

# Tone

Keith Jarrett

*i (Without Prejudice, 1997)*

nineteen cigarettes  
into someone else's day  
sis vaselines knuckles  
for court

summons a smile —  
when she's mispronounced  
as defendant

she steupses  
the predictability  
but holds her wig  
aloft anyhow

twenty-odd years  
later now

this scene rings  
identical twin  
to this season's news  
apologies exhibited

*...and certainly  
does not reflect  
our values*

she remains  
unperturbed  
by another trial  
twirls her gown

so the plot goes.

ii (*Rudies Come Back, 1980*)

*Sinting* met *somefink* and man flung  
a heap of words and vibes two-side

our mouths became full suitcases bussin  
with tea, thrown together with safety pins

bwoy, how we roamed imagination's ring roads  
tooting new beats, rattling punk tambourines

we constructed a home from the rubble  
of Empire's gutted cathedrals and were

labelled riots. we trendset, transcended,  
you know. stretched two arms out

from this island's midriff

etching our names in this stone and concrete  
land our mothers threw pardners to fly from

when night reach, man watered down the overproof  
rum cupboard. you clocked how our fathers did too?

we mixed ours with fizz from the same corner shop  
where we'd learned to moan the price of ackee tins

barely glancing up from their cartoons  
our younger brothers heard us stumble in

*don't be bait* we shushed, dripping Caribbean  
seawater from our only Sunday shoes

we wrung ourselves right.