



'Journal fragments in a time of hazard'

--/--/2015

It's weird, this climate change phenomenon. Creepy. Like rumours of an army that has encircled your town but you don't actually see any soldiers. And then, a sniper's shot. Someone at the window of her home falls. Then quiet again. Days later, a bomb falls a few streets away ... you hear that a house caught fire. You wonder when the war will reach your house.

I'm remembering when I was a child, probably twelve, and it began to seep into my imagination that nuclear annihilation was an actual possibility. It really could happen that at the command of a powerful leader, a button could be pressed and Armageddon would begin. In weeks, if not days, the planet could become a ruin of ash and wisps of smoke, suspended in dark space.

Perhaps a child's imagination is what we need now. This ... is annihilation – just creeping. Mostly. For now.

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In a way, the deepest horror of this is how surreptitious its horrors are. Subtle disappearances. You're talking to a literature class and you happen to mention miwiz. Puzzled looks. From everyone. You describe this fruit, its look, its taste, as best you can. Not one student in a class of more than thirty has ever seen a miwiz. Then it strikes you: When last have you seen one?

Incremental shifts. How many years have so many people in the Caribbean been saying: "Phew! Woy! To me, October didn't used to be so hot!"? No, it didn't ... Or April ... Or July ... Or ...

At first only old persons said this sort of thing. Now, young fellers on the block on a sweltering evening, teenage girls trying on outfits before each other for a party – they say it without irony: “When I was younger ...”

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So what do I say to my son, who turned nineteen two weeks ago? My granddaughter, who’ll be ten just three months from now? What do I say? “Yes, we knew but –”

What possible valid statement can follow that ‘but’? Really. What can matter more than giving children and grandchildren the possibility of a future with the normal good things of life in it and the possibility of them giving that to their children and grandchildren?

Thinking of the reasons why our ordinary everyday actions are taking place in a kind of poisonous psycho-miasma of our very being (the external miasma of greenhouse gas emissions is its exact counter-part) I am stunned, again, at how completely heartless this system is. Thinking of how much time, human effort, how much of the earth’s materials go into making millions of boxes of corn flakes a day, how many tons of tree-pulp transformed into cardboard, how much synthetic dye to make the boxes colourful, how many millions of genetically modified seeds engineered with the prime consideration of rapid growth, how many billions of barrels of oil to fuel the harvesters and haulage trucks and huge ships loaded with containers to bring these boxes to supermarket shelves and then to tables and then into bodies – and how little real nutrition there is in all of this. Thinking of how much cynicism it takes to keep this going. And I am stunned, yet again, at how completely heartless this system is. I shouldn’t be. I come from the Caribbean, where that heartlessness was systemically structured into the slave plantation.

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‘Global warming’. It’s a carefully scientific term, trying to avoid the knee-jerk judgemental morality that can be so limiting to science. That’s understandable, can’t quarrel with that. But ‘global warming’ for me is a dishonouring, a violation, of The Mother. And to honour The Mother now, in this time, another way of living is needed. Another economic system, first of all. Whatever it’s called is, if not irrelevant, at best distracting. The point is it must honour The Mother. Everything flows from that.

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Out walking earlier today and the last couple days and seeing the familiar scenes and realising I really need to look at them again, closely. I really need to wonder. I need the child’s imagination again. Look at the vendor’s arcade at the harbour’s edge. Look at the GFL Charles airport, its main gate a sauntering one-minute walk from Vigie Beach. Look at the cemetery on that beach - my father is buried there. Can it really happen that with a one meter rise in sea level, all this could ...?

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CONJUGATIONS – 5: THALASSA

<i>i look</i>	out where the sea, not far now, sips the shoreline in
<i>you like</i>	the still, stark beauty of this widening desolation
<i>it lakes</i>	the empty roadways, buildings, dissolving the idea of progress
<i>we lack</i>	all hope now. You tell us: This cannot be contained;
<i>you lock</i>	your dams, dykes, doors in vain; the waters rise;
<i>they lick</i>	unhurriedly at the diminishing world which they will swallow.

--/--/2015

I wrote the poem a couple years ago. But only one part of me believes it. This situation now calls everything into question. Every morning it stares me down, makes me ask: Okay, so what do I do? What do we do?

Now everything is in hazard. The weight of that phrase is sinking into me as I write it, in a way I never felt before. 'In hazard'. The negative charge of the word is obvious. But I'm also sensing the subtle tremor of another current. Hazard is risk, yes. But risk is chance. And chance is possibility.

Perhaps it's because I'm involved in a climate justice campaign: 1.5 To Stay Alive. Perhaps it's also to do with being from the Caribbean, which I've always seen as a zone – inner and outer – of possibilities that defy normal expectations. Perhaps it's because I'm a father and grandfather, so I refuse to not hope, knowing that hope is a channel for a higher energy of being and acting. Whatever the reasons, this time of hazard is a time of possibility.

The possibility? That in the necessary snarl and snap of heated discussion as our negotiators fight for us and our future in Paris in December and in the people-clamour outside and all over cyber-space calling for climate justice, the voice of The Mother will be heard.

Stories of Climate Change is a new blog series where writers from across the world touch on climate change. Look out for a new blog each Wednesday during November and December 2015. This blog post falls under [Coming of Age](#).

Kendel Hippolyte is a poet, playwright and director and sporadic researcher into areas of Saint Lucian and Caribbean arts and culture. His poetry has been published in journals and anthologies regionally and internationally. He has taught poetry workshops in various countries and performed at literary events within the Caribbean and beyond. His plays have been performed locally and regionally and three of his plays have been published in drama anthologies. His latest book, *Fault Lines*, won the [Bocas Poetry Prize](#) in 2013. He is an original member of the CXC Theatre Arts syllabus panel and is an external examiner. Retired from the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College, where he taught Literature and Theatre, his present focus is to use his skills as a writer and dramatist to raise public awareness and contribute to active solutions of critical social issues. Kendel is an advocate of [Panos Caribbean](#). Panos Caribbean's mission is to amplify the voices of the poor and the marginalized through the media and ensure their inclusion in public and policy debate, in order to enable Caribbean people to communicate their own development agendas. Kendel is also a supporter of [1.5°C to stay alive](#), a project that demands climate justice for the Caribbean.

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