

THE ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA REVIEW OF BOOKS



VOLUME 5

NUMBER 1

SUMMER 2012



ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA WOMEN'S POETRY

Mary Prince

Elizabeth Hart

Veronica Evanson

Valerie Combie

Althea Romeo-Mark

Linisa George

Rebecca Proppen

Eileen Hall

Cynthia Hewlett

Elaine Olaoye

Elaine Jacobs

Naomi Jackson

and more...

THE ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA REVIEW OF BOOKS

A Publication of the Antigua and Barbuda Studies Association

Volume 5 · Number 1 · Summer 2012

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Editorial Board: Ian Benn, Joanne Hillhouse, Paget Henry, Edgar Lake, Adlai Murdoch, Ermina Osoba, Elaine Olaoye, Mali Olatunji, Vincent Richards

Paget Henry, Editor

The Antigua and Barbuda Studies Association was founded in 2006 with the goal of raising local intellectual awareness by creating a field of Antigua and Barbuda Studies as an integral part of the larger field of Caribbean Studies. The idea for such an interdisciplinary field grew out of earlier “island conferences” that had been organized by the University of the West Indies, School of Continuing Education, in conjunction with the Political Culture Society of Antigua and Barbuda. *The Antigua and Barbuda Review of Books* is an integral part of this effort to raise local and regional intellectual awareness by generating conversations about the neglected literary traditions of Antigua and Barbuda through reviews of its texts.

Manuscripts: the manuscripts of this publication must be in the form of short reviews of books or works of art dealing with Antigua and Barbuda. Thus reviews of works by writers and artists from Antigua and Barbuda such as Peregrine Pickle, Mary Prince, Tim Hector, Ashley Bryan, Novelle Richards, Gregson Davis, Jamaica Kincaid, Edgar Lake, Althea Prince, Keithlyn Smith, Adlai Murdoch and others will be particularly welcome. We will also welcome commentaries on reviews we have published. Reviews should be no longer than six double-spaced pages, with minimal if any footnotes. Submit reviews to Paget Henry, editor, as word documents at Paget_Henry@Brown.edu for consideration.

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Editor's note

It is with great pleasure that I pen my editor's note to this special issue of *The Antigua and Barbuda Review of Books*. This issue is special because it is a volume that celebrates the poetic writing of the Women of Antigua and Barbuda. To our male poets, many of you have stopped me on street with inquiring eyes and voices, you can rest assured that we have plans for you. As many of our readers already know, the inspiration for the *Antigua and Barbuda Review of Books* was the 2006 conference paper by our poet, novelist, and playwright, Edgar Lake, entitled, "Nascent Aspects of An Antiguan Literary Heritage (*CLR James Journal*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 2007). In that path-breaking essay, Lake made the important claim that there is a literary tradition native to Antigua and Barbuda, and that we do not recognize it because we have neglected it and failed to cultivate it. Thus I am delighted to introduce Brother Lake here in his role as the guest editor of what is sure to be an historic issue of our *Review*.

This volume both illuminates and supports Lake's claims regarding the hidden and neglected literary tradition that is native to Antigua and Barbuda. In my introduction to the 2008 inaugural issue of the *Review*, I wrote: "the primary task of *The Antigua and Barbuda Review of Books* is to make this now invisible literary tradition very visible"(p.2). As a volume that brings before us a careful sampling of the poetic writing of the women of our nation from the mid-1700s to the present, this issue will certainly help to make more visible and accessible our hidden and neglected literary tradition. Consequently, for both his vision and his meticulous work on this issue of the *Review*, I must say some special words of thanks to Brother, Edgar Lake. Your work on this issue of the *Review* has been a model of commitment and devotion to the thought and writing of Antiguans and Barbudans. For the gifts of your creativity, time and effort, we all thank you from the bottom of our hearts. Also, I would like to thank Ms. Linisa George and Prof. Natasha Lightfoot for their important roles in making this issue of the *Review* possible. Finally, before turning things over to our guest editor, I would like to thank the department of Africana Studies at Brown University for its continuing support of the *Antigua and Barbuda Review of Books*.

Paget Henry

An Anthology

of

Antigua and Barbuda Women's Poetry

The Antigua and Barbuda Review of Books

Vol. 5, No. 1

Edgar O. Lake (ed.)

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Special Issue: Antigua and Barbuda Women's Poetry
Guest Editor: Edgar O. Lake

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Introduction and Acknowledgements

The heritage of women's voices chronicling Caribbean experiences exists over many centuries; - and, that heritage exists on both sides of the Atlantic.

As it regards this issue's focus on Antigua poetry, there were several 18th and 19th century poems written by settler Antiguans, or poems about Antigua, depicting anti-slavery aspects of plantation society in Antigua. These early Works are not uniform; indeed, they present surprising poetic texture: one expresses an interracial conjugal affair; others document African vocabularies. Yet others record still recurring themes - nuances in African Creole languages or themes of family ties. Besides, a few Epic poems brim with anthropological details - amidst fine poetic expressions.

But, to examine Antiguan women's voices in poetry, a complex heritage of multiple female voices persists. Some women writers like England's Amelia Opie wrote forcefully of the plight of enslaved African families in the Caribbean. And, in Antigua, Rev. William Shervington's 1749 poem, "*Leonilla On the Loss of Her Eye*", must be reread - not only as poetic protest for the 18th century forced migration of Scotts from the North to the 'West Indies'; but, as an expression of original vibrancy, heretofore untapped in the 'cross-culturality' of these ongoing poetic works.

Meanwhile the earliest non-European Antiguan poets, all of them women, crossed the Atlantic and landed in Europe. A few of them, with their status challenged by English law, were returned to Antigua. Indeed, the very first Antiguan woman poet left circuitously for Europe; however, she later travelled to teach and live in West Africa. In recent centuries, other Antigua women poets pioneered in North America. Within the archaeology of such compelling offerings a protean Antiguan poetry tradition has emerged.

The earliest glimpse of poetics emerges in Rebecca Freundlich's 1734 letters; which reveal prophetic influences from her favorite copy of the Dutch *Martelaers-Boek* (or Book of Martyrs). Her prison-release letter, offered here in particular, reflects this sentiment ("The Count is the key that he [the Lord] used to get us out of the prison..."). This is - not surprisingly - akin to Blake's *Poetical Sketches* of the Archangel Gabriel, whom he "personifies as Truth the bringer of 'good news of Sin and Death destroyed.'" Rebecca slyly forges 'poetic husbandry': - the elusive Age, with her task of writing - when writing to Moravian women; ("Sister, time is short and I am a bad writer so that I can't express in words as I would like...").

A century later, a second crucial poetic is found in Elizabeth Thwaites's language of elegiac Praise, inspired by Wordsworth's *Ecclesiastical Sonnets* (1822), particularly in *Primitive Saxon Clergy*, and *Cathedrals, Etc.* In truth, and closer to home, Thwaites's poems offered here are more plausibly a response to Joshua Marsden's widely controversial 'Methodist' poetry such as "*The Converted Mulattoes, or Enraged Junto*", or "*West-India Logic*," and "*Negroes Have No Souls*." However, one can also place Thwaites's hymns, and untitled poems amidst his "*The Spread of the Gospel*"; and "*A Black Man's Plea, 'Am I Not a Brother?'*"

The 20th Century offered a third poetic found in Eileen Hall-Lake's modernist metrical language. Boldly grounded in the discourses of the literary salon, Hall-Lake spun her verse of exile in a sphere between T.S. Elliott's 1921 essays, *The Metaphysical Poets*; and *Prose and Verse*. The newly forged language found in her important poems (*Heaven*, or *Non Sequitur*, and *The Shape of Chaos*) still echo in younger Antiguan women poets; unlike the dark prose of her Caribbean contemporary, the equally exiled Jean Rhys.

More recently, the landscape of women's poetry in the Caribbean, along with its related field of critical literature, is growing impressively. Emily Allen Williams's 2002 annotated bibliography, *Anglophone Caribbean Poetry, 1970-2001*, offers rich evidence in this field.

From a single chapter, "Gender and Sexuality," in Williams's bibliography we provide critical essay titles elaborating the range of poetry featured in this issue, by Antigua and Barbuda women poets:

M.J. Fenwich's 1989 essay, "Female Calibans: Contemporary Women Poets of the Caribbean," include poets 'who defy the traditional model,' in the Caribbean.

Pat Ellis edited "Women of the Caribbean," with varied essays by women poetry scholars, and published in Jamaica.

Elaine Fido's 1986 essay, "Crossroads: Third World Criticism and Commitment with Reference to African-Caribbean Women Poets." She compares "the poetry of three poets of African descent – Christine Craig, Lorna Goodison, and Esther Philips." She shows how each poet writes different aspects of their experience into their poetry. But, she also examines "the relationship between their writing and the reader/critic/audience in the creative process."

Dannabang Kwabong's 1998 essay, "The Mother as Archetype of Self: Poetics of Matrilineage in the Poetry of Clare Harris and Lorna Goodison," beckons comparisons within a wider African-Caribbean literary tradition creating matrilineal icons.

Valerie Lee's 1979 essay, "The Female Voice in Afro-American and Afro-Caribbean Poetry," finds topical shifts and expressions different to men in cultures; often female concerns of childhood, men/women relations and womanhood. Lee posits that Third World women share additional burdens with racial and sexual stereotypes now emerging in their writing.

Janice Liddell and Yakini Belinda Kemp, eds., in their 1999 book of essays, "Arms Akimbo: Africana Women in Contemporary Literature," beckon poetry scholars over a wide spectrum views of African women writers.

Carol Morrell edited a collection of essays in 1994, titled "Grammar of Dissent," featuring prose and poetry by Claire Harris, M. Nourbese Phillip, Dionne Brand. "The poetry of Trinidad and Tobago writers currently living in Canada," featuring Caribbean immigrants, living mostly in Canada.

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Velma Pollard's 1998 essay, "Language and Identity: The Use of Different Codes in Jamaica Poetry", in *Winds of Change: The Transforming Voice of Caribbean Women Writers and Scholars*, edited by Adele A. Newson and Linda Strong-Leek. Pollard compares one poem by Lorna Goodison, 'Ocho Rico II', showing "different codes in Jamaica English, Jamaican Creole, and Dread Talk."

Thelma B. Thompson's 1993 essay, "Their Poems, Their Words: New Jamaica Women Poets and Political Statement in Nation Language," deals with female Jamaican poets. But also features "'Nation language' asserting pride, rejecting restrictions of traditional forms and emphasizing audience inclusion rather than exclusion."

Gloria Feiman Waldman's 1983 essay, "Affirmation and Resistance: Woman Poets from the Caribbean," in "Contemporary Women Authors of Latin America: Introductory Essays." Waldman examines the poetry of Louise Bennett of Jamaica, Lolita Lebron, Iris Landron, Elsa Tio and Maria Arrillagan from Puerto Rico; and the poetry of Belkis Ciuza Male and Nancy Morejon from Cuba. Her examination shows common themes, technical styles and mutual concerns.

Antigua and Barbuda: Their Early Voices

As noted above, the heritage of Antigua & Barbuda poets who are women may well begin with **Rebecca Freundlich Protten** (ca. 1718 – 1780). According to her biographer, Jon F. Sensbach [*Rebecca's Revival*, Harvard University Press, (2005)], her original name was Shelly, and she was born ca. 1718, but kidnapped from Falmouth, Antigua, at the age of six. Rebecca was sold through auction in St. Thomas in the 1720s.

She was an activist, and an evangelist, as her signature is attached to petitions sent to the Queen of Denmark asking for protection for the African peoples in the Danish West Indies. These petitions were also published in English from the German United Brethren newsletter (*Büdingische Sammlung*, 1741), in an Edinburgh evangelical journal, *The Christian Monthly History: Or, an Account of the Revival and Progress of Religion, Abroad, and at Home*”.

An account of Rebecca Freundlich Protten's early life (as Shelly) was recorded in Christian Georg Andreas Oldendorp's handwritten 'Manuskript I', after his 1767-68 visit to the Danish West Indies. In 1777, an annotated Early German language version was published, *Geschichte der Mission der evangelischen Bruder auf den caraisibischen Inseln S. Thomas, S. Croix und S. Jan*. In 2002, a four-volume set, in Modern German language, *Histoire der caribischen Inseln Sanct Thomas, Sanct Cruz, und Sanct Jan (History of the Mission of the Evangelical Brethren on the Caribbean Islands of St. Thomas, St. Croix, and St. John)* was published of his complete writings, and illustrations.

Two of her letters are included in this issue, chosen because they evidence an all-important sisterly alliance. The originals are part of the *Brief von Neger-Geschwistern*, of 1737-1765, and archived at the Unity Archives, Herrnhut, Saxony (East Germany); the original letter was written in the Dutch language.

Her letter of May 28, 1737, was written to a fraternity of Single Sisters, in Herrnhut. whom she had not met, yet. The English language translations of her letters are by Sanneryn Jansen; they were provided through Jon F. Sensbach's scholarship, and with his permission. The first letter shows a subversive bent, mentioning her vocation in a letter of spiritual conversion and declaration to preach the Gospel: Sensbach explains that “Secular matters of one's personal life were consigned to each convert's *Lebenslauf*, or life story, describing their worldly lives, spiritual resurrection, and refuge in the church.”

The second letter of Feb. 16, 1739, shows the tension of between her language (and poetics), and the Moravian administrative rewrite, as first expressed on the same day.

Mary Prince (1788- ca. 1833) According to Moira Ferguson, she “was the first black British woman to escape slavery and publish a record of her experiences.” Born in Bermuda, she was sold to John Wood and brought to Antigua in 1814. Unbeknownst to Wood, she married David James, a St. John’s carpenter and Free Black. They were married at the Spring Gardens Church, where Mary received a Moravian education. Her writing has been critically studied through the lens of 19th century anti-Slavery Society literature. Yet, it must be considered for its moving narrative told in poetic prose. Her London and Edinburgh published memoir, *The History of Mary Prince, a West Indian Slave, Related by Herself*, (1831), emits a 19th century cadence and humanism still representative of our poetic tradition.

Prince’s baptismal odyssey – from washerwoman’s tears to memoirist’s inky blotted page – is awash with tutelage: from watching over her younger sister on Turks Island, to living in Thomas Pringle’s London townhouse in, 1827. The experience of working for Pringle, the Methodist secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society (he was first editor of her *History...*), was profoundly tutelary. For, as Moira Ferguson points out, following her 1827 act of self-liberation Prince benefited from a Methodist convert, (and Pringle house-guest) Susanna Strickland. Her skills helped in the transcription of Prince’s narrative, during 1829-1830.

Professor Ferguson’s pioneering reprinting and editing of Prince’s work (*The History of Mary Prince: A West Indian Slave, Related by Herself*, The University of Michigan Press, 1987), offers us powerful poetics from Prince’s trans-Atlantic sojourns: (“Whilst she was putting on us the new osnaburgs in which we were to be sold, she said in a sorrowful voice, - I shall never forget it! – ‘See, I am *shrouding* [sic] my poor children; what a task for a mother!’ ”[51]; or, (“ Oh! The trials! the trials. They make the salt water come into my eyes when I think of the days in which I was afflicted – the times that are gone; when I mourned and grieved with a young heart for those whom I loved.”) [54]; or, consider this more cryptic line, almost scriptural in cadence: (“I bore in silence a great deal of ill words.”) [70].

Lastly, ponder this evocative caveat. Mary Prince describes her discovering a sister whom she found with her mother aboard a slave-gang sloop, on Turks Island: “She had a sweet child with her – a little sister I had never seen, about four years of age, called Rebecca. I took her on shore with me for a week, for I felt I should love her directly.” [66]

This recurring name, Rebecca, though not the Moravian convert from an earlier century still projected a deeply poetic genealogy. For it resounded and embodied the deeper vernacular of ‘sisterhood’ - an enduring presence – inscribed by these women’s own writings; not to mention the impulse of *renaming* still practiced in our naming, today. On November 13, 1739, Rebecca had named her first child, Anna Maria; the second, born in April of 1750, was named like her half-sister, Anna Maria.

She, Mary Prince, of the nineteenth century had written the story of many ‘Maria(s)’ – indeed, many imbedded ‘sisters’, militantly resurrected. Most importantly, she had achieved this moral feat through remarkable poetics – a language of self-reflection, resolve, and utterance - and, at the narrative bridges of Methodist, and Moravian faiths: two distinctly New World religious societies.

Elizabeth Hart Thwaites, (1772-1833) - one of the ‘Hart Sisters,’ – (Anne Hart Gilbert and Elizabeth Hart Thwaites), is associated with the heritage of song – the hymns of the Methodist faith, and the Bethesda School of early 19th century Antigua.

According to Moira Ferguson, editor of, *The Hart Sisters: Early African Caribbean Writers, Evangelicals, and Radicals*, (University of Nebraska Press, 1993), Elizabeth Hart Thwaites wrote and published several short and long poems.

Two are featured here, with kind permission by Ferguson. An elegiac poem, “*On the Death of the Rev. Mr. Cook*”; and, another, “*Untitled*.” Both of these appeared, in Ferguson’s afore mentioned book; and in her footnote, she further indicated that they also appear in John Horseford’s report, *A Voice from the West Indies: Being A Review of the Character and Results of Missionary Efforts in the British and Other Colonies in th Caribbean Sea, with Some Remarks on their Usages, Prejudices, etc., of the Inhabitants*, 1856. However, based on the narrative of Rev. Cook’s record in the Caribbean, the Methodist scholar, Robert Glen, recommends a date of c. 1795 for Elizabeth Thwaites’s poem about Rev. Cook.

Eileen Lake, or **Eileen Hall Lake**, an Antiguan-born poet, published *The Fountain and the Bough*, 1938, (Charles Scribner’s Sons Co., New York). It received a fine review in the following year in *Poetry Review*. One poem from that volume, *The Shape of Chaos*, is included here. Her translations of works by short story writers; and her own poems from earlier issues of prominent

literary journals including *Harper's*, *Poetry* and *American Mercury*, show the breadth of her literary engagements. Two of her poems from Harper's – *Brief Fires*, and *Turn to Eternity*, – which are included here, suggest her personal philosophy. Her short stories and translations of other women's work are strewn in small publications on both sides of the Atlantic. Her association with the English literary giant, Ford Maddox Ford, is well documented – to include his late memoir's dedication “[to] Dr. Michael and Mrs. Eileen Hall Lake.” Ford first published Jean Rhys, and T.S. Elliot, among others.

Her Author's Note, included in her 1938 volume is, even now, invaluable; while full of irony: “the poems in Part III, referring to Antigua, West Indies, contain words and allusions that may be unfamiliar.” A rich glossary of “the negro dialect of Antigua” [sic] follows, illuminating those six poems – two of which are in the reputed ‘dialect’: (*Obeah Woman*, and *Lullaby*).” From that volume, we offer her poems, *Lullaby*, and *The Shape of Chaos*.

Hilda McDonald was born on August 3, 1883, on Antigua. She published a collection of verse (23 poems), *Snowflakes and Stardust* (1956), which remains elusive. It was published by The Writers' Guild, in England; and appears as a solitary mention (under ‘MacDonald’) in Herdeck's 1979 landmark tome, *Caribbean Writers: A Bio-Bibliographical-Critical Encyclopedia*. Herdeck lists Frank Collymore as having reviewed *Snowflakes and Stardust* in BIM 25 (July-Dec.) 1957.

A pair of fine poems appeared in the 1957 *Kykoveral*, titled *Anthology of West Indian Poetry* (Issue No. 22). One poem, *Evensong*, becomes more auspicious after it had been earlier published in the 1952 *Kykoveral* (No. 14), and, later republished in the journal's 1986 (Nos. 33, & 34) issue. Here, we feature the two poems that appeared in the historical 1957 issue of *Kykoveral*.

Dr. Veronica Evanson Bernard, with her pioneering volume of poetry, *Pineapple Rhymes*, (Blackwood Press, Atlanta: Ga. 1989), must be re-considered. The late Dr. Veronica Bernard was visionary in using poetry in the preservation of Antiguan Storytelling – and through one of the region's many distinct Creole languages - based on a plurality of African languages and voices which African women helped forge in the New World. Her poems are built on poetic forms still practiced by Antigua and Barbuda poets who are women. Even her selected book-title (Pineapple) infers a sophisticated literary aesthetic form - the pineapple as succulent, but prickly – fruit; a perfect symbol to a militant humanism with which she strove to burnish in her poems.

Her 25 poems written in our folk language – part of her 1989 volume, *Pineapple Rhymes* - is a juggernaut of poetics with which to reckon. Only Eileen Hall Lake – with two Antiguan folk vernacular poems in 1938 – precedes Dr. Bernard’s poetic opus. In pursuit of that insurgent literary heritage, I offer Amelia Opie’s 1791 novel, *Adeline Mowbray*, using the symbol of the Pineapple. It featured the fruit as curative agent in a fugitive Jamaican slave, Savanna, as she worked at resuscitating her lover’s life. Opie’s epic three-volume novel is most associated with late 18th century Rational Dissent.

Deliberately, I included Dr. Evanson Bernard’s term - ‘the verses’, - to undergird how she crafted the use of her ‘Standard’ English language poems: (*Women of Antigua; The Drought; Lodge March; and Twenty-fourth o’ May*).

Proudly, we have included two vernacular poems, *De Obeah Woman*, and *Miss Jeffie Jumbie*. But, we have also added her prophetic gem – “*Women of Antigua!*”.

Current Voices

Agnes Cecilia Hewlett-Carrington published her volume of poems, *Allo et Au 'voir*, in London, in 1972. Of this enigmatic title, Carrington writes so aptly in her Foreword: “Greetings, readers, and ‘bye for now. I’ll be back.”

We are pleased to announce her return; and to include five new poems, “fresh” off the handwritten page – which she mailed to us!

Here, she offers *Waladli*, a long poem, “a reflection of the poet’s feelings for her native isle, Antigua”; and it is sometimes used in her Native American/Caribbean dance drama, ‘Waladli’. Another poem, *Protest*, is “used in the dance drama ‘Heritage’ to accompany movements by a ‘Frederick Douglas’ character; also often recited during Black History Month celebrations. We are graced by another unpublished poem, *Reverie*, which is sometimes recited by Cecillia with dance performance. A short poem, *Teacher*, is a cautionary tale in a selfless trade. Lastly, her stern poem, *I Speak of Hope*, challenges our emotions. Cecillia writes that it is sometimes “recited in Black Celebrations on many stages and campuses; [it is] also part of the dance-drama, ‘Heritage.’”

Dr. Elaine H. Olaoye, received her Ph.D. in psychology in 1981 and has taught psychology at Brookdale Community College for over 20 years. Dr. Olaoye's area of specialty is Stress Management and Positive Psychology. She continues to write poetry researching it as a mechanism for coping with stress, as well as articles related to Positive Psychology.

Her poetry is informed by fusing the mineral and the spiritual elements of the earth, recharging them with the silicon of universal rhythmic chant. Her offerings here include a 1994 poem, *Our Real History*, a hybrid with narrative and Creole poetics. It appears to extend some techniques similar to the late Dr. Veronica Evanson Bernard's vernacular poetry.

A. Naomi Jackson is a welcomed new-comer whose work first appeared in the 2006 issue of *The Caribbean Writer*, while she was in South Africa on a Fellowship. Ms. Jackson wrote of a mass-band leader and costume designer, determined to see his vision completed. I was so pleased to bring this to the attention of Dr. Henry, and despite her post-doctoral work in Utah, coaxed and encouraged her to submit fresh poems for this issue.

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Althea Romeo-Mark, born in Antigua, West Indies, is an educator who grew up in St. Thomas, US Virgin Islands. She attended the College of the Virgin Islands; and has lived and taught in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands, the continental United States, Liberia, England, and Switzerland – where she has lived since 1991.

She was awarded the Marguerite Cobb McKay Prize by the Editorial Board of *The Caribbean Writer* in June, 2009 for her short story, "Bitterleaf," in Volume 22, 2008. Romeo-Mark as one of a hundred guest poets invited to read at the XX International Poetry Festival of Medellin, Columbia, where she represented Antigua & Barbuda.

Short biographies of these poets, including others who live in the wider Caribbean region – and, members of The Young Poets Society of Antigua and Barbuda – are posted after their poems.

Brief Observations

When Dr. Paget Henry first asked me to consider this assignment, in August of 2011, my familiarity with Works by some of our Early Poets offered me a modest confidence. I hoped, then, to provide a tapestry of impressive writings, albeit most of them are largely forgotten. But, soon, rich complementarities appeared between the Early Poets, - and the recent

offerings of the Contemporary Poets. On closer inspection, the likenesses of their Works merely concealed what was so individualist about each of them; one could grasp affinities without ignoring the deeper substance. Here, is the cautionary crossroad of our Age: while it is assuring to concede that traditional forms might inform Contemporary styles, the substructures of human Thought and expression fashion their own fine conceits; poetry – as could hardly have been imagined!

Nor has the venerability of poetry by our women, so widely recognized by others, ever been really known by us. Thus, at this point, it would be very appropriate for us to acknowledge the 1979 anthology of poetry, *Young Antiguan's Write*, and the women who made contributions to that collection. Indeed some of them are in our anthology. This pivotal crop of women poets were: Cheryl Abbot, Heather Abbot, Marilyn Ackie, Annette Baptiste, Julice Benjamin, Gertrude Brooks, Brendalyn Browne, Dianne Carrot, Shirley Corbett, Barbara Edwards, Sherilyn Forde, Charmaine Henry, Agnes Cecilia Hewlett, Cleone Jackson, Claudette Joseph, Lorilyn Lambert, Denise Lay, Hilda McDonald, Barbara Murphy, Brianne Newby, Marion O'Reilly, Collette Phillips, Francia Prosper, Avis Simon, Cynthia Williams, Veronica Williams and Patricia Willock.

Regionally, by all agreeable accounts, Una Marson, the prolific Jamaica lecturer (poet, playwright and journalist) was the first West Indian woman in the 20th century to publish her volume of poems, *Tropic Reveries* (1930). Subsequently, she published *Heights and Depths* (1931), followed by *The Moth and the Star* (1937).

My research offers the Antiguan poet, Eileen Hall Lake as the SECOND woman poet in the 20th century, from the English-speaking Caribbean to publish a volume of verse, *The Fountain and the Bough*, in 1938.

Moreover, Moira Fergusson, in her 1993 book, *Hart Sisters*, reprints a section of Verse, set precisely to original metrical lengths, titled: The Hymns and Verse by Elizabeth Hart Thwaites. (97)

Her footnote provides this caveat: "The hymns and verse by Elizabeth Hart Thwaites appear in John Horsford, *A Voice from the West Indies: Being a Review of the Character and Results of Missionary Efforts in the British and Other Colonies in the Charibbean Sea, with Some Remarks on the Usages, Prejudices, etc., of the Inhabitants*, (London: Alexander Heylin, 1856).

Of my initial editorial observations, I offer a modest trove to encourage the Reader to read deeply – and escape the strictures of superficial identifiers – my own pointers, included.

Althea Romeo-Mark's poems were first to be sent. They came as a collection, and seemed aptly titled, *Caribbean Nomad*. This resonated with a line from the late Edouard Glissant, who had then recently passed. In the 1981 UNESCO Courier, Glissant had written of the Caribbean Sea: "Arawak and Carib roamed over it; nomads of the sea." But, for our purposes in outlining a tradition, we recommend Eileen Hall's earlier poem, *Nomad*; then, couple it with Romeo-Mark's more recent coinage, - for depth of expression. This poem, *Nomad*, of Eileen Hall's collection appears here, from her book, *The Fountain and The Bough: Poems*, published some seventy years earlier than Romeo-Mark's offerings!

Lines in Dr. Elaine Olaoye's 2002 poem, *For Zora Neale Hurston* ("the chaos of thought/the thought of chaos/"), mirrors the exact same Modernist theme expressed decades earlier by Eileen Hall Lake's 1938 poem, *The Shape of Chaos*, ("Forced in a moment to define the shape/of Chaos—heavens omitted, a new earth/"). Moreover, one finds it flourishing in A.C. Hewlett-Carrington's 1972 published poem, *My Life...My Death* ("Nor found I aught but/Chaos, Nothingness/"). Those voices span 64 years of a 'chaos' as Prophetic tradition!

Tributes to "mothers" or "matriarchs" were evident within, and also between, generations of poets. Elaine Jacobs' poems, *Mother's Care*, *Black Hair*, *My Hair*; and *Planting Seeds*, echo deeply Althea Romeo-Mark's poems: *Last Island Griot*, and *Turn the Broomstick Up*. They also bring to mind the work of Althea Prince, particularly, her *Loving This Man*, and also her more recent book, *The Politics of Black Women's Hair*. Although Romeo-Mark's *Last Island Griot* have women firmly rooted in folklore stock, so does Hall's *Obeah Woman*; and Dr. Veronica Evanson Bernard's poems, *Miss Jeffie Jumbie*, and *De Obeah Ooman*. But Dr. Gemane Owen's *Mock Monster Sestina*, also retains a secure place in the tableau, 'jumbie'.

Dr. Veronica Evanson Bernard's poem, *The Drought*, has been deservedly linked to Althea Romeo-Mark's poem, *Drought*. (Earlier citations of two other Antiguan poets also appear in my essay, *Nascent Aspects of an Antiguan Literary Heritage*, *C.L.R. James Journal*, Spring 2007).

Samples of the elegiac tradition among our women extend from Rebecca

Prott[en] 1737-38 poetic prose (letters of Praise/self-deprecation), and Elizabeth Hart Thwaites's 1856 poem, *On the Death of the Rev. Mr. Cook*. But present-day poet, Jesseca Brann's short 2012 poem, *Words: The Beginning and The Hand*, is as masterful as Eileen Hall Lake's 1938 poem, *Dead Language*; or Dr. Yvonne Richards Ochillo's poem, *On Discovering Walcott's 'Another Life'*.

Examples of the pastoral tradition reside primarily in Hilda McDonald's poems, *Evensong*, and *Dawn*; but also that theme also exists in Eileen Hall's poems, *The Night Comes Down*. But, rich pastoral inferences in Eileen Hall's poem, *The Autumn Leaves*, - and Dr. Veronica Evanson Bernard's poem, *Moon Wish* - also reside in A. Naomi Jackson's poems, *Far Gone*, and *Far From Home*; and Dr. Valerie Combie's poem, *Moonlight on the Cove (Our Home near St. James)*.

The more overt theme of 'triumphal protest,' remains a bridge that spans two recent generations of poets. Hewlett-Carrington's poem, *Protest*, buttresses Jesseca Brann's *Nothing Says it All*, and her *Ode to Love: Black and Blue*. Alternately, Hewlett-Carrington's short poem, *Teacher*, is a wise a tribute as is Dr. Combie's *Ramblings of an Educator*. Still, Naomi Jackson's poem, *On Becoming*, speaks directly to Romeo-Mark's poem, *Eclipse*; while Dr. Yvonne Richards Ochillo's poem, *Vignettes from the Beach*, closes with stern words of a seasoned teacher.

Dr. Gemaine Owen's short poem, *Bread*, undergirds what Romeo-Mark recalls of a People's pride, in *We Do Not Cry for Meat*, or her other tribute, *The Nation Builders*. From her published 2003 volume of poetry, (*I Could Live Like a Bird*), Dr. Owen's devotional poems, *To Die For*; and another, *Before Eve*, sharply echoes Elizabeth Hart Thwaites's mid-1800s *Hymns [Untitled]*, two of which are shared in this issue; while Dr. Owen's poem, *She Knows how to Pray*, retains the language of Rebecca Freundlich Protten's 18th century letters, two of which are also included in this issue.

But Dr. Owen's fine title (*I Could Live Like a Bird*), is also bosomed in Eileen Hall's signature poem, *Nomad*, where rests the extended 'winged' theme ("Melodious in verdue, like a dove, /"); and, again, Hall's own volume's title, sequestered there while transformed by it: ("Though the heart mourn the fountain and the bough, /")

In expressing the modern sphere of transcendence, Eileen Hall's poem, *Starlight*, describes realms which Cecilia Hewlett-Carrington's poem,

Reverie, echoes in her line (“a loitering sunbeam”). These expressions remain sharply akin to similar poems in Hilda McDonald’s collection, *Snowflakes and Stardust*; but there are similar registers of refraction and luminescence in Dr. Ochillo’s poem, *On Discovering Walcott’s Another Life*; and riddled throughout Dr. Elaine Olaoye’s poem, *Antiguan Fantasia*, both of which are entered here.

Lastly, glimpses of this overarching poetic discourse may also be found in a 20th century popular figure (‘pop culture’), Michael Jackson. That contemporaneous impulse is expressed in contrasting ways. For example, in Tameka James-George’s poem, *Love Letter...Dear Blank*,” the ephemeral encounter signifying ‘encounter’ is phrased somewhat differently to Dr. Valerie Combie’s own, *Its All About Michael*.

We hope these glimpses beckon at a burgeoning field of scholarship, while encouraging younger poets of Antigua and Barbuda to provoke Critical literatures of the wider Caribbean. This may further – as did Langston Hughes’s 1949 inclusion - enriching wider comparative readings in Literatures of the Americas; and African American Women’s literatures.

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Acknowledgements

Althea Romeo-Mark’s poems, from this ‘Caribbean Nomad’ suite, have been previously published, as follows: “The Nation Builders,” *Jigsaw: Writers Works Bern Poetry and Prose*, Thun, Switzerland, 2010; “The Nakedness of New,” *Sea Breeze: Journal of Liberian Contemporary Writings* (www.liberiaseabreeze.com), 2011; “Last Island Griot,” *Off the Coast: Maine’s International Poetry Journal*, Spring 2009; “Moko Jumbi,” *Off the Coast: Maine’s International Poetry Journal*, Winter 2011(www.off-the-coast.com); “Street Sweeper,” *Off the Coast: Maine’s International Poetry Journal*, Winter 2011; “We Do Not Cry for Meat,” *Dirtcakes: The Hunger Issue*, Spring 2010, California (www.dirtcakes.org).

We are grateful to Ian McDonald for providing permission to reprint Hilda McDonald’s poems, *Dawn*, and *Evensong*, from the 1957 *Kykoveral Journal*, as they appear in this issue.

But, we are equally indebted to A.J. Seymour, editor for the 1957 *Kykoveral* issue (Anthology of West Indian Poetry), for reprinting Ms. McDonald’s poem(s). His historic Preface to the First Edition (reprinted from the 1952 *Anthology of West Indian Poetry*), reiterated the Langston Hughes & Arna Bontemps ground-breaking contribution to Caribbean poetry, as: “a British

Caribbean compilation in 1949, in the nature of a footnote in the predominately American writing collected in their *The Poetry of the Negro 1746-1949*.” In fact, it was a dedicated section to Caribbean poetry in the 1949 first edition.

We also want to thank Barbara Andreasson from *Harper’s Magazine*, New York City, for granting permission to reprint Eileen Hall’s two poems, *Turn to Eternity*, and *Brief Fires*, from *Harpers Magazine*, 1936. The poems appeared in their August and September issues, respectively.

To Dr. Raphael Bernard, our heartfelt Gratitude for securing permission for republishing the late Dr. Veronica Evanson Bernard’s poems.

Our Thanks, to Professor Moira Ferguson, at the ‘late hour’. Your agreement to allow for the republishing of Elizabeth Hart Thwaites’s poems, *On the Death of Rev. Mr. Cook*; and, *Hymns [untitled]*, means a great deal to us.

To Professor Jon F. Sensbach, author of *Rebecca’s Revival*, we extend our ‘Many Thanks’, - (an old Antiguan greeting!) – for his ready cooperation in featuring the translations of Rebecca Freundlich Protten’s letters from his book.

Thanks to the President and Fellows of Harvard College, through Harvard University Press, for permission to cite excerpts from Jon F. Sensbach’s book, *Rebecca’s Revival*.

Our Gratitude goes to Vernon Hall, through whom I first learned of the poetry of Eileen Hall Lake. From our subsequent conversations, we have been assured that Mrs. Hall-Lake has no survivors, and her literary estate – as best as we have been assured – has remained in the public domain.

A very Special Thanks to Genevieve E.A. Richards, B. Comm., for her assistance in providing two poems of Dr. Yvonne Richards Ochillo; also our gratitude to Francella Ochillo, Esq., for her correspondence on behalf of she and her siblings.

A note of gratitude to Conrad Luke, whose insistence on behalf of Dr. Ochillo’s poetic legacy, spiritedly reached out to Walter Sylvester Watkins on the project’s behalf.

To Walter Sylvester Watkins: - our deep ‘Appreciation’ for your liaison talents working closely with Ms. Genevieve E.A. Richards in the interest of Dr. Ochillo’s legacy as poet, scholar and teacher.

Our thanks to Quinlan Mars, Managing Editor, *The Caribbean Writer*, for going to great length to verify Dr. Ochillo's poems and biography in the three early volumes of *The Caribbean Writer*

To Ms. Sandra Christian and Carolyn Penta from the St. John's Public Library, Antigua, for their professional courtesies to my enquiries about elusive publications of poetry volumes by Hilda McDonald, and Mrs. Aurora McKay Marsh. We hope this issue will reveal the whereabouts of these two authors' Works.

Lastly, my thanks to Dr. Paget Henry, for his invaluable summer walks and discussions on Antiguan literature, beginning in 1971. His persuasive 2011 invitation, encouragement and patience helped us overcome the challenges of this project.

Edgar O. Lake

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POETIC LETTERS BY REBECCA FREUNDLICH PROTTE**A Letter To The Single Sisters, Herrnhut**

My dear Sisters,

After the Lord has been so merciful and has let me know about you, my dear Sisters, I want to be with the Lord and reveal my puny form to you. My dear Sisters in the Lord, I never knew there was such a thing as a spiritual life. Although I have always longed to follow the ways of the Lord, I never had the right foundation and have always yearned for more instruction. I never knew there were both the worldly and the spiritual. Oh, how good is the Lord. My heart melts when I think of it. His name is wonderful. Ooh! Help me to praise him, who has pulled me out of the darkness. I will take up his cross with all my heart and follow the example of his poor life. But how miserable do I find myself, my dear Sisters. And the dear Lord! If we cannot be together in person, let us together in the spirit. Remember in your prayers that the Lord blesses all. Greetings to all the Sisters in the Lord. I remain a dutiful Sister, even if I am not taken in [i.e., confirmed] as a Sister. I hope you will remember me. I pray that you will try to write me. I am a housemaid in Adrian van Beverhout's house.

Rebecca

[May 28, 1737]

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A Letter To Anna Nitschmann, at Herrnhag (1)

My dear Sister,

[illeg.]if I ___ his voice [illeg.] but oh, how I must be ashamed because of my disobedience and unfaithfulness that I again [illeg.] daily I have spent 15 weeks in prison and I have enjoyed sweetness in prison we were brought 7 times before the court and if I was brought before the justices it was sublime to me that the dear Savior used me poor worm to testify the 30 January we came out of prison through his miracles. The count is the key that he used to get us out of the prison the 30 the dear Sisters arrived on Son Tomas we have received each other with great joy my dear Sister, time is short and I am a bad writer so that I can't express in words as I would like remember me in your prayers I have here among souls in great [illeg.] that he decides I kiss your foot and hand and [illeg.] I greet you affectionately from our dear sister

marilies and my husband and from martin and greet all brothers and sisters kiss the sisters' hands the savior be with you amen I greet you very affectionately your poor slight sister Rebecca

[February 16, 1739]
St. Thomas, DWI

A Letter To Anna Nitschmann, at Herrnhaag (2)

“Dear Sister Nitschmann,”

The Savior has shown me his eternal love so I may rise mute and see for myself that I was not worthy but to be cast off from his holy countenance and to cry with the bad spirits, oh, for ever, so that I could do nothing else but fall down and cry out: o lamb; o lamb, give mercy to me, poor worm. And he has shown me how full of mercy he is. So I will no longer love myself, but give my- self willingly to him, with body and soul, to do his will. I have prayed to him that if there was drop of blood in me that did not want to be obedient to him, for him to reveal it to me and take it away and I have a great hunger after the souls. And the dear Savior has put me in the midst of the souls, as I wished, I am a child of mercy, so I pray that you do not forget me in your prayers....” I remain your poor slight but faithful sister Rebecca Freundlich.

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Biography: ‘Rebecca Freundlich Protten ’ was born ‘Shelly’ in Antigua around 1718. She was known by the Moravians as ‘Rebecca, the Mulatto,’ for her individual vision. According to Jon F. Sensbach, the first letter featured here “addressed the unmarried women, or Single Sisters, of the Moravian congregation in Herrnhut, Germany.” (The translation of Rebecca’s original letter was by Sanneryn Jansen, United Archives, GDR.

The second letter is, according to Sensbach, one of only four known to have survived. Rebecca, destined to be one of the most influential New World figures in Christian Evangelism is, on this occasion, writing to Anna Nitschmann, the leader of the Single Sisters group in Herrnhaag, Germany. She too, is one of the most powerful leaders in the Moravian Church in Europe. The letter was written in Dutch, a few days after she had been released from Fort Christian, St. Thomas, for the Danish West Indies’ first inter-racial marriage. At the end of the sixth line she mentions ‘the count’ he intercedes with Danish authorities for his Minister, and wife (Helper).

[N.B.]: The second translation (and drastically abbreviated, here), was, according to Sensbach, "...a second one [letter],, dated the same day, in her name, but written in a different, more elegant hand. Someone must have thought her letter needed more polishing and elaboration if it was to be presented, perhaps even read aloud, as suitable testimony of God's marvelous grace. The second letter is a rewrite of her original, kneading many of her ideas into a smoother flow. The doctored version is for the most part properly punctuated and capitalized, and full of florid phrases."

(These translations of Rebecca's original letter, and its second revision, both dated February 16, 1739, were done by Marjoleine Kars, United Archives, GDR.)

Poetic Narratives from Mary Prince

On Being Sold as a Child Slave

The black morning at length came; it came too soon for my poor mother and us. Whilst she was putting on us the new osnaburgs in which we were to be sold, she said, in a sorrowful voice, (I shall never forget it!) ‘See, I am *shrouding* my poor children; what a task for a mother!’ – She then called Miss Betsey (who was to inherit them, E.L.) to take leave of us. ‘I am going to carry my little chickens to market,’ (these were her very words) ‘take your last look of them; may be you will see them no more.’ ‘Oh, my poor slaves! My own slaves!’ said dear Miss Betsey, you belong to me; and it grieves my heart to part with you’ – Miss Betsey kissed us all, and, when she left us, my mother called the rest of the slaves to bid us good bye. One of them a woman named Moll, came with her infant in her arms. ‘Ay!’, said my mother, seeing her turn away and look at her child with tears in her eyes, ‘your turn will come next.’ The slave could say nothing to comfort us; they could only weep and lament with us. When I left my dear little brothers and the house in which I had been brought up, I thought my heart would burst.

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The History of Mary Prince, (p.61)

Coming to Antigua

During the time I worked there (Cedar Hills, Bermuda), I heard that Mr. John Wood was going to Antigua. I felt a great wish to go there, and I went to Mr. D—, and asked him to let me go in Mr. Wood’s service. Mr. Wood did not then want to purchase me; it was my own fault that I came under him, I was so anxious to go. It was ordained to be, I suppose; God led me there. The truth is, I did not wish to be any longer the slave of my indecent master.

Mr. Wood took me with him to Antigua, to the town of St. Johns, where he lived. This was about fifteen years ago. He did not then know whether I was to be sold; but Mrs. Wood found that I could work, and she wanted to buy me. Her husband then wrote to my master to inquire whether I was to be sold?

Mr. D— wrote in reply, ‘that I should not be sold to any one that

would treat me ill'. It was strange he should say this, when he had treated me so ill himself. So I was purchased by Mr. Wood for 300 dollars (or £100 Bermuda currency).

The History of Mary Prince, (p.78)

POEMS FROM ELIZABETH HART THWAITES**“On the Death of the Rev. Mr. Cook”**

In tender years, ere sin, with treacherous arts,
 Had spread its baneful influence o'er his heart,
 The Saviour drew him with the cords of love,
 Wean'd him from earth, and raised his heart above;
 Commission'd him to spread the Gospel grace,
 And offer mercy to the fallen race;
 Nor in his native land alone proclaim
 The saving power of Jesu's precious name:
 But distant climes the adventurous youth invite,
 His labour with the faithful few to' unite,
 Who, in obedience to the heavenly call,
 And for our sakes, had left their earthly all...

[Untitled]

O Thou whose ear attends the softest prayer!
 Redress our wants, our cries for Zion hear.
 Resign'd we to thy dispensations bow.
 Nor tempt Thee more, nor ask Thee, “What dost Thou?”
 But on Thy Church a blessing we implore:
 Thy servants save, nor thus afflict us more.
 Regard our sorrows, for the Saviour's sake,
 Nor all Thy watchmen from our Israel take;
 But grant the blessed few who yet survive
 May for Thy cause and to Thy glory live;
 That every sacred precept they enjoin
 With brightest luster in their conduct shine.
 O may they ever speak in Thy great name,
 Thy glory and our good their single aim,
 While they advance the kingdom of Thy grace,
 Untitled spread Thine everlasting praise!
 And give, O give us eyes to see our day
 And hearts that may the glorious truths obey.
 May all who hear (through Thee) by them be taught,
 Nor spend their precious time and strength for nought!
 Borne on our minds, to Thee their wants we bear,
 While Thou for us regard'st their faithful prayer.
 Protect by day, be Thou their guard by night,
 Nor scorching sun nor sickly moon shall smite;

Rest them secure beneath the Almighty shade,
 Nor troubles nor untimely death invade.
 And then, when each the appointed race has run,
 Ready that “glory end what grace begun”
 In years and labours rich, their farewell give
 To earth, and “cease at once to work and live,”
 With rapturous joy receive the signal given
 To ‘scape from earth, and hail their friends in heaven,
 There to remain in glory with the just,
 Till life Divine re-animate their dust.

Hymn (Untitled)

What would I have on earth below?
 Thine utmost mercy would I know,
 And quit this vale of tears,
 I long on mercy’s wins to fly,
 To leave my sins and griefs and fears,
 To love my God and die....

Hymn (Untitled)

Weary world, when will it end
 Destined to the purging fire?
 Fain I would to heaven ascend;
 Thitherward I still aspire.
 Saviour, this is not my place.
 Let me die, to see: Thy face....

Biography: Elizabeth Hart Thwaites (1772-1833), and sister of Anne Hart Gilbert (!773-1833), were the daughters of a black slaveholder father, Barry Conyers Hart. Both sisters were a part of a ‘free colored’ community; and as free Methodist educators in Antigua they were married to white men. In her 1993 pioneering book, *the Hart Sisters (Early African Caribbean Writers, Evangelicals, and Radicals)*), the distinguished scholar Moira Fergusson wrote, “the hymns and letters that Elizabeth Hart Thwaites wrote were two of the few acceptable [forms] for women at the time.” Fergusson reminds us further to consider: “Between them the sisters tackled a wide range of genres, from biography and religious history to poetry and letters.”

POEMS FROM Eileen Hall Lake**Nomad**

I found the garden fair:
 My youth renewed its freshness by this well;
 Melodious in verdure, like a dove,
 My heart found peace.

Were this my native air, I'd rest undriven,
 Secure and counselled by oblivion;
 But obdurate in exile, the strayed soul
 Rejects long festival.

Though the flesh weary of its travel-stain,
 Though the heart mourn the fountain and the bough,
 The soul, poor Arab, must traverse these sands
 To reach home before night.

O blinded and inexorable thing,
 What find you in the wilderness but thirst?

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Brief Fires

The carcass, ornamented, fed, caressed
 Aware of surfeit, famine, heat, and cold,
 Must drag its lassitudes from breast to breast,
 Although most pleasure is a tale twice-told
 Satiety is avid and still strives
 That some sharp bliss its shudder may impart
 The hope, the hunger in the blood survives
 The bitter recognition of the heart.
 But those slow poisons, drop by drop distilled,
 Will stiffen into peace the living side,
 When the last spasm of the nerve's fulfilled
 And the red tumults of the sense subside.
 What hinders, what withholds this fatal grace?
 Brief fires blackening a barren place

Turn to Eternity

Turn to eternity: consider time –
 The aeons scratched to meagerly on slate –
 Man, last dynastic monster of the slime
 In strata of the rock may read his fate.
 Life is recorded in a ring of stone,
 Though huge nirvanas of the sky and plain
 Obliterate, absorb the prowling bone
 The fang, the venom, the ingenious brain,
 Grim transients, we're grotesquely improvised
 To feel in common doom the separate shock
 Till the reluctant species is revised
 And adds another cycle to the rock –
 Dominions, dreams too cast for time to own,
 Abbreviated in a skull, a stone

The Shape of Chaos

The nerves proclaim disaster when it comes:
 Before the sickening mind can realize,
 Stretched tight for turbulence, like drums,
 They clamour certainties that paralyze
 The agile thought, intent upon escape
 From that fatality assuming girth,
 Forced in a moment to define the shape
 Of chaos – heaven omitted, a new earth

POEMS From Hilda MacDonald**Dawn**

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

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

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

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

Evensong

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

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

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

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

* These poems of Hilda McDonald were copied from the *Kykoveral* – No. 22, (1957), “Anthology of West Indian Poetry,” edited by A.J. Seymour

** Permission from the *Kykoveral* Journal was granted by Ian McDonald.

POEMS FROM DR. VERONICA EVANSON BERNARD**De Obeah Ooman**

[There was once in the island a certain 'obeah' woman who professed to tell people their fortunes by going into a trance. But one day she went into a trance and never did come out of it, so the story goes.]

One obeah ooman inna tung
 An plenty people a go to she
 Even vicil servant a line-up
 Fuh go larn dem destiny.

She tek you inna one special room
 An you one deh wid she
 An when oyu crass she palm wid cash
 She tell you yuh destiny.

...
 32 Dem say dat she go inna trance
 Tretch out as if sleepy
 ... An den she tell you all she know
 About yuh destiny.

You waan fuh hear who envy you
 An who a set jumbie?
 Jus see de obeah ooman
 You will larn yuh destiny.

A wen you a get married
 What de exack date will be?
 Go to de obeah ooman
 You will larn yuh destiny

No mattah wha you do
 It doan en successfully?
 Go to de obeah ooman
 You will larn yuh destiny

You waan fuh get pramoshan
 Lang time dat shoulda be?
 Go to de obeah ooman
 You will larn yuh destiny

Yuh husban tap out late o' night
 You wandah weh he be?
 Go to de obeah ooman
 You will larn yuh destiny

Dem say de obeah ooman
 Tell de future to eberybody
 But fuh she very own fartune
 She neber t'all min see.

One day she go inna de trance
 Nobody could wake she
 She neber open she yeye agen
 Det min she destiny.

Dat ongly go fuh show
 No mattah who you be
 Nat one o' a we can be sure
 Of anybody destiny.

Miss Jeffie Jumbie

[It was commonly believed that the spirits of the dead would sometimes return and lead children astray.]

Miss Jeffie dead
 An dem say
 She jumbie awnder de tree
 But I' nah trubble nobody.
 She jus a siddung

So dem say
 An watch de pickney dem a play.
 Me jus hope

She nah frighten dem
 Nar lead dem astray.

If Miss Jeffie waan company
 Wha she nah goo back
 A cimetry!

Wha she nah lef
 De pickney dem lone
 An goo back to she grave
 An res she bone!

Women Of Antigua!

When at times
 I sit and wonder
 Of my days in dear Antigua,
 Visions of women
 Seem to rise
 Like a flood
 Before my eyes.
 Women in a long procession....
 One long line of working women....
 Women logging along on donkey boxes taking provisions
 to market.....
 ... Women walking to the fields in the early morning dew....
 34 ... Women bent over Monday morning washtubs.....
 ... Women crouched over open firesides, preparing
 family meals....
 Women huckstering their wares at street corners....
 Women heavy with child, yet struggling on....
 Women fathers as well as mothers
 Women wending their way to church on peaceful
 Sunday mornings....
 Women picking cotton.....
 Women hoeing fields.....
 Women bundling cane.....
 Women teaching....
 Women serving.....
 Women gossiping....
 Women laughing....
 Women loving....
 Women grieving....
 Women tending the sick....
 Women washing the dead....
 Women holding their bellies, bawling to ease the pain
 of some distress....
 Why does the procession never cease?

It stretches, so it seems, backward to BLACK AFRICA
And again forwards to the new land
Whose earth
These selfsame women nurtured
With the very sweat of their brows
And the fruits of their wombs,
And where their bodies
Buried deep
In endless round
Renew the ground,
The very soil
Of this dear isle.

The late Dr. Veronica Evanson Bernard was a veteran 'Adult Education' teacher in New York City, after graduating with the ED. d., from Teachers College, Columbia University. Later, she served as an Associate Professor of English at Georgia State University.

POEMS FROM YVONNE RICHARDS OCHILLO

Vignettes from the Beach

Far out at sea
 fishermen draw pots
 wire-meshed, bamboo-meshed
 catch is all the same
 doctor fish, old wife
 grunt and queen mullet
 rowboat specialty
 barracuda and kingfish
 grouper and angel
 trailing deep waters
 favor big boats —
 fish used to be just fish
 not seafood yen!

... women stoop ashore
 36 and clean pig belly —
 ... Poor and clean can rhyme —
 'Get yer rice pudding
 No pudding, no maw
 Pudding an' maw'
 parents crowd round
 for three pence worth o' pudding
 six pence worth o' maw
 soul food some say
 soul anything runs high

on Sundays children gather groups
 flock air-conditioned beaches
 nurturing imagination
 with water games
 no fear of rain
 or swimming-pool hazard
 big ones compete to reach

boat moorings
 cutting robust waves with sturdy strokes
 duck here, duck there
 sharing some special moment underneath —
 water keeps secret well —
 a couple gulps perhaps is all it costs
 seawater good for health the old folks say
 little ones on shore
 watched by older ones
 who choose by turns to act a parent's part
 lifeguard, nurse aid all mixed in
 and big and little hands
 dig wells for treasured shells
 pile mounds of sand at water's edge
 commanding tides to stay well out of reach
 and toddlers fired by innocence
 stretch out tame hands and yield

to sea breeze will
 flirting with each new tide that scallop sand
 leaving footprints time cannot erase

seaside frolic
 taught a thing or two
 communion strengthens men women
 girls and boys
 gives sustenance no drugs can shoot
 thicker than
 milk or honey
 richer than continental green-back
 rivets strong bonds
 ammunition cannot fire.

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On Discovering Walcott's, 'Another Life'

What charms lie here?

muscles stretch defying crack of joints
 eyes pore through lines mining, sifting lore—
 nuggets of all size, and hue
 some chiselled into emblems rich and rare
 some wrapped so cozily in transparencies
 and some bejewelled by creators
 gleaming their way towards Eternity—
 while time points straight up
 closing joints in preparation for a new hour!

The potency of sounds, of words, of art
 created worlds
 reaching down below exploring space
 planting feet firmly in those giant steps
 Mount Snowdon could not hold
 Spirit knows no bounds, mindless of time and space

...
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 ...

Memory skips and hops
 tending treasured things—and people too
 an old shoe hiding yearnings unexpressed—
 words always trail so far behind desires
 a tree, the yard in their archival way
 crowded with another life
 Another
 very different kind of life!

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Biography: Dr. Yvonne Hyacinth Veronica Richards Ochillo was born in Johnson's Point, St. Mary's Parish Antigua, to George and Dorcas Jane Anne Richards on January 28th, 1940. She attended and Graduated from Antigua Girls' High School. Her Post Secondary Education, (1964-1972) included: College Of The Virgin Islands, St. Thomas, USVI, where she completed an Associate Degree; University of Victoria, Victoria, BC, where she completed a Bachelor of Arts in English; and Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, where she completed a Masters of Arts in English and subsequently, a Ph.D. in English.

Dr. Ochillo married Dr. Richard Fred Ochillo and they both moved from Canada to the USA (1973-1989) where she lectured in the Faculty of English at Alabama A & M University in Huntsville Alabama, Dillard University in New Orleans, Louisiana and Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Dr. Ochillo died on October 11th , 1989 in Kenner Louisiana and was laid to rest at Our Lady of the Valley Church in St. Mary's Parish, Antigua. The circle was complete.

Dr. Ochillo was a wonderful mother to her children, Odera, Owino(deceased), Oremo, Francella and Okelo Ochillo. She gave much back to society by helping many international students.

Dr. Yvonne Ochillo's poem "Vignettes from the Beach", was published in *The Caribbean Writer*, vol.2 (1988); her other poem, "On Observing Walcott's 'Another Life'", appeared in Vol.4 (1990) of the same journal. These titles are cited in *The Caribbean Writer's index*, Volume 10, which incorporated work from Volumes 1-10.

POEMS FROM AGNES CECILIA HEWLETT-CARRINGTON**Waladli (Antigua)**

I am bewitched
By each breath that you take,
And entranced
By each sound that you make.
Your smile
Gleams back to me
From each patch
Of sunlight.
Your eyes
Peep down each well-loved
Blade of grass
Into a soul turned dizzy
With the sound
Of your laughter
You told me
To write of brighter things
I write of "you"...
And see you bring
The sun into
My poems

...
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...

Protest

I protest!
Stand tall
I spit in your eye
Because you call me
Children's names
Bid me play at
Children's games,
When grey hairs fringe my
Grizzled forehead
And tell the lie to
Thoughts that sneer at
Dignity

Slow built down years where
Material was scarce, and
And workmen's tools were rare

There, besieged by
Lack of time, I
Fought the stars
The fates, the creed
Of you who thought
That any deed
Of worth was yours
Who, with closed mouth
And snobbish eye
Still cry: "Your bag is condescension, pity
Routine, cheap labor, is your deed
Out here.
Get out!
Leave enterprise for those
Who care
Or know how to manage such complexities

I protest
For tears of hope scarce cried
You forced to dry on withered cheeks
For my rainbow-textured coat of dreams
Torn from my back
Thrown to the flies

But I picked it up
When Martin Luther
Died
And dried
My grief in it

Reverie

Adrift
On a summer's day
I do not wear my watch
To remind me of the time;
But floating down a loitering
 Sunbeam
On the multi-tinted fabric of
 the leaves,
I watch the ripples
Widen 'round my dreams...
And think of you

Teacher

You gave me a helping hand
But only one short mile...
Only up one hill
And over one small stile;
Only round one bend
And down one narrow lane
You only wiped one tear
and eased one stab of pain
It all seems so simple,
And hardly worth a thought!
You only changed my whole life
With the "little" that you thought

I Speak Of Hope

I speak of hope,
 Of love, of brotherhood
 That lets us bind our wounds
 And put to use
 Our knowledge earned,
 Our knowledge learned
 Our shoulders are humped
 With the burden of past fears
 We must shake them off!
 The years demand it

Up, brothers, sisters,
 And stop moaning
 The time for growing
 Has long since passed
 Grief should not last
 For a young man's life
 He needs a wife,
 Children to work for
 Forget the wrongs
 That may've been done you:
 Forget inferiority
 Planted in the mind
 Forget the questionings
 And negative suggestions...
 And you'll be beautiful
 As only pride can make you

A futile cry... "Why?"
 And tears already shed
 Could have formed a Jordan
 To wash the sores of Lazarus
 There's largeness in us brothers, sisters
 And energy, and strength
 Be strong, because you have to...
 And never mind the length
 Of our wait!
 We survive... we thrive...
 Because we must

POEMS FROM VALERIE COMBIE**The Big Five**

Gone are the days
 When the Danes reigned supreme.
 Devising,
 Constructing,
 Creating an infrastructure
 That remains.
 The Danes are gone.
 But their signature remains
 Primarily in Christiansted
 Where the Big Five hold sway.

Built on the waterfront
 To facilitate commerce
 Be it merchandise or human cargo
 The Scale House was the first stop
 Where cargo was weighed.

...
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 ...

Business continued in the Customs House
 Where duties and taxes were paid
 And on cargo Danish imprint was made.

Postal duties were done upstairs
 In the Danish Post Office.

Across the street
 Impressively stands
 The Old West India and Guinea Company Warehouse
 Where cargo was stored
 And sold
 The trading black for slaves.

The Steeple Building,
 The First Danish Lutheran Church,
 Broke the color pattern
 Painted in white
 With red shutters
 Contrasting significantly
 With yellow buildings.

The Danish trademark
 Military and governmental pride.

Then comes the crowning jewel
 Fort Christiansvaern
 Christian's Defense
 Built during the reign of King Christian VI
 To house Danish troops
 Who provided internal security
 To safeguard the island
 Protecting commercial shipping
 From pirates and privateers
 Enhancing St. Croix's international trade.

The Big Five
 Strategically located on the Christiansted waterfront
 Poised for defense and commerce
 With the bust of David Hamilton Jackson
 Supervising the activities mutely.

Today the waterways are busy
 As vessels sail back and forth
 With human cargo
 But their mission is different.
 They have chosen to sail
 For entertainment
 Exploring the sea world
 Enjoying Buck Island
 Snorkeling,
 Diving,
 Picnicking,
 Having fun.

The Big Five still reign
 Some with closed doors
 But they revive memories
 Of a period long gone—
 The Danish dominance.

Christiansted Waterfront

The placid water stretches to the horizon
 As far as the eye can see
 Washing the shore
 Beating against the old sea wall here
 Doing the same thing there
 In another land.

The chartered vessels
 Traverse the waterways
 Possibly on day cruises
 While the ferry glides
 Back and forth
 Dropping off
 Picking up passengers.

On either side
 Are anchored vessels
 Toys of the wealthy
 Homes on the water
 Business endeavors.

...
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 ...

It's placid on the Christiansted waterfront
 With nature being disturbed
 By engine sounds of boats or seaplanes
 So very typical of island living
 Transporting people
 By sea or air.

Hotel on the Cay

The Hotel on the Cay
 Dominates the landscape
 Surrounded by palm trees
 And other shrubbery
 Completely surrounded by water
 It sits alone
 Yet not aloof
 Welcoming all to its beaches
 Its food
 And its hospitality.

Hats

(for the 6th. Graders at the Lew Muckle Elementary School October 20, 2011 – National Day on writing)

What's that? You ask
 What?
 This?
 Oh, That!
 That's just a hat.
 You must remember
 What you learned in kinder
 About Dr. Seuss' *Cat in the Hat*.
 I, too, read about that
 And today, I'll share with you my hats.
 This, cute little thing
 I procured in China fair
 Where I walked the Great Wall
 And posed in Tianamen Square.
 Ha, this funny little one
 Kept my head warm
 As I travelled through Russia
 In a typical bleak winter storm.
 In India, I learned of the Maharajah
 And I photographed the Imperial Guards
 Posing in their long frock coats
 Reliving a glorious era of the past.
 This you must identify
 As typical Americana
 Worn by the rugged cowboys
 Of the American frontier and Midwest saga.
 Traveling through Brazil
 In its Amazon Rain Forest
 I shielded my body from the elements
 With this versatile bonnet.
 In beautiful St. Croix
 I wear a hat to ward off
 The heat
 Of the tropical Caribbean.
 And when I have a bad hair day
 I don my hat and I'm on my way
 To shop or socialize

Because I'm very civilized.
 You see, they are only hats
 But what a story each brings
 As it kindles memories
 Of places, peoples, and things!

An Aerial View of Christiansted

Airborne, we flew over ruins
 Of Yellow Cedar, now abandoned
 With only memories and deserted remains
 Of houses constructed with pride
 The victims of eminent domain.

On the left lies the expansive terrain
 Of the Golden Grove Correctional facility
 Separated by a fence from the University
 Across Centerline lies another maroon roof
 Often mistaken for the former.

...

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...

On the right are huge oil tanks
 Heraldng the fourth refinery in rank
 In the western hemisphere.
 Alas, the mounds of red dirt disappear
 Giving way to construction on that site
 Presenting Diageo's pride
 Rivaling other huge structures in size
 Dispensing the brew
 Of that intoxicating blend
 Forerunner of disaster to homes, especially men.

Too soon the town of Christiansted materializes
 Roofs of many hues and sizes
 An amalgamation of sorts
 No distinct image or resorts
 Some large structures in the hills
 Display their magnificent frills
 The handiwork of skilled craftsmen
 Defying the hills, rugged terrain and then
 Presenting to the world
 Edifices with banners unfurled.

East End surfaces on the right
 Then quickly vanishes from sight
 As the plane banks.
 The pilots set their course
 Flying over the Caribbean Sea, a notorious body of water
 Deceptively clear, blue-green waveless
 Washing the Christiansted harbor
 Leaving behind King Christian Hotel
 And the ancient buildings we know so well
 Sentries of a once-thriving citadel.

My Final House

I have lived in fourteen houses
 By design and by choice
 But there's yet another house
 That I may occupy, not reside
 As I await the transition
 And transformation
 To my permanent home.
 "In my Father's house are many mansions
 I go to prepare a place for you,"
 Jesus said
 Igniting hope
 Giving me strength to cope.
 My next home is essential
 Dust returns to dust is fundamental
 There's no winged flight to heaven
 That's a lie told by the devil.
 In the Bible we're told
 God loves every soul
 And prepares a home
 But we will transition when Jesus comes
 Not when we die.
 "The trumpet will sound
 And the dead in Christ will rise."
 If we die and transcend to heaven
 Who will rise to receive the new life given?
 I will patiently anticipate the grave
 And rest during my sleep of death

For the next sound I crave
 The trumpet of God
 Piercing the portals of the grave
 And all will be changed
 “For this mortal shall immortal be
 And forever will we be with our Lord.
 Even so, come Lord Jesus.”

Making a Difference

Here am I in Christiansted again
 It's a beautiful morning
 Moderate temperature, not warming
 Tempered by the cool breezes
 Blowing off the water
 The music of the flagpole
 Resounds monotonously
 Orchestrated by nature
 An act of God.
 This bucolic setting
 Tempts me to claim ownership
 But I am not a Virgin Islander.

I may have worked, toiled, and shed tears
 Contributing to the economy
 Building bridges of harmony
 Rivaling architects and builders
 Whose edifices are temporary
 Victims of nature's vagary
 My construction is more permanent
 Beaten down but ever resilient.
 I have been the designer
 Working from the Master plan
 Not made by man
 But conceived by God
 Creatures populating this cursed sod
 Seeking fame
 Worldly acclaim
 In an attempt to create a name
 Conforming to the rules of the game.

But I build character edifices
 Constructed with the moral fiber
 That produces strong men and women
 Noble in their stance
 Honest and true
 Strong in moral sinew.
 My character edifices
 Defy man's designs
 Beautiful in mind and symmetry
 Excelling man's artistry
 In the scope of their knowledge
 And their virtuous carriage.

My character edifices
 Cannot be bought or sold
 Their worth exceeds the mines of gold
 That may be offered.
 Unwavering as the needle to the pole
 The true price of a person's soul
 in God's great plan
 I build the unique woman and man
 Who live by the dictates of their consciences
 Not seared with hot iron, but controlled by God's munificence
 These are my contributions
 To this Territory
 An exercise in ambiguity
 Because I am not a Virgin islander.

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 ...

It's All About Michael

Oyez! Oyez! Read all about it
 The King is dead
 Long live the King
 He took the world by storm
 Catapulting on the stage as a child
 The Jackson Five
 Cute boy!
 Gifted singer!
 Innovative dancer!
 What gyrations!

Then the controversy
 Family problems, abuse
 Weirdo, queer, child molester
 Facial transformations
 Bodily distortions
 Rumors
 Legal problems
 Still taking the world by storm
 Stop the presses,
 No news of Iran
 No news of the war in Afghanistan
 He upstages Farah Fawcett,
 Taking second place even in death
 No news but news of the King
 The King is dead!

Ramblings of an Educator

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 ...

Education has been minimized
 We learned of new math
 New and improved English
 But those are only words.
 The techniques may be new
 But there's no improvement.
 On the contrary
 We are producing functional illiterates
 Young men and women, unskilled and unlearned
 Ill-equipped for the world
 But ignorant of their deficits
 Elegantly clad in the latest fashions
 Styles, cuts, and colors that once seen
 Have resurfaced
 Conveying the impression of the new
 But they have already passed through
 The fashion conscious
 Where they saw the light of day
 And now, they are back.
 Inventions or initiatives in education
 They all follow the same trend
 Here today

Gone tomorrow
Will it ever end?

Moonlight at The Cove (our home near Fort James)

You have not seen a real moonlight until you have experienced it at The Cove.
The brightly-lit street lights
Illumined the road
Sending shards of light
On the lawn
Silhouetting the houses, trees, and fence lines.

Then came the moon
Shining brightly from its distant location
Transforming the night into a bright-as-day phenomenon
The spacious lawn glowed in its golden sheen
The dry, parched grass hidden in the moonlit grandeur.

Brightly, imperceptibly, the moon reigned
Bestowing its majestic beauty
On all in its path.
Silver-crowned trees
Sighed and moaned as their leaves swayed in the breeze

Biography: Dr. Valerie Combie, Associate Professor of English, The University of the Virgin Islands, has published her poems (and short stories) – many with Antiguan themes - in *The Caribbean Writer*. Her Creative Writing programs in schools, and among teachers, are well known in the US Virgin Islands.

POEMS FROM ELAINE H. OLAOYE*(Six poems from my Antigua Heritage Collection):*

*Antiguan Fantasia,
 Let Black Minds, from **Passions of the Soul**
 In the Breadths of the Antillean Sea
 Our Real History
 An Antiguan Day
 Amerindian Poesy*

Antiguan Fantasia

Antigua,
 Barbuda,
 Redonda
 Emerald jewels in the sapphire waters of the Caribbean-Atlantic ocean
 Home for the Siboney Stone Age people
 As far back as 1775 BC.
 These tropical ecological structures
 Limestone, volcanic and coral wonders
 Are geological-historical sisters three
 Antigua and Barbuda in Pleistocene times
 (That's about 9,600 BC)
 Were joined
 Then there was 200 ft less of depth of sea...
 Yet Antigua is made of rocks about 30,000,000 years of age
 This island emerged from an eruption on a volcanic stage
 Followed by northern coral deposits of a later age...

Antigua,
 Barbuda,
 Redonda
 Sound a dramatic refrain
 Compelling, drifting cirrus clouds
 To linger and play with the moving shadows
 On sun-kissed emerald patterned plains,
 Or hover around the azure bays
 Dotted with frigates and visitors
 Basking in the sun's burning rays
 Creating exquisite panoramas with beach trimmed isles
 Embroidered harbours of every concave within concave size.

Antigua

Barbuda

Redonda

A naturally occurring alphabet

Of a leeward archipelago

Extending southeastward from the mainland and Puerto Rico

Visited regularly now by air and sea:

Luxury yachts from Florida to Nova Scotia

Schooners and ships of varied registry

Sailing boats of every colour, pattern and nautical fantasy

Ply waters, dock at local quays

Race and sport with each other

And in liquid letters write their tropical histories...

Antigua

Barbuda

Redonda

Sanctuary of the magnificent frigate birds

Spectacularly rimmed with soft pink sands

Nests for turtles of sea and land

Oases of trees surrounded by drought smitten woodlands

Bursts of oleanders and sweet frangipani

Majestic poincianas, brilliant bougainvillas,

Cultivated spider lilies...

And the clarion sounds of a young lad on his recorder

Melodies arranged by a talented father

Selections that they often play together

In cathedrals, churches, homes or theatre...

From the deliberate strength of a youthful breath

The melodies rise and pierce the ether

Before the notes cascade and linger

In gardens with statuesque Yuccas, allamandas and hibiscuses.

As the wind catches the notes and wafts them past palm trees

Out to catch the rhythmic oceanward breeze

Melodic notes, tinkling, tremulous echoes alight and go

Carrying a twilight's benediction along the alluring alphabet archipelago.

— Olaoye (April 22, 1995)

Let Black Minds

Let Black brains
 Grow trillions upon trillions of neuronal pathways
 Of the vast complexity and strength
 That betray
 The lineage of the dark line of queens and kings
 That quickens
 That thrives with the stimulation of African cultural playthings...

Let Black brains
 Grow far bigger than the American dream
 And embrace truly an African-American theme

Let Black minds
 Traverse the vast galaxies of space
 And create new visions of the universe
 That betray
 The generosity of the dark line of queens and kings

...

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...

That soars
 To new heights when inspired by African linguistics, rhythms and paintings

Let Black minds
 Reach higher than the Western technological schemes
 And embrace a multidimensional openness
 That's big enough for everyone's dreams.

Let Black imaginations
 Continue
 To boldly, joyfully create...

— Olaoye (April 22, 1995)

In the Breadths of Antillean Sea

In the breadths of Antillean sea
 Where color-filled tropical fish ,
 Sea ferns and delicately structured corals do live and die...
 On the shore
 Facing the vast openness of the ocean,
 Massaged by resurging rhythms
 And resounding sounds of winds and waves
 I summon the spirit of my ancestors who were slaves
 I bid them rise and come forth from their humble graves
 And witness what their legacy is creating in this Caribbean enclave
 (Some I fancy will come forth to see
 Others will simply respond with please don't bother me).

Surrounded, supported, encircled by the depth and breadth of the sea
 Propelled by systolic tides of African-Caribbean blood
 I let the slave ships, the chains, all manner of deprivations
 Sail through my head...
 Should I be a slave of the slavery of the past,
 Should I still listen to the injustices and so make them last..
 Is there a new form of economic slavery and conditioning, binding
 By reflecting back with relentless constancy, the myth of African inferiority...

...
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 ...

Surrounded, supported, encircled by the depth and breadth of the sea
 Propelled by systolic tides of African-Caribbean blood
 I let my ancestors' spirits summon memories I do not have
 And as we drifted with winds and waves to ancient lands and shores
 To times and places that Western history 'innocently' ignored
 I sighted new visions of ancient and African ancestry
 Glimpsing vast cycles and subterranean currents of more than the sea...

In the breadths of Antillean sea
 Where colour filled tropical fish,
 Sea ferns and delicately structured corals do live and die
 On the shore
 Facing the vast openness of the ocean,
 Massaged by resurging rhythms
 And resounding sounds of winds and waves
 I summon the spirit of my ancestors who were slaves.

— Olaoye (April 22,1995)

Our Real History

Come here, gal
 Listen to wah me ah say,
 You never too old
 To discover more about de white man wey.
 Me just sat down and read me real history
 From a book Desmond Nicholson write
 For Antigua Museum library
 Ah didn't know dat people were here
 Since 1775 BC
 And dat de Caribs and Arawaks
 Followed in 35 A.D.
 Aw right me did know dat the Caribs and Arawaks
 Were here before we so.
 But what really struck me like never before
 Ah de timeline indicating how long
 Civilisation be pon dis island.

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 ...

A wah mak white man so wicked?
 Coming here pretending dat dey discover land,
 When in fact dey kill off people and bury dey living plans
 Den coming here and teaching us dat dis is our history,
 Dat wid out dem we didn't know civilisation,
 And pon top of dat, calling dis formal education.
 Lawd, ah good
 You can fool some of de people some of de time
 But not all of de people all of de time.
 De spirits must be ah grinning in dey graves,
 Knowing that sooner or later dey legacies would be saved.

So me feel good now, nah, to know
 Dat civilisation has been here for 4000 years
 On dese islands, Antigua and Barbuda.
 De white man just come and he soon ah go,
 You better get ready, gal
 Ah plenty wuk here for aw we to do and know.

— Olaoye (August 20,1994)

An Antiguan Day

Bright bouyant clouds
Engage in sportive play
Effulgent, frolicsome
They gambol joyously
In the azure-tinted translucence of the day.
Dallying with shimmering waters thousands of miles below,
And a brilliant sun millions of miles above
They crown the ether with their silent sound
And bring joy to those on the ground.

The bays and islets reflect their shade,
The waters an ever-changing hue;
And affluent flora in the glades
Whisper a word of welcome too:
The Golden Trumpet blows her horn,
The Chalice Vine makes ready her cup
For those who would sup
At her apricot-scented petal brim;
Hibiscuses boldly kiss the sun,
And Anthuriums not to be outdone
Make valentines for everyone.
Royal Poincianas command the sky
And with Flambouyant elegance
Greet the eye;
While cascading Golden Showers make
From the tiny petals of its flowers
A lustrous carpet for lovers bowers.

Bright bouyant thoughts
Engage in sportive play
Effulgent, frolicsome
They gambol joyously
In the beautiful splendor
Of an Antiguan day.

Amerindian Poesy

For them the thumb was
 'The father of the fingers',
 And the pulse
 'The soul of the hand'.
 Concepts of the Arawaks
 Who spent much of their time tending the land.

A Roman Catholic missionary
 Sent from France to convert Amerindians,
 Father Breton served his mission
 By learning and preserving its diction.
 From 1629 to 1665, he was able to garner
 A great deal about the Carib and Arawak lifestyle
 One of the treasures he's left for us bibliophiles,
 Is his Carib-French dictionary describing
 What could otherwise be a lost language and style
 Of eating and working and thinking,
 Since neither Caribs or Arawaks wrote or read,
 Its wonderful to learn what nonetheless they said,
 And see how similar life was, instead
 Of presuming that they were so different, or primitive or long dead.

A rainbow was 'God's feathers' or pretty colours,
 But a European was a 'mishaped enemy';
 Their helmets and clothes ruined their contours!
 The concept of lying was communicated as 'no heart you'
 While 'my heart' was used to describe the person to whom we say 'I do'.
 'You are dirty' were the words used for wicked,
 And 'loot on water' were those used for voyage.
 'The pot is boiling' identified earthquakes;
 Amerindians had words for only numbers one through four,
 What an adjustment we'd have to make!

Some thoughts, some morals, some feelings of a people
 Of an earlier time
 A peaceful people without the sophistication of the written word,
 A people that had nonetheless, the beauty and the power
 Of poetic speech and rhyme.

— Olaoye (August 20,1994)

Biography: Dr. Elaine H. Olaoye published her volume **Passions of the Soul**, in 1998, and published the 2nd edition in 2002, and added new poems, to the 10th Anniversary edition in 2008. Her most recent publication is a chapter entitled *Increasing Resilience in Multiple Minority Clients Using Positive Psychology* in **Multiple Minority Identities; Applications for Practice, Research and Training**, Editors Reginald Nettles and Rochelle Balter, Springer Publishing Company. Most her contributions to this volume come from her *Antiguan Heritage Collection* written in honor of Desmond Nicholson. *Let Black Minds* is from **Passions of the Soul**. She is presently teaching at Brookdale Community College, in New Jersey and John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York.

POEMS BY Althea Romeo-Mark
 (from the 'Caribbean Nomad II' series]

Biography

1

English Harbour, Antigua

Born in this village,
 yet a stranger,
 I paint pictures for posterity,
 for memories, like relics,
 are stolen by marauding age.

Village anglers, reddened,
 sea-salted, reeking of fish,
 announce catches with
 gusty, conch shell blasts
 Crowds gather, banter and barter.

...
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 ...
 Women sit on large verandas
 round cotton heaps,
 hum, sing and pluck boll weevils
 from cotton beaten into soft, white fluff.

Cattle farmers herd mooring cows
 in from pastures,
 and chat with others homeward bound.
 Hoes and pick-axes weigh down shoulders.

In the crowded rum shops,
 the quiet play of checkers
 compete with laughter and
 slamming dominoes.

As night grows old
 and rum's swigged down,
 raucousness rival stories
 about smuggling and raids
 and playing cat and mouse
 with the law.

Brer Rabbit, Brer Anancy,
 Brer Fox make each other
 bahzadi and kunumunu.
 Jablesses and sukanahs,
 jumbies and cow-foot women
 terrify nights, haunt dreams.
 Obeah men sell cure-alls.

Droughts and hurricane
 devastate the land.
 Driven to England,
 America, Canada
 new, unwanted immigrants
 dream of a better life,
 do unpalatable labor,
 become builders of other nations.

The Nation Builders

Brown men crowd an island hilltop,
 voice French-Creole and Spanish,
 not the English patois of generations
 assembled there before them.
 Belittled by nicknames,
 lynched by contemptuous stares,
 condemned as job snatchers,
 pounced on by immigration,
 they are herded into vans, shackled like cattle.

Shrouded in life's hardness,
 they shrug off morning's crispness,
 ignore the later sun's searing sting.
 Hungry eyes, straining downhill,
 scout for trucks crawling up.

Like mongoose out to kill,
 they charge the first that slows down.
 The man, his engine still running,
 shouts, "Two days wuk for four.

Men scramble, shove,
 become acrobats, settle into place
 speed to hard work and low pay.

The disappointed
 remain on the look-out,
 wait their turn.

They are builder of island nations.
 They are fathers of leaders who see
 with the eyes of the disenfranchised

The Nakedness of New

In this place there are
 no monuments to my history,
 no familiar signs
 that give me bearings,
 no corner shops
 where food can take me
 on a journey home.

...
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 ...

Fresh-faced
 in an old country,
 the new lingo
 is a gurgle in throats.
 Strange words assault my ears,
 throw me off balance.
 I seek refuge in mother-tongue
 Where ever I find or hear it.
 Hunger for my people's voices
 has forged odd friendships.
 But they have begun to fray
 and I cling to shreds.

Cold stares gouge an open wound.
 Winter's icy fangs bite deep down.
 A "foreigner" is dust in the eye
 and many believe I have come
 to plunder their treasures.

Come, hug the cold away,
 rock me in your arms,
 clothe me in your warmth,
 tell me everything will be okay
 Pull me back from the cliff's edge.

Moko Jumbi

The masked thing dances.
 Long stilt legs leap,
 sway and swing in abandon
 to the tune of steel pans-
 pling, plang, pling-a-ling.

Peacock proud,
 it lifts its orange-purple can-can,
 spins and swirls its
 layered rainbow.

II

The young ask,
 does the devil hide behind the mask?
 Will it kick and growl
 if we touch it?

Will we melt like metal,
 disappear before its steely stare?
 Will it banish us to hell?
 Should we take refuge?

III

The country devil in you is long dead.
 You, who doled out death
 to women and the uninitiated,
 now mock your ancestors.

Women, under the spell
 of bacchanal,
 dare you to strike
 the deadly blow.

Does the spirit world
cry for its loss?
You now stir laughter
and not fear.

Jumbi, you jam with us,
mock your past,
mask your loss
in the revelry of carnival.

Last Island Griot

Come sunshine,
the big bum boy we call Anti-man
carries dark, shrivelled Miss Lizzie
down Mango Hill
from her ancient, matchbox house.

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...
He sits her in a chair at that junction
under the shack-shack tree
where vendors hawk fruit
and old women sell newspapers
to people in passing cars.

It has to be this place, this tree,
as if her navel string was buried there,
as if she came to the world
the same time its seed was planted.

She sings, spins tales—
her gesturing, gnarled fingers,
rooting back to histories

long forgotten.
The village remembers,
Lizzie always sat there
stuffing snuff between her gum and lips,
grinding out ancient tales in an English laced
with African words.

Lizzie speaks like jumbi talking—
 her voice coming and going
 in a frequency of its own.
 Her chants crack, fade into a whisper,
 routes the voice of ancestors
 generations removed.

The message shifts time and place.
 She, unaware, loses us in the straying.
 We don't take time to listen.

Turn the Broomstick Up

Sis Mavis, rheumatism ridden,
 drinks ginger beer, eats sweet bread,
 rakes up forgotten stories, pierces old wounds.
 Grandma's anger smolders.
 Eyelids heavy in the afternoon heat,
 we become listless prisoners in armchairs.
 Grandma sneaks into the kitchen and
 turns the broomstick up.

We hear the car chugging up hilly island road.
 Behind the wheel is a slick vendor.
 Bed-spreads, suits and dresses load the trunk—
 Things we'll pay down on and pay up on forever.
 Grandma, peeping through the lattice, shouts
 "turn the broomstick up."

Relatives appear like ghosts on a haunt.
 They seek handouts or a place to dwell
 until they get back on their feet.
 They cause budget strains, crammed quarters
 and strife. Mammy's eyes say
 "turn the broomstick up".

We see them coming. Pairs, carry pamphlets,
 wear kind faces and ready smiles.
 Religious tales fall out of their mouths.
 Thoughts of conversion stir in their heads.

They persuade those with eroding faith
 to join their Kingdom Halls.
 Stop them crossing the yard!
 They will turn us into Watch Tower zombies.
 Turn the broomstick up!
 It's not only the dead who invade our homes.

Rum Heads

You spit out trash talk.
 Our ears brim over
 with curse words
 you cannot take back.

Generous,
 you offer strangers rounds
 gulped down quickly
 at Freddy's Rum Shop.

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At home,
 fists lash and bash
 when someone dares to asks
 where the money is gone.

Rum legs only take you
 to the cemetery.
 We will shake our heads
 and stare at your gravestone
 laid down too soon.

Eclipse

In days gone by fear imprisoned us,
 fear born in tradition, borne in culture
 invoked by ancestors straddling the worlds
 of the living and the dead.

Some youth disavow this mystic realm.
 That world now misread as nonsense, disowned, dead to them.
 We pray these dying roots of our young will regenerate.

Today we are spooked by other ghosts—
the ghost of our children barely out of cradles
already gone to their graves.

We are haunted by unused potential,
hunted by amoral gangs, weaned on violence,
conscience stripped of empathy.

Navel strings cut off, ancestors cannot hear
their children's drums talking,
their voices are lost in the wind.

We fear deadly metal missiles.
that shout our names,
sing our death songs.

We will not die from fear of ghosts,
but from fear of becoming ghosts.
Violence, like a chanting obeah man,
waits outside our doors.

Our universe holds its breath.

Streetsweeper

In this haven I clean paths in parks, sweep streets.
Red stains splatter the ground
where berries fell after last night's storm.

They are not the blood smears
of brothers accused of betrayal.
Hear-say alone is enough
to crush bones back home.

I joyfully sweep up berry seeds.
They are not broken fingers, or toes.

I wash the walkway, breathe in unpolluted air.
It is free of gasoline fumes spewed
by military trucks heading to frontier towns
to crush the voices of discontent.

My heart dances with joy
at the sight of red stains, not blood.

We Do Not Cry For Meat

Yesterday we ate rice and palm oil.
Today we are eating rice and palm oil.
Tomorrow we will eat rice and palm oil.
We eye our bloated bellies
in the shadow of the kitchen fire,
and though not old enough
pretend we are with child,
pretend our fallen teeth will grow,
pretend our limbs are fat
can bear our large tummies
but we wobble when we walk
and do not cry for meat
for the dry land has snatched
our cattle and left us only bones.

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Biography: Althea Romeo-Mark writes poetry and short stories and has been published in the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, The Bahamas, USA, England, Switzerland, Germany, Norway, Colombia and Liberia. Her last poetry collection, *If Only the Dust Would Settle*, was published in 2009.

Her recently published works include *Off the Coast*, (Maine's International Poetry Journal), Winter, 2011 and Spring, 2009; *Revista de Poesia Prometo: Memoria del XX Festival Internacional de Poesia de Medellin*, Colombia 2010; *Dirtcakes: The Hunger Issue*, Vol. 1, No.1, Spring 2010, California; *Tongues of the Ocean*, Spring 2010, Bahamas; *Sea Breeze*, (Journal of Contemporary Liberian Writings), October, 2011; May 2010; November and May 2009 edition; the November and May 2008 editions, Spring 2009, USA/Liberia; the August 2008 edition of *Voodoo and Women* in www.womenwriters.net; *Jigsaw: Writers' Works*, Bern, 2004, 2007 and 2010; *Calabash*: (Journal of Contemporary Arts and Letters), NYU, 4/2; 2008; *Library Focus* by Friends of the Antigua Public Library-New York, Inc., 2008, www.foalp.org.

Older publication history is available upon request or can be accessed at www.aromaproductions.blogspot.com

POEMS FROM ELAINE JACOBS**Planting Seeds**

My mother
 Never intended
 To turn old
 Away from home
 To die and bury
 In a lot other than one
 In the grave yard at Valley Church
 in Bolans Village, Antigua.

She never intended
 To purchase a Tutu house and
 Plant red hibiscus
 And pink bougainvilleas
 In the front yard,
 Nunu-balsam, sive and
 Thyme outside the back door
 Just like the place
 She left in her homeland.

She never intended
 To buy land on Mariendahl hill,
 Build a big, block house
 With a deep gallery where she could sit,
 Hum church songs and crochet.

She never intended
 to cash in her little VW bug,
 Upgrade to a Chevy Nova,
 So that when her people visit
 From back home or New York,
 She could pick them up herself
 Rather than depend on a taxi van.

She never intended
 To own a cleaning business,
 Hire and bond women
 From Haiti and Santo Domingo
 To help her fulfill lucrative villa contracts.

My mother never intended
 To plant the seeds she did,
 Yet, she planted them and they grew.

From Deep Inside

When we listen
 We could hear
 The stillness in trees
 And the
 Wave less seas
 As flat as glass.
 When we listen
 We could hear
 The gladness of the
 Rejuvenated earth
 In the aftermath of rain.
 If we listen
 Really listen
 We will hear
 That gentle voice
 From deep inside
 Guiding, guiding.

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Black Hair, My Hair

Black hair, my hair
 Close to scalp
 Like nut-grass to ground
 Now picking up with love
 Mother's love
 Parched sugar-apple seed mixed in Vaseline
 Agrees with it
 My hair, black hair
 Combed tight, tight in Congo* and single plaits

My face wants to cry-laugh
 When mother's adept fingers
 Pick and weave every stray strand

Every errant hair into patterned rows
Of submission

Black hair, pretty hair
Spring from scalp
Standing up like guinea grass
In strong wind

(*Congo names a style of braiding hair in Antigua; referred to as guinea in Virgin Islands and cornrow in Black America and popular culture)

Mother's Care

The mango-leaf crotons
In my mother's garden
Have blights, powdery pests
Sucking life out of them

But she restores her crotons
Wipe-washes every leaf
Loves them back to life
And hums "Sweet Will of God"

I watch her and wonder
If she remembers bathing us
When we were babes
Pat-drying tiny limbs
And sprinkling talcum powder under arms

Smoke Rings

Transetta sprawls on a park bench
Her open-air home sinks
Beneath a canopy of ancient mahogany

Cigarette wedged between fingers
She care not that her living-room
Is pedestrian thoroughfare

Drag after drag
Smoke tracks from her pursed lips

Encircling her life's disappointments,
Broken dreams, and let-downs

There was a time
She named them
Questioned them
Cried over them

Now
She plays games with them
Setting them up like bowling pins
Using frog's tongue precision
Throwing smoke rings around them.

Biography: Elaine Warren-Jacobs was born in Antigua and moved to St. Thomas United States Virgin Islands in the late sixties. Her experience as a daughter of migration informs her writing of poetry and fiction. Her work has appeared in *Talk That Talk: An Anthology of African American Storytelling* (Simon and Schuster 1989), *Sea Breeze Journal of Contemporary Liberian Writings* (2007), *All This Is Love: an Anthology of Virgin Islands Prose, Poetry and Art* (Authorhouse 2009), and *The Caribbean Writer 2011 Calendar Art & Poetry*. Elaine teaches English in the local public school system of the United States Virgin Islands and at the University of the Virgin Islands. She is the mother of four sons and she lives in St. Thomas with her husband.

POEMS BY GERMAINE OWEN

[The following poems are from a self-published book, "I Could like a Bird"
Copyright 2003 Gemaine Owen. Trafford Publishing.]

Compelling Forces

The hurricane comes
beating on the galvanized roof
as if it were a band
playing steel drums.

A compelling music
the rain makes- forceful, lulling
we are comforted despite
such notes of fury.

Then through closed louvers,
the wind itself is tried
halting where it can find
no route of entry.

So the hurricane retreats,
sweeping up its wind and rain
leaving the house stalwart:
its roof an instrument,
its louvers clenched teeth.

Bread

Taking the bread in hand, she sopped
up the wayward gravy
letting the bread melt
upon her tongue as she
recalled past days at home.

A fish bone was caught in her throat
one time, she recalled the fear
when it failed to pass down.
So desperately, she gulped
down a gob of bread

and coaxed away the splinter.

Every time, she eats fish nowadays
 she recalls the jabbing poke
 and the wayward gravy
 and remembers childhood's
 lesson is to always have
 a gob of bread in hand.

Mock Monster Sestina

It is true that mothers don't have to tell
 stories about the monsters, like the *jumbie*
 for little children to become afraid
 of that dark creature under their beds.
 As children, we simply did not know
 that imagination had its limits.

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To us mortals even the sky is limited.
 for it is often that parents can not tell
 what all their little children think they know
 about monsters, like the *jumbie*,
 whom we can justly blame for a night's wet bed-
 when children lie in darkness quite afraid.

I admit, that I know what it is to fear
 within a child's reasoning limits,
 that West Indian creature under the bed
 (for so the stories have been to children told)
 described as a furious breathing *jumbie*
 who all of children's wickedness knows.

I remember that I came to know
 soon enough how to handle my fear.
 For I had rationalized the *jumbie*
 by taking it out of the tale's limited
 view and created my own story, telling
 how it haunted, instead, children in bunkbeds.

Sometimes, when I am still awake in my bed,
 I often think that our parents knew
 how to help us cope-something I could tell
 from the way they made us laugh at our fears,
 while watching from behind cordoned limits
 of a parade, the prancing *mocko jumbie*.

He's a man on stilts- this *mocko jumbie*
 out from the lint under our beds
 now rides before imaginations unlimited.
 Thus, all little children can now know
 that you can laugh at the very thing you fear
 and when older can turn around the tale.

The *jumbie* is the creature, we knew always
 lived under our beds that we allowed to reign our fears
 until the limits we came to know- long after our parents had told us.

A Shame

I used to think illness
 was a shame
 like family secrets.
 Only later I recall
 nursing my sister almost to death.

She always knew
 I would be a doctor
 one day...
 but I had to learn
 the body was no shame-
 illness no stigmata.

I Could Live Like a Bird

I could live like a bird:

connect clouds with their reasons
swing north and south between seasons.

fly with a compass in my head
mark my territory, my homestead.

fight only to defend my young
communicate always with a song.

not clamor to be the fairer sex
or ever fret over an empty nest.

to be as beautiful as plain
and be as reasonable as sane.

... live without care or worry
78 take life in stride without hurry.

...

live a lifetime with just one mate
while traversing from state to state.
make my Creator watch and smile
and take a deed out on a piece of sky.

I could live like a bird.

Crosses

Any way you look at it-
a cross draws blood:
a dagger to your heart
or a bearer of your soul.

A cross draws blood:
a hypodermic syringe
or a rusty hanger-
any way you look at it.

A burning racial slur
or a heavy yoke-
a cross draws blood
any way you look at it.

Biography: Gemaine Owen, M.D., was born in St Croix to an Antiguan mother. She first published as an undergraduate from Johns Hopkins University. Her medical school training was completed at Medical College of Pennsylvania, where she received a certificate as a Humanities Scholar. She is currently a practicing physician who also writes fiction. Her first poem was titled, *Mock Monster Sestina*, and was printed in *Zenaida*, Johns Hopkins University, Vol. XII, No. 1, Fall 1989. Dr. Owen's first volume of poetry, *I Could Live Like a Bird*, was published by Trafford Publishing in 2003 in Victoria, Canada. She has been at work on her first novel.

POEMS BY NAOMI JACKSON**Far from Home**

October's rust red hydrangeas call.
 Blood beckons another autumn.
 My familiar etches another city's
 concrete. The beloved quails,
 quaked by missing, believes
 I've flown west,
 never to return again.

If there's only this, then
 she wants more, and
 if I am only me, then
 she wants everything that is.

On Becoming

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30 years on
 and the island I'm unborn to
 still sings beneath my skin.
 We come up as siblings,
 six weeks apart. Now,
 we shed ourselves,
 equal parts molting.

She sloughs the Commonwealth
 coat, hears a call to new arms.
 Gunfire echoes in the back streets,
 hollow reckonings of old conflicts.
 The twin island's young ask the question
 of dreaming on each other's bodies,
 eat each other alive, the amuse-bouche
 before the last supper. Maybe
 this is a fair answer to hunger.

Across the Atlantic, Villa still
 vibrates in my memory, summers
 of brick-red skin and days stretched
 long by joy and family. I am as old

as home today, and wonder
 how we will ready ourselves
 for the days ahead.

Far Gone

My dreams ask:
 What's at the far end of the sea?

An answer comes
 when I am still
 wearing waiting
 like the widow's cloak.
 I cut a figure.
 My figure cuts speech.

My dreams sing:
 What's at the far end of the sea?

My soul case wrenches open
 the oyster's tough mouth.
 The jewel of me glistens
 above the salt marshes.
 If you watch closely,
 you'll see the island
 called home. I am
 sated by the mirror's feast,
 the click of teeth against bone,
 and wonder is enough meat
 to feed the hunger
 questions summon.

My bones are
 What's at the far end of the sea.

On Erosion

The people have spilt
the wine of astonishment,
turn scarlet chins towards
the sky, asking for a wonder
that will not come again.
They wait, readying for
the fire next time. But
their chances are gone,
their tears made salt.
The coral and the sand
dunes do not make
new limbs. Algae
disappears between
rubbed fingers.
Only the mind's eye
holds what once was.

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After Abigail

I stepped into the middle
or towards the end of my life,
tongued the blade of a quarter
life crisis, bit down.

No one there knew me yet.
I could pass off my gums' blood
crystals for rubies. My heart
a cavern with space for so much new
to rush, to beat in.

I left behind David, paid my debts
to the name my mother gave me,
became the woman who was
my father's lover, my grandmother's
child. Her blood the price for my
unclipped wings. Not falling meant

not looking back. Handheld by angels
up Jacob's ladder, I hitched hope
to my name's five-pointed star.
When I became the woman
who could love me, I whispered
my true-true name, became
the beloved in the calling.

Biography: A. Naomi Jackson was born and raised in Brooklyn by West Indian parents. She is currently studying fiction at the Iowa Writers' Workshop. She traveled to South Africa on a Fulbright scholarship, where she received an M.A. in Creative Writing from the University of Cape Town. A graduate of Williams College, her work has appeared in *Coon Bidness*, *Encyclopedia*, *Obsidian*, *The Caribbean Writer*, and *Sable*. She has been a resident at Hedgebrook and received the Archie D. and Bertha H. Walker scholarship at the Fine Arts Work Center. She co-founded the Tongues Afire creative writing workshop in 2006.

POEMS FROM LINISA GEORGE**The Closet**

I've been in this closet for a while now, just waiting
This closet is empty
It's just me and my thoughts
My fingers the only touch I feel on my skin as I lean on the back wall
Waiting to feel vibrations
Waiting to hear the alarm
But the noise doesn't come, and I am forced to decide my next move

In here is dark and gloomy
But it is also quiet and comforting
The light sometimes hurts my eyes
But in this darkness I see clearly
Once I focus
I see colors
I see places
I see people
and I see me

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I am not stuck in this closet
No one forced me behind its doors
I chose to come here and just be with myself

I can hear footsteps and voices outside
Most don't know that I am here
But some do
Those that do choose to ignore my presence
Which averts their questions and the false impressions of wanting to help me
When really they don't

I listen closely to their conversations
Waiting to hear something that will motivate me to come out of this closet
But alas their speech is jumbled
Maybe my inability to understand them
Is due to my unwillingness to empathize with their circumstances and their thoughts

My heart and soul have turned away from the people outside this closet
 I prefer to stay in my darkness where I see more
 Where I think more
 I feel as though I am being forced to address my love of the darkness and
 fear of the light
 But what will I gain if I go back out there?
 In this closet I am master of my fate
 Out there I am just another unknown variable in the equation of circumstances

I think I will sit here a bit longer
 In silence
 Enclosed in my thoughts and dreams and fantasies
 I think I will stay here a bit longer as I puzzle my priorities together
 As I create an image of spectacular beauty and magnificence

I am not trapped in this closet
 But rather I am captured by its simplicity
 You hear better in seclusion
 You see better in the dark

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Guns For Souls

I'll give you a gun
 and take your soul
 I'll bury your life
 and add your heart to the toll
 Pointed directly
 Arched comfortably
 We see the remains of things we did not do
 The little boy we didn't discipline
 The little girl we didn't set straight
 Shaking heads
 And washing the ground with our tears
 Yet we do nothing to add more life to their years
 I'll give you a gun
 and take your soul
 I'll bury your life
 and add your heart to the toll

Cold metal
 Penetrating hands of violence
 Thoughts of uncertainty
 Wrapped up in our decisiveness and elusiveness
 Choosing not to admit our wrongs
 Making excuses for everything under the sun
 Violence is not motivated by economic needs
 It is motivated by power and selfishness
 Taking what is not yours
 Taking what was not given to you
 It is engulfed by deep seeded thoughts of anger and resentment
 Blame and ridicule
 It's wrapped up in the mental
 And manifested into the physical
 No one wants to take the blame
 Yet everyone suffers the same

How many more nights must you sleep one eye up

... Trembling warm blood through your veins

86 Living in fear

... Surviving in fear

Walking fast, running speedily

To your cars

To your homes

I'll give you a gun..... and take your soul

I'll bury your life..... and add your heart to the toll

I'll give you a gun..... and take your soul

I'll give you a gun..... and take your soul

I'll give you a gun..... and take your soul

I'll bury your life..... WE ADD OUR HEART TO THE TOLL

Televisions raising kids

The Internet reading them bed time stories

Continued cycles of neglect

Packaged in reject

You get what you put out

And suffer for what you've held back

..... Watch me take your soul

..... Watch me take you soul

..... They offered us guns
 for the price of our soul
 I've given you death
 Yet nothing you regret
 We've voided love, compassion and responsibility
 Devaluing the price of a human soul
 I'll give you a gun
 and take your soul

Biography: Linisa George is a creative outburst of energy. Born in Guyana, Linisa migrated with her family to Antigua, the island where she calls home, at the tender age of 4. She wrote in secret from the age of 6; her poems were her escape from a world that she didn't think she fit into. It wasn't until 2003 while living in Toronto and experiencing the writings of the amazing Maya Angelou, that she realized that her life's fulfillment was masked in her writing. Linisa moved back to Antigua in 2005, where after many false starts she was able to push start her career in the literary and performing arts. She is a poet, freelance writer, director and playwright.

A strong advocate for gender justice, she is an Executive member of Women of Antigua, a non-profit organization established in January 2008 that were responsible for bringing The Vagina Monologues to Antigua, and spear heading the compilation of the original play When A Woman Moans; monologues written by Antiguan women that tackle the subject matters of rape, death, child birth, domestic violence, abortion and sexual freedom. She is co-owner of a creative arts company, August Rush Productions, and the Director of The Young Poets Society of Antigua & Barbuda. The latter is an organization that uses poetry to awaken the creative elements in young kids ages 12 to 17. Linisa is co-creator of Expressions; 'Poetry In The Pub', a bi-monthly open mic event that highlights the local talent of spoken word artists and musicians. She was the 2010 co-winner of a National Youth Award in Antigua for her contribution to the literary arts. Her first book will be available in 2012, and is an anthology of pieces she has penned over the years and is co-written with her friend Zahra Airall, who is her August Rush business partner. Linisa will also begin shooting the documentary film 'Brown Gurl Envy' which is based on her autobiographical poem "Brown Gurl In The Ring"; a young dark-skinned girl's emotional journey to self acceptance. Her blog 'Black Girl in the Ring (BGR)' at www.blackgirlintherring.blogspot.com is her personal space to share her thoughts on identity and her favorite things.

POEMS FROM TAMEKA JARVIS-GEORGE

Uncomfortable

The familiarity of your physique as you stand idly in line,
 Your uneasy sway and foot tap,
 The way you lean your head ever so slightly to the left
 When you are deep in thought,
 Distract me from every little random detail that I was previously consumed with,
 About the mile long line of people that are preventing me from
 charging on with my day,
 I am stuck in one square foot of space,
 Stepping forward only one inch at a time.
 The obnoxious little girl in front of me playing
 Is annoying me less and less,
 The childish song she sings becomes warped and garbled
 As I become lost in thought, in memory, in us,
 Well not us, there is no us.
 I mean you and me...
 But I couldn't help but time travel
 While I wished Scottie would beam me up.
 You don't see me.
 You are about 6 tiles away.
 Still too close for comfort though.
 You don't see me,
 But I know you feel me.
 I sense you coyly trying to look around,
 To make sure whether or not your instincts about my presence are correct.
 I pretend to look through my bag for whatever,
 To give you the few seconds you need.
 My peripheral vision confirms and I smile too hard on the insides for it
 not to manifest on my lips.
 I look up instantly and our eyes lock.
 Apparently smiles are contagious.
 I wonder if the people around us can sense the reverse dichotomy,
 Feel the merging not only of eyes, but of minds and synchronized memories.
 Your look confirms my thoughts.
 You mouthed
 "Hi baby, nice to see you."
 I respond likewise, feeling warm inside my chest and places that I shouldn't.
 I'm uncomfortable.

The line gets shorter, and as it starts to turn our distance does as well.

I tear my gaze away,

I'm uncomfortable.

Though this discomfort does not come from the sharp pieces of a broken relationship.

It comes from floating remnants of the moans and sighs that we left in my bed, that I pieced together into a quilt to warm myself after fate decided that we would make exceptional friends instead.

Fate did. Not us.

It floats like a blanket of smoke in 5 alarm fire and wraps us up in warm memories, almost choking us,

As we stand here in this cold clinical bank just going about our business.

Now gazing at a should've or a could've.

As the place empties my mind fills.

I get done before you do,

Even though I came after you, and you are still doing your business.

I snicker at that thought, as it saucily reminds me of something else about you

I turn to leave and take a few steps, then do a 180, to find you staring at my exiting frame.

Your smile widens, and you reach out to embrace me as I approach you.

I inhale your neck, and you smell like Perry Ellis.

You inhale me and I smell like vanilla.

Familiar smells that heightened the sensations.

Some things never change.

I feel your hands on the small of my back and I close that extra inch of space and breathe you in one more time before I say goodbye.

I'm uncomfortable.

You feel so good.

"Call me sometime." you whisper.

Then we let go like we did all those years ago.

I force myself to not look back, but I can feel you watching,

And I'm uncomfortable.

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Selfish

When givers become takers,
 The tune becomes melancholy and bittersweet.
 We knew what we were doing,
 We know what we are about to do,
 As I stand in your hallway,
 And you at your door.
 There is a light around you, and it seductively beckons me to come in
 And stay a while.
 A very long while,
 So you can tell me stories and take me to strange lands.
 You take my hand, and I cannot turn back.
 I hear the low melody of Busy Signal promising to love me so and never
 let me go,
 While I walk pass that throne you've prepared for 'her',
 Knowing that I could only be she in my heart and mind.
 But I wish, I wish and
 You wish too.
 We pretend not to notice,
 We pretend not to be ourselves outside of this very moment.
 You pretend he doesn't exist and that you are not about to eat off of
 another's plate.
 That the feast is yours to fill your belly and nourish your body.
 You pretend that the ring on my finger was put there by you.
 You pretend that I am at home in your home.
 It smells like lust and love and fear in here.
 It smells like the fresh weed and home made wine you were partaking of
 to calm your nerves and kill your guilt, so that all you could feel was,
 Me, me, me me, me.
 I, I, I, pretend that our love is the covenant so that I can give myself to
 you, the way I have a thousand times in my dreams, without inhibitions,
 with zeal and gusto, not just open legs but open heart.
 I want some of what you've been drinking.
 I need it.

Our eyes preach what our mouths dare not,
 As not to burn our hypocritical ears.
 I need, I need and
 You need to.
 Though you gently close your bedroom door,

It's a thud of deafening volumes screaming
 Do you know what you are doing?!,
 Do you know what you are doing?!.
 A resounding 'NO' I want to scream,
 But I will do this,
 I will do this.
 You open your drapes,
 And I see the devilish glance that just danced across your eyes,
 Knowing how much you cursed never being able to hold my hands as we
 walked in public,
 But tonight you will [] me with your drapes open for all the world to see
 your styles and styles and styles,
 When you lead me up the 9 flights of stairs and stares.
 I feel your urgency to get there,
 Especially as neither of us knows if this will be a journey we can take again.
 I want, I want and
 You want to.
 Your breath intoxicates me,
 Your touch shivers me,
 Your kiss wets me,
 I am ready, I am ready,
 You are ready to,..
 And I feel you slide my rings off, as if to take away his ownership,
 As I will be your possession tonight,
 In every way a man can possess a woman short of slavery.
 Busy Signal gives more instructions for me to
 'Whine like that',
 And your eyes dance again at the thought of me on you and you in me
 while I follow his instructions.
 Guilt just died,

Lust is Lazarus,
 I am your woman,
 You are my man,
 And your cream intertwines with my cocoa.
 No one would know the end of flesh except for our pigment,
 As it was my brown that you said had called you.
 My brown called you, and you came,
 Runnin', runnin', runnin' and cumming and cumming and cumming.
 And I kept moaning and groaning, and crying, and begging, and
 writhing, and sliding, and clutching, and scratching, and climbing, and

smiling, and screaming, and wailing and dying, and dying and dying,
 Foreplay clouds one's judgment,
 But orgasm clears skies,
 And now we see, we see.
 There is no us,
 There is just you and me.
 Now what baby,
 Now what.
 Questions and clarity for only a brief moment,
 Because I am yet again being reminded of how little time we have,
 And simultaneously being given instruction by 'Father Busy' to
 Tic, tic, tic, tic tock, tic, tic, tic, tic, tock,
 Tic, tic, tic, tic tock, tic, tic, tic, tic, tock,
 tic, tic, tic, tock, tic, tock,
 Toc, toc, toc, toc, tick,.....

Love Letter.....Dear Blank

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I remember,... one time..@ bandkamp... :-)
 There was this guy...I used to know, His name was BLANK, Last laid eyes on him long time ago. After all these years and miles new loves and kids, We stayed apart, But that bandkamp kid his grip's so tight, Baby still holds my heart...Sittin', chillin' on his loud cloud, While I'm still here watching for rain,... Bust the gates, He got me open, I know he came to bring the pain.. But ready or not I'll take a chance, You take it too, put down the front, Stop [] around then drinking Jesus juice, to tell me what you want.... Dear BLANK, Why the [] did you ever let me go, Did my kampfire stories scare you? I wanted fast, you wanted slow. Whatever the reason for our demise, Hindsight, I hate that [], But [] wit you is like a dream, Promise me that you won't snitch,.... It 's not like it's 10 years ago, Can't photograph our love, No kodak moments of your [] inside, Fitting me like a glove. What type a girlfriend do you have? Bet she's the jealous type, She'll find our pics and put your ass on blast, And face-book [] our lives. I know sometimes when you're alone, I'm the person on your mind, And even when you think of maths, You think of 69. When you vybin' on your music, And what you wanna rap about, You really want me in your bed, Just goin' in and out. P.S I thiNk I love you, Remember,..I said THINK so don't get scared, But to the hypotheticals, Reality can't be compared,. Like Michael Jackson asked Iman I'm asking you if you remember, The time you had me up against the wall, [] You

were nuthin' but a youngsta...Wasn't bout no dream, or 'bama speech, Just the giant in your pants,.. Whooo, PHEW... I need a minute, I think my panties just got wet, I gotta go now, but I believe, That we ain't finished yet. As big Boi said.. Baby Baby,..You're in my system, Baby Baby... Tell me you miss me.

“Solemn”

I felt your arms embrace me wholeheartedly, as I felt my inhibitions leave me. I wanted this, What ever this was,... I wanted it. What was to be was going to be, I was willing to endure what ever the consequences. I will let you do what you wish or will. My mind races, as does my heart,...and we begin to sway unitedly as though we were one. You almost seem to be battling on the inside ,as your grip would tighten almost frighteningly so, as if you feared I would fall too my death if you let go,...and that in itself made me want to say I love you,...and then you would let go almost as quickly as though you feared you were hurting me,...and that in itself made me want to say I love you. I did ,...I do..... You felt just like how I knew you would feel,...soft-tender, rough- hard, smooth-silky,...experienced, familiar..... perfect.....Glorious... As I take in all of you, and your style,...the coconut and herb smell of your surroundings,...the pictures of your family on the wall,...the stack of books and scattered paper on the table in the corner,..filled with your handwriting,...the coolness of your sheets on my back,..as you press what i hope to become life into my body. The look on your face when you are feeling pleasure,..the little sighs that I can see and feel you trying to muffle in vain, and the sweat that can only come from total exertion,... I love you..... "you look just like how i knew you'd look the morning after I couldn't resist the pull beyond your threshold,... solemn, thoughtful, tired, content. Me at your feet looking up into your face, quietly thankful for your bedroom door that closed, your thick curtains that were drawn,..and rebel music that played and drowned out our cries....." Your stare almost crippling,..preventing me from further venture beyond your reach. My mind races, as does my heart,... The quietness becoming sooo loud, I can hardly bare it,..and I wished for you to speak,..confirm deny,... say anything to break that deafening silence,... What are you thinking? Please talk to me.

Haile's Response

(Response written by Haile Clacken)

I see you staring up at me trying to read my thoughts. But I am as far from thinking as speaking is from listening and I listen. Listen to the silence of you and me in this moment. It feels like yesterday, so complete that nothing can change. I could hoist a reassuring smile but no gusto is needed to proclaim that beside you I would stand having sowed my seed of truth, my pearl. So I listen, listen to the echoes trapped in my wall a testament to who we are and what we have become. It was everything I could not imagine.. the way you received me in blissful surrender and how I clutched you to complete this oneness withholding nothing but rendering the full force of myself in an ecstasy that cannot be described fully by words. It is complete as is my silence. I woke early to watch you.. sleeping... the light movement of your chest to the rhythm of your lungs... your eyes gently closed to this world and open to the next... your arms curled so childlike... reminding me of the innocence from which you now look at me so earnestly and from which I can see two souls delicately intertwined a generation before. I am certain of this moment, of this note in a unsung song of silence that I can play for you only through gesture. I think I should make you breakfast.. How do you like your eggs?

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Biography: Tameka Jarvis-George is a 34 year old Antiguan woman, who currently resides on the island. She is married with two children, and works in architecture and shipping. She published her first novel, "UNEXPECTED" in 2010. She has been writing creatively for 20 years, publishing 3 books of poetry, which were all positively received and reviewed. Two (of them) "Thoughts from the Pharcyde" in 1999 and "I Am" in 2005, were published by Hidden Brook Press in Toronto Canada. The third "I Am that I Am", was published in 2002 by Watermark Press in Washington D.C, and was the result of winning a publishing contract through a poetry competition they hosted the previous year.

Ever the multi-tasker, Tameka is in the process of writing her second novel about two people from completely different socio-economic backgrounds falling in love and in crime, regularly updates her blog bak2moi.wordpress.com, is also working on her first children's book and trying to get things in order to start her next film project. One of her poetry pieces called "Dinner", was adapted into a short film named the same and it was shown at the Jamaica Reggae Film Festival in Kingston Jamaica May 24th 2011 and at the Antigua & Barbuda Film Festival in November, 2011. Tameka also contributed the spoken word piece used in the voice over to a short film production titled Ugly, directed by Shabir Kirchner.

POEMS BY JESSECA BRANN

Ode to love: Black & Blue

I rescue you... **in my mind**.
 I cry; I shout; I smirk;
 Silent curses loud in the mind's eye
 You're weak, but **strong in my mind**.

Objectivity is the key but **subject I am**
 As I record images with words phrases that I wish to be understood
 Words I hope are never heard
 Yet I wish they are stuck on the minds of men

Anger dissipates and fear reigns
 I think of you; so **weak**.
 The songs of the ocean are drowned by profanity
 Falsettos I try to disregard...

Words that corrupt the purity of a page
 Reveal your secrets
 From a biased view
 Portrayed in a way unfair to you

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Inane, frail!
 Judgement screamed of you.
 I was there; I am here.
 Tomorrow. Will you still be here?

Strong willed but yet so weak
 Listen to the hate I spew
 I thought it was advice
 While **I judged you**.

Imagining the unforeseeable
 Hopelessly in honesty
 Not knowing what to do;
 With words in **save you**...

Ode to you of love black and blue
Ode to you

Nothing Says it All

Knowledge is power
And I'm considerably weak
Yet so strong
I at my peak

I was born at 17
My life begun at 17
I saw it all at 17
I experienced nothing at 17

I could prove it all
I knew nothing

I was born at 18
Life was restarted at 18
I planned it all at 18
I did nothing at 18

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Nothing was proven
Nothing was known.

Knowledge is power
And I'm considerably weak
Yet so strong
I'm at my peak.

Recycled

The cliché cycle of life reuses ideas
And throws refurbished individuals into recycled situations.

A second chance is deemed,
It may be the third or fourth but recognition bares the number two.

The significance of doubles: Pairs of eyes and hands;
But combined heats of hungry souls equates balance,

Adoration greets the heart as it reintroduces the past to the present day.
An unsuspected meeting with an opportunity sized.

To overthink is to compromise,
So proceed into the new with mere hopes of the future.

A text used to express the simple existence of your presence.
The now was deemed today: so it could rhymed when I ask you

To stay.

To Live Or to Die

To live or to die; that is the query.

Is it considered nobler to suffer the throws and tosses of bad luck, or to get help against deep worries, and in contrast, end them?

To die is to rest nothing else; and in this case to rest is the end.

The emotional pain and physical suffering that we humans feel, is a finality sincerely hoped for.

To die is to rest; and to rest: Is maybe to dream.

Hey, there's the impediment because in death do we dream?

When we leave behind our earthly flesh, required that we get a break?

There's the admiration that makes tragedy of a long life; because who's going to tolerate the lashes and mockery of time,

the bully's wrongdoing, the proud man's insolence, the pain of shunned love, the postponement of law, the disrespect and rejects from those who hold authority, and that enduring worth that the undeserving gets when he influences his pardon with

plain treachery?

... Who will accept burdens, sweating and grunting in a tiring life, if it wasn't
98 the fear of some after death, the unknown country from whose destiny no
 ... one comes back?

Confusing resolve and makes us prefer the tribulations we have than to go to others that we don't know about?

Our self-conscience make us all fear, therefore the natural way of perseverance, is obscured with the indulgent company of assumptions, and initiatives of great ground and instances .

With this consideration they are turned askew and lose the appeal of achievement.

You are spineless! Beautiful Person! As Spirit, in your prayers, may all my sins be thought of.

Words: The Beginning and The End.

Posed upon poetic fate,
I have the knowledge of inability.
My means of expression severed,
Words without substance,
My emotions undeserving.
Common clouds are disgraced;
Pictures that lack images,
Are mere minutes in space.
This is alpha, this is omega.

Biography: Jesseca Ormond Brann was born in French St. Martin in 1993 but migrated to Dominica, her mother's birthplace. At five years old she moved to Antigua, the birthplace of her father. An eccentric individual with a passion for literature and children, she incorporates sports, academics and volunteering together at the CCSET International Academy. She's a member of the Young Poet's Society of Antigua and Barbuda, CCSET Volleyball team, Phoenix Volleyball Club, CCSET International Student Body President, Past President of Octagon Club of South Coast Eagles and Transitions Club Volunteer. Jesseca believes that in order to write you must experience so she familiarizes herself both subjectively and objectively with features of

