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Nine Short Stories from the 28 Issues of
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MARTIN CARTER * FLORENCE CAVIGLIOLI
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Contemporary Reviews of:-

PALACE OF THE PEACOCK, BLACK MIDAS
TO SIR WITH LOVE and
NINE NOVELS by EDGAR MITTELHOLZER

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Lindy and to become a confidante and adviser to Lindy in her trouble. This exposes her to the hostility of Lydia and the peaceful backwater of her life is suddenly converted into a rapidly seething maelstrom which forces her to make unaccustomed decisions. Aunt Emily grows up before our very eyes, and it is her development which to a certain extent makes the book bearable and relieves the overall picture of dis-integrating personalities. She stands for life where nearly all the others stand for death. It is extraordinary how the character of Aunt Emily becomes the main image of New Amsterdam as the story progresses and how the leitmotiv which is herself in the story ("tide — turns . . . yearning years . . . withering tensions . . . sad birds chirp and twitter . . . Crab Island . . . ebbs . . . Vrymen's Erven") becomes mellowed as she acts as mother confessor and adviser in lives of greater complexity than her own. Life suddenly has purpose and this takes her mind off her own perpetual analysis of failures.

As always with Edgar Mittelholzer, this is a book you must read to the end as quickly as possible. The action and the dialogue are compulsive. What might keep us back is this new technique of the Leitmotiv. The author takes his technique from Wagner's "The Ring" by describing the characters in the story by symbols. These passages provide a pleasing musical effect and are adjuncts to the dialogue which carries the complete story. The leitmotifs tell you, if you care to study them, which characters are involved in a scene and often the emotions and conflicts which you will find. But of course, no one will study them and everyone will be inclined to run rapidly along the compulsive story. It is surprising, however, how much we are conscious of towards the end of the book as we learn the hang of the technique and as the story itself accumulates its tensions.

When the book is closed and we think back upon the effect, we may be inclined to congratulate the author on the great (Germanic?) industry he had displayed in the technique which we realise has been there all the time, like music in the cinema, affecting our moods and determining our responses. We will be grateful also for the "secondary dialogue" he has provided as scaffolding by way of the thought-passages included in brackets.

— A.J.S.

Latticed Echoes

By Edgar Mittelholzer

In this novel Edgar Mittelholzer has come home again. It is a curious feature of the creative imagination that *no matter* how far it soars upwards, or how far it ranges outwards, it always comes home again. As T.S.Eliot says, "Home is where one starts from". It is inevitable that the patterns of memories we lay carefully, deposit after deposit, into our archives of the mind, are those out of which we spin our truest webs, no matter where we live. And so in "Latticed Echoes" this novel with a new technique, there is the old familiar atmosphere of New Amsterdam. In the novel, the town is still the sleepy hollow of Rip Van Winkle, full of gossip, a backwater of thought and emotion and of solid old fashioned furniture, relatively undisturbed by the sweeping changes taking their course in Guiana.

Of course this is not the first time Edgar has described New Amsterdam. There are delightful hints and intimations of New Amsterdam to be found in "The Life and Death of Sylvia" and in that book which we all praise "Shadows Move Among Them." New Amsterdam figures also. In the prose account "With a Carib Eye" in which Edgar gives his reactions to the West Indian and Guianese society, we have other picturesque descriptions.

The New Amsterdam of "Latticed Echoes" is however largely that of the stranger and not of the resident, because Edgar introduces two couples from abroad, or rather a couple newly married and a son of New Amsterdam who is bringing back an English wife. But to bear witness to the truth of the town, there is the authentic moaning of the alligator in the Lochaber Canal, and of course there is the wonderful pealing and clashing of church bells for which New Amsterdam is famous, as dusk falls on the Sunday evening. It is not all clear however. We have to body out with our memories many aspects of New Amsterdam itself, because of the new method which Edgar uses in this book. We'll come back to this but it's a method which partakes, to my mind, of the technique Virginia Woolf uses in "Mrs. Dalloway," and also reminiscent of the manner of the Aldous Huxley of "Brave World" and "Point Counter Point." We have no descriptions of what the characters look like, except as we pick up incidental touches in their narrative, but we get to feel that we know the characters very well indeed.

Tinkling in the Twilight

by Edgar Mittelholzer

A TINKLING IN THE TWILIGHT — by Edgar Mittelholzer (Secker & Warburg — 18/-). The vein of humour which used to be sardonic in his previous books — I remember the sardonic overtones and echoes in **Morning at the Office and Shadows Move Among Them** — seems to be changing from the intellectual to the earthy in the Mittelholzer canon. Perhaps success is mellowing the author. However, in this new novel, the author makes his hero the retiring bookseller who lives in Paddington, alone with his Yogi routine, undergo a quietly humorous transformation in personality which gives release to his suppressed sex life and changes him from a figure of fun to a figure of sympathy. The change, is, in a sense, accidental, but it suddenly forces Brian Liddard to look outwards from his tightly controlled absorption with himself and his own states of mind. If we know our Mittelholzer, we know that he believes sex of some sort is a key to open the cupboards of humbug and let the roaches and cobweb out and very soon, this is an element mixed into the unravelling of the plot which then moves with his usual mastery of suspense to the end.

What is the story? The tale of a man who by brooding upon changes of time in the past unwittingly stumbles upon a door which leads him into the future, and to his horror finds that he is powerless to control the opening and the closing of the door. Edgar has often described the state of mind of a man going mad, or believing that he is going mad, but on this occasion we all feel the sense of fun as Brian describes in his notebook the strange feelings he has, and the frustrations which come upon him are comic in situation. Is it not comic for this austere bachelor to be suddenly faced with the charms of a professional "pedestrian" and to have to wriggle out to the accompaniment of her mocking laughter?

Even more entertaining to the reader with any interest in the future are the glimpses of the world of 2064 into which Brian breaks through! (I wonder — does Edgar see himself as a reincarnation of George Orwell or the younger, more platinum Aldous Huxley? Can he resist the temptation to become prophet as well as professional entertainer?) First of all, music and we hear the opening chord of Pembroke's Murder Symphony. After the blood-curdling scream

The Harrowing of Hubertus

By Edgar Mittelholzer

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Life and Death of Sylvia

By Edgar Mittelholzer

Once again Edgar Mittelholzer shocks his readers to attention with the dark and tortuous maze of the human mind and his abrupt and un-glossed descriptions of life.

His latest novel "The Life and Death of Sylvia", rises like a trumpet call against the brittle society in British Guiana. Sylvia's life from "The suggestion of a sigh" mounts in feeling to a heart-rendering cry.

Sylvia is a girl of mixed blood whose English father with his unconventional ideas and unrestricted way of life was the main influence in moulding her character. Charlotte, her mother of African and Amerindian parentage, weak, maudlin and with streaks of cruelty in her character, can do nothing to help her children retain their social position when their father is murdered. With no education she is not astute enough to save her husband's estate from the promissory-note-eating Mr. Knight, a man without the redeeming features of Scrooge. He turns the financial screw not only because he has obtained their patrimony through Charlotte's ignorance, but with the hope that Sylvia in unaccustomed poverty would agree to be his mistress.

A brighter touch is Sylvia's friendship with the lovely Naomi — and Milton Copps who befriends her and tries to put the necessary steel into a romantic adolescent mind not strong enough to fight injustice.

Sylvia's job-hunting and the insults she receives, her hopeless enmeshment in poverty, her fight to keep her ideals alive are realistically dealt with. Like Milton Copps' description of the music he likes, the tragic theme is alive with dissonant chords.

The vivid descriptions of people and scenes, the particular flavour, mark the author not only as a brilliant writer but an observant Guianese. He knows his people and country. His description of the different levels of society with its "tangled mass of cliques and clans and sub-cliques and sub-clans" is bitter but true.

People who because of their cliques know nothing of each other, distrust and despise those of other complexions and hair-quality who show their admiration for wealth regardless of culture, fail to remove the barriers that hammer understanding and unity.

His colourful word-paintings of city, coastlands, rivers and sea are touched with poetry. Georgetown takes new glamour with descriptions that tell of "the looming dignity of cabbage palms, the languid fragility of coconut palms, the mysterious foliage of mango trees, breadfruit trees stamping the silhouette of their grotesque leaves, like devil hands against a patch of mauve sky" "Evening settled in violet around you and turned the air soft and leafy-smelling. How

The Weather in Middenshot

By Edgar Mittelholzer

In his fifth and latest novel, "The Weather in Middenshot", Edgar Mittelholzer has for the first time written a full story in which the action takes place outside of the British Caribbean. Coming after "Correntyne Thunder", "A Morning at the Office", "Shadows Move Among Them" and the "Children of Kaywana", this new book to me is a kind of interlude written with the left hand, as he works on the second book in the Kaywana series. It's very interesting too from the view point that from his experience of living in England after five or six years, Mittelholzer has woven a novel with this pattern of events. Is this a judgement on England?

First of all, let us consider the story. The action is laid in a fictitious village in England named Middenshot not far from the Broadmoor lunatic asylum. The principal actors are Mr. Jarrow, who has been harmlessly mad for seventeen years since he was involved in a motor smash: his wife Mrs Jarrow, whom he believes to be dead and whom he only speaks to at the spiritualistic seance which he stages once a week; his elderly daughter Grace, who shrinks away from any change of the routine of living with her father and mother, but who still dreams of a possible romantic attachment with a village neighbour, Mr Holme, an ex-policeman who grows orchids. But Mr Holme's daily char-girl, young Hyacinth, is also in love with him, and she firmly believes and as the story turns out rightly believes, that her fortune would be made by her figure and particularly by her rump which is the shapeliest in the village. Into this quiet village life, there are suddenly introduced terror and horror. A homicidal lunatic escapes from the neighbouring asylum, and night after night an innocent victim is found murdered. Two talkative and moralising detectives come into the village, the emotional life of which experiences a sudden rise in temperature; Mr Jarrow plays a great part in destroying the murderer. Hyacinth wins the affection of Mr Holme, Grace shrinks back into her routine family life, Mr Jarrow brings back his wife from the dead and resumes his life with her after these seventeen years and the village falls back into another routine of quiet, with its characters rearranged.

To describe the story in this way is to omit three important characters in delineating which Edgar Mittelholzer excels — They are the wind, the fog and the show. It is the weather in Middenshot which cements the tale and holds the story together. The wind was a lewd demon, Mittelholzer tells us, whining and whooping down the chimney

feels that his interest in Hyacinth benefits at Grace's expense. As if he too, like Mr Holme, had decided to choose the earthy rather than the idealistic character. Mrs Jarrow is successful as a nice sentimental, faithful, elderly wife, and Mr Jarrow's method in his madness becomes clear in the end, with perhaps sufficient uncertainty as to the origin of his motive to make his character an intriguing one. The question one asks is 'Did Mr Jarrow really plan all these years to avenge on Major Rudstow the crime he had committed on Mr Jarrow's childhood sweetheart, Paula?'

Above everything else when one comes to think of it, Edgar Mittelholzer's book is a sermon. He intended it to be a sermon because he regularly and deliberately holds up the story to let the detective Southerby and the others preach to us. What is the text of the sermon, I shall tell you in words of the discourse that Southerby and the others keep on pouring out, with the same insistence as the snow falling, and these are their words :—

"Men are really only self-tamed beasts, but beasts remain beasts, whatever coating of civility and culture is laid over them. A small percentage of us continually menaces the safety of those with the better developed brains. Our business therefore is to eliminate these inferior brains wherever they occur ... a brain that makes for constructive peaceful living is a good brain, a brain that militates for chaos and destruction is a bad brain.

Most people avoid the dreadful. Think only of what's pleasant. But the dreadful is always there, always simmering behind our backs, or beyond our blinkers, always waiting to surge into view... It's strength or weakness that counts in this life of ours. If you act with strength, you win out and you achieve worthwhile states of being. If you act with weakness, you lose and you suffer chaos and defeat.

The requisites of a successful human civilisation are four:— strength, discipline, alertness and elasticity - it shouldn't shackle itself to rigid formulae of thought and behaviour ... What we need is an education free of religious bias and based on the elements of courtesy. Courtesy is a quality possible of attainment by all humans everywhere but can we ever hope to unite the world of men in religious thought and myth?"

We can say this novel "The Weather in Middenshot" takes Mittelholzer to another philosophical position. In the novel "Shadows Move Among Them" he had been telling us that we must withdraw from the world to heal ourselves like the sick hero. Now he tells us that society can purge itself in a totalitarian way.

But Edgar, isn't this the path away from all the ideals of democracy? Aren't we like Mr. Holme, the orchid grower, giving up Grace with her finer feelings, for Hyacinth and her shapely rump?

PALACE of the PEACOCK

By Wilson Harris

From another point of view, the same question may perhaps be asked of Wilson Harris that readers ask of E.R. Braithwaite, the author of "To Sir With Love" — Is his work a novel in the classic or accepted sense of the word? With Braithwaite, one is left wondering whether we are reading the plain text of the story of a man who encountered and overcame prejudice in one of the out-skirts of London, or has the text been treated to show how steadfastness and human sympathy can pay dividends in the hearts of the underprivileged? At the end some readers and reviewers claim the result is a little bit of both. But people have tended to shy away from the view that E.R. Braithwaite is a novelist, despite the presentation of the matter in its story style, and to say that this is autobiography.

When the perceptive reader comes upon "Palace of the Peacock", this first book by Wilson Harris, he also will want to ask whether this is a novel in the accepted sense of the word. Here is the tale of a number of dead men who travel up river into the interior of Guiana as a crew under the compulsion of their leader with a "dead seeing material eye". The voyage seems to have no purpose in it, the narrator, the I character, confesses early that his left eye has an incurable infection, while his right eye, which is actually sound, goes blind in his dream; in fact, the reader on the very first page is robbed of the quality of logical judgement by the introduction of an element of symbolic violence which is described as a dream. Everywhere the material world is overlaid by symbol as we can see from the following passage.

'We walked to the curious high swinging gate like a waving symbol and warning taller than a hanging man whose toes almost touched the ground the gate was as curious and arresting as the prison house we had left above and behind, standing on the tallest stilts in the world'.

The reader then finds himself following the crew in their journey; they come to an Amerindian Mission where for a moment, people crowd about them to verify whether this was the same crew which had been drowned to a man in the rapids below the Mission not so long ago. Then they shrink away before the leader Donne, who had a bad name in the savannahs and they vanish. The tale then passes into a description of the

characteristics of the crew, and the story picks up again with the decision to follow the people of the Mission up river where they have fled. The journey up river continues, but now the atmosphere of nightmare has thickened. The crew talk and quarrel, and the author tells us of their personal lives and backgrounds. One by one they fall into the second death. On the fifth morning, they abandon the boat and climb up ladders nailed on the sides of the huge cliff walls within which the boat has been travelling.

As they climb, the survivors come upon a vision in the cliff. There is a young carpenter in a room with "a rectangular face, chiselled and cut from the cedar of Lebanon." and he touches a primitive ram which runs out of a picture on the wall. Strange things happen. Then at another window in the cliff, there is a room with a solitary candle and a woman with a child no higher than her knee. In the vision, the woman is dressed only in her hair, and the watcher goes blind.

On the seventh day, there is the vision of the peacock, the tree that suddenly waved its arms and walked — "This was the palace of the peacock and the windows of the soul looked out and in". The faces of the dead crew appear at windows in the Palace of the Peacock.

Then there is music, "and it seemed to me as I listened I had understood that no living ear on earth can truly understand the fortune of love, and the art of victory over death, without mixing blind joy and sadness, and the sense of being lost with the nearness of being found." On the last page we read —

"One was what I am in the music — buoyed and supported above dreams by the undivided soul and anima in the universe from whom the word of dance and creation first came, the command to the starred peacock who was instantly transported to know and to hug to himself his true invisible otherness and opposition, his true alien spiritual love without cruelty and confusion in the blindness and frustration of desire . . . Each of us now held at last in his arms what he had been forever seeking and what he had eternally possessed."

This is the bare outline of the book, but it is enough to show that a powerful imagination is at work on the convention of the novel, overlaying the narrative of a boat trip up a Guiana river with many symbols such as the vision of the carpenter and the seven days of creation mixed with the idea of the return from the dead. The characters are treated as types

goes to the suggested home at once, but is told, "Sorry I'm not letting'. A voice from inside calls out, "Who's it Mum?" and the woman replies scornfully, 'Some darky here asking about the room'. As he turns away the young voice cries out 'Oh Gawd Mum' it's Sir, it's me teacher'. That the mother later visited the school specially to ask 'Sir' to take the vacant room speaks volumes.

Even as he begins to realise and take pleasure in the hero-worship the children exhibit, he realises that there can be pitfalls. The mother of the most attractive girl in his class asks him to have a word with her daughter who's been staying out late at night. 'She'll take notice of what you say, Sir, she always does'. Although flattered, the teacher realises the danger of becoming involved in the family affairs of this good looking widow and her auburn haired daughter. Someone else is equally conscious of the unfavourable gossip that could arise from this situation. Gillian, his best friend on the staff, warns him to be careful.

A different problem arises when he visits Gillian's parents. On a completely different social plane from the school children, Gillian's father is connected with international finance, and often travels abroad, Her mother is a fashion designer and the family home is at Richmond. While, with the ease of good breeding, the parents accept Ricky as a well educated and interesting person, they are aware that this friendship with their daughter is more than a passing fancy. They make no secret of their anxiety that she should be contemplating the difficulties of a mixed marriage. Besides, they're worried about their grandchildren, 'they'll belong nowhere and nobody will want them'. But Ricky answers proudly, 'I hope we will have children and those children will belong to us and we will want them.' He might have added that the children could happily belong in his own country too.

One wonders what difference it might have made to the story if Mr. Braithwaite had not been lucky enough to have the constant friendship and encouragement of his landlord and landlady, affectionately referred to as Mom and Dad. In the evening he could freely discuss the day's difficulties with them, and enjoy the benefit of their advice. It must have made a considerable difference to the buoyancy of his spirit to return each evening to a home, a place of unclouded relationships, a haven from the cold and unsympathetic vibrations of a large city.

The children as well as the rest of the staff are sketched in with bold strokes. The cool viciousness with which these 'force-ripe' boys and girls set out to 'break' their new teacher is told with candour. His was no sudden or miraculous victory, a weaker character would have given in early in the game. Facing the same class all day of every school day, trying every method of reaching them, of claiming their interest and attention in spite of themselves, this must have been a severe physical as well as mental strain. Only sustained and imaginative effort could have achieved the dramatic success which led up to the climax indicated by the title of the book.

Joy Allsopp

the dim figure of some prehistoric carnivora approaching an entrance and have to turn back because of the fires. I saw the terrible sabre-tooth tiger, the gigantic cave bear and various other beasts of the carnivora species.

Gradually the dawn began to lighten, and the various animals to slink away to their lairs, and figures of men and women appeared in the entrances of the caves. At last when it was fairly light, a woman stepped out of a cave apparently to carry out some duty. She came boldly out looking to left and right, but at the same time not neglecting to arm herself with a blazing brand. And it was well that she had taken this precaution, for a large cave bear, which had been hidden behind a huge projection of rock nearby, suddenly appeared and charged down upon her with a savage roar. She promptly flung the blazing brand in his face, turned and ran for the shelter of the cave, at the same time shouting at the top of her voice in her language which seemed to be made up only of monosyllabic words. At the sound of this alarm, men hurried out of each cave, each armed with a brand and a club or spear sharpened into a fine point. They surrounded the bear which had drawn back from the brand flung at him by the woman, and which menaced by the blazing torches, was able to put up only a half-hearted fight and began to make a slow retreat. The men of the tribe still half surrounded it and pressed as close to it as circumstances would permit. Now and again they were able to get close enough to drive a spear in its side or deal it a blow from a club. At last when the fight had lasted fully half-an-hour and the bear had stopped for a moment in seeming bewilderment, perhaps exhausted by the continual harrowing which he had endured, a huge man, not so tall but the broadest across the chest that I have seen, and armed with a mighty club, rushed in and struck the bear a savage blow between the eyes with all his might, which laid him dead at his feet. The bear however, had got his own back because in the path which the fight had traversed, there were two casualties, one man whose head had been crushed with a blow from his paw, and another whose thigh was laid open and who lay on the ground as if dead.

When the bear collapsed the tribe, evidently bent on not taking any risks, still continued to beat and pierce his carcass with their spears until there was left no doubt that the bear was dead. They then made a circle round the dead body and shouted and roared at the tops of their voices stamped, jumped and skipped. Just before they had begun the dance of victory, the brands had all been thrown on the ground in a heap which had begun to blaze. The people then made a circle around and still shouting, began to bow down themselves before it, and obviously showed their adoration and reverence as to a great and mighty god who alone was able to bring down the great cave bear by his strength and for whom all creation had such a wholesome respect. Then the big man who

had killed the bear approached the body from which he cut off two huge hunks of flesh, threw them on the flames, and let them be devoured apparently as an offering to the god.

After they had taken up the wounded man and carried him into his cave where his wives gave him such attention as their experience suggested, they cut up the meat and each household took its portion. The big man who officiated at the worship of the god also supervised the sharing of the kill and it seemed that he was the chief of the tribe. They now came and went about their daily duties, and I was able to notice more especially their personal characteristics. They were a dark-skinned race, and were absolutely without clothing of any kind and showed their bodies without a sense of shame or fear. They had low foreheads and broad faces, and in height, averaged 5ft. 4in., but were an exceptionally broad-chested and long-armed race. The chief of the tribe was a giant. He was fully 5ft. 6in. and broader in proportion. Also his face seemed more intellectual than that of his fellows and seemed to have been given to more thought, if that is possible in such a man.

I may mention that while my companion and I were able to see and hear everything, we were not visible to the tribe but were like a pair of ghosts moving among them. We were as if we had put on the invisible helmet, and we were able to move freely among the people see everything, hear all that was said, note all the private motions and actions of each individual without the inconvenience of being seen ourselves. After a space of time which seemed to be about two days, I got to know everything about the most important personages. The first in importance was of course, the chieftain whose name was Daug. He had about ten wives and lived with them in the topmost cave which was big and roomy. It appears that the tribe which numbered about eighty men and about two hundred women had come originally from a place about six days journey away, where they had been familiar with fire. This place seemed to have had a subterranean volcano and in spots the flames could be seen issuing through cracks which had been made in the rock. The place, however, was more or less desert and there was not much hunting to be found there. The tribe therefore deemed it advisable to seek better hunting grounds. They then sent exploring expeditions, and at last the spot was discovered. They brought the fire with them and worshipped it as a god but did not know all its uses for instance, they deemed that anything thrown into the fire and even slightly scorched had been accepted by the god, and the scorching was a sign that he had devoured some of it and it became consecrated to the god. Anything there which became partially burnt or scorched was immediately thrown into the fire as a sign that the god had accepted it and required the sacrifice by all faithful worshippers.

For example, the man who was slain in the fight with the bear had fallen on his torch and had received a burn on his side. His body was taken and burnt before nightfall with appropriate ceremonies. Again, a woman attendant on the fire, of which I will explain more fully further on, was one day accidentally burnt on the leg. She was immediately brought before the chief who adjudged her to have been consecrated by the god. She was put into a pen, and I may say well looked after. Every huntsman had to bring a portion of his kill and present it to her, on an appropriate day she was brought out and with a regular ceremony her head was bashed in, her body flung on a heap of fuel arranged before the caves and so consumed amid the dances and worship of the whole tribe.

The fire was kept burning day and night by the oldest women in the tribe in a cave which had fissures which seemed to go through the mountain to the other side, and these fissures were used as chimneys. The fuel used was peat-like earth which was brought from a spot some distance away. The fire had to be kept burning day and night, and the women attended to it in watches. As my conductor and I stood over this fire he said to me. "This is the origin of all vestal fires and vestal virgins, although at present this tribe attributes no virtue to virginity or scarcely realises what it is."

Daug took a great interest in the tribe, always watched over the members and endeavoured to prevent as much as he was able strife among the men, as that was one reason for the small proportion of men. His judgements seemed to have made improvement in the behaviour of the tribe although the aggressor was never put to death. If the fight was for the possession of a woman or a kill, and the aggressor won, the spoil was confiscated and consecrated to the god by being burnt publicly. If the prize were a woman, the bachelors of the tribe were made to compete for her and she was given to the winner of the competition. As an example, in one instance that I saw was, the throwing of a spear at an object. Here I may state that I did not see everything necessarily but that the memory and mind of the person whom I was examining was like an open book before me at the moment, and I could see the reason for every move and also how his thoughts and his mind were operating. Daug then was much in advance of his people, was a very successful chief, and the tribe seemed to be happy and contented under his rule. He had begun to rule about 12 years before, the preceding chief having been killed in a great fight with a sable-toothed tiger which Daug had afterwards succeeded in killing. Even then he had to dispose of two claimants for the chieftainship before he was established in the office. Since then his rule had never been challenged.

There was another man in the tribe in whom I took a great interest.

time, and that she must keep a look out for him. He then embarked on the trunk and as the current was not so strong in the shallows near the bank, he was able to push his craft only with the help of the pole. In 10 days he was back, and at regular intervals he visited the woman as he did on this trip.

This time as the woman came into the glade, she motioned Tung into the shadiest part and there immediately told him that her man had become suspicious about her frequent long absences. With a companion he had followed her on this occasion as she had hidden and seen them searching for her, and at the present moment they might not be very far away. Tung then decided that they should....hide... They therefore ensconced themselves in the branches of a tree and were enjoying themselves when they were suddenly startled by hearing the sudden report of a snapped twig below them. Tung sprang up as readily as a startled animal, peered through the foliage, and saw two men climbing up into the tree. Seeing that they were discovered, they descended and Tung as quickly descended, dropped off on the end of the trunk and faced them. Each was armed with a club and they both rushed at Tung together. He circled around them until he got them into a position of one in front of the other when he pressed the first one, barred a blow from his club and brought his club down with a smashing blow on his head. His man was killed immediately and his dead body fell against his companion who was then, for a moment, put out of action. Tung was quick to seize his chance. He rushed in and dealt with this one as he had dealt with his companion. Now master of the stricken field, Tung leaned on his club and surveyed his fallen foes. The woman, springing out of the tree, drew near and put her arms around him with an expression of pride and reverence in her eyes. They then left the spot, and after spending the balance of the day together, it was decided that the woman should return with Tung to his people. So on the next morning, they set out, the woman being provided with a pole of her own. Thus they made more rapid progress, and after an uneventful voyage Tung returned to the caves with his new found wife. It was amusing to watch the curiosity displayed by the members of Tung's tribe. They crowded around the woman, pinched her, prodded her, and often rubbed her very hard until the skin was almost bruised as if they thought she might have had a covering of some colouration over her skin which gave her this fair colour. One man even attempted to run his spear into her to make sure that she was mortal and could bleed and also die. He was stopped by Tung's aggressive attitude. Altogether, she was molested in this way for the first few days after she became as one of the tribe as far as any notice of her was taken, but altogether the others seemed always suspicious and not over-friendly.

Lall. He therefore made up his mind to lie and to say that Tung had been attacked by a savage species of ape which roamed thereabouts. So walking boldly into the clearing he related the occurrence to all who might choose to hear. He said that he had heard the roaring of the beast and when he came on the scene he had found Tung almost dead. He had rushed in and succeeded in despatching the beast, but not until he had got the wounds visible on his body.

The people came around and listened respectfully but Lall, remembering the incident in the forest, seemed inclined to doubt his word. However, being a newcomer to the tribe and as the others, because of the fear they had for Daug, accepted the tale without comment, she was obliged to acquiesce. Then Daug, turning to her, told her that as her man was dead she must come to his cave. She looked helplessly around, but seeing no one likely to give her assistance, she meekly obeyed, went before him and entered the cave. The next days Daug was not seen, but the next day he appeared famished-looking and went hunting. He brought back his kill, and he and his woman enjoyed their fill. Things went on in the usual way with the tribe for about a week when one day after it had been very hot and close during the morning, the earth began to tremble, a split appeared in the mountain and a huge rock came crashing down the mountain side. Lall and several other persons were standing in its path and they were all crushed to death by it. Daug was not there at the time. He had felt the earthquake in the forest and had rushed to see if anything had happened. When he stepped into the clearing he was told of the happening. He said nothing but his face was distorted with pain. He went to his cave but in the evening he came out and called the people about him. Seating himself on the chieftain's stone he spoke to them in this wise, "I Daug, the great chieftain, made a law that whosoever coveted a woman and fought for and won, that woman should be forfeit and given to another. It is not the law, O people? Hear, all people. When Tung was killed, it was no ape that killed him, but I. I killed him for the sake of Lall, his woman. I followed him through the forest to kill him but he turned and saw me coming and we fought. And I, because of my great strength, for who can conquer me, killed him. But fire, our god, who sees all things and is a terrible and just god, saw me and was determined that I should lose Lall, and today she has been taken away. Terrible and just is Fire, and terrible in his judgments." And seizing a brand from the fire before the entrance of a cave, he waved it before them shouting, "Worship Fire, the just and terrible god, who drove off our enemies and can punish those of us who will do wrong and who will not obey the laws and has this day punished me, even me, Daug, the great chief."

And the people fell on their faces and worshipped, and Daug also fell on his face and worshipped the fire, holding his hand aloft.

My alarm grew on beholding my toy city, the mechanics of an old buried town, buried long, long ago it seemed beneath the flag of the sea. Buried so deep I had to excavate alien and higher ruins to find it. And now that it was seen, and empoldered, and guarded at last, I was filled with such alarm. Which Godstown was it indeed I beheld beneath the sea, was it the first or the last? Ruin after ruin was its fable and history. And a grave displaced verticality was its haunting alarming and ruinous and confused place and position.

I raised my scarecrow head and stood braced against the first and the last sea-wall confused by the blowing wind and sea. I wondered whether I should feel proud to stand this way — not knowing truly where I stood — threatened by the ancient sea and shawl and mother of man. I knew my defences would sooner or later be rendered useless. I had driven new sticks and shafts to secure my foundations and situation, a gaunt scarecrow standing before the sea. All was slipping slowly into the ruinous well: at last nothing remained save my cocked hat, blown a little to one side, resting perilously on the sea-wall. It was so sopping and wet it had acquired weight to stand against the spirit in the wind. A mythos began to grow and appear around my cocked puddle and head.

The first Godstown marched forward in space and looked backwards with the raining eye of constellations and stars. The last Troy stood on Argo's mythical beam or upon another equally drenched constellation in the heavens. No ruinous wall and grave could contain my cocked hat of such dimensions. The wind and sea blew steadily into and out of my head. An old woman was approaching: she was mumbling to herself beneath the sea's shawl. She came to me and lifted my shopping hat and head like a child cradled in the sea's hands. I felt the wind blowing in the roof of my skull hither and thither as she cocked my head upon her head.

She was one of that curious sea of beggar-women, patrolling Godstown like conscience and muse, who floated and devoured pennies and scraps. She knew how to hug the debris of the world to her bosom. She mumbled and sagged and moaned to my cocked scarecrow hat "I know you wouldah fall down. Neither man nor god can fight the sea forever and for good. You don't know that? Sooner or later the old lady got to get you . . ." She was mumbling all the time a little crazily.

The wind in heaven tried to blow my hat off her head but she held it fast with her grey seas' hand that smelt of salt-fish and rum. The rank suffocating odour rose and almost devoured my head and her nostrils too, I felt. The seas' cruel death-smell grew wholesome and life-giving again as though life had turned to death and then returned to life again.

"Me hands smell and taste like if they dead and they living still", she mumbled, a little crazily again. "They hold life and death over and over again", she said, "that's why they smelling and tasting so. I

Banim Creek

By Wilson Harris

INTRODUCTION

"Banim Creek" introduces the typical Wilson Harris background. A team of four tide-readers live in a camp in Banim Creek, up the Canje River and they come in contact with a couple, Paula and her husband Mark. Three of the four tide-readers have known one another for years but the fourth is a new-comer, who loves to captivate everyone he comes in contact with. Paula was a well educated girl who ran away and married her father's chauffeur; he "beat her up when he can't get liquor."

The narrator is a philosopher often brooding on the timelessness of the river, the jet-black river with its islands of grass as the source of prophecy and of decision in the drama of life. As he watches the interplay of character with the unpredictable shifts of events around the one woman in the middle of five men, he says "I could not help wondering whether that secret companion to which one is ever attached, as to one's conscience, was bringing sharply before me the reconstruction of a tragedy that had happened in the spiritual sense already, if it had not yet occurred in the physical order of things."

In the last paragraph, the "I" narrator felt he had to pay the utmost attention to the story of Mark and Paula. "Their relationship was an important link in the chain I found myself so painfully reconstructing. The chain of man's existence and his eternal damnation or his eternal heaven on earth."

Extract from an unpublished novel

It was as a boarder occupying a room in the same house that I had learnt so much about Marie, Champ and Jerry. As fate would have it Champ, Jerry and I met again, so many years after, working on our present job. Van was apparently the complete stranger in our midst. But somehow from the outset he too seemed to belong to an existing pattern of things like an integral link in a chain. The trend of my thoughts during the past hour had taken such a phenomenal grip on my mind that I felt a whole school of ideas seeking to be marshalled properly or related properly in perspective. I stirred uneasily and raised myself slightly on

wealthiest merchants in town." She smiled when she saw my surprise, and continued before anyone could speak —

"I was educated at the best schools!"

"And your husband?"

"He was my father's chauffeur."

Jerry gave a grunting incredulous sound: "You little liar! I bet you dont even know who your father is! You think we are fools, eh?"

The woman looked hurt and annoyed. Her face flushed. I saw a baiting look come into Jerry's eyes.

"Well just tell us his name, this wealthy father of yours! I suppose he has cut you off without a cent, eh? Maybe you can never go back!"

"I'm ashamed to go back," the woman replied simply, the anger draining out of her countenance. "And I don't care what you think or say since you do not understand. "Have you ever found," she said looking at us appealingly out of those sickening eyes of hers, "that to go back, before you realise what caused you ever to leave, is sometimes to die? I prefer to learn to live where ever I am".

"How do you mean to go back is to die?" Champ asked in bewilderment. "And you say you got a wealthy old man to look after yuh?"

The woman caressed the weals on her skin, lost in thought. At last — "I said I was ashamed to go back. I was wrong. It is my father who is ashamed of me and my husband. He does not wish us to remain together if I go back!"

"And you prefer to stay in this bush, and get bite by fly, mosquito? Get mark up and beat up by that precious husband of yours? You is a funny woman!"

"Don't you understand there's no place for me to go? It would have to be me and someone else, I can't go alone!" "I understand just how you feel", said Van coming to her assistance with that earnest look of his. "It's life, that's what it is. It's not you is funny. It's life is funny."

The woman turned and stared at Van for the first time as if she hadn't seen him before. She felt that here was someone to whom she could talk. Champ was still bewildered. The lady did not fit into any scheme of things he had known in the past. And yet for some reason or other he felt an acute disgust with himself as though the whole matter should have been a simple one for him to understand, or any man for that matter. He wondered to himself whether the woman was lying, or whether the whole thing was not a kind of dream she had had, and that everybody has at some time or other and then forgets! A dream of companionship you may call it perhaps.

Jerry had been following the conversation closely. He had been keeping a shrewd eye on Champ and Van.

"I feel so sorry for you, lady! When I listen to you talk I feel you need a lot of good commonsense pumped into that head of yours."

had levelled at Van made any reconciliation Van had hoped to accomplish with Jerry impossible. In one respect Van had emerged victorious in the battle of wits. For instance Champ now hated Jerry. But in another and hidden respect Van was involved in a deeper and more frightful struggle. His first adversary in the form of Jerry, the ruthlessly free man, retired behind a proud contemptuous barrier; and Van was left face to face with himself as in a mirror, and he did not like the image he saw there. Thus a second battle of wits had ensued between Van and a new, subtle adversary, the human conscience it was and no other.

As I sat there in the cool of the clearing, possessed by the strain of my thoughts, watching the changeless river before me, I could not help wondering whether that secret companion to which one is ever as to one's conscience, was bringing sharply before me the reconstruction of a tragedy that had happened in the spiritual sense already if it had not yet occurred in the physical order of things. In this way I perceived the burden of my participation in it. I had been too passive, certainly not sufficiently active to help avert the disaster. In fact it was this deepening sense of loss which occurs when anyone dies — whether friend or foe — that seemed to sharpen my perceptions to such a degree that a halo of reflection imbued every minute thing that had happened. It were as though a kind of penance had started within me to atone for a fault I had committed.

And yet it is not always clear what participation is possible to the individual, whether any action of his might not further speed events down the incline. Perhaps our secret prayers are more effective since courage and compassion, it is certain, come from God. Not from man who is merely an actor and an agent, whether he chooses to acknowledge it or not, to his ultimate credit or downfall.

So it was that Champ whose agency was a perverse and fatal compassion, continued his pursuit of Paula. And Jerry whose agency was self-revelation took a malicious delight in assuming the role that Van had no longer stomach to perform: that is - rebuking Champ for his pursuit of Paula which constantly sought to impose upon her a kind of prostitution that would only further complicate her personal problems. Van's loss of stomach before Champ, Jerry and myself finally drove him to the greatest form of deception. He began to play a kind of superhuman role. How else can I describe it? His role was the role of Satan himself for he had successfully exorcised all human conscience. And this was his second paradoxical victory. It started when he became friendly with Paula's husband—Mark his name was—and invited him every day to the camp at Banim. It was child's play after that to instruct Mark in reading the tide gauge. Mark understood quickly, and Van utilised him during his spell at the gauge, many a time, to read the tides. Mark received monetary consideration every time he acted

He passed quite close to me now, and I could sense his wrath and belligerency. Anger, I thought did not suit him. He was too corpulent. His face was fat, and his hands were fat. And he seemed a very alien and ridiculous figure to find in this part of the world. But when I heard what he was saying I was shocked into urgency. I knew suddenly he was a strong man and a ruthless one despite appearances. I knew there was great danger in his words, that something terrible was liable to happen. He was shouting "You bloody fool! What in hell d ye mean by messing up my creek? D'ye know you're trespassing? Get to hell off this land!"

But the man by the creek facing John Muir did not move. I had a splendid view of him now. His face was very dusky, dusky as the bark of the tree against which I was standing. His hair was black like coals and crisp on his forehead. It made the duskieness of his skin seem lighter and browner by contrast. He wore a brief vest and shorts, and bare-footed. He stood very easy and very quiet, as a man would, who stands by his own hearth, waiting to greet the stranger who is within his doors. His limbs were powerful. They had the perfection of the young trees that stand rooted in the forests, breathing forth an ageless symmetry in their being.

The sharp, bitter words assailed him but as yet he showed no sign of anger. He brushed them aside in his wordless fashion. He was full of patience and dignity. He was full of magnanimity. His language was the language of poise, of gesture. He felt that his presence was enough. It would speak for him with finality and precision, his attitude implied that it was a bit puzzling, all the noise and confusion. The stranger could not mean what he was saying. Surely he would explain what it was all about without so much fuss! However it would not do to be hasty. *Haste was bad. He would wait, and listen to all the words that were being spoken.* He himself did not need words. His presence was enough. It was final.

I saw that John Muir's anger had turned into something cold and calculating and bitter. His strong and ruthless nature could not tolerate this silent dignity. He must shock this man into action. He must wring from him words or protests or subservience. He must impress upon him that he was master. He spoke horrible words. Slowly, in answer to his words, I felt that a tide of fury had begun to rise like a flood of bitter waters. It was wordless fury, the most terrible fury in the world. I could have cursed John Muir for his stupidity, for his lust, for the blindness that lay in the midst of his strength and his ruthlessness. Yet, after reflection, I am not sure that he was blind. Maybe he was courting a battle of wills, maybe he was courting violence. I am not sure. What is there, a man may be sure of, at such moments?

And I was not so much concerned about John Muir. It was the man by the creek that held my interest. I was afraid for him. I am baffled to explain the nature of my fear. But I felt he was in danger. I

felt he might lose his mastery over the earth. That mastery that had seemed to me so patent and obvious a thing, part of his birthright, the gift of the Unknown God. I felt that he might be swept into madness. I remembered those horrible whirlpools one sees sometimes in dangerous rivers, and I felt he might allow himself to be sucked down by his fury, into the bottomless whirlpools of his own nature.

When suddenly I saw him lift his hands, I knew it was the end. There was violence in those hands. John Muir would never escape. And then, as if to precipitate the threatening disaster, John Muir spoke words that I felt must surely seal his doom —

"I shall drive you off the land. I shall chase you and your people off the land. I shall put up fences. Fences to keep you off, that's what D'ye hear me?"

Surely it was plain that only a miracle could have saved John Muir after that! Tell me, do you not agree with me? Imagine a man living on a spot of land. He has lived there all his life, He is bound to the land by innumerable ties. His forefathers were there before him. They lived and died on the land. Would you dare to tell that man, you would put fences upon his land? That you would drive him off the land?

Only a miracle would save you after that. Only a miracle could save John Muir. The funny thing is, the miracle happened. The miracle happened and John was saved.

The transition was baffling. The transition from fury to calmness. I felt the shock of that transition. I saw the effort, the horror of the last few moments, the darkness on the face of the man standing by the creek. I saw his hands filled with a terrible eagerness, grow calm and easy again. It was over in a moment. A moment, as the books say, that was an eternity. I know it is incredible. Few men would believe what I say, that such fury had passed into calmness. But I swear it. It is true. A miracle had happened. For how else can this thing be described, but as a miracle?

Suddenly John Muir laughed, a laugh of triumph. He felt he had scored. He felt he had won a battle of wills, and was now master. I looked at the man by the creek, and I knew better. In a flash I saw the truth. I saw a little of the truth behind the miracle. It is funny how one gets these flashes. Maybe it was some trivial act performed. The man by the creek might have moved his hand on his axe in some peculiar fashion; he might have shuffled his feet in a peculiar fashion. It might have been the lift of his head. I do not know. But in a flash he had spoken to me in his wordless language. What he said was this: — Let the stranger build his fences. Something divine in me prevents me from killing him. I could kill him easily. I could crush his flabbiness to pulp. But to what end? What is the use of violence? There has been enough violence on the earth. Nothing can be built or preserved by violence. I have no fences to build I shall trust to my destiny. I shall trust to the forces that brought me on this spot I call my home. I shall

Tomorrow

By Wilson Harris

INTRODUCTION

"Tomorrow" was published by Wilson Harris in 1945 but it foreshadows some of the qualities we have learnt to expect in his novels. The figure of the "I" narrator who is a microcosm of the reflective imagination, reading meaning into an otherwise indifferent environment or an unfinished statue in the corner of the room, the swift transformation of mood in a character, the sudden even irrational appearance of people and events so that the web of personal relationships is unpredictably strained, the striving in the dialogue for deeper psychic meaning—we find it all in his early short story.

Perhaps the unfinished statue Wilson Harris tells us about is a symbol of Guiana—

The heavy, pouring rain chased me off the street, onto the pavement, against a dilapidated old building, that might have been a shop, a lawyer's office or a gambling saloon. I huddled against the closed door, but even here the rain, driving in gusts beneath the over-arching shed that jutted across the pavement, reached me with cold, bitter, naked insistence. It was late afternoon. In an hour or so it would be dark. I began to wonder whether it might not be better to take a drenching and get home, than stand here taking chill, with the lonely drab street before me, the hustling raindrops that flickered in upon me, every now and then, my only companions.

Suddenly I felt the door behind me moving. It had opened slightly looking back, I saw an eye appear at the crevice. A voice began speaking — "Won't you come in? The rain is so heavy!"

The door opened wider still. The eye grew to be a face, the face a form: the form of an old man standing in the doorway. He said again — "Come in. Come in. It's so cold out there! Come in." I looked at the rain, the drenched street, the heavy skies. Then I looked at the old man and I was held by a peculiar quality in the expression of his eyes: a sort of intensity, fire, a sort of hunger. These qualities contrasted strangely with a very old face, a face, lined, thin, fragile and kindly with that kindness and compassion the years sometimes bring to those who are deserving of their solace.

The old man said again — "Come in. Come in," — urgently. This time I accepted his invitation at once. He led me along a passage to a

by a strange, dark solemnity fixed upon her face. She began speaking in a very jerky manner, "I feel better, now I've come here. It's so quiet sort of." She lifted her head with a sort of defiance. She said:

"I've got something terrible to tell you." I noticed that her eyes were very sad and very beautiful. She said in a low whisper, like a sigh, "The police are after me. I've done murder, I killed a man to-night." There was a sort of sob in her throat as she said this, and I, listening to her, felt suddenly that I did not know whether everything might not be a dream after all and I a dreamer, in a strange world..Outside the rain stopped. The room was very silent. I waited for Mary, the statue, the strange old man to vanish, and I to find myself propped against my pillows, at home, in bed.

But the old man's voice brought me back to the reality of the moment. He was crying —

"What's all this, Mary? What have you been up to?"

Mary did not answer. She had started moving about the room in a fit of restlessness. She came to a dead stop close by the statue. She was staring at the uplifted arms. She cried, "This is like me. I've always held out my arms reaching for something." She continued in a quieter tone, "But I've never discovered what that something meant, what it really was." She stood very still with a sort of dreaming, terrible, confused look on her face. Her arms were still partly lifted, still tense, filled with quivering life, like a drowning man snatching at the beauty of the world. She lowered her arms and continued — "I've always wanted lovely things. A home and lights and music, and a lot of things. When I met him I thought I had everything. He was the lights in my life. He was the music. He was everything. Then he started taunting me, and despising me, and going out and leaving me for days on end. I became lonely. There were no more lights, no more beauty." She paused, shaken by a terrible ague. She looked at us with beseeching eyes. "I should have left him maybe. But I was afraid. The world was so strange, and the people all acted like strangers. Once I tried to ask you to help me," — she looked at the old man — "But words would'nt come. Everything was so deep. Funnily, you who were my best friend, suddenly became the greatest stranger of all." There was a puzzled look in her eyes. "It's funny isn't it? Why? Tell me?" But the old man only bowed his head and was silent.

She looked at him with remorseful eyes, and in his gesture beheld much of the frustration and the bitterness in her life. She lifted her arms with a sort of desperation. Her body was poised, beautiful and tense, like some watcher looking out into a new country.

Her face was dark and confused like a lamp that is dim, burning low. She and the statue had the same lifted prayerful arms, the same obscure expression, the same dim potentiality for good or evil. She stood thus for a long time, then her arms fell to her side. She went on in a quiet, bitter voice.

sun whose fires were beginning to gather strength, flecked with little white clouds like handfuls of sheep's wool, flung out over the blue by a careless hand. The wind too, was crisp and very clean, as if in its travels over the sea it had met with nothing unpleasant, so pure it was. Auberi stretched his arms out to the sea, filled his lungs with the wonderful air, and if he only knew how, he would have willed himself to dance on the white foam of the amber waves. It was on such clear mornings as this that the strange mood took hold of him, and as he stood there with his barefeet on the warm sand, it came over him. It was a mood in which the sand on the sea-shore became the sand of the desert, the distant capstan on the jetty loomed into Cheops' pyramid, the wind as it blew against his face full of the whisperings, the singing, of Arab voices the whole atmosphere charged with the breath of Egypt. In the grip of these powerful sensations he found himself trying to fit together the pieces of a very ancient existence, but each time the mood slipped away like the sand slipping through his toes, and he was left with the feeling that he had not resolved the melody of this existence into its final cadence. He now sighed heavily as the mood slipped away once again, and looked up the beach to continue his walk. He could not move however, for his feet refused to carry him; what his eyes saw commanded his feet to stand still. For not many yards away lay the shape of a human being.

After the initial shock had worn away a little, he forced his benumbed legs to take him to the body, and as he bent over it, he saw that it was a young woman. Her wet clothes clung to her body, her hair coiled around her throat like a snake; yet as he bent over her, Auberi saw her lips move, her eyelids flutter and close again, and a moan oozed from her throat. Quickly he picked her up in his arms and as fast as he could he returned to his little house which was not far from the beach.

He carried her into his study and put her on his couch, but her clothes were so cold that he decided to dry her. He peeled off her dress, made of such coarse brown cloth that he thought perhaps she was a fisherman's daughter, and when she lay before him, clothed only in her hair, his heart trembled at her loveliness. She was small, but withal, finely built. As he remained lost in contemplation of the wonder, she turned her head a little and moaned again, a moan which cut through his contemplation as a sharp rapier cuts through a piece of silk. Realising again that she was cold, he poured a little brandy down her throat, wrapped her up in blankets, and removed her from his study, preferring to give her his bed where she would be more comfortable. Although she did not awaken, her state gradually changed from unconsciousness to sleep, and as he watched her sleep, she seemed to grow more beautiful; her hair, which was now dry, was like strands of black silk, her every breath was like the clean crisp air at the seashore. He felt his heart quicken with desire, so he left the room, closing the door behind him.

Whenever he needed help or advice, he had always gone to his friend, Richard, the writer who lived next door, now he felt he needed advice, for he was bewildered by the finding of the girl, her beauty and his own desire. Perhaps he ought to fetch the doctor, for he could not understand why she should continue to sleep. She was all so still; and as he stood hesitating in front of the door, Richard himself came from the front porch.

'Oh, how glad am I to see you!' exclaimed Auberi. "I've found a precious jewel!" At this Richard raised his left eyebrow, a habit he had when he was sceptically amused. Auberi told him how he had found a girl on the beach, about an hour and a half ago, and how he had tried to resuscitate her; and although he believed that she was past all danger, yet he was disturbed that she should sleep so long. Richard looked at her, and while he conceded that she was alive, and breathing regularly, he urged Auberi to call a doctor. But this idea no longer appealed to Auberi. He felt that the doctor might take her away and although he had had the girl with him only such a short time, his heart pricked him at the thought of a separation from her. Instead of sending her a doctor, he asked Richard to remain with him, to wait with him while she slept, until she should wake up, and this Richard agreed to do. The whole day passed while they waited; evening came deepened into night, and at last Richard went home.

If you need me during the night, I'll be working, you'll see my light from my study. This is a curious thing, and I think you should call a doctor. You won't? Well, good luck." With that he was gone.

Auberi was distressed. He gave her a last look before he curled up on the couch in the study, hesitating between calling the doctor and leaving her alone. The excitement of the day had tired him, and since he was sure she was alive, he decided to wait until the morning. If she still slept, then he would call the doctor. He put out the lamps and went to sleep.

About midnight he thought he heard music, but he was always hearing music in his dreams, for was he not a musician? It sounded as if someone was quietly humming a quaint melody to the accompaniment of a lute. He decided that he was dreaming, turned over, and tried to sleep, but the song continued. He could hear the fingers plucking the strings of the instrument, and the voice had the deep rich notes of a violincello. He opened his eyes. The silver bow of a crescent moon was sending fine streaks of golden light through the window; and now the music was very near, so he turned slowly in its direction, enchanted by the sound and a little afraid by its beauty. Now he was stupified, for he was face to face with the girl he had rescued, but how marvellous she now was! She was sitting in the moonlight, wearing a gown of gentian and gold silk, a gown moulded to her bosom, billowing out in deep folds of blue and gold, and long sleeves of blue slashed to show the gold lining underneath. She seemed poised for flight out of her

gown as a butterfly is poised on the brink of the cocoon before flying off into the world. Her throat was a finely wrought pillar set between a handsome pair of shoulders, her face was soft and smooth, and when she smiled, the smile reached from her full ripe lips to the depths of her magnificent black eyes, eyes full of mystery and a vague longing, into which Auberi found himself longing to gaze. She was lovely, exquisitely and wonderfully made. As Auberi gazed at her, giving his eyes time to drink in her beauty, she continued to hum softly, her fingers plucking the lute, now and then, lifting those eyes to Auberi's face. His heart and his eyes were enchanted, and when she came nearer to his couch, put her head against his knees and continued her song, the enchantment grew stronger, and again he felt the desire he had experienced earlier in the day. Gently he took the lute from her, and tilted her face up to his.

"You are lovely," he said, "Where do you come from? What is your name? You know I found you on the beach this morning, and I have been waiting all day for you to wake up".

"My name is Arianne," she answered softly, "and I belong to you. But my Auberi, why not take the beautiful things in life gratefully, without asking questions?" He was surprised that she knew his name, and before he could ask her anymore questions she put her arms around him, kissed him on the lips, and as his own arms tightened about her, all his senses rushed out to discover her. His vision, touch, taste, smell, even his hearing, embarked on a voyage of discovery of this unknown mysterious gift.

The next morning when Auberi opened his eyes, he found himself alone, and his heart stood still in fear least it had been deceived by a dream or hallucination. He got up slowly, pricking up his ears, and crossed the room to the window on the other side, almost expecting to find his house in a strange setting; but when he looked out the window he saw Richard bending over his rose bush. He smiled at his own fear, turned from the window, making up his mind that the events of the night before could very well have been a dream, when he saw the lute on a table nearby. The sight of the lute evoked all the delight, and his heart trembled with the remembering, of the night before. As his thoughts formed the name "Arianne" she came into the room, in a frock the pale yellow of buttercups, which lighted up every contour of her face and body.

"There is one question I must ask you," Auberi said as casual as he could. "Last night you were dressed in a marvellous blue and gold gown, today you are wearing a yellow dress. When I brought you here, I brought only you. Am I dreaming, or are you real?"

"Touch me," she said in her deep rich voice. "What does your hand tell you? This is real, is it not?" she asked, drawing his head down to her full bosom.

A few days later Auberi and Richard were sitting in the shade of

red brocade. Her voice was indeed marvellous. Auberi got the impression that it had been carved, moulded, and shaped by the music of the madrigal for centuries, so that the melting flowing lines, the pathos as well as the perfection, had been left clinging to the voice as gold dust clings to the cloth over which it had been spilt. As they sang together, the harmonies gradually went to their heads like wine, intoxicating them delicately and delightfully, and when the song was finished, there was silence for a full minute, their minds held by the music as with strong but fine threads of silk, held as much prisoner as the silk worm is held by its silken bonds. But as Arianne played a little coda on her lute, they felt the bonds loosen, the silence fade, and the music take possession of the room.

Soon they were singing together every evening. Arianne made the most delicious honey and rice cakes, and provided saporillas with wine added to delight the taste. Auberi fell more and more in love with her, his whole being stirring and growing with one glance from her black eyes. She filled his days with tender care and his nights with delight, while he drank in her loveliness at every turn. The very air he breathed seemed to be a part of her, because she moved in it. Especially did her grace in playing the lute move him, so filled with music were her fingers. One day, he examined the lute, and found that it was made of finely polished wood, inlaid with ivory and mother-of-pearl. Like everything about her it was exquisite, but in spite of its beauty, it showed signs of great age.

'Arianne, I like your lute, but I don't remember finding it with you.'

She took his face between her palms and a shiver of sweetness ran through him. 'It was given to me a very, very, very long time ago, and he who gave it to me promised me that whenever I sang with it, I would be able to sing in as many voices as I chose. Touch me, Auberi, I feel I am living only when you touch me. You are going to ask me who gave me the lute, and I will tell you. An old man, whose name I do not know, gave it to me when I was quite a small child, and he is long since dead. Perhaps my lute is a magic one,' and she ran her fingers lovingly over it. 'It is not enough for you that I am here, my Auberi? When your hands caress me, I care only to be clothed with the garments your fingers can weave for me. Kiss me,' and when he kissed her, it was as if he was in a wine press and the sweetest grapes were being pressed into his mouth so that the juice ran down his chin.

There are now occurred a change in Auberi. He had been on holiday six weeks already, weeks which had been spent in reading, roaming the countryside with Richard, lying in his hammock under the lime trees, with not even a desire to write a single note. Now he found himself working, creating such wonderful sounds that his music took on a glowing richness, and he composed more easily than before. He worked ceaselessly while Arianne watched him anxiously. Many times in a

night she would get up and make him hot chocolate which he loved to drink when he was working, or she would sit under his desk and hug his knees until he stopped working from sheer exhaustion. Once in bed, he would cradle his head in her bosom and fall asleep immediately, while her desire was left to thread the darkness alone. She poured her tenderness for him over his curly head, kissed his hair and running her fingers through it, longing for him in the very tips of her fingers, the palms of her hands, in the edges of her lips.

The last week of his holiday arrived and Auberi allowed himself time to relax. He closed the piano, put up his manuscripts, held out his arms to her. "Come, my Arianne, come down with me to the sea before we go. Oh, it's been such a long time since I really held you in my arms; come with me to the sea."

As they walked along the shore, he told her how he had been enjoying the fine morning when he found her nearly dead. "How did that happen? Did a jealous lover try to drown you?" he asked, remembering Richard's explanation. For answer, she leaned her head against his shoulder and whispered.

'Auberi, I love you. It seems to me that I have loved you before, once upon a time, and that I lost you. Now that I have found you again I won't lose you, although you ask me questions the answers to which I do not know. Look how calm the sea is, and how beautiful!'

After that, Auberi forced himself to swallow any questions which begged for utterance. Instead he revelled in her beauty and took his fill of her love.

The next week they returned to the city with Richard and Auberi began rehearsing the new compositions with the orchestra. Arianne continued her tender care of him, and also undertook to care for his garden, for the only things which grew well in Auberi's garden were his roses. He neglected everything else. She cut away the vines which were killing the jasmine and mimosa, removed the anthuriums and put them in the damp cool and shade under the front stairway, pruned the fangipani, and soon the garden was filled with the fragrant perfumes of the flowers, the night air filled with their scents. On such nights, love was a lovelier thing because of flowers.

One evening there was a ball given to honour the composer whose music everyone was enjoying, as the concerts had begun and people were flocking from far and near to hear the music which Auberi had written. For it turned out that his music was so well received that everybody was talking about it. He took Arianne to the ball, and she wore a dress that took his breath away, everytime he looked at her. It was made of white gossamer silk, moulding the contours of her exquisite shoulders and bosom, and billowing out from under the bosom in deep, rich folds of white and gold; it was the same style of dress as the one she had been wearing after she had waked out of her long sleep, but a more magnificent one. Over her hair she wore a little

now, Auberi, for the sake of the jasmine-scented night of our love."

Auberi raised his arm and plunged the silver dagger into the bosom which had cradled his head a joyful night. As Arianne sank into the waves, a change came over her. In the light of the full moon, the beautiful girl shrivelled and shrank, her skin became wrinkled as a crocodile's skin the eyes beady like those of an old bird, the nose like an eagle's; beneath the skin on the brow could be clearly seen the shape and bones of the skull. This was age such as no man had ever seen, for even the limbs which a while ago were young and strong and perfect, were now crooked and bent like the limbs of an old tree. And the waves did not carry it away any further; they had lost their power. And while the two men watched like men bewitched, the old skin continued to shrink and to curl up, and at last to peel away, and like a snake shedding its old skin, a fresh new Arianne emerged while the sea suddenly gathered force and a gigantic wave heaved her and threw her heavily onto the shore. Here Auberi's strength failed him and he fell down in a faint.

He woke in his own bed, in his own house, to find a woman leaning over him. It was Arianne, as lovely as ever, but now dressed in his old blue bathrobe. He grew limp with joy when she took him in her arms, and he pressed his lips to her breast, he felt the mark he had made with the dagger. He opened his eyes, bewildered, and he saw Richard leaning against the door.

'Richie tell me that it has been a dream. But it could not have been a dream, for there is the mark.' He closed his eyes for the memory gave him pain.

"Touch me, my Auberi, my dear love," said Arianne. Her voice now had a new quality in it, it was a little husky, but still rich and sweet. Auberi looked at her again. She was still lovely, but in a different way. She no longer shone brilliantly like a diamond, the light seemed to have been softened, there was a new vulnerability about her, she was now like a rich ruby which asks not only to be enjoyed but also to be cherished.

'Auberi,' she said in her soft husky voice, "now I shall grow old along with you; now you will have to clothe me," and here she smiled a little impishly, "for now there will be no more lavish and magnificent gowns to set questions in your mind. I shall no longer remain young and beautiful, as I have for centuries; for four centuries have I been the lovely Arianne, because I once thought that to be young and beautiful forever to be the the thing I wanted most.

'My father was an Egyptian merchant who had a shop in Florence where we lived quite comfortably. He had a friend, a Netherlandish composer of madrigals, who dined often at our house, and who taught me to sing. It was all such a long time ago that I have forgotten his name, but he gave me a lute one day as a gift, and promised me that as long as I was young and lovely, I would be able to sing his madrigals in all their parts, the three-part ones as well as the six-part songs. I loved music very much, especially his madrigals; I was also very much

Lulu an de Camoodi

By Florence Cavigholi

INTRODUCTION

This story differs sharply from the others in this collection. It is a Creolese story, iin that many minds have taken part in the shaping and fashioning of the chain of events, with small emphasis and details being made and added here and there, and as a community and folk tale, it has passed from tongue to ear, to inventive tongue to ready ear in a stream of generations.

It belongs, of course, to the great family of West-Indian proverbial sayings which fed the life of common people in the Berbice River in the 1930's. It is intended to warn and advise girls to obey their mothers, and the two non-human participants, the parrot and the camoodi are sensible beings, can speak and even better, can sing songs as in an opera.

The tale has elements of the miraculous in it, since Lulu's head can be stitched back to her body (pasting back her hair may not be a miracle in these modern times) but the navel, the seat of life, can be pasted back with glue, and Lulu is restored to life again.

Our author is the scribe in that she was the person who wrote it down for the first time.

And they lived happily ever after.

Dis was a gurl, she live far in de faress wid she muddah, she faada an a parrat dat deh use to call Lora.

Now dis-gurl did name Lulu, an she faada did love she so much, dat he use to treat ee wife baad fu Lulu. If Lulu head hut she, e seh Lulu muddah en tekkin good care a she, an wah evva Lulu tell e against she muddah e use to believe she, an so sometime e would beat up de wife baad baad, so Lulu poar muddah live in dread all de time.

Lora now, was a talkin parrat an very sensible, she did like Lulu muddah, an use to sarry fuh shee wen she gettin baad treatment, and Lulu muddah use to treat Lora good, causen sometimes she use to warn Lulu muddah bout any a Lulu tricks dat she would play fuh get she in trouble. But Lulu din like Lora atall an of course Lora return de compliment.

By dis you know of course dat Lulu was a very wicked gurl, an she

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 the latrine; not no clean big shot latrine, but 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 this 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 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 Poiliceman 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 very

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 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.