Not Quite Without a Moon

From the earliest poems published in the 1950s, Ian McDonald has been a distinctive and admired voice in Caribbean poetry.

AUTHOR Ian McDonald

The latest poetry collection from the bestselling author of The Hummingbird Tree.

Ian McDonald’s poetry embraces Caribbean possibility with a romantic fervour which still acknowledges what is harsh and painful in the region.

“McDonald is dying proof of the sustaining life of West Indian poetry.” PN Review

Ian McDonald’s Collected Poems (2018) was marked by a late flush of exceptional new poems that addressed both the infirmities of ageing as well as its continuing joys. That flow of memory has continued, addressing a long, rich life from a childhood in Antigua, youth in Trinidad and an adult life lived in Guyana. It was not to be halted by anything as malleable as the word “collected”, and this collection of poems from the past four years is more than just a “brawta” to bring back from the market to enjoy. There is the mystery of why certain memories, dormant for decades, suddenly emerge, like a childhood nightmare still as real 80 years later, or how in one’s own elder years, recollections of one’s parents take on a pertinence and vividness of presence. But it is not merely the past that revisits but an immersion in the present that has never been more real and precious in every respect. If the world has become, increasingly, one’s house and garden, its inhabitants one’s wife, children and grandchildren, it is experienced as not a jot less rich than anything in the past – indeed ever more precious for its evanescence. Ian McDonald writes that he is simply the recipient, the receiving station of what arrives in his head. He denigrates his gift for exactness, for the telling detail, for the right word, gifts that have been cultivated by a long life of writing.

AUTHOR DETAILS
Ian McDonald was born in Trinidad in 1933. He read History and Cambridge and was a gifted tennis player and captained both the Cambridge and the West Indies Davis cup team. He first went to Guyana in 1955 and spent his working life there, as CEO of Bookers. He is the author of four poetry collections, and editor of two anthologies of West Indian writing. He now lives in Canada.

Peepal Tree Press, 17 Kings Avenue Leeds LS6 1QS
Poems of Good Love . . . and Sometimes Fantasy

A bi-lingual edition of Jonathan Cohen’s translation

AUTHOR Pedro Mir
TRANSLATED BY Jonathan Cohen

In following up his translation of Contração a Walt Whitman / Countersong to Walt Whitman, the publication of Jonathan Cohen’s translation of Poemas de buen amor... y a veces de fantasía, by the great national poet of the Dominican Republic, and an unquestionably major Caribbean poet, Pedro Mir, shows another side entirely of Mir’s work: intensely political in the Countersong, sensual and erotic in Poems of Good Love. There is a challenge that the translator rises to in making English language poems that are truthful to the deliberately opaquer language of this collection in comparison to the communicative clarity of Mir’s more overtly political collections. Here, Mir sets himself the task of writing about love in a way that is truthful to the Marxist historical materialism he embraced, in contrast to what he saw as the conventions of love poetry where love is seen as some kind of disembodied spiritual experience. As the introduction by Silvio Torres-Saillant makes clear, there were negatives as well as positives that followed from the task Mir set himself. It is obvious that fifty years ago (1969), feminism had not yet penetrated Mir’s Latin American Marxism and there are elements of the patriarchal, indeed of the religiously Catholic in Mir’s insistence that the chief purpose of love is procreation. What Mir triumphantly gives us, though, is a celebration of the carnality of love and the sheer joy of sex as the biological gift that (perhaps) ensures our continuance as a human species.

With an introduction by Silvio Torres-Saillant

AUTHOR DETAILS
Pedro Mir (1913–2000) is recognized as the Dominican Republic’s foremost literary figure of the twentieth century. Since publishing his first poems in 1937, he sought through literature to place the Caribbean experience in global historical perspective. He also produced work in the fields of history, fiction, and art criticism and theory. In 1993 he received the National Prize for Literature, the highest honor a literary artist can receive in the Dominican Republic. On the occasion of Mir’s death, the president of the Dominican Republic declared three days of national mourning and celebrated the poet’s memory and his work: “[Don Pedro] will always be with us because his thinking was transcendent, and he truly fathomed the national Dominican soul.”
Archipelagos

Powerful call-to-arms from an established poet exposing the relationship between the climate crisis and the malignancies of empire and colonialism

AUTHOR: Geoffrey Philp

This collection is a call to arms that opens out the struggle for human survival in the epoch of the Anthropocene to remind us that this began not just in the factories of Europe but in the holds of the slave ships and plantations of the Caribbean. No natural world was more changed than the West Indian islands by sugar monoculture – and as the title poem begins: “At the end of this sentence, a flood will rise/ and swallow low-lying islands of the Caribbean”. Historically, “the debris of empire that crowd our shores” connects to the “sands of our beaches / littered with masks and plastic bottles.” Philp’s powerful and elegant poems that span past and present make it very clear that there cannot be a moral response to the climate crisis that is not also embedded in the struggle for social justice, for overcoming the malignancies of empire and colonialism and against the power of global capitalism – the missions of the West that had and have at their heart the ideology of white supremacy. These are poems of wit and anger, but also of personal intimacy – the vexed relationship with a violent father – and line after line of the shapeliest poetry – in sound, in rhythm and the exact choice of word.

AUTHOR DETAILS
Geoffrey Philp is Jamaican writer and critic living in Miami. He has published eleven books, including six collections of poetry and four works of fiction from Peepal Tree Press. In 2022, he was awarded Jamaica’s Silver Musgrave Medal for outstanding merit in literature.
The Colour of Forgetting

A powerful reflection on family, community, silenced voices, incomprehensions and human connection, set against a sweeping historical background.

AUTHOR Merle Collins

- Generational narrative
- Historical and cultural interest - novel covers period of slavery through to the rise of Marxism and the US invasion of Grenada
- Introduction by the distinguished Canadian novelist, Douglas Glover.

Set on the Caribbean island of Paz (not a million miles from Grenada), this is a book that creates a space between epic poetry and the novel in the way its sequence of interludes bring into focus the lives of family and community through time – and in the confinements of space. It moves from the days of slavery through to the 1980s, through the difficult inheritance of one family – or rather the disinheritance of those in the family born illegitimate. Throughout, the novel conveys a powerful sense of place, of both attachment and confinement, of the meaning of land in relation to the island’s smallness, and the ever-present danger of the communal violence that can spring from those pressures. Through the generations comes the voice of three generations of the women the islanders know as Carib, warner women, whose prophecies of disaster are dismissed as madness, but who have an unerring sense of what is to come. Signalled in her title, Merle Collins has much to say about the nature of memory and the fatal nature of amnesia when it comes to the lessons of the past. Whilst the book is written in the continuing shadow of Grenada’s catastrophe of 1983, it signals hope in small things: the courage of women like Mamag who will not be silenced, the reconciliation between father and son that crosses the incomprehension between generations, the capacity of a young man to confront his innermost fears.

AUTHOR DETAILS
Merle Collins is the author of two novels, a collection of short stories and three collections of poetry. She was born in Aruba to Grenadian parents who returned to Grenada soon after her birth. She was deeply involved in the Grenadian revolution and served as a coordinator for Research on Latin America and the Caribbean for the Government of Grenada. She left Grenada in 1983.
The Selected Diaries and Writings of Henry Swanzy: Ichabod 1948-58

EDITORS Michael Niblett, Victoria Ellen Smith, Chris Campbell

AUTHOR Henry Swanzy

Swanzy was the editor of BBC Caribbean Voices, which launched the careers of key Caribbean and African writers

Extensive appendix with all the writers mentioned in the diary

"an unrivalled and often witty account of the Caribbean Voices and West African Voices programmes and the writing personalities involved in the crucial 1950s period." - DAVID DABYDEEN

Henry Swanzy (1915-2004) has an unrivalled position as the midwife of Caribbean writing in the post 1950s period. As the editor of the BBC Caribbean Voices programme (initiated by Una Marson) between 1946 and 1956, he was there as the careers of George Lamming, Edgar Mittelholzer, Jan Carew, V.S. Naipaul, Sam Selvon and many others took off in London. As a programme aimed in the first place at a Caribbean listenership, Swanzy encouraged writing that was authentic to its Caribbean roots, in language, theme and social concern. As an Irishman, Swanzy retained enough of a post-colonial sensibility to be positively sympathetic to the nationalist thrust of the writing. He was evidently well-respected by the writers to whom he offered both literary and personal support - and not least for his awareness of their pecuniary needs. Once Caribbean Voices was well established, it was left in the hands of Caribbean editors (including Mittelholzer and V.S. Naipaul) and Swanzy himself went off to Ghana in 1956 to encourage and support writers and broadcasting there. Thanks to the generosity of Swanzy’s heirs, his private and often amusingly indiscreet diaries of this period (known as "Ichabod") have been made available and carefully edited and documented by the team of Niblett, Campbell and Smith. With an introduction that puts Swanzy and these radio programmes in context, this is both an essential, entertaining and highly readable book for anyone even remotely interested in the development of Caribbean writing. Not least of its value is the extensive appendix where Niblett et al. have documented all the writers mentioned in the diary. This, in itself, is a salutary reminder of the wealth of writing talent in both the Caribbean and Ghana that flowered in this period but then, in the absence of other opportunities, in many cases undeservedly disappeared from view.
Azúcar: a novel

'Intensely imagined, and beautifully rendered' - Neel Mukherjee

AUTHOR Nii Ayikwei Parkes

- A novel that plays with a lyrical style of prose.
- Themes of exploring what it means to belong to a piece of land.
- Nii Ayikwei Parkes is a recipient of Ghana’s ACRAG award for poetry and literary advocacy

Azúcar (sugar) is a novel about belonging in a world where all things are on the move: people, ideas, foods and not least music. Oswald Kole Osabutey Jnr, henceforth Yunior, leaves his family in Accra to travel to the mythical Caribbean island of Fumaz where the revolutionary philosophy of peopleism just about keeps its flame alive against the forces of a USSRs-inspired political bureaucracy and a stifling trade blockade from imperialist USAs. Yunior brings the knowledge of the scientist, the skills of a farmer and the heart and invention of a musician to life in Fumaz. He must find some way of rescuing the island’s famed sweet rice industry from collapse; as farmer, he sees how much of his West African food has journeyed across the Atlantic to make the island’s unique cuisine; as musician he becomes part of the spirit that puts the island on the world stage, out of all proportion to its size. This is a novel of ideas – how much is accidental in the world? How much can be planned? – but it is love and death, harmony and conflict and the motives of vividly drawn characters that are the drivers of this zany narrative whose prose is as flowing, elegant and heartfelt as the music that moves freely back and forth across the seas between Africa and the Caribbean.

AUTHOR DETAILS
Nii Ayikwei Parkes, born in the UK to parents from Ghana, where he was raised, is a writer, editor and socio-cultural commentator. A recipient of Ghana’s ACRAG award for poetry and literary advocacy, he is Senior Editor at flipped eye publishing. Winner of multiple awards, notably the Prix Laure Bataillon for the French translation of his novel Tail of the Blue Bird, he splits his time between Ghana and the UK, where he produces literature events and teaches.
Patterflash

An impressive and inventive debut collection from an exciting, queer northern voice.

AUTHOR
Adam Lowe

- A stunning debut collection.
- Writing from the north.
- Authentic and Own Voices queer representation.

*Patterflash* embraces the performative, self-ironising aesthetic of campness but, as a mask, it is a complex and very malleable one, capable of showing features of tenderness, bravery, righteous anger and sometimes sadness and alarm – as well as the comedic. Within a collection that displays an engaging variety of language registers, both ‘high’ and ‘low’ in tone, the masking sometimes makes use of Polari, the gay street language that simultaneously reveals and conceals, excludes and invites, estranges and makes familiar. The collection connects the poet as a wry, humane observer of the scene, particularly as conducted in Manchester, and the persona of “Adam Lowe” as both actor in and narrator of his own dramas, who performs, exults and sometimes suffers in a wide range of guises and disguises.

What unites them is the urge to embrace the possibilities of being exactly who you want to be whatever the complications or consequences of your choice. From the four-year-old boy who, though always easy in his mixedness of race, also wants to wear a blonde woman’s wig without any angst of self-contradiction, through the poems delighting in the frank physicality of gay sex, to the mature man experiencing domestic contentment, Adam Lowe takes us on a journey rich in observation and always in a poetry that makes an art of patterflash.

AUTHOR DETAILS
Adam Lowe is a writer, performer and publisher from Leeds, UK, though he currently lives in Manchester. He is the UK’s LGBT+ History Month Poet Laureate and was Yorkshire’s Poet for 2012. He writes poetry, plays and fiction, and he occasionally performs in drag as Beyonce Holes. He is of mixed Caribbean (St. Kitts), British and Irish descent. He graduated with both a BA and MA from the University of Leeds.
Goodbye Bay
A new Trinidadian page-turner.

AUTHOR Jennifer Rahim

Goodbye Bay is simply one of the very best Caribbean novels to have been written, and not just in recent years.

It tells a gripping story with room for surprise, humour, tragedy and redemption.

It is 1963, one year after Independence, and Trinidadians are beginning to wonder what they can expect. Anna takes a temporary post at a remote post office in a small coastal town, hoping to escape a failed relationship, and the drama, pressures and politics of her city life. But neither time or space is granted, as the life of Macaima passes through the post office, and Anna reluctantly begins to take on the villagers' stories – which prove to be just as complicated and enmeshed in the social, cultural and political issues that divide the nation as her own. Long before the year is up, Anna has been immersed in an intense seasoning in Macaima that will change her for ever. Macaima is a magical place of intense and unforgettable characters, which Jennifer Rahim draws with exceptional psychological subtlety. And Anna herself – flawed, a little prickly and sometimes too ready to jump to conclusions – is a complex narrator whom we ultimately trust and care for. As an historical novel it asks probing questions about the nature of the means and ends of the project of Independence and its failures with respect to race, class, gender and sexuality.

Goodbye Bay is simply one of the very best Caribbean novels to have been written, and not just in recent years. Written in a seamless mix of sharply observed realism with moments of rich humour, and of numinous poetic intensity, it tells a gripping story with room for surprise, humour, tragedy and redemption.

AUTHOR DETAILS
Jennifer Rahim is an award-winning Trinidadian writer of poetry, fiction and literary criticism. She has published three earlier collections of poetry: Approaching Sabbaths, winner of the Casa de las Américas Prize, Redemption Rain, and Ground Level. Her published fiction includes Songster and Other Stories and Curfew Chronicles, winner of the 2018 overall OCM Bocas Prize for Caribbean Literature.
Bath of Herbs

- A love letter to the connection between nature and humanity.
- Beautiful eco-poetry.
- On the healing qualities of herbs and nature.

Poems deal frankly with the fragilities of life, but linking the whole is an engagement with the possibilities of healing: as in the bath of herbs in which her grandmother bathed her mother after giving birth; in the physicality of running and purificatory swimming in a river; in the care a hospital gives to her child and in the healing power of the natural world.

AUTHOR DETAILS
Emily Zobel Marshall is a Reader in Cultural Studies at Leeds Beckett University. She is an expert on the trickster figure in the folklore, oral cultures and literature of the African Diaspora and has published widely in these fields. She has also established a Caribbean Carnival Cultures research platform and network that aims to bring the critical, creative, academic and artistic aspects of carnival into dialogue with one another. She is a regular contributor to BBC radio discussions on racial politics and Caribbean culture. She has had poems published in the Peepal Tree Press anthology Weighted Words (2021), Magma (‘The Loss’, Issue 75, 2019), Smoke Magazine (Issue 67, 2020) and The Caribbean Writer (Vol 34, 2020, Vol 35, 2021 & Vol 36, 2021). She is Vice Chair of the David Oluwale Memorial Association, a charity committed to fighting racism and homelessness, and a Creative Associate of the art-based youth charity The Geraldine Connor Foundation.
The mother of the revolutionary firebrand Malcolm X was a Grenadian woman born at the turn of the 20th century in a small rural community in a deeply colonial society where access to education had only just begun for the children of working people. She emigrated to Canada and then the USA, where she became involved in the struggle for Black dignity and human rights then led by Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association. Malcolm X and others of his siblings have testified to their mother’s powerful influence on their lives. Within the sparse facts of Louise Langdon Norton Little’s biography, Merle Collins, the distinguished Grenadian novelist, has created a moving and deeply feminist work of fiction that gives vivid inwardness to both the heroism and tragedy of a life that involved fighting the Ku Klux Klan, discovering that male comrades in the struggle could be abusers at home, recognition of her skills as an organiser, but also a period of mental collapse that saw her incarcerated in a mental hospital until her family fought for her release. What Merle Collins dramatizes is the meeting of a collective struggle for equal rights with an individual life profoundly shaped by growing up with her forceful matriarchal grandmother and by her schooling. In the classroom she meets teachers who show Oseyan, Louise’s family name, how to turn the imperialist ideology of her schoolbooks on its head. These are the contexts of Oseyan’s life, but what Merle Collins most profoundly gives us is its breathing texture, through a mix of fictive narrative, letters and poetry, with episodes of great warmth, exuberant humour and drama, as well as the pathos of separation from community.

AUTHOR DETAILS
Merle Collins was born in Aruba to Grenadian parents who returned to Grenada soon after her birth. She was deeply involved in the Grenadian revolution and served as a coordinator for Research on Latin America and the Caribbean for the Government of Grenada. She left Grenada in 1983. The author of three novels, a collection of short stories and three collections of poetry, she has recently retired from teaching Caribbean Literature at the University of Maryland.
The Go-Away Bird

As a poet who balances careful observation with imaginative flight, Seni Seneviratne addresses both heart and mind.

AUTHOR Seni Seneviratne

Seni Seneviratne’s last collection, Unknown Soldier, was published by Peepal Tree Press in September 2019, and is a Poetry Book Society Recommendation and a National Poetry Day Choice and was Highly Commended in the Forward Prizes 2020.

She is a fellow of the Complete Works programme for diversity and quality in British Poetry.

In her fourth collection, Seni Seneviratne extends her reputation as a fine poet whose incisive social and political concerns are matched by her meticulous care with the shape of each poem and the architecture of her collections, where individual poems are enriched by their place in the whole and their dialogue with each other. In this collection, the connecting thread is the bird, both in its observed physical otherness and as an image that carries cultural and historical resonances. In the first section of the collection, the imagery of the caged bird runs through a sequence of poems that meditate on the silenced voices of enslaved Black children, trapped as picturesque, consumerist trophies in those 18th century paintings to be found in English stately homes, which celebrate their occupants’ gaining of new wealth through the slave trade and slave-grown sugar. The second section of the collection yokes Seneviratne’s skills as a poet with her deep knowledge of the ways of birds in their natural environment – the freedom they possess in their otherness from human concerns. The final section revisits the myth of Philomena from Ovid’s Metamorphoses and puts this tongueless woman/nightingale in dialogue with the gender fluidity of Tiresias to explore different forms of silencing in history and the present. As a poet who balances careful observation with imaginative flight, Seni Seneviratne addresses both heart and mind.

AUTHOR DETAILS
Seni Seneviratne, born and raised in Leeds, is of English and Sri Lankan heritage. She is currently one of ten commissioned writers on the Colonial Countryside Project: National Trust Houses Reinterpreted. She lives in Derbyshire and works as a freelance writer. She is the author of five poetry collections and her poem ‘A Wider View’ is included on the AQA GCSE poetry syllabus.
Colonial Countryside: Creative and Historical Responses

Poems and short stories produced by ten global majority writers featuring National Trust houses with significant colonial histories.

EDITORS Corinne Fowler, Jeremy Poynting

Colonial Countryside is a book of commissioned poems and short stories produced by ten global majority writers featuring National Trust houses with significant colonial histories. This includes properties whose owners engaged in the slavery business, in colonial administration or who were involved with the East India Company or British rule in India.

Historians have accompanied these pieces with commentaries detailing the evidence upon which each creative commission was based. The book ends with a photo essay by the project’s commissioned photographer, Ingrid Pollard, the Turner Prize shortlisted artist who has pioneered critical interventions into the supposed whiteness of the British countryside.

Peter Kalu’s story gives an account of Richard Watt of Speke Hall reflecting on his Jamaican experiences; Karen Onojaife’s story is set in Charlecote Park where a once-favoured Black page finds himself cut adrift; Jacqueline Crooks’ magical realist tale brings together an abused Indian princess and enslaved African employed in the mahogany trade; Ayanna Gillian Lloyd has written about Diego, the Spanish-speaking African who became Drake’s closest confidante; Masuda Snaith’s short story cycle tracks the cross-currents of empire across Lord Curzon’s Kedleston Hall; Maria Thomas’s account of Penrhyn Castle links past and present. It is a gothic tale of history biting back.

Malachi’s story features a young Black man who dates a white girl with a taste for country house visiting, including Calke Abbey. Other contributions include poetic meditations on artefacts to be found in country houses. Hannah Lowe reflects on the taste for Chinoiserie, Seni Seneviratne gives voice to the enslaved children trapped within the frames of 18th century art and Andre Bagoo makes connections between William Blathwayt of Dyrham Park and two stands featuring kneeling African men, brought to the house by his uncle in the seventeenth century.

EDITORS’ DETAILS
Professor Corinne Fowler is a research expert at the University of Leicester, and is Director of Colonial Countryside: National Trust Houses Reinterpreted. She specialises in the legacies of colonialism and postcolonialism to literature, heritage and representations of British history.