

*Tregenza Roach*

## **ANNIE MASON GARVEY 1915**



I wish that  
you had been  
afraid of the sea,  
that you had kept  
a clear memory  
of its awful strength,  
that somehow  
you had remembered  
how it kept you  
from reaching  
out to touch  
the golden coast  
whenever  
you longed  
to go home.

And had they  
not taken and  
sealed the books,  
to put them  
so far beyond  
your sight and reach  
then you just might  
have had the chance  
to read of Homer  
and the creatures  
of the ocean deep  
who made hell  
the lives of men  
as they challenged

the water.

Maybe then,  
with fear and  
with knowing,  
taken together,  
you might perhaps  
have chosen  
to make  
this island place  
a lasting home,  
and to wait  
with the land  
so you could keep  
our company  
when it was  
our time  
to come down  
from heaven.

But no doubt  
that other things  
were meant to be  
and that not even  
our lion king,  
the man called  
Freeman Garvey  
with strong loins  
blazing fire, loins  
which took you  
to death's door  
six times over,  
that he neither  
could inspire you  
to condemn the sea.

Then on that day,  
all the sinners  
who could stand  
to suffer more,  
they gathered  
and watched you sail,  
watched you work  
the cruel wind  
to make of us  
a tribe bereaved.

Zewa held her own,  
a quiet mourning,  
did not bawl down  
her young belly,  
did not then know  
how very much

she would need you  
to teach her  
how to manage  
the canepiece  
and husband,  
and the flock,  
as well how  
to get blood  
from a stone.

She honored you  
with anthems  
at morning  
and with vespers  
at the dusk,  
and made it so  
that no man  
could speak  
your name  
except with  
an inclination  
to worship,  
her mother,  
Annie, our queen  
in Frederiksted  
with her face  
against the sun,  
still remembering  
the Mountain  
called Misery  
and all those  
she left to its care.