

ALSO BY JENNIFER RAHIM

Fiction

Songster and Other Stories
Curfew Chronicles

Poetry

Mothers Are Not the Only Linguists
Between the Fence and the Forest
Approaching Sabbaths
Redemption Rain: Poems
Ground Level

Non-Fiction

As editor (with Barbara Lalla) *Beyond Borders: Cross Culturalism and the Caribbean Canon* (2009) and *Created in the West Indies: Caribbean Perspectives on V.S. Naipaul* (2011).

JENNIFER RAHIM

SANCTUARIES OF INVENTION



P E E P A L T R E E

THE ORBIS SPIKE, 1610

Rock, ice and sediment tell
their own stories.

They keep this memory:
in 1610, CO² levels dipped –
an Orbis Spike marks the martyred
on fields emptied of trees, emptied
of the dead that could no more labour.
Breathing hectares &
breathing lungs – limbs of bark & limbs
of flesh. No more alive.

Some tell that living wreaths sprung
upon the un-grieved
to cover, as love will, a vast
and crude nakedness,
and shamanic leaves sucked away
that sick era's poison
like unsolicited forgiveness.
Air was breath again;
but never-ever the same.
An infinite absence remains.

Now, uncaring, we strip ourselves
and call that development.
Forests burn like cancerous lungs
and First Nations are still
the first to die.

Ancients say, the land breathes for us,
and we for the land.

Today, I plant a poem.

I put its roots down in soil
brown as cosmic dust.

With every you encircled in every cell,
I ask for a multiplication of leaves –
and for First-Garden breeze.

Dear Earth,

we have grown so apart.

Now that we are full-blown, obscenely
anthropocene, will you forgive, allow us, again,
to breathe...