**The Devil’s Shoes in *Back Home* Afro-Caribbean Shop** *by Pauline Plummer*

In between the cardboard boxes of yams,

Plantains, green bananas and cassavas,

under a shelf of pilchards, beans

and bottles of palm oil,

a line of men’s shoes, asleep

like parrots on a perch.

*Are they the devil’s shoes?* I ask the shopkeeper.

They are multi-coloured leather, slippery as skin,

red, black and beige, or orange, yellow and brown

with long pointed toes, like an armadillo’s tongue.

They shout high life and jive

at weddings and birthdays,

sliding and tapping to insistent rhythms.

They flirt in church beneath the sober suit

mouthing, *I am a man who can afford expensive shoes.*

They may be bought by a wad of cash

in the hands of a spoiled son

or paid for monthly by a ticket collector,

and polished with spit and a rag.

These shoes look too often at their reflection

in shop front windows.

They diss worn-out trainers or cut-price shoes.

Pulling back the hoods of their convertibles

they drive off taking the finest girls

from the men who love them.

They wear gold from Dubai

silk shirts and camel overcoats.

But they never walk on a beach at dawn

in awe at a sunrise or tread the

pilgrim’s way.