

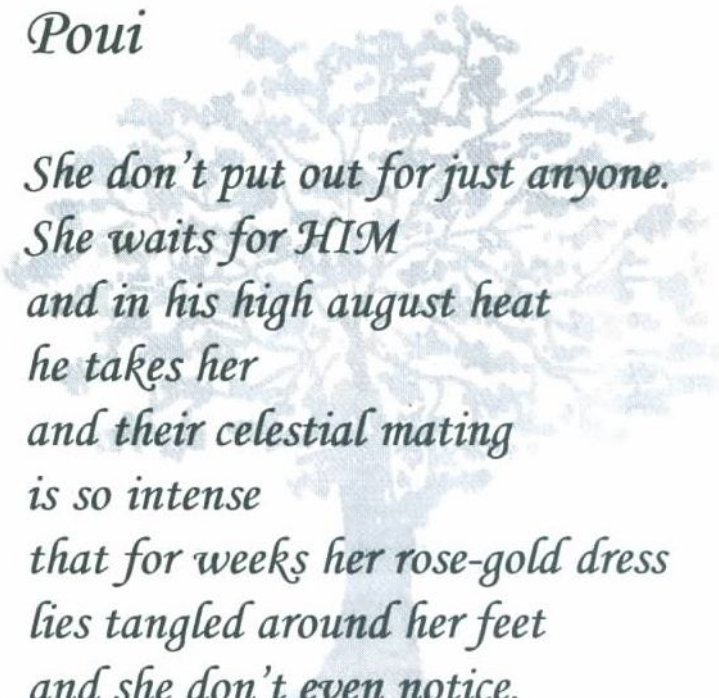


POET

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Poui



*She don't put out for just anyone.
She waits for HIM
and in his high august heat
he takes her
and their celestial mating
is so intense
that for weeks her rose-gold dress
lies tangled around her feet
and she don't even notice.*

Lorna Goodison

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Contributors

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Jewel Fraser worked for about 12 years as a sub-editor with the *Nation* and *Advocate* newspapers. She is now pursuing a degree in science at the University of the West Indies, out of a desire to try something different.

Katy Gash was born in 1971 and has two children. She is an active member of VOICES: Barbados Writers' Collective, and will be published in the forthcoming issue of New York University's literary journal, *Calabash*.

Wayne Jordan is a teacher of English at the St. Michael School in Barbados. He is currently working on completing a Master's degree in Applied Linguistics at the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill. Despite a love for creative writing from an early age, it was only last year, while taking an undergraduate course in Creative Writing, that he started to take this interest seriously.

Deanne Kennedy is a writer and an artist. Her work has been published in *VOICES I* and in five anthologies overseas. She has won several awards locally, including a first in prose and a second in poetry in the inaugural Ironman/Ironwoman competition. In 1999 she was made an International Poet of Merit in Washington, D. C.

Simon Lee was born in London in 1951, and has lived in Trinidad since 1987, where he works as a freelance writer. He travels extensively in the Caribbean, covering culture, heritage and the environment for regional and international publications. He is writing a book on Caribbean music.

Mark McWatt was born in Guyana and is currently Professor of West Indian Literature at the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill, where, in addition to literature courses, he teaches a course in Creative Writing (Poetry). He has been

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Sandra Morris is a freelance journalist and editor, and Co-ordinator and Webmistress of **VOICES: Barbados writers Collective**. Her work has been published locally and internationally, including in *Calabash*, New York University's literary annual. Performances include Poetry & Jazz 2000 (piece to be included on compilation CD).

Velma Pollard lecturers in Language Education at the West Indies, Mona. She has published poems and stories in regional and international journals and anthologies, as well as a novel, two collections of short fiction and two books of poetry.

Philip Nanton is a Vincentian who has recently returned to the Caribbean after many years in England. He is engaged in editing an introduction to the work of Frank Collymore for the Literary Endowment fund of the Barbados Central Bank, named after Collymore. His poetry has been published in a number of journals and Caribbean anthologies in Britain, and he has made radio programmes on aspects of Caribbean culture for the BBC.

Lorna Pilgrim was born in Trinidad of Barbadian parentage. In 1987, her story, *Soul in Siege*, won third prize in a national competition. In 1988, *Soul-Mate* won the Cedar's Prize for Excellence in Contemporary Poetry. Jesus Christ is her Muse. She is a part-time lecturer at U.W.I., St. Augustine.

Rosemary Phillips is a Barbadian and is studying French at the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill. She has been writing poetry since her school days and has two collections *ME* and *Mind's Eye*

Raymond Ramcharitar is a journalist and creative writer who lives and works in Trinidad. He is at present on a writing programme at a U.S. university.

Marzo Alejandra Silén was born in California, but raised in her own country, Puerto Rico. She has participated in writing workshops and courses with Lorna Goodison, Richard Weinraub and Luis López Nieves. She has published individual poems in *Onda apretada*, *Claridad*, *Segundo Simposio Caribe 2000*. Her first book of poetry, *Namasté*, will be published in 2001 by the University of Puerto Rico Press.

Brenda Simmons was born in St. Lucia, West Indies, attended college in London, and now resides in California. She began writing poetry in 1990, has been published in the *Bay Area Poets Coalition* magazine, and in *POUi I*. She also writes in Spanish.

Obediah Smith is a writer who has attended CWSI Writers Workshops at University of Miami and UWI Writers Workshop in Barbados. He has self-published 6 books of poetry, a short novel and a cassette tape of his poems.

12:30 Show

The music accompanies the hero
as closely as your eyes,

the city's in danger, the woman
waits amidst a sylvan scene.

The scene is as you would have it:
the calculated imperfections:

(seamless canopies of thought
covering the world

magnificent presumptions! The lives
unknown but so precisely assumed!)

consigning fabulous determined fates
to darkened considerations.

The camera's ambit is the universe,
an eye that mimics your own unseeing life.

The darkness from which we came,
The darkness to which we return.

Katy Gash

Josephine

Josephine's eyes were as bottomless and as dark as the pitch pools of her native Trinidad. If these were the windows to her soul, their heavy blinds were now tightly drawn. Impenetrable. I had never seen eyes so devoid of emotion, so immune to reaction. I'd never seen eyes so closed to light - emitting none, reflecting none.

Staring into these cold, charcoal pits, I searched for the faintest glow of an ember not quite dead; the tiniest ember of truth. Passionless and still, I figured these to be the eyes of a harsh and bitter life. Eyes whose waters had long since been cried out, wrung dry by cruel, unyielding twists of time - as a cloth wrung dry by the cracked, unforgiving palms of a river-bank washer-woman.

The nurses knew very little about her outside of her name and where she was from. The tiers of her brow were almost as deep as the pools in her eyes, and told of a joyless past. Gaunt hollow cheeks framed paper-thin lips, so straight and so rigid I wondered if she had ever smiled at all.

Was she an only child from whom life had spitefully denied such treasured joys as girlish skylarking? Or maybe the forgotten, unwanted one of many who faded, unmissed, into oblivion? Indeed, Josephine's face drew the story that her eyes would not tell. Yet still I searched.

I asked her of Trinidad - did she have any family? Children maybe? Old friends? I hoped that my words would somehow, like a faint breeze, ripple the surface. I spoke as if to flick a pebble, unnoticed, into those motionless black pools.

Her voice, though soft, still sang with Trinidadian inflection. Her responses were short, urging me to respect the peace within which her memories now lay. Yes, she had family. No children. No friends. Still her eyes told you nothing.

And in my mind, the image of her eyes came home with me that night. I wondered what it must be like to view the world through those eyes. Would red still be vibrant and lustful? Would the moonlight's glow still glisten like diamonds on a black satin sea? Were her sunsets orange and purple like mine, or dull murky grays and browns?

Then it struck me. I'd visit her again tomorrow, I vowed. I remembered how, as a child, I used to peep from behind the curtains mother had drawn - surely Josephine must peep too.

Josephine passed away that night, just after I left, the nurses told me. No pain, they said. She just stopped breathing. And as I wiped the tears from my eyes I remembered her eyes again. Maybe her eyes died first. Or maybe, just maybe, her soul had drawn the blinds so that her spirit could rest in peace.

Mark McWatt

Mazaruni I

I am silver in the afternoon,
mirroring the engine that sustains me -
I suppose it is my god,
insofar as I have one. I,
in turn, am divine to all that dwell
within me and sip life at my margins
to fashion other colours that contain me
- mostly green, though the softer
tissue of petal and ripe fruit can sport
whatever hue their bearers' codes
dictate. Purple is nice
and bright yellow. But green,
yellow or purple, all matter
that I enliven returns to me; I
dissolve their colours in me
yet I am not coloured by the colour
of any of them, but keep
my mirror polished to reflect
my lord of light and to obscure
the secrets of my depths. I guard
my own in darkness, even while
I shine with the image of my god:
I am Mazaruni, and I am silver
in the afternoon.