial slavery in the 19th century and in the 20th century, of colonial power and anti-black racial oppression, then power and conventional historical knowledge interpreted and represented the dual Haitian revolution as a horrible experiment which failed.[5] In the eyes of power this was not just an historical failure, it was the sign of black incapacity. Thus, if for power all the major revolutions of the 18th century (American and French)

1 Georg Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History* (trans. H.B. Nisbet) (Cambridge : Cambridge UP. 1975) p. 174.

2 Of course one is referring here to two texts in particular, Francois Furet's *Revolutionary France, 1770-1880* (Oxford : Blackwell, 1988) and Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution, 1789-1848.*(New York : Vintage, 1996).

3 This phrase is taken from the 1808 novel written by Leonora Sansay titled, *Secret History ; or The Horrors of St Domingo, in a Series of Letters, Written by A Lady at Cape Francois, to Col. Aaron Burt, Late Vice –President of the United States. Principally During the Command of General Rochambeau.*

4 T. Lothrop Stoddard, *The French Revolution in San Domingo* (Kessinger Publishing Rare Reprints)

5 This is not an unusual practice of power and one only has to read some of the early 20th century conventional historical accounts of 19th century Reconstruction period in Southern US after the end of slavery to see how what was a radical and significant event gets reduced again to black incapacity. For a discussion of this as well as an extraordinary account of the period. see WEB DuBois's *Black Reconstruction. 1860-1880.*

were about human progress, then the Haitian was a human disaster which laid the historical foundations for the contemporary conditions of Haitian society. Let me put this matter starkly. From 1791 (the beginning of the dual Haitian Revolution) onwards to today, power has represented Haiti as an example of black incapacity. Haiti has been a metaphor for the follies of black self-government and thus within the Caribbean what was the 19th century "Haitian Fear" has become today the deadly fear of "Haitization," where Haiti becomes the metaphor for so-called "failed state." This brief essay will review some of the key moments in the construction of a Western archive in which the revolution was represented as disaster and folly and then suggest that there is another archive which needs to be mined.

An Archive of Horror.

As stated before there were many newspaper reports, art works (particularly engravings), letters and books which in the early 19th century begin to represent Haiti as a site of horror.[6] However I want to pay special attention to two in particular: Leonora Sansay's travel novel and Stoddard's historical account of the revolution. If Sansay's novel was fairly popular, then Stoddard's work stood for many years as the standard English language text on the subject after 1914, when it was published.[7]

Sansay's novel, *Secret History or The Horrors of St Domingo* begins with a look at the life of the planter class. The major preoccupation of the elite planter/master at the time was of course the arrival of General Rochambeau who was to become the leading French general in the colony after the death of Le. Clerc. Sansay gives the reader a view of the expected large ball to greet the general and of what the elite in the island expect of him. Then she writes about the life of the elite focusing on women in this group. She writes:

> The place is tranquil. The arrival of General Rochambeau seems to have spread terror among the negroes. I wish they were reduced to order that I might see the so much vaunted habitations where I should repose beneath the shade of orange groves ; walk on carpets of rose leaves and then frenchipone; to be fanned to sleep by silent slaves, or have my feet tickled into ecstasy by the soft hand of a female attendant. Such were the pleasures of the Creole

6 Included in this archive of horror were many so called eyewitness accounts published in various newspapers and journals. See for a republication of some of these, Jeremy Popkin, (ed) *Facing Racial Revolution : Eyewitness Accounts of the Haitian Insurrection.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007)

7 There is another English language text published the same year which did not take the position of black incapacity but rather saw the revolution as black achievement. This was the book published by the African American scholar, T. G. Steward, *The Haitian Revolution 1791-1804.* (New York : Russell& Russell, 1914.) A remarkable text it argues that the social revolution(end of slavery) preceded and then lead to the political revolution (political independence) thus making the revolution a unique one in world history. To my knowledge this text was never taken seriously in historical scholarship on the Haitian Revolution. In part this was so because it was outside the dominant narrative frame of the revolution at the time.

ladies whose time was divided between the bath, the table, the toilette and the lover.[8]

Of course in this place of so-called tranquility, CLR James tells us that: "The stranger in San Domingo was awakened by the cracks of the whip, the stifled cries, and the heavy groans of the Negroes who saw the sun rise only to curse it for its renewal of their labours and their pains."[9] I think it is important to contrast these two descriptions of San Domingo because there is an element of loss in Sansay's travel novel which pervades the construction of the Western archive of Haiti. It is also of note that for her, the "horrors" of St. Domingo begin after the departure of Toussiant L'Ouverture and the struggle for political independence begins. She writes: "During the reign of Toussaint the white inhabitants had been generally respected, and many of them, engaging in commerce, had accumulated money which they sent to the United States, where they are now living at their ease."[10] This feeling of loss is both connected to the wealth of the colony but is also related to the ways of life that a planter/master could lead in the colony. Sansay recognizes that within the first phase of the revolution the black slaves "acquired a knowledge of their own strength "but she notes that this strength led to "the horrible catastrophe which accompanied the first wild transports of freedom." In other words she makes a distinction between the end of slavery and the struggle for political independence. In this frame what is central to the creation of the dominant Western archive on Haiti was not the slaves' struggle for freedom but the struggle against French colonial power. The victory of the former slaves in this struggle; the proclamation of Haitian independence and the elaboration of the 1805 constitution, both acts which opened new political and spaces for critical thought during this period, this is what had to be suppressed and rewritten, narrated and represented as a site of "horror." In this representation the key event which dominates all the narratives of the struggles for political independence and forms the core of 19th century and early 20th century Western archive was the massacre of the whites on April 25th, 1805.

Both Sansay and Lothrop pay a great deal of attention to the massacre. The latter notes that the proclamation for this massacre, "laid the doctrine of white exclusion ...the same general massacre had taken place all over the colony and ... the white race had perished utterly out of the land, French San Domingo had vanished forever, and the black state of Haiti had begun its troubled history."[11] Now of course the conditions for the massacre are never explained – that is the restoration by the French colonial power of slavery in its other Caribbean colonies and therefore the general feeling that the French

8 Leonora Sansay, *Secret History : Or the Horrors of St Domingo and Laura*(ed) Michael Drexler, (Ontario: Broadview Press, 2007) p. 73.

9 CLR James, *Black Jacobins* (New York : Vintage Books, 1989) pp9-10.

10 Ibid. p. 123.

11 T. Lothrop Stoddard, *The French Revolution in San Domingo* pp. 349-350.

would never rest until slavery was restored in San Domingo. This sentiment was strongly held by the ex-slaves in the colony and was clearly explained in the preamble of the independence declaration which enunciates:

> Citizens :
>
> It is not enough to have expelled the barbarians who have bloodied our land for two centuries ; it is not enough to have restrained those ever-evolving factions that one after another mocked the specter of liberty that France dangled before you. We must, with one last act of national authority, forever ensure liberty's reign in the country of our birth; we must take any hope of re-enslaving us away from the inhumane government that for so long kept us in the most humiliating stagnation.[12]

What has also been erased in the Western archive is any examination that the massacre was itself the subject of serious debate within the revolutionary army and that some generals committed suicide rather than carry out the instruction. What has also been erased from the Western archives about the massacre was that it was specifically targeted at the French. For example, take the case of Peter S. Chazotte a French colonial planter who was able to escape by posing as an American. In his own account of the massacre, Chazotte recounts the exchange between Dessalines and his troops when he announced that he was an American. This is Chazotte's account. "Dessalines, during General Jeffrard's address, looked sharp in my eyes, and then said in a loud voice,

" Select an officer and twenty men as a guard for this American ; and let their lives be forfeited if any harm is done to his person or property. We need show favor to Americans with whom alone, we at this moment have any trade."[13] The massacre also spared Poles and Germans who had joined the revolutionary army. Despite whatever complex political calculations faced Dessalines, the judgment of the Haitian historian Ardouin that, "certainly one can say by way of excuse, but not of justification that Dessalines did this only in imitation of the treacherous acts committed by the metropole itself .... But as we have already noted : bloody reprisals, like the crimes that provoke them, represent the realm of barbarism. We stand by this judgment, dictated to us by humanity," is worth reflecting on. What occurred in the Western construction of the archive on the dual Haitian revolution was that the rich and complicated dual revolution was reduced to the April massacre and a new narrative emerged, one which *equated the revolution with the massacre* and in turn created the conditions for so called black incapacity. Erased from this archive were the constitution of 1801 of Toussaint L'Ouverture and the remarkable constitution of 1805. It is to the latter that I now turn because I want to suggest that

12 *The Haitian Declaration of Independence January 1, 1804.* Published in Laurent DuBois & John Garrigus(eds) *Slave Revolution in the Caribbean, 1789-1804 A Brief History with Documents.* (Boston : Bedford /St Martin, 2006) p. 188.

13 Published in *Facing Racial Revolution* pp. 350-351.

elements of this constitution as well as the practices of the ex-slaves are an archive of freedom which we need to recall.

The 1805 Constitution.

Two of the most significant articles of the 1805 Haitian constitution which opened new political grounds were articles 13 and 14. Article 13 made it clear that article twelve which stated that "no white man, regardless of his nationality, may set foot in this territory as master or landowner, nor will he ever be able to acquire property" did not apply to "white women who were naturalized as Haitian citizens [and] the Germans and Poles naturalized by the government." Article 13 therefore begins to make exceptions to the previous article, but in society where during slavery and colonialism class, status and ownership of property besides resting on slavery were embedded within 128 color distinctions, there had to be a resolution to the matter of race. It was the next article, number 14, which frontally tackled this question. The article states: "Because all distinctions of color among children of the same family must necessarily stop, Haitians will henceforth only be known generically as Blacks." This article overthrew the then dominant biological based hierarchical conceptions of human beings as racially classifiable through biology, skin shade and phenotype, and black became a political identification. The constitution was in many ways the zenith of a revolutionary war against a social system in which human beings were dominated, as the Caribbean historian, Elsa Goveia so eloquently remarked, by being "property in persons." This war against slavery had many roots and branches as the Haitian historian Jean Fouchard makes clear. The various maroon struggles crystallized in a revolutionary war against the slavery of the French colonial state, in 1791, and the names which we honor today and others which have been "silenced" by the frames through which we often tell historical narrative beckon us to reflect the various archives of Haiti. The names of Toussaint L'Ouverture, Moïse, San-Souci Macaya, Fatima, Boukman and Macandal however beckon us not so much to reflect on the "victims" of slavery but rather to reflect on some of the ideas of freedom which were produced by the ex-slaves of Haiti.

Many historians including CLR James have argued about the relative weight and influence of the ideas of the French Revolution, Ki-Kongo political ideas or the Mande Charter in West Africa which inaugurated a regime of universal human rights after the Arabic slave traders were expelled from Mali. The charter which proclaimed that "every human life is a life" politically rethought the basis on which rights would be organized. The charter proclaimed that rights should be organized on the basis of human life, not on the basis of citizenship nor on political obligation. I think however that it is safe to say that all three streams and the practices of vodou influenced the shape and outcome of the revolution. However it was the experiences of being "property in the person", of

being a corpse that speaks; of being a living dead while having the requirement of all politics – speech; these were the experiences which shaped the horizons of the ex-slave and the possibilities of freedom, a possibility so distinctive that one observant French colonial official would remark in consternation, "The blacks have their own philosophy of freedom."

It is accurate to see the revolution as having two distinct but related phases. The first phase ends with the declaration of the 1801 constitution promulgated by Toussaint L'Ouverture. This constitution promulgates the end of slavery and advances dominion status for the colony. Napoleon was of course not having any of this and as he wrote to the English foreign minister in 1801. "[in] the course which I have taken of annihilating the black government at [St. Domingue] I have been less guided by considerations of commerce and finance than by the necessity of stifling in every part of the world disquiet … if not done so the scepter of the new world would sooner or later fall in to the hands of the blacks." The first phase of the Haitian revolution therefore had to be stopped in order not to encourage the possibility of the idea of black self-government.

We are of course aware of the rest of the story: that Toussaint was taken to France and died in one of Napoleon's jails. His removal from the ex-slave colony opened new forms of struggles against the French colonial power and in this violent struggle the French Army was defeated and the colony became independent Haiti. So there were two revolutions. One against slavery and the other against colonial domination. Both were related and for the Haitians the struggle for political independence was a guarantee against any return to slavery.

But after slavery and independence, what new ways of life were possible? What would freedom look like? This has been a difficult question to answer but I think we can safely say that two concerns about freedom animated the ex-slaves. The first one had to do with the form of labor itself. Who should own the products of one's labor? How should the use of the surpluses of one's labor be determined? This was a knotty issue raised by the dual Haitian revolution and one which was never fully answered. From the inception of wage labor as a form of human activity, this question has been a knotty one. The ex-slaves because of their experiences of being "property in the person" grasped this thorny issue and wrestled with it. The second question they posed … was what should freedom look like? Was freedom to be an ideal and therefore something to strive for and then actualized? Could one separate the conditions for freedom from freedom itself? The answer to this question came very quickly in the dual Haitian Revolution. For the ex-slaves, freedom as a human activity was about overcoming obstacles, it was about having the capacity to act and in the final analysis it was about human creativity. Human rights were foundation stones but by themselves without the capacity to create, to make oneself and community then they could not be realized. These were the issues that this

dual revolution placed before human consciousness. It was why when the revolution began to be isolated and strangled as Thomas Jefferson reversed initial US position and France demanded payment of over 150 gold francs, to be then followed by US external occupation in the early 20th century ; when such conditions created internal regime difficulties for Haiti, the Haitian would ask … "What kind of free is this?"

Because the dual Haitian Revolution posed these questions about freedom, the revolution was of world significance. No other revolution of the period, neither the American nor French posed these issues. It would therefore seem to me that instead of *framing Haiti a*s an *outcast nation of the West, we may want to embrace its historical contribution to human freedom as one central element of the making of the modern world*.

From this perspective how we frame the rebuilding of Haiti after the disaster of January 12th, 2010 is a critical question. Do we continue more of the same? Do we continue policies which everyone has agreed impacted adversely on the rice industry of Haiti forcing thousands of Haitians to Port-Au-Prince. Or do we frame policy along the lines of an equitable, just and interdependent society? In the end, the memory of the ex-slaves and their historical achievements beckons the international community to rethink policies of trade, of aid, of what constitutes economic development, of how to tackle global inequities. Perhaps once again in this instance as we rethink about these issues Haiti may lead the way.

Photograph by Raymond Maughan

The Mercy Gate

Inspired by a photograph by Raymond Maughan

The custom iron-gate,
the clattering mind
and the cement mound
that would dumbfound us further on…

Though the whipped and
snarling limbs of trees
relay whose ornate call to anguish?

For the dead know none.

Alas it is the living
who file past the gate
and have locked away their
rattled grief for now,
squared away their
inch of feeling
for the reckless sake of peace
and daily quiet insanity
till time,

eying each flat
footfall, gauging
the staggering indifference
of each given name,
plots a darling irony
of shadow
and shuddering shape

till the gate
opens out
in our creaking wake.

Dana Gilkes

The First Boat People Fleeing to Haiti for Freedom and Citizenship

Hilary McD Beckles

As the world approached the end of the 20th century within the pantheon of its tragic human images were those of Haitian people in desperate flight from their native land. Peasants abandoned the land and assembled on beaches with the urban unemployed, there to dare mini-passages across the dividing Caribbean Sea on vessels not worthy of voyages to freedom. Hundreds found watery graves as global eyes watched in silence and awe; death accompanied desperation as the nation sunk into despair. Such images, expressions of a dream gone dread were etched irretrievably upon the minds of millions.

Everywhere that cared there harbored discussions of the past in the present as the tragedy unfolded. Few participants, however, were empowered with the evidence to understand why it had occurred. Fewer desired to reflect philosophically upon the irony history imposed by such images. In the academy scholars spoke of shark ravished, washed up bodies as markers in the making of a movement defeated by a triumphant western imperialism.

The world had seen too much and cared much less. Sense and sensibility had hardened around the Haitian plight. The flight to freedom, said the media moguls, was the lure of Miami; materialism gone wild in the minds of the alienated. Then came a twist in the tale; enter the poor from Eastern Europe with the collapse of the Soviet Empire. The world refocused and eyes glued to screens in search of clues to explain the flight to the 'West' from Budapest.

The idea of this paper, however, is not to compare nightmare, neither is it to examine why citizens abandon ship in rejection of the tyrannical excesses of their leaders. Rather, it takes a slice of time and celebrates a moment in which men and women with power took a stand against the cruelty and injustice. It deals with a magical episode in Haitian history, hardly known and long ignored.

It all came to a head in 1804. The anti-slavery revolution evolved into the nation called Haiti. It signaled the beginning of the collapse of European slave regimes in the Caribbean, and inaugurated modernity's engagement with constitutional freedom and citizenship for black and indigenous people in the Atlantic world.

As the flag of the independent Republic of Haiti was raised on January 1st, and President Jean Jacque Dessalines declared the beginning of a new world, blacks and Indigenes, everywhere trapped within hemispheric colonialism, took note. Haiti became the site for new notions of freedom and justice. The Europeans had spoken of an Enlightenment that predictably degenerated into global African enslavement and universal colonialism, marked by the attendant crime of genocide against natives. All of this was punctured; in Haiti an African Enlightenment had begun.

President Dessalines understood all too well the impact his republic would have on the minds of blacks within the Caribbean and wider Atlantic world. Toussaint L'Ouverture, his military commander in the war against slavery, had imagined the ending of black slavery wherever it was rooted. His death in the prior year gave way for republicanism, but it also inspired the framers of the independent constitution of 1805 who translated the principle of universal black freedom into the language of Article 44. There, the intention was clearly set out; any person of African or Amerindian descent who arrives on the shores of Haiti will be declared free and a citizen of the Republic.

The Haitians had taken the deepest revolutionary decision. All societies in the hemisphere, from Alaska in the north to Argentina in the south, had within their ranks enslaved Africans and native persons. Article 44 was a statement of irreversible revolutionary objection. The word spread; imaginations were stimulated. From all corners of the continent routes to the republic were conceived and designed. The migration became a flood. Freedom trails led to shores of Haiti; the first boat people, in search of freedom and justice, headed to the land of liberty.

In the decades that follow, official documents detail many accounts of such flights to Haiti by enslaved blacks from the Caribbean, North, Central and South America. In this paper I look at one case from Jamaica in order to explain the unwavering commitment made by the Haitian government.

The year is 1817. A party of six enslaved blacks at Port Royal seized a vessel named the 'Deep Nine' belonging to the brothers James and Robert M'kewan, and made good

their flight to freedom in Haiti. The M'Kewans listed their names and property values as follows:

Enslaved blacks aboard the Deep Nine

Names	**Approx. age**	**Value** (Ja pounds)
James	25	230
Dublin	30	230
Kingston	25	230
Quashie	25	230
Archey	25	230
Robert	15	180
Total		**1, 330**

The M'kewans went about the task of retrieving their property from the Haitian government. Agents were dispatched to Haiti, and personal representations made to the government official. The Jamaican colonial government dispatched letters to the Haitian government in support of the claims of the M'kewans. A war of letters ensued, charting a trail to the English Privy Council in London and the office of the President, Alexander Petion, in Port-au-Prince.

After weeks of concerted efforts with town officials in Trou-bon-bon, the frustrated M'kewans addressed a letter to President Petion. It was at once respectful and militant in tone, designed to achieve the dual objectives of asserting property rights in slaves and to open a door to further negotiations:

Port-au-Prince,

28th, January, 1817

His Excellency Alexander Pétion,

President of Hayti

Sir,

We have already had the honour, by a personal communication, of making known to your Excellency the circumstances that have brought

us here to claim, from the justice of your government, the restitution of property that has been piratically taken from us, and to which you have in part had the goodness to accede, though you decline to deliver up the individuals (also our property), who assisted in the commission of the act, upon the ground, that, by the 44th clause of the constitution of Hayti, persons of their description having once obtained a footing within the republic, they are entitled to its protection. We cannot presume to call in question the policy of such an enactment, though we trust we may be permitted to observe, that from the peculiar nature of your exterior relations, more particularly with the government of which we are subjects, the sanction of such acts, or even the protection afforded the perpetrators thereof, must necessarily involve political questions of very great moment, the agitation of which, upon reflection, your Excellency may see the expedience of avoiding.

We do not, however, by any means, wish to rest our claim upon such grounds; we seek only the justice that every civilized state affords in similar cases. Piracy and barratry are crimes so heinous, as well as destructive in their consequences to commercial states, that it is the interest of all not only to discourage, but to punish the commission of them with the utmost severity. We, therefore, pray that the individuals in question be delivered up to us, that we may have them tried by the laws of their country.

Any persons bringing a vessel into a British port, under similar circumstances, would be immediately thrown into prison and tried for the offence.

To confirm the piratical intention of these people, we beg leave to observe, that at the first small harbour they put into, called Trou-bon-bon, they sought to purchase arms and ammunition, for what purpose, we consider is sufficiently evident; this circumstance awakened the suspicion of the commandant there, who very properly **arrested the *people and seized the vessel.*** We are well aware that it is your desire to prevent, by every means in your power, any

piratical system obtaining ground along your coast; but if the present attempt be not made a pointed example of, the negroes [sic], in every drogger or small plantain-boat belonging to Jamaica, will be availing themselves of your numerous bays and creeks to take refuge in, and become a nest of daring marauders; and this would render necessary

that your coasts should be continually watched by his majesty's cruisers, which would cause very serious interruption to your trade.

We further beg leave to urge in favour of our claim, that as master pilots we are more especially entitled to protection, as the lives and property of so many would be exposed to considerable risk if negroes we have instructed with much labour and care are encouraged to desert from us, and leave us without the means of bringing in the numerous vessels continually flocking to the ports of Jamaica.

Permit us to state to your Excellency, that, during the late war between Great-Britain and the United States, in more instances than one, our boats, with our negroes [sicj on board, were captured by the enemy's cruisers and carried into America, from whence they were sent back to us, when the nature of the property was known.

We therefore again most humbly submit to your Excellency's consideration the propriety of delivering up not only the vessel, but the negroes [sic] that came in her, four of whom are boys, who have been forced away against their will.

We likewise beg to call to your Excellency's attention the hardship of our case; the value of the property at stake is to us of considerable magnitude; our occupation is laborious in the extreme; and to be thus deprived of our hard earning in what we are confident is far from your Excellency's wish. If, however, from reasons of state policy, you still conceive it necessary to refuse our claim, we entreat that you will be pleased to signify your reasons in writing; and, with the highest consideration and respect,

We have the honour to be your Excellency's most obedient and very humble servants,

James M'Kewan

Robert M'Kewan

President Petion had no intention of negotiating on the principle that his new citizens were to be treated under law as pirates and criminals. His reply to the M'kewans shows diplomatic restraint and an unwavering perspective on the national constitution. This much was contained in his letter:

14th year of independence

Mr. James M'Kewan

Port-au-Prince

Sir,

I have received your letter of the 28th inst. claiming the English schooner Deep Nine, together with the individuals who brought her from Jamaica to Trou-bon-bon, as your property. I have just given directions for restoring to you the vessel, and every thing appertaining to her, but as to the men, they are recognized to be Haytians by the 44th article of the constitution of the republic, from the moment they set foot in its territory, and it is out of my power to restore them to you agreeably to your demand. Each country has its laws, as you must know, sir, and, fortunately for the cause of humanity, Hayti is not the only one where slavery is abolished. The allusion you make in your letter cannot be attended with any serious consequences, because no body here has been guilty of suborning subjects belonging to other powers; but such persons as arrive in this territory must be protected, since the laws require it. If there be, among the men you claim, any who have committed crimes against the rights of men, they will, on your furnishing me with proofs of their crimes, be delivered over to the proper tribunals established for the purpose of taking cognizance of them by the local laws of the country, of which they are now citizens.

I have the honour of saluting you, sir, with consideration.

A. Pétion [sic]

Port-au-Prince
30th January, 1817
His Excellency Alexander Pétion [sic],
President of Hayti

The M'kewans were adamant that their case was a just one and that the Haitian government should honor it by restoring their property. They could not accept the notion that a constitution did not provide for property rights in humans, nor the idea that this was

also the case in Britain following the ruling of Judge Mansfield in the Somerset case that dominated abolitionist discourse during the 1780s.

James M'kewans replied in defiance:

Sir,

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of this date, communicating to me the impossibility of your complying with my just claim. The reasons you therein assign for such determination must now be laid before the governor and admiral of Jamaica, that such measures may be taken as will prevent a recurrence of similar acts. As to bringing the culprits to trial before a tribunal of this country, I am too well aware what the result would be, to expend either time or money for that purpose; not, sir, that I, for an instant, doubt the integrity of your courts, but the same law of the constitution, that recognizes them as citizens, would acquit them of all piracy.

You ask, sir, for a proof of their crime. Did they not run away with my vessel, and whatever of valuables there was on board of her? This I should presume sufficient to condemn them.

As the restitution of the people cannot be complied with, I still hope that such of them as are willing, of their own free will, to return, will be allowed to do so, and I, therefore, solicit an explicit order to the commandant of Jeremie to have them brought before me, on my calling in there, that I may know from themselves if any of them are disposed to return with me. Out of the seven individuals belonging to me, who were on board the schooner, four of them are very young people, who, lam confident are not capable of appreciating the value of becoming citizens of Hayti.

I beg further, sir, to request your attention to the following articles that were on board, when the schooner called at Trou-bon-bon, namely:—

	Dollars
A gold time-keeper, value	300
A cabouse	80
A cable	120

A square sail 54

A canoe 60

A chest and portmanteau, containing clothes—

in all amounting to upwards of six hundred dollars.

The square sail, I am informed, was taken possession of by the commandant of Trou-bon-bon:

The gold watch was seen in the hands of one of the people who conducted the schooner's crew to Jeremie.

Restitution of the above articles I claim from your justice, and, at the same time, I take the opportunity of thanking you for having given up the vessel, and I have the honour to be, sir, your most obedient humble servant.

James M'Kewan

And there the matter came to an end, despite further letters and representations to the Haitian government. The M'kewans took their case to the British Privy Council to no avail. In the end, the Jamaican colonial government settled the matter by providing compensation to the M'kewans. They were compensated for loss of property under the traditional legal provision that dealt with enslaved persons put to death for anti-slavery activity.

References:

1. Documents in respect of this case can be found in Journal of the Jamaica Assembly, Vol. XIII, 1817, national Archives, Spanish Town. There, the letters of the M'kewans, their testimony in the case, as well as documents relation to the Deep Nine, are filed.
2. see also for an account of this case: Richard B. Sheridan, " From Jamaican Slavery to Haitian freedom: The case of the Black crew of the pilot boat, Deep Nine", in Journal of Negro History, vol 67, no. 4, 1982, pp. 329-339.
3. see also, WW Harvey, Sketches of Haiti: from the expulsion of the French to the death of Christophe (London, 1827) ; and James Franklin, The Present State of Haiti (London, 1828).

Thinkin Home

thinkin of scent, thinkin of accent,
thinkin of bombays, de sound of de fruit
fallin outside a window; thinkin how de thud
of mangoes can rhyme with morning;
thinkin of Mavis Bank, de riverbed like an acre
of grey, de stones bleached into sadness, thinkin
of de way up de Blue Mountains
cleared by Nanny's cutlass, de walk as long as Sunday,
de air that grows thin,
de smell of number that grows thick,
thinkin how it easy to forget de magic of mangoes
when you find yourself here
and you no longer wake to the hard accent of fruit falling.

Kei Miller

Mango Moon (detail) by ***Vonnie Roudette***

Wet Season Memories

The years have burst their drying pods
cringing and flying like cotton before wind
and I forget about poui season in the hills.

I forget it is wet season in Trinidad,
when rain in the morning sounds like so many tongues
prophesying the excitement of afternoon floods,
as branches palm greenly against galvanized roofs.

I forget the lightning-damp silences of nights,
the electric fan blowing away the mosquito room,
leaving only mango-filled windows, the moon,
like a sky jumbie bathing in the glass.

It has been ages since those drizzling Sundays
when we swam, together, through Tunapuna market,
hearing in the underwater a boy plugging poinsettias,
seeing thyme illuminated on chicken feed bags.

There must be life in these dried up memories,
some arable place left over from all those years
where I can plunge these withered dreams deep in water,
watch them bleed to life again.

Summer Edwards

Photograph by Ronnie Carrington

The Reunion

Ronald A. Williams

Andrea felt the change in Etienne Ochukwu and sensed that Natas had felt it as well. Since the descent of the suctors, they had been aware of each other, feeling the animosity that had been between them for so long. Since that day in the luxurious cabin somewhere in the Pennsylvania mountains when Natas had seen him exposed, there had been this dislike that had occasionally flared into hatred. Now, though, the animosity was controlled, and he felt only the overpowering sense of inevitability in this conflict. He stood on a hill, watching the water disappear into the sky and wondered when it would end.

At the top of the cathedral, he could see Natas as he had seen him so long ago on the ice, a figure that towered over the earth. Below him, in every available space, the faithful bowed and prayed, fear and faith contending in their breasts. He did not want this fight with Natas, but knew it had to be. Natas had to be destroyed, for he was the spirit of enmity and confusion and had to be reunited with his brother and sister. That Reunion offered a new beginning for humankind, another period of hope and possibility; another attempt to please those whom humankind had called gods. If he, Maatemnu, who was set apart as the pure man, should fail, then all life, including the remnant that they had promised if he should win, would die.

The experiment would have failed, Andrea thought angrily.

He fought with his emotion, squeezing it down to almost nothing. The distance between him and Natas/Baal shrunk, and Andrea saw the lack of concern in those eyes that stared at the world without care, without fear. Andrea pulled back his mind-sense, and the distance was again as it had been.

Then the crowd stirred, becoming agitated, rushing away from a path that was being

cleared. He did not need to look. It was Etienne Ochukwu. In his mind-sense, the massive, black body with the crocodile's head was plain. Natas looked first at Andrea and then slowly turned to the man who had once been pope. Etienne had been walking, his head held back as he stared at the equally large figure above. Suddenly, Andrea felt Natas' energy surge, and Etienne was picked up by some invisible hand and pulled to the broad walkway atop the cathedral. As soon as he landed, Etienne charged Natas, his claw-like hands held before him. For a while, it seemed as if Natas would do nothing, but at the last possible moment, his left arm stretched out, slamming into and through Ochukwu's chest. The arm inside the body glowed for a brief moment, and then, Etienne slumped. Andrea could see the shock in Etienne's eyes as he felt the life leaving him, and then, Natas, contemptuously, almost thoughtlessly, threw the body from the catwalk. As it dropped, Andrea felt the challenge in the act, and he shot forth his mind-sense, cushioning the fall. The huge body of the dying pope descended slowly, and when finally it landed, Andrea was beside it. He had changed in the time of the movement from the mountain to the cathedral, and the faithful backed away from him, for he had become golden, a body that reflected the color of the suctor. And in his hand, the golden staff glowed. This he touched to Etienne Ochukwu's chest, and the hole closed. Etienne's eyes looked helplessly at him, and the man said,

"I am sorry."

Andrea shook his head, touching the saurian face and watching the rise and fall of the giant chest. Then, a look of perplexity came across his face, and he said,

"How could it be you?"

But Etienne's eyes closed, and no answer came.

High above, Natas saw the figure and jumped, but when he landed, they were no longer beside the cathedral. Instead, they stood on the Southern Plain of Sotami, beside the Hall of the Onyes. Andrea looked around at the barren land, knowing that Natas did not wish to risk the destruction of his new city, nor the accidental deaths of his followers. Their battle would be undertaken beyond the eyes of the faithful.

"So, Maatemnu, we meet once more," Natas said in a voice that shifted the sands.

"As the sacred texts have said, as the goddess has willed, Baal," Andrea replied.

The figure laughed, replying,

"My sister, the goddess as you say, has always overestimated your capacity. How many times must your race lose? Would it not be better to end it for all time? You cannot win, Maatemnu. If you defeat me, a remmant is saved to begin this whole miserable process all over again. If you lose, it all ends, and you worship only me. Forever. What a choice my precious sister has given you."

Andrea gripped his staff more tightly as Natas' face changed. Andrea was aware of

the startling brightness and the golden shimmer of the suctor, the barrenness of the land and the pulsating center high above from which the three suctors emanated. What he was not aware of was that Natas had moved, had effortlessly crossed the distance between them. It was only when his mind sense screamed danger that he flipped away, avoiding the kick that Natas had launched. As he rolled to his feet, though, knowing he was too slow, Natas' foot sliced the air in a low arc toward his stomach. The impact knocked him back, and Andrea twisted away, barely in time to avoid the second leg connecting under his rib. Andrea wiggled his feet, trying to find a solid place to stand. Natas smiled, and from his body, he seemed to take off a staff. It was dark and shimmered with a peculiar energy.

"You have learned much since Lusati, Tama, but you are no match for me," Natas said.

Just then, the staff glowed in his hand, and he attacked with a fury that Andrea found all but incomprehensible. The dark, glowing staff was everywhere, and even as Andrea parried, it seemed not to be where it was supposed to be but moving always. Then, Andrea realized something else. As fast as Natas was, Andrea's staff seemed to have a mind of its own, so that while his mind told him that he was too slow, the staff seemed to be anticipating Natas' moves, arriving there ahead of him. On the other hand, his staff appeared to be purely defensive. It had not struck a single offensive blow. Andrea loosened his grip, remembering what had happened when he did not think. Immediately, the staff seemed to be alive, its golden skin crawling under his hand.

And he moved.

The swiftness caught Natas unawares, but he parried, leaping high into the sky as Andrea flew at him. The staff glanced off Natas, and a streak of energy sliced through the air colliding with one of the pillars of the Temple of the Onyes. A section of the giant portico fell, and Andrea saw Natas' eyes flash to the building. For the first time, something like anxiety showed. They stood, each assessing the other, their senses searching for weaknesses. Then a thought crept into Andrea's mind. Why had Natas chosen to fight here? Would it not have been more effective to battle before the faithful if he believed he could win? Why choose this barren desert in the land that had been hidden for so long? Was Natas protecting the Hall of the Onyes? If so, why? Andrea slowly pointed the golden staff at the hall and deliberately propelled a burst of energy in its direction. Immediately, Natas's staff glowed darkly, and the energy was intercepted. Without delay, he attacked again, his body apparently weightless, his feet flying in brutal arcs as he came through the air. Andrea blocked the feet with difficulty, but at the last moment, as his body was passing by Andrea, Natas' hand snaked out, catching Andrea on the head. Andrea felt the deep burning in his mind-sense, and, for a moment, he was disoriented. In that moment, Natas' staff flashed, and Andrea was knocked down. He felt the sand part and fly upwards, and above him, he could see Natas' staff, converted into a dark spear, aimed at his heart.

In desperation, he pointed his staff at the Hall of the Onyes, and again the golden blast flashed. Again, Natas was distracted, and as he redirected his energy towards saving the building, Andrea rose, flying away from him, giving his mind time to clear. He did keep the staff pointed at the building, however. This seemed to slow Natas down, and Andrea wondered what the building meant. Inside were the Onyes. They had been beautifully preserved, and he had marveled at the symmetry of their bodies. Beneath the hall had been bank upon bank of computers.

That must be what he is protecting, Andrea thought.

But why would monitoring the temperature of the continent be so important now that the Repulsion was here? What did it matter, if everything was going to be destroyed anyway?

Suddenly, Andrea moved in the direction of the Hall of the Onyes, and Natas, showing alarm, moved equally rapidly, intercepting Andrea on the portico on which the marble blocks had fallen.

"No," Natas growled, his face for a moment losing its beauty and showing something horrifying beneath. Andrea was surprised by the change, for Natas did not look like Etienne, but something more horrific.

"Why, Natas? What frightens you?"Andrea asked.

"He whom you know as Natas is all but gone, fool. I am Baal, and my fire destroys mountains."

"Yes, but you said we have met before, and there was a remnant that survived. After all, we are here again. So I must have defeated you then, Baal. Is that your fear? That I will defeat you again, and you will become part of the Goddess, part of the Reunion?"

For a moment, it seemed as if the air became superheated, and the desert disappeared. Natas' move was like lightning, and Andrea felt the pain as the dark energy burned its way past him.

"Your understanding is as limited as your life, fool. Do you think my brother, my sister and I that different? Do you think they want a universe that is different from mine? We all want the same thing. Order. They call it perfection. Does the word deceive you, fool?"

"And what do you seek, Baal?"

"Your worship."

The voice was blunt, harsh and arrogant, but Andrea was not frightened by it.

"We will not be slaves, Baal."

The laughter that came had the smell of sulphur, and Baal responded,

"You have a choice between different slaveries."

With these words, he charged, but Andrea stood firm, his staff deflecting the dark staff of the god. A second charge had the same result, and Andrea turned away, walking into the Hall of the Onyes. His mind-sense was alert, linking with the work that the computers still did. Baal followed him into the Hall, his face alive with malice. Andrea saw the bodies exposed in the glass tubes, and was again struck by the perfection of their forms. They were ....

Suddenly, he stopped, his eyes flying to Baal.

The bodies were naked. The wrappings had been removed.

Immediately, he thought of the image that the god Chango had shown him. Natas and his scientists pouring over the reams of cloth and creating the weapons of war.

Before he could say anything, Baal said,

"Join me. You have their power within you. Together, we could win, turn them back. If you don't, they will destroy your world."

Ignoring the invitation, Andrea said, wonder in his voice,

"The wrappings! It was not the mummies that you wanted but the wrappings."

Then, Andrea extended his mind sense, linking with the giant banks of computers. He saw the codes, the mathematics of the ancients being translated by the linked triad of computers, and suddenly it was clear. Still, when he spoke, his voice carried surprise.

"The calculations are not the temperature changes of the continent as I had thought. The wrappings contain the knowledge of the gods, but none of you could use it separately. The Reunion is not simply your presence coming together but the knowledge of the past coming together."

Baal breathed, and Andrea felt the fire in him.

"But you," Andrea continued, "You would have it to yourself, and for the first time in all of these Reunions, you have the capacity to store and decipher the information without Chango and Tiamat."

Before Baal could respond, Andrea heard the sharp change in the tone of the suctor and felt the trembling in the earth.

"You are too late, human. They have come. Let us have done with this."

Then, Baal leapt, his feet furiously thrashing, and the power shook the hall so that pieces of the marble fell, and the air cracked as it was pushed apart and then snapped back together. Andrea stood, his mind sense trying to follow the lightning fast movements of the god. Still, the great feet cracked against his head, and he fell. He could sense

Natas attacking again and again, and Andrea covered up as best he could. It did not work. There was a new fury in Natas, and Andrea felt himself weakening as the powerful blows connected. Andrea fell, feeling the gritty sand fill his mouth. Natas stood now, confident, on the portico, a smile on his face; Andrea was aware of many things: the furious whining of the suctor, the odd stillness beyond that, the sand shifting ever so slightly. Most of all, he was aware of his imminent death. Natas was too strong. Below him, he was aware of the churning giant computer, and he understood what it was. Natas was gaining access to a knowledge that had never belonged to any one of the gods: the knowledge of how to bring the dimensions together. If he possessed this, Chango and Tiamat would be irrelevant, and Baal of the fiery mountain would rule forever. It could not be allowed to happen. Now, he understood. Throughout time, Maatemnu had chosen death rather than life because the life offered had always been that of Baal's making, a life of fury and hatred, of deceit and perdition. Andrea knew he could not allow it. Better that all life should end than it should exist in the hell that Baal would create.

Slowly, he pushed himself to his feet, and maybe it was something in the cast of his body, but the smile slid from Natas' face, and he stepped from the portico on to the sand.

"Last chance, mortal. We could rule together," he said, as he moved his staff into an attack position.

"No, Baal. Death would be preferable."

"Then, you shall have your wish, mortal," the god responded harshly, attacking at the same time.

Andrea parried and countered, his staff flashing towards Natas' head, but the god was fast, incredibly fast, and Andrea missed. He tried to react as the god's foot slashed upward, but he was too slow, and once again, he was down. He rolled as the foot stomped down, pounding the sand, causing it to fly upwards. It appeared as if he had escaped, but the other leg flicked backwards bending the god's body to an impossible angle, and Andrea was once again rolling in the sand, a brutal burning in his side. It felt as if he had broken something. Again, he stood, this time swaying, and saw the shift in the god's foot as it slid to the right.

Just as Lona used to do before his death blow, Andrea thought incongruously.

Andrea had no idea how long their battle had been going, but he was aware of a deep tiredness in his soul. He would die here. He was not good enough. He had failed.

Then something … someone stood beside him, but it was neither Chango nor Tiamat. Its spirit was gentle, but it guided Andrea's golden staff straight to the body of Baal who screamed,

"You!!"

as his body shook, changing shape so rapidly that Andrea was amazed at the faces. Some were recognizable, others were not, but finally, he saw a crocodile change into a dragon. This seemed petrified, and it drifted out of the Hall of the Onyes, then up into the flaming sky until it lay, a series of thirteen shining stars, low on the horizon.

"The constellation of Draco,"Andrea whispered, turning to look at the hole that had appeared where the three suctors emanated.

Behind it, he could see in his mind-sense, the darkness which was composed of the motes, and behind that, the impartial senses of Tiamat and Chango. The siblings looked towards the new constellation, their brother Baal's essence, and with a last look at Andrea, it was towards this they tended. Soon, the brightest star in the constellation flared, then settled to a steady brightness.

Andrea looked down at the small, weak figure that lay on the floor of the Hall of the Onyes, and bending down, cradled the dying god in his arms. Its face was that of Etienne Ochukwu. The eyes, so old they seemed, blinked slowly. Then, the boy god who contained Etienne's spirit, his voice hoarse, said,

"Few men know their purpose, Maatemnu. I have always needed the strength of the one you call Etienne Ochukwu. Now call to her. You need her strength for your sacrifice. I can help ...no more."

The head fell backwards, and Andrea gently laid the boy god on the floor. He looked to the sky and saw the flaming star. He was just about to pray to the goddess when he remembered Empheme's words, "When your strength is not your strength, then you must call on me."

The shaking under his feet had increased, and Andrea linked his mind-sense to the computers. It did not take long to understand the dying god's comment. He was not to make a sacrifice; he was the sacrifice.

Abracadabra

**used as a charm to ward off illness, the word was usually written out in the form of a triangle.*
– entry from The Oxford Dictionary of Word Histories

(a) pronounce the word slowly
(ab) one letter at a time breathe in
(abr) let the spell expand your chest
(abra) let thunder gather behind your teeth
(abrac) you need nothing so silly as wand or hat
(abraca) trust only in the syllables and in your breath
(abracad) believe only in the growing alphabet of the word
(abracada) its pyramidal shape that makes you think of Cholula
(abradadab) what is to come will descend like a waterfall river healing
(abracadabr) splashing onto your mother's bed wetting her unmovable legs
(abracadabra) this magic stretches Alpha to Alpha Root to Root Amen to Amen

Kei Miller

Photograph by Ronnie Carrington

Sea Baths

Brenda Flanagan

My father comes on Sunday to take us for a sea bath. He does this once a month, the day after he pays Mr. Ling for the goods he allows my mother to trust from the shop. These two things my father does religiously: he takes me, my sister and my brother for a sea bath once a month, and he pays for the food my mother takes from the shop.

He says we need the sea baths to wash the blight away from us. He always says, *the blight*, as if it is a disease he knows that we carry, like chiggers in our toes in the dry season. Sometimes, when he says this, I think he means we might turn out like my brother whose words sput, sput, sputter like Mr. Ramotar's car in the rainy season. My father hates to hear my brother sputter and sometimes taps him on his head to make him hurry up the words, or he'll turn away before my brother finishes his sentence.

My father says it's my mother's fault that my brother can hardly speak but I am afraid to ask him, how come?

Children do not put their mouths in grown people's business. I wish I could find out where blight comes from but I don't know who to ask. I looked up the word in the dictionary in school but the explanation only confused me. It said: "blit, v.t. To affect with blight; to cause to wither or decay; to frustrate-v.i. To injure as blight does." On another page "blight" was a noun but its origin was unknown. It was defined as "Some influence, usually hidden or not conspicuous that destroys plants, arrests their growth, etc.; smut, mildew or other fungous plant disease; any insect which destroys or infects plants; any malignant influence of obscure or mysterious origin; anything which withers hope, blasts prospects, or checks prosperity."

When I see stains on clothes, like cashew juice or coconut water on my white school bodice, I always think of blight. Nothing in this world will get out cashew juice and coconut stains. My mother tries the best she can. She scrubs my bodice against the ridges on the jucking board until her fingers turn blue, but the stains don't move. They

run down the front of my clothes like the streaks on the diapers my mother wears on the days she bleeds. No matter how hard she washes those cloths, bleaching them on stones in the yard, leaving them outside in the dew overnight, the stains never go away.

My father does not take us to the beach. He takes us down Carenage by bus. We get off just before the bus turns around at the last stop in front of the American base, where the Yankee soldier, dressed in khaki, carries a gun in a white holster like the Lone Ranger I have seen in the film at Rialto cinema. I would like to talk to that soldier, ask him about America, where all the good men carry guns, but I must follow my father through a sandy track with overhanging almond trees to a place where huge roots arch into the sea. I once read in a book that there are coconut palm trees along island shores. Tourists pose under them. But I have never seen a coconut palm tree along this shore.

My sister and I hide behind some bushes to remove our dresses and our panties. We fold each panty to hide the crotch before we tuck them into our dress pockets. Every time we go to the sea my mother makes sure we wear dresses with pockets into which we are to hide our underwear. Neither my sister nor I wear brassieres. I'm twelve and she is ten. My tut-tuts are big enough for a brassiere but my mother says she can't buy me one. She says she might be able to afford one by the time I become a young lady. Although she hasn't told me this, I know from my cousin that in addition to the bra, I will also get a set of ten diapers that my mother will make from an old white bed sheet. She'll also give me safety pins to pin the diapers to my panties when I start bleeding. When my blood begins to flow, my father will no longer take me for a sea bath.

My sister and I bathe in gray chambray shorts with rickrack braid around the thighs that my grandmother has made for us. We come out from behind the bushes. I've crossed my arms on my chest to hide my tut-tuts from my father. He thinks I'm acting as if I'm afraid of the water and he tells me to stop being a stupidy. My sister, whose chest is still flat, hands him our dresses with the panties pushed deep into the pockets. He ties them together with the handkerchief from which he has just emptied some leaves and hangs them from a branch of the almond tree.

My brother, who is eleven, is almost a man. He stands out in the open, peels off his shirt and pants, flings them onto the highest root, and wades quickly into the water in his drawers. He does not go far. He has never liked the sea. The salt turns his eyes red and he can't see for a long time after the sea bath, but he never tells that to my father. I feel sorry for him, but what can I do?

My sister and I must wait until my father has slipped off his long pants to reveal the short one he will bathe in. He places his pants and his shirt near my brother's, then he does his exercise. Hands raised above his head, he bends from his waist ten times to

touch his toes before breathing deeply. Only then are we allowed to place our hands in his and walk, one on either side, across the rocks into the sea.

We don't use soap. My father scrubs us with the bush leaves he has brought, wrapped in the white handkerchief, from my grandmother's garden in Bellevue. He says my grandmother has told him that the bush leaves will help to remove the blight from us. I don't know the names of the scratchy leaves, but they smell like what we call *cuzaymarho* that my mother burns at night to try to get rid of mosquitoes. We always get bitten anyway.

Our knees are deep in the green water. In books, the sea is always blue. I have never seen blue sea. I wonder if a blue sea is like the blue my mother soaks white clothes in to make them whiter, or the blue she rubbed on us when we were small to keep jealous people from giving us malyeaux. I would like to bathe in blue water one day.

The sea floor is slippery. I feel as if I'm standing on a bed of icky moss. I want to move but my father is holding on to me, scrubbing my neck, complaining that my mother does not see to it that we wash our necks clean enough during the week. "That woman is a waste of time," he says. I scrunch my toes, and pray silently for him to hurry up so I could try to float, like my sister, who is just out of his reach.

My father has stopped wasting his time with my mother. He left last year. He did not go far, just down the road to Miss Jayne's house.

A few days after my father took his clothes, his sharp knife, and his carpentry tools to Miss Jayne's house, my mother told us, "When you see the lady, you must always say good morning or good afternoon to her. You are not to get involved in big people's business."

My mother always calls her *the lady*, a title I see reserved in books for important people. She'll tell me: "Go by *the la*dy's house and give your father this message," or I might hear her saying to Tante Lill: "He could put toilet in *the lady's* house but he can't put shoes on his children's feet."

One day, just before school started, I saw Miss Jayne walking up the road with a heavy basket on her head. I wanted to duck into Mr. Reggie's parlor to hide until she passed but I couldn't. My mother has trained us to help women carry load so I took the basket from Miss Jayne and carried it to her front steps. She invited me in for a Solo, calling to my father that I was there. But before he could come from the back, I ran home without stopping.

The following week, when my sister and I and my brother needed shoes and uniforms for school, Miss Jayne stopped me in the road. She pressed a small brown envelope into

my palm. It resembled the ones in which my father received his pay, but I suspected my father did not know about the gift. “Give your Ma that for me,” she told me quietly.

When I handed it to my mother she asked me: You tell the lady thanks? Yes, I said, But that wasn’t true, and the way my mother looked away from me, I could tell she knew I was telling a story. I started feeling bad about it, so later I went to the lady’s house to tell her thanks but my father was in the gallery reading and I turned away before he could spot me.

I missed my father’s singing most of all. He has a deep voice that sounds like a growl. His songs are mainly about traveling *like Winking, Blinking, and Nod, who sailed off one night in a wooden shoe, sailed on a river of crystal bright, into a sea of blue,* and he only sings after he and my mother have had a row.

I used to tremble every time he came through the house, banging doors, slamming the lids of pots, or pulling open drawers as he growled about Winking Blinking and Nod, or Humpty Dumpty who sat on a wall, Humpty Dumpty who had a great fall, or Little Boy Blue who lost his shoe. When he left I missed his singing but not the rows.

My brother was always a quiet boy with few friends. When my father left he stopped talking altogether. My father said that was my mother’s fault but he never explained why.

On Sunday my father comes to take us to the sea. My brother shakes his head. Stop shaking your head like a *coonumoonu*, my father tells him. Put your foot in your shoes and come on. My brother looks to my mother but she shrugs her shoulders. My father and my mother do not talk. They channel messages through us. My father will say to me, Ask your mother if she thinks I break a bank, when I’ve told him that my mother says the electric company is coming to cut out the lights. I can repeat the messages but I have no language that will help me tell my father that I think my brother is afraid of the sea, that maybe he had a dream, a warning that he should stay away from salt water. But even if I could say such things to my father he would say that was all the more reason for us to go for a sea bath to wash the blight from all of us.

My brother can’t win. He hangs a towel around his neck and I feel like twisting the ends around my own neck, to tie us together, but I can’t lift my arms. We are not that kind of family. Besides, my father is hurrying us. We are going to get a ride to the sea in the back of my uncle’s truck.

My father sits up front with my uncle. My sister, brother, and I cling to the sides of the small open truck as it swerves around curves on the road to Carenage. My sister says she feels sick. She asks me to knock on the glass partition and beg my father to ask uncle to stop. My father leans out the window and shouts that we are nearly there. Just hold your

water. He says we pee too much.

We get to the spot where we usually bathe but my uncle keeps going. My father shouts that my uncle knows a better place. A beach with nice sand. We'll get there soon.

We do, faster than we imagined.

The brakes on my uncle's truck come loose and he cannot stop the truck from tumbling down a precipice. My sister and I are pitched into bushes. My father and my uncle manage to leap out, though my uncle breaks an arm. My brother is too frightened to jump. His mouth opens but he does not scream. The truck lands on top of him near some rocks on the beach.

The waves come up from the sea to wash his eyes but they are closed. They leave little flecks like salt on his eyelids.

Later, I hear my father say to my uncle, What'd I tell you? What'd I tell you? These children blighted!

Pangs of Silence

Such a thing
is the poem
that starves its eyes out
for words
such a terror
without fanfare

imprisoned by a ghostly sound
and your impoverished mouth above
the white conscripted throes
of the ocean's ballast-fare,

an unresolved
coming into being
between sift and stance
and no election shore,
between the sunlight
and necessary avoidance
nothing relish
save that final eventual sorrow
beneath the sway and sagging rectitude of palms.

So what is this accursed dance,
this wretched, twisting motion
that gets you
nowhere at last
and nothing actual
done?

In the flourish-field
the gulls are tactless with their pit and weigh
and quarrelsome devotion to sound.
Harbouring violence,
the ocean says pretty much any damn thing it wants
and drags me into its brash conundrum
regarding freight and volume
and moving violation with the sand,
till once again that tireless sound
that urgent bluff that drives the feudal waves
brings home to me
that after each solace comes the vacancy.

See how the silence curls back upon itself to gain
fresh impetus!

A hungry voice must know no bounds!

Dana GIlkes

Ancestral Moon (detail) ***Vonnie Roudette***

Bacchanal

Karen Lord

Delarua learns something about the workings of the Sadiri mind and her own empathic abilities as the team gets back on the road and goes to Carnival.

'Why me?' I asked. 'I mean, I know, you've told me, but tell me again why this is supposed to be a good idea?'

Tarik gave me a look that suggested he found my nervousness absurd. 'Your updated psi-profile indicates that you have developed an above-average ability to discern and suppress imposed emotions.'

'The Board of Inquiry has recommended that we add psi-profile data to our genetic and

anthropological data,' Nasiha continued equably, waving a scanner of some sort over the tiny sensors stuck to my various pulse points and nerve nodes and whatchamacallits.

'We require Cygnian as well as Sadiri data to calibrate our readings,' Tarik resumed. 'You are the only Cygnian with an operable level of psionic ability on the team. Therefore, you have been assigned to us for testing purposes.'

'Thank you, Qeturah,' I muttered sarcastically. 'Now, what are these for?' I waved a hand at four injectors laid out with precision on a tray of implements.

'To inform you of their contents and effects would compromise the neutrality of the tests,' Nasiha said in a tone that was almost soothing, which only increased my worry.

'Try to relax,' added Tarik, easing the medtable from vertical to nearly horizontal with a swiftness that had me gripping the edges.

The two Sadiri watched the readouts for a while, looked at each other, and nodded. Nasiha picked up the first injector and pressed it against my arm. I gulped quietly as it hissed its contents into my bloodstream. Seconds passed.

'Well,' I said, slightly relieved, 'I'm not sure what –'

Then I screamed.

After an hour spent alternately laughing, weeping, screaming and mumbling 'whoa

... cool!', I went to Qeturah to complain. She refused to be swayed. 'Psionic ability results from a combination of nature and nurture. It can't be measured using genetic data alone, and it's an intrinsic part of what it means to be Sadiri. We need this information.'

'Yes, but why *me*?' I asked plaintively. 'I never scored particularly high on psi tests before. Can't they use some average readings from the database?'

Qeturah shrugged. 'This particular method of testing has never been done before. There *is* no data.'

'Fine,' I snapped.

We were back in savannah country, this time at a Forestry and Grasslands outpost that offered a little more comfort than a temporary camp. The aim was to take an extra week or two to refine our mission brief before continuing to the next assignment on the schedule. Qeturah was working feverishly on documentation with Lian's assistance, Fergus was acquiring all kinds of new and exciting survival equipment and regionally-appropriate advice from the rangers, Dllenahkh and Joral seemed to be spending an inordinate amount of time in meditation, and Nasiha and Tarik were torturing me.

Then Dllenahkh turned up at the next session.

'Please tell me you're not here to add to my misery,' I said with mock cheerfulness.

He shot a look at Nasiha and Tarik that didn't reassure me, then sat down beside the medtable. 'You have found the experience thus far to be intolerable?'

I struggled with myself. 'It could have been worse, but really, not having your own emotions under control is pretty miserable, yeah.'

His mouth twitched – I swear I saw it! But his face was dead calm a moment later, and he said, 'We apologise for not previously detailing the nature of the experiment to you. However, we had the approval of the Commissioner to ...' He trailed off, constrained by the habit of truth, and amended, 'The Commissioner conveyed to us the permission of the government to carry out these tests.'

'Thanks for that,' I said quietly. 'I had an inkling Qeturah doesn't really like my involvement in this. Now, you were about to tell me what's going on here?'

He picked up an injector. 'A simplified explanation will suffice. The contents of these injectors have been designed to stimulate or suppress one of the two ranges of the limbic system that contribute to emotion. One range has satisfaction at one extreme and dysphoria at the other. The other range varies from frenzy to lethargy. The first range is additionally complicated by the fact that it actually consists of two separate scales of pleasure and pain which overlap in the lower values. For example, the emotion categorised as anticipation

consists of small elements of pleasure, caused by looking forward to the moment of satisfaction; pain, caused by the fact of the present absence of satisfaction; and frenzy, manifested as an urge to seek out the aforementioned satisfaction.'

I blinked. 'That's fascinating. Complicated little buggers, aren't we?'

'Indeed. Incidentally, it is not only those of Terran or Ntshune origin who experience this. It appears to be common, by one physiological mechanism or another, in all humans.'

I think I felt a mingling of mild pleasure, pain and frenzy at that point. That was the first specific bit of information he'd given me about Sadiri neurology, and I was hoping he'd say more.

He didn't. 'At present, Cygnian psi-profile tests are designed to detect levels of ability which could significantly impact a person's capacity to function in a largely non-psionic society. Strong telepaths and empaths are provided with training and a system of ethics to regulate the use of their skills. Most Cygnians are not at the level where this is required.'

'Including me,' I said with a frown. 'So why am I here on this medtable being pumped full of different kinds of crazy juice?'

'Because there are other aspects of psionic ability which the tests do not address,' Nasiha interrupted. 'For example, we have discovered from monitoring our own reactions that you are capable of quite strong empathic projection in two very specific areas.'

I grinned. 'I bet I can guess one. Pleasure, right?'

'Yes. That is the stronger one. When your pleasure range was stimulated, Nasiha and I both experienced a strong desire to laugh that was only mitigated by increasing the shielding on our telepathic receptors.' Tarik's face was so deadly serious, almost mournful, as he admitted this that I had to bite back a laugh.

'Less intense but still significant was the projection of lethargy,' Nasiha continued.

I raised an eyebrow. 'I bore people?'

'You calm people,' Dllenahkh said diplomatically. 'But it is a much subtler effect.'

I contemplated the ceiling for a while, processing this. 'Okay. So, how does "discerning and suppressing imposed emotions" come into this? Because I was completely at the mercy of those injectors, let me tell you.'

Dllenahkh explained further. 'It is difficult, if not impossible, to stop the action of chemicals introduced directly into the body. It is, however, possible to shield from external attempts to alter brain and body chemistry. That is the aim of today's session.'

The three Sadiri around the medtable suddenly seemed to loom with menace. 'You're going to try to influence my thoughts and emotions? I squeaked.

'With your permission,' said Dllenahkh.

I thought about it. I took a good few minutes while they remained there in silence, waiting on my word.

'Knowledge is power,' I said at last. 'Let's do it.'

While the Sadiri were getting their data and creating their new tests, I was finding out what my strengths were. For example, it seemed that I was even able to control my real emotions far better than you'd expect from how I usually behave. Telepathically, though, I had no talent whatsoever. I could be influenced into doing all manner of nonsensical, trivial things and rationalising them afterwards, like the time I randomly picked up an injector and aimed it at Nasiha who, fortunately, was agile and aware enough to leap out of the way. If she hadn't shot Dllenahkh a very nasty look for that trick, I would have sworn it was all my idea.

Another good thing about the testing was that by the time we were ready to leave, I had acquired some respect for Nasiha and Tarik. They were wrapped up in each other, but their professionalism and skill were incontestable. I found that admirable.

Because the settlement we were visiting consisted of widely scattered homesteadings, we had arranged our schedule to arrive for one of their festivals. People would be gathering at a public area called The Grand Savannah over a period of two days. Initially, we had planned to spend time at one of the major homesteadings and conclude our visit with the festival, but given the delay we were going to do it the other way around.

Our first sight of the Grand Savannah was a long, high berm with an arched entrance cut into the centre. Underneath the arch ran a road of flagstones. We came in government vehicles with a wagonload of gear. Inside the earth-walled enclosure was a huge field with a tent city, the colours so bright and the designs so varied that it looked like a scattering of kites on the ground waiting to take flight. There were rangers there acting as marshals, and they pointed us to a space where we could set up our camp.

A distraction immediately appeared. He walked past me with a swagger, a bottle in each hand, and in his eye a twinkle that wouldn't understand the concept of rejection if it were explained to him in nine languages and fourteen dialects. Then he paused and looked back. 'I'm off to hear the bands. Would you like to come, my lovely?'

I looked at him. What he didn't have in looks he made up for in self-confidence. 'Yeah. Whyever not,' I said.

The music was good. The stuff in the bottle was good. There was alcohol in there, but mainly it was surprisingly thirst-quenching in the heat, yet terribly more-ish at the same time. The crowd was energetic and there was much dancing. I lost my first acquaintance and found several more friends in succession, finally sticking with a rather nice young man

called Tonio.

I forgot about the rest of the team entirely until Joral turned up where I was sprawling on the steep angle of a berm, still listening to the drums and pipes on the field below and Tonio's snoring as he napped beside me. Joral seemed a little apprehensive, moving as if he hoped to preserve a small exclusionary zone around himself. I watched with a smirk as two young women breached the zone, danced up against him, and then moved on, leaving him frozen as if unsure whether to be glad or appalled. Finally he pulled himself together and clambered up to where I was sitting.

'Enjoying yourself, Joral?' I asked blandly, handing him the bottle.

He looked at it blankly for a moment and then, in response to my hand gestures, tipped some of the contents carefully into his mouth. His eyes widened slightly and he made a considering moue.

'Piquant and refreshing,' he proclaimed, and handed it back. 'I am finding the experience very educational. The Commissioner informed me that she already has a significant amount of genetic data for this settlement, and while the phenotype is mostly Terran, there are sufficient taSadiri genes in the population that a combination of selection and switching could easily produce a child of Sadiri appearance and physiology. Moreover, the anthropological data clearly show that a number of Sadiri traditions have been retained.'

'Is this festival a Sadiri tradition?' I asked, having drunk and passed the bottle to him again.

'In fact, it is not. While it does appear to have a few features of certain ancient festivities – except with less blood and ... um ... other activities – its origin is Terran, specifically the festival of Carnival.'

I passed him the bottle once more. He drained it. 'This beverage is delicious. May I have another?'

I hauled another two bottles out of a nearby cooler and gave him one. He popped it open and immediately took a swig.

I looked down at the Savannah. 'If we stay here for a couple more hours, we'll get to see the fire dancing. That should be good. Oh, I forgot to ask, did you come to find me for a specific reason?'

Silence. I turned to Joral. He was contemplating the already half-empty bottle in his hand with a strange little smile. 'Oh. Yes. Councillor Dllenahkh wishes me to tell you that after the festival, we will have a meeting with some of the elders of the settlement.'

'Joral, are you feeling all right?' I asked, concerned at the look on his face.

He turned to me and smiled fully, which completely freaked me out. 'I feel fine, Delarua, just fine. I wonder if I should go down and try a bit of dancing. It doesn't look that hard.'

I hit my comm immediately. 'Nasiha! Something's wrong with Joral! He's *smiling*. I think he's drunk.'

Nasiha spoke with her usual calm. 'How much has he had to drink?'

'About four hundred mils of ... something,' I stammered, trying and failing to find enlightenment on my bottle's label. 'There's alcohol in it. Six per cent.'

'That is far too little to affect a Sadiri,' she mused. 'Can he still walk?'

'Ye-es – I'm not sure. Joral, stand up.'

He did so obligingly, canting on the incline of the berm with a stability that hinted at least at physical sobriety. 'I feel fine! I am standing up. Tell her I am standing up!'

'Hm,' Nasiha said. 'Joral, return to the camp immediately.

I escorted him back to camp, which is to say I herded him like an inexperienced sheepdog as he pinballed his way through the crowd, dancing from partner to partner. Nasiha and Tarik were waiting, and they immediately gripped him by the elbows and hustled him into one of the shelters. I followed them in time to see them wrestling him down onto a cot, still protesting he was fine. They quickly took a blood sample, tested his breath, and looked at his eyes.

Then they looked at me accusingly. 'This is not inebriation,' said Tarik.

'Well, don't look at me,' I wailed. 'Look at this!' I waved the bottle at them.

'Yeah, that'll do it.'

I jumped. It was Tonio. I had been so preoccupied with Joral that I hadn't noticed when he woke up and followed us. He stood casually in the entrance of the shelter, completely unworried at the scene before him.

'That'll do it,' he said again. 'It's got fireberry juice in it.'

'And what,' said Nasiha severely, 'is fireberry juice?'

'It's like, another kind of alcohol, you know? Kinda takes the edge off your emotions and calms your thoughts, but doesn't take out your legs or fuzz up your head. Mothers give it to their kids to settle them down, no worries. Works great on teenage boys especially when they start to get ... y'know.' He shrugged and flicked an expressive eyebrow upwards while realigning the crotch of his trousers with a practised cup-and-shake of his hand.

Nasiha and Tarik looked at each other, then stared at Tonio. 'Tell us more about this fireberry juice,' said Tarik.

'Well, here, try some.' The enterprising Tonio took a small flask from his pocket and

handed it to Tarik.

Tarik opened the flask cautiously, poured a tiny amount into a clean sample cup, and sipped it. 'Intriguing,' he commented.

Nasiha took the cup from him and drained the remainder. 'Most interesting,' she agreed.

'But this makes no sense,' I complained. 'Why would it make Joral *more* emotional?'

'Oh, forgot about that,' said Tonio helpfully. 'Also removes inhibitions, like alcohol. Bit of a paradox. Feel less, express more.'

The two standing Sadiri were looking at him very curiously. 'This calls for further research,' said Nasiha. 'Can you take us to someone who makes this beverage?'

'Sure!' said Tonio cheerfully.

He went out, Tarik and Nasiha followed, and just as I was bringing up the rear, Nasiha turned and said pointedly to me, 'Someone should stay with Joral.'

I grimaced. 'Fine.'

Watching Joral very quickly turned into watching Joral sleep. I put him in the recovery position just in case some nasty after-reaction should occur, and curled up on a nearby cot, listening bitterly to the shouts and cheers and drumbeats of the firedance show I was missing.

There was a shadow at the entrance. 'Tarik?' I called out, tapping on a light.

'No,' came Dllenahkh's voice. 'Nasiha has just informed me about Joral's condition. How is he?'

I sat up and yawned and looked over at Joral. 'Still sleeping peacefully, it appears. Where are Nasiha and Tarik?'

A very strange expression came over Dllenahkh's face. It was the look of a man who had seen things he could not unsee. 'Dancing,' he said shortly.

I gaped. 'Beg pardon?'

'They decided to test the effects first-hand by sampling the various beverages that contain the active ingredient. They are now ... blending in.' A faint, cool disapproval touched his voice.

'Well, good for them, I say. After all that madness they put me through, I'm glad they've got the guts to experiment on themselves. But I still don't get it. What's the big deal about this stuff?'

Dllenahkh moved to pick up a handheld and came to sit beside me on the cot. 'Perhaps a look at the data will clarify matters. Here is a summarised form of the data collected

from the sensors during your experiment. And here ... ' he tapped and went to split-screen view ... 'is the summary for Sadiri data. Nasiha was the test subject, naturally, in order to maintain sex as a constant variable when comparing your readings.'

'These are Sadiri readings,' I said, tracing the line of data.

'Those are the markers of the biochemical reactions we experience during sensory input and processing, yes.'

'And these are mine,' I said, tracing a much lower set of values. 'How do you live with that?' I asked with muted awe.

'Carefully. With meditation and strict adherence to the disciplines,' he replied. 'But without this high neural sensitivity, we could not be who we are. We would not be able to pilot the mindships, nor could we sense each other, communicate with each other, form telepathic bonds with each other.'

I gave a slow nod of admiration. 'Now that you've found this, a non-addictive way to control your response to sensory input, will you use it as an alternative to meditation?'

'It may serve for recreational use, but I do not believe it is to be depended on in the long run. One might find oneself in a situation where the ingredients are not available. However, the disciplines can be taken anywhere that the mind goes.' He gave me a considering look. 'Would *you* recommend this sense-suppressant for regular use?'

I thought about it. 'That can only be an individual decision,' I hedged.

'Then let us consider a specific example. Would you recommend it for me, for example?'

'No,' I said finally. 'Like you said, it's who you are. I wouldn't want you to be anything less than yourself. I don't know if that makes sense, but there it is.'

There was a rustle at the entrance and Nasiha and Tarik came in. They were glowing with energy, but smiling only very slightly. I was a bit relieved. I had been afraid they might come in laughing or doing something shocking. Nasiha was carrying something in her hands.

'First Officer Delarua,' she said with a touch of breathlessness, 'we apologise for making you miss the festivities by asking you to watch Joral. Please accept this traditional regional dish as a token of our regret.'

I took it with a smile and a twinge of anxiety, but when I looked at it, it was familiar to me. A genuine grin spread over my face. 'Thank you, Nasiha! I *love* chocolate decadence cake!'

I broke off a bit and put it into my mouth. Now, this was a drug worth taking. My taste buds positively hummed in bliss at the creamy richness. I closed my eyes and moaned.

There was an odd echo. I opened my eyes and caught Nasiha and Tarik watching me avidly, their palms pressed lightly together in a poor attempt at intimacy. There was a slightly guilty look on Nasiha's face, but it was spoiled the next instant by a suppressed giggle. The two then exchanged a smouldering look and departed hastily.

My mouthful turned to ashes. I swallowed it with difficulty and set down the dish. 'Perverts,' I said truculently. 'Now I've lost my appetite.'

'Eat your cake,' said Dllenahkh, and there was a definite hint of amusement in the tone of his voice. 'They're gone now, Joral is asleep, and my shields are strong.'

Mack 1

Kendel Hippolyte

What he's most wanting is not what he wants
Is not what he craves
Deeper than avarice, if he'd let himself feel, is the haunting hunger
That saves

He holds the whole world in his hired hands
Desperately trying
To have it. But trapped in his spasming grip, his seizures, the earth
Is dying

He cannot stop grasping. Whatever he sees
He is accounting
Its self into cost into price into sale into profit into himself
McWanting

He gluts till he's wracked with a spasm and spews
Blood-flecked bits of self
A wasting consumption leaving him gasping for life and clutching
At pelf

What is the deep whole he's wanting to fill?
For what is he hungry?
Gorged with the planet's green flesh, its black bile, its ripped out entrails
And yet empty

Running to every thing and running everything
Avoiding the whole
He's afraid that will swallow him into its void where has no thing
No soul

And yet he touches us, Midas-like, desperately
Haunted and haunting
And we, his children, we bear his name like a watermark, secretly
McWanting

Mack 2

Kendel Hippolyte

The flowers of McKallus grow everywhere
Sahara to Arctic, skyscraper to shack
On each one he ravishes personal care
Rapt, necrophiliac

He cultivates thousands in each killing field
He sows landmines that bloom in bursts of dead petals
Black tulips of shrapnel, poppies of congealed
Burned-flesh-and-metals

From the cut stalks of limbs, hacked crinums of hands,
Picked fading irises, he makes a bouquet
Corsages of flesh wounds are what he demands
New blows each day

In his sedulous experimental plots of malevolence
Nyarabuye, Columbine, the gardens of bane
He plucks, from a dark loam of pleasure and violence,
The lilies of pain

The sick-sweet scent of the flowers of cruelty
Intrigue him intensely. Sometimes he grows,
With cigarette burns on the face of a baby,
A delicate rose

Crumpled leaves of petitions, a guard's fly-trap grin
A hand out extended toward you, acanthous
Surreal, the subtle forms of phytoxin
Of flowers of McKallus

His seeds germinate in a subsoul of mystery
Then burst through the surface, and we recognise
McKallus' bright efflorescence of cruelty
His blooms in our eyes

really

One of the city's madmen, a new one,
as the car eases past the traffic light,
takes rapid aim, fires, pumps, fires again –
a direct hit. The car
smashes the bridge broadside, half-spins, crashes
the other side, breaching the suddenly buckled girders, goes
right over, bonnet first, into the muddy stinking river.

This is not what we see. We see
a lunatic gesticulating an exact mime of a shotgun murder.
Fantasy. A comic unreality where thoughts are triggering
blank acts that leave reality unharmed.
He is pathetic, that sniper into our world, his thoughts
ricochet off our rear windscreen back at him, he drops
out of our sight, diminishing in the mirror.

It's later, alone, i realise: i have been hit.
It shocks through me – the understanding, in a wondered moment,
that for him it was real, for where he really lives,
this happened. More, that where i – where we – live
is that same place.
For, considering what lies
between our thought and act, the dream/the life, where
do we live truly?
If what touches, what we touch with, at the core,
is not, though it may seem that way, the act,
but the thoughtfelt intangible tip of what becomes the act;
if spirit not flesh, emotion not action, is our substance,
where else is there to live in truth
but in that place where he, the ineffectual murderer madman,
lived, when he fired dream-lethal thoughts at us, at what we felt
was our reality?

Kendel Hippolyte

DISTRACTIONS

I

Supposed to be fulfilling my retirement dream
of transforming all the fictions and the poems
of my heart into the legible glyphs
of wonder that will help decipher me
and disinfect my ripening soul—instead
I am distracted: watching
in apprehended fascination as my mother
gums her way through the last feg
of the orange of her life; half the juice
of each nibble runnelling down her chin
and dark-greening her light blue blouse,
the tidy straight-jacket of her life's achievement.
The other half-stream that she manages to swallow
distorts her face with a sour smile
as she tastes the vanishing sweetness
now mingled with the sharp citric tang
of all life's pains: those suffered long ago,
those in memory's current chapter (alas,
now inaccessible) and those to come at the end,
when she will shuck the pith sucked dry…

And why do I feel guilty
each time I turn my eyes and mind away
to deal with other things? Is it because she has become
a future mirror, which I will never see as clearly then?
Or does some mind of me recall when it was she
who carefully fed me life's orange, and now
I struggle to know how to repay all that—while
I still long for that remembered smell, that touch of her
which would obscure all else and fill to bursting
all the chambers of my hopeless, childish heart?

II

And then there's you, the sum of all my wants
and worst distraction of my fevered brain
—where my soaring hopes crash into your disdain
and that gorgeous avatar of you still haunts…

Ah, what electric impulse can I find,
marking time somewhere inside me deep,
eager, athletic, with sufficient charge to leap
across the wide synapses in your mind:

those gulfs of calm indifference to my love
that prompt your teasing, prophylactic smile
and baffle my vain assaults… How do I file
a charge against such cruelty and prove,

in the unheated courtroom of your heart,
that my own hot love is shivering for your touch
and the pain of your rejection is too much:
some compensating kindness on your part

is now required. Either you let me love you,
consume you quite with hungry arms and mouth,
or else, with cruel mercy, you pluck out
my unworthy heart and leave me cold, like you—

so to my tales and poems I can turn anew.

Mark McWatt

Photograph by Ronnie Carrington

I REMEMBER

My mother sang songs to exorcise fate's
taunting demons. She possessed a good voice
and would render all the popular hits
of the day times over, as if to cease
left an opening for tears to enter.
But I knew even in my child's mind then
that under the shell of performance knots
of pain throbbed where bruises stigmatised her.
Sometimes I sang with her, or hummed softly,
and she was pleased to see I shared her mood.
She'd starred at school, but then was shown the road
to enslavement, barred like an intruder
from reserved endeavours. So she drew on
her courage and toiled for pennies of scorn,
owing the rent, having to take quick flight
from one unlighted coop to another.
When her unwary heart foundered on rocks
and currents pulled her to a different harbour,
songs became a foil to fortune's snigger.
All through her years she had to parry
blind thrusts neediness made with its razor,
sometimes sipping rum's golden promises,
draining the drops of dulling illusion
yet, it's belly laughs I hear in the garrets
of memory, wit's ribald repartees,
and the singing that broke out like the sun.
That's the creed I learned about most, a flounced
answer to rules of servitude. Was it
merely bravado? Or the only way
to defeat her birth's ordained damnation?
It's that triumph I celebrate today,
grieved that my love had stayed so reticent,
only feeling itself swell every day
and though bursting with rage over her pain
having no words to tell her what I meant.

Cecil Gray

ALONG THE WALL

There was a wall that ran along the edge
of the road and above a bowl of space
you could fall through if you stood on the ledge
over the drop to the limekiln, a place

whose name meant perilous mystery then.
From there the road went up and down the hill
in a slow slant, a quiet grey road when
its sunwashed untrodden asphalt lay still

in the day's deserted hours. You could
sometimes follow butterflies as they flapped
down lanes just out of your own neighbourhood,
braving strangenesses of a world unmapped.

It is that sunlit emptiness and peace
when you walked from school and when everyone
was at work that reappears without cease
in videos memory repeats. It shone

like a child's unvanquished joyousness. So
you should not complain about occasions
that bring back the dread you had come to know
on nights you sat alone. Her devotions

took her away and the dim road was thronged
with phantoms, spirits, aliens. You peered
out with wet eyes, blinking away the pronged
jabs from the streetlight and the shapes you feared.

But next day the long grey wall made the road
safe again, guarding you from jeopardies.
Then like a pardoned prisoner you strode
past the shaded continents of the trees.

So it was little to suffer to let
her feed her hope. That was the way she knew
to keep alive in the choking net
of need. She thought angels would bless her pew.

But from the bright and bubbly air you won
your own relief. It was as if the light
chased the ghosts and all the shadows were gone,
leaving you to bustle like a bounding kite.

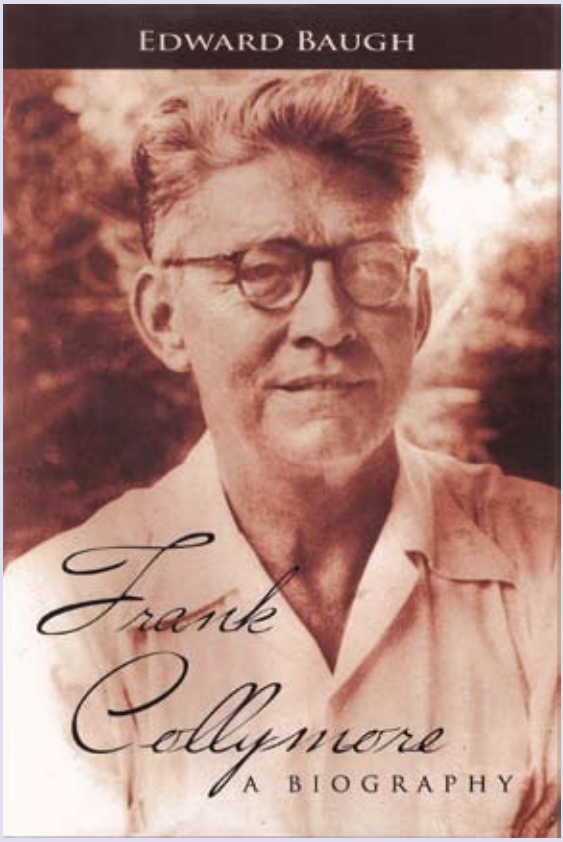
All along the wall a lithe innocent
went bouncing onward, keeping out of mind
what the stricken language of her face meant,
what your eyes translated, less and less blind.

Cecil Gray

FRANK COLLYMORE – CARIBBEAN LITERARY ICON

Frank Collymore – A Biography *by Professor Edward Baugh*

Published by Ian Randle Publishers



Thoughts on the Colly Book

Henry Fraser

Frank Collymore – A Biography is not just the life of a writer, editor, teacher, actor and artist; not just a collection of important literary letters; not just an anthology of poetry, nor just a sociological treatise on Barbados and "Caw'mere," nor just a review of Caribbean literary development; it is, in fact, all of these. Eddie Baugh, Professor Emeritus of English at The University of the West Indies (UWI), a published poet and Public Orator Emeritus of the Mona Campus, has done us all proud with this splendid biography of the Caribbean's great literary icon, Frank Collymore.

Young Barbadians are familiar with his name, commemorated every day in the Frank Collymore Hall, and institutionalised with the annual literary award at the National Independence Festival of Creative Arts (NIFCA), but until the re-birth of *Bim* three years ago, through the UWI Cave Hill Campus and the Prime Minister's Office, few people under forty knew who exactly Frank Collymore was, and why we owe so much of our redeeming Barbadian civilization today to this amazing man from a little house on Chelsea Road.

Eddie Baugh has brought a scholarly and insightful approach to the life of a man of great complexity. It is a biography which does not merely chronicle events, but analyses them thoughtfully; it does not merely quote, but interprets; and it draws on the richest variety of sources – published work, his unpublished work and diaries, letters – numerous letters – to and from, until the end of his days, school reports, press reviews and interviews. There are hundreds of quotations, all accurately referenced.

The structure of the book is appropriate for such a multi-talented man – a Renaissance man. There is a rich contextual introduction to the Collymore family history and his early childhood: "Beginnings." This details the well documented genealogy and the defining slave-turned-successful-business woman who was his great great great grandmother, Amaryllis Phillips Collymore. It also includes an extract from a letter of his father to young Frank, which bears quoting in full, both because of its relevance to

Frank's personality and the nature of his life, and his own exceedingly happy marriage to Ellice:

> *"When I leave her (if it should please God to take me first) I die loving her more each year since I put the Ring on her finger and I do not ever remember* ***one*** *occasion that* ***either*** *of us have given the* ***other*** *a cross* ***look much less a word*** *and I take it that's a* ***Record."***

The book comprises five main sections, covering his five careers*: Schoolboy and Schoolmaster; Friendship, Love, Marriage; Writer and Artist; Editor and Literary Godfather: Bim;* and *On Stage*. The details gleaned of his childhood, "boy days," painstakingly recorded by Professor Baugh, provide the background which perhaps explains much of Collymore's entire life as teacher, mentor and guide. I found myself, as I read the first three chapters, collecting in my mind the virtues of this extraordinary man, so clearly formed in the loving, secure relationships of his childhood – his generosity of spirit, kindness and consideration of others, his commitment to a cause (in spite of his own confessions of laziness), his capacity for love, loyalty, friendship and patriotism, his modesty and his sense of humour, all so wonderfully enabling his multi-talented knowledge, wisdom, skills and creativity.

The chapter *Schoolboy and Schoolmaster* is both richly humorous and deeply thought-provoking, especially in the context of current debates on teaching methods and corporal punishment. Colly abhorred corporal punishment and he wrote in his diary (April 15, 1940) that he was amazed "that the majority of people seem to imagine that there is a reflex action between the backside and the brain or moral sense." He believed in a process of interviewing and guidance for the "errant boys," in which "sympathy and mutual respect are absolutely necessary." He claimed these methods "successful in *Friendship, love and marriage* in every case but two." Sir Alexander Hoyos, who taught with Colly at Combermere in the 1930s, wrote in his own autobiography *The Quiet Revolutionary* that Colly succeeded because:

> *" ... his philosophy as a teacher was based on that of St. Francis of Assisi. He sought not so much to be understood as to understand, not so much to be loved as to love, not so much to be respected as to respect the thousands of boys who passed through his hands."* And those of us fortunate enough to have been taught history by Sir Alexander at the Lodge in later years, saw this same approach successfully used with the less quiet revolutionaries of Lodge!"

The staff room of Combermere, over which Colly was, according to Sir Alexander, "the presiding genius," was known for its humour, and tribute is paid to the legendary Dudley Ralph "Firpo" Perkins, Colly's great friend and colleague. Reputedly, Major Noot, the headmaster, visited Captain Perkins at home and the obligatory bottle of rum was

produced. Major Noot observed: "That rum looks rather pale, Perkins," whereupon Firpo replied: "Well, sir, it must have known you were coming." Which reminds me of another legendary Perkins repartee circulated at inter-school cadet camp in my youth. Captain Pope told Captain Perkins: "If that belly was on a woman, I would swear she was pregnant," and Captain Perkins replied promptly: "Well it was, Captain Pope, and she is!"

The chapter *Friendship, Love and Marriage* is, thanks to the frankness of his diaries and the willing assistance of Ellice Collymore, a marvellously revealing portrait of Colly's most intimate emotions and life in his more turbulent middle adult years. But as someone else has said: "The book review should tantalise rather than reveal," so I exhort the reader to read the book to appreciate the inter-relationships between his social, romantic and creative life and most of all his great and lasting achievement as editor of ***Bim*** and mid-wife to Barbados and the Caribbean's rich literary output. Let it merely be said that love, loyalty and friendship permeated all his relationships. And everyone who knew him would say that his and Ellice's marriage was one made in heaven, although Colly, ambivalent about God to the end, may not have acknowledged the divine inspiration for their great love!

Colly's creativity is perhaps best known to most Bajans through his insightful and often humorous "*Notes for a glossary of words and phrases of Barbadian dialect,"* which has seen six editions, and his poetry, with the quite frequent rendering of favourites such as "*Hymn to the sea,"* with its haunting, repeated line: "I must always be remembering the sea." Professor Baugh, well known Jamaican poet himself, summarises Colly's poetry as *"... in general ... gentle, conservative, quietly celebratory or valedictory, stoic in its acknowledgement of life's limitations. There is an all-embracing loving kindness."* But he goes on to recognise some exceptional, disturbing poems, such as *"By each let this be heard,"* a poem which explores a personal, deep seated guilt and *"confronts us with our 'murderous' capacity for personal betrayal:"*

Not only by the knife or cup
Or exigence of war
We pile the pallid corpses up;
Each private abattoir
Abounds in slaughtered cadavers
Of those whose blood we spilled,
Whose unsuspecting breasts the thrust
Received, the shambles filled
With rotten death, and yet we live
Gay and rejoicing ...

Contrast his nonsense verses and Collybeasts:

... His mincing gait

And snifty glances

Are quite as foul

As cousin Frances'

(The Swonk)

And note the way he treated a melancholy, even tragic story in the *Ballad of an old woman,* whose many children all migrated and forgot her – so relevant to today's abandoned old folk – strong, even bitter social commentary, with a deceptive levity:

There was an old woman who never was wed,

Of twenty-one children was she brought to bed ...

... Sometimes they thought of her, sometimes they wrote,

Sometimes they sent her a five-dollar note.

Colly frequently denied that *Bim* had a fixed programme or policy, and he preferred to err on the side of leniency in accepting submissions, to ensure no truly fine talent was missed. In fact his almost unerring judgement resulted in the encouragement and promotion of most of our great writers over a period of thirty years, from Derek Walcott and George Lamming, through Kamau Brathwaite, Michael Anthony (of Trinidad), Austin Clarke and Tim Callender, and including the frequently published Edgar Mittleholzer (of Guyana, and perhaps the least recognised and acclaimed of the great Caribbean novelists), John Figueroa (of Jamaica), Eric Roach (of Trinidad) and many others. He helped to launch so many aspiring writers through *Bim*, or on the *BBC* through his relationship with Henry Swanzy, who aired Colly's short stories and the work of his protegees. His sincerity and kindness were transmitted so eloquently through letters that most *Bim* contributors seem to have developed what one might call a passionate admiration for someone they'd never met! (Read Professor Earle Newton's moving recollection of his meeting with Eric Roach in Trinidad, on page 186, for example.) Eddie Baugh includes quotations from letters (often eloquent and engaging in themselves) from George Lamming, Kamau Brathwaite, Tim Callender and all, which speak to the inspiration and encouragement, love and friendship this venerable icon provided, from the earliest phases of their careers until death did them part.

There can be no better way of ending these all-too-brief reflections than with the moving tributes of John Wickham (friend and successor as editor of *Bim*) and George Lamming (on the dust jacket. John wrote: *"If there are two things which make me feel saved from complete nonentity, they are that Colly entrusted the editorship of Bim to me*

and that, in that last note, he said that I was to bear him and to write his obituary." And George Lamming wrote: "*Edward Baugh shares his scholarship with such grace you hear the voice of Frank Collymore on every page. It will be a required text for every student of Caribbean literature."*

But I will go further and invite Eddie Baugh to follow up this master-work with a long-standing dream of mine – a sequel ***Selected works of Frank Collymore.***

For Ellice Collymore

A quiet afternoon.
An elderly man and woman
in separate queues, he, balding,
wearing three-quarter sleeves,
suspenders hooked to trousers;
she, dressed in simple blouse
and skirt, hair in a tidy bun;
nothing remarkable,
part of the deadening wait
on comatose bank-tellers.

She leaves her queue,
walks over, taps him softly
on the arm. He turns, "------" he cries,
it's you, after all these years!"
"Yes," she says, her voice a gentle quaver,
but clear, "How have you been?"

She waits, pleasantries over.

We wait as well.

"I've always wanted to tell you..."
she says with a shy laugh,
"I've waited all these years to tell you..."

Tell him what, we wonder.

"You see, Mother wouldn't let me."
The obvious? Hardly.
The meekest virgins
can get past Mother... What then?

"That motorcycle! That fancy
red motorcycle you had back then;
you offered me a ride one day,
but Mother had warned me.
You don't know how I wanted
to jump on that pillion—"

"So you wanted to! Really
you wanted to!"

A grin lights his face;
the afternoon revs up, spreads out
into green fields and open roads.
A young man rides full-speed
leaning into the wind.
Arms clasped around his waist
her skirt hitched up
she sits astride the pillion.
They ride eastward
the red cycle a dervish
whirling through years
tossing them like her hair
her joyful laughter.

Esther Phillips

BIM Vol 10 No. 38 Jan–June 1964

Early, Early, Early One Morning

Austin Clarke

Suddenly, I could hear my mother's voice bombarding the small room in which I slept. "Get up get up get up! boy, you too lazy! you think the morning waiting on you? get up and get! the sun almost half-way up in the sky, and you in there still sleeping? This is Easter Morning! blessid Easter. The Lord rise-up outta Hell long long time, so you get up, too!... and don't forget to clean out the pig pens and the sheep pens. 'cause yesterday morning you didn' clean the pig pens proper', and you left back all my precious milk inside them sheep breasts. Come, boy! half the morning gone already! So get up!

She had hardly taken a breath in all this time. I listened to the beautiful mountains and valleys of her surging voice, and laughed inside my heart. I was already awake. I had been awake for about three hours. I could not sleep. I could smell the fresh delicious smells seeping under my door from the kitchen: the roasted pork, the great cakes, the fruit cakes, the sponges, the bananas, the golden apples, the rum and the sweet drinks and the new coats of varnish and polish on all the furniture in the house. This was Easter in our house. Everything was cleansed. Even the pig pens were given a clean white resurrection coat of freshness; and the front of the house was sprinkled with white marl. Everything was new, was clean, was virginal. My new clothes had been bought months before; and my mother had pressed them many times over, and had hooked them on a hanger on to a nail, high in the ceiling of her bedroom – where they could be seen, but not touched. Every chance I got, I would watch them: the seams in the short grey-flannel trousers, keener than a new Gillette, the sea-island cotton shirt pressed without a wrinkle or blemish and, rich and creamy as milk from our sheep; my cork hat, white as snow, (although no one in our Village knew what snow was, except having seen pictures of it in a book; or in the foreign Christmas cards which trickled into the Village from Overseas), and stiff as a dead man with Blanco; and my shoes like two mounds of black pitch, and

shining, Lord Lord Lord! like nobody's business. And the tie. My mother never trusted her fingers to tie my tie: and she never trusted mine either. So, I always wore ties, ready-tied, with an elastic band around my neck. All my ties had a savage stripe in them. This was my Easter outfit: new and clean from my underwear out.

I would be wearing to church this morning, at five o'clock. This was to be my first day as a choir boy in the Cathedral. No achievement of mine, in my eight years, had made so great an effect on my mother! Not even when, at seven, I had successfully fought off five girls, all sisters, with a thick piece of sugar cane. Not even when I won the long distance race at the church outing. Not even when she and my step-father came home tired as dogs one afternoon, to find that I had cooked a meal for them – a meal which I wanted to stand out as a single landmark; but which they interpreted as a boast, with the result that I was cooking their meals, every afternoon since then.

"Boy! You heard me say morning here? Well, get up!" And then I heard her opening the window of her bedroom, and talking to the darkness outside. "Lavignia! Lavignia? You sleeping, too? What time that clock o'yourn saying, darling? This blasted boychild I have in here still sleeping, thinking that the morning waiting 'pon him... the sun all up in the skies already! What time it saying? Thanks." And she closed the window with a bang, and suddenly, I could hear Lavignia's voice no more. And the barking of the dogs stopped: and the cackling of the hens ceased, as if someone had shot them dead.

I searched around in the semi-darkness for my clothes. I put on the ragged cap, now too old for me to remember its original colour and shape. Next, the shirt patched expertly in many places and looking like the quilted robe of Joseph; and then, the trousers, my step-father's which my mother forgot to reduce to fit me, and which wobbled about my legs like a school girl's bloomers. And then I rolled the crocus bag and the straw mattress from the floor, took them under my arms, and went into the Yard to hand them over to the sun, to dry. I had wet my bed again. But she found it out, nevertheless. "Pissing pissing pissing! Looka boy, you don't know you too old for that? You not shamed?" I was glad it was only three o'clock in the morning; that none of the girls in the Village was awake; that nobody could hear her reproaching me for this normal behaviour. And there must have been something about this morning, this Easter morning, which held her silent, in crippled awe. For she did not strike me with the back-hand slap which she had perfected with such speed and accuracy, that it landed always, in the same fat spot of my face.

Again, the pigs and the sheep were on my mother's side: they had filled the pens with mountains of their droppings. And all the time I cleaned the pens, and washed the pigs, I wondered if it was like this in Bethlehem in that stable where Christ was born; if that stable smelled half as dirty as this; and whether God had purposely made that the birthplace of Our Saviour, to remind Him always to be humble. Or whether it was to give him an inferiority complex. And I was glad that I was not born in a stable. The pigs

smelled evil. And after the pigs, the sheep. Rank rank rank sheep, whose perfume would take a soap-factory of scrubbing to wipe off. And then I began to think of my first day in the Cathedral Choir. This morning, when Christ was supposed to have come out of the grave somewhere in a country so far from my little Village, I was going to walk up the aisle of the beautiful church to the sacred chancel, and send my prancing voice all over the church in a solo, in praise of Easter. And all the boys in the choir would envy me. Particularly Henry, who was only my substitute.

"Them pigs clean yet?" You 'tend to the sheeps? Yesterday morning the sheeps had my milk lef' back inside their bubbies! And you forget to sweep-up the Yard. Boy! You think you is a man, becausing you is this big Cathedral Choir-boy! But lemme tell you something. Your backside ain' so mannish that I can't give you a proper tarring this bright blessed Easter morning, yuh!" I could feel the sting of the whip in the threat of her voice. And I knew she meant it. I hurried through my work, making sure that my eagerness to wear the rich linen ruff, the crimson cassock and the pearly white surplice did not cause me to be inefficient. The sun pretended it was going to come up above the tops of the sugar canes. But when I stood and waited for it, it changed its mind, and continued to give a golden glow over the entire Village, My work done, I bounded into the house.

"You don't intend to bathe? You intends to go in the people' church smelling like a pig pen? Looka, boy, get outta my eyesight and go to the Stand Pipe and get a clean bucket o' water and cleanse yourself with, hear?" Who could argue with a woman like this? Who would dare?

Across the pitchlake of the road, the canes were grumbling, and shaking their fists in my face. I imagined monsters coming out of them. Only last week, a boy had been beaten up by the Man in the canes. And as my head was swollen with monsters coming at me, I heard a rustling in the canes, and I dropped the bucket. And when I stopped running, I was beside our paling. My dog, Rover, came panting at my side. Again, he had frightened me. And I wanted to kick his head. But I only looked at him; and was very glad he could not talk. Holding on to his collar, I went back across the road to recapture my bucket, and get the water. A few malicious windows with heads and lights in them, were open. And I walked in the shadow of the canes this time – my dog was my guardian angel now! – so they would not see me.

"I thought you wasn't coming back!" my mother said "Is four o'clock. You not riding that bicycle outta this house today, bright Easter morning. You *walking* to church. 'Cause I slaved and slaved on those clothes o' yourn and no damn bicycle seat and bicycle spoke' going to mash-up my labours, you hear me?" And so, it meant walking two miles, two miles of canes, two miles of Men in the canes. In all that distance, I would pass only two houses, until I approached the Square in which the Cathedral was built. I would pass only two street lamps, which seemed to have been burning since the day the Island was

discovered, and which were never repaired, and which seemed ready to go out. I would be alone all that time, all that terrible distance, with only the brightly lit church in my heart, and the rich beautiful music in my ears. *You not riding that bicycle outta this house today.* No passenger buses ran in my part of the Island on Easter morning. At least, not at five o'clock in the morning. And the Villagers were so poor, that only one family was rich enough to own a broken-down car. But since that family was not a Christian-minded family, I could not hope for a lift to church. I was the only one in my Village who belonged to a *big* church, who belonged to the Church of England. My mother, who was brought up in that Church, had recently started to attend the Church of the Nazarene, because she felt its services were more like a part of life: were more emotional, more exciting, more tragic and more happy – something like that holy day when "those mens gather' up in a room in the upstairs part of somebody house, and talk' and talk', Lord! in so many diff'rent kinds o' language' and dialects, that you wouldda think the world coming to a' end!" There, she could stand up in her large congregation and open her heart to God and to them, and tell the world that yesterday, God step' in, and Satan step' out, Amen! and she was brought through pretty and nice. There, she could testify how God helped her, when she didn' know how the hell the day would end up. There, she could clap her hands, and stamp her feet till the floorboards creaked, and she could jump up in the air and praise God. And for all that, feel as if God was really listening. But in the Church of England, she was regimented to a sit-and-stand exercise of dull droning religious drilling. And she always complained that she did not understand *one word* of the Word the minister was preaching. He used words that simple common, poor people like my mother, could not understand – as if there was some conspiracy with the Word of God. And never, never, had anyone stood up in the Church of England and said, "Amen!" to God. It was such a strange church to her!

My mother then began the careful ceremony of dressing me. My hair was ripped by the comb, which this morning seemed too fine to plough the tough roots of my rebellious head. And each time the plough stuck, my mother cursed and said she didn't understand why the hell I couldn't have good decent black people hair like everybody else. After the combing, came the greasing. My hair would shine like the stars in the heavens. Then the powder under my arms, and the Bay Rum to make me smell "nice and proper." And the new silk vest with the price tag still on it. And then the underwear. And all these things she herself dressed me in, suspicious always, that I would destroy them. At eight years of age, she did not think I was fit to dress myself on an Easter morning to venture into the powerful Church of England's God. On went the three-quarter grey stockings, with a rim of blue and black. When I reached under the bed for my shoes. I heard her warning voice in my ears: "No no no no! You not mashing-up them shoes! You putting on them shoes, *last* thing! I want them shoes to return inside my house without *one* bruise, you hear? Things too damn expensive these days, boy! And if I see a mark on them, well, God help

you, hear?" And she meant it! I had suffered because of this, before. And all I had been guilty of, was that I had walked in a pair of new shoes, and a pebble had scratched the tip of one. But she had examined the soles of the shoes, and had decided that I had not walked in them "proper", that I had walked too much on the right side of the heels. This time, she would take no chances.

My shirt was the next piece of vestments in this ceremonial robing. I was made to stand like a piece of wallaba tree-trunk, not breathing, while she put my arms through the shirt, and buttoned every button herself. I could smell the richness of the cotton, and feel its warmth on my washed body. The ready-tied tie went on next, and then the trousers. Carefully, I put one leg through, and then the other, making sure not to touch the trousers themselves. She pushed the shirt gently into my trousers, and snapped the belt. Only my shoes remained! But I knew what to expect. For weeks she had made me drill about in the house, walking on old newspapers so that the soles would not be soiled, stretching the shoes which she always bought too small. I could never understand why. And even although she insisted that my feet were too big, that "big shoes don't look nice 'pon a little boy' foot", I could not really imagine that my mother would purposely force me into these undersized shoes, just for the sake of this belief.

But I inhaled deeply. I rested my hand on her shoulder as she commanded me, balanced myself on one leg, and got ready for the punishment and the torture. The shoe was too small. But that was not the point. It looked neat. My toes went in. I could feel a savage sting against my instep. My heel suddenly became as long as a cucumber, and it refused to go in. And as I touched the back of the shoe to see what could happen, my mother shrieked: "Good God, boy! Don't step on the back o' the shoe! You want to throw my money down the drain? You mashing it up. And suppose I have to take them back!" But I knew she would never take them back. Intransigence would never permit her pride to allow me to take them even to the Shoemaker across the road for a stretching. I would have to make my feet get smaller. Not the shoes stretch bigger! " Come come! Eat this little food." I pulled a chair out from the table, and was preparing to sit, when I heard her voice again. "Boy! I didn't tell you to sit down and eat! Not in them trousers what I slaved and slaved so hard over, to press and make look nice for you, like if you is somebody decent! Stand up! Stand up and eat. It can't kill you!"

And so, I had to stand up and eat the *little food*: about two pints of green tea, warm and thick and rich with sheep's milk; a loaf of bread as big as a house, and a wedge of roast pork, enough for two people; and a banana. My mother believed in bananas. They "make your skin nice and smooth", she would say. I could soon feel the heavy load in my belly; and I felt good. I would wear any shoe now. Even a size Seven, instead of a Nine. "Come come!" she said, "Belch! Belch! You belch good and proper', while you home. 'Cause I don't want to hear that you belch-out in public, in the people' church, or

in the street, like if you don't have no manners, hear?" And I granted her her belch. A smothered, respectable belch, which although it did not quite satisfy her, yet it made her say nothing, since it was some assurance that I had already belched at home.

Now, the shoes! My hand was resting on her fat shoulders. I was balancing all my weight on my left foot. My right foot was said to be slightly larger than my left foot – although she never told me why. I knew the shoe would never fit. But I was not such a fool as to tell her so. "Put your weight on your instep, boy, do! Don't put all your weight on the whole shoe, 'cause the shoe won't go on, then!" Exasperated, she grabbed my foot, and forced it into the pincers of the shoe, while I remained silent, and in agony, "Hold there! Don't you move!" she commanded. And she left me. Coming back with the large pot spoon which we used as a shoe horn, she said, "Push! Push hard! Don't mash-down the instep. Push hard boy, like you have life!" The more I pushed, the smaller the shoe became. My face changed from black to blue to purple. Still, my judgement warned me not to comment on my pain, and certainly not on the smallness of the shoe. She would never believe. "Push! You pushing? Or you standing up there with your face like some ram goat?" At last, through some miracle, the foot went in. Never to come out again! Lord have mercy, I prayed in my heart, as the pain was already whizzing through my body. When the other shoe was rammed on, I was sweating. The perspiration stuck my sea-Island cotton shirt to my back. And she noticed it, and wanted to know why I was sweating. "You intends to sweat-up this clean shirt I just put on your back, boy?" I tried to stop sweating, tried hard, as if to stop it, I had only to turn off a faucet. "Walk off! Walk off, and lemme see how the shoes look on your foot, boy!" I held my breath, pushed my chest out, and asked God for strength. The shoes crucified me. I would never be able to walk on the smooth marble in the Cathedral. But I wanted to be at church this Easter morning. This was *my* Easter morning; and a simple thing like a biting shoe was not going to stop me.

"Okay! You ready now," she proclaimed, And she dusted my handkerchief with some perfume, tucked it into my shirt breast pocket and secured it with a gold-coloured small safety pin. "Now, turn 'round, and let me see you. Boy, you look real good! You look just like the white man at the Plantation' son. Just like a little doctor. Now, I want you to grow up fast fast, and be a doctor, hear?" And I knew that if I did not answer, she would want to know why. "Yes," I said, wishing that I was already grown-up, and was thousands of miles from there. She looked at me again and again, and then she took me into her bedroom, and showed me my reflection in the life-sized looking glass. Back in the living room, the white, sparkling-white Blanco-cleaned cork hat, with its green undersides to field the driving rays of the sun, was clamped on my head. I was now ready for the Easter world!

"Since you not riding that bicycle outta here this blessid Easter morning, I going to give you twelve cent', to put in your pocket. Now, walk down. I want you to look fresh

when you enter that Cathedral Church, so that when people look at you, they could know you is somebody' child. Now, seeing that it is Easter, and you have friends, you must buy a penny in sweets... no, you hads better buy losengers to make your breath smell nice, and a pack o' sweeties... Every child like sweeties. And you ain' no damn diff'runt. And keep the rest for bus fare *back* home. You could afford to climb in a crowded bus, *after* church. It don't matter then, if your trousers crease-up a trifle. Now come back inside this house, looking tidy. Not as if you went through a pig' mouth. You hear' me?" She put the twelve-cent piece into my hand, as if it was the last part of her inheritance, which I was to cherish for the rest of my life. I looked up at her, so large, so beautiful, so lovely and so black – a mysterious African Queen – with her hair braided neatly and long; with her white dress clutching the feminine twists and turns of her full body. She looked down at me, and she looked into my thoughts; and she smiled. She drew me close, close to her breast and her rolling soft stomach where I could feel the love and the blood pumping through her body. And she kissed me on each cheek, and said, with a voice that came from the depth of Africa: "I praise God that I didn' throw you in a blasted dry-well when your father left me pregnant with you, in this terribul world, with not even a half-cent to buy milk with! Lord bless yuh, son. You is mine, and I proud o' you!"

I was ready to go now. Outside, the morning was glorious. The sun had eventually decided to come up. And I could see its rays setting the tops of the canes on fire with a golden flame. The birds were scavenging for food. And the dogs and the chickens and the small children were quarrelling for their breakfast. My breakfast felt good and heavy and safe in my inside. "When you go 'cross the road, and see Jonesy, say Goodmorning. Say Goodmorning to Stella. And to Lavignia. I going call Lavignia now, and let her see how you look." And she moved away from me, and went into her bedroom, and called out for Lavignia.

"Why you don't let me say my prayers to God, in peace, this blessid morning, eh, Mistress Carlton? I here bendding down on my knees before God asking Him who the hell he going send to lend me a shilling to buy milk with this Easter morning.

"He coming out now," my mother said, with pride.

"Who? God?"

"The bridegroom coming. Come outside, and see how he look'."

And Lavignia, apparently convinced that her prayers would be in vain, left her spiritual complaining, and came out in front of her house to see me, *dressed like a little doctor*.

"Mistress Carlton! this boychild o' yourn look first-class! like something to eat! Boy, you should be grateful you got such a nice mother. I hopes, to-Christ, you don't intend to forget her when you come to be a man, eh? 'Cause, if so, the birds o' vengeance pick-out

your blasted eyes!"

And I had to answer Lavignia with as much respect as I would have answered my mother, and say, "No, please, Miss Lavignia, I won't never forget my mother."

"Good!" she said, and adjusted my tie although it was already adjusted properly. "Now, you go on down in the name o' the Lord, and sing that solo like if you is a born angel. Mistress Carlton!... but wait!... you give this boy some fresh crispy biscuits to help out with his voice? Biscuits good for the voice. If you don't have fresh ones, I have some. Come, boy, these biscuits does do wonders for your voice. Eat them whilst you singing, and the people in that Cathedral-church going think you is Michael the Archangel."

I took the biscuits and munched on them all the way down the road with the canes bordering it, mumbling mumbling, trying to take my mind off the torment of the shoes, and the threat of the canes. But the canes moaned, and the shoes burned. I walked in the middle of the creaking road, forcing my mind from my present predicament, and focusing it on the musty-smelling Changing Room in the loft of the Cathedral. I could see the ruffs, sparkling white. I could smell the starch in them. And they were ironed so many times by Henry's mother, that they shone; and when you ran your fingers over them, they were as smooth as glass. And the crimson robe! And the white linen surplice – all of them made to fit me, so long as I remained with an unbroken voice in the choir of this heavenly Cathedral. And I could see myself coming down the steps from the Changing Room, with the other choristers, and standing at the entrance of the church, while the Lord Bishop and his assistants waited for a few late worshippers to settle in their pews, And I could see the faces of that vast congregation: almost half the population of the Island, who came to the Cathedral in droves whenever the Bishop was preaching. Some came to church, as they would every Sunday, because they like to come to church: others, because they like the resplendent robes and the university hoods of the ministers – all colours under the sun, so pretty and so impressive and so learned! And more than once, I myself wanted to become a minister in God's Church of England, to swish my long flowing robes, and adjust my hood and hat, and large ruby-Cyclops ring every second of the service, and pour Communion wine at the rails, and mumble those few important indistinguishable words, while the sinners knelt before *me* and prayed to *me* and asked *me* for forgiveness, because they could not see God, or talk to Him, unless they had first asked *me* for forgiveness, and recognized *me* as His disciple. Now, I was walking up the aisle, so long and so smooth with its marble shining from the long underpaid hours of scrubbing by the church Sexton; my voice warbling; and the men and women at the ends of the pews nearest the choir, nodding their heads and complimenting. How they raised their heads from their unmelodic hymn books, and nodded, and turned slightly with their eyes to locate the voice; and I, seeing them, raising my voice even higher and sweeter, until the organ seemed silent and voiceless as the dumb man who opened his mouth and

sang aloud his soundless praise to his God, every Sunday at Matins. And then, my solo. The old heads nodding, and smiling, because they could not applaud in God's presence, in God's Church. And the organist, like an English spy, glowering at me, anticipating a wrong key or a blunder... and Henry, my solo-substitute, envious with praise. And then, when it is all finished, the choir and the Lord Bishop and the ministers walking down the washed-out, chastised church, with the congregation dumb and whipped by the sermon and the presence in the church of Christ's body, come from the dead... rejoicing, because this is Easter. And then, the Benediction said by the Bishop, and the sign of the cross which he always made as if he was chasing flies from his face; and the limp people kneeling to say a last something, a last word or two, in thanks, to their God.

I passed the first street lamp, and continued into the desolate, black morning, cramped by the thick unsympathetic fields of canes which refused to let the sun through, to keep me company, On and on, in perpetual misery from my shoes. At last, I had to give in, I took them off. I tied the laces together, and strung the shoes around my neck. The stockings, I pushed into my pocket. And then I ran, hurrying to church before the street should be crowded before I could be seen, and detected, and laughed at. But nothing happened all the way: I reached the vicinity of the Cathedral: and tall tomb stones like diminutive skyscrapers, and the trees in the grave yard of the church, and the blackbirds playing hide-and-seek unmannerly from tree to tree, and the houses coming alive... and finally, the Cathedral itself, facing me like my mother, unapproving. I would have to put my shoes and stockings on before I could cross the threshold of the West Portico. But I had to find some place to sit.

The bells were ringing now. I looked up to see them; and their laughter and rejoicing filled my heart with joy. And I yearned to be in the choir, in the chancel, singing my solo.

The congregation was arriving. Women were dressed in the white of angels, white hats, white shoes, as if they were proud to be part of this great resurrection morning, as if they had remained all their lives, new brides, new virgins. They were standing at the West Portico, waiting for the service to begin, waiting for the men to pass and whisper little controversial words for their ears. And most of the men, in the black of the funeral, wearing their suits of long-ago-black-now-purple, which fitted them like coats of armour, and walking stiff and proud in the morning sunlight spinning through the lazy mists, hovered around the North Portico, talking about the Test Match which had ended in a draw. I could see Henry, my arch enemy, standing near them, loading his head with facts which later he would claim as his own; and with him were some of the boys of the choir. I lingered near the tall wall that kept the Cathedral from the fish cries and the whore-cries of the nearby Market. How was I to get into the church yard and sit on a tomb stone and put my shoes on my feet again?

The organ began to rant and swell like a stormy sea swept by gales of Bach,

breathing its powerful chords into the ears of the uninterested congregation. Everything was fresh. Everything was new. The organ was breathing now like a monster. Somebody important was arriving. From where I stood, looking over the tops of the short croton trees, and over the head of the white angel, silent and stationary in polished marble, I could barely make out the roosters sitting on the helmets of the Governor and his party. The Lord Bishop, his robes fluttering like the Union Jack in the breeze, came out to meet them at the North Portico. I could see the Prime Minister of the Island, his eyes red with sleep and rum; and his ministers standing uncomfortably in their official clothes; and the lords an ladies of the Island, all untitled, but all rich and white, coming to this old Cathedral so early in the morning. And they all seemed half asleep to me. As they disappeared into the church, I threw my shoes over the wall, and jumped behind them.

They were coming towards me now, coming up the aisle, towards the East Window. The important people, and the choir. I saw Henry, grinning into the pages of his hymn book. I saw the choir pass the multitude of people of all colours: the black, brown, light-skinned, light-brown and yellow-skinned, and approach the front pews of the church where the Governor and the poor white people and the rich black people always sat. And as they fled into their seats and into their stalls, all that was left was the wide white aisle, like a swath through a canefield, running straight out into the road, through the West Gate. There was a beggarman standing in the silhouette of the Gate, in the road, drinking from a paper-bag with which he was conducting, as the music romped and played.

And all the time, my tears fell on the clean, freshly-ironed cotton shirt, and into my shoes as I struggled to get them back on my feet. And when I looked up, and saw Henry step into the middle of the aisle, in the chancel, my heart broke. And straightway, I thought of my mother, standing at the entrance of the gate of our Yard, waiting; waiting for me.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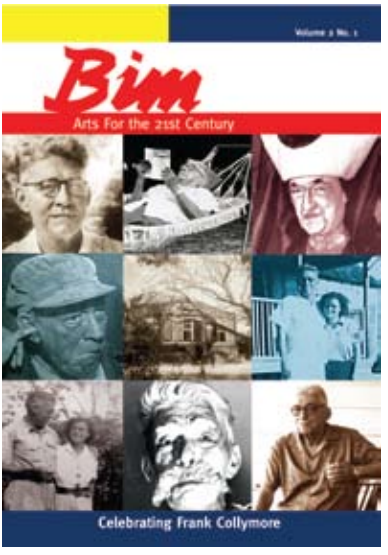
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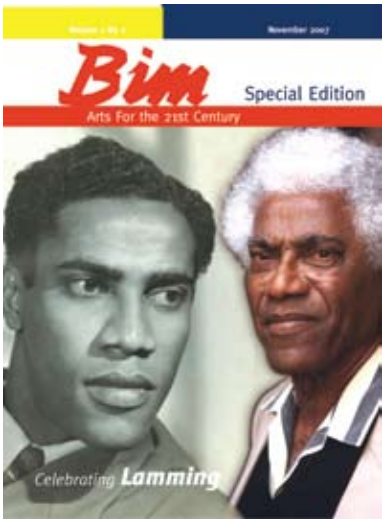
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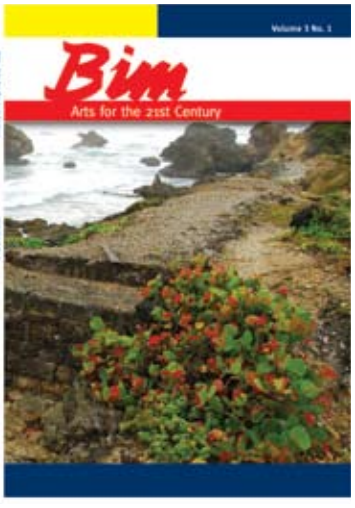
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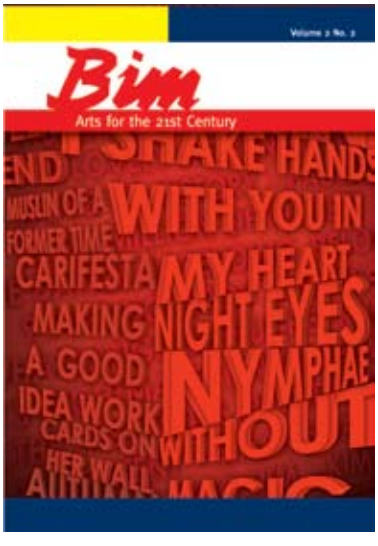
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