

# April Elegy

Sam Selvon d. 1994

I call my mother on her birthday, the way  
I always do. Eighty-eight this time and so

Alive, thank God. I can hear her smile. She may,  
She says, for this is morning there, go

To the shops later. We talk about the way  
She feels, the way England is, a chance to go

And visit her sister. Family talk. The way  
We do. I miss her. I miss others. Go

Back when I can. You went a different way,  
Sam, old smiler—this time you were asked to go

Back to Trinidad, famous there now, way  
Past time. And you were pleased, you said, to go.

I sometimes met you in the shops here, the way  
People meet, and we talked of how it was to go,

After the war, to London, alone, and the way  
You survived, the jobs, how you made money go

Further in your long exile. The way  
You told it, you'd enjoy yourself, and go

Collect people and places there, learn the way  
You had to write them, make them speak, go

Happy and sad and lonely, in harm's way  
Or in safety. Those books of yours, they go

On giving time to lives, pointing a way.  
Why were we both in exile? Why did we go

Walkabout from our roots? We discussed the way  
Of the world, journeying, the push to go.

You stop on my mother's birthday—nice the way  
You did that, like a writer—more shops to go

To, more good talk untalked, and see, way  
Across the ocean, this spring day, she will go,

My mother, healthy, eighty-eight, the way  
She does, to her shops. You never said you'd go.

Never told me that, like this, you'd go.

CHRISTOPHER WISEMAN