

## FOR COLUMBUS

Cyril Dabydeen

### I

When grapes are her breasts  
And apples her skin, I am at home--  
I long for Italian brothers, Greek sisters,  
An African father  
                                an Indian mother.

I long with the same longing  
As the clouds coming down, the sky  
About to tilt over  
Like a ship in a hefty sea.

I also long for a French aunt  
Who will elegantly raise her a handkerchief  
In the wind, signalling an archipelago--  
As I cry out, "Islands, islands!"

### II

Now it is you who I remember,  
Your neck bruised, the shadow  
Of an axe coming downing  
                                in the Tower.

You too Cortez, as Montezuma burns  
Inside, his cry resounding in the night;  
You with your Quetzalcoatl face,

A helmet still glinting.

Pizarro next,  
And I watch the Incas in silver mines  
Living out a life, buried in sand, their heads  
Above the ground while the ocean once more  
threatens disaster.

### III

With a Crusoe mask, I listen in the distance,  
Our Friday's commands,  
The Spanish Empire sinking in the background--  
This treasure being all I am left with,  
Bible in hand, the sun whipping by,  
A lopsided moon sinking lower  
into the bottomless sea,

As I try to jump over it, my *paradiso*,  
El Dorado, the heathen sky  
Falls prostrate  
at my feet.