From ‘Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister’ (1842)
Gr-rr – there go, my heart’s abhorrence!
Water your damned flower-pots, do!
If hate killed men, Brother Lawrence,
God’s blood, would not mine kill you!
(Trilling and Bloom, 1973, p.500)

From ‘My Last Duchess’ (1842)
That’s my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive…
(Trilling and Bloom, 1973, p.502)

From ‘Porphyria’s Lover’ (1842)
The sun set early in to-night,
The sullen wind was soon awake,
It tore the elm-tops down for spite,
And did its worst to vex the lake:
I listened with heart fit to break.
(Jack and Fowler, 1988, p.250)

Well, the first speaker isn’t named, but we can infer that, like Brother Lawrence whom he hates, he’s a monk. The second must be a Duke since he refers to his ‘last Duchess’ and, if we read to the end of the third poem, we discover that the speaker is a man consumed with such jealousy that he strangles his beloved Porphyria with her own hair. Each of the poems is written in the first person (‘my heart’s abhorrence’; ‘That’s my last Duchess’; ‘I listened with heart fit to break’). None of the characters Browning created in these poems bears any resemblance to him: the whole point of a dramatic monologue is the creation of a character who is most definitely not the poet. Charlotte Mew’s poem can be described in the same way. But what do you make of the speaking voices in these stanzas from Anne Brontë’s ‘Home’ and Grace Nichols’s ‘Wherever I Hang’?

‘Home’ (1846) by Anne Brontë
How brightly glistening in the sun
The woodland ivy plays!
While yonder beeches from their barks
Reflect his silver rays.
That sun surveys a lovely scene
From softly smiling skies;
And wildly through unnumbered trees
The wind of winter sighs:
Now loud, it thunders o’er my head,
And now in distance dies.
But give me back my barren hills
Where colder breezes rise;
Where scarce the scattered, stunted trees
Can yield an answering swell,
But where a wilderness of heath
Returns the sound as well.