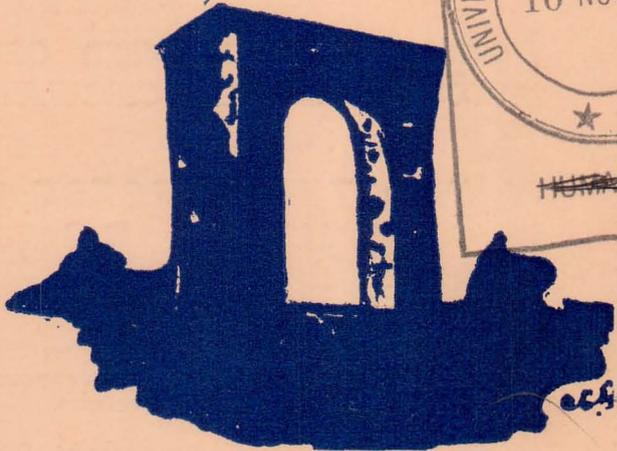


KYK- OVER- AL

No. 23



MAY, 1958

Greatness and Bitterness

Letters by :- A. J. Seymour, Peter Andersen, Frank Thomasson
& others.

Out, Out the Fire -- .. Martin Carter
On Writing History -- .. Allan Young
Six Poems .. -- Milton Williams
The Dancer .. -- Jacqueline de Weever

Poems -- .. Reviews

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Comment.

The theme of Greatness and Bitterness hung on the peg of Yeats' poem is one of the main items of this issue. I hope that the debate will continue in the minds of readers after they have read these letters, and deliberately I have omitted to draw any conclusions.

I wish to draw attention to the wealth of poetic imagery implicit in the religious customs of the East and coming out in the poems of Milton Williams whose work I welcome warmly here. From New York Jacqueline de Weever sent her tale and from London Joy Allsopp sent her review of the latest Mittelholzer novel, while at home Allan Young tells us of the urges that moved him to write his forth coming book and Martin Carter contributes an extract from one of his long short stories. Good Fare.

A. J. S.

KYK-OVER-AL

Edited by

A. J. SEYMOUR.

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May, 1958.

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

KYK-OVER-AL

Ivan G. Van Sertima.

POEM FOR PRINCESS MARGARET

When you see us
standing in the streets
shouting as you pass,
waving a forest of limbs
in the spontaneous frenzy of the massive welcome
know that we love you, our princess,
know that our Guiana's
one with the brotherhood
webbing the far-flung fragments of the grand empire.

When you hear the murmurous rumble of our drums,
see us dancing the wild dance,
screaming our bronze throats dry,
tumbling to the tortuous rhythms of the tempestuous
calypso
know joy intense in us
is moving, incensing us
joy at your nearness, our princess,
joy at your coming.

When you see us
massing in the streets
thronging round your car,
gazing on your face,
know that we hunt for the golden glimmer
half-hidden in the jungle of your auburn hair:
know that it makes us remember
the long lost golden city
half-hidden in the jungle of our ancient hope.
know when we look into the blue interior of your eyes
we shall see the blue main
o'er which the galleons of Sir Walter Raleigh rode,
tempting a trek of bold empire-builders,
transplanting here new visions and a culture:
turning our idle swamp and forest patch
into town, plantation, settlement, and village.

know that as we stand here in the streets
basking in the ivory brilliance of your gracious
smile
we shall be looking back across the centuries
and from the carib altars of our heart
offering a silent prayer:
not only for the language that we speak,
but for the laws and institutions,
the customs and traditions that we cherish,
your nation's legacy
and our heritage
our mutual treasure and possession.

So when you see us
standing in the streets,
waving when you pass
adding our joyous cries
to the tumultuous thunder of the glorious welcome.
Know that we love you, our princess,
know that our Guiana's
one with the brotherhood,
webbing the far-flung fragments of the grand empire.

Six Poems by Milton Williams

I WIFELESS

In the afternoon when there are
 no songs in the air, in the dull
 grey afternoon when the sky's in shroud
 And people to their houses withdraw
 To fire up the silences with fermented-brew.
 And men cuddle to their wives
 In the same strange ancient way, I, Wifeless
 And she husbandless, the Indian girl
 with the big red cherry for face,
 the girl that moved me to Oh!
 Prahalad, stood by her window,
 her cherry-coloured face
 more illumined in the dull afternoon.
 She smiled and her teeth were balls of
 white clouds amongst purple tinged ones.
 She waved, a compulsion for me
 To realise her cognizance of me.
 She spoke words,
 Words that from across the silences
 Pitter-pattered
 Like the music of rainfall on zinc sheets:
 That lighted me up like fermented brew:
 Transforming the dull grey songless
 afternoon into one of birds'
 and sun's music.

✽

SOMETIMES A MAN

Do you inquire of me stranger?
 Because you always see me staring in the blue
 Because you always see me in raptures with my visions
 Do you inquire who I am and what I want to be?
 I will tell you then, stranger,
 I will tell you
 Even though I never told my mother
 Even though I never told my father
 I will tell you.

Sometimes a man, like my own father
With six, or even nine children,
Gets a whole fourteen dollars-a-week.
And he has to pay rent, stranger,
He has to eat food
He has to wear clothes,
His children have all got to go to school.
And they
Then they grow up
Must endure the same, suffer mutely, or rebel.
They, when they grow up,
Will graduate out of suffering
Into more suffering.

So stranger
This is why
You always see me staring in the blue,
This is why
You always see me in raptures with my visions
Because,
The shrine of my heart
Longs only for the beautiful things man is capable of,
To prevail over all the earth.

Each time I see my people
At labour in the fields, factories, offices.
Each time I see the whore in despair
Barter her body for survival:
I am determined to be like a crow:
To fly as high
And cleanse the land.

OH! PRAHALAD DEDICATED DAY

On the eve of this, Prahalad Dedicated Day,
 Abeer drench'd you come to me, Oh Indian girl
 With your face and hands all turned crimson,
 With the previous colour of your dress
 undistinguishable,
 And all your form reverberating an atmosphere of
 festivity.

You come and you sit and you sing for me, playing on the
 jaal!
 The golden sound of your voice sending sweet stinging
 darts to my heart
 Then leaving it in exquisite jets clothed on wings of
 delight
 The very voice felled star-apples and saporillas from
 their trees,
 The very voice ripened the cherries and gooseberries all
 around.

I took you and placed you under the cherry tree
 On its crest a red breast was warbling her song.
 Oh the sacredness of the sight!
 I dare not utter a word to you
 For suddenly it came upon me like the wind ruffling the
 trees
 trees
 This was the very meaning of "Phagwah."

*

HERE THERE'S A WAR ON

Here there's a war on.
 Not like the war that stalked London:
 Clouding it in sheets of angry dark smoke
 Crumbling its buildings with rock-like hails
 Driving pink and white temporal travellers
 Into the impregnable walls of air-raid shelters,
 Leaving a waste of tears desolation and broken hearts
 Implanting in the minds of youth in their formative
 years

The bitter misery of the bitter horror!

No!

But a war rages here.
 A war waged by tanned men in defiance
 Dooming them to be condemned for their rebellion
 Churning into ashes their miserable dreams and
 ambitions
 Leaving them like trees shed of their green branches
 To endure stoic-like perpetual horror of the
 buzzard-like elements,
 Or else, to fall, — bewildered stragglers on the side line
 of life.

PRAY FOR RAIN

In seasons of drought the dry land cracks
 Leaves turn from green to pale yellow.
 On streets the asphalt reflects
 The furious energy of its crystallised-burden.
 "It is seasonal," the people say,
 "Pray for rain."

Drought is not only an affectation
 By nature to men and crops!
 It is the living lie of all of us:
 Young men green-vitalled
 In industry
 Withering to absurd anonymities

O comrades, perpetual drought is our heresy!
 Like garbage on the downheap
 We are piled: forced to exhaust
 Ourselves, be divested of all our purity,
 Crack, decay, and burn.

*

IRON PUNTS LADEN WITH CANE

Iron puns laden with cane
 Come gracefully like pregnant women into harbour.
 Iron punts laden with cane
 Make me see strong tanned men
 Labouring under the sun's invigoration:
 If blood instead of sweat could flow
 It would rain from their backs —
 And if ever life through over labour
 Surrendered its mortal clay
 It would theirs

A. J. Seymour

POEM

Oh Light
 You vast primeval word
 You gave the eyes

For You the rose's red
 Leaps from the night
 And You transluce from dark
 The pearl of dawning.

You scrawl
 The circling alphabet of the stars.
 You daze the lovers' eyes
 With inner stars of ecstasy

Your seeing clasps all lovers' heart beats
 And You link and seal
 The beauty of the world

You looked on Mary
 You uttered Him within the womb

And in one great event
 Your meaning sears
 The page of Time

The dead God sagging in love upon the tree.

*

A. J. Seymour

THREE PETALS

Seal the door, quench the light,
 Prudent housewife, it is night.
 Cave, or Greek or Latin homestead,
 Or bungalow opposite in Church Street,
 The duty is ageless.

*

Where neck and the shoulder join
 Above the line of attire
 The body will yield perfume
 If the lover will breathe desire

O body, yield perfume,
 My heart is quick with desire.

*

O Sleep
 Handmaid to the stars
 Laying your soft dew on men's minds
 To make them a child again.
 Come to me with images
 Borrowed from her
 That I may couch with thoughts
 Laid aside with her dress.

I have gone down like this
 to the oceans of men,
 sounding their depths,
 forging a link to my spirit,
 with the echoes that ring out from the deep dark hollows
 within them:

But their songs have not quenched me,
 their tongues do not speak me,
 their patterns are alien to the webwork I seek
 And I must still go down to my sea in the long dark
 nights,
 searching for a voice, searching for a voice.

Would that the flame of my thought
 fanning so faintly now over the far waters,
 may from a flicker foment,
 flare to a furious force,
 full to a fountain of fire,
 and from the fevering ferment of forms,
 forge me a frame,
 fording the fathomless!

Would that the voice that I seek
 could like the winds of my soul
 breathe me a music
 milked in the multi-mooded murmurings of the
 mighty spirit!

A voice, broad and deep,
 broad and deep like the river of time itself,
 bearing upon the sensitive stream of its subtle symphony
 all the vague and vivid etchings
 that the waves have made.

VOLCANO

Ivan G. Van Sertima

When I speak now
there are no urgent rumblings in my voice
no scarlet vapour issues from my lips

I spit no lava:

but I am a volcano
an incandescent cone of angry flesh
black brimstone broils within
the craters of my being.

When I speak now
no one can hear me
the thunder lies too deep too deep
for violent cataclysm:

My heat
is nothing but a memory now:

My cry
a terror of the long forgotten:
Time heaps high snow upon my passive flanks
and I stand muted with my furnace caged
too chilled for agitation.

But mark me well
for I am still volcano
I may disown my nature, my vesuvian blood,
so did my cousin Krakatoa
for centuries locked his fist within the earth
and only shook it when his wrath was full
and died to rock the world.

So, mark me well
pray that my silence shall outlive my wrath
for if this vomit ventures to my lips again
old orthodoxies villaged on my flanks
shall face the molten magma of my wrath
submerge and perish.

Alex. Best.

LINES ON A LITTLE GIRL DROWNED

There in the sea
by the side of the groyne,
Little girl drowned.

Back into the umbilical cradle
tide-tossed lightly
her bloated body, stiffened, rock-carved
like some old Sumerian figure—
mother-type in embryo—
knows no awakening,
Safely sleeping in sea-sanctuary

Current-guarded, no ebb nor flow will affect
tension of desire and fulfillment
sea changes of fortune
Nor fate blot out.

As silently as stars return to water
In the wake of the churning ship
Life creeps back to its home;
And the Great Sea-Mother fondles
Millions of years in six;
a little girl sleeps
softly swayed by womb-water.

*

Alex. Best.

"IN THE CAVERN OF MY BLOOD"

Dedicated to The Society of African Culture

Centuries of black blood
pulsate my heart
and pound a weird ancestral rhythm
on a soul
stretched across the abyss
between my yesterdays and today—
Drumbeats of words
to twist a shock of recognition;
to awaken ancestral ghosts
and the centuries' madnesses,
In labyrinthian tunnels of my being dark dancers
stamp votive offerings
to stir the ju-ju man....

But

**I must emerge to rape memory—
If I could withstand the birth-pains—
that this page where
today and yesterday
strain in the sweat of copulative exercise
may deliver my song.**

**(Around that hallowed mound
Undulating anthropoids dance
in welcome of conception).**

*

Alex. Best.

THE FALLING LEAF

**The falling leaf gently twists its shape
in vain to veil the sudden sun.
In vain**

**Death turns the streams
that cleans life's filth
Or the moon's inquisitive eyes hunt hidden lovers
Or distance spread outstretched palms
to impede an inflow of love—**

**No leaf nor cloud could blot out
the radiance of a half-shy smile
nor death erase memory
nor moon seek out where
hidden caresses cling in hesitant ecstasy.**

**Love will outdistance distance
To dance together on a star.**

Greatness and Bitterness.

A. J. SEYMOUR

W. B. Yeats in one of his poems asks a question which I find has been echoing in my mind for years. The question is in the section on Ancestral Houses in the long poem "Meditations in Time of Civil War" written in 1923, and the section ends with those lines:

*"What if those things the greatest of mankind
Consider most to magnify or to bless
But take our greatness with our bitterness."*

Yeats had spoken of "violent and bitter men who called architect and artist in, that they, bitter violent men might rear in stone the sweetness that all longed for night and day. The gentleness none there had ever known", and he mused "what if these things take our greatness with our violence". So I ask the question. Is the artist respected in his community? Is he respectable by the community's standards? Must he not preserve his bitterness in one form or other if he wants to achieve greatness?

Traditionally the artist, the poet, the musician, is a rebel. His role is to place his new vision sharply in contrast with the old community views. In older societies like the United Kingdom, there is a considerable body of culture, so the rebel tendencies of the artist represent a reaction against some established view and move to modify them. In a young and emerging society like the West Indies and British Guiana where there is no body or established view, the rebel tendencies are relatively stark and the murmur arises in the minds of people "why is the artist so bitter? It would be more helpful if he were a nicer person". They don't understand Yeats' muttered fear of "taking greatness with out bitterness".

Actually I believe that this conflict is a necessary source of the imaginative life of the artist. Heaven forbid he should be a nice person, that he should cease to be a rebel. And yet I can see the other point of view, that the society will move forward best if its prime movers have balanced minds and temperaments combined with thrust. This means does it not, that the artist becomes respectable and is tamed into responsibility.

They say that a pint of practice is worth a gallon of theory. One mark of the political leader in all times is a gift of phrase and a talent for the compelling image. In former generations in the West Indies these abilities served only in literature because of the restricted political climate. Shall we risk a few examples? Someone has pointed to Albert Gomes of Trinidad, a literary figure in the early thirties who was converted to the more exciting pastime of politics. What of the latest star in the West Indian political heavens, Eric Williams, who hammered out the massive literary style of the

historian and then graduated into political life via extra-mural lectures in Woodford Square. It was the encouraging political climate which provided a larger arena for their talents, and their image-making intelligences work in a more practical field. Or take the way in which a mind like Philip Sherlock's harnesses itself to the tremendous job of being unofficial ambassador for the West Indian University. So many of his speeches owe their bite and their memorableness to the fact that the man is a poet.

I begin to over simplify here. It seems to me that there is a type of public figure in our West Indian life based on those literary qualities, this type is very much in the van, leading the intellectuals of the region, and also catching the imagination of the masses in the surge towards nationhood. To make a nation, the leaders must create new values and mirror the society in such a way that it improves upon itself. The leaders must write the books to feed the national spirit, and give the young people a sense of pride.

Like the favourable political climate, the foundation of the University provided another nursery for leadership and for the cultivation of minds of the first intellectual rank. The strenuous discipline of research in academic matters encourages the emergence of figures like Elsa Goveia, Rawle Farley and Roy Augier. According to the records, Dr. Walter Rankin was the same type of mind in his field of Latin studies, but the era in which he developed led his steps so far away from Guiana and the West Indies that on his return he was almost a stranger, although a legendary one.

But after I have said all this, there still remains the need to produce and preserve the intellectual who is neither politician, nor academic figure, and who will be free to act as a responsible yet critical agent in his society. His role will be, it seems to me, always to deepen the discussion privately or publicly, always to take the arguments further so that eternal principles are seen to be involved, always to suggest in prose and verse, that a new point of view is possible and that the shell of conformity may be a stifling and restricting prison we should escape from. His opportunities, to question community assumptions and to state that they are false or inadequate will occur in the home, in the club, in the social group, and in the lecture room. Part of the repressive atmosphere of the Colonial scene is its intellectual poverty, and one of the main advances towards independence is the discussion of intellectual ideas with the assurance of standards of 'judgment and taste'; and the proper marriage of the Genius of the Place with the Human Spirit.

I've been thinking on the reasons for the intellectual poverty in a colony and there are one or two more obvious pointers. First of all generally, there is only a high school education and the leaders of the community who are born and bred there tend to accept too easily as

necessary to get by and even hold important office, a superficial grasp of ideas and a merely functional ability to make things and organisations work. This complacency is apparent to outsiders coming into the country and recruited in the administrative, commercial and industrial fields. They have no deep loyalties to the territory so they work for their living and make the most of the limited means of recreation and enjoyment available to them. They reason that it would irk the egoism of the fairly decent chaps in the territory and expose their relative inability to answer if any deep intellectual issues were brought up. So intercourse remains on the level of triviality.

Then there is the shortage of good up-to-date books, related to the shortage of potential buyers. People don't read much and if they do, they borrow from the public library or a friend because there is financial poverty and a low standard of living. The booksellers do not risk adventurous orders of titles, and the libraries, quite properly spend their money on meeting the median range of reading needs which are largely fiction of the undemanding type.

At the International Conference of Artists held in Venice in 1952, Mr. Taha Hussein of the International PEN Club, in his address on *The Writer in the World Today* described the need for "the secondary profession". He said then, "to expect intellectual activity to provide its author with the means of subsistence is merely to stultify it," but warned that it was harmful for the secondary profession to absorb the writer completely. The writer must be at the service of truth and truth alone. As Dante described him, the writer must be always a man going forward through the darkness with a lantern hanging at his back, lighting the path for those who come after.

I have started a number of possible lines of thought and arguments and done that deliberately and I should be glad to have your views on these things. Let us however, come back to W. B. Yeats and his bitterness as a possible essential for greatness. And what is bitterness here? Is it not a quality of vision making for truth, that the writer will see elements in the community's present and past life which he will condemn as an angry young man? Is he not protesting with vigour the complacency and the crust of acceptance which his community takes for granted? Is he not saying "lets leave the gentleness and the sweetness to others, but my spirit tells me we've got to change this and forge a new kind of life?"

In an emerging society such as we find in colonies, there is much for the young intellectual to be angry and bitter and violent about. It is this grit that he must take into his oystersoul

and work into a pearl. He is himself an agent of change and this was probably one of the thoughts in Yeats' mind as he wrote:

*"Oh, what if gardens where the peacock strays
With delicate feet upon old terraces
Or else all Juno from an urn displays
Before the indifferent garden deities!
Oh, what if levelled lawns and gravelled ways
Where slippered Contemplation finds his ease
And Childhood a delight for every sense
But take our greatness with our violence.*

*What if the glory of escutcheoned doors
And buildings that a haughtier age designed
The pacing to and fro on polished floors
Amid great chambers and long galleries lined
With famous portraits of our ancestors;
What if those things the greatest of mankind
Consider most to magnify, or to bless,
But take our greatness with our bitterness."*

*

Peter Andersen

I do not agree that it is the artist's function to rebel, to lead, to reform, to compromise, to seek greatness or respectability in his community, or even particularly to think. I do not agree that the terms "artist" and "intellectual" are the same or are interchangeable. (Although there are artists who are also intellectuals just as there are farmers who play cricket.) I don't believe that society is indebted to the artist, or that the artist is indebted to society.

In fact, I am sorry to say that there is little in your open letter that I do agree with.

To my way of thinking, the main difficulty comes with this confusion of the terms artist and intellectual.

I should define the different functions of the artist and the intellectual in this way:

The artist draws direct from human experience in order to express himself, or as Martin Carter put it recently, beautifully succinctly — people are the artist's raw material; but the artist draws no conclusion or points no moral. The intellectual on the other hand is a step away from humankind. His raw material is not people-human experience-but human knowledge, and of course, he does draw conclusions and, quite often, points morals.

The artist is in the midst of life, his ideas are expressed subjectively; the intellectual is one step in front, one to the right of life, ideas are expressed objectively.

It might seem that I consider the intellectual more of a "producer" than the artist, but, of course the very opposite in true. The artist is a creator, the intellectual an empiricist.

You might call the symbol of the intellectual the mind, the brain — the symbol of the artist is the stomach and the sexual organ

So then, the rebel tendencies of the artist, as you describe them might represent a reaction against some established view, (although I would not agree that this is always true), but his concern is not to change or modify that view. His concern is merely to make an observation about it.

The artist might say, "The tempo of life in the colonies makes for intellectual poverty," but he will go no further by drawing the conclusion that intellectual poverty is undesirable. That is for his fellow human begins to decide. The artist is never a *leader* in this sense. Possibly the intellectual is, for he will certainly draw the conclusion that intellectual poverty is undesirable and might try to persuade others that this is so. This might imply that I think the artist and intellectual work hand in hand, complementing each other's function but I do not think this is true either. Should the artist form such an alliance with the intellectual the artist's role changes and he is then in the position of following up his observations with a conclusion — i.e. handing the ball over to the intellectual for analysis and interpretation. (And in case there is any doubt about this, artists do *not* produce work for the benefit of critics!)

To make matters worse, the artist — intellectual subject of your open letter later on becomes involved with the politician and the national leader. Your politician-artist-intellectual-leader "must create new values and mirror the society in such a way that it improves upon itself. The leaders must write the books to feed the national spirit and give the young people a sense of pride."

I would like to say that I reject this attitude completely. Society has no right whatever to demand any particular form of expression from the artist any more than the artist has any right to expect Society to accept the form of expression he has chosen.

As soon as you start dictating to the artist (or intellectual in this case) what he should aim at you kill genuine expression. You have only to see what has happened to art and thought in the USSR and what is beginning to happen in USA to see the results of the imposition of a policy of national uplift on the artist.

In any case I do not believe that leaders or politicians to intellectuals or artists create nations. People and people only create nations.

The same thing is true of the deplorable lack of any but completely material standards in colonies such as British Guiana. (Religion seems to be considered sufficient substitute for intellectual development to most people.) I suggest there is nothing the artist or the intellectual can do about it except make sure that *his* intellectual development does not become impaired. Enlightenment can only come when the people who live in the colonies feel that it is necessary.

I have gone to some length in attempting to point out what I consider the differences between the intellectual and the artist because when the artist who is the bitter subject of the first part of your argument is separated from the intellectual who is the potential saviour of society's minds in the second part of your argument, we seem to be right back where we started.

The artist can help to raise a particular community's cultural standards simply by leaving his work where it can be seen, read, or heard regardless of its content. Eventually people will become accustomed to having the artist's work around, and they will eventually come to accept standards of truth, beauty etc., because they are being confronted with statements. Whatever you think of the relative merits of Rembrandt and Picasso, Cervantes and Eliot, Beethoven and Sibelius, you cannot deny that their work exists. The results of the intellectual's endeavours are somewhat different. To quote one example only, intellectuals have been commenting on the Bible ever since it was written and we are no nearer discovering the truth or otherwise of religious philosophy than we were two thousand years ago.

I suggest in conclusion that we do not need more leaders—we have too many already—we need more ordinary members of society who can do their own thinking and can make their own decisions. In the meanwhile the artist will always be with us, (if we are allowed to survive in an atomic age), just as the farmer and the fisherman will always be with us. I suggest that his role is at least as important, although not more important than these other useful members of society.

*

Martin Carter

In your letter you seem particularly preoccupied with what you call "bitterness". I see too that you associate "bitterness" with the "rebel", claiming that the condition of rebellion and bitterness is a necessary source of the imaginative life of the artist. I don't know if I agree altogether. And I am reminded of Thomas Mann's point about the artist being so much disturbed internally that he sometimes has to make out quite the opposite, externally.

The core of your argument is that the "artist" is a "rebel". Don't you think we might do better to say that the "artist is an artist", and then proceed to tell what being an artist means? This

idea about the artist being a rebel seems a romantic notion to me, a notion the philistines love. Because it immediately absolves them from self-criticism. For when they do in fact encounter an artist, all they do, with this notion well behind them, is to pretend to be interested and curious and "cultured" while deep down inside they tell themselves that this animal is an artist only because he is a rebel, transferring in this context, whatever suits them to transfer. Thus they excuse themselves and sink gently back into complacent limbo.

As I say I feel it might be more fruitful to discuss the artist as artist. If a given human being is an artist and a rebel, at one and the same time, then being a rebel is either a consequence of being an artist, or, it is a parallel situation. On the other hand a person may very well be a rebel without being anything like an artist. So therefore that which goes into the making of a rebel is not necessarily the same as that which goes into the making of an artist. But by saying that the artist is a rebel, you are implying the opposite, with which I strongly disagree.

The other part of your letter deals in a way with the intellectual atmosphere of the West Indies. You say "part of the repressive atmosphere of the colonial scene is its intellectual poverty". May I extend this condition of poverty to everything? And may I say too that the job of the artist and intellectual in the West Indies is no different from the job of the artist and intellectual in every part of the world. We are concerned always with the human condition and the establishment of value. Everything is to be taken in the hand and transformed and given meaning. Other jobs belong to the others.

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Jocelyn D'Oliveira

I agree generally, but these points occur to me. I would divide artists roughly into those who aspire to be the "mirror" of their society, the extollers of all that is good in it, and the "Conscience" of their society, those who see the faults in their society in stark perspective and, perhaps consciously, perhaps not, try to lead their society on to better things.

As an example of the first type may I suggest Tennyson (at least the later Tennyson) and Kipling. Were they bitter? Such artists can be conforming; "nice chaps" in other words. No example need to be given of the second type, but here again we've got to watch two special varieties of the "bitter great". First, those who have a personal grudge against society and pay off their grudge in vitriol e.g. Swift who, it is said, would have been sweetness itself if he had got the Bishopric he craved, and Pope whose deformity made him a laughing-stock. Second: watch out for the poseurs who cultivate bitterness as the badge of their profession and delight to "epater les bourgeois" as the French say.

I haven't had time to digest the points you make in regard to the emerging society, but I'll think about it and we'll talk it over some time.

J. G.

In what tradition is the artist, the poet and the musician traditionally a rebel? Not for instance in the Persian tradition. The Persian miniaturist's vision of the garden is what it always was — the tree, the reclining figures, the running water. The intermingling of cloud and mountain peaks in a Chinese landscape transcends any historical situation. This divine restlessness with what exists, the demoniac urge to create something always new belongs particularly to Western Europe, and indeed, to get the time perspective right, is a fairly recent event. We might say it gets under way with the Renaissance, and crystallizes into a spirit of revolt about the time of the French Revolution. The age of revolt is now, in an extended Western world. If we are to talk of the artist, the poet and the musician as a rebel, we are conceiving him in this tradition. We are accepting limitations to our conception imposed by the conditions of the Western world.

Of course there may be nothing else for it. All prisoners of our society, we have no choice but to be rebels. But if that is so, we are in an impasse which is ridiculous. We have to say that the artist is patterned by the society in which he exists; he conforms, and at the same time rebels. To escape from the paradox we shall have to go further. It is not sufficient to say that the statement "the artist is a rebel" can only be made in the context of the Western world. Something is said about artists — in the Western tradition they are commonly rebels. But nothing is said which distinguishes them from politicians, crackpots or businessmen. Some help in thinking about the problem can be gained from a deeper analysis of the rebel.

"L'homme revolté" is seldom compounded solely of revolt. In each expression of rejection there is an assertion. The rebel is not a maniac whose only joy is in destruction. In the moment of his protest he asserts that something else (and presumably something finer) should take the place of what is. In his heart whilst firing the shot from the barricades, he is a creator. Whether the artist be rebel or not, the true rebel is usually in a manner of speaking an artist, because what he really wants is to create. But the rebel and the artist are not brothers, though they might be found together on the barricades. They are not interested in the same kind of creation. The rebel wants to bring the kingdom of heaven onto earth. The artist *divinizes* the earth. He takes what he finds around him, and this may be the stuff of revolt, and transmutes it into something which satisfies a different kind of laws. His material exists here and now. He does not create it. He uses what is to hand. A tree, a man suffering, an emotion or an idea—which he may borrow from the rebel "de Carrière". These continue to exist and do not change, under his hand. The tree remains and the man suffers, continues to suffer, for eternity. The artist puts them into a new pattern which is made of paint or stone or words

or sounds, and which is just right, so that the pattern seems to contain its own justification. The artist has created a new and permanent way of looking or listening which is durable. A song or a play may be used to start a national movement, but that's no concern to the writer as an artist. A monument may set patriotic blood tingling, but as an artistic creation it must stand a test of another kind. The writer and the sculptor are not sociologists or politicians. Their measure is timeless. The song and the play may last when revolution has become ancient history, and when the cheek flushed with patriotic pride is chap-fallen.

In primitive societies a man painting a motto on his boat might be carpenter, priest and artist all at one time. Later in time, the boat may cease to be a useful economic tool and the motto become a meaningless symbol of an outworn creed, yet the pattern may retain its vigour as art and be active in new creations. In modern societies the artist has become a specialist, but not to such an extent that he ceases to be a man — politician or priest. He cannot help but live with other men, eat, drink, share their labours and problems, but in so far as he is an artist he creates from his experience something which is no longer reducible to its original elements. Once the paint is dry, it can no longer be rendered tractable by mixing it again with oil.

The poet may sing a song of protest, or of sixpence, or record a paeon of praise. The essence is not the bitterness or the thanksgiving, but the genius of creation.

The artist, the poet, the musician may be rebels, may well be rebels in the Caribbean sector of the Western world, but they need not be. They may also, in the same way, be intellectuals or leaders — though I don't like to think they could be both. A leader is versed in the ways of the world; he can give guidance to keep his followers from going astray. "Intellectual" seems to me a word which has an underlying pejorative meaning. Like the artist he is removed from hurly-burly; unlike the artist he is remote. The artist is rich in experience which he transmutes by an act of creation. The intellectual avoids experience. He does not live so much as reflect life. He is a mirror, or rather a prism which analyses life into its separate parts. He does not create. He dissects. A poet may be wise. But let him rebel fiercely against becoming an intellectual.

Yet in spite of what he is not — neither rebel nor leader — the artist does make a contribution to his society. This contribution stands in its own name. Art is an integral part of culture, is not present by proxy nor as the agent of economics, religion or politics. The artist freezes the transient and formless moment into a snowflake, thereby creating a pattern which memory preserves. Without him there would be no certainty the pattern ever was. The artist is the true chronicler of our suffering and achievement.

Wilson Harris

Yeats' wonderful "greatness with bitterness" does not, it seems to me, apply to the rebel. It would apply if rebellion were a part of fate and loaded with peculiar destiny, as it were, rather than being, as I understand it, a mere pretence of history. The rebel is very often an ordinary puritanical person magnified out of all proportion by superstitions such as the political superstition, the moral superstition, caste and race superstitions. Think of the famous Dreyfus case. Dreyfus was a little man, no hero or anything of the sort. Think of the numerous dictators that crop up from time to time all over the world, so petty, so mean, so cruel and still as ignorant as the Haitian Soulogne who ruled his country for eleven years with incredible violence and cunning.

The artist then in the high fateful sense of "greatness with bitterness" must not be confused with the rebel in history. The balance between greatness and bitterness is bound to be struck sooner or later as sure as the clock strikes and the gong echoes. Not the drumbeat of rebellion but the heartbeat of fate.

Remember Troy. Father Zeus surveys the scene. It is Hector's last struggle. The balance is falling against him. A bitter moment even for Zeus, the father of the gods, who loves Hector. But that bitterness, the bitterness of death, is necessary to establish a greatness. The scales fall lower and lower, and Hector knows he is alone and there is no succour anymore for him from living men or gods.

The problem that agitates my mind, out of all this, takes a different murmur and form to that whispering gallery which asks or seems to ask why is the artist so bitter, why cannot he be a nicer person, why is he so irritable and upset.

What agitates me is not these questions the whispering gallery asks. It is the burdensome sensibility the individual artist constantly carries and bears like a scarecrow before the world. Here is no rebel but a sacrifice and victim. It is almost too comical to be true the punishment some men inflict on themselves, or allow to be inflicted upon themselves which transcends by far anybody's little irritations and murmurs. Comical but true. Give this punishment whatever artistic label you like: the Hunchback of Notre Dame, the Phantom of the Opera, the Blue Angel, Rimbaud's 'derangement of the senses', Goethe's Faust, Eliot's "Murder in the Cathedral", Brinnin's "Dylan Thomas", Laocoon and his remarkable serpents and snakes. Any label you like.

I wonder whether the whispering gallery as it murmurs of the artist's bitterness would not stop and reflect on the comic side, the delightful rape, as it were, of human nature which all are privileged to enjoy even in small doses.

Frank Thomasson

There appear to be two assumptions running through your 'Open letter to the Intellectual' which should not be accepted entirely at their face value. One is the linking of the intellectual with bitterness, and the implication that a real intellectual cannot be free of bitterness. Strictly speaking, an intellectual is simply a person of superior mind, that is, someone who, through no fault of his own, lies towards the upper end of the distribution of intelligence. Such people usually have a number of particular abilities, or at any rate, have them to a greater degree than their ordinary fellows. The ability to think more clearly and objectively, to think through a problem or situation, the ability to handle a larger number of concepts at one and the same time, the ability to visualise and create.

Is it not the ability of the intellectual to think with greater clarity that enables him to strip a situation, or for that matter an idea or a way of life, of all its frills, convention and tradition, and to see it stark and unadorned. Perhaps it is the revulsion at what is left that tends to lead to bitterness.

Since the intellectual begins to submit everything to this 'stripping' process at an early age, he is unlikely to be in a position to make any active contribution to corrective action, except to talk about it. The frustration this causes only increases the bitterness.

There are, on the other hand, a considerable number of people who have an equal degree of intellectual ability, but whose use of it does not lead to bitterness. Perhaps it leads to impatience instead, which may be a better basis for action than bitterness. It is possible that any improvements which result from action by this group are accredited to the 'bitter ones' simply because they are or make themselves, more obvious in society.

Is your assumption merely an unfortunate generalisation or are you in fact saying that a highly intelligent person only becomes 'an intellectual' when use of his intelligence results in bitterness?

Is it not possible that bitterness may arise for other reasons? The creative ability or at least the creative urge is a feature of the intellectual mind; however, quite frequently the results of the urge do not find ready acceptance or reward. Isn't it possible that bitterness may appear simply as a result of the writer, artist, poet finding that his work is not accepted. And again, in respect of the intellectual's ability to handle a larger number of concepts or ideas than the ordinary man, it may lead to him having difficulty in communicating himself to the mass of the people. Only a very small percentage of the population, consisting of similar 'superior minds', are likely to be able to understand. Possibly the intellectual often overlooks this fact, and mistakes the inability to understand for an unwillingness to understand, and his consequent disappointment leads to bitterness.

Finally, in this connection, is it not true that the bitterness is greatly diminished by the time an intellectual achieves even a measure of greatness, or even recognition, except perhaps, where the bitterness has already become a pathological state.

The other assumption is that a writer, an artist, or a poet is automatically an intellectual. This is to credit some of them with belonging to the 'superior mind' group merely by reason that they have given evidence of possessing one or two of the attributes and abilities associated with this group. It is possible to have and to demonstrate creative ability and at the same time be relatively unintelligent in other respects. On the other hand, a writer or an artist may simply be an extremely good technician and nothing more. The assumption requires qualification.

These two assumptions are commonly accepted as facts. This is unfortunate, since it is under their umbrella that a large number of pseudo-intellectuals, literary fakes, artistic cranks, and poetic licences creep in and become accepted as intellectuals by the unthinking and uninformed. This is even more likely to happen in the colonial territories to which you have drawn attention, because of the lack of informed opinion which would be able to set reasonable standards in these matters.

I will not attempt to debate the reasons you suggest for intellectual poverty in colonial territories, except to point out that there is a natural numerical limit to the number of superior minds, and this is commonly accepted as being in the region of 4% to 5% of any population, so one cannot expect any large number of intellectuals to be thrown up. The number is less than can be expected on this basis, partly because of the reasons you give for intellectual poverty, and partly because there has been a trend in past years for such intellectuals as there were to leave the land of their birth and go elsewhere.

Your phrase 'intercourse remains on the level of triviality' is attractive in a literary sense, but the reason you give for it is superficial. There are a number of other points which appear to have a bearing on it. Firstly, it is not many years ago since there was no intercourse at all between the 'outsiders' and local people. When opportunities did arise, they were purely social where, inevitably, the level is one of triviality. It is only very recently that the climate has been such that more serious discussion has had an opportunity to flourish. That it hasn't flourished to the extent that one might have hoped may be due mainly to the fact that only a very small number of the 'outsiders' would lay any claim to be intellectuals in any event, and for those who are the difficulties of full and frank discussion and criticism being personalised, arising from latent inferiority, have to be braved.

Finally, to return to bitterness. Undoubtedly, the intellectual has a considerable part to play in the development of an emerging

society, and undoubtedly there is much to be angry and impatient about to act as a spur to action. But, must there be bitterness, it's such a negative emotion and the intellectual in these circumstances needs to be more responsible and more positive than he need be in a more stable society. There is so much to *do*.

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J. A. E. Y.

Congrats on an excellent and very thought-provoking article. It takes a great deal of courage to write the 9th paragraph.

What I find very marked is the absolute universality of your concept of the artist. It covers a whole range of chaps — you make no distinction, for example, between poets, versifiers and hack-writers. Purely from a personal viewpoint I would have liked to see you have a go at an all-embracing definition of the artist. As I say, however, this is purely personal.

I am not sure that I agree with Yeats that bitterness is an essential ingredient to the artist. What I expect rather is the testiness, the impatience that the head-boy in the class would have with his less enlightened comrades. The essential ingredient to high art is, I think, a mighty theme such as the Western world has been lacking ever since the Jesus-theme became worn thread-bare by the poets. Perhaps the assault on outer space will provide such a theme. If so, will the West Indian artist be in a position to stake his claim before the subject is monopolised by world-art? As a foot-note I might add that if the West Indian artist finds his inspiration-bitterness in our socio-economic oppression in the past and our political repression in the present, when we shall have progressed so far from our past that it ceases to bite, and we will have achieved political independence, then the outlook for the West Indian artist will be gloomy indeed.

I have already suggested that you include examples of outstanding achievement in fields other than the academic.

What you say about the intellectual and his role in an emerging society I find so utterly indisputable that it gives me a queer, familiar feeling as though I myself might have written it.

The Dancer.

BY JACQUELINE de WEEVER.

In the land of the dead, the tall dancer paused awhile in his restless roaming. From where he stood in eternity, he could see a beautiful girl, still in time, as yet alive, as yet untouched by love. And his heart opened, and he loved her. Love gave him a brief respite from his eternal pain, and in that short moment he resolved to save her from the fate which was his, the fate of those who have never loved. For with knowledge peculiar to the dead, he knew that she was one of those who dedicate themselves to an ideal, and thus forswear to love. He would become again the man he was before he had taken of the potion of death, and he would win her love.



He spun round and round in the darkness, so quickly that he could hardly be seen, although his dancer's tights were of such a brilliant yellow that he seemed to shine with light. He stopped abruptly, his arms stretched out in a pleading gesture, and as he crumpled to the ground, he slowly disappeared behind a thick mist.

Marguerite opened her eyes. It had been like this for the past week. Every night she dreamed of the tall man, almost as slender as bamboo, and whose skin was the golden bronze of the sun, He danced passionately, his movements full of a vitality more powerful because of its restraint, and altogether giving the impression that he had come from another world. Never had she seen such dancing, full of longing and desire, so perfect, and so utterly beautiful. Now the longing of his eyes, his limbs, his every gesture, troubled her, for as yet she had not known love for any man.

She was herself a dancer. She danced for the sheer joy of stretching her limbs, feeling the music flow through her, spreading her lovely arms upon the air. She was not strikingly beautiful, and yet it seemed that she was clothed in loveliness, particularly her hair, which seemingly carried within its strands a thousand tiny lanterns. She carried herself with quiet dignity and grace, and was, on the whole, a delight to look at. Men had vowed to love her, and she had listened to them, but her heart remained untouched, for she was dedicated to the dance, and felt that she could never love.

And now, suddenly, she had begun to dream of this vibrant dancer who filled her thoughts completely, whose eyes spoke so eloquently of his desire for her, with whose movements she was intoxicated as with wine. Was it because he danced? The anguished dancing of the night before troubled her, and she went to her work, imagining she could see the brilliant yellow fall in front of her on the pavement. His finely sculptured features seemed to appear before her as she practised with the other dancers of the troupe, and she could pay attention neither to the music nor to the directions of the choreographer. She became alarmed when she realised that

he was actually drilling her, and he kept her at her work after the others had gone, until she felt that she would collapse from sheer exhaustion. When he did allow her to stop for the day, he was clearly puzzled by her apparent lack of concentration.

"What is happening, Marguerite?" he asked. "You're not in your usual good form today. What's the matter? Ill?"

"I am very sorry," she replied in confusion, "and I promise to do better tomorrow. I will try harder. I really will." She was so contrite that he let her depart without further questioning.

After that day she dreamed no more of the strange dancer, and as the days wore on into weeks, she kept her promise, and danced so well that she astonished the choreographer. He gave her the leading part in a new ballet on which he had been working, and the whole troupe began practising on the dances.

At the end of three weeks, Marguerite's dancing was almost perfect, and she was much heartened by the praise she received. Her dreams of a month ago no longer disturbed her, and she had almost forgotten them.

Then one day, as she entered the practice room, she saw him — tall, slender as bamboo, and as bronze as the sun, with his back toward her, he was talking with the choreographer. She could hardly believe her eyes, and as she went towards them, her heart seemed to have stopped beating.

"This is our new dancer, and he is going to be your partner in the new ballet. His name is Stephen." The voice seemed far away. She saw recognition in the dancer's eyes, and she was suddenly standing very still, outside of time, her whole physical world had been rolled up like a blanket and thrown aside. From a distance she heard the clap of hands, music penetrated her being, and gradually she regained her conscious world. Practice had begun.

The ease with which the new dancer danced, the strength as well as the beauty of his movements, his gracious attitude, together with the ethereal atmosphere he created, all these things produced a complete bewilderment among all the dancers. When the dancing needed brilliance, his technique was as dazzling as the tropic noon-day sun, and yet he knew how to temper tenderness with melancholy, making it more moving. As for Marguerite, she found that when she stretched her arms to him she felt as if she were the dance itself, welding the lines of her body to the fluid lines of the music.

The weeks passed. Instead of dreaming of him at night, she was dancing with him during the day. He was a silent man. Always she could read the knowledge of infinite sorrow in his eyes, and although she felt an impulse to comfort him, she dared not speak to him. There were times, however, when it seemed to her that he wanted to tell her something, and at these times she was so

afraid that he changed his mind. After dancing, he seemed to leave before everyone else, and in the morning he simply appeared in the room. And then she began to dream of him again.

His expressive eyes were sad as he leaned against the wall, studying her.

"Why are you afraid of me?" he asked, and the sound of his voice was like the whispering of the wind through a hollow cave near the sea. She could not answer him, and in the silence he straightened himself and began to dance. Quietly, almost inaudibly, music filled the room, and as she felt a strong desire to dance with him, she got out of bed and matched her steps with his. Gradually the room changed, and she seemed to be dancing up a familiar street with Stephen. The moon was very new, just the barest crescent, and the pale moonlight cast shadows of the leaves on the ground making them look like a rich embroidery. The music became agitated as shadows of dancers floated down from the tree-tops. Their dancing was fierce and full of passion, so much so that it seemed that the passion of many ages had been waiting for this one chance of expression. They beckoned to Marguerite, but Stephen held her fast. She felt that she wanted to join them, to forget all else in the fire of the dance, but she could not. She looked at Stephen. His face wore a hollow, haunted expression, his eyes were filled with the agony of intense suffering. Seeing that their efforts were in vain, the dancers floated back up to the tree-tops, and the music once more became soothing and gentle. All night they danced, and she did not know when the music stopped, or how she got back to her room, but she awoke very tired. She knew that this time it was no dream, that she had actually danced, and the sight of the shadow dancers, Stephen's agonized expression, were still vividly in her mind.

For two days after that night Stephen did not appear for practice, but on the third day he came. Marguerite had gone to the studio a little earlier than usual to do a little private work, and no one was there except the cleaning woman who opened the doors. As she danced, she leaped into the air, and as she came down, she was caught by a pair of strong hands and guided to the end of the movement. Whirling around, she looked into Stephen's eyes black eyes full of tenderness and yearning, eyes full of sorrow. Before she could speak, he said in his infinitely beautiful voice:

"Where I have been, I cannot tell you, but I had to see you once again before I leave you forever."

"Where are you going," she asked in a frightened whisper. "If you cannot tell me that, take me with you."

He looked at her steadily. "You do not know what you are saying, Marguerite," he answered gently. "Where I go, you cannot come. Shall we dance together now?"

She no more wanted to question him, because of the expression on his face. It was the same haunted look she had seen in her dream. The music of the ballet filled the room, although there was no orchestra to play it, but stopped abruptly as the dancers began to come into the room.

At the end of the day, he left before everyone, as was his way, but when Marguerite got home, there was light in her room, and when she opened the door, he was sitting on her bed.

"How did you get in?" she asked in surprise, but he did not answer. She sat beside him and he said,

"I cannot tell you anything about myself. It is forbidden. But I am allowed to love you." He took her in his arms, and held her face against his. "You have never loved, I know, and how I wish you would love me!"

She wanted to tell him that she did love him, but the magic of his voice had cast a spell on her and she could not speak. She felt the weight of his head on her breast, and now the desire of his limbs against hers was like thirst that had to be quenched, the desire of that first haunting dream of so long ago. The desire became a beseeching, and she felt her body slowly unfold itself, as do the petals of a bedewed hibiscus under the wooing of the warm insistant sun.

He did not go away immediately. For the rest of the week she practised and rehearsed with him in the studio. She did not realise whenever she danced with him, the exactness he demanded of her was gradually taking its toll of her slight frame. She hardly ate, for she seemed to draw strength from her love for him.

At last the first night arrived, the curtain went up, and the ballet began. The whole piece was full of a power and a beauty of which the critics had never dreamed, even in their wildest dreams. Marguerite had become the music, and the dance dominated her mind. As the curtain fell to the thunderous applause of the audience, she began to feel the fatigue of the endless weeks of hard work. By the time she got home, she seemed almost overcome with weariness, but her love for Stephen was stronger than her body, and she would not let him leave her.

As she took him to her bosom she told him: "This is too much of joy, Stephen. I cannot bear it. Perhaps it is because I am so tired."

He did not answer, for his heart was heavy. She could feel the violent throbbing in his breast, and as she put her hands in his hair, she said at last, "I love you, Stephen." As the words left her lips, the throbbing became less violent. She knew he had opened his eyes because she could feel the delicate brush of his eye lashes against her throat, like the brush of a moth's wing. Then he raised his head, and looked at her with eyes clear and calm, and free from pain at last.

"It has not been in vain," he said, "and now my suffering is over. How I have worked to save you from the fate of those who have never loved, who howl with the wind in winter, who roar with the sea in summer, who are forever without rest. I love you, and *this* is too much of joy, and I cannot bear it, my beloved!" and he covered her face with a thousand kisses.

The next morning the housekeeper found her dead, and found also a pair of brilliant yellow tights on the floor of her room,

On Writing History--An Administrative View.

BY ALLAN YOUNG

The sector of history-writing with which I am most concerned is the sector in which I myself have recently been operating. I shall therefore begin with a few observations on my own approaches to "The Approaches to Local Self-Government in British Guiana."(1)

To begin with, how is it that the book came to be written? The answer to this lies in a single word — encouragement. I was persuaded by a number of knowledgeable persons into believing that the material utilised for my B. Litt. thesis has some historical value that is practical and not wholly academic. With this encouragement I embarked on the additional work of re-vamping, of amplifying and simplifying, of whittling down and amending the original thesis, to bring the book into its ultimate form, but it is a fact, as I have mentioned in the preface to the book, that the work was conceived primarily as an administrative and not as a historical study. This is a point to which I will be returning.

The question may well be asked, why is it that an ex-land surveyor/civil servant, currently concerned with communications and works, should aspire to producing a work on the subject of local government — what are the factors that influenced the choice of subject? The answer this time is not so simple.

The foremost reason, I think, is the fact that my Civil Service apprenticeship was served with the Local Government Board. This was my baptism in the practicalities of village administration from the inside. Several years later, as Chairman of a village council and later still as a District Commissioner, I was to come to grips with the realities from the outside.

My early duties demanded direct intercourse with village councillors and village overseers. Among these duties, I was assigned the responsibility for the printing of all village estimates. From these I gained a direct and useful insight into the entire scope of the activities of the many village councils and country authorities.

Every Friday a swarm of village overseers would descend upon the office with their pay-lists for the week's village works. As assistant pay-master, it was my duty to see that the work was within the approved estimate, to check the arithmetical accuracy and to verify that every one of these pay-sheets was certified by the village chairman and at least one councillor, or not less than two councillors. I then had to examine the appropriate ledger, to see

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whether each village was 'in funds' from its rate collections, to the extent of the sum required, before writing a cheque for issue to the overseer to cover the amount.

I later had to check the correctness of the stamp duties where these were required, and such other details as the correspondence of the signature at the receiving end with the name of the worker furnished.

It was at this period that an event occurred that created in my mind a lasting interest in village affairs. This event was my first reading of the memorandum on village administration in British Guiana prepared in 1903 by Mr. A.M. Ashmore, the then Colonial Secretary. The memorandum itself is brief for such a document compared with many of the official memoranda I have since seen and it was quite unpretentious to look at, but the tale it told of bands of ex-slaves combining to purchase abandoned plantations, out of which they moulded so many of the villagers for which I was processing the pay-sheets, caught and held my imagination.

My next stimulus in this direction was to come in 1937 with the publication of Clementi's "Constitutional History of British Guiana". Though a constitutional work, Clementi quite gratuitously threw in two chapters on local government, Chapter IV of Part II on The Municipality of Georgetown and Chapter XV on Village Administration and Local Government. Clementi's two hundred thousand words on the history of the Colony's constitution made it quite unnecessary for me to adopt his pattern in reverse and devote a chapter to constitutional history in my short history of village administration. Thanks to Clementi, I could confine myself to the occasional reference needed to make some point, and to resuming the constitutional record where Clementi left off, but again merely for the purpose of argument.

Clementi's chapter on village administration shed much more light on village history than did Ashmore's memorandum. Even so however, it is understandably a bald outline and what set my mind racing was not so much what Clementi said as what he left unsaid. I found myself asking myself a number of questions. I was curious to know a great deal more as to how the successive systems of village administration actually worked while they lasted, exactly what it was they had each tried to accomplish and the precise reasons why, and the way in which, they each had failed.

A decisive moment came in 1951 when, like more than a score of other Guianese civil servants over a number of years, an opportunity came my way to do some intensive work in administration, including research in some particular aspect. For the research, my natural choice was village administration in British Guiana, but I must confess that I had a moment of weakness. This came when I read for the first time Burn's "Emancipation and Apprenticeship in the British West Indies." The plight of the poor Stipendiary Magistrate, pressured between Parliament and Planter, striving heroically nevertheless to do the right thing as he saw it, awakened my interest. The Apprenticeship came of course a century before the phrase "continental destiny" had been popularised by

Sir Gordon Lethem. Burn clearly intended this book to cover British Guiana, and like a good Guianese I was incensed to find that it was confined almost entirely to the Jamaican scene, that in a book of 400 pages the references to British Guiana number only eight, all adding up to a total of less than three pages. The urge to make a similar study for British Guiana was strong. But I soon reflected that our Stipendiary Magistrates had survived for more than a century beyond the end of apprenticeship and that in the meantime the apprentices themselves had graduated into full-fledged villagers. The post-apprenticeship relationship between stipendiary Magistrate and ex-apprentice was wholly unexplored. This was clearly tied in with village development. Everything pointed to the need for a history of village administration.

I was not long in discovering too that the curious pattern of supersessive legislation outlined by Clementi was characteristic not only of pure village administration. It was evident in several other allied spheres. What was behind it all? There was only one way of finding out. I was back where I had started. For me historical research into village administration in British Guiana was quite inescapable. So much then for the existence of the book and the choice of subject.

One of the most exciting features of historical writing on British Guiana is the struggle for material. Generally speaking the problem is not so much a dearth of material as the difficulty of locating what there is, the maddening uncertainty as to exactly where some link of vital information might be hiding itself — the question may be at times, on which side of the Atlantic? For the general historian some authentic work is now coming to hand, Clementi on Chinese Immigration and again on the Constitution, Nauth on the East Indians, Raymond Smith on Negro Social Evolution and my own work on the Villages. A history of sugar has been published in several volumes.

In my own chosen field I was far less fortunate. Clementi's two chapters, a chapter in the Report to the Fabian Colonial Bureau on Local Government in the Colonies, scattered references in Professor Simey's "Welfare and Planning in the West Indies", two articles in *Timehri* — and the published literature on my subject was exhausted. Dr. Marshall's report was not available until I had reached the concluding stages.

I was thrown back on the primary sources of material, always the most reliable in the end. Successive legislation against the background of the Court of Policy and Combined Court debates, and correspondence between the Governor and the Colonial Office proved the most fruitful and dependable source, and one hitherto virtually unexplored, and, so long as I was in the United Kingdom a source that was readily available through the Public Record Office and the Colonial Office Library. For those who may be interested perhaps I might mention that in the latter library there appears to be a gap of several volumes in the Court of Policy Debates,

I was to discover too that in British Guiana the complete hansard was introduced only from 1880. Prior to this only minutes of the proceedings were kept. Fortunately however, it was the practice to reproduce the debates verbatim in the daily newspapers of the time, of which a good supply is to be found in the Archives, Georgetown.

I said earlier on that "The Approaches ..." was conceived primarily as an administrative and not as a historical study. Perhaps I should now remove any possible misimplication by glancing briefly at the respective roles of history and administration.

What is history? It is, in my view, the progressive total record of the efforts of mankind in its upward striving towards the fuller life. The raw material of history is human behaviour and human achievement. Human failure will also find a place, and the record will include such milestones as migrations and conquests, treaties and laws, discoveries and disasters. Each achievement, every failure, every effort in short, is born of a prior decision.

We must add to the record too the triumphs over the challenge of natural disaster, the challenge of flood and famine, earthquake and pestilence, but where disaster is concerned, it must be noted that a natural occurrence, however cataclysmic, is never in itself history but only the germ of history, only a scientific fact in the physical evolution of the inanimate region. A volcanic eruption in the Gobi desert or the Antarctic wastes is a matter not for the historian, but for the scientist. "The event itself is as pure water from the pitcher of Fate". What makes history is not disaster itself but the effect of disaster on human beings. What makes history out of an Act of God is the action taken by man to meet and deal with its effects. Here again action must be prefaced by decision in every case. Achievement, failure, the coping with disaster, these are born alike of decision. The history of a people is therefore to be found in its national decisions, and what is public administration concerned with but the making of national decisions?

This relationship between history and administration is not always apparent, for in the making of these decisions there must be in each case some head of State vested with the ultimate responsibility, and in the pageant of world-history the untrained eye sees little evidence of public administration, but only, at the summit of the nation, a varied procession of High Priest and President-Dictator, King-Emperor and Cabinet Minister, a procession in which the Colonial Governor very nearly finds a place, *mutatis mutandis*. To these leaders are passingly entrusted this ultimate responsibility, irrespective of the number of individuals who might each make a contribution towards the decision made on behalf of the nation.

This then, in essence, is the administrative view of history — the record of the successive national decisions of a people, in its upward striving on every front towards the attainment of the fuller life,

Ivan G. Van Sertima

LIFE AND DEATH

(Dialogue on man's mortality and significance)

THE MATERIALIST:

**Man's life is a mere adventure of nervous matter,
a futile fever of the flesh,
a gross melodrama of a billion bacillae.**

**spirit of man
is material essence of material substance,
god electricity, the blind kundalini,
mechanical motor-root of the accidentally animated
atom-maze.**

**Man is an ant in space,
a speck of dust on a speck of dust,
his world is only a dot on the map of the cosmos.**

**Life of man
is the inconsequential murmur in a themeless
symphony:**

**of what vital significance
the pin-point flicker of flame
against the immense and engulfing darkness of
timeless infinity?**

**or
the inaudible patter of the water drop
bursting amid the colossal cataracts
that tumble**

forever

and

forever

in a chaotic and cataclysmic cascading ?

**Death of man
is a total disintegration,
inglorious dissolution of cellular formation,
end to an integral awareness of being.
death is the absolute totality of effacement
the awful precipitation**

**into a vacant and hollow-socketed
oblivion**

**it is time's final liquidating trample
upon the worm's ineffectual wriggling.**

**death comes
and the essence passes
spirit of man**

sinks down into the earth

like dew

**only returning
in fresh unrelated moulds of fermenting substance.
death comes:**

**and the frail concoction of marrow and corpuscle
is lowered like carrion**

into the maggoted mud

**to manure the flora and fungi on the star's epidermis
when death comes.**

THE IDEALIST:

Death comes
 but man transcends it
 mounting triumphant from the trammels of the tomb
 he comes,
 mocking the meanness of matter,
 the magnitude of space,
 earth's pain and the flesh's darkness,
 time's tramp
 and the relative mortality of the stars.
 Death comes

and the flesh collapses
 matter of man
 falls back onto the earth like mud
 but the essence never passes
 the river in man

surges to life anew
 nursing upon the natal currents of divinity.
 Flesh is the university of the unsculptured spirit,
 mint of the ethereal germ,
 material experience, the evolutionary plastic
 for the casting of independent divinities.
 death of man

is mere metamorphic dropping of the shell-cell,
 end to the gross caterpillar,
 shackle-striped acendancy of the angelic essence.
 Life of man

is a vital movement in the grand universal symphony:
 Man *is* an ant in space,
 a speck of dust on a speck of dust,
 yet bigger and brighter

than the brightest and biggest of
 stars

for what are a million worlds of gas and fire
 to five thought-tingling ounces of magically animated
 substance?

what are all the chronicles of comets
 or the sagas of the suns
 to the history of one human heart?
 or what the grandeur of a moon
 or the intensity of a star
 to the subtleties and profundities
 the glory and magnificence of the human spirit?

One infinitesimal man,
 one lilliputian image of divinity,
 is a cosmos in the flesh,
 a colossal creature of immeasurable magnitude!
 Man's life is the expression of divinity in matter,
 a glorification of the flesh,
 a million-mooded manifestation of the master spirit:
 spirit of man

is eternal essence in ephemeral substance,
 god, the genius of the cosmos,
 superconscious intelligence throbbing at the heart of all
 creation.

Out Out the Fire.

By MARTIN CARTER

(In this extract the description of the street in the city is followed by the discovery in the alleyway of a decomposing foetus, obviously thrown there by someone who had undergone an abortion)

Outside, in the city the, sun burns madly upstairs in the sky. The streets blaze white near green grass, and galvanised iron roofs shimmer like vapour. When the sun is high the city lies rigid, tense and trembling in the stark light. And the sky is far away like a foreign country, and the clouds are like new sails on old ships sailing forever.

Every street is straight and white like a chalk line. On either side houses stand up on stilts like angular insects, reaching for something to eat. The fronts of the houses are separated from the green parapets by fences made of wallaba paling staves. But some are broken and jagged like splintered teeth, dirty and discoloured. The fronts of the houses are like open mouths and the stumps of the paling staves are like the stained stumps of broken teeth. And just as down a human mouth, the food of life goes everyday, just so into this broken mouth of the house, life goes everyday, passing forward and backward as if some giant face were eating with a morbid relish, spitting out the more tasteless morsels and swallowing all the rest.

The street is wide and full of dust. In the white sunlight it lies down passively. From the wide world come motor cars, lorries and vans, making a lot of noise, shaking up the white dust and leaving the air full of the smell of fume. Wooden donkey carts, creaking and shaking, rattle over the pieces of white marl lying all about. Dogs fight in the grass, snarling and snapping angry white teeth until they lock into each other, twisting violent muscles. And little naked black children, with rags for shirts, run about with discarded bicycle tyres, jumping over the furious dogs, the grass and the stones. Sometimes, but sometimes only, the whole street goes suddenly quiet, as though everything has stopped for a moment to listen to itself. But then it begins all over again, iron wheels turning, sun wheels turning, sky wheels turning, life wheels turning, hub and rim, centre and circumference, point and limit, core and boundary.

And when the sun goes down the whole yard becomes a slab of darkness, like a block of black ice. In the night-wrapped city, where the streets intersect, the light from lantern posts falls into yellow pools on dust and pebbles. Trees grow tall above the roof tops and some of them look as if they were trying to go to sleep. Crapauds in the damp grass begin to rattle and whistle like birds who can never fly. And even the dogs bark with a different meaning. The night is like a door that closes in the afternoon locking everything into a black room. And as it comes down, the sky seems to

rise high up into space, only to come down again. Below, in the streets, boys and girls on bicycles ride past men and women walking. And a donkey cart would appear around the corner moving slowly. The cartman droops over the donkey's rump, half asleep. In his fist he clutches a bottle from the narrow spout of which protrudes a tongue of yellow fire. And as the donkey walks, the cartman rolls forwards and backwards in rhythm with the hooves. And in the yards, the women sit on their doorsteps looking out at the street, spitting at the night, gossiping with their neighbours and laughing at themselves, in strange and secret amusement.

4. Miss Agnes always sat out on her front steps watching the street after dusk. She would sit down and look at the people passing for an hour or two before going in to prepare for sleep. But as somebody from the yard would come to look out too, she invariably had a companion to talk to.

That night she was sitting on her front step in the dark as usual when she suddenly heard a voice from the shadows behind her.

"Like you looking out", the voice said.

"Eh heh", Miss Agnes replied, turning her head to see who it was. She recognised Old Katie's voice and repeated, "Eh heh, ah looking out lil".

Old Katie came up and stood beside Miss Agnes.

"But wait! Was to ask you. Is wha' kind of shrimp shells you throw away in the alley dis morning."

Miss Agnes started. The sudden question surprised her. She did not reply at once but wondered why Old Katie had asked the question at all. Before she could say anything else Old Katie continued:

"If you only smell the place now. It smell like some dead ramgoat bury with rotten eggs. I never smell nothing so bad in all me life." As she spoke she grimaced as though something was stuck up in her nose. In the dark her flabby face twisted around her nose like a mask of soft rubber.

"But is wha' you mean at all" Miss Agnes asked her after a moment. "Is only today I throw 'way dem strimp shells in de alley. You never smell shrimp shells before? she demanded, turning fiercely on Old Katie.

Old Katie sighed. She was not a quarrelsome old woman so she said quietly. "I custom to smelling strimp shells yes, but I ain't custom to smelling strimp shells like dem at all. I telling you, Miss Agnes, dem shrimp shells really smelling bad. But you must come with me and tek a smell for yourself."

Miss Agnes did not reply. She was wondering how the few shrimp shells she had thrown away that morning could ever smell as bad as Old Katie was making out.

"You sure is shrimp shells you smelling in de alley", she asked quietly, looking at Old Katie.

"Is wha' den" the old woman replied. "Is only you use shrimps today and throw way de shells in de alley. It didn't smell so last night, so it could only be you strimp shells that got de place smelling so nasty."

"Well", said Miss Agnes. "Well ah really don't feel like smelling no nasty'ing tonight. But if you sure is me shrimp shells smelling so high in de alley, I going to come down in de morning and tek a smell foh myself."

Old Katie turned away, grumbling to herself. "Just fancy, she don't feel like smelling no nasty thing tonight! But I who living in de backhouse got to sleep with it, and bathe with it cook with it, eh! eh?"

As she walked back through the yard to her house at the back she continued grumbling in her mouth.

"But look at me trial" she grumbled. "Dey come and dey throw way dey nasty things all about the place and when you talk to dem about it dey bex. People like them should live in de pasture where dey could do what dey like."

She walked up her step and entered her little shaky house. Across the alleyway she could see the lights in the other houses giving off a sickly yellow glow as though the lights was weak and anaemic with living in all the darkness.

And when midnight comes and every light is out except the street lights, all is quiet as a grave yard. In the silence the beat of the wind on the sea comes gently, floating over the sleeping roofs. In the grass near the land crickets and candleflies exchange places on hidden leaves. Dogs snarl and bark out suddenly. And somewhere in the world of night, a man lies on top of a woman closing his eyes and emptying himself into the invisible depths of her body. And then when is quite empty, he becomes light like a feather and floats through the black silk cotton of sleep like a seed on wings. And far away to the North of the city the sea surrounds the world, dark under the keen stars. Up and down, forever and forever, the broken waves run from shore to shore, from night to night and from man to man.

5. In the morning, bright and early, Miss Agnes went down to the alleyway. The sun was lifting itself over the city and the sharp light made clean shadows on the earth. The wind was fresh and moist and the sky sparkling like wet glass.

"Ah come foh smell de ting you was telling me about last night", she called out as she came up to Old Katie's house.

Old Katie looked through the window.

"Wha' happen" she asked, "you mean to say you ain't start smelling yet." She looked at Miss Agnes suspiciously.

Miss Agnes took a noisy sniff, holding up her nose to the air.

"You ain't got foh do all dat", Old Katie cried out, "just come round by the back step and you gin know."

Miss Agnes walked around and took another loud sniff.

"Oh Jesus Christ!" she exclaimed suddenly, "Oh Jesus Christ, but is true. But is wha got dis place smelling so bad!"

As she stood up there she could see the shrimp shells she had thrown away lying on the ground. Surely those few shrimp shells could not be giving off that smell. And yet, she reasoned, it had to be the shrimp shells. There was nothing else lying about that could possibly give off such a cloud of stink.

Miss Agnes stood up looking about her. She could'nt say any thing to defend herself. And all she did was to cry out again and again about the smell.

Behind her at the window Old Katie was waiting to hear what she would say.

"You believe now?" Old Katie asked, "you believe now about what I was telling you last night. And you only smelling it now you deh here standing up. But if you was like me living in dis house you would dead long ago. Last night the smell was so bad that I dream I was living in a latrine, not no clean big shot latrine, but one of dem brum down nasty latrine some people got in the yard where dey say dey living. And dis morning when ah wake up and smell the smell, ah know de dream was not no dream at all. Because up to now ah got one splitting headache."

Miss Agnes turned around sympathetically.

"Ah know how you must be feeling wid dis nastiness so near you." She walked away slowly wondering what she should do. As she turned around she noticed a piece of cloth sticking out from under a pile of old boards lying half in the yard and half in the alleyway. She walked over and looked at it curiously. As she bent down to inspect it, the smell rose in her face like a dense spray of water. She put her hand over her mouth and bent lower.

"But is wha' dis?" Miss Agnes asked again. She looked around on the ground and picked up a short piece of stick and started to probe at the half-hidden cloth.

As she poked at it a piece of pinkish fabric broke away.

"Eh Eh" she remarked aloud. "But dis look like blood." The smell was stronger than ever and Miss Agnes kept her mouth tightly closed so as to prevent any of the bad smell going down her throat.

Suddenly she jumped back as though something had leaped from the ground straight into her eyes.

"Oh Gawd" she screamed, "Oh Gawd". She spun around to face Old Katie. "Is a dead baby, is a dead baby." She bawled, "come quick."

"An' was dat got the place smelling so bad an' got me blaming Miss Agnes shrimp shells", Old Katie told Policeman. Policeman was writing in his notebook standing near the spot where the bundle showed under the wood. Around his black uniform the women from the adjoining houses were discussing the pitiful discovery. They had all come running when Miss Agnes gave the alarm, leaving their pots cooking on the fires in their kitchens.

"But why you all people don't go home and cook you husband food," Policeman asked them nudging one of the women with his elbow. They were all grouped around him listening as he spoke with Old Katie, and from time to time they interrupted him.

The woman he had nudged sucked her teeth loudly.

"But like you is a anti-man nuh?" she asked, cutting her eyes at Policeman. All the women laughed out boisterously, and Policeman looked back into his book writing industriously so as to appear as busy and official as possible. He knew he dared not attempt to exchange remarks with the women and so he tried to ignore them.

The policeman was a young man with a dark brown skin and a very serious expression on his face. The women knew that he was young in the police force and that he felt he had one of the most important jobs in the world and that he meant to live up to the dignity of it. He had been sent out from the Station when Old Katie went and gave the report. And now he was taking a statement from Miss Agnes, who all the time had remained on the spot watching the bloody bundle that showed under the wood.

"Is somebody living around here throw way dat thing", one of the women said.

"But ah wonder is who", another asked, leaning forward as if to inspect anew and discover some clue as to its origin.

"Is somebody living round here", the woman who has spoken first repeated again, emphatically.

"Like you know is who", Policeman said suddenly, turning to look directly at the woman.

"Oh me Jesus", the woman cried out in alarm. "What I know about anything like dat. And to besides, leh me go and see what happening to me pot before it boil over."

She bustled away hurriedly, leaving Policeman looking behind her inquisitively.

He turned back to face the women.

"Now listen", he said "if anybody here got any information about who throw away this ting in dis alley, dey bettah come forward right away. Because if you know and you don't tell is an offence."

He spoke proudly aware of his authority. But nobody answered.

"Alright, alright", he warned. "You all people want to lie down wid man when the night come and enjoy yourself. But when you get ketch you don't want to mind pickney. You don't think about the consequences. All you want is the sweetness. Ah know, ah know, but we going to see what is going to happen. Somebody looking for trouble and is one of you."

As he spoke he frowned. The women, who a few minutes before were laughing at him, now watched at him with troubled eyes.

"And this is a serious offence" he continued. He saw that he had them frightened and he was happy.

"Last year in the country", he said, "a woman get baby and when the baby dead she wrap it up in an old newspaper and throw it away in de alley. And you know what happened? Was only because the Magistrate sorry foh she that she didn't get jail."

"Is true" one of the women said. Every eye was fixed on Policeman. Standing in his black uniform stiff and erect, he seemed to tower over them. Suddenly Miss Agnes took a step forward.

"But boy", she said, without warning "But boy, is wha' you name?" She had been listening to Policeman while he was speaking and her sudden irrelevant question fell like a bucket of cold water over him.

"Constable Cecil Joe No. 4914" Policeman almost shouted, almost saluting. But as quickly he caught himself and relaxed.

He glanced at Miss Agnes.

"Like you is a botheration woman", he said softly with cold anger in his eyes. The question had really caught him and his immediate parrot like recitation of rank, name and number made him feel ashamed. He realised how stupid he looked and he knew that the women who only a few moments ago were looking at him with awe, were now more or less normal again and ready to laugh at him.

Just then another policeman came up to the crowd with an old toffee tin in his hand.

"You tek down the statement and everything" he asked Constable Joe.

"Yes ah got it."

"Well alright then, leh we pick up dis thing and carry um down to the station one time.

The second policeman picked up the bundle and put it in the toffee tin.

"I am going to have to ask you some more questions", Constable Joe told Miss Agnes as he started to leave. "This investigation only now start"

Miss Agnes stared at him for a moment, then she laughed out, with a forced bitterness.

"Bur hear he!" she shouted at his back. "But hear he! You could start anything like investigation!"

She turned to the women. But they had all begun to walk away and so Miss Agnes went back alone through the yard to her room. And on the grey ground beneath her feet as she walked, the hard little brown ants journey through the dust leaving no trail. In the yard the lean chickens scratch with impatient feet at mounds of dirt, searching for a worm, a shrimp shell, a grain of rice. Green blades of grass choking beneath weeds, lean back their clean points to the land in a mute repudiation of light and sun. Only the winged marabuntas and the slender tailed pond flies dance through the air, flitting from earth-floor to roof-top and darting from cool shade to cool shade like memories seeking a place to rest. And high above, beyond the tall interruption of coconut palm heads, the unsympathetic sun burns out its white insistence, contemptuous of ant or chicken, grass or weed, roof top or dust, *memory or wing*.

Book Review

The Kyk-Over-Anthology of West Indian Poetry.

(Editor A. J. SEYMOUR, 1957.)

There are many kinds of anthologies. I have seen polyglot anthologies. There are anthologies made from the works of a single poet — the Third Anthology of Jimenez Nobel Prize of 1956, springs to the mind. But the majority of anthologies belong to one of three main groups. First, the personal anthologies in which the poems have nothing in common but the anthologist's partiality for them. The most common kind of anthology is more conscious of its duty to literature, or perhaps to literary history; it attempts to give a representative selection of the poetry of a national culture through the centuries, — the Oxford Books of Verse in various languages are among the best examples. And the last kind is what I may call the partial representative anthology — the anthology that strives to present to us the poetry of a particular school or of a particular period. The various books of Modern Verse, — Faber, Penguin, Oxford — are obviously of this kind.

It is to this last group of partial representative anthologies that our book belongs most. I say 'most' because, in the first place, it is evident that the personality of the anthologist must always influence the choice of poems for inclusion, and perhaps more strongly, the choice of poems for exclusion.

A. J. Seymour, the editor of 'Anthology of West Indian Poetry' (Kyk-over-al No. 22), is well aware of this problem. One of the questions he asks himself is whether he made 'a fair attempt to correct his own proclivities and see the best'. It is well nigh impossible for a reviewer to criticise Mr. Seymour for his inclusions or omissions since one of the declared objects of this anthology is to make known the work of Caribbean poets to a larger public *for the first time*. 'There are few who have seen the poems' I quote from the editor's Preface to the First Edition of the Anthology '... and of these fewer still have attempted to collect the individual booklets and the magazines in which they have been printed.' In such circumstances, I am quite prepared to accept Mr. Seymour's anthology, with the reservations he himself makes, as a representative collection of contemporary West Indian poetry. And with this premiss, it seems logical to assume that the collection must represent faithfully the quality of the cultural matrix of the poems.

I am well aware that the question 'Is there a West Indian culture'—Culture .. with a West Indian C' is how Lamming puts it — I know that this question has been widely, and often hotly, debated in West Indian circles in recent years. Most of those who affirm that there is, quite apart from the amusing circumstances of seeing themselves as the high priests of such a culture, seem to me to be guilty of the same sort of fallacy as those who see a University degree as the completion of an education, rather than the completion of the foundations. I should describe a culture as a 'significant an characteristic flowering of the human spirit in a particular society'. This is my own definition; it is much more limited and exigent than the definition of the anthropologist, and necessarily implies a significant flowering of the liberal arts.

How truly may we say that there is a *flowering of the liberal arts in the West Indies*? Painting must be dismissed, in spite of Guianese claims for Denis Williams; Music has all the elements, but no great work as yet; prose literature has its Roger Mais and its Mittelholzer and poetry boasts the works of George Campbell, E. M. Roach, Harold Telemague, Derek Walcott and of A. J. Seymour himself, five poets picked almost at random from the twenty-eight names represented in this anthology.

Let me be positive about this. I think that these poems image forth only the beginnings of a culture. That this should be so is nothing to be surprised at, even less to be ashamed of. A comparison with the culture of Latin America should, I think, be more illuminating than that made with other Commonwealth countries by the editor. Cultures are not propagated by seed, but by layering. The layers of Spanish culture in America were struck over four centuries ago with the foundation of the first Universities in the Islands, in Peru and in Mexico. And yet it is only in this century that new cultures have grown, in Dario, Neruda and Gabriela Mistral, to triumphant maturity and independence. The cultural record of the British Caribbean makes a sorry comparison. There is not yet, as we are well aware, one single fully independent University; the placental layer cannot yet be severed. And the system of slavery was largely effective in destroying those elements of native culture, in the looser sense of both words, that were, and are, used to such effect in Mexico and Peru.

This sense of being despoiled of native culture wells up into the sullen protest of E. M. Roach's *I am the Archipelago*'

*The obeahman infects me to my heart
Although I wear my Jesus on my breast
And burn a holy candle for my saint.
I am a shaker and a shouter and a myal man;
My voodoo passion swings sweet chariots low.*

I believe that this sentiment, expressed in one of the most moving poems of the collection, is negative. In this poem, Roach does not, as Mr. Seymour suggests a poet should, create 'out of his sensibility the positive and encouraging view of human life necessary for the development of the community.' 'There is nothing positive in dwelling on the ruins of slavery, any more than there is in the cry 'Back to Africa.' More positive by far is Telemaque's approach in the poem 'Roots', an attempt to create an identity in a setting:—

*Who with the climbing sinews
Climbed the palm
To where the wind plays most,
And saw a chasmed pilgrimage
Making agreement for his clean return..
Whose heaviness
Was heaviness of dreams,
From drowsy gifts.*

Telemaque's also is the successful identification of poet with local habitation in *In Our Land*.

*In our Land
We do not breed
That taloned king, the eagle,
Nor make emblazonry of lions;
In our land,
The black birds
And the chickens of our mountains
Speak our dreams.*

One of the editor's assumptions I must challenge. It is this: that West Indian culture is the exclusive concern of the Negro, whereas it is a fact that in two of the important territories the Negro is in a minority. Mr. Seymour is well aware of the fact, as his own poem *The People*—not in this anthology—shows. It would seem, however, that he chooses to ignore the main implication, which is that a *definitive* West Indian culture and literature must be founded on a wider basis than at present. The contribution of the non-Negro elements to the common culture may well be highly significant.

I should like to see signs of a forthcoming common culture based on the essential unity of the human race, and on the absolute worth of the human person, in George Campbell's poem 'Holy', which I shall quote in full;—

*Holy be the white head of a negro
Sacred be the black flax of a black child.
Holy be
The golden down
That will stream in the waves of the winds
And will thin like dispersing cloud.
Holy be
Heads of Chinese hair
Sea calm sea impersonal
Deep flowering of the mellow and traditional.
Heads of people fair
Bright shimmering from the riches of their species;
Heads of Indians
With feeling of distance and space and dusk:
Heads of wheaten gold,
Heads of peoples dark
So strong so original:
All of the earth and the sun!*

Highly interesting are the poems that try to evoke a tradition. Keane's *Fragments and Patterns* and the editor's. For Christopher Columbus' and 'The Legend of Kaieteur'. Interesting too are the celebrations of things very specifically Caribbean — Sherlock's 'Pocomania' and Keane's 'Interlude — Calypso'...

There are many faults in the poets of this anthology. Too many affect an outmoded idiom, measures too pat or free verse too free. Banality creeps in, as in Una Marson's 'I thought the sight/might tear my heart/to pieces.' and the ludicrous, as in George Lamming's

*'Today I would remember you whom birth brought no lucky dip
From which to pluck a permanent privilege, . . .'*

Very often, poetry seems to be lacking completely — I am thinking especially of W. Adolphe Roberts' Gray-like verse. And pretentiousness mars most of Lamming.

But there is much genuine feeling in these poems. I have already mentioned E. M. Roach. Una Marson's 'Where Death is Kind', in spite of the fault I have mentioned, achieves poignancy. And there is genuine poetry. I shall conclude my examination of these poems by quoting the impetuous clanging music of George Campbell's short 'History Makers'

*Women stone breakers
Hammers and rocks
Tired child makers
Hapazard frocks.
Strong thigh
Rigid head
Bent nigh
Hard white piles
Of stone
Under hot sky
In the gully bed.
No smiles
No sigh
No moan.
Women child bearers
Pregnant frocks
Wilful toil sharers
Destiny shapers
History makers
Hammers and rocks.*

The editor makes a strong plea for the building of a building of a 'bridge of communication' between poet and people, 'so that a unique way of life may be won and a culture made in which they may all rest.' It is well to remember that 'poet' is a Greek word meaning 'maker'. Whether the poet's function, as Mr. Seymour suggests, is to make a culture, or only to make poems, is debatable. What is quite sure is that Mr. Seymour has, in this anthology, built a good bridge to the poet, so that we may see exactly what he is making, and how he is making it. And for that we must be very grateful to him.

LAURENCE W. KEATES.

*

Review

Kaywana Blood

by Edgar Mittelholzer

It must be, I suppose, more difficult to write a historical novel where the characters live in recent times, within living memory of so many people, because there is then room for contradiction. Nevertheless Edgar Mittelholzer has produced such a work in his latest book, KAYWANA BLOOD, the last of the trilogy dealing with the lives and loves of the van Groenwegel family, a stirring tale.

As in the two previous novels, the story of the family is interwoven with an account of the history of British Guiana. This book, dealing as it does with the period from the nineteenth century to the present, has as interesting a historical background as the others. In the hands of this excellent storyteller it becomes easy to understand the frustration of the planters in whose memory the colony had passed unconcernedly from hand to hand, being in turn Dutch, French, Dutch, British, and at one time nearly achieving Swedish nationality. The story of the growth of the city from Longchamps, chastely laid out in squares by the French, to the Dutch Stabroek, then Georgetown with its recurring ravishments by fire, would fascinate anyone.

For those who are on one side or the other of the old argument about heredity and environment, there is much food for further debate. The 'Old Blood' comes out again in very much the same way as in the former generations. In every generation of the family there is the son or daughter who becomes intense either in love, politics, or simply in defence of the old family motto 'The van Groenwegels never run'. In the end, very neatly, the family name dies out as there are no more sons to bear it, but the old blood continues in the many branches who, for various reasons, use a different name, and who now, have in their veins not only the blood of their common ancestor Kaywana, but also that of just about every race which has settled in British Guiana — African, East Indian, Chinese and Portuguese. The family has spread itself in another direction also, and can now be traced in every level of society, from English aristocracy to the most despicable of small shopkeepers.

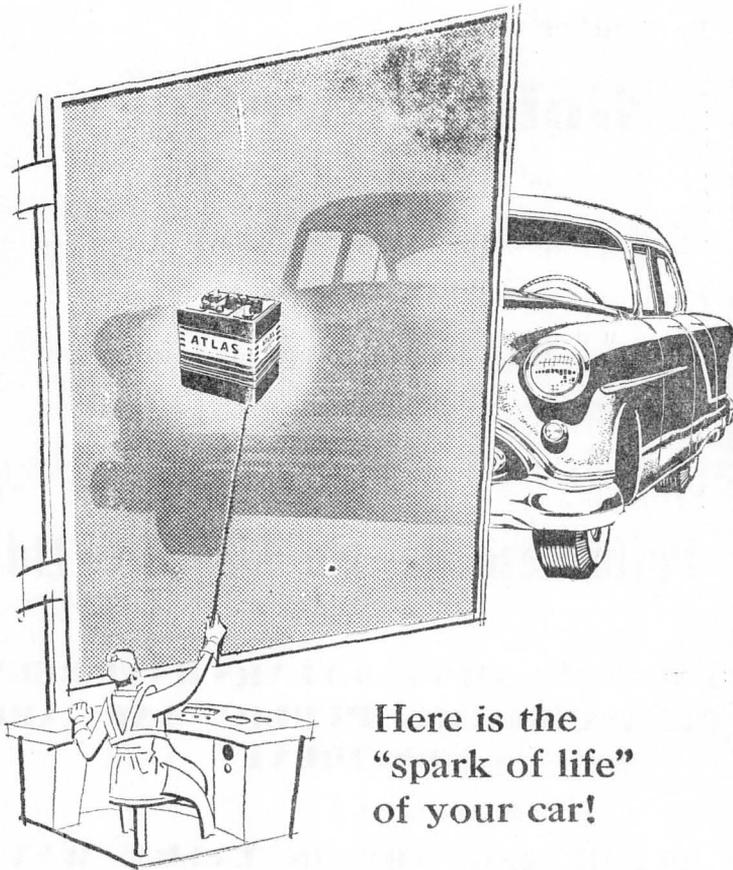
Mr. Mittelholzer's favourite views concerning religion and sex are once more given an airing, and he presents another facet of the picture of Rev. John Smith, the famous missionary and martyr, one which is not usually told to children in Sunday School.

Anyone reading Mr. Mittelholzer's books must be aware of his sensitivity to the beauty of trees, to the various moods of the weather, to the music of nature. He paints nostalgic pictures of a part of the country with which he is obviously intimately familiar.

The story ends at the time of the 1953 elections, just at a point when the reader would ask eagerly, 'And what happened next'. After following the fortunes of the van Groenwegel family through all the generations and through three centuries, it would be useless to suppose that everyone could live happily ever after. They could not, not with the 'Old Blood' spread around in so generous a fashion. The only hope is that in this ever new and modern environment the family traditions will speak in gentler tones, and that the new blood intermingled with the old will modulate the same old themes into new and richer harmonies.

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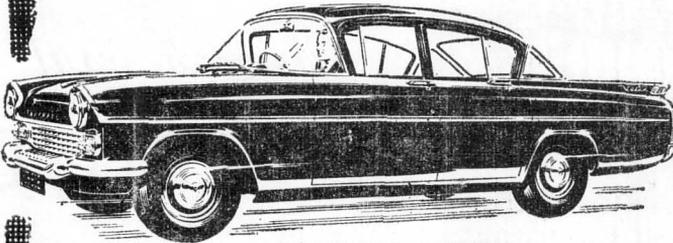
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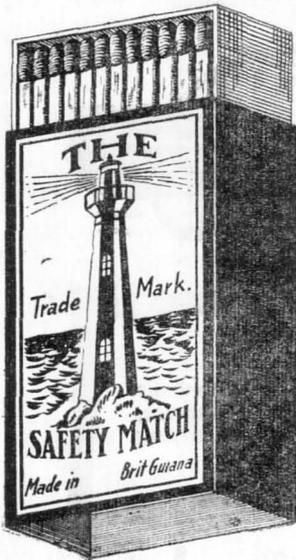
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