

A Broken Appointment

You did not come.
And marching Time drew on, and wore me numb.—
Yet less for loss of your dear presence there
Than that I thus found lacking in your make
That high compassion which can overbear
Reluctance for pure lovingkindness' sake
Grieved I, when, as the hope-hour stroked its sum,
 You did not come.

You love not me,
And love alone can lend you loyalty;
—I know and knew it. But, unto the store
Of human deeds divine in all but name,
Was it not worth a little hour or more
To add yet this: Once you, a woman, came
To soothe a time-torn man; even though it be
 You love not me?

Thomas Hardy – 1901

The Norton Anthology of English Literature. Ed. Stephen Greenblatt, et al. Vol.2. New York:
W. W. Norton & Company, 2006. 1870.

Walking with My Brother in Georgetown

Dih city dying
dih trenches seem smaller
dih streets
dih houses
an everyting an everybody
look suh rundown
an stamp wid dih dry ah hunger

You been away too long girl
smile mih brudder

Dih city dying
we need a purging
new fires burning
some incense
dih sun too indifferent

You been away too long girl
smile mih brudder

An ah hearing dub-music blaring
An ah seeing dih man-youths rocking
Hypnosis on dih streets
Rocking to dih rhythm of dere own deaths
Locked in a shop-front beat

You been away too long girl
smile mih brudder

Dih city dying
we need new blooding
an boning
too many deaths unmourning
Jonestown, Walter
time like it ground still

Hibiscus blooming
People grooving
Girl, why yuh sehing dih city dying
Seh me brudder sighing

Maybe I lying
Maybe I dying.

Grace Nichols – 1984

Hulse, Michael, David Kennedy, and David Morley, eds. *The New Poetry*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1993. 156-57.

“So You Think I’m a Mule?”

“Where do you come from?”

“Im from Glasgow”

“Glasgow?”

“Uh huh.Glasgow”

The white face hesitates

the eyebrows raise

the mouth opens

then snaps shut

incredulous

yet too polite to say outright

liar

she tries another manoeuvre

“And your parents?”

“Glasgow and Fife.”

“Oh?”

“Yes. Oh?”

Snookered she wonders where she should go
from here-

“Ah, but you’re not pure”

“Pure? Pure what.

Pure white? Ugh. What a plight

Pure? Sure I’m pure

I’m rare...”

“Well that’s not exactly what I mean,

I mean...you’re a mulatto, just look at...”

“listen. My original father was Nigerian

to help with your confusion

But hold on right there

If you Dare mutter mulatto hover around hybrid

hobble on half-caste

and intellectualize on the

‘mixed race problem’

I have to tell you:

take your beauty eyes offa my skin;

don’t concern yourself with

the ‘dialectics of mixtures’:

don’t pull that strange blood crap

on me Great White Mother.

Say, I’m no mating of

she-ass and a stallion

no half of this and half of that

to put it plainly purely

I am Black

My blood flows evenly, powerfully

and when they shout ‘Nigger’

and you shout shame

ain’t nobody debating my blackness.

You see that fine African nose of mine,

my lips, my hair, You see lady
I'm not mixed up about it.
So take your questions, your interest,
your patronage. Run along.
Just leave me.
There's a lot of us
Black women struggling to define
just who we are
where we belong
and if we know no home
we know one thing:
we are Black
we're at home with that'
"Well that's all very well, but..."
"I know it's very well.
No But. Goodbye."

Jackie Kay – 1991

Kay, Jackie. "So You Think I'm a Mule?" *The Adoption Papers*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1991.