

POUJI



Cave Hill
Literary Annual

No. 4, December, 2002

Introduction

I owe the honour of editing this Cave Hill Literary Annual No. 4 to the resident editors Mark McWatt, Hazel Simmons-McDonald and Jane Bryce as well as the consultant editors Kamau Brathwaite and Nailah Folami-Imoja. This issue of *Poui* showcases a range of submissions volunteered or coerced from what now appears to be a diverse and growing band of committed contributors. Readers will find observations on perennial subjects, aspects of birth, loss, carnival, violence, religion, and the migrant's lot - each from the unique perspective of poet or story writer increasingly located, as the list of biographies demonstrates, across the Caribbean and its Diaspora. There are also resonances which capture in microcosm contemporary confrontation in urban Guyana ('No Parking') or the wryly observed solace offered by a run down New York bar ('The Bar').

As guest editor I am also conscious of the importance of the role of *Poui* as one of a few literary journals carrying forward the tradition of making available new writing, a tradition inherited from an earlier period when *The Beacon*, *Focus*, *Bim* and *Kyk-over-al* were all flourishing. One poet/jazz musician from that earlier period in whose writing I have a special interest, the Vincentian born, Shake Keane (1927 - 1977), was a regular contributor to some of these journals. Keane won the prestigious Cuban Casa de las Americas Prize for poetry in 1979 for his collection *One A Week With Water: Notes and Rhymes*. He died in 1997 with some of his most recent poems unpublished. It seems appropriate that some of these poems should now appear as a special feature in *Poui*. I am grateful to Dr. Margaret Bynoe for permission to publish 'Nostrand Avenue', 'Love in Bed/Stuy Brooklyn' and 'The Bar'. I like to think that Shake would have appreciated seeing them alongside new writing from across the Caribbean.

Those who knew him will need little reminding that Shake was in many ways larger than life. Before he died he claimed that he was writing poems one could taste. This gustatory metaphor applies equally to the writing selected for the pages of this *Poui Cave Hill Literary Annual No. 4*. Enjoy the feast.

Philip Nanton
6:01:03

CONTENTS

Nick Whittle

<i>Clouds</i>	1
<i>Bernard</i>	2
<i>Life Jacket</i>	4

Christian Campbell

<i>Guinea</i>	5
<i>Shrine for Athena</i>	6

Michelle Barrow

<i>Woman Heritage I</i>	8
<i>Woman Heritage II</i>	9

Ian Strachan

<i>Haitian Worker, Monday Morning</i>	10
<i>Waterbirth</i>	11

Shara McCallum

<i>The Story of the Madwoman by the Sea</i>	13
<i>Par Drive</i>	14

Dee Horne

<i>Woman in the Rocking Chair</i>	15
<i>Frangipani</i>	16
<i>Sea Turtle</i>	16

Debra Providence

<i>The Gallery</i>	17
<i>Slug</i>	18

Opal Palmer Adisa

<i>Living</i>	19
<i>Justice</i>	20

Maria Soledad Rodriguez

<i>The Women In You</i>	21
<i>Wood and Stone</i>	23
<i>Hammer and Nail</i>	23
<i>Pitchy-Patchy</i>	24
<i>Chamomile Tea</i>	26

Obediah Smith	
<i>Wet Fit</i>	27
Brenda Simmons	
<i>The Singing Sea</i>	28
Katia Ulysse	
<i>Reunion</i>	29
Krishna Ramsumair	
<i>Elijah</i>	30
Lyneth Smith	
<i>Lumps in My Cornmeal</i>	36
<i>Janus' Missing Face</i>	46
Ann Natasha Second	
<i>Hallelujah</i>	53
Maria Bell	
<i>Like Calvary</i>	58
Shake Keane	
<i>Nostrand Avenue</i>	61
<i>Love in Bed/Stuy- Brooklyn</i>	62
<i>The Bar</i>	64
Philip Nanton	
<i>Riff: The Shake Keane Story</i> (excerpt)	67
Susan Brown	
<i>Old Beauty</i>	71
<i>At The Parrot Cafe</i>	72
Christine Singh	
<i>No Parking</i>	74
Maggie Harris	
<i>Canterbury Tales on a Cockcrow Morning</i>	84
<i>Tita</i>	95
<i>Take Me Down to the River</i>	96
<i>From This Same Verandah</i>	97

CONTRIBUTORS

Opal Palmer Adisa: is a literary critic, writer, storyteller and artist. Published works: *The Tongue Is a Drum* (poetry/jazz CD with Devorah Major) 2002; *Leaf-of-Life*, poetry, 2000; *It Begins With Tears*, novel, 1997; *Tamarind and Mango Women*, poetry, 1992, PEN Oakland/Josephine Miles Award Winner; *Traveling Women*, 1989; *Bake-Face and Other Guava Stories*, 1986 and *Pina, The Many-Eyed Fruit*, children's book, 1985; *Fierce/Love*(poetry/jazz recording with Devorah Major), 1992. Nominated to be Poet Laureate for the State of California, 2002

Michelle Barrow: is a theatre artist/educator who has been writing for 18 years. Her work has been anthologised in *So Much Poetry in We People, Voices 1, An Anthology of Barbadian Writing*, and *Incantations and Utterances*. She was the winner of the Inaugural Poetry Month's poetry competition organized by the Commission for Pan African Affairs. She has performed her work throughout the Caribbean, Canada and South Africa.

Maria Bell: is a pre-med student at Sussex County Community College, Newton NJ, a member of Phi Theta Kappa and recipient of the Gottfried scholarship for the Sciences. 'Like Calvary' is Bahamian-inspired, for the islands dearly loved.

Susan Brown: is a graduate of Goddard College and the Pratt Institute, New York. She has published her poems in *Poui* and *Crescendo - South Florida Writers Journal*, and fiction in *The Caribbean Writer*. Susan has also published a volume of poetry, *Frederiksted Gingerbread*.

Christian Campbell: a Bahamian-Trinidadian poet, studies and teaches at Duke University, where he is a PhD candidate in English. His work has been published in journals and anthologies throughout the Caribbean and the US. He is a 2002 Commonwealth Caribbean Rhodes Scholar and is currently completing his first collection of poetry entitled *The Biggest Sound*.

Maggie Harris: was born in Guyana and has lived in England since 1971. A teacher and reader-development worker, she also runs writing workshops for all age groups. She has won numerous awards, including a research award at UWI, Cave Hill, in 1999 to study contemporary poetry, and the Guyana Prize for Literature 2000 with her first collection, *Limbolands* (Mango Publishing).

Dee Horne: writes fiction and poetry and lives in Prince George, British Columbia. She is Associate Professor in English at the University of Northern British Columbia. She has co-authored *Images of First Nations in Books Children Read*, and

written *Contemporary American Indian Literature: Unsettling Literature*, articles, interviews, and book reviews.

Ellsworth McGranahan Shake Keane (1927-1997): Vincentian jazz trumpeter, fluegelhorn player and poet. Essays and poems published in *Bim* and *Kyk-over-al*. Played jazz with the Joe Harriott Quintet, Michael Garrick Quintet (England); as well as with Frany Boland and Kenny Clarke (Germany). He published five collections of poetry. *One A Week With Water: Rhymes and Notes* won the Cuban Casa de las Americas prize for poetry in 1979.

Shara McCallum: originally from Jamaica, she currently lives in Tennessee where she teaches at the University of Memphis. Her first book of poetry, *The Water Between Us*, won the 1998 Agnes Lynch Starrett Prize and was published in 1999 by the University of Pittsburgh Press, where her second book, *Song of Thieves*, is currently under consideration. Individual poems have been nominated for five Pushcart Prizes and have appeared in *Antioch Review*, *Callaloo*, *Chelsea*, *Ploughshares*, *Verse*, *The New American Poets: A Bread Loaf Anthology* and *Step Into a World: A Global Anthology of the New Black Literature*.

Philip Nanton: is Vincentian and lives in Barbados. 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.

Debra Providence: was born in St. Vincent and is a student of the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill.

Krishna Ramsumair: was born in Trinidad and studied in the United States before returning to take up a position at UWI, St. Augustine. He is a teacher and medical researcher, and was awarded a fellowship for creative fiction by the Creative Arts Centre UWI/Cropper Foundation.

Maria Soledad Rodriguez: was born in Puerto Rico, studied there and in the United States, and lived in the South Pacific for a while. She teaches women's, Caribbean and United States literature at the Rio Piedras campus of the University of Puerto Rico.

Ann Natasha Second was born and raised in Tobago. At UWI, Mona, she was inspired by lecturers like the poet, Mervyn Morris. She has since taught at secondary schools and served as a part-time lecturer at UWI, St. Augustine. The John Cropper Writers' Retreat in Trinidad gave her writing the boost it needed, since when she has been working on two novels. 'Hallelujah', the story in this volume, was written for John Cropper, who was murdered last year, along with his sister- and mother-in-law.

Nick Whittle

LIFE JACKET

I remember the red-flecked wool
knitted before fingers locked in pain.

On bad days, I would pull you over my head
forcing arms into sleeves of innocence.

I kept you hidden, in a special place
ready for days like today.

But you were discovered and discarded
in a moment of good housekeeping.

Waterbirth

The year my brother died it hardly rained. The magnolia tree that once gave us two harvests in a year refused to bear. No swelling green fruit, turning purple and then a yellow red. No blossoms that looked like golden upside down Christmas trees.

But there were butterflies. More than in a long time. Pieces of coloured paper cut out by a skillful hand and magically made to flutter and spiral in wind.

The year my brother died we had a hot summer. Hot and blinding bright. And then finally, the weather came. The storming winds. Sea surge.

That magnolia tree he loved, the one he planted twenty years before, the one that would not bear: I watched it rise from out of the earth and lay flat on the grass as if pushed over by a great child's hand, tired of a toy. Pushed over flat like my brother had lain flat for all those months. Blown over by something too strong to deny.

Before that storm that tried to blow all our possessions away, I went for a swim. I remember the water was warm. I got salt water in my nostrils. The sensation stirred me. I remember lying there on my back, at the water's edge, as the waves came in. One and then another.

I remember closing my eyes and not really trying to float. I remember putting my head back and closing my eyes and holding my breath, simply wishing to be

washed this way and that by the warmth. I felt light.
Light ...

I imagined all the universe being immersed in water. And the stars as beams of light piercing a massive sea. And I thought of babies floating in water, not needing to breathe, living by a mother's lifeline. I felt light. Light.

And I remember hoping that was death too. A kind of washing. A kind of letting go to be taken up by water, borne up on the waves, your head thrown back, your hands outstretched and your eyes closed. Set back by a thing too strong to deny. Borne up and soothed by warm water.

And I tried to imagine Kenneth letting go of this world that had blown him over. I tried to imagine that he had fallen softly into water when he fell. That while we wept he had felt relief. And he had floated out into that starry sea, forever safe from storms, on a cushion of waves. Light. Light.

The Gallery

Feet dragging just beyond the starched uniform
of a doorman, fingers itching for the world outside,
mind distant, musing over cable
and pizza, video games and football,
not wanting to insult I trail,
and in musing eyes are jumped, as in a dark alley,
grabbed
by a wooded piece of something or other that ar-
rests
and incarcerates me into its existence of salt water
wisps and white sails whipped by a wind that
blasts the frothy surf against cragged black rocks
and forces me to look at a blinding light
that I thought was the sun, but was
actually the flourescent spear of a light house
from which I cover my eyes and try instead
to stare at the sky streaked with vermilion, gold and
russet
and a bird flies by and immediately I am urged to
follow
as though the wood calls and meshes with me
wood on flesh on bone on marrow on eye on mind
and ...

Thankfully, wrenched free by an indignant arm that
swears

I mustn't wonder off so and takes me, feet dragging
past the starched uniform of a doorman thinking of
lighthouses, sails and waves, longing for another
look,
but not daring to spare a glance.