



#InConVerSation:

The Muse of Memory Is The Muse of Poetry:

Bookends presents the first of a series of conversations #InConVerSation between the writer Jacqueline Bishop and phenomenal women writers who call Jamaica home. Today's featured writer is Poet Laureate of Jamaica Lorna Goodison.

An Interview With Poet Laureate Lorna Goodison

LORNA, I start by saying thank you so much for granting this interview. I must say I was moved to tears when it was announced that you would be the new Poet Laureate of Jamaica. Is there any significance for you, personally, in being the first female Poet Laureate of your beloved homeland? What do you hope to initiate or achieve with this new platform?

Thank you so much. I am honoured to be the subject of one of your interviews.

I too was very moved when Justine Henzell, Professor Edward Baugh and Winsome Hudson, former director of the National Library of Jamaica (NLJ), and Minister Olivia "Babsy" Grange asked me on behalf of the Government of Jamaica to become the Poet Laureate of Jamaica. Being made poet laureate at the same time that my Collected Poems — which is over 600 pages long — was published by Carcanet Press (UK) seems like a double blessing. As you yourself said to me, "If anybody asks you what you have done with your life, you can point to that book."

As the first woman to be given this honour, I am of course well pleased, and I have hopes, dreams and plans for what I'll do while I am Poet Laureate, and one of the first initiatives I've been involved with is the "All Flowers are Roses" Self-Defence

and Poetry Summer Workshop. This was a workshop designed to teach young girls basic self-defence and poetry writing. It was taught by the well-known Jamaican poet and martial arts expert Cherry Natural, and the poet Yashika Graham. The logo was designed by the British Jamaican artist Ruel Hudson, and it went so well that the current director of the NLJ Beverly Lashley is working with Abigail Henry, who does a wonderful job of running the Poet Laureate programme, and me to expand it this year.

As I see it, poets laureate are national praise singers and advocates of poetry, and I believe I have been doing something like that in my own work, in an unofficial capacity, for many years. I am particularly grateful that I've had the great good fortune to have been able to read my praise poems to Jamaica to wide audiences here at home and in many different parts of the world.

I have also been at this

business for quite some time. My first collection of poetry was published in 1980, by the Institute of Jamaica Press, and individual poems of mine had been appearing in various magazines and in Jamaican Sunday newspapers for at least 12 years before that. From the very beginning, I was always writing poems inspired by aspects of Jamaican culture; even some of my most intimate and personal poems somehow manage to reference Jamaica. One of my poems, which appears on the London Underground, is called "Bam Chi Chi La La", and it is about a Jamaican teacher working as a char woman so that she can build her retirement home in

Mandeville. Because I love how we talk, I try to write in a mixture of Standard English and Jamaican speech so that it resonates perfectly to Jamaican ears but it is still accessible to non-Jamaicans. Somebody once wrote that I seem to be trying to inscribe Jamaican culture onto the consciousness of the world. I think that is a good thing!

One of your initiatives as the new poet laureate of Jamaica is the Helen Zell prize for young poets. Can you expand on this and why you thought it important to initiate this prize in Jamaica?

I was fortunate enough to have taught for many years at the University of Michigan in their Helen Zell MFA writing programme that is consistently rated in the top two such programmes in the world. As part of the job I had to read and evaluate countless applications from highly gifted young writers who are very serious about developing their craft. As the current Poet Laureate of Jamaica, I thought that I would like to encourage our young writers to perform at the highest level, and I am grateful to Douglas Trevor and Linda Gregerson, at the University of Michigan for agreeing to establish this prize. The details can be read online, but basically it is open to Jamaican poets between the ages of 17 and 25. Applicants are asked to submit a portfolio of between three to six pieces of original work to be appraised by University of Michigan MFA students and faculty, and the winner will receive a prize of US\$1,000.



Lorna Goodison
(Photo: The Scottish National Library)

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An Interview With Poet Laureate Lorna Goodison

LORNA from Page 1

Since becoming Poet Laureate I have given a number of talks and readings in schools and libraries and I've met young people who are really serious about poetry. By establishing this prize, I am doing my best to encourage the development of a new generation of young Jamaican poets. The winner will be announced at a special function on World Poetry Day, March 21.

I had the chance to read recently of your going to South Africa to deliver the Nadine Gordimer Memorial Lecture to the 5th African Women International Writers' Symposium. Huge congratulations on that. Can you take a moment here to talk about what that experience was like for you? As well, you seemed to be saying, in the lecture that I read, that women's stories add a necessary counterpoint to the male stories that you read about Africa. How necessary is it to hear female perspectives and voices in writing?

Delivering the Nadine Gordimer Memorial Lecture at the 5th African Women International Writer's Conference in Johannesburg, or Jo'burg as South Africans call it, was an extraordinary experience. I had been blessed to travel to Southern Africa three times before, twice to give readings at the International Poetry Festival in Durban, and once when I accompanied my husband, who was a Rhodes Scholar, to a gathering of the newly established Rhodes Mandela Trust in Cape Town. Anyone who knows my work knows that I always felt a profound connection to the people of Southern Africa; and my poem "Bedsread", which was written for Winnie Mandela and that I had the honour of reading to her in person here in Jamaica in 1994, is a poem that I still get requests to



Road of the Dread Rastaman by Lorna Goodison — from the collection of Dan Kelly, photograph of painting by Hugh Wright

read. I have over the years met and shared platforms with a number of African women writers whose work I greatly value because they write from their own very unique perspective. In 2000, at a Commonwealth Conference organised by Michael Schmidt of Carcanet Press, I met and spent time in the company of Nadine Gordimer, and so I was able to speak first-hand about that experience in my talk.

Now, more than ever, it is important to examine things from the female perspective. The half that has never been told is now loudly demanding to be told. As someone who has been trying to tell my side of that half for over 50 years, I say this is a good thing. The world is experiencing something of a seismic shift when it comes to matters of gender, and if this movement is handled right, then the world just might receive a badly needed measure of nurturing and healing.

I am sure you are familiar with "not being new to this, but being true to this". A little later on in the interview, I will take up the ways in which I see you continually experimenting in your work. But more and more there seems to be an explosion of Caribbean voices and Caribbean literature in the marketplace. I wonder how do you, as someone who has been around for some time, make sense of all the new Caribbean voices now vying for attention? What advice would you give to someone trying to make their way out into the world of publishing, as a writer from Jamaica?

Speaking as someone who started writing when there was very little to gain from being a Caribbean writer, I am pleased that there are now so many more opportunities for publishing, prizes, fellowships, etc for our writers. Here is the thing: a real writer usually writes because that is what he or she has to do; and if this is so, they are in for the long

haul. Personally, I resisted the idea of being a writer for a number of reasons, but no matter how hard I tried, I could not avoid writing poems and stories. I used to destroy them, but they kept coming. There were years when I was putting my energy into other things, years when I assumed writing had gone away and left me to my own ill-advised devices. As it turns out, what was happening was that my voice was just being cultured in a new and different way, and that culturing process takes time. When it was good and ready, poetry came out in that new way in the form of my "Heartease" poems.

All I'm saying is that sometimes this writing business *writes you* more than you write it, and if that is so, what you produce is not going to be dictated by any marketplace. So, let everyone write and let everyone produce and some will be sprinters (but only one will be the Usain or the Shelly-Ann!) and some will be long-distance runners.

But maybe I need to temper that question, because I can attest to the struggle that poets in particular face in getting published. Recently, someone I quite like asked me, why write poetry? What in the world can the writing of poetry do for you? What is the role and function and uses of poetry to a place often in crisis like our beloved Jamaica?

Why write poetry? Well, for one thing we need to accept that there is probably never going to be really huge audiences for poetry in our part of the world. But you never know. I was just in New York City taking part in a celebration in honour of the life and work of Derek Walcott that was held at the 92nd Street Y. It was a freezing cold night, but the huge auditorium was filled with people who had come to hear poets and writers sing praises to our great Caribbean poet. The best-selling poet in the world today is Mowlana Jalal ad-Din Balkhi known to us as Rumi, who was born in Afghanistan 800 years ago. All kinds of people today draw deep consolation and joy from Rumi's words. Who could have guessed that something like that would have happened?

Poetry is one of the gifts we human beings have been given to help make our lives easier, and people used to know this. When I was growing up everybody in Jamaica who had passed through primary school knew poems because they'd been made to memorise them. People knew memory gems — "Little deeds of Kindness, little words of Love, make the mighty ocean and the stars above". Think about that for a minute, what that little couplet is saying is the universe is created by acts of love and kindness; love and kindness are creative forces. Poetry is, as one poet said, "one person's inside talking to another person's inside". This describes that feeling you get when you read or hear something and your reaction is, *That is exactly what I was feeling, or That is exactly what I was thinking.* When that happens you do not feel so alone in the

world. So, for as long as we are thinking, feeling human beings we will need poets to express people's innermost thoughts, to help speak for people who have no voice. Writing on behalf of people who have no voice is something that poets must do, especially in times and places in crisis. Real poets have to have a sympathetic imagination, they have to have the negative capability that John Keats spoke of, they have to be able to imagine themselves into other people's lives and into situations that they themselves have not actually experienced. To aspiring poets I'll just quote what Miss Lou used to say to me at various stages of my life when my career was not always moving forward: "Lorna, tek wey yu get, so till yu get wey yu want".

About publishing, there are more Caribbean writers being published today, both by mainstream and by smaller presses, than there were when I started out. And there is online publishing which is a great way to begin to get readership for your work. But I definitely agree that we have to try to make much more happen on that front for writers in the region.

You have by now published fiction, non-fiction, and criticism. Your oeuvre as a writer is quite diverse. Yet "poet" is the title you seem to prefer, more so than "writer". Why is this so?

It took me a long time to refer to myself as a poet. I felt that I had to earn that right. I also think that often you yourself cannot just decide that you are a poet; usually some acknowledged poet identifies you as such. The best example of this is to be found in the short story, *B Wordsworth*, by VS Naipaul. And yes, I have written non-fiction and fiction, but my default position is still poet. How do I explain this? Poetry is my darling? Love it like cook food? Seriously. Poetry has saved my life on more than one occasion; it has led me to the best parts of myself. There have been times when I found it hard to pray, but I am always able to pray through reading and writing poetry. Poetry gave me a structured inner life at times when I was experiencing chaos in my outer life. Poems I have written have helped to give shape to my inner turmoil. People have told me that some of my poems have helped them through times of loss and trials, and that they read my poems at weddings and funerals. Someone once wrote to me to say that he keeps a copy of "Heartease" next to his bible. Why should I not privilege the name poet above writer?

One of the issues that invariably come up at conferences and such, is that of writers who write within and those who write from outside the Caribbean. You have done both. A two-part question here: Firstly, do you believe writers who write outside of the Caribbean have any special responsibilities in how they choose to write about and represent the Caribbean? Then: Do you see developments in the Caribbean that are making it less and less necessary for writers to leave for the metropole?

God A Me

BY LORNA GOODISON

Tide wash me out of the river
sweep me up onto the bank.

I was swimming in sync
so with the live currents

of the big rivers, one hundred
rivers of this green island.

Now here I am beached
but still breathing.

They say I am the only one
who can live so,

outside of the water culture
where fish flourish and grow.

Fish out of water
God a me.

Fish live on land
God a me.

Slightly amphibian
God a me.

My name itself a prayer:
God a me.

On land I breathe uneasy
but still breathe though

until the tides of mercy
pull me

back into
the flow.

God a me.

I am not sure that we can tell writers what and what not to do. Most writers are iconoclasts, and they value their own opinions highly. That is to say, some of them have big egos. But having said that, I have been known to get really upset at some disparaging one-sided depictions of life in the Caribbean that are so sensational and weird that you have to wonder what would motivate someone to write some of those things. Money and fame? I once had a student in the United States say that, judging by the books he'd read from the region, the Caribbean must be the worst place in the world for a child to grow up. That hurt me to mi heart! I'd say that maybe writers have responsibility to at least be fair to their subject, and that writers who do not really know the area should do careful research before they write about us. I am strangely optimistic about the Caribbean, I cannot explain why. There is much evidence to the contrary, but I somehow believe that we are going to turn a corner, that good things are going to happen and this will create more

opportunities for writers to remain at home and to thrive. Look at what happened when a visionary like Glen Mills decided that we should coach our athletes at home. Now the whole world is coming to him! This could happen with our writers. Why am I using so many sports analogies? Maybe because I have an old-girl crush on Usain Bolt?!

As our writing tradition matures, one of the questions that I am faced with as a reader of Caribbean literature is how to draw the line between being influenced by a writer, and just making off with an author's imagery and style and techniques. When does influence become plagiarism in creative works? What words of wisdom do you have to offer on this issue?

Many writers begin by imitating other writers they admire. But as you develop, you have to find your own voice or all you will end up being is a good imitator or somebody who uses tracing paper to copy over other people's words. I personally think that it is best to spend time cultivating your own voice, and the unique circumstances of your life are what will make your voice distinctive. Nobody else will have lived your life but you, so even when you are assuming a mask, you will be masking in your own one-of-a-kind way. Something else to consider is that many people come to poetry as a result of having been broken in some way, many poems are written from places of terrible pain, and that cri de coeur, or cry from the heart, is something that is hard won. It should be respected.

Now turning to your quite substantial collected poems recently published by Carcanet in the United Kingdom. In your very first collection of poems there is a poem entitled "A Brief History of a Jamaican Family", which seems to be the introduction in your work to the fact that history will become a trope that you will return to again and again. Why the fascination with history and what would you say is your muse?

"A Brief History of a Jamaican Family" is one of my very early poems. I believe it was published in the Carifesta anthology in 1976. I'd thought about reading history at UWI but I decided to study art instead, and to do what some scholars call "history from below". I have done jobs which required me to do 'field' work, so I've ended up interviewing people from all walks of Jamaican life who have versions of history that are not found in books. All my work is engaged at some level with history. The muse of memory is the muse of poetry. History and memory are fellow travellers. I suspect that for as long as I keep writing, I will be drawing inspiration from our heartbreakingly tragic yet strangely redemptive history. I feel deep love and undying gratitude to all my ancestors who suffered and struggled and refused to give up so that I can be here. If I can honour them by writing about them, I am going to, as we say, "do my endeavour best". Also, writing poems that are inspired by historical

events is another way to teach others about our history.

You know, Lorna, one question that I have always wanted to ask you is, where for you is Heartease? Is Heartease an actual place in Jamaica? Similarly, what can you tell me about search-mi-heart flowers? Are those for you real flowers? How did you come up with that name? To me, those two things, along your guinea woman great grandmother, are indelibly linked to your work.

I was a trainee bookmobile librarian at the Jamaica Library Service — my first real job after I left school — when I was sent to work in Manchester, St Elizabeth and Westmoreland and I saw the signpost for "Heartease" through the window of the big bookmobile as we were driving through Manchester. I was so moved by the sight of this place with such a blessed name, that years later I began to write about it as this mythical place of goodness and light. I believe there is actually more than one Heartease district in Jamaica. For me though, Heartease is internal, it is a site of Peace, Hope and Possibility, and some days I feel close to it, some days it seems very far away. Still, I know now that it is the *journey* to reach that Heartease state that is important. The glimpses of it we get along the way are what keep us going.

As for the search-mi-heart, it is a real plant, a type of bush used to make tea. It is supposed to be good for heart palpitations or fluttering. I have come to believe that it is very important to search one's heart on a regular basis, and by heart I mean our internal life.

The actual Jamaican landscape stands out in your poetry, particularly Jamaican fruits and flowers and of course the Blue Mountains. But one huge revelation in reading your collected poems is your fascination with the constellation, with stars, the moon and with light. What is behind this fascination?

You know, when I started to teach at the University of Michigan, I got into the habit of reading, for at least two hours every day, some poetry or fiction I'd never read before or some book about a subject I find interesting. I went to a lot of great lectures and readings during my time in Ann Arbor, and if I found those talks or lectures engaging, I'd go off and read more about the subject. In 2000, I got married to Ted Chamberlin, who is a brilliant literary critic and social activist. He is also my great encourager, so when for example, I was asked by the South Bank Center to take part in a special celebration to commemorate the anniversary of the publication of *Dante's Inferno*, Ted got me every English translation of the *Inferno* ever written and I spent time in 'hell' reading multiple translations of *Dante's Inferno* for weeks! I ended up rewriting *Canto 12- Brunetto Latini*, and setting it in Jamaica. Since then I have rewritten three other cantos, and I might be ready to tackle another now. I have come to believe that in order to write and to teach creative writing you have to be interested in, and to have a fair amount of knowledge about almost

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An Interview With Poet Laureate Lorna Goodison

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every subject, including the constellations and what the *King James Bible* — I am a big fan of the *King James Bible* — refers to as “the great lights”, that is the sun and the moon and the stars.

Your mother was a seamstress, and she returns in one form or another in all of your collections, to date. Sewing arises forcefully as a trope in your works, particularly so in your later writings. So, tell us, Lorna, a little about your mother Dorice. How did she learn to sew? What were some of her notable creations that you remember? Do you still have some of the things that she created?

My mother was a great and generous soul. She was powerful and beautiful. Very strong, you did not mess with her, but she was amazingly kind-hearted and she was highly intelligent. She had been a teacher before she got married to my father Marcus — I want to put in a word for my father here, he was one classy guy, caring and loving of all his children, Barbara, Howard, Carmen, Vaughan, Kingsley and Karl, Keith, Lorna and Nigel. He had a great work ethic, he was a trusted friend in whom many important people in Jamaican society confided, and he had a killer sense of humour which we all inherited along with his love of music; everybody in my family is passionate about music. Anyway, I learned many sweet little poems and all sorts of stories from my mother Dorice. Her family, the Harveys, were big-time Anglicans, so she was very familiar with the language of the *Book of Common Prayer* and her speech was rich with all sorts of high and low references. She is the person who encouraged my eldest sister to become a journalist, and I believe if she had lived at another time, she would have become a writer.

I learned much from watching my mother sew. One of my favourite definitions of a poet is that of “maker”. I like the idea that you are actually making something when you write a poem. When my mother and her sisters Cleodine, Albertha — also called Jo and Ann — sewed dresses (only Aunt Rose never sewed) they paid close attention to everything from how the fabric looked in different lights, to how it would fall if you cut it on the bias as opposed to just cutting it straight, and they made sure that the inside was finished as neatly as the outside, all kinds of things like that. I think I try to do something like that when I write poems. I’m not sure where they learned to sew, but my aunt Cleodine had gone to a special school run by an English woman and maybe she learned sewing there, because she was actually a world-class seamstress, who had a highly developed aesthetic sense. She was the eldest so she may have taught her younger sisters. My mother used to sew the most gorgeous dresses. I remember one off-white damask linen dress with a circular skirt that must have had at least five yards of cloth in it that she made for my sister Barbara. It could have been in the pages of *Vogue*! I lost all the beautiful dresses she made for me to Hurricane Gilbert.

In the later poems, there is a lot of transience, restlessness and movement. On the one hand, I read these as the natural outcome of partaking perhaps unconsciously in the triangular trade route travelling among Africa, Europe and the Americas. Yet, there is a resistance to the notion of exile by the narrator of these poems, who insists she is not in exile from Jamaica, simply “making life” away from Jamaica. How is exile different from making life and how do you as the poet of these poems understand the restlessness and the constant movement and travel, particularly in the later poems of the collected works?

Other people have drawn attention to the themes of transience, restlessness, and constant movement in my work, especially the later work. The fact that I have been doing a great deal of moving up and down, working and living in several different places during the second half of my life, has come as a great surprise to me, because

So Who Was The Mother of Jamaican Art?

BY LORNA GOODISON

She was the first nameless woman who created images of her children sold away from her. She suspended those wood babies from a rope round her neck, before she ate she fed them, touched bits of pounded yam and plantains to sealed lips; always urged them to sip water. She carved them of heartwood, teeth and nails were her first tools, later she wielded a blunt blade. Her spit cleaned face and limbs, the pitch oil of her skin burnished. When the woodworms bored into their bellies, she warmed castor oil; they purged. She learned her art by breaking hard rockstones. She did not sign her work.

I never thought that I’d ever live outside of Jamaica. But as my beloved cousin Joan Moran once said to me when she came to visit me when I spent a year at the Bunting Institute in Cambridge Massachusetts, “If God can’t move you, God can’t use you”. That is the only explanation I have for all the restlessness, etc. My dear son Miles, who moved back to Jamaica a few years ago, says he is in no hurry to go travelling anywhere. I think this may be because he has lived with me in so many different places.

Continuing on the theme of travel, there is a deepening understanding of what New York City means to the consciousness writing these poems. But it suddenly occurred to me that most artists going abroad to study when you did perhaps most likely went to Europe, specifically England, for their training. But for you that was different. Why did you choose to study in New York City as opposed to England? What was your time in New York City and at the Art Students League like? Who did you study with and what kind of work did you produce? Were you writing poems at this time as well as painting? If yes, how did you juggle doing both art forms at once? Do you still paint today?

I went to New York because I wanted to go to the School of the Art Students League. I believe it was Karl and Seya Parboosingh, who were good friends with my sister Barbara and her husband Ancile Gloudon, who recommended that I go there. Jamaican painters like Cecil Cooper, Vernal Rueben and others had also studied at what I believe might be the oldest art school in the USA. So I guess I was just doing what some others before me had done. I’d done art and art history for “A” levels and taken private lessons with artists like Moira Small and Valerie Bloomfield before going to the Jamaica School of Art where I was taught by people like Colin Garland, Kofi Kiyiga, Fitz Harrack — who was courting the brilliant Norma Harrack in those days — Vernal Rueben, Winston Patrick, and Gene Pearson. At the School of the Art Students League in New York, I studied portrait painting with Robert Brachman and I took a class with the great African-American painter Jacob Lawrence, who taught me many important lessons. For example, I learned from Mr Lawrence not to spend too much time over-thinking things. He’d always tell me, “Just go and do the work.” I live by those words. I have never been inclined to get into too many discussions with anybody about my creative endeavours. I have always kept that to myself. I just try to do the work.

Strangely enough, I wrote a lot of my early poetry when I was studying to be a painter. Many of the poems in my first book *Tamarind Season* came from that time. In a way, I became a poet in New York. Today I no longer consider myself to be a painter, but I go to museums a lot, and I think and write a great deal about painting, about all the

arts. I have, for example, been thinking a lot about public monuments, and the effect they can have on a society. But that is a whole other interview!

Another thing I noticed is that you write many poems about visual artists and their work, but overwhelmingly, the visual artists you write about are male, with the exception of a quite moving poem about the work of Petrona Morrison and the poem “So Who Was The Mother Of Jamaican Art?” I am wondering what your thoughts are on this observation, and if you can unpack for us the reason you wrote that quite powerful poem questioning the matrilineal provenance of Jamaican art?

My poem “Who Was The Mother of Jamaican Art” was inspired by some of the thinking I’ve been doing about where art comes from. I read about enslaved women making carvings of human figures representing the children they had sold away from them, in an article by Tekla Mekfet, and the poem came out of that. I knew Edna Manley quite well during the 1970s, and I’m sure she’d agree that the first mother of Jamaican art would have been an enslaved African woman whose art was born out of unspeakable circumstances and whose work would have been unsigned. I wonder about things like that a lot. Can you imagine how many gifted people were lost to the world because of the abomination that was the Atlantic Slave Trade? I am grateful to historians like the great Philip Sherlock, Lucille Mair, Swithin Wilmot, Patrick Bryan, Rupert Lewis, Maureen Warner-Lewis, Verene Shepherd and Hilary Beckles for the influence their work has had me; and yes, although I have written a poem for my dear friend Petrona Morrison, and I’ve credited Kara Walker, you are right, I do need to engage more with art made by women.

Finally, there are praise songs in many of the poems in your collected works, but two that really stand out are dedicated to your contemporary poets Velma Pollard and Derek Walcott. It is indeed breathtaking that one poet should “turn thanks” to other poets in her work. Why did you feel the need to do this?

I learned a very important lesson after the publication of *Tamarind Season*. In that book, I dedicated poems to people who were just friends and, in some instances, almost casual acquaintances, people I was not particularly close to, but whom I maybe just liked. I discovered after that, that there is a kind of reader and/or critic who reads a lot into a dedication, and they usually read way more than I actually intended. So since then I have become very careful about who warrants a poem from me. It goes without saying that Derek Walcott more than deserves praise poems by the bushel for all he has done for poetry. My poem dedicated or ‘livicated’ (as Rastafari would say, and Velma Pollard being a boss of dread talk would agree) to her, came about because I once heard her give a very funny and smart reading of the loincloth worn by Bombo the little boy who lived in the Congo, a story taken from *The Royal Primer*, which we used to read in primary school. It is meet and right to praise; writing praise poems is something all good poets are must and bound to do.

The Gymnast & Other Positions is Jacqueline Bishop’s most recent book, which was awarded the 2016 OCM Bocas Award in Non-Fiction. Bishop, an associate professor at New York University, is also the author of *My Mother Who Is Me: Life Stories from Jamaican Women in New York* and *Writers Who Paint/Painters Who Write: Three Jamaican Artists*. She was a 2008-2009 Fulbright Fellow to Morocco, and the 2009-2010 UNESCO/Fulbright Fellow.

