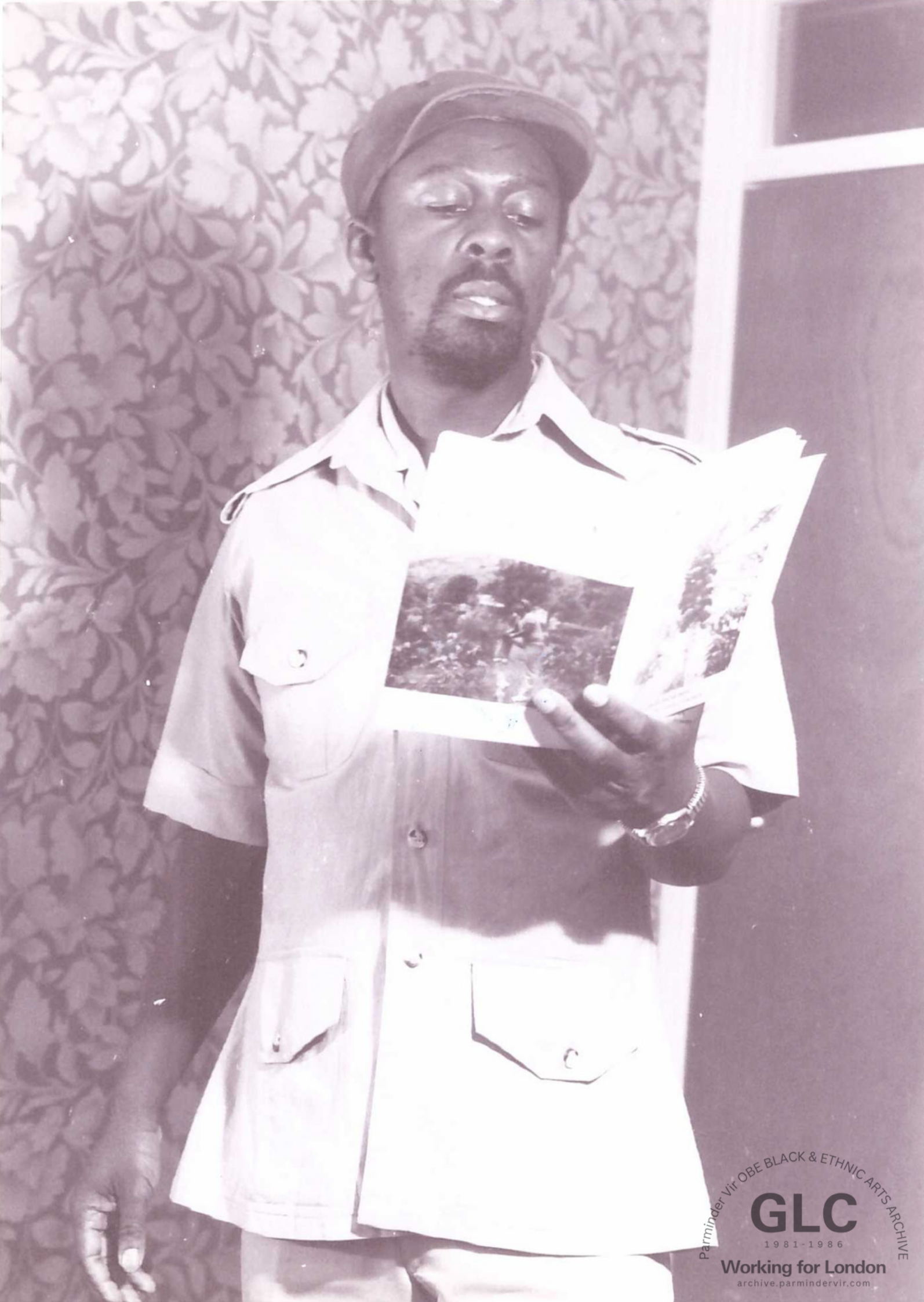




Book Reviews

On the shelf

A fortnightly look at the latest books

Compiled by Clive Davis

"Me Mamba Wen" selected Poems by Frederick Williams.

Frederick Williams came here from Jamaica at the age of 17, to join his parents and continue his education. Today he works for British Rail in London.

He published his first book of poems — "Moving Up" in 1978, and he's performed his work here and in the West Indies, on television and radio.

In his introduction to *Me Mamba Wen*, he says:

"If every one who reads these poems can find pleasure in at least one line, then I will not have wasted my time."

The book opens with 'Forward Poet', so well written that you wonder if the rest of the poems can leave such a lasting impression:

"Oh, Bless the poet to use the words

to open and stimulate minds. Let the poet go forward to admonish the young, the old.

The weak, the strong, the bold."

Harassment is one of a number of pieces written in dialect. The book contains a brief but worthwhile glossary for those who may not understand some of these words.

Don't call me a tramp is typical of the poems, touching on the joys and tribulations of black people: "Have you ever experienced extreme desperation



Frederick Williams.

Then the law get hold of you, lock you in Jail, So you stop starting to cry, waiting to die."

I'd recommend this book. Even if you don't like all of the poems, you will read one that you won't forget.

Me Mamba Wen costs £1.95, and is available from the following London book shops:

Bogle L'Ouverture, Ealing.

New Beacon Books, Finsbury Park.

New Times Books, Hackney.

Centerprise, Hackney
Sabaar Books, Brixton.

Racism and Reaction by Peter Ratcliffe (Routledge £12.50).

1981 will go down as the year when books on race relations went out of fashion. The last decade has seen a flood of well-meaning studies into discrimination — without much action from the Establishment. It's taken this summer's riots to reach the parts of politicians pleading words cannot reach — their conscience.

Peter Ratcliffe's study of the Handsworth area of Birmingham took four years to complete, getting the views of 1,100 West Indian black, brown and white residents. It's all very worthy, but the survey ended in 1978, and a lot of material has already been published in another book two years ago. So who is it all for? The people in Handsworth don't need to be told they live in bad conditions and the politicians

It's not Peter Ratcliffe's fault that *Racism and Reaction* has already been overtaken by a brick thrown through a shop window. This book is as heavy as a brick. But a brick's a lot cheaper.

STEPHEN SAUNDERS

A TOUGH STREET LIFE FOR YOUNG BLACK AUTHOR

HACKNEY'S tough street life is featured in a sharp and witty book of poems to be launched this weekend.

Local poet Frederick Williams deals with the pressures suffered by Hackney youngsters in his second book, "Me Memba Wen," which will be published tomorrow (Saturday).

The book — half in Jamaican dialect and half in standard English — describes youth unemployment, racial tensions and youngsters' relations with local police.

It is aimed primarily at a black readership, but the author hopes whites will be able to read and enjoy it too.

As well as describing life in Britain for West Indian youngsters, the book is designed to give local people an insight into life in the Carribean.

EXTRACTS

It will be launched at a "Cultural Spectacular" tomorrow (Saturday) featuring the author reading extracts of his work, the Black Echo Dancing Group, African Drummers, an art exhibition and the KP International Disco.

The book launching will be held at St. Mary of Eton Church Hall, Eastway, Hackney Wick between 7.30 pm and 11.30 pm.

"Me Memba Wen" is the author's second book. Frederick, 33, of Navarino Road, Dalston, had his first book published in 1968.





