

Travelling Man

Man, you travel far. Remember
those days when they praised you
for what they called your simple, native
craft, secure in their belief
it knew its place, colonial backwaters,
ramshackle, picturesque ports?
But craft is craft, and a man
has the pulse of the sea in his wrist
or he doesn't. So when at last
they rose to cheer you, master
mariner, manoeuvring your craft
that had encompassed the world
into that port from which they once sailed
to claim the world, and hailed
you now as man, as craftsman,
I stood in that crowd by the quayside,
the only one not clapping,
and anyone glancing at me
then might say, "But look
this man! Him dead or what?
Him don't see history in the making?"
But my joy was too much for display,
it needed the space of silence.
Why bother to tell them I knew
the place where the journey began,
that you were not alone, that you brought
with you a people? You had carried
the silence beyond applause.

EDWARD BAUGH