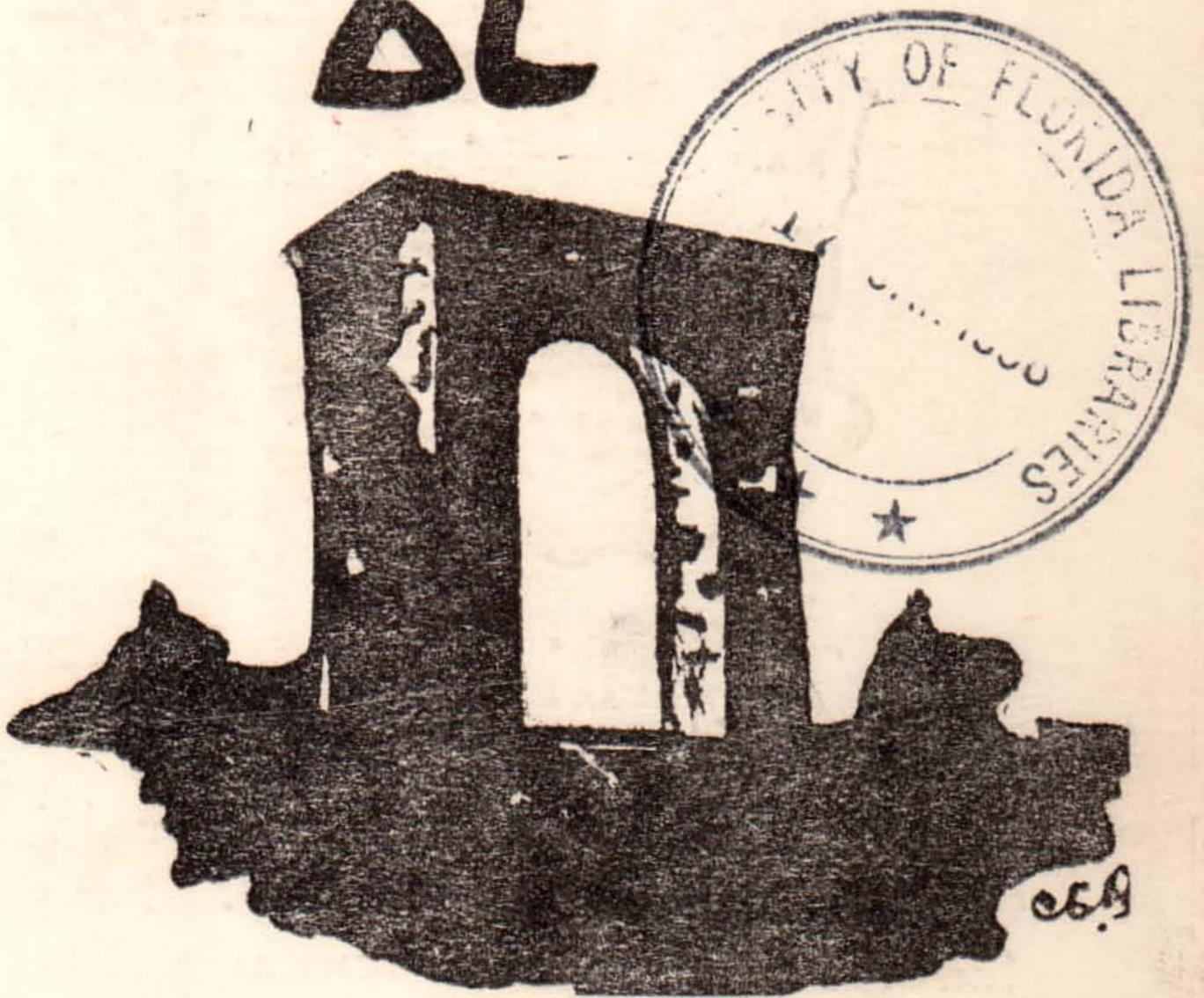


Mid-Year, 1955

**KYK-  
OVER-  
AL**

HUMANITIES ROOM



—The Life and Writings of Roger Mais  
—A Memorial

—The Paintings of Denis Williams  
—Wilson Harris

—“Is there a West Indian Way of Life?”  
—A Symposium of Views

— Writers featured include Edgar Mittelholzer,  
Derek Walcott, John Figueroa.



**Try this test and see!**

Watch each member of your family read the Guiana Graphic. You may be surprised. For you'll find Junior scanning general news as well as comics, your wife reading sports as well as the women's page, and you may turn to the gossip column. Yes, there's lots of "cross over" reading in every family, and this means planning and editing your Guiana Graphic to please everyone. Every story, on Page 12 as well as page one, must be easily understood, accurate and interesting. The Guiana Graphic knows this. That's why it's the paper

*Make the* that is written to be understood by everybody.

**GUIANA GRAPHIC**

*your daily tonic*

**34, Robb & King Streets  
Georgetown**

**\$1.40 per month  
30c. per week**

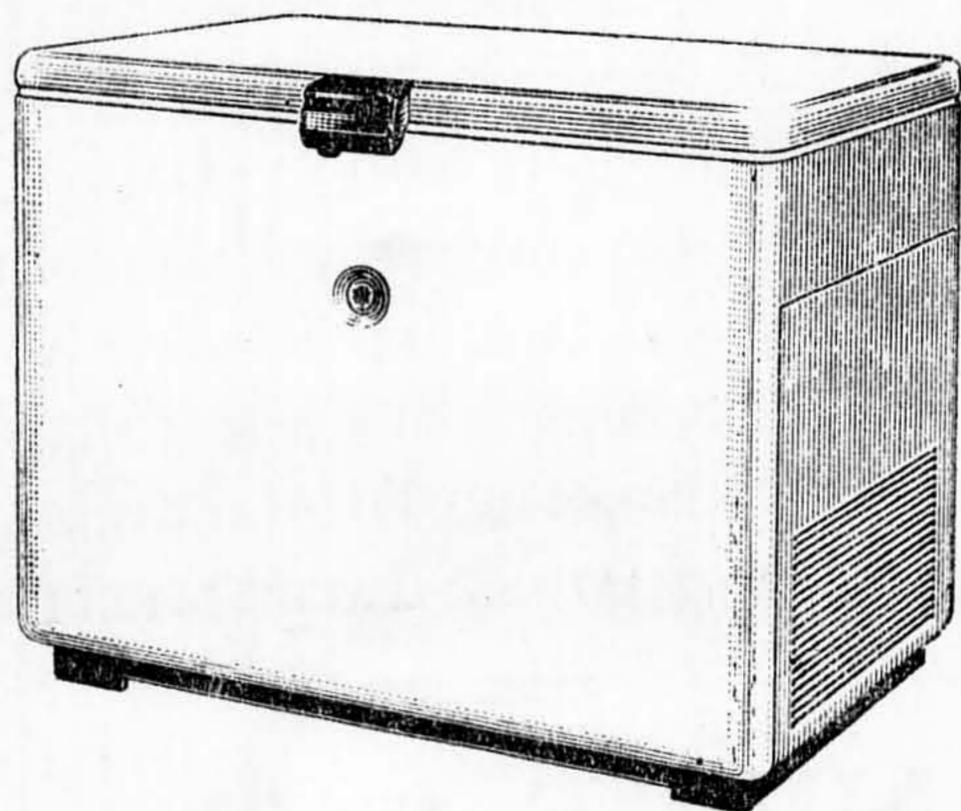
KYK-OVER-AL

# WARERITE and a PRESTCOLD



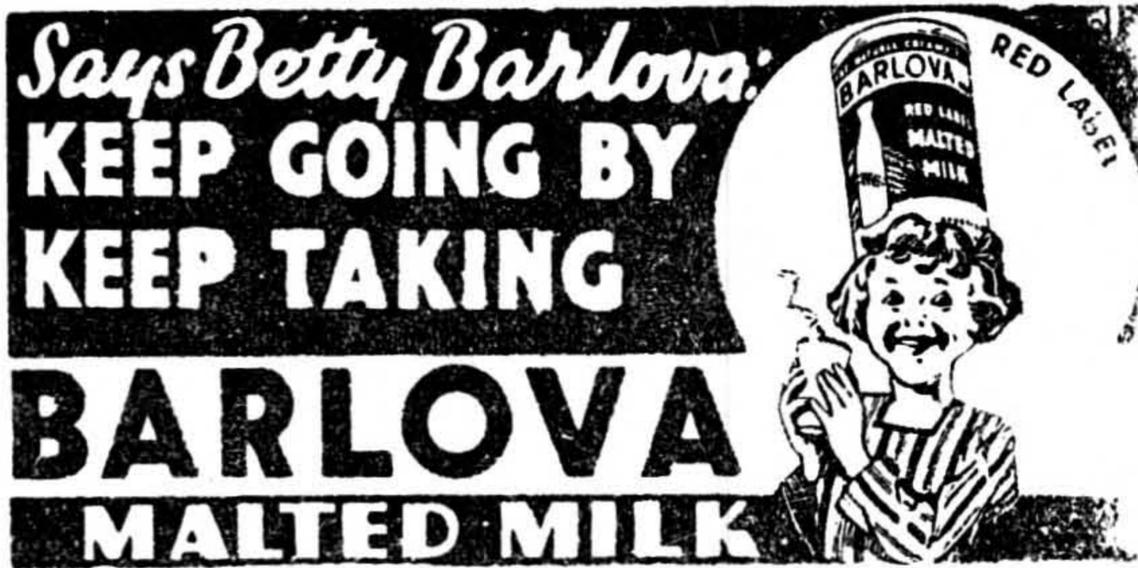
## IN YOUR KITCHEN

Just Two of the items which you can obtain advice on from



The General Agencies Department of  
**Sandbach, Parker & Co., Ltd.**

**BOY! OH BOY!**



The Quality Beverage with the Chocolate Flavour.  
The Malted Milk Supreme.

---

*Other Agencies Include :*

CEREBOS TABLE SALT,

GAYMER'S CYDER,

MAZAWATTEE TEA,

McEWAN-YOUNGER'S SCOTCH MALTS,

O'KEEFE'S OLD VIENNA LAGER,

WHITE HORSE SCOTCH WHISKY,

JOHNNIE WALKER SCOTCH WHISKY,

WINTERMANS DUTCH CIGARS.

ARDATH, STATE EXPRESS & DU MAURIER CIGARETTES

MONK AND GLASS TABLE JELLIES.

---

**GARNETT & Co., Ltd.,**

**Wholesale**

**Phone 39**

**Retail**

KYK-OVER-AL

*Do You Use . . .*

**CYCLAX**

*Toilet Preparations ?*

**They are used very extensively in England  
and elsewhere**

**All lovely and attractive women use**

**CYCLAX**

***Just Arrived:—***

Colour Cling Lipstick—

Gay Morning Lipstick—

Twenty Minute Mask—

Skin Soap & Perfume—

Compact Rouge—

Hand Lotion—

Face Powder—

Day Lotion and Braceine—

**AT**

**Ferreira & Gomes,**

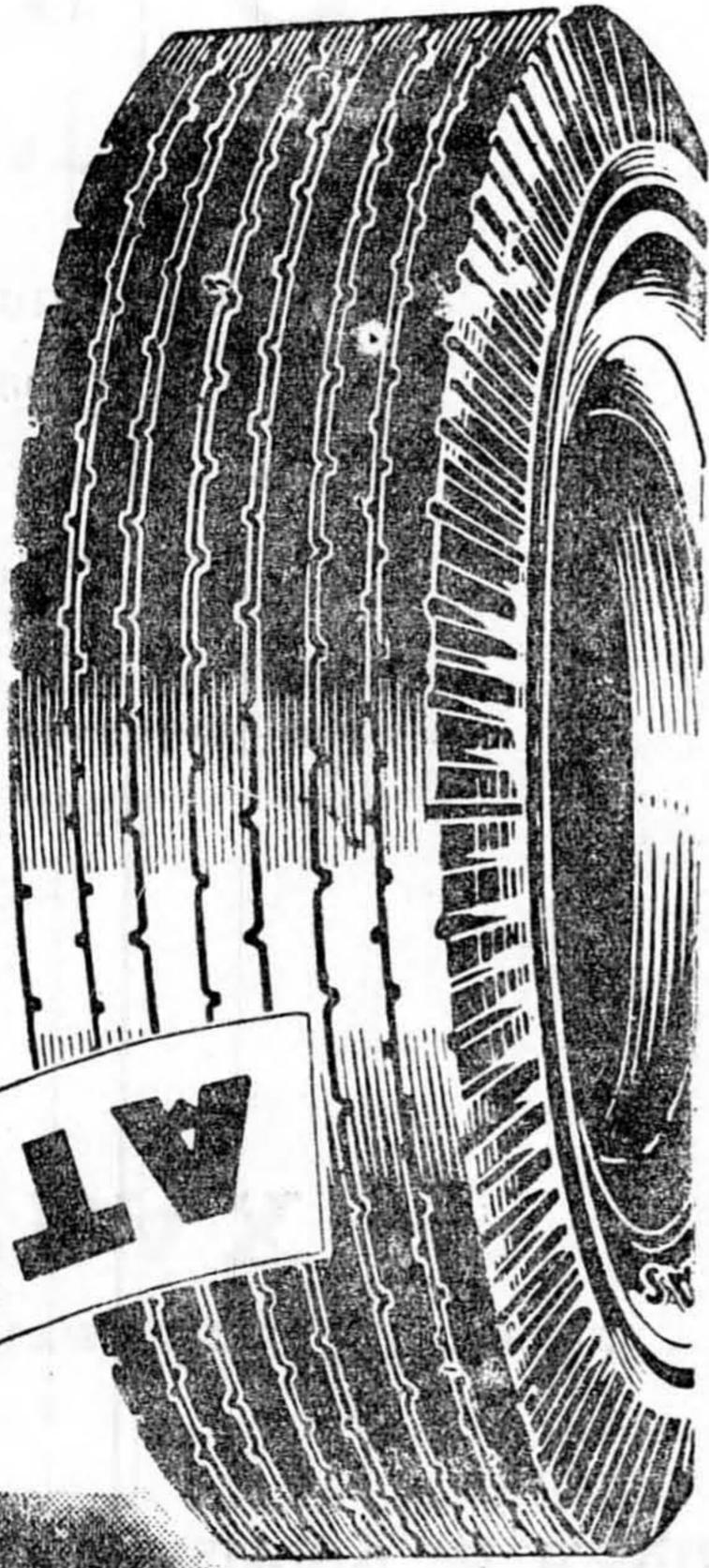
**LIMITED.**

**20/21 Water Street,**

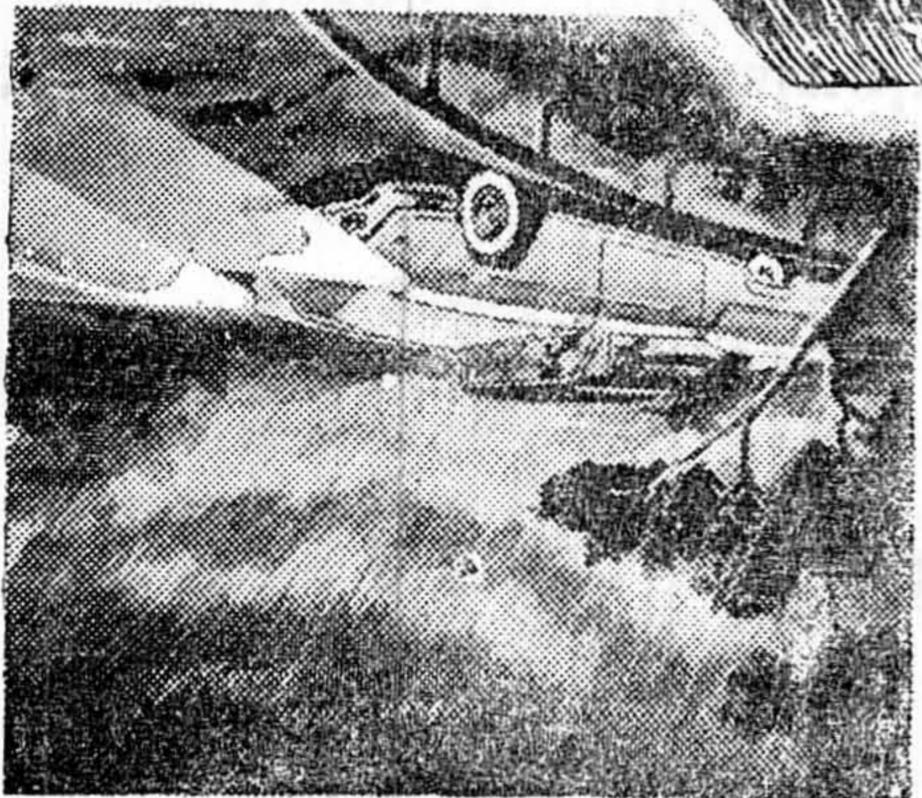
You get Something **MORE** at Your Happy Motoring Store



are better  
in any kind  
of weather



**ATLAS**



KYK-OVER-AL

KYK-OVER-AL

FIRST  
IN ITS CLASS



**EXTRA  
MOTOR OIL**

KYK-OVER-AL

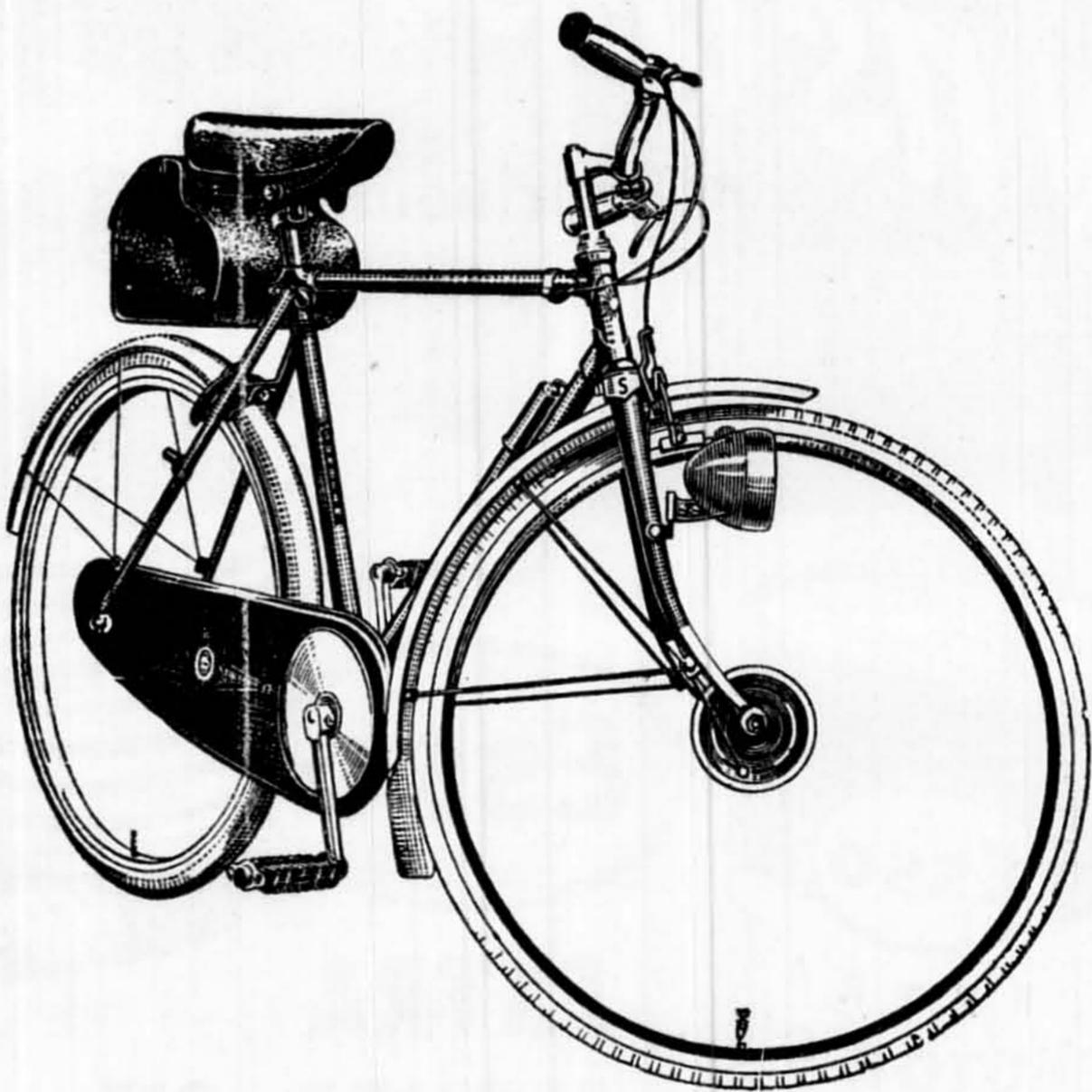
*For Pleasure,*

*For Comfort,*

*For Long Life . . .*

THE OBVIOUS CHOICE IS

**SUNBEAM**



BRITAIN'S FINEST CYCLE

CASH OR TERMS

FROM

**H. B. GAJRAJ Ltd.,**

Water & Bentinck Streets, Georgetown.

# USEFUL PRESENTS

FOR ALL OCCASIONS

The Result of Expert Workmanship is always appreciated by the Discriminating Woman.

*The Excellent Assortment of*

## **Jewellery** including **Filigree**

Will be readily approved by both visitors and residents of the colony as GIFTS of outstanding quality and high value. What makes our offer most remarkable is our LOW PRICES.

---

**The Portuguese Mutual Pawn-  
broking Company,**

OF BRITISH GUIANA, LIMITED,

*16, Robb & Hincks Streets | Phone Central 329.*

**Established over 68 years.**



KYK-OVER-AL

Jewellers, Gold & Silversmiths,  
Ring & Watch Specialists,  
Pawnbrokers.

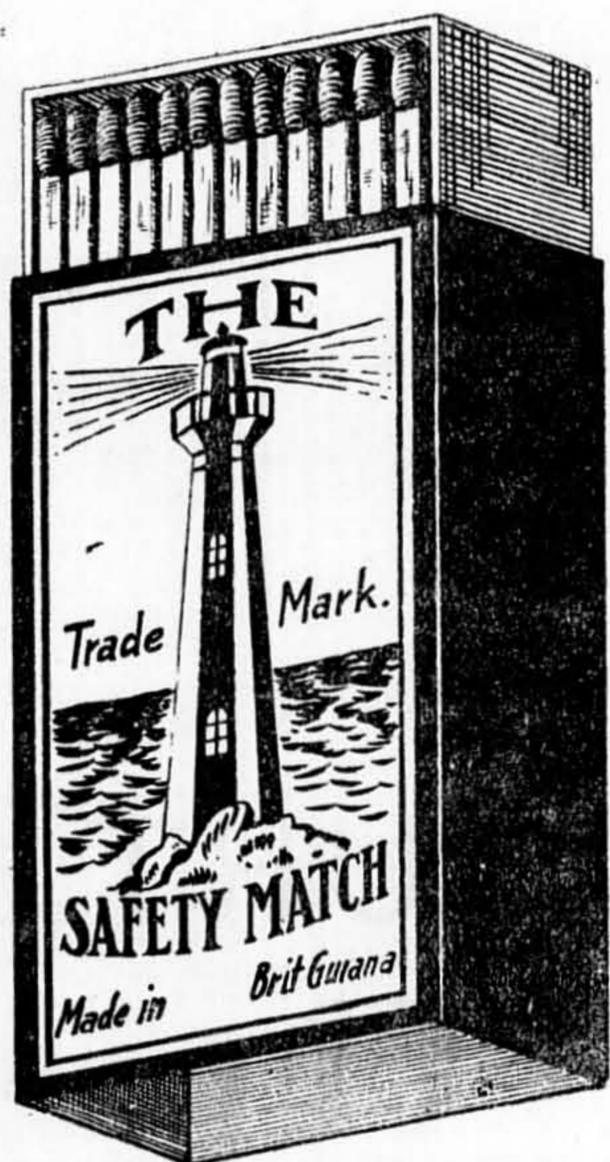
**HUMPHREY'S**

— ON HIGH STREET —

Always at your service, as Jewellers and Pawnbrokers  
of repute, our name has become justly famous and we  
welcome your enquiries at all times.

**HUMPHREY & CO., LTD.**

ROBB & HIGH STREETS.



**SHEDS**

*its Cheerful*

**LIGHT**

*Over All*

**Guiana Match Factory,  
LIMITED.**

Vreed-en-Hoop, W.B., Demerara

KYK-OVER-AL

LET

*Bettencourts*

DRESS YOU

G. BETTENCOURT

AND COMPANY, LIMITED.

WATER STREET.

KYK-OVER-AL

Edited by

A. J. SEYMOUR.

Vol. 6 No. 20

Mid Year, 1955.

48 Cents

---

		Contents	Page
Editorial	.. .. .	.. A. J. S. ..	.. 135
Poems	.. .. .	..	..
Three Poems	.. .. .	.. Derek Walcott ..	.. 139
Three Poems of Shape and Motion— A Sequence	.. .. .	.. Martin Carter ..	.. 141
Oedipus at Colonus	.. .. .	.. John Figueroa ..	.. 144
Translation from Horace	.. .. .	.. John Figueroa ..	.. 144
To Pyrrha	.. .. .	.. John Figueroa ..	.. 145
If I Could Speak	.. .. .	.. Ivan G. Van Sertima ..	.. 145
Song	.. .. .	.. Jacqueline deWeever ..	.. 146
Memorial to Roger Mais	.. .. .	.. .. .. .	.. 147
"A Green Blade in Triumph" . . . .			

Contributors:—A. J. Seymour; Basil McFarlane, N. O.

Linton; Joy Allsopp; Neville Dawes; Vic

Reid; George Campbell; Edgar Mittelholzer;

Fred Wilnot

<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>Philip Pilgrim's Legend of Kaieteur</b> .. .. .	<b>171</b>
<b>Rogue Male</b> .. .. .	<b>Basil McFarlane</b> .. <b>173</b>
<b>The Sun (Fourteen Poems in a Cycle)</b> ..	<b>Wilson Harris</b> .. <b>175</b>
<b>Two Periods in the Work of a West Indian Artist</b> .. .. .	<b>Wilson Harris</b> .. <b>183</b>
<b>"Is There a West Indian Way of Life?"</b> .. .. .	<b>188</b>

Contributors:—**Dr. Frank Williams, H. M. E. Cholmondeley;**

**Martin Carter; Ruby Samlallsingh; P. H.**

**Daly; Edgar Mittelholzer; Rev. E. S. M.**

**Pilgrim.** ..

#### **Book Review**

<b>The Harrowing of Hubertus</b> .. .. .	<b>Edgar Mittelholzer</b> .. <b>203</b>
<b>Poem</b> .. .. .	<b>Leo I. Austin</b> .. <b>205</b>

Contributions and all letters should be sent to the Editor "Kyk-Over-Al", 23, North Road, Bourda, Georgetown, British Guiana.

# EDITORIAL

---

In this issue *Kyk-Over-Al* considers itself fortunate to be able to pay tribute to the work of an outstanding West Indian novelist on the occasion of his death. We have devoted a section of our magazine to the literary work and life of Roger Mais who died in Jamaica late in June.

Ten years ago, just before *Kyk-Over-Al* was first published, another fine West Indian artist died, but there was no opportunity for such a memorial.

Philip Pilgrim, the composer was hardly known outside British Guiana, because writers and musicians in the Caribbean were hardly known outside their small island or bit of territory. We bring this back to mind because last year the B.B.C. noted the 10th anniversary of the performance of the Legend of Kaieteur (the music of which was composed by Philip Pilgrim), which took place in July 1944 in the Assembly Rooms, Georgetown, and we have included an article based on that anniversary programme. So on his death in 1944, there was grief in Guiana alone. Today it is different; each territory finds itself more and more akin and knowledgeable about the other, and there is growing up a national feeling among West Indians. Without doubt we stand on the threshold of a new era and we present in this issue a symposium of Guianese views on the question "Is there a West Indian Way of Life?", in order to feel the pulse of this part of the region in the matter of our common nationhood and ideals.

Under the guise of an article on Denis Williams by Wilson Harris we look at the development of art over the last ten years, and the position of the West Indian artist in the world. There are three new poems by Derek Walcott, some lovely translations from Horace by John Figueroa of the Education Institute of the University College of the West Indies, and a cycle of poems on the sun by Wilson Harris.

This issue, *Kyk-Over-Al* No. 20, marks the end of a 10-year period of publication. We publish twice a year, so there is no comparison with the internationally famous magazine, *Horizon*,

which ran from 1940 to 1950 and then folded up after the 120th issue. But ten years is a considerable span in the life of a little review, especially in a region like the British Caribbean, and it is right to pause and look back.

Ten years ago the world was recovering from the effects of a catastrophic war, and at the same time the peoples in the British Caribbean were beginning to see the dawn of a future better than had ever appeared before the eyes of their forefathers. It was in this light of hope and dawn of nationhood that *Kyk-Over-Al* was born, sponsored partly by the B.G. Union of Cultural Clubs and the direct offspring of the B.G. Writers Association. Timidly, and as we look back over the pages, we see how hesitantly, the people who were interested in cultural and intellectual ideals strove to create an organ which would allow them to express their growing ideas, and to celebrate events which would promote welfare and happiness in this region. Very timidly, very hesitantly, we began to raise our standards and to insist on work of better quality; gradually we began to think of the West Indies as an organic region; then more perceptibly we began to link hands across the seas with writers in Trinidad, Barbados and Jamaica; until with growing assurance we began to mark the points of view of the region's nationhood.

*Kyk-Over-Al* styles itself a literary and cultural journal. In 1945 there were few works of literature for us to be exclusively literary, so we began to carry the flag for excellence in every branch of art. It is heartening to look back from the vantage point of ten years further on, and to see how the tone grew surer, how the stammer disappeared, and how the voice began to speak clearly, reaching across to the writers listening on in the region.

In the history of *Kyk-Over-Al* there are three special numbers, that we must mention. There is the Survey of West Indian Writing, embracing the short story, the novel, the little reviews, the poetry produced by writers in these sun-drenched young territories, which appeared in April, 1950. That year the editor travelled through some of the islands on a lecture tour, and he could feel the appreciation which the issue evoked wherever he went. Then in mid-year, 1952 *Kyk-Over-Al* was devoted to an anthology of West Indian poetry. It isn't often that the editor of a little review can testify to a complete issue rapidly taken up but this was a quick sell-out. At the end of 1954 a special issue

was again devoted to an anthology of Guianese poetry, and that is steadily selling.

In the ten years since *Kyk-Over-Al* first saw the light, a great change has come over the spirit of the Caribbean. In 1944 there was only one Mittelholzer novel, "Corentyne Thunder", but there was no Lamming, no Walcott, and although a number of West Indian writers had begun to put their thoughts on record, very few had reached the publication stage. There was no "New Day". In Jamaica in 1943, Edna Manley had published her *Focus* collection of Jamaican poetry and prose but the greater part of the West Indian cupboard was bare.

In this decade of years over which we are looking back, a group of three of us began the ambitious aim of publishing regularly some of our poems. At the same time there was conceived the idea of publishing the Miniature Poets, a series of 16-page booklets published in very limited editions and sold to subscribers at one shilling a copy. The poet whose work was being published generally undertook to pay for some copies and generally the remainder was taken up month after month by friends and well-wishers, teachers, civil servants, ministers of religion.

This is the place to complete the record of these brave little booklets:

"Leaves from the tree" — A. J. Seymour.

"Musings" — Jas. W. Harper Smith.

"Fetish" — Kona Waruk (Wilson Harris).

"The Hill of fire glows red" — Martin Carter.

"Canes by the Roadside" — A. N. Forde (of Grenada).

"Moments of Leisure" — Frank E. Dalzell.

"Jacob and the Angel" — Basil McFarlane (of Jamaica).

"And the Pouis Sing" — C. L. Herbert (of Trinidad).

"Twelve West Indian Poems for Children".

"Ixion" — E. McG. Keane (of St. Vincent).

"A Dozen short poems" — Frank A. Collymore (of Barbados).

"Ten poems" — Philip Sherlock (of Jamaica).

"Islands of memory" — Miriam Koshland (of U.S.A.).

"Scarlet" — Harold M. Telemaque (of Trinidad).

"Fourteen Guianese Poems for Children".

Apart from the Miniature Poets there were other publications by the group "Eternity to Season (I)" and "The Well and the Land" (Wilson Harris) "To a dead slave", "The Kind Eagle" and "The Hidden Man" (Martin Carter); "Water and Blood" and "The Poetry of Basil McFarlane — an introduction" (A. J. Seymour); "Streets of Eternity" (Jan Carew).

To complete the record, we must remember the collection of essays and plays by N. E. Cameron — "Thoughts on Life and Literature" and "Three Immortals"; and a study by P. H. Daly, "West Indian Freedom and West Indian Literature".

Thus the record at home in British Guiana. But in the West Indies and the English literary world, the ten years which have passed since *Kyk-Over-Al* was launched, have seen the bursting dawn of our British Caribbean literature and the evidences of our growing nationhood.

A.J.S.

*Derek . Walcott*

# P o e m

---

Though suns burn still, remembering pyres,  
Whose swifts like cinders fly,  
Write how dark man lies deep who cries  
The tongue goes out in wind.

A bird that is the evening's acolyte,  
Is but a moth to such consuming fires,  
Under the mapless grave a man must fight  
With his last flame, the mind.

Though he and all he make lie all one ember,  
The lily white bone crumbling in his eye,  
What the mind truly makes, time will remember,  
He dies, and will not die.

Men must go down in ashes, the red  
Veined tree burn out with the heart's rose,  
But from his rest, dead  
Tongues proclaim his height,  
Like stars on hill graves,  
His death the shadow of another light.

---

*Derek . Walcott*

# P o e m

---

When I dreamed I found  
Passion limited  
To a patch of ground;  
Weeping now I fled,  
From my morning bed,  
But I had been bound  
By a golden fire;  
Then when love lay dead,  
Hair knew heart from head,  
Head knew heart from hand.

Manacled, I raged,  
 Like a seer gone blind,  
 To destroy what hurt  
 The crimson tree that aged,  
 Or that anguish bled,  
 Back to common dirt.  
 Chained in mills of the mind,  
 I know love is dead,  
 Which lives by content,  
 And an evil thing  
 In imprisonment.

---

*Derek . Walcott*

## P o e m

---

He who fears the scattered seed  
 Sows devils of necessity.  
 Who denies the body's need,  
 Hides in the bushes of complexity.

Fear is the harlot of desire,  
 And her cunning virtue gives  
 Heaven a countenance of fire,  
 And a stranger to your wives.

In the desert of cowardice,  
 Where the hermit howls alone,  
 Virtue hides the roots of vice,  
 And the fruit of guilt is grown.

But where two make three desire  
 Sows the dews of weeping eyes,  
 And the ring of golden fire,  
 Saves by mutual sacrifice.

Martin Carter

# Three Poems of Shape and Motion

## -- A Sequence

---

### Number One.

I was wondering if I could shape this passion  
just as I wanted in solid fire.  
I was wondering if the strange combustion of my days  
the tension of the world inside of me  
and the strength of my heart were enough.

I was wondering if I could as tall  
while the tide of the sea rose and fell  
If the sky would recede as I went  
or the earth would emerge as I came  
to the door of morning locked against the sun.

I was wondering if I could make myself  
nothing but fire, pure and incorruptible.  
If the wound of the wind on my face  
would be healed by the work of my life  
Or the growth of the pain in my sleep  
would be stopped in the strife of my days.

I was wondering if the agony of years  
could be traced to the seed of an hour.  
If the roots that spread out in the swamp  
ran too deep for the issuing flower.

I was wondering if I could find myself  
all that I am in all I could be.  
If all the population of stars  
would be less than the things I could utter  
And the challenge of space in my soul  
be filled by the shape I become.

### Number Two.

Pull off yuh shirt and throw 'way yuh hat  
Kick off yuh shoe and stamp down the spot  
Tear off yuh dress and open yuhself  
And dance like you mad  
Far far,

Oh left foot, right foot, left — Ah boy!  
 Right foot, left foot, right — Ah boy!  
 Run down the road  
 Run up the sky  
 But run like you mad  
 Far far.

Jump off the ground  
 Pull down a star  
 Burn till you bleed  
 Far far.

Oh right foot, left foot, right — Ah boy!  
 Left foot, right foot, left — Ah boy!  
 Oh right foot, right foot  
 Left foot, left foot  
 Dance like you mad  
 Far far.

### Number Three.

#### (i)

I walk slowly in the wind  
 watching myself in things I did not make  
 in jumping shadows and in limping cripples  
 dust on the earth and houses tight with sickness  
 deep constant pain, the dream without the sleep.

I walk slowly in the wind  
 hearing myself in the loneliness of a child  
 in woman's grief which is not understood  
 in coughing dogs when midnight lingers long  
 on stones, on streets and then on echoing stars.  
 that burn all night and suddenly go out.

I walk slowly in the wind  
 knowing myself in every moving thing  
 in years and days and words that mean so much  
 strong hands that shake, long roads that walk and deeds that do  
 themselves.  
 and all this world and all these lives to live.

#### (ii)

I walk slowly in the wind  
 remembering scorn and naked men in darkness  
 and huts of iron rivetted to earth,

Cold huts of iron stand upon this earth  
like rusting prisons.  
Each wall is marked and each wide roof is spread  
like some dark wing  
casting a shadow or a living curse.

I walk slowly in the wind  
to lifted sunset red and gold and dim  
a long brown river slanting to an ocean  
a fishing boat, a man who cannot drown.

I walk slowly in the wind  
remembering me amid the surging river  
amid the drought and all the merciless flood  
and all the growth and all the life of man.

## (iii)

I walk slowly in the wind.  
and birds are swift, the sky is blue like silk.

From the big sweeping ocean of water  
an iron ship rusted and brown anchors itself.  
And the long river runs like a snake  
silent and smooth.

I walk slowly in the wind.  
I hear my footsteps echoing down the tide  
echoing like a wave on the sand or a wing on the wind  
echoing echoing  
a voice in the soul, a laugh in the funny silence.

## (iv)

I walk slowly in the wind  
I walk because I cannot crawl or fly.

*John Figueroa*

# Oedipus at Colonus

---

I come to these mountains  
I Oedipus though blind  
Can see the tops gently  
Touched with white the dawn blue  
As clean as my purged self  
I come at dawn to wait for dusk.

When the life-giver has warmed  
Away the silver lace of dew  
And warmed this sacred grove  
After noon he will withdraw  
Beneath the crisp whiteness  
Of the round mountain in the west there.

The cooling grove shall darken  
And grow secret  
I shall follow him into the dusk  
Below the peak.

Daughters when the sun and thy father  
Leave thee in saffron shadows  
Consider my life's day-tramp here  
Seek not yet to know what night brings.

*John Figueroa*

## Translation

*From HORACE*

---

Dismal Cocytos  
Wandering, faintly flowing,  
And the notorious race of Danaus,  
And Sisyphus condemned to endless labour,  
You must visit.

You must leave your soil, your home  
Your ever pleasing wife,  
Your tended trees, no not one of them  
Save the hated cypress  
Will follow you, their brief master.

Your worthy heir will drink up the Caecuban  
Guarded now by a hundred keys, tainting  
The titles with that proud wine,  
At more than priestly feasts.

**John Figueroa**

## To Pyrrha;

(After Horace's "*Quis Multa. gracilis te puer*")

---

Who is the green-horn with you now  
Pyrrha, in the long grass by the garden wall?  
Is he urgent in his tweeds as he presses  
His cheek on the "natural tint" of your golden hair?

When his green gods fade, on some  
Dark sea he will weep  
And wonder at the black winds  
And bitter waves, whose faith  
Now teaches him that you are always golden  
Always green spring and lovable.

Oh the poor men who think you so fresh!  
My shipwreck was nearly fatal,  
But the gods who saved me  
Have received on their temple walls  
My soaking tweeds for a thanksgiving.

**Ivan G. Van Sertima**

## If I Could Speak

(Lines written in a beautiful garden)

---

Fain would I blend my spirit with the ether  
And foist my wild emotions on the breeze  
And power a million voices with my passion  
To give this dumb, tumultuous rapture ease.

If I could speak, O God, if I could speak  
Of all the beauties that besiege me here  
The very birds would cease their tuneful mouthings  
And swoon at symphonies beyond compare.

If I could use the zephyr as my trumpet  
And murmur forth my musings in the trees  
The leaves would twist and moan in anguished sweetness  
And flutter down in dying ecstasies.

If I could speak, O God, if I could speak  
With all the tongues in this arcadian green  
My heart would burst into a peal of glory  
As wondrous in its magic as the scene.

Fain would I know why in my darkest hour,  
Why at the nadir of my bitterness,  
I looked upon the world as full of horror  
And felt fore'er cut off from earthly bliss.

How could I dream that suffering was all,  
 That God had made a crude and ugly thing,  
 When from beyond the happy warblers call  
 To tell me man can know eternal spring.

If I could speak, O God,, if I could speak  
 And burst into a hurricane of phrase  
 My voice would leap beyond this dark mausoleum  
 And breathe its pulsings in the murmurous maze:

And all the earth would tremble at its thunder,  
 And all the world a new awareness know,  
 And none would weep in unabated torment  
 For beauty numbs and mitigates man's woe.

---

*Jacqueline deWeever*

## S o n g

---

You came;  
 and the world woke  
 to flowering  
 and nature grew  
 to music  
 and my heart knew  
 its first pain  
 because you came.

And my heart knew  
 its first pain  
 for love and joy were brought to birth;  
 a great, new loveliness of earth  
 was instantly alive.

And nature grew  
 to music  
 the cassias were a golden melody  
 glad lilting lyrics were the leaves on every tree  
 I am become like them, free suddenly,  
 because you came.

You came;  
 and the world woke  
 to flowering . . . . .  
 and my heart knew  
 a flowering too,  
 because you came.



advance copy and of a sudden, I was stricken again with the sense that really it was too early in the morning for the call. So we rose and left.

On the walls of the rooms in the house some of his paintings were hanging. I could see they were Roger's work as they were all of a piece with the cover designs of his novels. There was a vacant place on one particular wall and Mrs. Dayes — she had a live expressive face — told Odilia that some painting they both knew of hadn't come back yet.

Then we had to bid farewell and outside the sun was bright on the leaves.

Inside the house we had left, a West Indian novelist lay dying.

I was grateful to Odilia for taking me to see Roger, and glad that I had paid my respects.



**BASIL McFARLANE (from Public Opinion, Jamaica).**

He was born, August 11, 1905, in Kingston. Not long after his birth the family, who were in business in the city, moved to St. Thomas and devoted themselves to farming. It was doubtless to this experience that we owe many of those impressions of the Jamaican countryside recorded in the early short stories and poems. Here too, perhaps, originated that passion for the rearing of plants and flowers that manifested itself at various stages of his later life.

From Calabar High School, where he received his formal education, Roger Mais entered the Civil Service. It is noted that he found this occupation uncongenial; and from the time of his quitting the Service must be dated the restless search for a mode of life that could more readily be fitted into his main design; namely, to become a writer; and to which his genial, expansive temperament could more easily be adapted. He became a reporter on the old, now long defunct "Jamaica Mail". He enjoyed a spell of property life. He published a magazine, "Pepperpot". He devoted himself to the rearing and marketing of flowers. He became a professional photographer. And all the time he was writing and acquiring the techniques of the writing trade by every means open to him. In 1937 he told Edna Manley he had written 200 poems.

Around 1940 began to appear the first collections of his short stories, "Face and other Stories", "And Most of All Man". Many of them had been appearing in the pages of **Public Opinion**, founded in 1937, whose policy included the regular publication of work by Jamaican writers. These short stories of Roger Mais exhibited a style and sensibility of a sort different from anything that had gone before. Already, however, a new interest had claimed him. He had conceived the ambition to become a painter.

In 1943 he held the first exhibition of his paintings at the old Phoenix Library in Tower Street. It was, at the least, a tribute to his enterprise and his faith in his destiny as an artist. In the meanwhile

he had written plays; one of which, "Hurricane", was produced at the Ward Theatre during these years.

In 1944 occurred the event which it is probably safe to regard as the most critical of his entire career and by which his name became a household word throughout Jamaica. This was his trial and conviction on a charge of sedition on the strength of an article appearing in **Public Opinion** "Now We Know...." became a sardonic chant on the lips of the populace.

The return to civil life, after his months in prison, was painful and laborious. Once again he was, so to speak, on his beam ends. He manufactured and sold table delicacies. He hawked insurance. He assisted in the running of a dairy. He planted rice. He wrote for the newspapers. He put out another magazine, "The People".

In 1950 he wrote and assisted in the production of "Atalanta at Calydon", a verse-play modelled on the theatre of the Ancient Greeks. Bare months later he staged his second one-man exhibition of paintings under the aegis of the University Extra-mural Department. He had written a novel, based on his experiences of prison, which Jonathan Cape accepted and published in 1952 under the title "The Hills Were Joyful Together". Here, at last, was recognition of the sort for which he had worked long. He was 47.

He journeyed to England, published a second book, worked and played in France, did not neglect to hold an exhibition of his paintings in Paris, capital of the Arts, and returned home suddenly at the end of 1954.

---

## POEMS

Roger Mais wrote many poems. I have selected these five from his book of short stories, "Face and Other Stories" for reprinting in this tribute to the man and his work.

---

*Roger Mais*

# Epitaph

---

Because from life I fiercely fled,  
 Because I hated so the glib hypocrisy of light,  
 And preferred my appointment with eternal night,  
 I was glad for my election to the exclusive dead.

I thought I had at last escaped the noise—  
 The clamour of tongues, the intrusion of curious eyes;  
 Until one came presently, weeping to my grave—  
 One whom on earth, beholding, did my thoughts enslave—

(Ah yet within me how her memory quickens, laughs!)  
 Interrupting my quiet rest with epitaphs.

—From *Deirdre*

*Roger Mais*

# Last Night I was Awearry of the Wind

---

Last night I was awarey of the wind  
Haunting the eaves of my ancient abode  
Haunting the curtained interior of my tent.....

I said: "The wind is the angel of my loneliness—  
Alas, how lovely is the dark-winged angel  
That spreads her wings within this solitude,

My inheritance, that is but the habitation of the wind'.  
I sighed with the burden of my great weariness—  
When out of the night, clothed with the night

And without other garment, saving her nakedness,  
Stood suddenly before me that other angel — your need.  
The pinions of her wings reached down to the rushes on the ground....

She stood before me mute, her head down-bent,  
Her hands before her, laid about her nakedness—  
And of a sudden we were without a witness.....

The wind was a slave-girl playing upon a reed —  
I lay quivering and dumb upon my pallet  
Alone with the dark angel of your need.

*—From Comedy Above The Stars*

---

*Roger Mais*

# Last Night When it was Very still

---

Last night when it was very still,  
When heaven leaned down her mirror,  
The moon her smile;  
The wind threw down to me  
The whisper of your feet about the stars.  
Their laughter.....

Why, armed with the breastplate of unbelief,  
 The spears of limitations,  
 The javelins of doubt,  
 Do we hurl challenges at the Absolute  
 And rant and shout,  
 Confounding the stars with astronomy,  
 And all their miracles beyond  
 Our human reason flout?

Last night I stood  
 Under the shadow of the Absolute,  
 With you, little white ghost, one silent while....  
 And heaven leaned down her mirror to my soul,  
 The moon her smile.

—From *Deirdre*

---

*Roger Mais*

## Static

---

I am wearied of the dynamics of being awake,  
 Of eating, laughing, weeping, procreating—  
 Of being my own minister  
 Of dissolution, or of satiety,  
 Which is dissolution doubly sinister!  
 And being repentant, and sorry myself.

I would like to gather up all these shadows  
 Into one great writhing, rebellious sheaf  
 And drown them all in the infinite emancipating shadow of death.

For what is death but static knowing,  
 Static procreating, evolution,  
 Static growing?  
 A quiescent State of static forgetting,  
 A mating of the present with the past—  
 With no superimposed dynamic regretting—  
 Where one can be utterly alone at last!

—From *Deirdre*

*Roger Mais*

# I, Shall Wait for the Moon to Rise

---

I shall sit here and wait for the moon to rise,  
And when she shall look at me,  
From over the mountain-tops of tall bleak buildings  
And come smiling down the valleys of the streets,  
I shall ask her here to sit with me  
In a Chinese tea garden under a divi-divi tree.

And a maiden golden like moon shall come  
Wearing a clean white apron.....  
And I shall show her a bright new sixpence  
And bid her shut her eyes  
And paint with the pigments of all her dreams  
The broad brave canvas of the skies.

And she will think: 'He is a little mad—  
Decidedly he is a little mad.'.....

I shall sit here and wait for the moon to rise.

---

## The Short Stories

---

### **A. J. SEYMOUR.**

Mais is a poet and a painter and he guides the moods of the reader from one story to another; just as moods are changed or set by the songs of Shakespeare or by incidental music in the cinema. In his 1943 collection of short stories, "And Most of all Man", and in the earlier "Face and Other Stories" (1942) Mais used poems to command the same switch in mood.

Though dealing with social conditions as Claude Thompson does, Mais is more subjective and inclined to analyse the mental states of his characters; and he obtains his effects by broad sweeps of colloquial prose showing how characters react to their environment.

Among other things, the indigenous short story in the West Indies should be a mouth-piece for the mass of the people and express their thoughts and hopes and inevitable fears of unemployment and it is around this theme that Mais in "Face" has written six of the sixteen stories dealing with the servant class. It is proletariat literature, written sympathetically from the inside and while the two, "God made little Apples" and "Red Dirt Don't Wash" are more typical of Mais's talent with their introspection and frustration the story "Afternoon Delivery" of the iceman and the parlourmaid, has a condensed vigour and a swift movement that make it eminently readable.

There are other thoughtful vignettes of pictured emotion in the Pond, the little story Face (which described a child's reaction to a quarrelsome

tramcar neighbour), the Letter and Lookout and an engaging feature is the intercalation of pages of poems between successive stories.

The 1943 collection "And Most of All Man", shows an advance in the quality and structure of Mais's stories. First of all, he contributes a foreword and a Prologue which set the key and bind together all the stories in the book. In these he states that he is writing the story of "Man, the eternal protagonist amid eternal process", — whom he met on the top of a hill in St. Andrew, Jamaica, dirty, hungry and in rags.

In "And Most of All Man", the philosophy is more mature and the plotting is better and instead of the reader being almost on top of the story situation, Mais has adjusted the microscope of his social and human examination so that the stories are more objective. "Flood Water", "The Springing" and "The Earth in Season" are vignettes in the manner of the earlier collection and they deal with situations in the life of the peasant on the land, but already they show a sureness and an advance which will be more apparent in the "Month of the Beautiful Stranger" and "Crooked Branch" and "Without benefit of the Moon". In these three more shapely pieces of work, Mais explores the family context and its inter-relation with the thought and feelings of the boy or lad as yet uncertain and frustrated before the challenge of the world, and the impression is that he has caught the adolescent's wonder and growing apprehension of the world. One may hazard the opinion that in these short stories Mais portrays the young Jamaica coming to manhood.

Perhaps, perhaps, these stories are his best monuments. Like Mozart, he is able to create a swirl of melody around each moment he selects for narration. The outpouring of these stories are very close to the quick of the mind; and here may be found the tenderness of Mais, the tenderness he elsewhere compounds with fire and tempest to make a novel.

---

## The Springing

By Roger Mais

---

You could put out your hand and feel the sap rising in the trees. The sun warm and lingering, drawing it up to the rich springing where the young leaves were putting out.

He put two fingers in his mouth and whistled shrilly. The girl looked out through the window, but she drew in again almost immediately, and all he heard now was the sound of suppressed giggles.

He dug his bare toes into the mud of the roadside and felt his bitterness within him like a burning pain.

That was all she had for him, then. After all that had gone before. To make a mock of him with her cousin, because she was a teacher

now. And not even that, really. They called them pupil-teachers at the government school.

And he worked in the field. And so there was this great social gulf between them. When they had sat next to each other in the fifth form room at the government elementary school it had not been so. It had been understood that she was his girl.

Now there was this division, and only because his choice lay with the land, and hers with a kind of career that led nowhere, that was nothing really. A pupil-teacher in an elementary school.

And this girl cousin of hers from Kingston, she it was who had made Myra see it this way; thinking herself too good for him.

He threw the empty sack over his shoulder and took his machette in his hand. He turned and walked stiffly down the road, without looking back.

When he was round the bend and out of sight he stopped and looked down at his bare feet, at his trousers rolled up to keep the dew off them, at his forearms bare to the elbows with his shirt sleeves rolled up.

But he was not ashamed about anything. He was dressed as any working peasant might have been. There was nothing to be ashamed of there. Instead he knew resentment against her and all her kind who could see something unworthy in all this.

A man's life lay all within the earth he loved. It was all he had. Himself the same and the equal of all those other dark-skinned peasants who owned their land, or rented it, and grew their crops, and reared their livestock, and were free men. In their inner understanding they recognised this thing, and more, they respected it alike within themselves, taking their pride of manhood there; and in their fellowmen, holding them in equal esteem. Not to brag about with the lips, but feeling it as something present, and recognisable, and real; that was the bearing of a man.

He walked on feeling the dull edge of his resentment against her like the stones under his feet.

He could get himself shoes if he cared to. Shoes to wear out into the field. Others had done it. But till this day he had never felt the need of them, in the sense that he lacked anything.

And so he came at last to the field that had been his father's and his grandfather's before him.

The field lay in a fertile valley, and it filled him with pride to stand on the roadside and look down upon it. The rows of yellow-yam vines climbing up their sticks, and the sweet potato vines. The rows of bananas. The patch of coffee, dark-green in the shade of their trees that were planted there before his grandfather's time to protect them from the sun.

Someone was down there gathering wood. Who could it be? Very well, he would learn whoever it was that he was not the sort of man to tolerate trespassers on his land.

He went down the track nimbly as a goat. Down there among the coffee he was, whoever it might be. He crept closer, covering the ground silently as an animal stalking his prey.

He stopped short suddenly and drew himself upright with an oath.

'God dam it. I thought it was. . . . What are you doing there?

Miss Laura's Rhoda who never would stay in school. They said she was so bad the old woman couldn't do anything with her.

He frowned down at her feeling that he ought to be angry, without quite knowing why. The girl was as brash as they come. She just stood there grinning up at him, not saying anything.

'Well, what do you want here?'

'I came for wood.'

'Wood.'

'To make a fire with.'

'What else would you be wanting it for but to make a fire with. Don't try to be funny'.

She shrugged her shoulders, and still her gleaming white teeth showed splendidly in their setting of ebony.

They said she was a bad girl, but no one ever ventured to say how bad, or in what way. The idea just circulated around in an abstract sort of way. The most anybody knew was the old woman couldn't manage her. Though why anyone should want to manage another he didn't really understand.

She had run away from school because the teacher wanted to take the strap to her. She had bitten his hand almost to the bone. And after that they couldn't get her to go back to school again. She used to sing in the Baptist choir and all, before that. But the school master was a deacon in the church, and on that account she stopped going to church too.

'Now look here, you have no business here. You didn't ask me if you could take away any wood from this place. Don't you know that's stealing?'

For answer she just put her head back and laughed right up at him. It was rich, that laughter. Like the sap flowing up in those trees, answering the pull of the sun.

He saw the round curve of her throat when her head went back like that, as though she was hurling her laughter at him in the meaning of a

challenge. Not as Myra had laughed, secretly, with that cousin of hers behind the half-drawn curtain.

Suddenly the anger went out of him, and he knew that he wanted to get at something inside this girl, to understand her. To find out for himself what made her do the things she did. Why she laughed at him when she ought to have been at least contrite — or at most angry. But instead laughed. He felt of a sudden there was something here that he wanted to find out about for himself.

He came slowly down the slight incline and stood confronting her.

She watched him with quiet amusement, but with all a kind of wariness. He felt it and it made him stop suddenly, arrested, with his intention as yet unformed within his mind.

He felt about her as he had felt about the trees this morning, seeing their colourful rich springing where the young leaves were putting out.

They stood facing each other across the little bundle of firewood that lay at her feet, for the space of a few seconds, in which neither spoke a word. The whole world became for that time as still as their own breathing. And it was as though something passed between them, from eye to eye, from breast to breast; something invisible, but real and with meaning, like the sap flowing in the trees.

It was she who broke the silence that had fallen upon them like a spell.

'All right,' she said, 'it's your wood, you can have it.' And she started to walk away.

But he didn't want her to go, now. There was this upsurging resolve within him to find out about her, what made her act the way she did. All that. He wanted to call to her, to beg her not to go. But somehow the words refused to shape themselves upon his lips. His throat felt suddenly hot and dry.

He saw the curve of her thigh under her short dress as she thrust against the steepness going up the hill. And the thought of her became fluid and flowed through him like water.

She turned once and looked steadily at him, saw him standing there gazing after her, with his jaw hanging open. But she didn't laugh now. And she wasn't angry with him about the firewood either. She took all these things with the same acceptance that she seemed to apply to everything, not asking that they should be different, that people should act other than the way they did; only wary, to be on her guard where she could, to defend herself how and when she could, knowing herself virgin and whole, and a little apart from it all.

'So long, then,' she said, with a gesture of her uplifted hand toward him.

And he answered her, awkwardly raising his hand; 'So long.'

He stood watching her until she was gone.

He dug his toes into the soft mud.

'By Christ,' he said, but without profanity.

He would take the wood up to the house after her. She would understand by that he wasn't angry, understanding it as an overture of friendliness.

He would take wood up to the house every day, and sit and talk with the old woman, once in a while.

But by the time he got to their house on the hill she had gone to the village. The old woman was ailing. She didn't come out and talk with him. He found the axe and chopped the wood and brought it into the kitchen.

Then he went slowly, thoughtfully back to his field again. But not to work. He did no work at all that day.

He lay by the river and watched the yellow grains of sun in the sand under his fingers. Scooping it up and pouring it out with his hand, and throwing handfuls of it up into the air.

He closed his eyes and saw the sap flowing up inside the trees.

He listened to the wind lifting and falling among the reeds and the sound of it was like the earth itself breathing.

He saw the sunlight leaping back like fire from the eddies, of the river, curling upward from the concave sides of the water; and the great boulders squatting on their black haunches in green water up to their rumps; the curious way the water circled round their ample forms, like fingers caressing, loath to let go of them.

That evening, he returned late from his field. He was going by Myra's house at the edge of the village with the first of the stars.

He put two fingers in his mouth and whistled shrilly — twice. But now with a bravado that went jeering, taunting through the twilight; brash against the peaceful chirring of the crickets and the melancholy piping of the whistling toads.

# The Novels

## The Hills Were Joyful Together

---

**N. O. LINTON**

The first novel by Jamaican Roger Mais is certainly striking — both in content and in style. The language, sure and swift, very descriptive and with choice use of adjective, reflects the fact that Mais is an artist — one can see that his paintings would be striking, colourful, thrifty, and true.

The author's sense of humour creeps into the fabric of his writing — take the following passage in which, describing a row of shops, he comments . . . . . "one of them flew a dirty little triangular red flag which indicated nothing more sinister than the fact that ice was sold here." That he is mature — 48, and knows his countrymen is brought home in the well defined characters around whose lives the book centres — the slippery and appropriately named Hitlers, kindly Ras, generous Zephyr, timid Tansy, "forceripe" adolescent Manny, spineless Bedosa and many others. A panoramic picture of West Indian lower class life is given — the tricks of the Chinese shopman, the cowheel food, the school age children working at home, the religious tracts, the cheap patent medicines, the humourously descriptive term "ole fowl" — now riding popularity in a current calypso — is used in its original setting.

This book is full of people and the liberty with which the author fills his pages with these people is perhaps indicative — stretching it a bit — of their quantity and consequent low value in their society. For this is a story of the Jamaican lower class, the hand-to-mouth common people living in a yard, their everyday life and eventual fortunes. It is a cruel, hard story, and the non-Jamaican must needs wonder whether life in Jamaica is as hopeless as depicted here. The twenty-five characters living in this yard — a typical housing range of the Caribbean — filled with poverty and drudgery, are colourful and amusing — their emotions, well known to us — usually centre around sex, religion and politics — strangely enough for a Jamaican scene politics is completely left out of the book. Their characteristics are the negro's high spirits, sense of humour, love of singing, dancing or religion, and highly emotional. Mais cleverly contrives to tell a story about almost each of his characters. It is a story of everyday life, but the climaxes are, I would like to think, hardly everyday, for six of the twenty-five die — all violently. It is a tribute to his technique that the whole story, save for the prison sequences, centres around the yard — the reader gets no impression of life in Kingston or Jamaica generally, the whole story is about the yard and remains there. The tragedy developed slowly, almost stealthily, for over half the book you drift along charmed by the day to day happenings in the lives of the yard, then suddenly, swiftly, it all explodes and in swift succession tragedy follows upon tragedy reaching to a heartless climax. The passages on prison life are among the best in the book — "Jamaican prisons are hard . . . . . "they make animals of the men who pass through here" . . . . the police cruel, and incidentally, Jamaican

police are armed, the prisoners hard. The dialogues here are good, and through them some penetrating insights into human character are given and the author leaves off his straight story telling to philosophise a bit and to evince social protest — an inevitable characteristic of modern West Indian writings.

All in all the book is fine reading. The story grips and interest never slackens. The author's trick of diverting from one trend to another just as the interest in the former is at a high point, helps to keep the reader lively. However, the reader finds that on finishing the book he is left with little but a memory of a good story well told — the book is not particularly thought-provoking although conceivably a sensitive, community conscious Jamaican may be inspired to contribute to the social welfare of the forgotten people who make up this story.

## Brother Man

### JOY ALLSOPP

The page or two of introduction to each chapter, which Roger Mais calls 'Chorus of People in the Lane' is like the setting of the stage for each act of the play. It is here that we look at the stage, before the actors come on, and fix upon our minds certain preliminary impressions.

In the first chorus — "The tongues in the lane clack-clack almost continuously, going up and down the full scale of human emotions, human folly, ignorance, suffering, viciousness, magnanimity, weakness, greatness, littleness, insufficiency, frailty strength." And in this chapter — this first act — we meet all the characters. Most striking of all is Brother Man, and the most striking thing about Brother Man is the quiet intensity of his eyes, and the simple directness of all his conversation.

It is in these 'Choruses' particularly that Roger Mais the artist expresses himself in words which paint pictures as bold and essential as the drawings done by the author for this book.

In the second 'Chorus' he says — "The sea breeze has swept the lane clean of its odours, and the big moon, riding high in the sky, lets down light, dividing the shadows and walking in loveliness between them".

The moonlight seems to have its softening effect on this whole chapter. Here we see Brother Man sitting on the end of the little wooden jetty looking at the moonlight on the sea and letting the peacefulness of it all flow over him, until he sees a vision of a man in shining scales who says — "What do you want here". "To be alone, and invite the vision, and listen for the call" says Brother Man.

Roger Mais has his own characteristic way of unfolding his story. He presents a series of pictures and just as the reader begins to understand the curtain is pulled and there is another picture on the screen. In this way the reader's interest is kept just on the crest as the story moves from climax to climax.

The characters are all strong, elemental and vivid, presenting life in the Jamaican slum where — as in any slum — people seldom think beyond the things which trouble them physically — shelter, food, sex. Brother Ambo tries to capture their imagination, and their money, by his obeah. Brother Man tries to impress on his neighbours his message — 'Peace and love' — and he follows through by living a Christian life, helping those in need not only by giving away the little money he has, but by talking and praying with them too. And following in the tradition of Christian martyrs, the time comes when these same people turn against him when he is in trouble and then comes the terrible picture of Bra' Man being stoned by a crowd of people, and a woman throws the first brick.

In contrast, the scene before the final curtain shows us Bra' Man recovering from his wounds, full of hope for the future and beside him is his faithful Minette, who now calls him by his real name, John, and no longer falters before the quiet intensity of that gaze — and all is peace and love.

There are other stories interwoven in the plot besides the principal one of Bra' Man. These provide the undercurrent of violence which contrasts with Bra' Man's peace.

There is Papacita, so anxious to get rich quick that he becomes involved with a gang of counterfeiters. There is Girlie who lives with him. Her emotions are very near the surface and she is roused quickly to passionate love and as quickly to passionate hate. They alternately fight and make up, and in the end she becomes so bitter through jealousy that she stabs him in the back with a clasp knife.

There is also Jesmina, who has her own anxieties concerning her boy friend Shine, but is very worried about her sister Cordy whose husband has gone to prison for six years for peddling ganga. Cordy has taken this very badly and since troubles never come singly, her small son Tad is very ill. Bra' Man does his best to help her, but she loses faith in him and turns to Bra' Ambo and his obeah. She eventually loses control, and after smothering the child, hangs herself.

Any West Indian will feel at home among the characters of this novel who express themselves in Jamaican dialect, using phrases and expressions which are familiar and dear to us all. Not only the words, but their very lives are familiar to us. We see them being lived around us every day — the small boy trundling an iron hoop down the road — the loud voices of people talking, laughing, quarrelling next door—the sun piping hot overhead — the Chinese shopkeeper — and they are all part of our West Indian way of life.

# Black Lightning

NEVILLE DAWES

It would be fair to say that the impact and force of Roger Mais' first novel, **The Hills Were Joyful Together**, could not be repeated. This book gathered together all the indignation, poeticism and sympathy of a remarkably intense life and set it down with a vigour approaching crudeness, and an eloquence which occasionally became rhetorical. Everything went the way of realism "stark" was the usual adjective—the observation was surprising, a large number of differentiated characters was effectively 'placed'; but it was not a rounded creation. In his second book he went back to the same material and wrote a more finished, less powerful **Brother Man**. It seems that the novelist who begins late, who writes at the end of his experience rather than during it, has a tendency to go on re-writing the same book: if he is aware of this he may stop writing altogether (which seems to be the case with Vic Reid) or, and this requires as much courage as skill, he may attempt an entirely new path. **Black Lightning** is such an attempt.

Here Roger Mais chooses a village setting and a handful of characters. There is Jake, the principal figure, a blacksmith by trade but well-educated, who is sculpting a huge Samson in the loft of his workshop: there is Amos, crippled and incomplete, drawn to Jake's powerfulness: there are the young lovers Glen and Miriam: there are Bess, Jake's housekeeper and Estella, his wife who leaves him.

Roger Mais is primarily interested in the internal lives of his characters. He gives Jake three crises — his wife's leaving him, his loss of artistic vision (both subtly connected), and his physical blindness — all handled quietly and without rhetoric. The suggestion of punishment for presumption is pointed up in the village-warner's outcry against the making of 'garden images'. There is searching talk throughout, as when Estella in one of her brief appearances attempts to define her relationship with Jake (talking to Amos).

'You. You don't think a hell of a lot of yourself, do you?'

She said quietly: 'I know what I am talking about. He knew it, and he hated to know it. For a time he tried to close his eyes to it, it was bound to destroy him'."

Amos and Jake fumble towards a statement of the problems of artistic creation,

"What you see, for instance, is a man carving a block of wood: but that's not all. You must understand that he is first of all a creator, that man whoever he is. He's like God, brooding over that bit of wood or stone'."

The love-story of the adolescents Glen and Miriam, even if its immaturity is over-emphasised and its lyricism slightly artificial, is an effective and amusing foil to Jake's more earnest story.

Certainly **Black Lightning** with its deliberate restraint and quietness is a book well worth reading.

But it has little of the personality of **The Hills** or of **Brother Man**. It would be truer to say that this last book of Roger Mais went back rather than forward. It has about it the 'feel' of an expanded short story and only a thoroughly admirable mastery of the technique of writing sustains it over two hundred pages. Again, there is a retreat to the 'not-poetry' of the late thirties in West Indian literature,

"What a lovely miracle this night with moonshine....."

The wind laying the grass on its side, laying the little grass.....

What a lovely miracle of a night with wind and moon....."

The publisher's word 'idyllic' can carry no further significance than the absence of 'city' and the presence of deliberate artifice — the wood and the river scenes interwoven with immature or ingrown love, Amos' accordion, the faint sense of place.

If we said **Black Lightning** is 'charming' we would mean it is free from sensationalism: we would not imply a lack of masculinity. For, in reading this book we have the regrettable certainty that much more work of power and insight would have come from Roger Mais' pen.

---

## Postscript

### VIC REID

We of **Public Opinion** have had the privilege, the abiding honour of calling him colleague. It was here that he served his apprenticeship with the pen, as a newspaper reporter. It was here that his early poems and his fiction were published. His gifts as a painter were early discovered by us. And again, it was in these columns that the monument to his patriotism was furnished when his now celebrated article, **NOW WE KNOW**, appeared.

The consequences to him are now historic. He was imprisoned under the wartime Defence Regulations for six months.

And it is in this context that Mais is perhaps the only **complete** patriot we have produced in these decades since the first strong waves of nationalism surged forth in 1938. His was no negative punishment of being detained for what he **might** do. Roger Mais dared, and suffered.

In his defiance of the conventions, he grew into a legend. He had no apologies for his "Bohemianism". He knew full well that in the orchestra of humanity, his was not the role of "any wind instrument, nor any stringed instrument, nor any instrument like piccolo or flute", but

that his was the genius that only knew its limit when it was filled "with the madness of the great Maestro".

The quotations are from his poem **The Wind**.

His early struggles were immense; they would have struck down a lesser man. It is fitting that just before his sudden flagging at noon, he should have been caught up in that floodtide of creativeness that brought three excellent novels and a gallery of masterly water-colours from this great artist.

Now we know that his memory will never die.



### **BASIL McFARLANE**

The qualities of Roger Mais as a writer are difficult to assess. Though he had a feeling for the breadth and amplitude of the Novel his sense of form was never highly developed. Energy had always been his main characteristic; and this energy had a tendency to expend itself in many different directions at once. The nett effect may be vital, disturbing; eloquent of this or that: but seldom, if ever, did he attain that consonance which is the prime condition of literary art. Eloquence, indeed, was the virtue he possessed above all others and it may well be that the choicest examples of his prose are to be found among the files of local newspapers; in the Johnsonian polemics in which he from time to time indulged; or, perhaps, in some of those early, lyrical short stories which have a quality not unlike that of his last watercolours. His apprehension of the world and of experience came, let it be admitted, more and more to be plastic, and, perhaps, had never been anything else.



### **GEORGE CAMPBELL**

I recall when we were the only reporters at **Public Opinion** in the throes of the campaign of the first General Elections. A. E. T. Henry was News Editor, and Isaacs, Editor. Fairclough converted the weekly then into a daily, and it was almost a miraculous task, heart-breaking really, to gather news with a couple of persons, and edit in uncomfortable, badly-equipped rooms, and print on a press that was always breaking down.

That was always the final background of the day, the press that from morning till night had to be coaxed and prayed to. Roger Mais was a mass of energy, with passionate dedication to the new Jamaica and a West Indian way of life. He went to prison for writings that were really innocent, but expressed with the childish passion and true conviction of the dedicated visionary.

Finally, thought and expression became more controlled, and all his writings now will belong to the freedom of literature where there are **no**

**prisons;** to the future, where social equality, social freedom, and justice may be realized.

He was dedicated as a writer, taught and trained himself as a writer, and must be admired for doing nothing else for a living, over many years of struggle, in his passionate, detached way. I like to believe that despite his painful illness, somewhere towards the end he found some happiness in a sense of achievement. West Indian letters, especially, and present-day literature are the poorer for his passing.

As the years passed I knew the warm, frustrated, gentle, spiritual core in all his desperate passion. I saw the short stories, loose in structure at first, develop into a polished vehicle for ideas and social protest. The novels controlled, powerful, realistic pictures of Jamaican life, censored by a truly sensitive mind. He was a mixture of Zola with the art-studio work mind of Flaubert. He would have been the richer for his ultimate development. But his final writings, **The Hills Were Joyful Together** and **Brother Man** will assure him a place in West Indian literature and destiny, in which he took such a fanatic interest. Like Yeats he had a 'fanatic heart.'



### EDGAR MITTELHOLZER

Having never had much use for middle class hypocrisy and sentimentality, I care nothing for the convention which rules that one should speak only good of the dead. I shall praise or damn a man as I think he deserves, whether he be dead or alive. So it may be taken for granted that what I say here about Roger Mais is what I sincerely felt quite a little time before I heard that he was even ill. In fact, in a letter to Henry Swanzy in October last, a copy of which I still have on my files, I said: "I'm convinced Mais has the right idea about writing fiction. When he gets over this 'proletarian' phase, it will be interesting to see what he does."

News of his death affected me in much the same manner as did the death of Philip Pilgrim, some ten or eleven years ago. Another highly talented West Indian artist gone — and we can ill spare such men! Death is a cock-eyed economist.

I have never met Mais personally, but I know his work. His short stories always struck me as being outstanding, and his novel **The Hills were Joyful Together**, when I read it two years ago, left no doubt on me that here was no fumbling, amateurish talent doomed to fizzle out in a

short while. I can say with perfect truth that this novel of Mais's was the first I had read by a West Indian which had held my interest from cover to cover, and which, in my opinion, contained all the ingredients that a good novel should.

I am never weary of pointing out to people who ask me that, as I see it, a good novel is one which succeeds in three basic things: telling a story that holds the interest, depicting credible characters, and creating a strong atmosphere of place. In **The Hills** the story is not only gripping but powerful and dramatic. The characters all live and can be believed in as human beings. The atmosphere of place is rich; at times, overwhelmingly so. Added to this, there is a lyrical quality about the prose that delights the ears.

When I saw **Brother Man** announced, I suspected another "proletarian" novel—and when the book came into my hands, I found that my suspicions had been justified. I began the work with a groan, expecting a mere repetition of **The Hills**—but before I had read a chapter I had begun to succumb to Mais's magical manner, and **Brother Man** held me to the last sentence. It was repetition with a difference!

Again, as in **The Hills**, story, characterisation and atmosphere are strong, but, unlike the previous book, the tragedy is touched with a deeper pathos. The central character, Brother Man, dominates the book as no character, not even Surjue, did in **The Hills**. In the hands of a lesser artist, this character could easily have been a caricature or a figure of intolerable sentimentality; the actuality that emerges is a creature not only credible but one for which the reader cultivates a definite affection. There must be few people in this part of the world who are unaware of the impatience I feel for religion and religious fanaticism; it is expressed in almost everything I write. Yet for not a single instant did I feel myself out of sympathy with Brother Man. He was too human.

We shall never be able to prove it, but some intuition tells me that Mais could have treated middle-class characters with the same understanding and depth as he did his proletarians. His scope as an artist was big enough, and it seems a pity that he could not have set his hand to writing novels at an earlier period of his life. He certainly had the right idea about writing fiction. He was no airy, impractical experimenter, and realised that however "poetic", however strange and highbrow a novel might be, if it lacks a good story, if the characters don't live, and if the atmosphere is poor, it is a failure.

Basically, as a novelist, Mais was sound, and, given another ten or fifteen years, I feel certain, would have produced a body of work of solid literary worth.

**FRED WILMOT**

The oak was strong and sturdy, and grew, resisting storm and high wind. The buffetings of nature harmed neither its growth nor its form, tested it and found it worthy. One day it came to the end of its time, sickened, and died, wasted and ravaged, leaving behind the memory of its strength, an echo of its beauty in the golden leaves it had strewn at its feet, the hardy seeds it had cast at its own roots.

Some men grow like trees. They send down firm roots in the soil, seeking the nourishment and warmth and strength that comes from their native earth. They are connected to their earth by a rich taproot, strong, seeking, that draws from the richest places of nourishment. And they give as much, if not more, than they take. For they change the food that nourishes their minds. It becomes transmuted by the chemistry of their imagination, and is made that much richer. Some men grow like trees, and such men are like Roger Mais.

Those closest to Roger during the wild excitement of his living days could not have known that searching taproot he sent down into the earth of things. It was there, but it would not show because until years enabled him to understand the happening, it is likely that he did not know it was there himself. Instead those around him must have seen a restless hungering, a wild, nagging, insatiable wanting for something else. For Roger was a seeker, and as a seeker, he could be known only to a stranger who saw in his eyes the endless asking that marks the seekers.

He grabbed at life and living, twisting and turning it, tearing at it, looking for the ache and pain of it. In the writings of Thomas Wolfe there is a great dominant question mark, the symbol of the seeker who asks why. There is the stormy question, the looking at and touching of things that excite. In his writings was the great, blustery fear of not knowing, and it was shaping and reshaping of words into new meanings, into the dark music of language that marked his work. Through the passages of his writings, majesty strode.

I remember Roger speaking about Thomas Wolfe and recognising in his words and writing that majesty of words. I remember reading Roger's writings, and hearing in his words that same majesty. Because he was a seeker too.

Roger became anything he wanted to, many things he did not know he was becoming. He became a famed Jamaican in 1944 when, with that impatient, restless anger he focused on the British Empire his caustic concentration. "Now We Know", which he wrote in **Public Opinion**, Jamaica's nationalist newspaper, drew on himself the mark of the protestor and earned the wrath of Governor Richards, the Attorney General, the patriotic anger of the Britons in Jamaica. To Jamaicans the words rang with the poetry of truth and when he was imprisoned for sedition a part of all protesting Jamaicans served the term with him. Roger had written from a place close to the heart of his people.

That year was Roger's beginning as a figure of importance. At his own expense in 1939, he had published "Face and Other Stories" and followed it with "Most of All Man" in 1940. They became collector's items. The bright spark of notoriety had lit for Roger the small flame of growing fame. Jamaica discovered his way with words and ideas and soft, sensitive feelings.....

"I, remembering how light love  
hath a soft footfall, and fleet  
that goes clicking down  
the heart's lone  
and empty street  
in a kind  
of spread twilight-nimbus of the mind,  
and a soft voice of shaken laughter  
like the wind.....

I, remembering this,  
And remembering that light love is  
As fragile as a kiss  
Lightly given,  
And passes like the little rain  
softly down-driven.....

Bade love come to you  
with rough male footsteps —  
Deliberate —  
That hurt to come,  
And hurt to go....

And bade love speak to you  
With accents terrible, and slow.

Roger was a blustering and loud fellow, was described as rude and bumptious. And he was. He had within him a great endless anger; he refused to believe that men must be stupid and blind and unfeeling, but he accepted it and delighted in cursing men for it. He had handled ideas with words, touched ideas and felt their texture, got an easy familiarity with them, and known them coming through the process of his mind, and worked his alchemy on them before putting them down on paper and written in soft-spoken beauty.....

and remembering that light love is  
As fragile as a kiss  
Lightly given,  
And passes like the little rain  
Lightly down-driven.....

One day he picked up a pencil, some say at the urging of Edna Manley who handed him this familiar instrument and said "draw something, Roger, draw anything," and drew. It didn't come to him easily, although

he drew quickly and deftly, with an eye that knew the shapes and forms he drew.

Roger drew the hills around him, the hills he had seen in sunshot silence and written about in knowing words....

"All men come to the hills  
Finally.....

Men from the deeps of the plains of the sea——  
Where a wind-in-the-sail is hope  
That long desire, and long weariness fulfils——  
Come again to the hills.

...he drew the heavy, lumping mass of the hills and from the beginning those who looked at his paintings felt he knew the folds of land they had looked at for so long and not seen, and had drawn their quiet strength out of them and put down on canvas. But painting did not come easily to Roger. He spent hours in the Institute of Jamaica, examining the work of other painters giving his great mind a chance to search and seek and wonder at the things that moved other men. He understood quickly, intuitively, and scorned his quick, intuitive knowledge, but worked to have it come out of his brush so that it looked and felt right for Roger Mais.

He looked into his own country for further inspiration. Out of history he shaped a play, "George William Gordon", won first prize with it in a contest run jointly by **Public Opinion** and the Little Theatre Movement. The play was strong, stark stuff, full of embarrassing truth about men and motives, about the heart of a patriot. It was never produced.

Working the play form around in his knowing hands, Roger wrote another. "Hurricane" was a powerful work, was produced by the Little Theatre, and was a smashing success. Mais was demonstrably Jamaica's most powerful writer, its only playwright of consequence, an outstanding capable writer. He wrote "Atalanta and Calydon", had it produced by the U.C.W.I. Extra Mural Workshop.

By 1951, Roger had won ten first prizes in local competitions, had been published in **Life & Letters, Negro Story Magazine, Focus, Bim**. His prose and poetry had been heard on BBC, he was to be included in an American Anthology of Negro writing published by Dr. A. N. Oxley.

Roger had become the stormy petrel of Jamaican letters, was a true artist who lived his life from the inside out, saw the world and the lives of others from the outside in. No dimension was too spacious for him to sample, no experience too frightening. He had developed the peevish intellectual irritability of genius, the impatience of the honest, the forthrightness of the able. He spoke straight from the shoulder, hard, ugly words sometimes, found joy in the thunder and conflict of argument, used words sometimes as rapiers, sometimes as stilletos, sometimes as pickaxes or mauls, always aggressively in the lists of dialectic. He drank and played hard, chose his friends from among those who held no superiority for the act of living. He was incapable of any snobbery but the snobbery of the

intimate group, he sought out no artists or writers, and scorned the literati. In fact, he was ordered to leave more than one meeting of austere, dignified intellectuals gathered together to self-consciously discuss Writing or Art. Roger on "The Intellectual" was a classic of its kind.

When he finished the first draft of "The Hills Were Joyful Together", he was afraid of it. He was afraid of the months of work, the hard struggle with words, the deep love he had for his own creation. He was afraid it might not be good enough. He gave it to a few friends to read, a very few. It was a powerful, blunt-edged work, shockingly direct, full of Roger and his language.

It was rough in the first draft, rough and unfinished, its characters blurred sometimes. But it was a work that throbbed with power, that promised to emerge with dedicated effort. He took it back into the mill of his mind, pounded it finer, worked it around. Then he proudly presented it again. It was his first book, ready to go to the printers. There was no question in his mind now about it being good enough. He **knew**. It proved out that he was right, except for some slight adjustment.

Roger had never left Jamaica. He was incurious about the world, about the miles of water and strange lands that were over the four horizons. He had been searching out the heart of his own land, a patriot, a nationalist, a Jamaican whose home was Olympus. But suddenly he decided he wanted to see the places outside. He told his friends he would be leaving Jamaica by hook or crook. He set about painting with an angry fury, hurrying to capture the world he saw and the people he saw.

His work went on show at Anderson House, paintings again of hills and houses, of faces and forms. The show was attended by friends, by critics, by the curious. It was his first major show, although he had put on a one-man show previously at Doris Duperly's Phoenix Library. Again his talent, surprisingly extensive to many who came, shown in his understanding of form and colour, of shape and substance, of the nature of the things he saw, was the outstanding characteristic of the show. More, now, found the word "genius" and the phrase, "the genius of Roger" more apt, more easy to use.

The Seeker still sought, and Roger was searching through the world of canvas and paint for another part of himself. He worked at poems, was inspired by the hurricane of 1951, to write the prize-winning "this is the city, this is the hills...", a story of the wild fury of the streets in the midst of a disaster. He lived his life of intellectual search, leaving behind the vital statistics of his own life. "Born, Kingston, August 11, 1905, son of Eustace Cleveland Mais, businessman, and Anna Louise Swaby; educated Calabar High School; former Civil Servant (Education Department, 1924), reporter, publisher, planter, horticulturalist, photographer, Publications: "Face and Other Stories; And Most of All Man; House of Pomegranate. Plays: "Masks and Paper Hat; Hurricane; Morning Noon; and Night; Atalanta at Calydon; George William Gordon; Painting; Two One-Man shows, 1949, 1951; Unmarried; recreations: Reading, literature, painting.....arguing.....fighting.....drinking.....living."

And so Roger left for England, bid adieu to the few, select friends he had allowed within the orbit of his searching friendship, with whom he shared his moments of madness, of anger and blind wrath, of profane lust for life. He left with a publisher's acceptance in his pocket, with a wider fame within his grasp. But not before he had put on a final, powerful one-man show in the house of his sister, Jessie, softspoken, understanding Jessie, a show to which he invited friends presented his mother, fussed and worried and finally left. Again those who came and saw were amazed at the flexibility of his understanding, and those who could understand and see recognised in his work something as distinctive as a bold signature, for Roger's work, still reaching and seeking, had become Roger, identifiably his.

He wrote to a few friends from abroad. England was dirty, the most depressing, damp country, London was an untidy charwoman. He was living in small digs, getting used to the cold, dim, spacious mass of London. He was going to Paris. The word sang. It was the greatest of Roger's hopes to see Paris.

He took his talent, his brushes, his ideas and understanding to Paris. There he worked, painted the places around him, worked with a sudden hurry and rush, with a desperate haste. The 50-year-old boy still looked at life through his ever-youthful brown eyes, put down what he saw. As he painted, he wrote, and revised words written before, new words projected from the fevered maelstrom of impressions that filled his mind. He crystallised and shaped a character who had walked through "The Hills Were Joyful Together", his first, controversial novel, into the gentle, humanity of "Brother Man". The jackets of both novels were illustrated by Roger himself, brought his characters to life to be seen by the reader.

When he returned to Jamaica in December, 1954, he spent lonely, quiet days in his mother's Barbican home. A few friends visited him, were frightened at what they saw, were impressed by his fierce determination to finish the many things that were yet to be done. But the fight was a losing one. While he was sick in bed his paintings went on display, the show arranged, planned, put on by his good friend and confidant, Albert Huie. From the walls of the Institute glowed a new Roger, a newly crystallised ability, a bright talent, a deft, professional understanding of how to put down the things around him.

Doctors had opened Roger, despaired. The little, bearded man returned to the home of his sister. He began his halting walk towards the final door. Beyond it.....?

....Golden are the fruit of night,  
Golden for laughter....

Roger had written those words of the endless reaches of space.

....Who planned the orchard there,  
Planned their hereafter.

Golden are the fruit of night,  
Golden for laughter.

And the Searcher walked through the door, alone.

## FLASH BACK

# Philip Pilgrim's Legend of Kaieteur

---

On Wednesday, July 28, 1955, introducing a BBC Programme, Mr. E. R. Edmett the Producer, said:

"Ten years ago in Georgetown, British Guiana, there was given the first performance of a choral work (originally intended for chorus and orchestra and then recast for three pianos in place of the orchestra), the music for which was written by one Guianese, Philip Pilgrim, to verse and to a theme created by another, A. J. Seymour.

In Britain now are several of the people who either helped in the organisation or took part as performers or were members of the audience which witnessed the birth of a production which could truly be described as a native work both in conception and performance.

The programme relates the experiences and the reminiscences of these people told in their own words and recorded for the anniversary of the event."

**Mrs. Joy Allsopp took part in that Programme and she writes: —**

Away from British Guiana, everything that had anything to do with home became nostalgic, particularly a memory already charged with so much feeling — The Kaieteur Legend. Even then, ten years after the first performance in Georgetown, everyone of us in the small group of people gathered in a BBC studio in London, was just a little emotional. We had recorded our small parts in this tenth anniversary programme separately, over a period of a month or two, and now we had come together to listen to the finished recording.

The programme was a collection of memories and impressions, not only of the Legend but of Philip Pilgrim himself, and our thoughts were principally with Philip and with his family as we heard various people give their impressions of him — his tutor say how gifted a musician he was.

As we sat there listening to the programme, I am sure we saw and heard not only what was going on then, but felt again the atmosphere at the Assembly Rooms in 1944, the air of excitement, the pride of achievement felt by everyone, even those who had nothing at all to do with the production, who only belonged to the Legend because the Legend belongs to Guiana.

We also saw again the choir file on to the stage, the soloists George Harding and Ismay Callendar, the pianists Colin Franker, Reggie McDavid and then Philip himself, the conductor John Heuvel — and the performance began.

It had come upon us suddenly, this music, and we were unprepared for the splendor of it,

His inspiration came out of the unknown and untouched forest. Philip was very anxious to collect and preserve the true folk music of Guiana, things like the now familiar "Itanimi" which he arranged for choral singing — and the music of the Amerindians. The main theme of the Legend came from this folk music, and that is the theme which most people remember, which comes right at the beginning with the words "Now Makonaima the Great Spirit dwelt..." and which recurs again and again.

The structure which first inspired this outpouring of music was written four years before, and was essentially an old Amerindian folk tale of — "the Old Man who was sent over the Fall in a wood skin by his resentful daughters". This, put into rhymed verse, and enriched with all the magic of the atmosphere of the Falls, expressed in poetry, became the Legend as we know it, and Kaie, the old man, emerged as the central figure who had by an act of will to become a sacrifice for his people.

There had not been, in the British West Indies, in 1944, much musical composition of any sort. Even the calypso had not won the respect and popularity it has today. And so as people filed into the Assembly Rooms for this premiere they had for the first time the real thrill of a first night. It was not, as always before — 'For the first time in British Guiana', but simply 'For the first time'. And so the conversation filling out those elastic few minutes before the performance began was not, 'Did you read about the capacity houses in Trinidad' or the review in some magazine, but 'How wonderful it will be when people in other countries have an opportunity to hear this — our Legend.'

And there, in that word was the pride — 'our' Legend — inspired by our Kaieteur Falls, written by our Arthur Seymour, set to music by our Philip Pilgrim and performed by our friends and families.

There will be many other such nights in Georgetown, perhaps on the same site though not in the same building. We and our sons and daughters, shall taste again the peculiar joy in being present at the unveiling of many a masterpiece of art which is of us and so satisfies us more than anything we have heard or seen before. But there cannot be another first born — that was the Legend of Kaieteur.

There was at that time, in 1944, writing of various kinds which belonged to British Guiana, but music reaches out in a way that words never can, and draws people together until they realise that they all feel the same way.

And in that BBC studio, that afternoon in August 1954, we all felt that in the programme the words expressed just about as much as they could, but now we wanted the music. There had been just a teasing extract from one of the solo parts, but lovely as it was, it only reminded us of Keats' 'Heard melodies are sweet but those unheard  
Are sweeter.....'

And all the way home odd phrases of melody vibrated, after ten years' sleep, in the memory.

SHORT STORY

# Rogue Male

by Basil McFarlane

---

From the proscribed solitary vantagepoint of two-years-old he perceived the world: the backyard, the frontyard, the large, sounding house. Of proscription he was dimly aware as with the daily arrival and departure of his father the stranger whose morning peck at his mother's face and casual tousle for his own head he merely endured or as in calm progress between yards he was disturbed by the frenzied outburst of his mother at the trail of small mudencased feet over the polished floor. Indeed as time wore on she became less and less understandable. In solitariness he was confirmed. This was life.

He watched her about her daily business with a vague stirring of regret. On what distant shore had they once stood together and how had come the parting? She seemed not to know what he felt and there were no words with which to tell.

In the backyard was the place he considered the most interesting of all the world: under trees, a cool green place, the ground always covered with dry dustcoloured leaves that made a hoarse terrific noise when he dragged his feet through them. In the soft rich soil beneath the fallen leaves there were worms, long, pink and marvellous in their earth-shadowed delicateness.

The presence of trees somehow relieved the loneliness that crept upon him with every day: their rooted constancy, remote and ancient converse with the wind. The unselfconscious beauty of their several forms was for him a voiceless music of green dusk and stark ironic boles.

Here Gerald found him who bore on his broad muscular chest the scars of the Kaiser's war and hoisting him onto his shoulder they set off to where the stunted thickets lay at the edge of the forest. Oh that was a wonder indeed to ride on Gerald's shoulder up almost among the high wonderful companions of the wind almost to touch one to feel reverberate beneath him the firm careful tread not his own was security indeed from all complexities of lostness! A far space below Earth swam but he was safe in a new dimension and free even as his crazy unattainable friends the leaves.

Gerald sang the songs of the Kaiser's war. Out of his scarred muscular chest burnished with sweat as he split the kindling for the kitchen fires the voice growled thick and resonant of guns and trenches bristling with beautified hate. This then was the way for him for Gerald was his friend: to fight the Kaiser and return with scarred and burnished chest to splitting kindling in his mother's backyard. A fine world.

Occasionally these moments of extreme selfpossession and aplomb would be disturbed by the sound of his mother calling from the backsteps. His calm was shattered. What could she want alien as she now was? His loyalties were with Gerald and the life of the trenches

or with the profound and voiceless forestmusic he knew she could not hear. In these moments he was brought to the hell of indecision.

Love was with us a summer long ago;  
 For this is Autumn and the woods we walked  
 Are bare. Their gaunt and bitter thighs are frocked  
 With rime. Their words, their leafless words are slow.....

She sang that song and he loitering in the dim hall where she sat in the shadow of the ornate piano her father's gift knew he was trapped. What a triumphant melancholy in those long phrases! What about the pale tender cassiaflame and beyond those arrogant mountains flaunting their blue pride? Would they sing thus? What did he know of Autumn or for that matter what did she in a land flattened to scrub by the perpetual stare of an iron sun? What did they know of Summer who knew only Summer?

And those scabrous slums lurking in the shadow of rich homes where today he had driven with Claude — surely they were an omen of the pretentiousness and inequality of our lives? The sudden vision of ragged zinc fences their paint blistering in the sun intruded upon the polite orderedness of his wife's petunia beds and gave savage balance to her complacent melancholy.

Or was his nostalgia perhaps equal to her own and as futile? What was he doing about these vague ardours that so disturbed him? Was he not proud of his unrest the index of a liberal mind? She yearned perhaps for another land of different weathers and he only for this in which he had been born and grown to manhood. How was he cut off from his life?

She sang of love. Had he known love in the pagan revelry of his not too distant youth or in this comparatively secure existence with her who bore his children and supported his life, even a life he did not wholly acknowledge? The daily round: departure and arrival. The morning sun that was both tender and cruel not implacable like noon but warm clear lulling like a warm bath fluid like flame; fixing his heart with the strange unquiet of one journeying to his own doom. Reminding him perhaps of the hill he had not found on which to spin out the golden hours, perhaps consummate some wild love. The daily round: Melanctha at the office, bright and knowing, challenging him almost to a return to the past, smiling with arch possessiveness when Dacres said that day: We are proud of you.

He was a fool. He knew himself a fool and stricken with the mortal folly of all men watching the child his two-year-old stand on tiptoe in the attempt to unlatch the gate into the street. It was not the first time

After repeated efforts he turned and saw his father standing in the doorway and on his face was the expression the man had seen there on that afternoon they brought him grimy, dishevelled and rebellious in from his childish games to be washed and groomed for the evening. The troupe had passed him where he sat with his newspaper and his son had looked at him in a silent appeal. As he turned to resume his reading he had been shocked to discover the tears that stood in his eyes.

WILSON HARRIS

# The Sun

(Fourteen Poems in a Cycle)

---

## I

To Christ, the seasonless fire

The fire burns both quick and slow.

Blow wind, blow!

What relative furies glow

like summer and spring and autumn weather.

Long past the hour of death,

some miraculous flame will linger,

a fever of spiritual desire that makes a living finger  
of the faintest fuel of life.

In the black prison

of this grate flesh bears

burns slowly the last miserly shovelful

of death: life empties out this ash,

leaves only wisdom like the secret of the fire:

life empties out this ash and leaves the wisdom that is fire

In the heart of human wood. Like wood, what tree or man

Upholds Christ, the inevitable good.

What tree or man, what monstrous wood, what monstrous branch

Becomes sainthood,

Sheds a leaf of spiritual desire

that falls slowly to face good,

Christ, the seasonless, the unconsuming, and the fire.

## II

The sun-rose

still lights

every black sea,

Still turns the blackest sea

into a glowing rolling marble sun:

splinters from the moving marble sun

fly like wave-birds,

like flocks of sea-birds

flying out of the marble sun

stemming neither from the pure sea nor from the pure sun.

The sea-rose in turn

still darkens

in every marble sun.

The marble makes the sea-rose black with its every turning,  
and the rose still turns into a sea-egg  
like blackest sun,

a sea-egg like blackest sun,  
like blood and wings of a hatching sea-bird  
at the splintering of the marble sun.

At the splintering of the marble sun, what immortal sea-bird  
is still divining, still divining  
the fire-yolk in every black sea, the rose-of-the-sea in every  
marble sun.

## III

Sun cuts down in the west  
in a knifing of wind.  
Light is cut deeper still  
where sun rose even still.  
Every ship chisels the sea  
and every sea planes the wind.  
  
in a waving of wind.

where sun breaks even still.  
Every ship curves the sea,  
Who loves the glory of the sun  
the inward-turning light  
at the-breaking-of-the-sun.

Every black sun stays bright,  
Where love still gathers a far light,  
the fiery, faint and far light,  
beyond eclipse of the sun.  
Each day-star pools the sea,

Sun blows up in the west

Light shoots higher still  
and every sea bends the wind.  
must harbour its blowing light,  
that stars

Beyond the eclipse of the sun  
and the knitted sea heals the  
sun.

## IV

Sun colours and shapes  
Earth in every leaf.      Every single leaf sun treasures above  
Has earth's shapes and colours beneath.      Above

Sun still shapes every leaf  
With the whitest cross of earth beneath and heaven above.      Beneath

Sun still colours every leaf  
With the greenest cross of heaven above and earth beneath.  
Earth's brightest shape and most glowing colour sun makes

Of every cross of heaven beneath and earth above.      Every green leaf  
sun burns into light  
Heaven gains above like light bones of sun beneath.

Beyond its transparent bones of sun  
 is the green flesh of every leaf,  
 the green flesh of colour the sun crosses on the ground beneath.

The sun crosses this dense earth above and beneath,  
 crosses beneath heaven and crosses earth  
 above.

Crosses of sun trace every living shape and every living colour on earth  
 beneath

they trace every grave leaf that falls to the ground.

Forever traces of the green sun cross the earth,  
 and the white earth is forever  
 on the sun.

## V

The sun burns every tree,  
 and every tree burns,  
 a happy martyrdom,  
 Of every century.

under every sun,  
 burning with the suns  
 Burning with the suns of every  
 century

Black wood of every tree  
 under the upright sun  
 Stands burning the black wood of  
 every tree

stands upright under the upright sun:

burning with the suns of every cen-  
 tury.

On the black cross of a tree  
 still hangs burning,  
 and still hangs free.

the blue sky hangs still,  
 a happy martyrdom,

## STILL HANGS

On the white tree of the sun,

a red cloud trailing every human  
 ground.

At sunrise or sunset,

what red broom of memory traces  
 the ground:

light, light sweeps this broom like rain on the ground.  
 It sweeps the ground and leaves no stain of blood, light, light  
 on the ground. Light, light  
 is the mark the broom of the centuries  
 leaves on the ground. Light, light  
 is the dust the wind blows,  
 and the rain sweeps down.

Light, light the broom in the clouds sweeps the dust,  
 that was once the noblest flesh  
 the sun burnt upon.

## VI

Love's cross  
of time  
and place  
still is  
in the still race  
of every sun.

Love's cross  
Still bears  
Of your human form  
On love's  
Space runs  
Space is

of memory  
the frailty  
and mine.  
cross of individual lives  
like water between us.  
between your cross and mine  
clear, swift, timeless,  
so clear  
so swift  
so timeless

there is no burden, there is no bitterness, there is only brightness,  
the brightness of an unearthly sun, or the stars' brightness.  
Stars nail our blood to this,  
this cross  
of  
time and place.

Stars nail our blood  
to this.

## VII

Sun is steel

a band in steel

**steel band.**

Sun is heaven

a band in heaven

**steel band.**

Sun is hell

a band in hell

**steel band.**

Black fingers in the clouds  
play upon

the hot steel band of the sun, heaven and hell's  
steel band.

The clown comes first and dances,  
dances under the sun.

His liver turns to ashes,

and his tongue lolls on the ground, **steel band.**

He hangs in the noose of the sun, **steel band.**

The saint comes next and dances,  
dances with the sun.

The clown scorns him as he dances,

a visionary shadow dancing, dancing with the sun,  
**steel band.**

The vision of the saint is a violent dance for the clown  
 hanging free of the ground  
 under the trapdoor of the sun, **steel band.**

Crucifixion

is the still dance with the sun,  
 the dance with the sun still standing  
 still  
 above  
 the dancing clown.

### VIII

Clouds bury the great sun in the sky, the great sun,  
 the great sun,  
 in the sky, in the sky.

Clouds bury the hastening ripe sun  
 in the sky, in the sky.

Each forgotten seed-sun on earth when the sky-sun was bright  
 glows now  
 like a new sun, a little sun, a spiritual sun,  
 a dumb sun: each forgotten seed-sun, now,  
 is visionary and light.

Each dumb sun starts, now,  
 With the promise and with the memory of the Cry, the Cry,  
 Of the Dumb that first broke the sky,  
 Summoned the sun,  
 The great flowering sun from each seed-sun.

### IX

Sun is milk, milk, milk,  
 Sun is a pure, milk-white

Sun is milk.  
 star in the sky.

Sun is milk.

The strongest star

is milk.

The weakest star

is milk.

Milk, milk, milk

is every star.

The sun is milk.

The whitest sky

kills the weakest star.

The strongest star saves the whitest sky, the sun of milk fills the whitest  
 breast.

The stars are milk.

The stars are milk,  
 still drops of milk,

still drops of milk on the blackest sky,

On the blackest sky, on the blackest breast. Every black breast is starred  
 with milk

still starred  
 with milk.

## X

The sun is a skin

of light.

The sun  
runs  
with every  
black skin,  
light, light.

'Light, light

the sun  
light, light.

runs

The sun's  
skin of light  
runs  
with every  
black skin,  
light, light.

Every sun shaves this breathless skin with light. I run with the sun's  
light.

I run light.  
with the sun's light breathing skin.  
Though breathless  
I run light.

## XI

The skin

of the sun

is on the harvest's warm ground.

Its ripeness

is harvested

seed  
in warm ground.

The stone

is still warm there.

in the heart of the ground.

The sun

warmed the stone there

in the harvested ground.

The skin

is still warm here.

The heart

is still stone there.

The heart that dwells true here  
is stone there in ground.

In the harvest

the stone falls  
into the ground: the stone in the heart  
from the skin of the sun

Falls

from the fruit,

falls from the skin,  
the stone in the heart  
from the skin of the sun

Falls from the heart

falls from the sun.

## XII

Sun lights	a pale-gold	vessel made of cloud.
Sun lights	a pale-blue	lake which floats this cloud.
Sun lights	a sensitive sea which harbours	cloud.
	Sun lights	
	dawn	
	in	
	cloud	
Sun lights	noon	in cloud.
Sun lights	the height and depth	of night in cloud.
Dawn	noon	night
	sail by	
	the sun's light	
	under cloud.	
	Under cloud	
The Sailman hammers,		hammers loud:
Hammers sun		the painted sun,
Hammers stars		the hidden stars.
	And starry nails from noon	
	fly round	
To nail this sail		to night like cloud
	to nail the day	
	to the starboard sun.	
The strongest cloud		on the starboard sail
Is the crowd of the stars,		Is the sail of the sun.

## XIII

The death of Hector, tamer of horses

Over the mountains and over the sea  
 runs a black horse, his hoof  
 Pounds the mountains and unsettles the sea.  
 His hoof grounds the mountains  
 Like the bones of the sea.  
 When Death runs so swiftly, his black limbs remember  
 my very vain breath and my boast in the stars.  
 I mount him and I hold him  
 with the sun for a saddle and a bit made of stars.  
 I mount him and I hold him  
 with my breath on the bridle and my boast in the stars.  
 I mount and I hold him  
 with my breath turning silver like a bridle of stars.

Far up on the mountains and deep down in the sea  
 I ride my black horse up and down and far.  
 My breath now deserts me,  
 I spit saliva and stars, I stop breathing  
 the gore and  
 mud,

I grow breathless, ride faster and ride far. My ultimate horse of darkness  
leaves earth's doors ajar.

I am kneaded into a star.

I am kneaded in a cave of darkness  
where Death's hoof ploughed a scar.

I am kneaded on the mountains near heaven  
where Death's hoof cut a scar

like a grave for a man and a mortal  
the mud and spit of stars. The mud and spit of stars are in  
the mixing

and in the kneading  
Of every mortal being  
Who rides the black horse far.

#### XIV

The intercession of Mary, Mother of God

I stood in the forest of space, Lord  
beneath the jungle of suns

under Calvary's flowering Sun.

I stood with the trees of space, Lord,  
under Calvary's flowering Sun,

Saw the fall of galactic suns, the galaxies  
are the pollen of suns. But **this**  
is Calvary's Sun: this hour, this day,  
This Sun.

O God, hold still  
this Atom,  
This ladder of Calvary's Sun,  
for a Child climbs up and down, Lord,

Look

Love mushrooms in the Sun,  
his coal-burnt flesh marks his birth, Lord  
he was born in the burning sun  
with the blazing sight of children which looks round the  
earth to the sun:  
a burning sphere or sun-drop still trembles  
into the ladder of the sun yet never truly collapses  
tiptoes to other suns.

What Child !

but climbs this ladder  
into every curving Sun.

(May God hold still ,  
this Atom,  
this ladder of Calvary's Sun, and bring Love safely down)

# Two Periods in the Work of a West Indian Artist

by *Wilson Harris*

---

Any proper attempt to study the work of Denis Williams must take into account the two periods his work discloses. The first embraces the **Human World** theme, the second — in which he is deeply involved now — has reached a high point in "Painting in Six Related Rhythms 1954." This painting secured an Award of £250 from a distinguished panel of judges — including Sir Herbert Read and Mr. Graham Sutherland — in a competition organized by the Daily Express of Great Britain.

There is a very wide difference indeed between the two periods. This kind of separation or departure marking the changes and periods in the work executed by great artists always offers room for fruitful enquiry into the nature and spirit of genius. We shall not attempt this now. Our object is to be as factual as possible and to put on record, as best we can, the principles which govern the two periods to be observed in the work of Denis Williams.

We can venture to say that the **Human World** period started here in British Guiana in 1949. This may appear strange to a great many persons. Denis Williams had returned from England where he had been painting and working since 1946 when he secured a British Council Art Scholarship. Two major works in the **Human World** theme were painted here on his return — **Origins** and **Burden and Release**. A few persons were privileged to see these paintings at private exhibitions before the painter returned to reside in England, somewhat disappointed at being unable to secure a thoroughly remunerative post as a teacher of Art in his own homeland.

**Origins** and **Burden and Release** were painted in oils on Sacking. They were paintings influenced principally by a sense of the **Actual**. The artist sought in overpowering and densely packed symbols to gather together the shapes of leaves, breadfruit, branches, trees and above all human life and expression into a most profound and disturbing form: a form that was classical in the traditional spirit of modern art where the painter worked for actual relationships organized structurally or architectonically and drawn from his field of vision. The word **classical** is always under fire but we use it bearing in mind Wilenski's admirable definition of what is classical in modern art. Cezanne and Seurat and Gauguin qualify as modern classical painters in contradistinction to the Impressionist school.

We may say then that Denis Williams's work was structural and architectonic — rather than Impressionist — in spirit. The artist painted with his eyes wide open, in absolute concentration on the Actual. His figures had mass and patient architectural and structural build-up. Human

expression took on a terrifying stony candour and urgency: — a marriage had been forged between primitive passion and European technique.

The painting **Burden and Release** has remained one of the most powerful and successful paintings of the **Human World** period which was to reach its climax a year or so later in England. **Burden and Release** is less urgent and dramatic than that great painting **Human World** which marks the close of the period. But it is wonderful for a quality of non-gesticulation. It has immense quiet and control. The painter had worked with his eye on the strange mud huts one sees on the coastlands of Guiana, and on the Corentyne. These mud huts are trashed or roofed by palm leaves which dangle sometimes like grotesque hair under the tropical moon. The grey flesh of the huts is, of course, mud, and the eyes and half-agape mouth are, of course, windows and doors.

Denis Williams returned to England in 1950 to continue his paintings of the Actual and the Human. He worked with a daemonic intensity almost like possession. He put everything he saw on canvas: fearful faces, desperate faces, demons, lust, the faces of newspaper vendors uttering mechanically the destinies of the world, faces coming out of subways, on buses, on the pavement, the face of pregnant women — all against the actual harsh world of time and circumstance.

Now, more than ever, he longed for a greater and greater canvas. He wished for space like a mural, or some great expanse of wall at the junction of busy streets. If only one had space!

His paintings were numerous. Many he destroyed. Amongst those he destroyed were the remarkable **Plantation Studies** on brown paper in gouache. These had been painted in British Guiana and were, to a great extent, preliminary studies leading to the major painting **Origins**, which the artist retains today in his studio like a prized possession. It is interesting to note that the **Plantation Studies** had been exhibited in British Guiana in 1949 under the auspices of the Guianese Art Group. They aroused considerable comment that bordered in some instances on hostility.

The paintings that survived included **Burden and Release**, **Mystic Marriage**, **Umbrellas**, **Securities**, and of course the greatest of them all in that period — **Human World**. Some of these paintings hang today in national and private collections in Europe, and it is hoped shortly to acquire by public subscription **Human World** for a British Guiana national collection.

Wyndham Lewis had already seen something of Denis Williams's work shortly before he returned to British Guiana in 1949, and had praised it. Towards the end of 1950 he accepted an invitation to have a look at the new paintings, and immediately used his great influence to bring that work before the sophisticated viewers of the London art galleries. This gesture grew naturally from one of the greatest of English artists (amongst the few with a great international reputation), — a Rebel

and a genius whose obsession has always been with the values of culture above all else in a civilisation where those values are in peril.

All the paintings that belonged to the **Human World** period, which had not been destroyed by the painter of course, were gathered together and exhibited in December of 1950 in the Gimpel Fils gallery. The exhibition was a marked and brilliant success, and the repercussions from that exhibition reached New York and Paris. The **Human World** period had closed with fame for Denis Williams.

It is too early still to analyse the tremendous philosophical implications of this success, philosophical implications that have to do with the whole character and destiny of culture and society in the 20th century.

The four years following the "**Human World**" period are marked by that phenomenal characteristic of genius we have hinted at already: the renunciation of one period or style and the adoption of a new technical and spiritual revolution.

What was Denis Williams renouncing? When I met him again in England in 1954 I was inclined to criticise him rather too bitterly for renouncing the invaluable experiments that I thought still possible in the **Human World** theme. But the fact is — it is idle to criticise such a renunciation. The overburden of guilt and responsibility in the actual human world draws the artist deeper and deeper into squalor and mire until he renounces the overpowering oppressive theme in favour of a Spirit which is freedom itself. Let us examine the situation closely.

One of the most remarkable experimental painters in 20th century Europe was the Dutch Painter Piet Mondrian who died in 1944 ten years exactly before Denis Williams painted his "Painting in Six Related Rhythms 1954". On Mondrian's arrival in Paris in the first decade of this century he was influenced by **Cubism**. He moved on from there to make his own radical experiments. His work pursued a course that freed form and rescued basic and essential relationships. **Composition 1935** and **Victory Boogie-Woogie 1943-4** are examples of his last and mature works. Mondrian wished to establish what is known as **an equivalence between form and space**. It was a remarkable idea. In order to accomplish this, space must no longer be mediate and indecisive. He reduced volume to an illusion. Volume was abandoned in favour of the plane, and the plane lost its identity to become an area between lines. In **Victory Boogie-Woogie**, where the pure rhythms of original jazz music had captivated his intelligence, the lines themselves were broken. Mondrian, in his search for pure reality in terms of paint, accepted the limitations that the flat canvas imposed on him. He sought for a principle of unity in which natural form would be reduced to constant elements lucid and free and uncluttered by distortion.

The search for lucid essentials was also the preoccupation of the **purist** school of painters. They, however, sought an organic discipline in relation to forms — natural and man-made (like the egg or the broom) rather

than in the reduction of natural form to a pure mathematical spirit in paint. All this work has had considerable influence on architectural achievements (Corbusier for example) in the 20th century.

An examination of abstract work of this order reveals a refreshing climate of freedom and contemplation, almost metaphysical in character, which has been blurred and partially buried under the moods and arbitrariness and partisanship and oppressive relationships that dominate nearly every form of creative activity today or every attempt at understanding the creative spirit of the past.

It is at this point that we must start to assess the second period in the paintings and work of Denis Williams. His intention is to break with and renounce the powerful and dominant and oppressive relationships that he painted with such actuality and genius in the **Human World** theme. He was surfeited with the idea of power as admirable in itself alone. Most great paintings exercise power and they dominate the onlooker. They hold the onlooker captive. The onlooker is taken into the canvas. Denis Williams sought for ways and means to renounce painting in that traditional sense, and to **free** the onlooker, to extend him gloriously out beyond the confines of the canvas. He wished to set aside the painting that captures, and to discover a movement outward, a liberation of the person. What he sought steadfastly to guard against, however, in his new experiments was the arbitrariness or mood that is characteristic of a new school of abstract painters at this present time in England and Europe. He did not wish to gamble with colour or intuition. He sought a work of art true in itself, true to a law and discipline of relationships.

Some of his first experiments are therefore free of every kind of illusion save the baring of essential movements and relationships. He worked on wood instead of canvas. Bold vertical strips literally stood out beyond the surface. The horizontal movement was immanent and present in the bare intervals. Colour was applied with a kind of restraint and quiet deliberation.

More striking than these paintings was the sculpture he attempted. The artist worked with the utmost patience and skill in brass, cutting and saving his material, soldering parts together. The outcome was a space-work, an aloof and shining open spirit. It was curved and shaped like a mask: so unobtrusively, however, that an almost impassive quality obtained—a shining impassivity wherein the mask very slowly ingrains itself in the mind without compulsion or force as if withholding recognition until recognition is freely given.

The painter became more and more aware of the new growth he was tending in his own spirit. He saw — in his mind's eye — a flowering art free of sordidness or distortion, and he was increasingly drawn to explore the "mathematic" and soul of this new art. He increasingly schooled himself to abandon all arbitrariness of mood in favour of unrelenting research and organization of the purest relationships of form. He was tempted to abandon painting altogether in favour of space-

sculpture that sparkled with impassive and deliberate joy, a seasoned and cultivated journeyman. He wished his work to be tied to no mythological or ideological creed, to exist freely in its own right.

He abandoned completely the quest for single organic natural forms—the egg, the leaf, the fruit — in purist art. He had toyed with, and speculated on, this principle. He applied himself instead to discover a fundamental mathematical order that would inspire entirely new relationships free of any element whatsoever of subjective coercion.

What have Mondrian and Denis Williams in common? and where lies the essential difference in their work? Mondrian set out to find certain “deliberate relationships” long forgotten under the subjective morass of art. He stripped every illusion from painting and signalled that a fresh approach to Form had become a necessity. Denis Williams retraced the ground Mondrian had covered to a point where he struck out on a new track. Mondrian’s mature and last works had shattered volume and space. Planes no longer existed on his canvas. He had freed and disclosed the real function of paint on canvas so as to release it for a purpose which would come as close to reality as possible. This **freeing** of the function of paint could be taken no further. What was necessary now was Form obeying its inherent objective laws that had been rescued and freed for that purpose in Mondrian’s experiments.

Denis Williams struck out on this new track of Form in one of the most radical and metaphysical paintings of the past decade — “Painting in Six Related Rhythms 1954”.

The mathematical control was supplied by strict vertical, horizontal and transverse lines so ruled on the board to offer varying compartments ordered to strike a balance of areas. The paint was applied so that brilliant and precise objective relationships emerged moment to moment, hour to hour, day to day.

The painter worked without any moodiness or arbitrariness, almost as if he were an engineer tracing the stage-discharge curve of a river from plotted values. With this **major** difference that each application of colour was a test of his own genius, in response to an **unknown form and its relationship** to colour that he had no method of pre-determining or reassuring himself about in actuality or from previous discovery, as he encountered it. It was a Presence that grew: a Presence that did not compel or force or demand allegiance. The witnesses to that Presence were spatial relationships like an ordering of a new universe that appeared under the brush — deliberate and joyful and with a tendency when looked at from another angle, other than the painter’s, to fly away into space outside the confines of all tension or restraint.

This is the major painting that won an Award in the Daily Express Exhibition, and it glows like a jewel among 200-odd paintings in the Burlington Galleries, London, a witness of a technical and spiritual revolution, where the tension is contained and balanced, and the spirit of man is independent and free.

## SYM POSIUM

# “Is There a West Indian Way of Life?”

---

### EDITOR.

Some weeks ago I invited some of my friends to give views as to whether there is a distinctive West Indian way of life, either in being or emerging, and whether, beneath these forms of culture and artistic creation, there lies a complex of historical traditions and religious and moral beliefs as a result of the community's attempts to meet the challenge of its environment.

The term “way of life” may be interpreted to cover matters such as family structure, the use of national dishes, questions of dress, deportment and behaviour, the psychology of workers, the attitude to games a basic psychology of life etc., and it may also include achievement in the fields of art, music, literature, dancing etc.

Discussion of this question will lead to an assessment of the possibilities of West Indian Nationhood, and this is necessary at the present time as a broader and deeper current of thought, parallel to the political discussions on Federation. It seems fitting that the artists and the leaders of thought in the region should express themselves, consciously and deliberately, on this vital issue.

Whatever the decision on political grounds, the success of the political association must depend on the facts of culture, and the underlying truths of a way of life common to the British countries of this region.

Friends were cordially invited to send their views.

I received replies from a doctor of medicine, a minister of religion, an educationist, a journalist, a social welfare worker, a post and a novelist. Some replies came as impromptu letters and others were in more formal dress but at the risk of untidiness they are printed as they were received. Possibly the views of a painter, a musician and a lawyer would have rounded out the symposium but they have not come in, although solicited.

### DR. FRANK WILLIAMS

I have long taken it for granted that there is a West Indian way of life — and when one takes something for granted, reasons and explanations become as difficult as they seem unnecessary.

When I left home in 1944 for the first time, I had met few West Indians other than Guianese, but just over five years in the U.K. brought me into almost daily contact with the entire region. It was not long before I discovered that we all thought alike on most matters, our tastes in dress and food — and people — were alike, our outlook on sport was

the same, our outlook on money was the same (we all felt **insulted** when on paying a three half penny fare for an English friend, we found it being returned to us), we had the same sense of rhythm; and in all these respects, we, as a group were certainly different from the English, Welsh, Scots, West Africans, Indians from India, and Continentals, though of course, we shared varying common features with each of these groups. It was the sum total that was different.

But making generalisations such as these won't do. You want me to be specific, don't you? At this point, I may well ask what 'sinister' thoughts prompted you to want a doctor to contribute to this symposium. Of course, I agree with you that expressions of thought by different elements in a society on such a subject might in some way be helpful to the society, especially such a one as ours with all its pressing problems, some perplexing and devilishly difficult, some nearing solution, others defying solution, but all of them, intensely exciting.

Is it that you feel some doctoring is indicated? Or do you want to know whether West Indian doctoring is making a contribution to a West Indian way of life? I won't say anything of "respectable" doctoring, but certainly our own brand of witch-doctoring is making its contribution! I see evidence of it almost daily. I always ask my patients whether they have had any treatment before seeing me. Almost everyone presenting with abdominal pain has had his belly "hailed for nara" — and these include all strata of our society. I will not discuss with you all the possible consequences of this fact, but I suggest it does contribute to a way of life — perhaps occasionally to a way of death! And what about our bush medicines? Who knows what contributions to our way of life have been made by such notables as "Tanta-fal-back" and "Lemon grass", "Man-piaba" and "OOman-piaba". Surely "Stinking Toe" has done something! I wonder if there is any West Indian, or even West Indian born, who in his childhood has not had "bush tea"? At this very moment, our friends at the University College Hospital in Jamaica, are giving much thought to the possible part played by "bush tea" in the causation of some of the diseases of West Indian children which baffle us — among them a disease of the liver. And everyone knows how important the liver is to one's whole well-being, physical, mental, emotional! At least everyone who listens to the advertisement of patent medicine. According to these, a "sluggish liver" may be held responsible for almost anything from that tired and run down feeling in the mornings clinically indistinguishable from laziness, to nagging one's husband or beating one's wife. I wonder how many of our West Indian politicians suffer from sluggish livers? And I wonder how many of them were brought up on bush tea? What has bush tea done to mould our artists, writers, poets, musicians and our men of learning? And how many of these has it robbed us of — or created? And before we leave this subject of bush medicines and bush tea, it is of interest to know and note that our University College is collecting and sorting every bush known to be used for medicinal purposes in the region with a view to discovering their potential uses and usefulness. Native medicine in other countries has given many a respectable cure to mankind and who knows what the West Indies will con-

tribute in this field? We may yet find some drug right here on our doorsteps which will help us to defy the enervating powers of the tropical sun and so free our full energies for the immense tasks ahead.

May I now change the field. The Australians have left us all figuratively hanging our heads, for we too have been bitten by that menace to sport, the prestige bug.

A friend of mine after licking his wounds, began to indulge in that West Indian pastime of day-dreaming—yes, day-dreaming is a part of the West Indian way of life. He mentioned the names of a few of our promising youngsters, then commented, “you know, in a few years, nothing can stop us;” then reflectively, he added, “except perhaps ourselves”! Now, there are cricketers who will give expert and scientific views as to why we lost — bad selection, unbalanced teams, no fast bowlers and so on. But for me, I believe we lost mainly because of our outlook on the game. And it would appear that the Australian Captain thought so too, for he said “We won because we played tighter cricket”. This is almost British in its understatement as a description of the grim, businesslike, ultra-professional, planned-to-the-last-ball cricket the Australians play. That’s their way of cricket, reflecting no doubt part of their way of life. What’s ours? Cricket, to every West Indian, whether Test Cricket or else, is still a Saturday afternoon game, played for entertainment, played for fun, played for relaxation. I’m not here concerned with whether this outlook is good or bad — only with the fact. We like to see stroke-play and our players oblige. We want runs — all the time. When, very rarely, a Weekes or a Walcott or a Worrell decides to play the hard Australian way (and English too), he gets barracked — by us all. Players are conditioned by their environment. Hence, the flash at the ball outside the off stump, with the score at 0. If it comes off, player and onlooker are delighted. If it doesn’t come off, it is because he isn’t good enough. “Headley would have hit that for six” someone would say. Do you remember the adverse comments of radio and newspapermen on the slow rate of scoring of the Australians on those occasions when clearly the state of the game warranted it?

But another aspect of the West Indian way of life emerges from all this. We want stroke play and runs all the time — but we also want to win! Yes, West Indians like to eat their cake and have it too. We want to experience the emotional satisfaction of seeing our country win, but we dislike the sacrifice, effort and discipline involved (on the part of both player and onlooker). Some of us want the fruits of Federation, but we are afraid of the sacrifice, effort, and discipline involved. We also want to manage our own affairs, but are afraid of the sacrifice, effort and discipline involved.

We want to see these undeveloped lands of ours developed, but are afraid of the sacrifice, effort and discipline involved. Please note, I did not say we were **incapable** of sacrifice, effort or discipline, for those West Indians who live in a different society with different values, do adapt themselves quickly and completely in the interest of their own personal survival. Those of us who have studied abroad in a climate and in surroundings and circumstances quite foreign to us — indeed at times

hostile to us, know that we could not have succeeded without sacrifice, effort and discipline. We have it in us. We only need something to nourish these qualities.

I prescribe a good dose of being left to look after our own affairs, to bear responsibility fully, to make mistakes and to correct them by the time-honoured process of trial and error, to do all this unhindered and unhampered by any mothering, however, well intentioned.

But you didn't ask me to prescribe.....I'm sorry — I can't help it. Prescribing is in my bones but not because I'm a doctor. Prescribing is part of the West Indian way of life.



### H. M. E. CHOLMONDELEY

You ask me whether there is a West Indian way of life and my simple answer is that I cannot tell.

For one thing I assume that in the term W.I. you include the mainland territories of British Guiana and British Honduras with all the W.I.

Now isn't it a tall order for me to opine as to whether there is a way of life in the terms of your definition that is common to this area?

I have not travelled extensively in the area — what is a week in Port-of-Spain? — and the West Indians I have met in B.G. and in the U.K. were too selected a group for me to use them as a norm.

Again the works extant on the various aspects of W.I. cosmology are so few or are written in Spanish that I cannot claim to have made a close study to venture an informed opinion gained from second hand sources. Having established my **bona fides**, I feel free to express the thoughts I have on this question.

A W.I. way of life is the expression of the social habits of a West Indian Nation and while I agree that the development of a W.I. nation is desirable, nay is an absolute need in the present day world pattern, yet I can only see the faint beginnings of a W.I. nation being fostered.

Of course the conscious evolution of nationhood is nothing new — the U.S.A. and Britain being notable examples of this, but in our case this "growth" is being fostered from above and not from the grassroots as it should be.

Both England and the U.S.A. had time to grow, the latter having the advantage of building on the accumulated experience of several grown communities but they had the advantage of a compact country within which this development took place, while the position in the W.I. is so vastly different that the sea would tend to wash out what little sentiment we derive from our common racial backgrounds. McIver and Page in their monumental work "Society" feel that the bases of community are locality and community sentiment which can only arise in an area of social living marked by some degree of social coherence.

Thus the theoreticians warn us of the extreme difficulty of creating this W.I. nation and the consequent emergency of a way of life. Need I

comment on the existence of insular feeling so deeply rooted as to find expression in legal sanctions?

On the other hand Hans Kohn claims that "in modern times, it has been the power of an idea, not the call of blood, that has constituted and moulded nationalities."

True as Hitler has proved and although this is a good tool for our purpose we would not approve of Hitler's methods. This fostering of W.I. level of thinking is evident in the U.C.W.I., I.C.T.A., R.E.C., F.W.I.C.C. and F.W.I.C.S., but some of these attempts at national thinking are "forced" upon the intellectual elite as the only way of survival in a world which is unmindful of small units.

But where is the attempt to foster the growth from the bottom, from the grassroots; have we yet begun to use the power of the idea among the people who must give form to a W.I. nation?

Let us digress for a short while to examine one unit of the W.I. as you understand it and assess its demographic situation as it affects nationalism: our own B.G.

Do you see a Guianese way of life developing? Do we the six peoples have any community sentiment or feeling that would make us face the extra-territorial world with a united front?

Think of the differences of our racial origins and the difference of circumstance of our arrival here and the cumulative influence of these and see whether you do not agree that the healing power of Time should be given a longer period within which to exercise a more beneficial influence? To illustrate the difficulty of the problem, let us think of one activity which should strike a sympathetic cord in the hearts of all the six peoples — cricket.

All of us even the indigenous Amerindians — do you know that in my recent trip to the North West District, I found on the Kaituma two teams of Amerindians engaging in a practice match on some unpromising pegasse land and on examining the pitch closely I was informed that the stuff of which it was made was transported in boats over 50 or 60 miles? How's that for enthusiasm! — Yes, I was saying, all of us like our cricket but do you think when we as a country engage touring teams that most of us wish B.G. to win? Think of the M.C.C. and the Indian tours, and in the former case recall the press comment and in the latter. I daresay you should have sampled opinion then and discovered where the sympathies of nearly 50% of our population were concentrated.

No, give Father Time a chance and to this add one generation or two generation or two of enlightened teachers at all levels and other moulders of public opinion in our country and at the end of a generation we should have made some progress on the road of Guianese nationalism where in the words of Macaulay's Horatius:

"None was for the party and all were for the State".

And now, look at Guiana as a microcosm of the W.I. and you have your answer.

**MARTIN CARTER**

Instead of asking "Is there a West Indian way of life", I would much prefer to ask, "what is there about the life in this region which gives an essential distinction, a distinction that we can call West Indian". I do so for reasons separate from the fact that the original proposition, appears to be what Kant would have called an analytic proposition, inasmuch as the answer to the question is contained in the very meaning of the subject itself.

Wherever human beings live in community there must be a way of life. And the only sort of enquiry which can tell us anything about this way of life is one which seeks an answer in terms of culture. For it is only in cultural heredity, humanly speaking, that human beings differ from one another.

Out of the complex of situations, traditions, influences that have gone into the making of the way of life in this region, the institution of slavery in the beginning lies at the foundation of the psychological make-up of the people. This ignores of course the minorities, but the foundation referred to above is to some extent all pervasive. Emancipation in the eighteen thirties took the chains off the hands and the feet, but the psychological constitution woven in the gloom of the plantation remained. If this is true, then there is no need to stress the psychological continuity here implied. And it is at this point that we come to recognise the real meaning of the term "West Indian colonial", relating in this context a political situation to a cultural condition in order to make possible a deeper realization of status in terms of world humanity.

The cultural process is one of cross pollinations, of infinite selection, rejection, permutation, transformation. This was the very secret of the miracle of ancient Greece, that meeting ground of the wisdom of the ancient East, Africa and Europe. What is happening with us here is obviously the same process in another world, where the psychological necessities are rooted in the slave-patterned experience of the West Indian colonial. And it is these necessities that go to give that almost demoniac energy and vitality to the unrelenting rhythms of the steelband with its emphatic physical imagery; that sardonic fantasy, casual dialectical humour-prophylactic of despair, and ironic self-contempt to the argument of the calypso with its pornographic corruptions; and that releasing mockery of fate to the temper and spirit of life in this region. If I may quote here from a popular calypso:

Back to back  
 Belly to belly  
 Ah don't care a damn  
 Ah done dead a'ready.

It is because music is the very language of the inner life that we can so easily find such expressions of the life of the people in it. Torture and hope is a furious tension.

What is of greatest relevance to our theme is not simply what has come in, but rather what has been done with what has been taken. A slave who reads a Bible becomes one of the Children of Israeli, a highly significant and revealing identification. On the other hand, the prohibition of marriage between slaves and the oft-discussed family structure of contemporary city-dwellers are by no means Biblical injunctions.

A way of life is a necessary choice in which the necessities that operate are only partially manifested in the choosing. The stem of a coconut frond becomes a cricket bat in the hands of a child from the slums. The metal instrument of a steel band evolves from a length of bamboo — inevitable motion in opposite directions, a consequence of the particular socio-economic determinism in these parts. And when the choice can no longer contain the necessity, comes the transformation, comes the explosion of the seed.

There are seeds exploding every day in the West Indies. And every sprouting leaf that emerges has the sign of its form, the mark of its origin. Distorted almost beyond recognition in the trance of a miserable existence, it screams for attention. It is the voice of the West Indian strange in his own ears.

Because the human spirit must survive, and because music is the language of the spirit itself, a necessity that conquers choice, it is in our music that we must look for discoveries, avoiding at the same time however, that uncritical static idealising so dear to the shallow and demagogic nationalist.

And so, in spite of all the brutalisation, all the shattering of nascent forms that obtain in this region, West Indian music does contain within itself that emerging configuration specifically and particularly West Indian, no matter how crude and primitive. It is here that we will find the most rewards in our search for the West Indian meaning, the West Indian way. And yet even here the greatest care must be exercised lest there ensue a confusion of the shape of the germinating seed with the shape of the possible fruit. Everything here must be dynamically conceived with a Protean essence as a tribute to the human effort and experience involved.

Only when the West Indian can experience himself as a human being will he be in a position truly to celebrate his spiritual possibilities. It is when his status as colonial is abolished that he will come into his own human self-possession.

What is of highest value in the contemporary way of life in the West Indies is that which moves to bring about this urgently required transformation of status. In the jagged political efforts of the people in the social demands for a better life, in the poetry and the art that extends the spiritual dimensions beyond the suffocating actuality to accomplish human growth, lies the burning ember of survival struggling into flame.

**RUBY SAMLALLSINGH**

Is there a West Indian Way of Life? — That this question is very much in the minds of West Indian peoples everywhere seems to be an indication of a nascent nationalism in these parts. It is a healthy sign that these peoples of varied origins, from different races, religious and cultural groups are beginning to feel a real sense of belonging to the West Indies and taking a true pride in being West Indian. Hence the striving to assert our individuality, to stress our separateness, to emphasize our uniqueness in any particular aspect of our life.

It is a swing of the pendulum from the time not so long ago when the middle classes in the West Indies were ashamed to admit knowledge of, or participation in, anything so "vulgar" as Carnival, Calypso, Obeah, Shango etc. But this swing was inevitable. These things were too real, too essential a part of the lives of the masses of the people not to make themselves felt. They influenced the manner, behaviour and outlook of the people so profoundly that they forced themselves upon the attention of thinking people. A few of the intellectuals began to study these forms of behaviour, and origins were probed, histories were attempted, and organisations were formed for the encouragement and improvement of these expressions of the national character. Tourists and foreign visitors expressed interest in, and appreciation of the more overt forms, sociologists and foreign students came to study the more secret forms, a few books were written, and gradually the general public began to take an interest.

Wherever people settle down to make a living, there will eventually emerge a manner of life which of necessity reflects the history, geography and economic conditions of the people, as well as the racial traits and religious convictions, and all these forces interacting, result in a psychological make-up of the people which is typical.

In the West Indies there is a great variety of racial types, and a great intermingling of these races which has resulted in the creation of completely new types. Peoples of mixed racial stocks are known in other parts of the world, but the variety and extent to which they are found in the West Indies and the fact that they are in these parts the rule, rather than the exception, is an indication of the uniqueness of certain things found here.

In Trinidad and in British Guiana and to a lesser extent in Jamaica, there is a great variety of religions practised side by side, and Christian Churches, Hindu Temples and Moslem Mosques add variety to the landscape by the architectural forms which are reminiscent of the style of the countries of origin. Christian, Moslem and Hindu festivals are celebrated by many people who are not adherents of the particular faith. At Christmas, every one sends gifts and sets up Xmas Trees. At "Holi", the dye is thrown on Hindus and non-Hindus, and at "Ede", Moslems invite their non-Moslem friends to join in the festivities. A Hindu wedding in a Trinidad village is an occasion of celebrating for the whole village, Indian and African alike. The red and white flags flapping from bamboo poles in the front of Hindu homes are a part of the landscape. These phenomena

are an accepted part of the life in these parts. They no longer cause question or comment; they are recognised expressions of the way of life of the West Indian peoples.

In addition to these major recognised forms of religion there are a great variety of occult religious practices which are a strange mixture of Christianity and a more primitive form of worship. There are many variations of these, but they all have in common an extremely high degree of emotionalism — The Pocomania of Jamaica, Shango, Hoodoo and Shouters of Trinidad are forbidden by Law, but persist in the remoter areas and are practiced by many people of the lower classes. Associated with these are certain occult practices of Obeah and Black Magic, which profoundly influence the character of the people.

In the West Indies there are a great variety of people representing many countries and many ways of life, and each trying to perpetuate or carry on the culture of their country of origin, with minor adaptations to suit the climate or geographical conditions. This perpetuation of individual cultures is not a conscious effort, but results simply from the fact that each group of people continues to live according to the patterns which they know best. But running under all these can be seen certain patterns that are typical of these parts; certain ways and customs that are unique to these islands, that are the offspring of all the different forces at work here.

The Carnival in Trinidad, seabathing and Sunday picnics on the beach in the islands, the Roti Stalls in Port-of-Spain, the promenading on the Sea Wall in Georgetown, the bicycles which are a menace to the Georgetown motorist, the Boating in Barbados, Kite Flying on the Sea Wall in Georgetown, are all typical of the Way of Life of these places. So is the food which is eaten here — the foo-foo, corn coo-coo, flying fish, sea eggs, pepper pot, metagee, "blogo", pilau, crabbacks, etc.

The family organisation is sociologically interesting. Here we have the rather loose family set-up. This phenomenon has its origin in history — the time of slavery, when family life among the slaves was actively discouraged, because it was felt that the slave was a better worker if he had no family responsibility. And yet the breeding of children was encouraged because it swelled the labour force and increased the wealth of the slave owner.

The master of the slave looked after the children of slaves and parental responsibility was reduced to a minimum. This has left its mark on the people, and today we still find men leaving their children and going off without any care for their support. This has resulted in the evolution of a strong type of woman and a semi-matriarchal type of society, where the woman is head of the household, and where illegitimacy is an accepted practice.

As soon as a way of life has been established it strives to express itself in various art forms, in festivals and in humour.

The Carnival in Trinidad is well known and popular among all sections, cutting across all racial and class barriers and has become popular among the peoples of the neighbouring islands as well as the mainland of South America. It has often astounded and intrigued tourists and visitors who hail from the more sophisticated societies of the northern climes.

The Steel Band is a completely indigenous phenomenon arising out of the emotional need and economical necessity of a people to express itself in music. It has a strong African rhythm, but the instruments, the sentiments and the 'feeling' are Trinidadian. It is an interesting sidelight on the West Indian Way of Life that forms developed in one island, are taken on and become popular with the people living in the other parts of the West Indies. Indeed, the Steel Band is now internationally known.

In drama, the Little Theatre movement is gaining ground in Jamaica, and in Trinidad several Dramatic Societies are producing plays written by West Indians about the West Indian's scenes and peoples. Derek Walcott's "Sea at Dauphin", "Henri Christophe", Erol John's "How then tomorrow", "The Tout", Frank Pilgrim's play Priscilla's Wedding are efforts to express in dramatic form the West Indian Way of Life.

The West Indian scene is transferred on Canvass by our artists of whom to mention only a few Sybil Atteck, Denis Williams, Albert Huie Burrowes, Alladin and the Holder Brothers are the best known, a Sculptor A. Herbert has carved many a West Indian bust and captured in wood the expression of such well known types as the Old Indian Man, and the "Saga Boy".

Beryl McBurnie and her troupe, and Bosco Holder are gradually developing a West Indian dance which draws upon all the influences, music and folksongs of the islands and depict the history and emotions which shape the West Indian people.

In every art form our people are expressing this West Indian Way of Life.

In the political sphere we have politicians like Butler and Bustamante who could only be West Indians, and we have men like Norman Manley, Grantley Adams who can hold their own in the International scene and gain credit for the West Indies.

But it is chiefly in the attitude towards life, the easy going happy-go-lucky "laissez faire" attitude of the West Indian people that this unique West Indian Way of Life is best typified, because our way of life must of necessity be a reflection of our personality and our general psychological make up. And since our whole historical background is so different, so unique, it is natural that we, as a people, should be fashioned by this mould which is our heritage, and that there should be elements in our Way of Life which would be typically ours.

## P. H. DALY.

A national way of life—the representative, habitual life of a people, into which their thoughts and imaginations are poured, and on which their distinctive characters are impressed — is a reflection of their corporate cultures. This way of life may be comprised partly of codified ideals, such as a written constitution, and partly of a multiplicity of uncatalogued customs, habits, and traditions. And, though the constitutional part of this way usually has its codified concepts, such as **Habeas Corpus**, the uncoded part, having merely the moral sanction of custom, can and does function with all the force of statutory law.

As an example of the force of moral sanction on customs which comprise a people's uncoded way of life, you have the English pantomime, which dates as far back as 1660, that century when the common man in England was defying the power of the Star Chamber. The pantomime survives today as constitutionally virile as the independence of the jury for which Edmund Blundell, by defying the Recorder of London, made a codified part of the British way of life.

Because a national way of life belongs to the various essences of a people's nature, only those patterns which we consider genuine and good ought to be preserved and handed down to our issue to continue and revere. In their present nervously irresolute insipidity, West Indian way-of-life patterns, such as the steelband and the calypso and the area's habit of rum-drinking, have not yet been canonised, by the moral sanction of custom, into approximations of codified ideals. They have not yet reached the stage of a permanent way, such as the custom of Germans eating frankfurters and sauerkraut, Italians eating macaroni and spaghetti, and Greeks eating honey and mutton. The calypso, the steelband, the drinking of rum, are ruled too much by the vicissitudes of capricious public taste and economic changes. One possible change I can think of is this: Rum, made from sugar's by-products, is the West Indian national drink; but the discovery of oil and valuable minerals in the Caribbean area might conceivably imperil the suzerainty of rum as the national beverage. Another actual change: In British Guiana, masqueraders and Congojumbies and the foo-foo bands were the pantomimic pageant of my childhood days (and writing about them now makes me nostalgic!) but—ah! They have all made their valedictory ritual now, and their successors are the steelbands and the calypsonians. What we thought were fundamentals have withered into fungus. Excrescence had been mistaken for cream; anthropomorphism for permanent form. And who will prophesy that the steelbands and their breed will not likewise be liquidated by the insolvency process of time! And that our issue will not be observing strange new rubrics and rituals, bowing their knees to misbegotten strange new gods of song and dance. This all comes from a lack of permanency in our incipient forms.

Not even in dishes, the culinary—or dyspeptic!—sidewhiskers of the West Indian way, is permanency found. What have we in the West Indies been ritualistically eating for a hundred years? Nothing. The regional dish, like the Regional Novel, has not yet arrived. From dishes

to novels all are insular in appeal. And even territorial dishes have proved, with the passing of time, nothing more than territorial amorphous growths. Take the pepperpot, that apotheosis of meats which so aptly reflects the plural nature of our society, and that conspiracy of carbohydrates called metagee. In my childhood days, they were both high up in the culinary hierarchy. The mysterious rubrics of their manufacture were solemnly revealed to us by our grandmothers. With a lush display of toothless, masticatory finesse, our grandmothers showed us how they ought to be ritualistically eaten. Today? Pah! So passeth culinary glory. Time is revealing a quality of sham in them all. Yet they had been hailed as permanent ways. We had not concerned ourselves much with their true, critical evaluation, but had left them to journalistic demagogues and hack columnists who had hailed them as 'traditions'. Tradition! Don't we meet our traditions ready-made? And we sometimes, if we are fortunate, contribute to the making of tradition. But do we—or dare we—preside at the sanctification of amorphous growths into traditions!

A subtle alchemy of change prevents our customs from congealing into permanent ways. Is it alchemy or character? Is this inconstancy a reflection of the West Indian under the skin? or is it a process of climatic corrosion, as a West Indian poet sings: "Burn, sun, burn my waters", and to which we may add, "burn our customs, too". It is to be noted that the West Indian novelist delineates West Indian character as inconstant; and as there is little the professional psychologist can tell the novelist of human nature which he does not already know, we must stop and think. But apart from this suggestion of caprice and corrosion which prevent our customs from congealing into ways, it ought to be noted that the English pantomime grew up alongside the provincial theatre. National ways of life have been perpetuated by national shrines, used as psychological rallying-grounds and an emporium for national wares. We in the West Indies have no native theatre. We have no shrines—no Thermopylae, no Runnymede, no Richmond—nothing.

Hedged around as we are by this psychological vacuum and fungus growth, two fundamental 'instincts' explain the present turbulence of the West Indian situation, and they are helping to formulate two important concepts which are influencing West Indian society—the concept of free political institutions, and the concept of a free Christian Church historically critical of the secular authority. To understand how these 'instincts' have come into being, take a look at the vital historical forces at work. You know that the psychological heritage of our enslaved and indentured ancestries still makes West Indians think of government and employer in terms of the whip. So we are constitutionally allergic to oppressive government and oppressive boss. So West Indian mass psychology determines the radical programme of West Indian political parties. Representative political institutions, therefore, take on the significance of a weapon to fight the symbol of the old historic whip—the government and the employer. The tragedy starts when representative institutions themselves are the government.

The second concept which, in my view, forms a permanent way is the historical role of the Christian Church as champions of liberal movements. Because the Christian missionaries were also emancipationists, Christianity has imbued our political struggles with the **ethos** of theological sanction. So we are, too, allergic to any tendency of the Church repudiating its historical stand as liberal champions in the context of our still-continuing West Indian emancipation.

These, then, are the possessive and the critical political instincts which are forming permanent West Indian ways of life. To say that our West Indian way of life is already influenced by the concept of a free parliament and a free Church, is to say, and say rightly, that West Indianism is a spiritual contradiction of communism. This possessive political instinct explains the constitutional crisis in Jamaica in 1839, when the legislature, resenting the Act for the Better Government of Prisons which overrode its authority, went on strike, defied the Melbourne Government to suspend the constitution, and created the fantastic spectacle of the overthrow of a British government. The instinct was also at work in the Great Civil List Crisis in British Guiana in 1840. Today this instinct explains our irresolution to enter a federal arrangement. The historic approximations of this West Indian instinct are the religious way of life of the American nation, which goes back to the Puritan traditions of the Founding Fathers, the political way of life of the British, which, through the practical genius of the English Common Law and the impartiality of the Queen's judges, ensures freedom from arbitrary arrest and freedom of mind and conscience; and the Prussian military way of life, which goes back to the Hegelian model of education—Hegel out of Kant and Kant out of Rousseau.

With West Indianism already influenced by these two instincts, and with the Region's people themselves working out the theoretical jejune-ness of cultural thought, our way of life is being built on fundamentally sure ground. All that is left is for our successors to see that these instincts shall not wither and perish from our hearts.



### EDGAR MITTELHOLZER

Yes, there is a West Indian way of life — but it is not as distinctive a way of life as many cranks and faddists, who have West Indian nationhood on the brain, would have us believe. The West Indian way of life is a way that runs fairly parallel, and very close, to the European way. It was Europeans who colonised these islands (and mainland territories), hence is it to be wondered at that the West Indian way of life should have been tremendously influenced by the culture of the particular nation or nations in control? While it is true that in various islands and mainland territories, there are traces of African and Indian, (or African-cum-Indian) customs, it would be sheer exaggeration to say that either African or Indian has played a strikingly dominant part in fashioning the over-all West Indian way of life. The Africans came as

slaves, and the Indians were an eclipsed people; the culture of the Europeans carried the day, and Africans and Indians who came in contact with the conquerors (and the Africans were always in contact) could not help being influenced. For three centuries the Africans of the West Indies have been divorced from their land of origin and have been open to European influences; and being slaves, for the first two hundred years, they were not even allowed to practise overtly their own primitive religions, nor indulge in their own ways and habits, (at one time drum-beating was prohibited by the planters). The result was that, as time passed, they absorbed the ways and habits, and the religion and language of the Europeans; they imitated their masters in every possible manner, even to adopting their names. The little African that remained in them manifested itself in the occasional parody of some ritual dance or "ceremony" which, in many a case, was itself not free of European influence (to wit, the **voodoo** practised in Haiti).

Again, there is this that must be considered when speaking of a West Indian way of life: each island or territory has its own "way" of speaking, eating, and viewing life, of worshipping and governing its people. The Barbadian way is not the same as the Trinidadian, nor is the Guianese the same as the Jamaican, and, of course, if we take the French islands into consideration, too — and I assume we mean by West Indian not necessarily **British** West Indian — then, again, we shall discover some alarming contrasts. Indeed, the contrasts will become almost impossible of being put into perspective if we also include islands like Cuba and Puerto Rico, and the Dominion Republic. I defy anyone to amalgamate Latin American **joie de vivre** with the pseudo-English puritanism of Barbados, and arrive at a common denominator called A West Indian way of Life. It seems to me obvious, therefore, that there is no point at which all West Indian ways of life meet. The Trinidadian has his Carnival and calypso and his pilau, his **tullum** and **pistache**, and his **boballes** and graft in high places; the Barbadian has his gospel-halls and his **coo-coo** and falernum, and top-hat and frock-coat at weddings; the Cubans have their rhumbas and revolutions — and Ernest Hemingway.

There is much more I can say on this subject, for it is one on which I have definite views, and rather strong feelings — though, perhaps, not the kind of views and feelings that will prove popular among our West Indian neo-nationalists. Indeed, I have had quite a lot to say about it in a novel I have just completed, entitled **A TALE OF THREE PLACES** (the three places being Trinidad, England and St. Lucia) in which the central character is a young man who cannot decide whether to be loyal to his native Trinidad or to the England of his dreams: the England of which he has been taught so much at school and has come to learn to love even without having seen. For remember, it is not the British Council which has inoculated British West Indians with a love for things British; it is the decades and decades of conditioning that are behind us. And the same may be said of the Martiniquans and the French.

A West Indian way of life? It will be a long time, I feel, before that way can be charted with clarity on the map of Caribbean **mores**.

## REV. E. S. M. PILGRIM.

“IS THERE A WEST INDIAN WAY OF LIFE”? That is the question. But, first of all, what do we mean by the term “West Indian?” We may agree, — and I hope we will, — to include within the term Guianese as well as Barbadians and Trinidadians and the islanders generally, — (although there are some people who definitely disagree with us here). But when we have done that our difficulties are not over. What about the East Indians who form so large a part of the population of Trinidad and British Guiana? Shall we regard them as West Indians? I do not see how we can avoid it, in spite of racial and cultural considerations. So when we ask whether there is a “Way of Life” which is distinctly West Indian, we are asking whether the people whose homes are in British Guiana and the West Indian Islands have, in the mass, developed, or are developing a “Way of Life” which would be regarded as the hall-mark of their essential unity in thought, aspiration, and outlook, and a promising basis for political self-determination.

The two main cultural groups among the West Indians are the Afro-Europeans, — (a term which I have invented to include the descendants and offshoots of the original sexual unions of Africans and Europeans), and the East Indian, descendants of the East Indian immigrants brought in to work on the sugar plantations. We can disregard any idea of there being “pure Africans” in any considerable numbers, in these parts. Nor need we consider, for our present purposes, other comparatively small national elements in the West Indian population, — such as Chinese, and Europeans. The Afro European group is undoubtedly developing a “Way of Life” which is distinctive, and peculiar to itself. We see it in the West Indian “Calypso”, which seems to embody the African rhythmic form modified by close and continual contact with the musical inheritance handed down to us from Europe. We see it too, (and I speak of British Guiana), in the crowds which follow the Steel Bands, — crowds which are composed almost altogether of Afro-Europeans. The East Indian group already has its own “Way of Life”, which is part and parcel of a cultural inheritance dating from the remote past. One is conscious of it when one listen to the Indian Music, which, to Afro-European ears, seems so un-musical, so toneless and monotonous. One sees it too in the Indian Feasts, the Indian Marriage and Funeral customs etc., which are a kind of national and cultural cement, binding together the individual units of the race. Of course, the East Indian “Way of Life” has been, and is being, modified, by constant contact with the large Afro-European group. But this modification is being strongly and consciously resisted by Indian-minded Indians, who look on such cultural modification as is going on (through inter-marriage, adoption of Christianity and Christian customs etc.), as cultural **contamination**.

Herein lies the difficulty of forging a political constitution which will bring political self-determination to the West Indies. There lurks the fear that one of the main groups, with its own distinctive “Way of Life”, may by sheer weight of numbers or economic strength dominate the other.

So there is an Afro-European "Way of Life", and an East Indian "Way of Life". Is there any sign of the emergence of an over-all "Way of Life", embracing both of these groups? I think there is. I see it in the schools, in which children of both dominant races sit together, learn together, sing together, play together. It will be very difficult for them to forget this when by-and-by the Workshop of Life claims their time and their services. I see it in the University College of the West Indies, where young men and women of both races, the future teachers, and leaders, of the West Indian Nation that is to be, are learning to know, to respect, and to trust each other. I see it in our literary and cultural groups, where differences of race are transcended by a feeling of cultural affinity and a common quest of Truth. I see it in those Christian Congregations in which East Indians and Afro-Europeans worship our common Lord. Every school, college, University, — every club or group every social gathering, of whatever kind in which the races mix, — contributes to the development of that over-all "Way of Life" for which we look. Every Christian Congregation in whose Fellowship East and West are equally at home, adds its invaluable quota to the total effort. The movement will gather momentum in proportion to our faith in it, and our earnest desire to help it along.

---

#### BOOK REVIEW

## The Harrowing of Hubertus

Edgar Mittelholzer

---

Those of us who enjoyed "Children of Kaywana" and waited anxiously for the second volume of the series, will not be disappointed in "The Harrowing of Hubertus". The story continues chronologically from 1763 until 1802 and we follow the fortunes and misfortunes of the van Groenwegel family — and of British Guiana — through a very interesting period of history.

It was at this time that the government of British Guiana changed hands from Dutch to English in 1781 then French in 1782. Through the enthusiasm of the lovable if lispng Wilfred, with his passion for statistics, we are kept informed of all that takes place at the new Fort St. George — 'very near to Plantation Labourgade at the very mouth of the river, East Bank.' The name of the Governor at that time was Kingston.

When the French took over in 1782 the Dutch planters, having been made to take an oath of allegiance to the English the year before, were now called upon to take one to the French.

And no sooner had the French taken over than this most interesting proclamation was issued — "To all whom it may concern, be it known that it is considered necessary, from the great extent of this river and its banks (the Demerara) to have a capital which will become the business centre where religion will have a temple, justice a palace, war its arsenals, commerce its counting houses, industry its factories, and where the inhabitants may enjoy the advantage of social intercourse." And so was born the town which we now call Georgetown. The French

were systematic. They planned the town well, and passed a law that all kitchens should be built in brick, to reduce the risk of fire.

In 1784 British Guiana once again became Dutch and again the planters were called upon to take oaths of allegiance. The fort at the mouth of the river ceased to be called Fort St. George and was renamed Fort William Frederick, and the new town of Longchamps was renamed Stabroek.

But the romance of our own history is only part of the attraction of this novel. As in his previous novels, Edgar Mittelholzer has created vivid characters. Hubertus dominates the book. He has great strength, physical and of character. He has schooled himself to speak English as well as his native Dutch. He is greatly influenced by the traditions of the family, even though he takes care not to instil them into his children as his ancestor Hendrikie did. There are times when he is very ashamed of his ancestry, but yet when prompted by his cousin Faustina or by his own daughter Luise, he cannot help conforming to the van Groenwegel tradition, and then he is proud of — ‘the blood I despise — or imagine I despise.’

But he is always struggling with himself. As he says — ‘How can one be loyal to God and to the flesh at one and the same time? The flesh is not of necessity evil, yet to yield to its urges is to wound the spirit. The spirit cannot grow in stature while the flesh is being satiated.’ And he never really solves this problem.

His wife Rosalind is English, and everything about her is well ordered, her household, her children, herself. She is deeply religious and is greatly troubled by her husband’s lapses from the high standard he has set himself. She is however always ready to forgive and try to help him find peace within himself. If she has a fault it is only lack of understanding, but then, as Hubertus’ cousin Faustina says — ‘Good, pure people don’t always understand.’

Edward is the sort of person who knows the loneliness of being alone in a crowd. The rest of the family have always thought him queer, from the time he was a small boy. Edgar Mittelholzer excels in his portrayal of this sensitive yet strong character, who has a passion and genius for design and later is among the first to build a town house in the new town created by the French. The love of twenty-eight year old Luise for Edward, ten years her junior, would normally invite unfavourable reactions from the reader for these characters, but here the author succeeds in arousing sympathy for both Luise and Edward in this most unusual love story.

No mention of any of Edgar Mittelholzer’s books about Guiana can be complete without reference to his awareness of the beautiful in nature, especially those things peculiarly Guianese — ‘dismal December

rain' — 'the air cool with the scent of leaves and fruit blossoms and the vague aroma of damp earth.' One feels that Hubertus' great love of trees is the author's —

'Hubertus . . . looked past the men at the fruit trees. The sun glittered in their foliage and sackies and kiskadees twittered amidst the branches. The mangoes were in blossom and very faintly on the air drifted a turpentine aroma that of a sudden grew stronger as a breeze, audible a moment ago as a hissing far away, now sizzling through the foliage of the trees.'

And there is a moment in time like a beautiful bubble that has somehow been preserved for us and that can never be destroyed for the kiskadees will always sing and the mango trees blossom in Guiana.

—J. A.

---

## Poems By Leo I. Austin

---

Mr. W. H. Auden, speaking of poetry, reaffirms a basic truth in the poetic spirit when he says — "Essentially poetry is an affirmation of being, and the main negative motives for writing it a dread of non-being. The poet feels like St. Augustine: 'I would rather have been deprived of my friend than of my grief'; even when he says 'Since never to have been born is beyond all comparison the best', he is rejoicing that he is alive to make that statement".

These are words which have considerable meaning for the serious West Indian poet and artist, that strange person whose work lives and moves within two extremes — an extreme indifference in the Caribbean to all serious art whether home-made or foreign, — and an extreme nostalgia the West Indian entertains — in spite of every rebuff — for his homeland, and extreme desire not to be deprived of his grief, his roots, his soil.

One can perhaps take pride in this extreme circumstance because it means that the West Indian (were he aware of it) is a symbol of the twentieth century world.

The predicament is plain to see in Mr. Austin's poems like a kind of unconscious device goading the writer but losing force in the form and expression the writer adopts. One searches in vain for experience in his material — experience that welcomes the unconscious, experience in fashions word-material in spite of the unconscious, into a kind of memorable proverbial utterance. Form and content are then inseparable. In fact everything is Form — the mystery is Form.

After reading Mr. Austin's poems I come away with the impression that the time is ripe for methods and principles to be discussed, the materials and the texture of poetry — sheer poetry as an experience, the unique and the phenomenal character of poetry.

We must read and study poets like Hopkins, Hart Crane, Yeats, Edith Sitwell, Pound, Mayakovsky, Rimbaud. One is aware in these writers of a major concern with words and their poetic material.

It is incongruous that Mr. Austin should write lines like these

In views secured from mountain tops  
The heart will catch some fleeting glimpse  
In those rare vistas  
Of the meaning  
Of life

and yet be oblivious to the hackneyed spirit in

Ere the shaking bark of ripening youth  
Ventures uneasily o'er Life's mysterious seas  
And each consoling beacon of my boyhood days  
With the fleeting shores forever shall recede.

The evidence is there — in spite of every insensitive lapse — that Mr. Austin loves his material. Consider these lines from Part III in his **West Indian Panorama**

All the bars of wealth and race  
As bosoms throbbed with animation  
Were hurled aside in an hour of fate;  
Saw Black and White work out a perfect harmony  
In the dance's brief embrace.

A poem when all is said and done is the mystery of words and the mystery of personality.

Nothing short of that is a poem in any memorable or fruitful sense.

— WILSON HARRIS.

**GENTLEMEN,**

For that Dress Suit of yours

— VISIT —

**Lall's Camp Street Bazaar**

Where you will find up-to-the-minute material  
to satisfy your taste.

**LALL'S Will Please You**

KYK-OVER-AL

*It's the - - -*

**SERVICE**

BEHIND THE

***SYMBOL***

**A. C. L.**

THAT KEEPS

**The Argosy Co., Limited**

**in the Forefront of Printers.**

---

**The Argosy Co.,  
LIMITED,**

Tel. 267

- - - Bel Air Park, Vlissengen Road

KYK-OVER-AL

CALL FOR—

# O.K. SOAP

- - FOR IT- -

WATCHES-OVER-ALL

YOUR CLOTHING

---

A product of . . .

THE

**B.G. Soap & Oil Works,  
Limited.**

31/32, D'Urban Street, Wortmanville

Georgetown, B.G.

Phone C. 1436

KYK-OVER-AL

# When you are in need of Office Equipment and Supplies

CONTACT:—

## Victor C. Gomes Ltd.

15, Water Street

P.O. Box 107

*We sell:—*

The New HALDA "STAR" TYPEWRITER, with the  
Star Margin and Multimatic Tabulator.

FILING CABINETS—All sizes, by Sankey Sheldon.

CARD INDEX CABINETS, by Sankey Sheldon.

STEEL DESKS, by Sankey Sheldon.

FACIT CALCULATING MACHINES.

ODHNER ADDING MACHINES — Manually and  
Electrically operated.

ELLAMS DUPLICATOR.

EXECUTIVE AND TYPIST CHAIRS, by Tan Sad.

---

See us at our Show Room at 15, Water Street.

Phone 797.

KYK-OVER-AL

# THE WORLD'S

choicest

products

reach you through

# BOOKERS

Nuffield Products

B.S.A. Motor Cycles and Cycles

Goodyear Tyres

International Harvester Agricultural Equipment

G.E.C. Refrigerators and Electrical Appliances

Lucas Batteries and other accessories

Frigidaire Refrigerators

Philips Radios and Electrical Equipment

British Paints

Gestetner Duplicators

British Oil Engines

Tilley Kerosene Lamps and Domestic Irons

Electrolux Refrigerators and Cleaners

Hercules Cycles

Slazenger Sports Equipment

Kodak Photographic Equipment

**BOOKERS STORES, LIMITED.**

**PHONE C 1151.**

KYK-OVER-AL

# CARIB HOTEL

---

*XMAS DANCES*

**Saturday, 24th December**

**Monday, 26th December**

---

Reserve early by payment of cover charge at  
2, Croal Street, Phone 699.

**Men's Suiting at its Best**

*English Sunbridge Suitings*

*All Wool Tropical*

*Worsted Cashmere*

*All Wool Gabardine*

*The quality is Superb*

*The Colours are up-to-date*

*and the Prices are right*

---

AT **L. KAWALL, LTD.**

**28, Water Street.**

**With the increasing Competition in Rice production throughout the world, it is becoming more and more essential that Rice Producers in British Guiana strive for Better Quality.**

**THIS CAN ONLY BE ACHIEVED**

by Installing the most modern machinery which embodies the latest developments in the efficient handling of rice and equipping your factory with a Dryer which will permit you to process and mill your rice continuously regardless of weather conditions.

**F. H. SCHULE, G.M.B.H.**

of

**HAMBURG, GERMANY,**

are world renowned for their

**Rice Dryers — Hullers — Separators**

and all Machinery pertaining to the efficient milling of rice.

Quotations can be prepared for all or any of the varied Machines produced by our Principals.

*We invite your Enquiries for whatever unit or units you may be interested in.*

**Agents :**

**J. P. SANTOS & Co., Ltd.**

**54/55 Water Street,**

**GEORGETOWN.**

KYK-OVER-AL

# Sandbach, Parker & Co., Ltd.

MANUFACTURERS REPRESENTATIVE.

Established 1790.

EXPORTERS OF—

SUGAR & RUM

GENERAL IMPORTERS

AIRLINE AGENTS

STEAMSHIP AGENTS

Tel. Nos. 558, 559, Water Street,  
560 & 107. - Georgetown.

Acceptable and enjoyable on all occasions . . .

PLAYER'S

# CLIPPER CIGARETTES

. . . are neither too mild nor too strong, but are just right for the smoker who enjoys and appreciates High Grade Virginia Tobacco.

Manufactured by

*Demerara Tobacco Co., Ltd.*

KYK-OVER-AL



*Don't be  
Vague-  
ask for*

# Haig

SCOTCH WHISKY

AGENTS :

**WIETING & RICHTER, LTD.**

We aim to please with - -

# LIGHTHOUSE

## CIGARETTES

and achieve this object by the skilful blending of specially selected tobaccos, in order to give that satisfaction that is expected and obtained from these fine cigarettes.

MANUFACTURED BY

**The Demerara Tobacco Co., Ltd.**

---



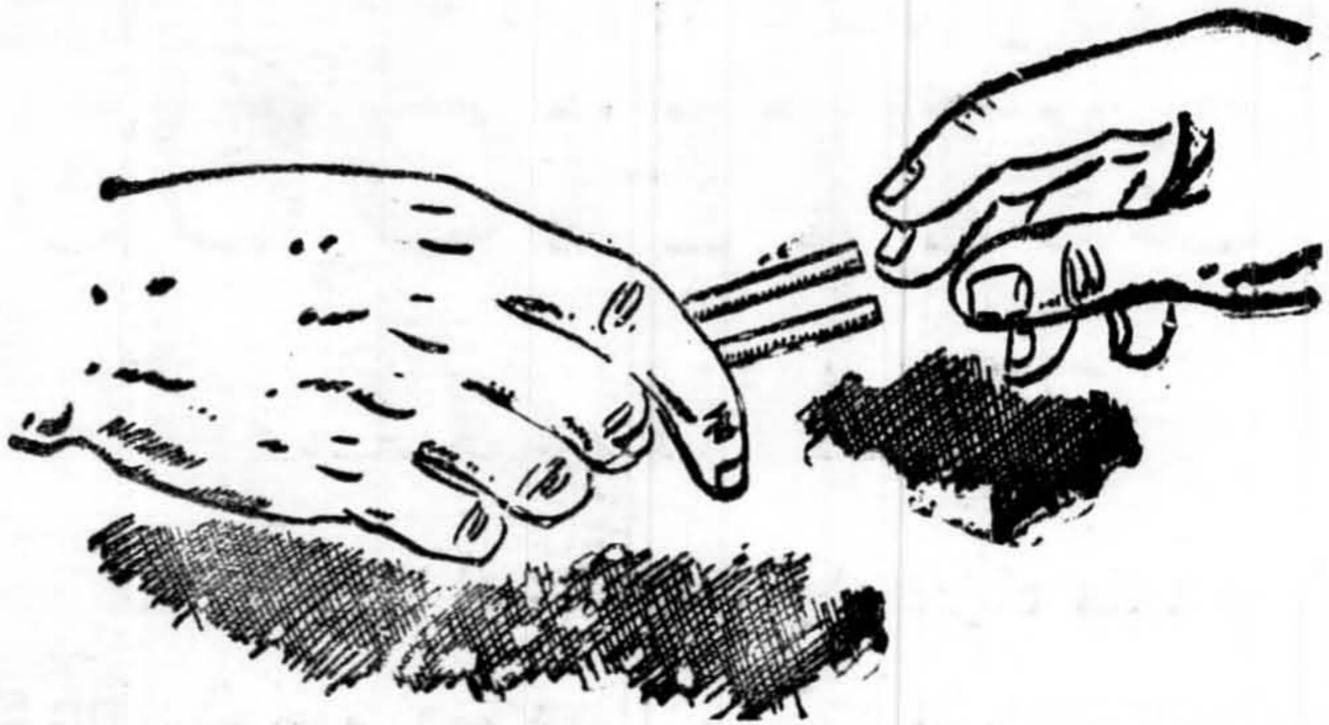
"This Sure Makes Work Easier"

For real refreshment,  
nothing can beat  
delicious ice-cold Coca-Cola.

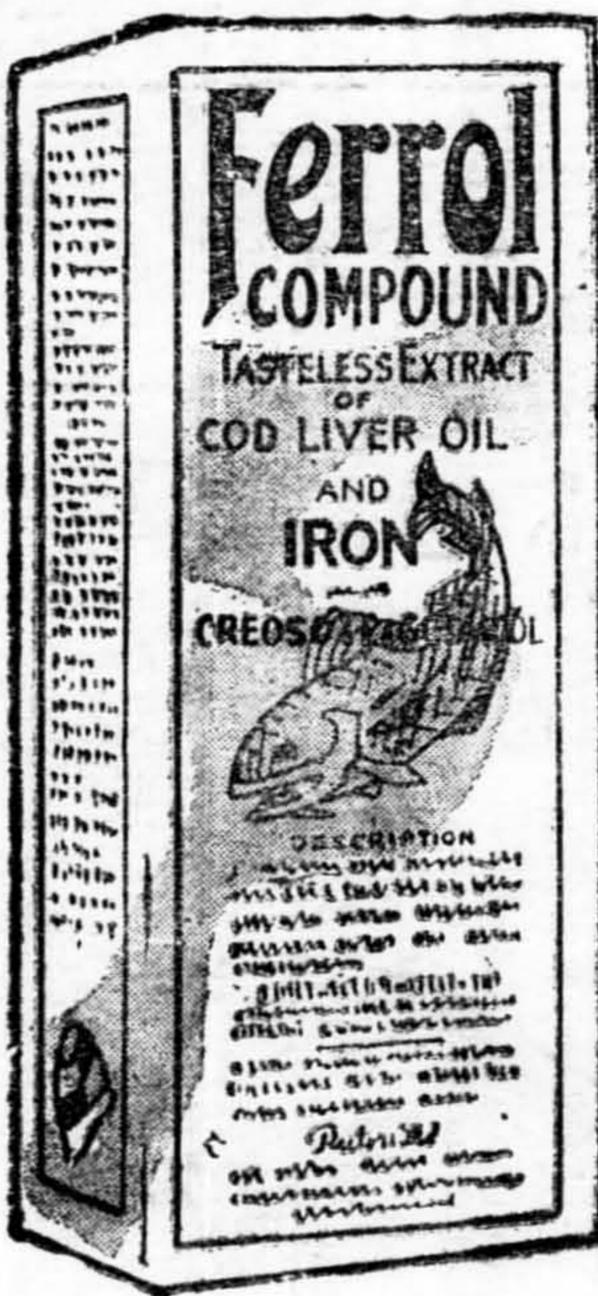


BOTTLED UNDER AUTHORITY OF THE COCA-COLA COMPANY BY

**Wieting & Richter, Ltd. (C.S.&I.D.)**



## Don't gamble with that persistent cough...



There's danger in a persistent cough...it may become chronic...it may lead to something more serious, more worrying. Take the safe, sure way to rid yourself of a cough that hangs on—take Ferrol Compound, the tonic cough remedy. The very fact that a cough hangs on is an indication that your natural resistance is low and that nature needs help. As long as your resistance is poor you will never get rid of your cough. Ferrol Compound starts off by raising your resistance and in a very short time you are completely rid of that stubborn cough.

# FERROL COMPOUND

THE TONIC COUGH REMEDY in the Blue Wrapper.

on Sale at all good Drug Stores

A Product of BOOKERS MANUFACTURING DRUG CO., LTD.