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Lorna Goodison, *Goldengrove: New and Selected Poems*, Carcanet, Manchester, 2006.
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In her new collections of poems, Lorna Goodison and Jacqueline Bishop take us on a Caribbean journey to experience with them the local scents and rhythms, the tropical winds, the ambivalence of cultural origins, and the conflicting urges to fly away or swim back. Each offers a different perspective, yet both explore the very nature of a work of art, and deal with such fundamental themes of contemporary writing as alienation and belonging, exile and homeland, motherhood, and the possibility of combining different languages and traditions.

Lorna Goodison's precious *Goldengrove* opens with her eagerly-awaited 'New Poems' which confirm her standing as one of today's most commanding voices in world poetry. The second and third parts offer poems from *Travelling Mercies* and *Controlling the Silver*, which are read anew, becoming part of another ideal whole. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine them removed from the new order envisioned by the artist. T S Eliot's words on collective memory, on the changes brought upon old works of art by the creation of new ones, ring truer with Goodison's new achievement. Goodison proves once again her miraculous ability to interact with past poets and ancestors, to weave past and present, to recreate old works of art in today's language.

The voyage Goodison has set as the centre of her work, the voyage of ancestors away from freedom and into slavery, comes to symbolise many other voyages, as it also becomes our voyage towards awareness and through the collective artistic memory of humankind.

We join her as she travels through old and new themes, fusing them into a circular structure, where poems from the three parts of the collection echo each other, building on each other, their lines becoming threads, directions, in an ideal route.

Identity and belonging are the first threads we recognize and hold: they become our Ariadne's threads, but also story-lines written in blood and carved on the flesh.

Though the style may vary from one poem to another, the overall structure is that of a single powerful dramatic monologue.

With the introductory sonnet-like 'Balm' the Caribbean magic works on our senses, and we enter a world of sensuality, love and passion, welcomed by fragrances of a chemist's shop, the 'dispenser' who sells love potions, oils full of promises, the 'Oil of hold, oil of keep and never leave'.

We are at first delighted by the long section of 'On Leaving Goldengrove' written in the style of an eighteenth-century verse epistolary novel, where the narrator recounts how he has become 'apprentice to Cassamere', master of five trades. Then, the festive verses give way to stories of loss and exile. The tone is now lyrical and we are following another thread, language. Goodison's fascination with language becomes tangible in 'Where I Come From', where bodies of 'old women' are turned into scriptures, legacies, their flesh inscribed with words, carved with old 'cures' and old stories, transformed into texts for future generations so that tradition, memory and language may be passed on to posterity.

As the first part is coming to a close, and before we move on to meet familiar faces in a new light, we share the sadness of the narrator, who has told us the reasons for going away, for boarding a ship that sailed 'across the wide water' to the 'land/England', a new place that 'I must now make my home' ('Windrush Sankey').

With the past always present, personal histories are interwoven with that of a whole people, as we follow their collective suffering through Goodison's powerful version of Canto XV from Dante's *Inferno* ('Brunetto Latini') to the redeeming beauty of 'Island Aubade', to be soothed at last 'By the Light of a Jamaican Moon'.

We close the book, perhaps Goodison's finest virtuoso language performance, with regret, intoxicated by her elegant verses – her love potions – balm for our souls.