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BLACK AUNTIES WRITE



An anthology of memory, migration,
womanhood and ageing

PLACE
AT MY TABLE
From My Table To Yours

CREATIVE WRITING WORKSHOPS • SUTTON • 2026

BLACK AUNTIES WRITE

A short anthology

Workshop facilitator and introduction

Dr Michael McMillan

Place At My Table 2026

Memory · Migration · Womanhood · Ageing

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The contents list has been expanded to include all works supplied for this edition.

Introduction

Dr Michael McMillan

This short anthology emerges from a series of creative writing workshops exploring ageing Black bodies that I was asked to lead by Joseph Jeffers, CEO of ASKI. With the logistical support of Farrah Khan, we met over five Wednesday mornings during June/July 2026 at Place at my Table, inside the St Nicholas Way Shopping Centre, Sutton. As it turned out I was the only man in the group, hence me calling this publication *Black Aunties Write*. The group included Elizabeth Mudyiwa, Jeanette Thompson and Virginia Idah, as well as Beverley Dixon, Carole Kiffin Young, Emerald Davis, Heather Davi, Marie Wray-Williams, who I previously worked with on the *Bun & Cheese* writing project (2024).

As part of the creative process, poems by Maya Angelou, Andre Lorde, Lorna Goodison, Grace Nichols, SuAndi, Kamau Braithwaite and Derek Walcott, provided a stimulus for discussing themes including ageing womanhood, becoming mothers, infertility, female ancestors, and enduring beauty.

What emerged included poems and stories about childhood in the Caribbean and Africa, such as Emerald's Davis's story, *A letter to my Father*, who was Guyanese; Elizabeth Mudyiwa's story, *Picking Pumpkin Leaves with my Mother in Zimbabwe*. The smell of Old Spice and paraffin captures growing up in Britain, in Beverley Dixon's poem, *Cum Nuh*; while a photograph tells stories about losing a mother, in Jeanette Thompson's poem, *Reliving dreams in a Photo*. Departing to and arriving in Britain was never what one expected, such as realising that a loved one is flying with another woman to the UK, in Marie Wray-Williams' poem, *My Old Sweet Little Bambi*; or the disappointment of a fiancé not turning up to meet them when arriving in the UK, in Heather Davi's poem, *Remembering the moment of arrival*. Meanwhile, Emerald Davis's story, *Call the Midwife*, about her struggle overcoming racism working as a midwife in London, resonates with many nurses, transport and other workers of the Windrush generation.

Memories of youth from a gaze of an old self are captured in poems by Beverley Dixon, *Perseverance*, and Emerald Dixon, *Returning to My-self*. The physical and emotional challenges of ageing is evoked Carole Kiffin Young's poems, *Is this my Body?* and *The Sitting Empress*, as well as Virginia Idah's, *Ageing*. Whereas beauty through the grace of ageing comes in Marie Wray-Williams's poem, *Mirror Mirror on the Wall* and Heather Davi's *Calabash*.

The *Black Aunties Write* group will be performing this body of work in November 2026, and we hope you enjoy reading this anthology and find something meaningful, as much as I did working with them.

Dr Michael McMillan • 2026

A letter to my Father

EMERALD DAVIS



You were a strict disciplinarian and only now can I understand the meaning of some of your indiom's: 'No one factor should dominate your life'.

I was allowed to have one friend.

I wish I could let you know

how much I benefitted from your words of wisdom,
so I write you this letter

Dear Daddy



My young self did not think kindly of you, because you were the one that took me away from my Grandmother, just because I did not recognise you in your Police Uniform. You were a stranger to me, you never hugged me like Papa did.

My teenage self was afraid of you, because you never allowed us to have friends, no one was allowed to come to our house, whilst all the other girls were allowed to visit each other's homes.

My young grown up self missed you and often thought of the nice things you did, and I began to realise that half of the fear I had was instilled by my Mother to keep us in order. I now reflect on how you fostered in us not only good discipline and work ethics, but also all things that were character building.

I remember fondly being woken up to the smell of delicious foods when Mother had sent us to bed without dinner.

I wish I could tell you how much I value your moral compass and work ethic that I was able to pass onto my children and grandchildren, and to see them grow and flourish. I feel comforted in the knowledge that you would have been as proud of them as I am today.

Your Loving daughter,
Emerald.

Moving across the the distance of time I reluctantly bring myself to think about you, my awkward self, always head and shoulders above my peers,

causing me to constantly stoop. You have been the bane of my life for as long as I could remember. You have been the cause of so much of my struggles and insecurities. You have caused me not to shine or feel good about myself and even when I manage to rise up and feel that I am remarkable and resilience....

I survived racism of the worst kind when I was so young and far away from home yet managed to come out as a fully qualified Nurse instead of remaining a Domestic in a hospital that did not think that I could do the training. Still you managed to pull me

down. You sit on my shoulder and constantly prod at my imposter syndrome to make me feel insecure and not belonging. However, because of you, I am me and was able to change direction in my profession and pursue a four year degree in Self Analytical Psychotherapy successfully at the age of fifty. I am remarkable, I am resilient.

Looking back over my life, I can clearly see times when you as my first boyfriend, my husband, the father of my children and my ex-husband, have been a joy as well as a thorn in my flesh and even and even now that you've passed some fifteen years ago, you can still provoke such conflicting feelings in me. I remember the times we spent as youngsters back in Guyana sitting on the sea wall looking up at the stars, the seven sisters were our favourite, and we'd always search the skies until we found them. Often times the magic of the moment was broken by the radio of someone's house nearby with the familiar beep beep beep, then the very English voice clearly saying, 'This is the BBC London calling'. This would mean that it was nine o'clock and we would have to make haste out of there and hurry home before my curfew was up and that Daddy would be sitting in his usual seat in his rocking chair, just by the staircase.

© Emerald Davis

Picking Pumpkin Leaves with my Mother

ELIZABETH MUDYIWA



The comforting nostalgic lived experiences when growing up and the cultural practices passed on to me by my mother continue to live with me up to now in my old age.

When she passed on, I was lucky to have one of the clay pots she made and used it for cooking our family meals. The pot kept on display in my kitchen, is a constant reminder of my childhood.

My favourite recipe was and still remains pumpkin leaves cooked with peanut butter and eaten as a side dish for our family's main meal.

From a young age, my mother made sure I accompany her to the fields to pick the pumpkin leaves. At times, I would be fast asleep and fail to respond to her call. She would come and gently touch my feet and remind me it was the morning to go and pick some pumpkin leaves for our evening meal. The leaves had to be picked up early in the morning before the heat from the tropical sun caused them to wilt making them not easy to pick and prepare for cooking.

I learnt at an early age that picking and preparing the pumpkin leaves is not as simple as one might think. There is a skill to it and I was lucky to be taught by my own mother. I learnt how to pick the tender leaves found at the top end of the growing plant and not the mature ones which remain hard well even after cooking.

At first it was not easy for me as my tender young fingers felt stinging on touching the stem to separate it from the main plant. This was due to the prickly hairs found on the leaf stem and the leaf. I soon learnt another important skill in preparation for cooking the pumpkin leaves. How to get rid of the prickly hairs! I was taught how to hold the leaf by its stem, cut the tip of the stem and peel downwards to remove the top layer covering the stem and leaf, thus stripping off the prickly hairs.

Cooking the pumpkin leaves was my most enjoyable experience. The carefully picked and prepared leaves didn't have to be washed at times before my mother used her hands to break them into half for cooking. The unique smell of the fresh pumpkin leaves cooking in the clay pot on the open fire is a personal experience as I have no words to describe it.

I knew for sure even then, it was different from any other vegetables like spinach or cabbage that my mother also cooked sometimes. I would quickly jump up in response to my mother saying get me the salt and peanut butter in Shona 'ndipe sauti ne dovi'. The smell changed as soon as peanut butter was added to the cooking pumpkin leaves and the steam from the clay pot soon filled the round hut, our the family kitchen, with a mouth-watering aroma of peanut butter. I could see my mother skilfully move the wooden spoon from side to side mixing the contents of the clay pot.

The pot was left to simmer while my mother prepared the thick maize meal porridge 'Sadza' part of the dish and soon the family evening meal was ready before my eyes.

Looking through my current lens on my early formation, I see how my lived experience, Shona identity and its cultural practices and beliefs, helped me to understand who I am today, in my older self, living in London.

I often wondered years ago after moving to London aged 19 years and living thousands of miles away from home, where would I find my favourite meal of maize meal thick porridge served with pumpkin leaves in peanut butter?

Many years later at retirement, I got an allotment where I now enjoy growing pumpkin leaves and other home grown vegetables. The experience takes me back to my life in the village with my mother and has become a fulfilling hobby. Growing vegetables and the benefits of eating fresh produce makes me enjoy a healthy life in my old age.

Physical demands can add to the pains and aches of old age, but I am lucky my son helps with the digging and preparation of the soil for planting. My face lights up realising that it's not a dream, as I watch him sweating while working hard. This brings back memories of me and my mother in the maize and pumpkin fields back home. Here I am, with my son at the allotment preparing to plant pumpkin seeds in London. My heart is full of joy at the thought that I am passing on the family longstanding practices to my son as my mother did for me.

Soon after the seeds are planted, I look forward to one of my favourite stages. I like to watch when the seeds start pushing the soil as they germinate in a matter of days. It's a wonderful sight, seeing the pumpkin, beans, tiny mustard and other seeds break the earth's crust to enter the world like a person escaping from a feeling of suffocation. The experience leads to an inner feeling of extreme excitement of what's to come that enhances the desire to continue watering and caring for the plants.

Soon the plants start showing their true identity as their leaves grow. I often wonder what they would do if they knew what would soon befall them especially the spinach, mustard and pumpkin leaves soon to be picked, prepared and cooked as part of the meal for the day. Maybe they are content giving their lives to us, because we gave life to them planting them in the soil.

The taste and the numerous health benefits of these fresh organic vegetables are fulfilling, satisfying and giving me a quality life in my old age.

© Elizabeth Mudyiwa

Cum Nuh

BEVERLEY DIXON



Glancing back,
my younger self smiles,
as itchy jumpers hang,
smelling of Old Spice and paraffin.

Sounds of Sunlight soap
bruising knuckles on washboards,
as mothers
squeeze, wring, squeeze.

Dutch-pots bubbling,
pimento and thyme;
bellies mark the hour
as saliva dribbles and pools.

I clear two steps at a time,
into rooms with frilly bedspreads
and stand flamingo-like,
unhooking dusty drapes.

And in that moment,
net curtains become a wedding veil,
curtain rings a band,
I dance and swirl,
with Pocomania spirits rising
to Kumina.

The timeless resistance
of talking drums,
beckons to my older self,

'Cum nuh' dinner's ready.

© Beverley Dixon

Reliving dreams in a photo

JEANETTE P THOMPSON



Photos transport,
taking you to that exact place,
frozen moments
revisiting time and place.
Happiness,
drama,
trauma,
love,
loss.

Lives captured placed in a frame.
Protecting, projecting.
An old cracked frame slashed left to right,
top to bottom an omen of what was to come.
It's photo still protected
still projecting.

Black and white photo,
remembered in colour.
An old life seen
through thick cracked glass.
That day strongly etched in my mind,
me aged three,
in front of my family,
mum, dad, aunties, uncles, cousin.

This old photo holds love,
shows love,
beautiful people,
bright futures ahead.
Although not carried through
because cracked glass shattered the past.
When did that crack appear?
How did it get there?

Time, dished out sparingly mum, dad
you both drew the short straw.
Mum, you drifted away,

dying too soon,
taking you away aged thirty six,
no age.

Dad, you raised and loved your children,
caring,
protecting,
before you too were taken
by a cancerous disease just sixty two.
Cracked glass in a photo frame;
shattered lives,
shattered dreams.
Why?

Memories captured in a cracked photo frame.
Smiles,
a lasting image dusted off,
held in aging veined hands,
lines vivid,
yet those hands
made a home,
dinners.
Nurtured children,
loved now wiping dust off a cracked photo frame,
years cannot erase,
when seen in an old cracked photograph.

Proof that truth held strong.
Moments of lasting youth,
aging three to seventy guarding,
cherishing,
seven years of a mother's love,
Condensed in four years of memories.

Mum, your hands gently brushing my hair,
each stroke caressing,
cherishing your touch gentle.
Listening to your voice
reciting poetry,
remembered.
'The Swing'
with each stroke of the brush
I'm lifted up on that swing.
Memories replayed over and over again.
In dreams you come,
dreams so real,
vibrant alive intense feeling of love,
delivered in a hug,
your smile still remembered,

enveloped, in a dream.

Dad you standing by mum's side,
smiling,
happy.

Together in dreams.
'Together at last' etched on a headstone.
Me aged three to seventy realising pain,
loss never goes away.

Life is not sugar coated,
yet time can heal
and sweet memories revealed.
Moments are defined.
How one moves,
breath,
step,
dance,
loved,
lost,
laughed,
lived,
to become resilient
characterised by all you do.

Age creeps up,
deceiving,
believing there is time to thrive,
time to survive.

Age a number we feel when aches arrive
and memories fade.

Still a photo revisited,
evokes dreams,
memories,
as hearts beat a rhythm still.

Bringing forth youthful abandonment,
to laugh, joke, sing, whilst pain is felt,
we still can dance.

© **Jeanette P Thompson**

My Old Sweet Little Bambi

MARIE WRAY-WILLIAMS



Waiting patiently in the sweltering heat.
Palisadoes Airport saying good-bye,
but not for long.
Excitement ripping through my body.
The noise of travellers and well wishers
saying tearfully their last-minute parting wishes.
Wishing I could hold Selwyn in my arms forever.
B.O.A.C would land him in greener pastures – Mother Country;
fulfilling his dreams.
I get a glimpse of passengers queueing,
with Selwyn standing boldly at the entrance.
He holds me tightly, but tenderly
as he opens my clasped hands.
Placing Little Bambi
between my fingers,
repeating reassuringly,
‘Sleep with Little Bambi every night,
place it under your soft foamy pillow,
so that you can dream of me always.

Our eyes meet once more,
he kisses me good-bye.
I see a young woman nearby,
making haste.
Suddenly, she stumbles in her red spike heeled shoes.
Porters come to her rescue.
Poor thing, hopes she catches the flight.
Heading upstairs to the waving gallery,
with still enough space for me.
I wave my handkerchief,
hoping that Selwyn can make me out.
Shock, horror,
I glimpse two figures on the runway,
and with tear-filled eyes,
Selwyn and the woman who fell down,
climbing the make shift plane steps together,
clearly forgetting
that I was his old sweet little Bambi.

© Marie Wray-Williams

Remembering the moment of Arrival

HEATHER DAVI



It was half past eleven,
as I glanced at my shiny watch,
a present from my fiancé Rodney.
When my train pulled into Platform 19 at Waterloo station,
I surveyed the crowded concourse looking for his face

There were thousands of people,
people of all nationalities,
races and colours,
people getting on and off trains,
people greeting each other,
laughing, crying;
people lost in their newspapers,
everyone on their way to somewhere else.

The sounds of the busy railway station,
jolted me back to reality.
Metal on metal
as screeching trains came to a halt.
The sounds of train doors slamming shut;
the end and beginning of journeys.
The din of loud speakers,
competing to be heard,
as they announced arrivals,
departure and cancellations.

The smell of railway grease
mixed with brewed coffee and tea
fresh baked bread
fried eggs, sizzling bacon
and boiled cabbage
was smutty and dirty
and overpowering my senses
made me retch to vomit.
Rodney,
the love of my life,
known and together since childhood.
Beheld, betrothed, besotted,
in spirit and in soul,
promises, plans and preparedness
for our life together.

My train had arrived early,
I had expected him to be waiting,
with flowers and plans.
I walked around the station,
dragging my valise behind me,
stuffed with the goodies:
mangoes, sugar cane, flying fish,
for his pleasure.

People stared at me,
my frilly summer frock,
open sandals,
the forlorn look on my face,
but said nothing.
I spotted familiar faces,
people I met on the passage across,
but they were far too busy to talk to me.

I began to doubt myself.
Had I sent him the date, the time of my arrival?
I never received any replies to my letters.
Someone tapped me on my shoulders.
I spun around to see that some man
had mistaken me for his wife.

I took the stairs to the second floor
to get a bird's-eye view.
As I climbed I couldn't help but notice
the wide plain glass windows,
giving a panoramic view of South London.
To my left,
the Houses of Parliament
that we had learnt about so much back home.
To my right,
splattered dry pigeon shit covering the entire roof.

It was now half-past twelve;
and I was feeling hungry,
angry and alone.
Back on ground level,
with tears streaming down my face,
I manoeuvred through the crowd,
the long winding steps out of Waterloo Station,
and took the number 59 bus to Brixton,
to begin a new life.

Call the Midwife

EMERALD DAVIS



When I was a District Midwife in 1968, I faced many challenges that it was amazing that I managed to deliver the service I so loved doing. One particular incident remains with me to this day.

I was called out at 2.15 am on an early frosty morning. It was so hazy, it made visibility difficult and navigating the journey from Brixton Hill to Clapham North on my bicycle was not easy to say the least. The traffic light was showing green so I was safe to cross at Clapham North, but suddenly out of nowhere came a car speeding through the red lights from the other side.

I was so shocked. I managed to take myself off the road onto the pavement but they followed me by mounting the pavement and only stopped when they got in close proximity to me. Three of them charged out of the car and menacingly came towards me, I was petrified. What now I wondered? There was no one about. I was alone and shaking like a leaf. Then out of nowhere came this voice. I think it was the driver in the car, 'Ahh, she's only a nurse, leave her alone'. The three men who were coming menacingly towards me, laughed hysterically, turned back and got into their car and sped off.

My stress level sky rocketed. I wasn't able to get back on my bike straight away. How was I going to carry on to my patient who needed my support? It was not her first pregnancy, and from our last discussion, there wasn't too much time as she was having labour pains for about two hours. I also knew she had an anthropoid pelvis, so her first stage would take a while, but the second stage would probably be quicker. This gave me a little hope for a slower third stage.

With renewed vigour, I got back on my bike and made my way towards the tall block of flats I could see in the distance. Phew! I thought as I got to the entrance, and parked my bike, taking care to padlock it to the fence. Now my next phase of anxiety; I didn't like lifts, but my patient lived on the 10th floor, so I have no choice. In I went and reluctantly pressed the button. The lift seemed unusually slow, but got there eventually. To my absolute horror as the door slid open, there stood a scantily dressed man with a machete in his hand glaring at me. I froze. He beckoned me out, and I managed to get my legs moving.

As I approached my patient's flat the door opened before I could press the bell. It was her mother frantically waving me in. 'I'm so glad to see you Sister, I think she's ready'. She was not wrong. I got my kit out, prepared the delivery field and put my gloves. On my first attempt to have a look, I could see that she was fully dilated, so on with the delivery. It was quick and uneventful or so I thought. All I now had left was the placenta. Then she shouted, 'Sister!', we looked at each other, I placed my hand on her uterus. The contraction was undeniable. It wasn't the placenta, but another baby, undiagnosed. Two girls to her delight, as the child she already had was a boy.

Fifteen years later, I returned to Brixton with friends for a stroll and to reminisce. I felt a tap on my shoulder and turned around to see a woman standing with two young girls. She smiled at me, then said 'Sister, you can't remember me, can you?' I smiled, but felt a little embarrassed. She pauses then turned to the girls and said, 'This is the midwife who's responsible for bringing you into this world.' They both came and gave me the most wonderful hug, it made my day. I loved working as a District Midwife.

© **Emerald Davis**

Perseverance

BEVERLEY DIXON



I remember when dressing was easy.
Now the mere thought of putting on a pair of tights,
fills me with dread.
There they are draped over an old chair,
like skinny lizards laughing at me.
My hands once gathered-up,
lengths of Lycra,
stretching over upturned toes
with no trouble at all.

This has descended into a battle,
between balance
and the force of gravity.

Pulling,
tugging,
hoisting
over a more fulsome body.
I persevere;
wintery beads of perspiration trickle,
as I ask myself
Was it worth it?
Socks would've been much easier.

© Beverley Dixon

Returning to My-self

EMERALD DAVIS



You will love again,
a voice from a far away place says.
My reflection in the mirror.
Who are you?

My stranger self said,
There's that smile I used to know.
I peel my image from the mirror,
my heart throbs.

With elation I say,
For here, eat bread, drink wine.
Give back your heart
to the person who loves you.

Feast on your life today,
tomorrow is another day.
I love you now,
I loved you then.
The self knows what the heart wants.

© Emerald Davis

Is this my Body?

CAROLE KIFFIN YOUNG



I don't recognise this body
it fails when I needs strength
it crashes when I need stability
it forgets how to do simple tasks
like spell a word or open a lock.

I don't recognise this body
it droops where I need bounce
it freezes when I need to flee
it shakes when I need calm
and my plate slides and smashes on the floor.

I don't recognise this body
it sleeps for two days
reliving the weight of misuse
holding memories of abuse.
It recalls every angry blow
every insult
every prejudiced slight
that my parents
and ancestors endured.

I will wash my body
with the waters of acceptance
stroke it's weary muscles
carress it's ugly scars
rest my tired hands and feet
and refuse to pick the scab
that never heals.

I will cleanse my mind of the negativity
that haunts my sleep
and plagues my waking hours.

I will chase demons into the light
where there's no hiding place
and they will dissipate into thin air.

I will cover my body with herbs
botanical infusions and hymns
'Swing low, Sweet chariot'
carry me away to sweet Jesus

for I am a divine part of nature
the trinity of body, soul and spirit.
I hear the eternal ship of slave hymns
drink bush tea
take lemon baths
and sing, 'Nobody knows the trouble I've seen'
transcending the tethers that anchor me
and my mother's mother's mother
to the scorched soil.

She and I will take flight
weightless and free
no longer encased in this earthly tomb
and leave our bodies behind..

© Carole Kiffin Young

Ageing

VIRGINIA IDAH



My day watch has a clasp;
always used my first finger,
to pinch open the catch.
Couldn't do it one evening.
Trying and trying,
numbed my fingertip.
Little or no feeling left
and a wrist not strong enough.
Slept with the watch that night.
Three days it stayed put,
went everywhere with me;
in bed,
in the shower.
Not waterproof,
it gave up the ghost.
My old friend,
gone.
Another female,
far from young,
with ease,
opened the latch.
Couldn't believe my eyes.
Once a woman,
twice a child.
What's happ'ning?

Then,
I couldn't unbutton
the stubborn buttons
on my top.
What's happ'ning?

Another challenge.
Hooking up my brassiere;
unfeeling fingertips again.
Once, twice, thrice.
Ouch!
Did it.
Nobody else around.
Necessity,

the mother of invention.
Try, try again girl,
you'll succeed at last.
Clasps,
buttons,
hooks.
Full stop.
Just aches,
aches and more aches.
What's happ'ning?
Que pasa?
Old age, mum.
At last.

© Virginia Idah

The Sitting Empress

CAROLE KIFFIN YOUNG



Skin glistening
burnt sugar flecked with amber
raised veins
criss-crossing the epidermis.
Arthritic nodes
prominent and proud
knuckles
fingers joints
two and three.

She sat proud
immovable
an impenetrable expression
the stranger observed
nails pink blush
ending in ivory white half-moons.
Survivor's palms
hands outstretch
dark brown life lines.
What stories they could tell?

Resting peacefully now
on broad African women's thighs
remembering
the tiny red short shorts
just visible beneath the floaty blouse of green
and yellow birds
made the road men call out
'princess'
'empress'
mother chasing them away.

Luminous breasts suggesting
heavy desires of a bygone age
with sponge in hand, patted dry
circles of bed sores, oil salve balm.

Slender throat, a pathway to lips
moist with promise
now loose skinned and papery
high cheek bones showing off the

deepest ravines, a window to the soul.

They flick awake,
alert to their surroundings
simultaneously,
reflecting then and now.

© Carole Kiffin Young

Mirror, mirror on the Wall

MARIE WRAY-WILLIAMS



Darling dearest mirror,
I love the way in which you told me
that youth was in my favour.
You always show me my full fresh face,
well defined lips garnished with plumpness,
eyes wide opened with alertness,
an upright and energetic posture.
Not likely to stumble at any time.
A mouth fully devoid of dentures,
truly as pretty as a picture.

But now time has allowed me to see your cracked lens,
treating me with disdain and judgement.
Imagine,
I am now three score and ten.
Have you now joined forces
with society and the cosmetic industry?
Grey,
white and patchy hair,
no longer my beauty,
but frightening me,
encouraging me to view ageing as a catastrophe.
Subtracting every line that is
horizontal, vertical and parallel from my features.
The science of combining serum and retinol,
a definite cure for looking youthlike.
Hair dyes that will compliment my appearance,
teaching me the negative language of expression.
Where I am now on the decline?
Warning me to Act Now!
Or become invisible for life

Admittedly, I was tempted,
the pressure was on.
I succumbed by embracing some of your suggestions.
They were not sustainable.
So mirror, mirror
you have taught me acceptance and wisdom
and I thank God for taking me thus far.

© Marie Wray-Williams

Calabash

HEATHER DAVI



Round black hollowed out fruit,
not unlike the roundness of womanhood -
no sharp edges here.
Smooth, elegant, ripe, juicy.
The carrier of babies
legacies.

Chided in my youth,
to hold my belly in tight,
least it all spilt out.
A flat stomach,
straight hair,
bleached skin,
perky breast,
Things of beauty?

In midlife,
menopause,
diets and dieting consumed my life.
But now in later life,
hollowed out through life itself;
set-backs, pain and disappointments.
I am letting it all hang out:
wobbly, unsteady, pendulant,
no longer considered
a thing of beauty.

Talking to my younger self,
I would say,
Walk tall, kick- back, shut down voices,
let the true self shine through,
and like the calabash,
carrier of water
now
life-affirming gourd,
round, robust, beautiful,
live on,
live on,
live on.

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“The self knows what the heart wants.”

— Emerald Davis, *Returning to My-self*

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