



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 3.0

Roy McFarlane

Arms Outstretched

Dis Rasta arms outstretched
has been chained to rocks, adamantine steel
has held him down, he who dared to defy the Gods
breaking the mold, pulling the pattern apart,
to imagine something new, something beautiful
that begins within and heals without. Dis Rasta
is brown-eyed, dreadlock Christ nailed to a cross,
blood pouring across centuries, a piercing of the side
by the state and the pious church that watched
and hide as waters flowed with healing beyond borders
of religion and rituals *for as much as you did unto them
you did unto me*. Dis Rasta is the thousands of women
arms outstretched pleading for mercy when forced,
sitting on ducking chairs, the ones that sunk
and the ones that survived only to be burnt as witches
by the devils wrapped in cloaks of patriarchy
and a god that looked like them. Dis Rasta
followed Paul Bogle with hundreds of peasants
to Morant Bay. Dis Rasta threw rocks and sticks
and ran as the militia opened fire. Dis Rasta escaped
the flogging of six hundred and the execution
of four hundred more, Dis Rasta is running.
Dis Rasta is the chopped limbs
of the people of Congo under King Leopold's rule.
Dis Rasta is in ghettos, wearing the star of David,
dis Rasta is barefoot walking through *Kristallnacht*.
Dis Rasta is resurrected out of the ashes of holocaust
climbing from under the bones of genocide
only to change garments with Palestinians.
Dis Rasta is a shadow left on the playgrounds
of Hiroshima, arms outstretched against a red sky
running to waters filled with bodies, bloated horses
and black rain, black rain everywhere.
Dis Rasta is running for his life, her life,
running from atrocity to atrocity.
Dis Rasta is a child, dead, curled up on a beach

picked up by the outstretched arm of a stranger
because borders have closed their arms.

Roy McFarlane was born in Birmingham of Jamaican parentage and spent most of his years living in Wolverhampton and the surrounding Black Country. He has held the role of Birmingham's Poet Laureate and presently the Birmingham & Midland Institute Poet in Residence. His poems have appeared in anthologies: *Filigree* (Peepal Trees 2018), *It All Radiates Outwards* (Verve Poetry Press 2018), *Dissonance* (Hesterglock Press 2017), *Somewhere to Keep the Rain* (Winchester Poetry Festival 2017), *Out of Bounds* (Bloodaxe 2012). His previous publications include *Celebrate Wha?* (Smokestack Books 2011) and *Beginning with Your Last Breath* (Nine Arches Press 2016). His latest collection *The Healing Next Time* will be out in October 2018 and he is also completing his MA in Writing Poetry with The Poetry School and Newcastle University.

royjazzoetry@hotmail.co.uk