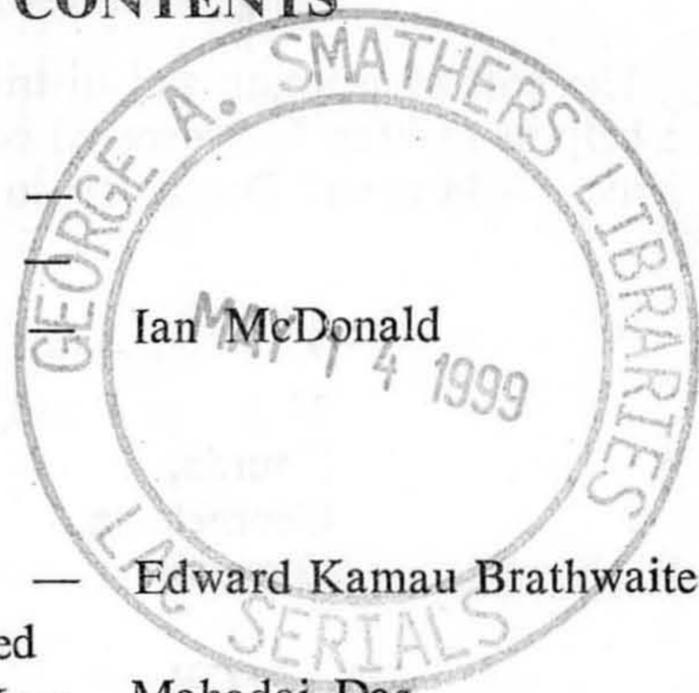


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KYK-OVER-AL

The cost of printing and distributing a literary magazine is very heavy. Please help us to keep **Kyk-over-Al** going by sending your annual subscriptions (two issues — June and December) to either of the Joint Editors as follows :

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The Editors of **Kyk-over-Al** would welcome the submission of poems, short stories, articles and reviews to consider for publication. Publication of course cannot be guaranteed and because of expense it will not be possible to return manuscripts.

OVER THE EDITOR'S DESK

Caribbean Year 1986 in U.K.

From the Commonwealth Institute in London came a Newsletter, announcing that the Institute is planning a projection of the Caribbean in the United Kingdom, to run from March 1986 and concluding in November 1986.

Imaginatively planned, Caribbean Year has many aspects — the brochure mentions the renewal of all Caribbean national exhibits, especially **The Today Gallery** (to travel to other venues also), film and television seminars (as in Africa Year 1984), conferences and educational activities.

Caribbean Sunday will be April 27, 1986 with a service at Westminster Abbey. A Caribbean Boat with groups of performing artistes, starting from the Thames will tour the West of the U.K., putting into Leith and possibly going on to Rotterdam; Extra-mural Focuses on Caribbean Affairs, possibly in Liverpool, Birmingham and Northeast or Devon.

Guyanese Poet wins 1984 Commonwealth Poetry Prize

David Dabydeen, a Guyanese lecturer on English Literature at Warwick University in Britain, has been awarded the 1984 Commonwealth Poetry Prize with a collection of poems **Slave Song**.

The news sheet **Commonwealth Currents**, describes the collection as "showing the creole mind striving and struggling after concepts of beauty and purity, tho hampered by the harsh experience of daily existence".

We Must Educate Our Women More

At a Charter Presentation Ceremony on March 16, of The Inner Wheel Club of Georgetown, the UNDP Representative in Guyana, Miss Cecile Davis, addressing the 60 persons present, stressed the great importance of women in society, especially when moral values are concerned. Since change and technology bring dislocation in their train, there is great need to educate our women more, so that they can equip the next generation to sustain and improve the quality of living.

We Must Know Our Heritage Better

UNESCO has given the Guyana Heritage Society a grant of \$15,000 (US) to complete a Cultural Inventory of Guyana for all to know. The Society has begun to work on (1) the Immovable Material Heritage of important buildings forts etc. and (2) the Non-Material Heritage of the folk traditions, ceremonies and customs of the various ethnic groups.

The Turkeyen Journal of the Arts — Vol. 1, 1985

The University of Guyana Faculty of Arts in its first **Journal** issue sets out an intellectual forum: In its 46 pages, it presents six articles and three poems by Stanley Greaves. **Bill Carr** commends the **Idea of the University with pride**.

He has served in three universities — Cambridge, U.W.I., and now 18 years with U.G. which he feels is “Validating itself in the context of the Guyanese community” . . . “encouraging a liberal quality of mind.” Roberta Kilkenny, in close on 4,000 words, has built a dense and successful structure of “productive labour” from the French Physiocrats showing how the concept paved the way from feudalism to modern capitalism thru Adam Smith, David Ricardo, Jean Say to a good basis for Karl Marx.

Donald Sinclair reflects upon Claude McKay and his protest literature. He claims that “social commitment does not exempt an artist from art” — “his primary obligation . . . translating the private and particular unto the universal”. Rayman Mandal deals with **La Noche de Tlate'olco** as a successful documentary of the 1968 student agitation in Mexico City and the massacre and imprisonment of students.

Two other articles complete the journal — in 5,000 words, Alan Hosein discusses the quality of “seeing” in Walt Whitman’s “Song of Myself” in **Leaves of Grass** and Andrew Bishop sets out the various factors as the study of Geography evolved from the Middle Ages to modern times.

Stanley Greaves presents three beautiful philosophically-toned poems.

H. A. Vaughan Is Dead

The Barbados poet, Hon. Hilton Augustus Vaughan, born 1901, has died. He served his country well as Judge, Attorney General and Ambassador to the U.S.A. and the U.N., and had acted as Governor General of Barbados. He was Queen’s Counsel and OBE.

With Frank Collymore he was one of the two outstanding poets of Barbados of his time and although he published only one collection, **Sandy Lane and other Poems**, in the 1940’s, his poems have been widely anthologised. As AJS wrote some years ago, “The world of Vaughan is classical in temper, shrewd in analysis and nationalistic and political in content; he was one of the early proponents of the maxim that ‘Black is beautiful’.”

We recall with great pleasure his lines beginning: “Turn sideways now and let them see what loveliness escapes the schools.”

Senator John Wickham remembers him as the “embodiment of so many qualities which seem essentially Barbadian”, with a profound knowledge of the lives and times of patriots and “an inveterate and unrepentant punster”. Sir Alexander Hoyos recalled him as his “guide, philosopher and friend in the journalistic records of the Barbados past” and who had a “common interest in the treasures of literature, philosophy and religion”.

KYK 30

We are grateful to see the favourable reception of **Kyk 30** so far as readers were concerned, and we are happy at the poetry coming in for **Kyk 31**. We would like to receive good short fiction but that seems in short supply at the moment.

— AJS

A VERY SPECIAL THANKS

The reappearance of KYK-OVER-AL could not possibly have been achieved without the support of a number of people and organisations in the community. We are more than grateful to those who so readily supported this effort to keep alive an important part of Guyana's cultural tradition. Everyone concerned and interested in the literary life of the nation owe these sponsors a debt of gratitude.

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“Supporting KYK-OVER-AL — Guyana's literary magazine”.

Editors : A. J. SEYMOUR and IAN McDONALD.

POETRY MOSAIC — HOW AND WHY

Reading and writing poetry is to me a daily joy. I have always been puzzled why poetry is so often considered either as an irrelevance in the ordinary course of life or as the exotic indulgence of a peculiar few. Not long ago, in an issue of "The American Scholar", Karl Shapiro wrote :

"There is no poetry audience. Only a great population who claim the title of poet. In my experience nobody in this country reads poetry except poets, writers, and teachers of poetry".

As a West Indian that is the sad bell I hear tolling too. It should not be so. Recently, in the space of a few days, I read two pieces which I thought got to the heart of poetry better than most of what I have seen written about it.

The first piece was an article by Robert Pring-Mill entitled "The 'Workshop Poetry' of Sandinista Nicaragua" which appeared in Volume 1, Number 2, of the journal *Antilia* published in 1984 by the Faculty of Arts at U.W.I. in Trinidad. This article describes in a most stimulating way the "poesia de taller" which emerged in Nicaragua soon after the defeat of Somoza. This poetry, produced by a generation of peasants and town-dwellers, many of whom could neither read nor write — let alone aspire to compose poems — before the literacy campaign in 1980, emerged under the inspiration of Ernesto Cardenal, the poet-priest. Cardenal was appointed Minister of Culture in the first Sandinista Revolutionary Government and was recently expelled by Pope John Paul II from the Jesuit Order because of his refusal to resign his Cabinet post in Nicaragua.

The key teaching document in this surprising flowering of poetry among ordinary people was a pamphlet issued by the Ministry of Culture and the work of Ernesto Cardenal himself. In his article Robert Pring-Mill comments on this pamphlet :

"Its rules may look naive, and the style is so 'deadpan' that one is tempted to see ironies where none were intended; but even if the introductory sentence was meant as 'one in the eye' for academic critics and established poets, Cardenal undoubtedly wanted his young workshop poets to take that startling affirmation as literally as the rest".

Here is the pamphlet in full.

"SOME RULES FOR WRITING POETRY"

by **Ernesto Cardenal**

- Writing good poetry is easy, and the rules for doing it are few and simple.
1. Verse need not rhyme. If one line ends with **Sandino**, do not try to end another with **destino**; if one ends with **Leon**, there is no need to make another end in **corazon**. Rhyme is a good thing in songs, and very suitable for slogans ("WE WON IN THE RISING — WE SHALL WIN ALPHABETISING"), but rhyme is not a good thing in modern poetry. Nor is it a good thing to have a regular rhythm (all the lines with the same number of syllables) : verse should be completely free, with long lines or short, as the poet chooses.

2. One should prefer more concrete terms to vaguer ones. To say "tree" is vaguer or more abstract than saying quayacan (*liqnum vitæ*), **quesimo** (a sturdy tropical tree), **malinche** (flamboyant), which is more concrete. "Animal" is more abstract than "iguana", "rabbit", **culumuco** (*Felis jaguarondi*). And it is more abstract to say "liquor" than to say "whiskey", "champagne", **cususa** (a strong alcoholic drink of varying composition). Good poetry is usually made out of very concrete things.
3. Poetry has an added appeal if it includes proper names : the names of rivers, towns, and villages. And people's names. Part of the charm of Carlos Mejia Godoy's songs lies in the wealth of proper names — complete with surnames and even nicknames — to be found in them : "la Amanda Aguilar", "Tirso Mondragon", "Quincho Barrilete", "the almond tree at Tere's place".
4. Rather than being based on ideas, poetry needs to be based on things which reach us through our senses : which can be felt with the touch, which can be tasted with the palate, which can be heard, which can be seen, which can be smelt. It is good to make a point of saying that corrugated iron is "rusty", that a river stone is "shiny", that an iguana is "rough-skinned", that a macaw is "red, yellow and blue" (and to try to describe the sound a macaw makes). The most important images are visual ones : most things reach us through our eyes.
5. One must write as one speaks. With the natural plainness of the spoken language, not the written language. To put the adjective first, as in "los sombrios senderos" (the shady paths), is not natural in our language, but rather : "los senderos sombrios". By the same token, it is preferable not to use *tu* but *vos* (i.e. for the second person singular) in our Nicaraguan poetry, since that is how we speak in daily life. The greater part of the new Nicaraguan poetry is now using *vos*, and it is also rightly being used in advertising, mottoes, slogans, etc. (*Vos* is used in almost all of Latin America, but there are few places where it is used as much as in Nicaragua; the new Nicaraguan poetry is going to impose the use of *vos* throughout Latin America).
6. Avoid what are called commonplaces, cliches, or hackneyed expressions. In other words, whatever has gone on being repeated in the same way for a long time. For example : "burning sun", "icy cold", "cruel tyrant", "heroic fighters", etc. The poet should try to discover new ways of putting things; if what he writes is made up of expressions blunted by use, it is not poetry.
7. Try to condense the language as much as possible. In other words, to abridge. All words which are not absolutely necessary should be left out. If there are two ways of putting something, one should choose the shorter. One should economise on words as though one were writing a telegram; or as in the phrases on the roadside billboards, which are made as short as possible. The real difference between prose and verse is that prose uses many words, while verse uses few. An editorial or a news story in **Barricada** is prose because it is written with many words; if the same thing were condensed into just a few lines, it would be "verse". A poem may be a very long one, but each of its lines should be in very condensed language".

The second piece is an essay written by Philip Larkin in 1957 and reproduced in a volume of his miscellaneous writing entitled "Required Writing" published by Faber and Faber in 1983. Concisely and with telling clarity it sums up, infinitely better than I ever could, the essential fact that "poetry, like all art, is inextricably bound up with giving pleasure". The essay was written nearly 30 years ago but what it says is never out of date. Here are extracts :

"THE PLEASURE PRINCIPLE"

It is sometimes useful to remind ourselves of the simpler aspects of things normally regarded as complicated. Take, for instance, the writing of a poem. It consists of three stages : the first is when a man becomes obsessed with an emotional concept to such a degree that he is compelled to do something about it. What he does is the second stage, namely, construct a verbal device that will reproduce this emotional concept in anyone who cares to read it, anywhere, any time. The third stage is the recurrent situation of people in different times and places setting off the device and re-creating in themselves what the poet felt when he wrote it. The stages are interdependent and all necessary. If there has been no preliminary feeling, the device has nothing to reproduce and the reader will experience nothing. If the second stage has not been well done, the device will not deliver the goods, or will deliver only a few goods to a few people, or will stop delivering them after an absurdly short while. And if there is no third stage, no successful reading, the poem can hardly be said to exist in a practical sense at all.

What a description of this basic tripartite structure shows is that that poetry is emotional in nature and theatrical in operation, a skilled recreation of emotion in other people, and that, conversely, a bad poem is one that never succeeds in doing this. All modes of critical derogation are no more than different ways of saying this, whatever literary, philosophical or moral terminology they employ, and it would not be necessary to point out anything so obvious if present-day poetry did not suggest that it had been forgotten.

We seem to be producing a new kind of bad poetry, not the old kind that tries to move the reader and fails, but one that does not even try. Repeatedly he is confronted with pieces that cannot be understood without reference beyond their own limits or whose contented insipidity argues that their authors are merely reminding themselves of what they know already, rather than re-creating it for a third party. The reader, in fact, seems no longer present in the poet's mind as he used to be, as someone who must understand and enjoy the finished product if it is to be a success at all; the assumption now is that no one will read it, and wouldn't understand or enjoy it if they did.

Why should this be so? It is not sufficient to say that poetry has lost its audience, and so need no longer consider it: lots of people still read and even buy poetry. More accurately, poetry has lost its old audience, and gained a new one. This has been caused by the consequence of a cunning merger between poet, literary critic and academic critic (three classes now notoriously indistinguishable); it is hardly an exaggeration to say that the poet has gained the happy position wherein he can praise his own poetry in the press and explain it in the class-room, and the reader has been bullied into giving up the consumer's power to say 'I don't like this, bring me something different'. Let him now so much as breathe a word about not liking a poem, and he is in the dock before he can say Edwin Arlington Robinson.

.

The cash customers of poetry, therefore, who used to put down their money in the sure and certain hope of enjoyment as if at a theatre or concert hall, were quick to move elsewhere. Poetry was no longer a pleasure. They have been replaced by a humbler squad, whose aim is not pleasure but self-improvement, and who have uncritically accepted the contention that they cannot appreciate poetry without preliminary investment in the intellectual equipment which, by the merest chance, their tutor happens to have about him. In short, the modern poetic audience, when it is not taking in its own washing, is a student audience, pure and simple. At first sight this may not seem a bad thing. The poet has at last a moral ascendancy, and his new clientele not only pay for the poetry but pay to have it explained afterwards. Again, if the poet has only himself to please, he is no longer handicapped by the limitations of his audience. And in any case nobody nowadays believes that a worthwhile artist can rely on anything but his own judgement: Public taste is always twenty-five years behind, and picks up a style only when it is exploited by the second-rate. All this is true enough. But at bottom poetry, like all art, is inextricably bound up with giving pleasure and if a poet loses his pleasure-seeking audience he has lost the only audience worth having, for which the dutiful mob that signs on every September is no substitute. And the effect will be felt throughout his work. He will forget that even if he finds what he has to say interesting, others may not. He will concentrate on moral worth or semantic intricacy. Worst of all, his poems will no longer be born of the tension between what he non-verbally feels and what can be got over in common word-usage to someone who hasn't had his experience of education or travel grant, and once the other end of the rope is dropped what results will not be so much obscure or piffling (though it may be both) as an unrealised, 'undramatised' slackness, because he will have lost the habit of testing what he writes by this particular standard. Hence, no pleasure. Hence, no poetry.

What can be done about this? Who wants anything done about it? Certainly not the poet, who is in the unprecedented position of peddling both his work and the standard by which it is judged. Certainly not only the new reader, who, like a partner of some unconsummated marriage, has no idea of anything better. Certainly not the old reader, who has simply replaced one pleasure with another. Only the romantic loiterer who recalls the days when poetry was condemned as sinful might wish things different. But if the medium is in fact to be rescued from among our duties and restored to our pleasures, I can only think that a large-scale revolution has got to set in against present notions, and that will have to start with poetry readers asking themselves more frequently whether they do in fact enjoy what they read, and, if not what the point is of carrying on. And I use 'enjoy' in the commonest of senses, the sense in which we leave a radio on or off. Those interested might like to read David Daiches's essay 'The New Criticism: Some Qualifications' (in *Literary Essays*, 1956); in the meantime, the following note by Samuel Butler may reawaken a furtive itch for freedom: 'I should like to like Schumann's music better than I do; I dare say I could make myself like it better if I tried; but I do not like having to try to make myself like things; I like things that make me like them at once and no trying at all'. (*Notebooks*, 1919)."

—000—

As I happened to read these articles almost one after the other it became clearer than ever to me why and how poetry could and should be more central in ordinary, as well as extraordinary, lives. I hope it may be so one day among people in our West Indian nations. Listen to Osip Mandelstam:

"The people need poetry that will be their own secret
To keep them awake forever,
And bathe them in the bright-haired wave
Of its breathing".

IAN McDONALD

JAH MUSIC
for ROBIN DOBRU
1935-1983

3

Blues

for

Billie Holiday

She's dark and her voice sings
of the dark river . her eyes
hold the soft fire that only the warm
night knows . her skin is musky and soft

she travels far back . explores
ruins . touches on old immemorial legends
everyone but herself has forgotten . she
becomes warrior and queen and keeper of the

tribe . there is no fear
where she walks . although drums speak
to announce the immanent death of a tyrant
and although her song is sad . there is no sorrow

where she sings . she walks in a world
where the river whispers of certainties
that only she can acknowledge . the trees

touch confident and unassuming . she hopes
that light will break in the clearing before her song ends...

4

Bird

for

Charlie Parker

The night before he died
the Bird walked on and played his heart out
notes fell
like figure forming pebbles
in a pond . he
was angry . and we
knew he wept to know his time had come
so soon . so

little had been done
so
little time to do it
in
he wished to hold the night from burning all time
long
but time
is short
and life
is short
and breath
is short
and so
he slowed
and
slurred
and
stopped
his fingers fixed
upon a minor key
then slipped
his bright eyes blazed and bulged against the death in him then knock-
ing at the door
we watched
as one will watch
a great clock striking time from a great booming midnight bell
the silence slowly throbbing in behind the dying bell
the night before he died
the Bird walked on through fear through faith through frenzy that he
tried to hide
but could not stop that bell

7

Circles

for

Melba Liston

Music will never fly out of your green horn in squares
nor out of your harp nor out of your thumb pianos
because it does not grow on cotton wool plantations
it is not manufactured good nor made of metal neither
it can never go straight up to heaven
clambering up its notes from a ladder in the sky

for it curls like your hair around its alabama root . circles
like fishwater around your children's sticks
has deep watery eyes like a sea lion has clear fiery eyes like a hawk
it sees through stone . and dynamites itself in quarries
of deep bone . bringing our riddim home
it is the blue lagoon inside your slide trombone
it is the echo not the rock that does
it is the reggae reggae riddim that explodes the prison burns the clock

8

Flute(s)

Its when the bamboo from its clip of yellow groan and wrestle
begins to glow and the wind learns the shape of its fires
and my fingers following the termites drill
find their hollows of silence . shatters of echoes of tone
that my eyes close all along the wall all along the branches all along the
world
and that dry creak and spirits walking these graves of sunlight
spiders over the water . cobwebs crawling in whispers over the stampen
green

find

from a distance so cool it is a hill in haze
it is a fish of shadow along the sandy bottom
that the wind is following my footsteps
all along the rustle all along the branches all along the
world
and that that stutter i had heard in some dark summer freedom
startles and slips from fingertip to fingerstop
into the float of the morning into the throat of its sound

it is a baby mouth but softer than the suck it makes
it is a hammock sleeping in the woodland
it is a hammer shining in the shade

it is the kite ascending chord and croon and screamers
it is the cloud that curls to hide the eagle
it is the ripple of the stream from bamboo

it is the ripple of the stream from blue
it is the gurgle pigeon dream the ground dove coo
it is the sun approaching midday listening its splendour

•
it is your voice alight with echo . with the birth of sound

9

Stone

for

Mikey Smith

When the stone fall that morning out of the johncrow sky
it was not dark at first . that opening on to the red sea sky
but something in my mouth like feathers . blue like bubbles and light
carrying signals & planets & the sliding curve of the world like a water pic
ture in a raindrop when the pressure drop

When the stone fall that morning i
couldn't cry out because my mouth was full of beast & plunder
as if i was gnashing badwords among tombstones
as if angry water was beating up against the curbstones of the palisadoes
as if that road up Stony Hill round the bend by the churchyard on the
way to the

post office was a bad bad dream and the dream was on fire all the way
past the

white houses higher up the hill and the ogogs bark
ing all teeth & furnace and my mother like she upside down up a tree like
she was screaming and nobody i could hear could hear a word i shout
ing even though there were so many poems left and the tape was switched
on & runn

ing and the green light was red and they was standing up everywhere in
London

& Amsterdam & at UNESCO in Paris & in West Berlin & clapping &
clapping & clapp

ing & not a soul on Stony Hill to even say amen . and yet it was happening
happening

the fences began to crack in my skull and there were loud **bodooooongs**
like

guns going off them ole time magnums or like fireworks where i
dreadlocks were in fire

and the gaps where the river coming down and the dry gully where my
teeth used to be

smiling and my tuff gong tongue that used to press against them &
parade pronunciation

now unannounce and like a black wick in i head & dead

and it was like a heavy heavy riddim low down in i belly bleeding dub

and there was like this heavy black dog thumping in i chest &

pumping murdererrrrrrrr

and my throat like dem tie like dem tie a tight tie around it . twist

ing my neck quick crick quick crick and a never wear neck

tie yet and a laughing more blood an spittin out lawwwwwwwwwwwd

and i two eye lock to the sun and the two sun staring back bright from
the grass and i

YOU HAVE RETURNED

You have returned.

some fount in my heart
is unscrewed; the poetry
flows and flows tonight,
a fall or a fountain,
a forest stream quietly
overcoming stones in
its course.

love, what were you doing
there; that place so far
away from my heart that
in your absence, my very
blood seemed to run more
slowly; all my tangible
tempos seemed to sigh
and turn away from
implementing their previous
mad, wild dance in my temples,
or heart, or inside my wrists.

What have you done to me,
love, when your absences
slow me down to inaction,
that slow metabolism of
despair, while your returnings
quicken my pulse excitedly,
the circulatory map of my
eager blood going to riot.

THERE'S A FINISHED PLAY

There's a finished play
typescripted
in my head.

in a large, empty
auditorium, behind
drawn, heavy curtains,
the whole act's
been rehearsed.

"at the climax
the heroine fell,
with all her skirts,
deep into his eyes.

he, a chivalric lover,
eyes masked from the world,

his ready feet in love's stirrups —
galloped in upon the moment —
snatched her up with
a passionate kiss,
to his breast.

Together
they rode
to the land of love

But you, sweetheart,
watching me intently,
are you sitting in the wings?

SILENT MY HEART

Silent, my heart.
She will take him in good care.
See how tightly he holds
her little hand.

He is sleeved, this wintry
afternoon, in black, and
a girl who, scarfed in
a homely plaid, hangs
on his arm, may yet be his wife.

Hush, my heart
you knew him when he walked
against the cold wind, coatless,
lost, like a small-town boy with
faraway eyes in a big impersonal city.
She will care for him.

He won't buy many sandwiches now.
The deli people will be sad.

After home-made suppers, nights
kissing her besides red glowing
candles; after she's hung his
shirts out in the bathroom,
stayed up with him while
he writes his book——

He won't lack for company.

You were never in the picture,
my girl, you were an extra
who thought herself a star;
you were never in his picture,
only in a dream that wasn't
his, only in a beautiful dream.

A dream nevertheless.
So hush my heart.
Be happy he's found
one to sit with him
in front of the home-fires,
who seems good and true
enough to bear his child.

FOR PATRICK

Great Jehovah
you let my brother
be lost like a common snail
without mourning.

You let him grow mad,
pacing the iron space
two straight lines confined,
measuring his steps keenly
between impossible parallels
in his life, grieved and bewildered.

Into that primeval and city-forgotten
jungle which dragged him into its own
remembrance, the twin geography of this
world and the next, unwittingly he went,
without even maps of child-young crayon
lines, without the golden compass of
your sure guidance, without your
multifarious light.

Was it his appointed time to fill
that high office I mentioned previously?

Is that why you called him
from all my carefully-constructed
dreams, my sandpapered corridors,
my high-glaze windows?

Or did my desperate brother play,
like Bergman's mediaeval antihero,
a grim game of chess with inflexible
death, and lose?

MAHADAI DAS

“LONG TIME”

IF LINES IN MY HAND
HAVE BECOME MY FACE
YOU HAVE BEEN A LONG TIME COMING.
THE ECSTASY OF CLOUDS
NEVER PAINTS RAINBOWS
FOR ANTS RUNNING MY MIND ,
AND I DID NOT RECOGNISE YOUR FACE
BRINGING BIRDS
WHO SHELTER UNDER DIVINE LOVE.

JAGOUR, STONEFLOWER,
YOU HAVE BEEN A LONG TIME COMING.
EACH DAY IS TODAY
FOR TOMORROW NEVER COMES
TO STEAL MY SHADOW
OF EXULTANT BOUQUETS.

“TO A POET M.C.”

AND THE HORSES
AND THE DRUMS,
THE NIGHT DOES NOT STILL
DOGS PRACTISING TO HOWL.
WITH LEAVES STUCK TO FEET
THE CONDEMNED COMMIT MISERIES
WHICH EVEN LILIES
IN THEIR HEARTS
CANNOT CONCEAL.
THE ABSENCE OF TRUTH
HOODS EAGLES' EYES,
ANGELS CANNOT BE HEARD,
ONLY THE WARDEN OF WORDS
STRINGING POEMS
AS THE PRECIPITATE WREN
ITS GALAXY OF SONGS.

“TRICKS”

SHAPE AND COLOUR OF AFRICA,
CLOSE CURLED SKULL
SINGING THE SONGS OF SLEEP.

SKINS OF PLASTIC LEOPARDS
INHABIT THE MARKET PLACE
CALLED BEAUTIFUL
WHERE BLUE INDIGO IS COINAGE.
ESHU SITS IN THE CROSSROADS
SIGNALLING TRICKS FOR SALE,
MAD SAHARAN SINGING SANDS
AND BLUE BUSH DEVILS.
STOP ME AND BUY
ROTUND TRUTHS
FOLLOWING SECRET CURVES
WHISPERING AT SHAVED TANGENTS.
THE DESPERATE TRICK
AFRICA TO AMERICA
FLAMES A RED RAINBOW
OVER THE SARGASSO OF SINS.
LIFE IS THE BIGGEST TRICK
EACH BREATH IS NO MORE
THAN ONE LESS TO BREATHE.

STANLEY GREAVES

SOUTHERN CROSS

First Movement — Granny Amy

1. An a must get a chick
But you na get no chick
And a must get a chick
But you na get no chick
And a must get a chick
Mi say you nah get no chick!
Pinyaah di hawk is coming down . . .
2. You know what is
a Leghorn chick?
A capon?
A layer?
You know yaws?
You too fool, yaw —
Yaws is a disease
that fowls suffer from.
You must be a fowl.
3. A company of shadow
under the coolie plum tree
each stump a windy tale
the dark earth storing history
4. Here in this place of greening
orange tree, civil orange tree,
coolie plum, naseberry,
the family chickens
came to meet their death.
You put the body under
a old pan, leave the head
outside, press down knife to neck
with a clean stroke, let the pan
up: see the chicken flatter . . .
5. And a must get a chick
But you naw get no chick
And a must get a chick
But you naw get no chick
And a must get a chick
Mi say you nah get no chick
Pinyaah di hawk is coming down.
6. Papa kept a nanny goat
in the backyard.
I see him milk it still
his fingers deft white milk

answering them in small
clean streams into
the noisy pan.

Not a grass was ever
so green as the guinea
grass that goat ate
in that yard. No
mint smell so sharp
as the small clump
halfway down the slope
to the back gate.

7. Is grass and ashes
you take to clean pot
you know. You never
know? Beat the clothes
on the big beating stone
beside the pipe, bleach them,
starch them (blue in
the starch) and set cleanly
orderly on the line
Not a clothes so white
Not a collar so starch
Not a pot so clean.

8. Papa's carpenter's bench
stood against the orange tree.
Every so often it get shaky
and he shore it up.
What my father could do
with a nail and two
sure strokes of a hammer!
I see him plane wood, now,
and the shavings curl
bright brown-red like
the sun catch in the wood
and he planing leaves of light,
so and so, so and so,
and the warm steady
noise of the plane, the comfort
of making.

On that bench
one Good Friday I set
a egg white in a jam bottle
to see the shape of the crucified
Christ. Not a shape was a shape.

9. Blue bird, blue bird
 in and out the window
 blue bird, blue bird
 in and out the window
 Oh Janey I am tired
 Take a little girl
 and pat her on the shoulder
 Take a little girl
 and pat her on
 the shoulder.
10. Who pat that pat?
 My granny had
 a big mouth
 big nose
 big bosoms
 big belly
 big feet.
 She restrained
 them all.
 She pat that pat.
 It was a waking pat;
 a you-haven't-made-
 your-bed-yet, pat;
 a chile-you-forget-
 your-drawers-in-the-
 bathroom-again, pat;
 a never-mind-every-
 little-girl-has-
 nightmares, pat.
 I pray God, when
 I have grans, I have
 a pat like that.
11. One day down by the beating store
 Delores say she wish my mother
 womb would drop out.
 She was a evil-looking woman
 head like medusa, plants
 shoving clenched fists
 from her yellow face
 like small tough snakes.
 Why my mother womb to drop out?
 Who not to born?
 Which one, as Father Roy
 say, would she
 have savaged in the egg?

12. At Papa's workbench also
I beat out Pascal's wager,
around ten.
 If God, then hell;
if no God, what the hell!
But if hell, well?
If hell, well God.
13. Papa and Mr. Holness built
our house. He looked
just like Delores: high cheekbones
yellow bronzing into gold
for he worked
in the sun. He wasn't old
nor young. Just
ageless, decent, good, Him
Papa, seive and saw,
cement and sand and sweat,
These raised the walls
we lived in, set
a roof firmly astride,
When man and man
build so, it give a
meaning to abide.

PAMELA MORDECAI

REMEMBERING

Pearldrops she said
and smiled towards her breasts . . .
too cold for turning on, I said.
my poets warm to raisins tipping
naseberries on the limb

pearldrops are cold and white
and dead

how ever came that image in your head?

Now that the doctors say
the end is on its way
I find me thinking . . . pearldrops . . .
pre-suggesting . . .

“pearls lie deep”
the ocean
gathering lifedrops
storing on its floor
cold people with cold pearls

Pearldrops
I hear her say
and note (too late)
the wanness of her voice.

SCREWS LOOSE

I do not wish to sit and smile
too sweetly where the pavement ends
nor set small windy fires at Papine
nor scrupulously cleanse myself in streams
guttering too slowly
gathering stench on stench

I do not wish to mumble as I go
gesturing wildly as the voice grows loud
eyes staring wide
and crude uneasy laugh

mad people whisper late
sane peoples early dreams
beware my inmost thoughts
that wait mad mind's release

too much too soon
the mind rejects it all

uncensored now and overflowing here
flotsam and jetsam mixed with precious pearl

and so my love my seraph dear go home
mad women whisper sane men's names
and not in jest

leave me my dreams of growing calmly old
turning thin pages in moth ridden books
rocking my evening bones
watching each sun go down

A CASE FOR PAUSE

Arrest the sense
and let the fancy flow
without design
collecting cloud and air
petal and leaf . .

Rein in the fancy now
unleash the sense . . .
constructs and theories
not yet pursued
rush in perfected, whole.

Each pausing briefly rests
to rising work its best
shadows and moonlight
dust and then the rain
each dies the while
to brightly live again.

VELMA POLLARD

FOR NEVILLE ROBINSON

(sodium)

The light tread of the rat's paw
on the stair
Will not disturb your sleep now.
It is clear that men
are too much like rats.
And your fear of rats
and men alike has been transcended.

I remember when you paused
mid-thought
to consider, in your way, the setting sun.
You always loved, I feel, what you condemned.

Life, I see, you found not easily
reducible to rhyme
or is it that you understood in time
that, despite our tongue,
death rhymes fiercely with life.

SOON YOU WILL BE GONE

Soon you will be gone
Jacketed in a metal tube
cutting to the hearts of clouds,
destroying splashes of
sunlight as you pass
casting your dark,
winged shadow over me.

Soon you will be gone
and I will stand below
my tear torn face turned
upward

How will I find you
when distance winters you.
How will I know your frozen life.
I who have known only the sun.

C. G. AIRD

TRAVELLING

Travelling along the country roads
Faces peer from dark doorways
Tough looking people move around
With huge grins on their faces
Old women carrying large
Bundles on their small heads
Men with bicycles as old as
Their grandfathers'
The music plays with the loudness
Of a cathedral bell
Houses that look small
But hold huge families
Horses cats dogs
Seem to know each other well
Long backyards whose trees
Always seem to bear fruit
And everything move on
As though the healthy greens
Move them on

I HAVE SEEN THE MILES GROW TIRED

I have seen the miles grow tired
I have seen flowers burst with
Expectancy only to die from
The raging sun
I have seen the earth
Cracked brown, dying from thirst
Her trees refusing to speak
Only their silence with their anguished
Emotions
As to live or die
Waiting for the rains to come
Praying for the rains to come
And the rains never come
Listening to the voice of the mocking heat
Telling them to be patient with
Time
And they hoping it would be soon
Sooner than before
Later than never.

TIME AND THE FORTUNES

Time and the fortunes
Life and its dreams
Madness with its anger
Solitude with its loneliness
Laughter with its sadness
Discussion with its intent
Running with its freedom
And love beckons them all

Mountains that we yearn to climb
Forests where we long to sleep
Places where we long to walk
Promises that we must keep
Hands that we hold
Things that mean a lot to us
The crying faces of hungry children
And love beckons them all

Beaches churches factories
Dark — and bright nights
Alley cats
Sick men with healthy minds
Women with exposed breasts
Brave men with cringing fears
Old people with young hearts
And love beckons them all

STEVE PERSAUD

FOR INDIRA GANDHI

You let the hawk in you
break loose.
That, you seemed to think,
would bring the dove back
to a disastrous sky.
Perhaps you stood too firm
and so were unbalanced
when you tried to throw
a lariat over a lion's head.
You wanted the garden whole.
What you saw as weeds
might only have been flowers
of a different kind;
and the wild horses
that would not be stabled
nor join the herd
were perhaps lions
that would have given too many tears.

For some, Indira,
You still are,
a bright mark in the sky, your memory
a suddenly appearing star
in their heart's gloom.
For others, you were
the sky's starring sore,
the disastra that only
hate's keen surgery
could have removed.

Raincloud in drought,
or monsoon,
sore or star,
you made your mark high,
upon the heavens.
You were spectacular,
and when you fell, all
looked your way
again, and wondered.

MICHAEL AARONS

FOR ERIC WILLIAMS

And so the daylight crumbles
and the night moves in
The tower tumbles
and the crash resounds
all through the vast Columbus rounds
The pieces must be picked
and put in place
Doom's machinations must be licked
the flowing Caribbean waters
are not tears
or fears
but cleansing streams of hope
to give its people impetus to cope.

Dusk has been fleet
a wisp
a whisper
a trade wind breath
to cool the shock of death. Right
in the strife of life
Predestination struck
sharp like a knife
The Trinity rose high
to triumph
not to cry.

The crowds will brood
upon the scholar's cradled head
the creeping, stalking, ghostly hood
insists in Port-of-Spain
the statesman's dead
The historian will not write again
only be read.

An erstwhile politician wears a shroud
no more the hustings
but a Carib cloud
smudges the features
of a Tobagonian sun
the wisdom, victories of Woodford Square
not done.

The hurricanes retreat, the floods subside
Paria chides her tide
The hills, the mountains throb
the palm trees genuflect
in solemn homage for the man who died.

A sweating Windian heat speaks out,
this is a tragic thing.
The king is dead.
Who will be King?

CLEVELAND HAMILTON

DREAMS, LEAVE ME ALONE

I am going along fine in the middle years.
I've left youth like a blazing fire
Guttering out in albums, in old letters full of puzzles.
I am heavy with the stone of middle age :
The skin of all I touch is thickened,
A glaze on what I see,
Sounds muffle like a pillow cuffed,
Tastes furr like old peppers left in vinegar.
I smell the air, it has no smell at all.
I think the well-considered thoughts
That other men have thought before.
Unusual beauty I quite ignore or shun.
Like an old car on a cold morning,
I need a kick start.
But it's all right, lives find their level :
Comfortable, not vivid, are the passing hours.
The joy of the world
Is faded like a worn rug
In a sunny room.
It looks as if the time left
Will be serviceable but not astonishing :
A walk, eyes down, through brilliant forests.

IAN McDONALD

MILLIONAIRE

I have written a million words,
Life-long a single poem,
In my hallelujah chorus.

Celebrating the skipping boy
Girl flaunting her curving beauty
The old man shuffling along
The leaf with the rain on it.

Celebrating my human tree,
The memories that whisper of childhood
And its care-free happiness

My memory, nameless and vast,
Pushes roots in the nation's past
And the past coming leaping to life,
Defying time to print
The black velvet of my mind.

The happy cascading bells
Trembling in songs of joy
A crystal contains them all.

The tilapia in the trench
Burrow deep in a cave of mud
Fancying themselves to be safe,
From fingers impregnable

But the secrets, dark in the heart
Yield their jewels at harvest time,
The creative imagination.

A. J. SEYMOUR

***CATTLEWASH: THE CRUEL SEA**

Lions roarr . . . Their brazen
Claws dig deep in the shore. Non stop,
These carnivorous whiteheads chop
And plough, splaying across the sand.

The routed pebbles rattle
Like bones around my ankles.
One, sharpened by time
And the water's grinding stone
Slices me, I groan and whine
Bending, clapping salt-water to my ankle-bone.

Few are the hotels sunbathing here
In this primal place,
Only the wake of the boulders' impervious stare
And the flowing hair of the seagrape.

Where
The water pelts its deadly jabs,
The scathed rocks are cornered there.
These choiceless labourers tighten their belts,
The boulders' eyesockets weep crabs.

Trapped in this shout
Of salty ravenous mouths,
A middle-aged man flays his small arms all about,
And, the wind howls, and, the sea
Roars, and, the waves plough
A blight in this geography.

***Cattlewash is a beach along the east coast of Barbados,
known for its scenic beauty but deadly tides.**

TONY KELLMAN

THE LESSER-KNOWN TRADITION OF GUYANESE FICTION

A Preliminary Bibliographical Survey

Part 2

(Continued from *Kyk-over-al* No. 30, Dec., 1984)

by JOEL BENJAMIN

PRELIMINARY NOTE

The interval since the publication of the first part of this essay permits my acknowledgement of indebtedness to Fr. Matthew De Souza and Ian McDonald who were able to point out two important omissions. Christopher Nicole's *Off white* (1959), a work set in Guyana, certainly should have been included. Very interesting is the inclusion of the name of Evelyn Waugh in the theme of this paper. Evelyn Waugh had travelled into the interior of Guyana and to Boa Vista in 1933, subsequently producing his travelogue *Ninety two days* (1934). His novel *A handful of dust* (1934) is a result of his experiences during that journey. The latter part of the book is based on one of Waugh's short stories (*The man who liked Dickens*) in which the hero is kept prisoner by a semi-insane character who compels him to read to him, interminably, the works of Dickens (Sykes 1977 : 194-196).

Inevitably, that interval has allowed an awareness of other new material. Frederick Cranmore, a Guyanese, published his first novel, *The West Indian* (1978), in Brooklyn. The story, dealing broadly with the theme of cultural adjustment of the emigrant, is set both in the United States of America and Guyana. Most intriguing was the discovery that the 1763 Berbice Uprising led to an awakening of the consciousness and conscience of Dutch writers of the period (Lichtveld and Voorhoeve 1958 : 236). (The play *Monzorgo of de koninklyke slaaf* (1774) by N. S. van Winter was one such admitted literary outcome of that awakening). The obvious implication of this Dutch development in terms of an expanded bibliographical search for works of fiction rooted in the Guyana experience is fascinating.

Finally, as corrections to the first part of this essay (p. 40), it should be noted that the 1983 first edition of Shiva Naipaul's novel took the different title of *Love and death in a hot country*, and the name of the country in this work was 'Cuyama' and not 'Cuyana' as stated. The name 'Peasman' (p. 39) should read 'Paasman'.

THE SHORT STORY TRADITION

Although the short story tradition for Guyana is old, there are few works by writers who fall into the 'outside' category. The oldest recorded work of short stories pertaining to Guyana is arguably in this category. Matthew Barker, who was once an editor of a local newspaper in the 1820s, published his *Tough yarns : a series of naval tales and sketches to please all hands* in London in

1835. It is under the nom-de-plume 'The Old Sailor', a name which he used in his contributions to **Bentley's Miscellany** (Rodway 1896 : 224). Included in this rare book is the sketch of "Daddy Davy" (p. 153-169). Daddy Davy, left a free man in Demerara, meets his former master in Britain on a cold winter's night as a beggar. The following scene (reproduced in Rodway 1918 : 138-139) is significant for the use of a creole speech form, and very much indicative of the stereotype of the black which obtained at the time :

"My own massa! what for you give Davy him life? What for you give Davy him freedom? and now de poor nigger die for want! But no?" checking himself, "neber see the day for go dead, now me find my massa!" 'Confound the cold!' said my grandfather, thrusting his thumb and forefinger to his eyes, 'how it makes one's eyes run! William, my boy,' turning to me, 'fetch that pocket hankerchief off the sofa.'

"I immediately obeyed, and felt as if the cold had affected me too; for I employed my grandfather's handkerchief two or three times to wipe the trickling drops from my face before I delivered it into his hands."

Wilfred Ashton's **The syndicate horse and other stories** (1898) is also very rare, the copy of this book in the Royal Commonwealth Society (London) being the only recorded one. The seven stories (with quaint titles like 'The syndicate horse', 'The missing link', 'Major MacMurdo's manservant', 'The black dog', 'Mrs. Dreevor's little dodge', 'The promotion of Mervyn Daynter', and 'Felo de Se') are all set in a local environment. To judge from these stories, Ashton was most likely an expatriate, but details on him and his life in Guyana are not forthcoming.

Somewhat uneasily in the tradition of the outside perspective is A. Oswald's **It happened in British Guiana: stories by an overseer on a sugar estate** (1955). This is a miscellaneous collection of odd stories, yet clearly indicative of the author's practical knowledge of the country. **Jewels of the sun** (1979) by the Antiguan-born Ralph Prince deserves inclusion at this point, not only because Prince took up residence in Guyana at Linden, but because some of the stories are distinctly set in a Guyana environment.

Eric Walrond (1898-1966) is the most remarkable case of a Guyana-born author who turned 'émigré'. **Tropic death** (1926) is a collection of interesting short stories, one of which is set in Guyana. Walrond arguably occupies the three peculiar positions of being one of the earliest indigenous Caribbean writers, the Caribbean author with perhaps visibly the least developed potential, and one of the least known figures in Guyanese literary history. In the 1920s he had settled in the United States of America, involving himself in the literary movement known as the Harlem Renaissance. Some mystery once surrounded Walrond's origins, and evidently some confusion still persists on this. It is erroneously stated in some sources (e.g. Herdeck 1979 : 220; and the blurb to the 1972 reprint of this collection of stories) that Walrond was Jamaican-born. Kenneth Ramchand (1970a : 240-241) writes, "Walrond's collection of stories set in Panama and in the islands, **Tropic Death** [...], is a work of blistering imaginative power and compassion. Walrond's life of exile, journalism and vagabondage, his promise and his strange failure to produce must form an

important chapter in West Indian literary history [...]". Ramchand has published (1970b : 67-75) a more detailed examination of Walrond's contribution to West Indian literature. (See also Hughes 1979 : 131).

Although in the main tradition of Guyanese writers, Jan Carew has published a number of lesser known short stories on themes of the future, the bizarre and the supernatural. These include **Stranger than tomorrow : three stories of the future** (1976), **Save the last tango for me and other stories** (1976) and **Don't go near the water : three stories** (1982).

Lawrence Blackman is very little known as a Guyanese short story writer. His **Three short stories** (1977) was published in Sweden. Blackman migrated to England in 1962 and to Sweden in 1969, training as a radiographer. The first of his three stories is about the fumbling efforts of a Guyanese abroad to escape from a life of isolation and bookishness. Blackman (1977) has himself described this particular story as 'taken from life' and one may assume that it contains a disguised autobiographical statement.

Short story writing by locally-based Guyanese authors probably has a much older history than is now known. In the 1860s the locally published **The Guiana Magazine** contained short stories, some in serial form. The one known issue of this journal (for 1861) is in the University of Guyana Library. This includes two stories entitled 'Sloppytown, or a tale of cholera in 1857' and 'Obeah curse'. There is no reason to suppose that the authors were not Guyanese. Yet the first distinctly identified book of short stories published by a resident Guyanese was that by Egbert Martin. His **Scriptology**, published in Georgetown in 1885, is also very rare, the only recorded copy being in the Moorland-Springarn Library of Howard University. The work consists of four short stories (Seymour 1978 : 38). Egbert Martin, writing under the pseudonym of 'Leo', is arguably the leading figure in the history of Guyanese poetry. (See Seymour 1946).

Writing about the modern short story writers of his time, Cameron (1950 : 64) refers to an emergence of an active tradition, but there is no indication as to whether or not any of the persons concerned ever published outside of local magazines like the **Chronicle Xmas Annual**. In terms of separately published works, there appears to be a massive chronological gap between that of Martin and the next recorded one of J. A. V. Bourne. Bourne's **Dreams, devils, vampires** (1940), composed of spooky and horror stories and originally published in the **Chronicle Xmas Annual** between 1925 and 1937, is an odd entry into an area which is little touched by Guyanese authors. The list grows rapidly after this date, as can be seen in S. A. Sattaur's **For the glory of Islam** (c 1941), a story set on a religious theme; H. J. M. Hubbard's **Poor man's Christmas** (1944), a curious little work with an obvious political and social message; Rajkumari Singh's **A garland of stories** (196—?), six stories relating to East Indian life; Bertram Charles' **Our dilemma : (short stories)** (196—); Hugh Wharton's **Some Guianese short stories** (1963), four stories originally published in 1960 in **The Daily Argosy** newspaper; Rick Ferreira's **Are you stone cold, Santa Claus? : a 'calypso' collection; stories, poems, articles** (1973); John Why's **Nice and nasty tales** (1976), a collection of eleven stories set in a Guyana environment; **The**

river between (1979) edited by Liz Cromwell, comprising twenty-five stories by eight Linden writers; Ramcharran Sawh's **Hidden treasure and other stories** (1979), four stories on local themes; and Harry Narine's **Grassroot people : thirteen stories on one theme** (1981). Narine won a 1981 Casa de las Américas prize with this collection of stories set in Guyana. Sheik Sadeek has brought out five collections of short stories, all exploring the reality of Guyanese everyday life. Some of these stories were published in the local newspaper and magazines as early as 1949. The collections are **Windswept & other stories** (1970), **Across the green fields and five other stories** (1974), **The diamond thieves and four more stories** (1974), **The porkknockers and 4 other stories** (1974), and **No greater day and four more adult stories** (1974).

The sympathetic editorial contribution of Arthur Seymour to the publication and promotion of the genre of the short story needs to be recorded. Besides his editing of **New writing in the Caribbean** (1972) and **Independence 10: Guyanese writing 1966-1976** (1976), both of which include short stories by both the major and lesser known names in Guyanese literature, Seymour has published between 1976 and 1982 at least four collections in mimeograph of stories by young writers who had participated in his fiction-writing course at either the then National History and Arts Council or at the Department of Extra Mural Studies at the University of Guyana.

Some recent works fall into a special class of locally-produced short stories. Frances Tracey's and Beverley Dawson's **Maroro-nawa Sanmao kotu-ainaoun** (1975) is a mimeographed compilation of stories in the Wapishana language. As explained in the introduction to this work, these stories were written by adult Amerindians from the village of Maroro-nawa in the South Rupununi. The authors had learnt to read and write English in school, and during a two-week course in 1974 they received instruction in the reading and writing of their own language. The short stories were produced during that course. More recently, the Akawaio Translation Project has attempted to make religious texts available to the Akawaio in their own language. The missionary group responsible for this operation embarked on a programme for first getting Akawaios to read and write in their own language. Of the fourteen mimeographed booklets (all by Akawaios) so far produced, the following can be placed in the class of short stories : Rita Hunter's **Male yamak itanomasak kon yuk yau** (1984), Doris Williams' (et al.) **Awale amak pantoma** (1984), Charles George's (et al.) **Ali ek ton pantoma** (1984), and Isaac Jerry's (et al.) **Aliton ok amak pantoma** (1984).

THE CREOLE PERSPECTIVE

The dividing line, if it exists, between fiction and social description is not always clear. In this respect, in discussing the writer from inside, one cannot ignore the nearly continuous tradition of story-telling and social description/commentary in the creole language which began in the later nineteenth century. In this genre, the form is more important than the message, and stories (where they exist) are usually devices for illustrating the actual way of life of a people. The earliest work in this form is Michael McTurk's **Essays and fables in prose**

and verse (1881) which was published under the pseudonym of 'Quow'. This was revised and enlarged in an edition of 1899. G. H. Hawtayne's **West Indian yarns** (1884), written under the pseudonym of 'X. Beke', was re-published in a revised and enlarged edition of 1890. It comprises a number of fascinating stories set in a wider Caribbean environment. With its dual publishers in Georgetown and London, it is an interesting point that, at this early stage, a work of such a nature should have been directed at an international audience. The writings of J. Van Sertima are worthy of special note. His **Among the common people of British Guiana** (1897) and **Scenes & sketches of Demerara life** (1899) comprise several short descriptions of Afro-Guyanese social life and individual behaviour, largely set around the vivacious character of "Rebecca". The sketches in these books had appeared originally in the local newspapers in a serial form. It would appear that Van Sertima also published **Rebecca rediviva** before 1909, and this was in the same category as the two works mentioned above (Argosy Company 1910 : 498). Unfortunately no copy of this work is now known to exist. Van Sertima's approach to his subject matter, important as this is for historical sociology, is slightly ambivalent : at one level he distances himself by his writings on 'popular zoology', and at another he is the sympathetic recorder of the Afro-Guyanese way of life.

As an amateur student of the creole language of Guyana, the Rev. James Speirs made a major contribution to social history with his book on proverbs. His other work, **Creole life in British Guiana** (1902), is accessible only through very scant references to it in other works. It would appear that, like Van Sertima's earlier writings, this book contains sketches or stories on creole life. In this vein are J. G. Cruickshank's **Negro humour** (1905) and E. N. Woolford's **Georgetown vignettes : sidelights on local life** (1917). This last work, though marred by the obvious social prejudices of the author, has a number of sketches which are important for an understanding of the everyday life of the earlier part of this century. (The only recorded copy of this work in a public institution is the one in the University of Guyana Library).

The writings of Leonard Evelyn-Moe deserve a special mention here. Evelyn-Moe (under the pseudonym of 'Uncle Stapie') wrote a number of articles in the **Daily Argosy** in the 1930s and 1940s. These charming creole language sketches, anecdotes and general social commentary have been partly reproduced in two mimeographed volumes by the Department of English at the University of Guyana. The story-teller and social commentator in Evelyn-Moe were probably reflected in a booklet of short stories which he is recorded as having produced. J. W. Smith (1952 : 31) writes, "those of us who are old enough will remember his humorous series on the adventures of the wayward boy "Theo". These stories were printed in booklet form, but like so many other Guianese books, the work is out of print and unobtainable."

Somewhat in the tradition of Hawtayne and McTurk would be Edgar Mittelholzer's little known **Creole chips** (1937) and George Mc Lellan's **Old time story : some old Guianese yarns re-spun** (1943). McLellan's work, under the pseudonym of 'Pugagee Puncuss', comprises some two hundred and twenty-

eight stories etc. which were originally published in the **Daily Chronicle** newspaper between 1937 and 1938.

One of the noticeable features of these earlier story writers in this genre is that they unconsciously make a link between the use of the creole language and humour. The recent attempts to see this language form as a vehicle for themes of tragedy and serious human concern have largely been in the nature of a cultural statement. Yet conscious humour is a valid element in the short story, and there are a few works which, although not fully in a creole language form, treat humorously of creole life. Sydney Martin's **Humour, sketches etc.** (1916) includes a few stories, the most extensive being 'Mrs. Farrington's third husband'. Martin was a Portuguese comedian (Cameron 1950 : 85). As with so many other early local publications, this work is rare; and, indeed, the bibliographical data is incomplete, as the only recorded surviving copy of it in the University of Guyana Library is defective. In this genre one could note the somewhat bawdy and humorous sketches of Sam Chase's **Laugh with Sam Chase** (1967) and the two volumes of C. A. Farrier's **Guyanese humour store** (1968 & 1969) written under the pseudonym of 'Uncle Scudie (Skewdie)'. The curious nature of this last work is probably best described by its sub-title, viz. "Comprised of anecdotes and tit-bits etc., well interspersed with creolese and calculated to provide readers with mirth and laughter". Farrier had worked for years in the interior of Guyana in such jobs as logging and mining.

MYTHS, LEGENDS AND FOLK TALES

Spanning the worlds of adult and children's literature are the published myths, legends and folk tales of Guyana. The work of the Rev. William Brett in the nineteenth century must surely be the most important here. His **Legends and myths of the Aboriginal Indians of Guiana** (c 1880) is really prose in poetry, and is based on his systematic collection of Amerindian oral traditions. Brett's work was issued as **Guiana legends** (1931), an abridged prose version edited by Leonard Lambert. (James Veecock's **Legends of British Guiana** (1888) is almost completely based on Brett's work, and is more of an attempt to give an account of Amerindian legends than to reproduce them in their own right. This work was originally published in issues of the **West Indian Quarterly** in the 1880s. Walter Roth's **An inquiry into the animism and folklore of the Guiana Indians** (1915), containing a number of such Amerindian myths and legends, is of a similar type). A number of recent publications have dealt with Amerindian legends and folk tales — in most cases they have been re-told for children's reading. These include Frances Tracey's **Wapichan kotu' ainaoun = Wapishana legends** (1974), a mimeographed work. Frances Tracey and Beverley Dawson, working for the Unevangelized Fields Mission in Lethem, have been responsible for two publications by the Curriculum Development Centre of the Ministry of Education, viz. **Amerindian stories** (1976) and **More Amerindian stories** (1977). Also published by the Ministry of Education are **Folk tales and legends of some Guyana Amerindians**, edited by Edwards and Hubbard (1979), and Sister Rose Magdalene's **Amerindian stories for young Guyanese** (1983).

The only other collections of folk tales of ethnic groups are those relating to Afro-Guyanese, and these deal specifically with Anansi stories. A few, and indeed the earliest recorded Guyanese Anansi stories, are to be found in the Rev. Charles Dance's **Chapters from a Guianese log-book** (1881), a miscellany of observations on local life. David Makhanlall, a Guyanese author, has published a number of collections of such Anansi tales which have been adapted for children's reading, viz. **The best of Brer Anansi** (1973), **The invincible Brer Anansi** (1974), and **Brer Anansi strikes again** (1976).

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Defining the boundaries of children's literature is not so easy. There is a sense in which such novels as the earlier mentioned **The emigrant's lost son** by George Wall could be said to fall into this category. Either way, the unambiguous class of children's literature is quite extensive.

The earliest known work in this category is Gertrude Shaw's **West Indian fairy tales** (1914). A. J. Seymour (1978 : 101) refers to the contents of this work as "Jumbie stories about the Ogre of Kykoveral, the Witch of Baracara, and about spirits identified with other Guyanese place names". Nothing is known about Shaw — whether she was Guyanese or not, or even if the name itself was a pseudonym.

Foreign writers of children's literature have produced a number of interesting works. Somewhat in a category of their own are those children's books which have had as their objective nothing more than a description of the real animal life of the Guyana jungle. Outstanding in this respect is Charles Livingston Bull's **Under the roof of the jungle : a book of animal life in the Guiana wilds** (1911). The ecology of the jungle and the intimate behaviour patterns of the many animals are introduced in attractively illustrated stories which reflect the detailed powers of observation of a naturalist.

Theodore J. Waldeck went on an expedition to Guyana in 1937-38, and his **The white panther** (1941) is within the Bull tradition. The bibliography issued by the Information Centre on Children's Cultures (1969 : 25) states about this book, "...this story of the maturing of a jaguar remarkable for his white color shows insight into the behaviour of this cunning, ferocious beast. It is a gripping, fast-moving adventure which gives a good picture of wild life in the jungle. There are several slighting references to Indian hunters". Jo Besse Waldeck (the wife of Theodore Waldeck?) wrote in a similar vein on the local environment, viz. **Little jungle village** (1940) and **Exploring the jungle** (c 1941). The former work, according to the Library of Congress catalogue, deals specifically with children in 'Guiana'. Jo Waldeck's other work **Little lost monkey** (1942) comprises legends and stories relating to monkeys, but it has not been possible to establish a direct Guyana relevance of these.

David Chamberlin, better known for his popular biographical study of John Smith, produced **Ebony Bob : the adventures of a slave boy around 1920**. The story is set during the 1823 Demerara Slave Uprising. The book itself

is extremely rare. Helen Tee-Van's **Red howling monkey: the tale of a South American boy** (1926) still stands on its own merits. The story concerns the life of Arauta (Red Howling Monkey), a young Amerindian, and gives a reasonably accurate account of the life-style of the Akawaio Indians and of the animal life of the jungle. Helen Tee-Van was the wife of John Tee-Van, one of the researchers at the Tropical Research Station of the New York Zoological Society at Cartabo. William O'Grady's **Princess Marie Minnehaha of Manoa, Guiana** (1934) is indeed a curiosity of children's fiction. Its sub-title is "Princess Minnehaha of the White Indians, of the El Dorado before Pizarro's time". and although the work is supposed to be set in the Guiana region, all of the illustrations in the book are of North American Indians. **Bim: a boy in British Guiana** (1947) by Stella Mead deals with the varied experiences of an East Indian boy, including his stay in the Mahaica Hospital for leprosy. If only in its sympathetic treatment of this subject, there is a social message in this book. (**Naar de Barbiesjes** is a children's book recently published in the Netherlands. It is set in Suriname and Guyana in the nineteenth century when slavery was abolished only in the latter territory. Information on this work is incomplete at the moment).

In this category of children's literature the Guyanese writers abroad are few. Marilyn Awoonor-Renner (née Jack) lived in Sierra Leone where she lectured in geography at an advanced teacher training college. Her **Ndapi's childhood** (1976) is one of the several books for children which she has written. **Ndapi's childhood** is about a boy who was born in Sierra Leone at the end of the nineteenth century, and who experiences major changes in his life with the coming of the railway and the missionaries. Jan Carew, famous for his novels, has published some excellent children's stories, e.g. **The third gift** (1974) and **Children of the sun** (c 1981). The latter is a tale created out of a mixture of myths, mainly of the Amerindians of Guyana. The beautiful illustrations are set in a timeless African world, but the names in the tale (e.g. 'Makunaima', 'Roraima', and 'Akarai') are distinctly Amerindian in origin. Jacqueline De Weever's **The bamboo flute and other stories** (c 1979) is a local mimeographed publication with some of the stories relating to a Guyana theme. De Weever is now resident in the United States of America.

John Agard and Grace Nichols are, perhaps, temporary exiles in England. Nichols' **Trust you Wriggly** (1981) and **Baby fish and other stories from village to rainforest** (1983) are full of promise. John Agard's locally published **Quetzy as saviour** (1976) is an exciting first effort in the area of children's literature. As with Carew's work, a specially devised Amerindian atmosphere is used. The story, written in a form of creole language, lies ambivalently between prose and poetry. Agard's London-published **Letters for Lettie and other stories** (1979) is a set of related stories placed in Guyana.

A few works by Guyanese authors have been published in recent decades, viz. Joy Allsopp's **The tale of Teddy the toucan** (1960), Henry Jcsiah's **Makunaima returns** (1966), Sheila King's (et al.) **Stories from Guyana** (c 1967), Gloria Jones' **Tales the honey-bear told** (1974) and Krishna Prasad's **Addie the alligator** (1982). The last two are in mimeograph. Invariably the potential of

these storytellers is marred by the limited attractiveness of the physical publication. (Joy Allsopp (now Joy Bland) lives today in Barbados, having recently published there a fascinating children's book of stories, **Crossing the water : a story about mongooses in Barbados** (1984)).

Numerous children's stories have been published in Guyana as part of a broader educational programme in which reading improvement and the teaching of history have been the main objectives. As the work of a private individual this latter objective is illustrated in Walter Rodney's **Kofi Baadu out of Africa** (1980). This story, initially in the form of a radio script, is an effort to show Guyanese the richness of their African heritage and the historical process by which they were brought to Guyana. Although described as aimed at an all-age audience, the material is clearly written for the easy understanding of young readers. Somewhat earlier, but similar in conception to Rodney's book, is Celeste Dolphin's **Children of Guiana** (1953), based on radio talks and intended to introduce the history of the 'six' races of Guyana. A number of well-illustrated children's stories, intended to be used in the English and Social Studies curriculum programmes, have been published by the Ministry of Education through the Guyana National Service Publishing Centre and the Curriculum Development Centre. These include Sibil Cort's **Farmer Smith** (1973), Victor Davson's **How the Warraus came** (1972), Allan Fenty's **Cumfa drums are calling** (1973) and **Stories of protest** (1978), Barbara Greaves' **The big hit** (1973) and **The new fence** (1973), H. F. Meerabux's **Balram's new home** (1972), Sharon Mentore's **The little man** (1972), Maureen Newton's **Rebel** (1974), Yvonne Wray's **Shanta and Rajah** (1974), and Evelyn Wallace's **The moco moco tree : (an ol'higue story)** (1973).

THE COMIC AS SHORT STORY

It would not be a new idea to treat comic book stories as a form of literature, but a detailed examination of this dimension cannot be undertaken here. It is worth noting, however, that the identifiable Guyanese tradition of the comic is not particularly old, although the cartoon, its precursor, has an honourable history going back to the pages of the local newspapers in the nineteenth century, and continuing in the form of printed collections from the first World War onwards. Although account needs to be taken of the fact that much has disappeared from our cultural memory, it would appear that the first comics were produced by Rudy Seymour in the 1960s. His 'Preacher' series still makes fascinating reading.

THE STORY THAT NEVER WAS

There are some significant references within the Guyana literary tradition to the novel or short story that was conceived and never written, or written and never published. The latter category has a long history if one is to include the intriguing twenty-eight page typescript (now in the Attorney General's Office, Georgetown) which was produced in 1899 by one of the persons present at the Paris Arbitral Tribunal for the British Guiana/Venezuela boundary. This bound work carries the prosaic title **British Guiana-Venezuela boundary arbitra-**

tion : (Paris June-October 1899), and is a satirical response to the interminable process of argument before that Tribunal. In a preliminary 'Synopsis of events in connection with the boundary question', the humorous entry for the year 2162 is "Original members of tribunal having all left Purgatory—but all not having gone to the same place, proceedings terminate by agreement, when it is discovered that it has since been proved to demonstration [by] leading Counsel on one side in one place and the leading Counsel on the other side in another that no such place as Guiana ever existed but was merely a myth prevalent in the 19th century". There is a great irony in this, given the resurgence of the boundary dispute in the 1960s.

A. J. Seymour (1974 : 44) refers to 'chapters from unpublished novels which have appeared in **Kyk-over-al** such as P. H. Daly's "The Bearded Trees", and Ivan Van Sertima's "The lost and the lonely"'. Seymour (1972 : 267-271) also publishes an extract from Ivan Van Sertima's unpublished novel, **The Black Prince**. Sections from an unpublished novel by Henry Josiah on the theme of slave rebellion appeared some years ago in a local newspaper.

Of some interest are the unpublished works of S. A. Sattaur, the author of the earlier mentioned **For the glory of Islam** (c 1941). In that work there is an advertisement stating that a number of novels were to be released by the author, viz. **Islam and its worth, The cool hand, The moment of hesitation, Islam the reviver, The mystery of the septangular mirror, For the sake of revenge or When eternal remorse steps in** etc. Elsewhere **The cool hand** is described as a full-length detective mystery. The other works, however, are more aptly described as short stories. Sattaur, once President of the Young Men's Muslim League, never got any success with the publishing of his works, and in his later days (until his death in 1983) worked in a secondhand bookstore in the Bourda Market. The manuscripts of his works are now in the possession of his widow.

The completed manuscripts, tucked away in drawers and trunks, are perhaps more significant in terms of the literary heritage, even in instances where the authors have not found it possible or wished to have these published. In this category one could mention the unpublished work on the El Dorado theme by J. T. Seymour, the father of A. J. Seymour, which was completed in 1924 (Seymour 1978 : 66), and a manuscript of a novel by Martin Carter, now in the poet's personal possession.

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The Guyanese-ness of Guyanese Writing

by JEFFREY ROBINSON

I should apologise for inflicting the word "Guyanese-ness" on the public but I can think of no bet'er way of expressing the same idea. Some years ago, I was asked by Mr. A. J. Seymour whether I thought there was such a thing as Guyanese Literature and, if so, what were its characteristics. I replied, fumbling for a word to describe our Literature, that it seemed strangely mystical. I should now prefer to say that there is, in the major works by Guyanese writers, a similarity of theme and attitude. The theme is the relationship between the mind and the world and between both of these, considered as a dialectic, and time. The attitude is one that renders these relationships not so much as philosophy or theory but rather as riddle or mystery.

The relationship between mind and landscape is often such that the latter functions as a mirror, becomes, in short, the ground of dreams. John Hearne has written of the Guyanese landscape that it is "one of the great primary landscapes of the world, and it can crush the mind like sleep. Like sleep, it inspires the dreams by which we record the progress of our waking life." Whether the ultimate source of this Literature of dreams is indeed landscape remains itself a mystery to me.

At any rate, the formal concomitant of such emphases, mind and world caught up in time in a way that brings perception itself into question, is a more or less self-conscious art. For if art is vision and if the premises or the possibility of vision must be questioned, then art must question itself. This, of course, is a modern, rather than a peculiarly Guyanese, process. As Roland Barthes puts it in *Writing Degree Zero*, "the ideological unity of the bourgeoisie gave rise to a single mode of writing . . . in the bourgeois periods (classical and romantic) literary form could not be divided because consciousness was not; whereas, as soon as the writer ceased to be a witness to the universal . . . his first gesture was to choose the commitment of his form by either accepting or rejecting the writing of his past. Classical writing therefore disintegrated and the whole of Literature from Flaubert to the present day, became the problematics of language."

However, it seems to me that the writer in the Third World must confront the problem in an even more acute form because the undivided consciousness, the ideology implicit in the literary and linguistic traditions he must enter, may not only seem flatly opposed to his own divided condition but may even be said to subsist upon it. For instance, as Wilson Harris has pointed out, the concept of the person as a closed or complete entity wholly constituted by the attributes of a given plane of a given society seems to have little to do with the condition of the slave or, by extension, the materially and culturally deprived man. Can one, in the Third World, consider the formal and thematic order of Pope without thinking of the imperial disorder that was its material underpinning and towards which, by the absoluteness of its exclusion of any such contradiction, it always seems to be gesturing?

It is at once comical and revealing that the best known poem in praise of Guyana, Walter McA. Lawrence's "O Beautiful Guyana", should issue from a poet who seems to be somewhere on the sea-wall, his back resolutely turned to most of the eighty three thousand square miles that are his ostensible subject, in rapt contemplation of the Atlantic Ocean. It is as if his absolute fidelity to a borrowed form drags up from his subconscious a content that undermines his patriotic intent by parodying both form and patriotism. To say this is not to complain that Lawrence was not several decades ahead of his time. The point is that form is not simply a container into which one can pour new thoughts. Also interesting is the unconscious subversiveness of the imagination; it is precisely in unconscious self-parody that the glimmer of an awareness of a problem of language or a problem of form may appear, ending the illusion of a perfect understanding between writer and reader based on their common acceptance of "universally valid" forms.

Martin Carter's **Poems of Succession** can be read as a meditation on the nature of language and cognition. The selections from **Poems of Resistance**, for the most part, belong to a tradition of public poetry which makes use of a rhetoric that assumes no gap between poet and audience. The later poems discover a gap between speaker and hearer, initially located in a specific social, political and historical context. In "Groaning in the Wilderness", the poet involved in a breakdown of community so complete that it entails the destruction of a social product, language, and thus of the humanity of the individuals in the broken community, finds himself barking. "A Mouth is always Muzzled" seems to me much less specific in its historical and political reference even though it is usually taken to be about the politics of Guyana and nothing else.

A close analysis of "A Mouth is always Muzzled" would show that the first stanza describes a breakdown first in speech and then in perception. In the case of speech, there is a movement from the self out into the world ending in disorder;

In the premises of the tongue
dwells the anarchy of the ear

The second movement is the reverse of this since it proceeds from the world to the self;

In the chaos of the vision
resolution of the purpose

In this case, there is a certain ambiguity; is it that the purpose orders chaos or that the purpose is founded, despite its "resolution", upon chaotic premises? The second stanza describes two movements; one movement is speech which goes from the self out into the world and the other is the processes, eating, by which part of the world enters the self and actually becomes "self";

But a mouth is always muzzled
by the food it eats to live.

The two movements result in a kind collision and in silence. The third stanza describes one movement from the world to the self with a benevolent—because man-made—interposition and one movement from the self into the world aided by human inventiveness;

Rain was the cause of roofs.
Birth was the cause of beds.

These are riddling statements that make the human powers of speech and cognition seem beset by difficulties everywhere in the environment. The final riddle grows out of this view of the human condition;

But life is the question asking
what is the way to die.

Greater than the demand for roofs and beds or, perhaps, subsuming all such demands is the need to live in such a way that the final absurdity, death, shall acquire meaning. The poem describes life more as a riddle than as a question, but then, says Carter in an earlier poem, "if these are riddles, riddles write themselves".

The order of time in the poems is frequently confused. Only the end of an experience can make complete sense of the experience ("only where our footprints end can tell/whether the journey was an old advance/or a new retreat") so that one lives "forward" and understands "backwards". This makes speech doubly difficult as time reveals new meanings ("So sudden and so hurting/is the bitten tongue of memory"). One normally bites one's tongue because something that lay in the future when one began to speak contradicts the intent. Carter has reversed the order of time by applying this to memory.

One poem brings together the question of the relation of self to world and the sense of time as running backwards in the order of cognition. It does so in the form of a dream-like experience. "About to Pass Me" presents the poet leaving a house (so that the experience of being in the house is in the past) and meeting himself approaching the house (when the experience of being in the house is in the future). One recognises that the house and the person addressed are important to the poet and that the dream-like experience expresses his own reluctance to leave. In other words, the contents of consciousness are being projected on to "reality" so as partly to displace it. The "practical" need to leave is seen in the poet leaving while the desire not to leave becomes the poet approaching. The double image is a curious balance of the pressure of internal and external or emotional and "practical" elements and also a balance of past and future in a dream where "faces that never lived stared at" the poet.

The poetry of Martin Carter undergoes a radical transformation after **Poems of Resistance**. This is usually explained wholly in terms of political disillusionment. Yet the consequences of so radical an exploration of the most basic premises of experience can only be a drastic alteration of form and a sort of difficulty best described as that of the riddle.

The art of Wilson Harris is rather more obviously based on the dream-like state. In **Palace of the Peacock**, the break between inner and outer worlds is represented, in part, by the relationship between the narrator, whose closed, spiritual eye is turned inward to a world of feeling, and the central character, Donne, whose seeing, material eye is turned outwards to the world of action. The literal journey into the interior of Guyana is the correlative of a spiritual journey to reverse this ancient "dissociation of sensibility". It is a journey into the past in the sense that the journey has been made before and the members of the crew are returning to the places where they died before in a "mixed futuristic order of events". Since the journey is a metaphor, it is possible to see all the characters as aspects of one character or, as Harris puts it, "the crew that every man mans in his inmost ship and theatre and mind". The novelist thus makes it clear that the tale is a kind of dream of a single mind. Indeed, I am told that the original title of the book was **The Dream of the Pilgrim**.

In **The Who'e Armour**, Harris describes a journey simultaneously into past and future. The hero, Cristo, during his stay in the wilderness, goes farther back into the past than the time of Noah and imagines himself a monkey swinging from a tree (the cavalier fusion of Darwin and the Bible is characteristic). He also hears of a glass factory which did not exist in Guyana at the time Harris wrote. Within this curious temporal order, landscape becomes a sort of mirror of Cristo's spiritual development. The same may be said of the landscape in **Palace of the Peacock**; the crew are actually journeying in pursuit of some Amerindian labourers, "the folk" who have the "only real devil of a title to the land". They eventually find themselves pursued instead although "the folk" never actually appear. The reason is that they are themselves "the folk" as soon as they choose to be and so to pursue the folk is to pursue themselves. Thus the land gives back the terror and oppression they bring to it.

Few writers in English have mounted as concerted an attack on the traditional form of the novel as Wilson Harris has done. The point of the exercise is not to be exotic but to find a form appropriate to a reality very different from the one that English nineteenth-century novelists lived in. I suspect that Harris underestimates both the power and the complexity of what he calls "the conventional mould" but his sensitivity to the implications of borrowed forms is probably justified.

Edgar Mittelholzer's experiments with leitmotifs and "telescopic objectivity" testify to his own, less systematic, interest in developing the form of the novel. In his novels, the dream state becomes the experience of the supernatural which, very often, mirrors the consciousness of the experiencing subject. In **A Morning at the Office**, a young woman thinking of having an affair, has her thigh caressed by a ghostly hand coming out of her desk. In **Sylvia**, the "brown jumbies" taunt the heroine with her own sexual repression. Sometimes the landscape seems to have a personality, as in **Of Trees and the Sea**. Mittelholzer's interest in the supernatural can thus be seen as part of his interest in abnormal states of consciousness that are capable, at least partly, of displacing reality.

In Mittelholzer's case, the question of time appears as a sense of the weight of history. He is said to have written the Kaywana trilogy partly to give Guyanese a sense of their own history. The inanimate objects that contain their past like an electric charge, the key in **A Morning at the Office**, the Dutchman's map in **My Bones and my Flute**, indicate a way of looking at history that is quite different from, say, V. S. Naipaul's history of "futility" or Edward Brathwaite's African Journey or the allegations of an absence of ruins. Mittelholzer repeatedly suggests that the past inheres in the present as a kind of potency released by human consciousness. This is not very different from the recurrence of the past in Harris's novels or from Martin Carter's poem "What for Now?".

The vision of the past as dream inherent in the present may also be seen in A. J. Seymour's well-known poem, "There Runs A Dream". The poem has been criticized for expressing "a romantic view of history". The poet's obvious distaste for the rather sinister forest and tangled vegetation and his equally obvious appreciation of the "trim dwellings" and broad fields are decidedly unromantic; no enthusiasm for untamed nature is allowed. However the vanished order persists mysteriously in the ancient symbol of time, the river, despite the anarchic jungle. The sense of mystery is conveyed by the "black waters" because a normally transparent element has become opaque and dark; the past persists as mystery and dream just as it does in the art of Mittelholzer, Harris and Carter.

Anancy-strategies in THE WHOLE ARMOUR

by JOYCE JONAS

A concept that is crucial to an understanding of Wilson Harris's art is that of liminality. Taken from the Latin *limen* (threshold), this term is used by anthropologists to denote the limbo which lies beyond a society's institutions and norms. Liminality is expressed symbolically in a variety of ways. In the realm of the religious it may be the shaman's trek into the wilderness in search of a vision that transcends society's concept of reality. In the secular, it occurs during times of carnival—when the fool becomes king, when sacred tenets of social order are mocked, and hierarchies are momentarily inverted. During rites of passage, liminality portrays that no-man's land to which persons positioned ambiguously **between** given states are relegated.

But whether it wears a tragic mask (as with the shaman) or a comic one (as with the fool or trickster of carnival), liminality is a ritualised expression of man's capacity to imagine something above and beyond experienced reality: it is, as Barbara Babcock-Abrahams so aptly puts it, a "tolerated margin of mess"¹ in which societies and individuals do their creative dreaming. Characterised by paradox and ambiguity, the liminal is a place **outside** our everyday conceptions—a vantage point from which we can see clearly the premises on which we have structured our cosmos, and can reflect on those constructs in ironic contemplation.

The liminal is situated "betwixt and between"² known structures. The shaman, for instance, enters a realm **between** the human and the spiritual, and the moment of carnival occurs in intervals **between** periods of structure. Similarly, in rites of passage, the initiate passes through an in-between stage where he is neither/nor. A bride on honeymoon, for instance, is neither a girl nor a wife. Further, in traditional societies, the neither/nor paradox is symbolically represented in a variety of ways: initiands are dressed in clothing that deprives them of sexual identity, or are dressed in shrouds to indicate their "death" to a former state; and ceremonial sacred images, half-beast/half-bird, half-bird/half-fish, suggest the limbo of incomplete metamorphosis.

Still more significant, for our purpose, is the liminal zone that lies at the meeting point of different cultures. In his seminal study of rites of passage, Belgian anthropologist Arnold van Gennep identified various inter-cultural meeting places that are neither-nor zones.³ Market places, battle fields, common hunting grounds and territorial boundaries are all regarded as sacred thresholds—crossroads guarded by the gods. Being in this limbo space "between two worlds" is precisely the experience of the West Indian, suspended as he is between the culture of his forebears and the imposed culture of Europe, yet exiled from both.

The paradox, though, of limbo, is that although it is the locus for the "dirt"⁴ that is swept out when society structures itself, it is also the place from which renewal of the society must come. Liminality, says Victor Turner, "may perhaps be regarded as the Nay to all positive structural assertions, but as in

some sense the source of them all, and more than that, as a realm of pure possibility whence novel configurations of ideas and relations may arise."⁵ It is this aspect of the liminal—its "pure possibility" that informs all of Wilson Harris's work: his preoccupation being with the creative potential lying at the interstices of structure. He asserts that the limbo or void of West Indian experience is a deprivation or dispossession **only** when viewed from a particular and arbitrary structured perspective. From a different vantage point, the loss and historylessness are transformed into a potential ground of original creativity and fulness.

Turning from anthropological discourse to Wilson Harris's aesthetic theories, we find the idea of liminality referred to constantly, and in a variety of images. Always, though, the common picture is of the artist filling empty spaces with a creation generated from his own substance. In his early volume, **Tradition, the Writer and Society** (1967), Harris identifies the role of the artist as shaman:

It is as if within his work he sets out again and again across a certain territory of primordial but broken recollection in search of a species of fiction.⁶

In the same passage, Harris speaks of entering "overlapping capacities of nature" to break through "the one-sidedness of self-sufficient social character." Here the artist is depicted as society's scapegoat, driven into a barren wilderness from which he must wrest some healing vision.

A later article⁷ draws together the concept of limbo with that of the mythic trickster Anancy. The spider, spinning in the interstices of structured premises, is developed into a symbol of folk creativity. His web fills the void between existing structures, turning deprivation into plenitude. Such "arts of the dispossessed" Harris sees as being of the utmost importance in a society moving from "a state of cramp to articulate a new growth." For an art that fills the interstructural void with richness is a "ground of accommodation, an art of creative co-existence, pointing away from apartheid and ghetto fixations."⁸

Situated as he is in the limbo-void of dispossession, yet converting this lack into a ground of creativity, the artist, Harris suggests in a third image, resembles the vodun dancer of Haitian culture. Harris's commentary on the statuesque poses of dancers in a state of trance demonstrates the way in which empty space is given shape by the body of the dancer—as if the dancer herself were the axis holding together the entire cosmos.⁹

Art in the Caribbean, then, must, like the vodun or limbo dancer, like the anancy-spider, and like the visionary shaman, give shape to the void—the liminal space that lies at the boundaries where cultures meet. The artist, according to Harris, is essentially the inhabitant of the margins—shaman, anancy-trickster, Idiot Nameless. Reflecting ironically on the partial structures and limited conceptions on which the social framework is premised, the artist leads the reader away from his preconceptions into the limbo-space of fiction—itsself a world outside of daily reality—to a liminal region where certainties melt,

where premises are challenged, where ambiguities and paradoxes jostle together in a fantastic carnival offering unlimited scope for the imaginative re-creation of our mental cosmos.

Carnival, the questing shaman, the fool or clown, and the figure of Anancy—all these and other supporting symbols of liminality are omnipresent in Harris's fiction. His racially-mixed character groupings represent the heterogeneity of the Caribbean and of modern society in general. The landscapes of his novels, too, especially of those set in Guyana, are landscapes in which boundaries are threatened by gargantuan forces: flood and erosion, eclipse and tidal movement, death and decay. Curiously, within this liminal world of threatened boundaries that Harris creates, each structured premise finds itself being mirrored. It is as if the boundary line defining the self is merely a mirror surface, and that the self has its being only by virtue of the shadowy non-self that it forms into an image of "the Other." Reflections (a key pun in Harris's work) occur at liminal meeting points, permitting us the self-knowledge that wounds yet can bring healing.

I have chosen **The Whole Armour** to illustrate the liminality discussed thus far because this novel is one of the easier roads of access to Harris's admittedly difficult corpus. The story is quickly told. Magda, a black prostitute in a Pomeroon village, seeks a way to save her son, Cristo, from being apprehended by the police for the alleged murder of a rival suitor to Sharon—a well-educated "lily-white" virgin living in the village. She asks the recluse Abram, one of her clients, to conceal the boy in the hut he occupies away from the village down by the shore. In an angry altercation with the youth, the old man suddenly collapses and dies and, while Cristo is off to seek Magda's advice, Abram's corpse is dragged into the jungle by a tiger. Magda, returning with Cristo, finds the mangled and rotting body, and insists that Cristo don Abram's clothes. Armed with her fiction that Cristo is dead and that Abram has gone to hunt the tiger in the jungle, Magda returns to the village and arranges a wake for her son. Cristo, meanwhile, has a dream-like experience in which he finds himself running in a long history of escaped slaves. Mortally wounded, he is healed by medicine men, and clothed in the skin of the marauding tiger. (The prosaic explanation is that he ran into a mock battle staged by a local Amerindian reservation during carnival festivities). Clothed in the tiger skin, Cristo returns to the village. There he is joined by Sharon, whom the villagers have dubbed a witch, and together they flee into the forest. Exiled from society, the two scapegoats experience a sense of inner wholeness, "communitas" with each other and with the society from which they spring, and a oneness with nature itself—all symbolised in a sexual union that must be one of the most lyrical moments in West Indian writing. Magda arrives, in great anxiety, urgently warning them to escape from the police, who, undecieved, are in search of Cristo. To his mother's horror, Cristo, whose new-found freedom far transcends the merely physical, decides to hand himself over to justice, leaving Sharon to bring forth the child she has conceived through his embrace.

This brief summary points to many aspects of the novel's liminality. The landscape images man's tenacious and tenuous hold on life, threatened on the one hand by the "violent and treacherous . . . erosive impact of the sullen seas"

(p. 34),¹⁰ and on the other by fears of "the visitation of the tiger . . . descending from the headwaters of the Venezuelan Cuyuni across the jungled Guiana watershed into the half-settled Pomeroon" (p. 37). Magda as prostitute, and Abram as recluse are both society's marginals, as are Cristo as criminal and Sharon as witch; while Magda's wake for Cristo places the action between the living and the dead, between fact and fiction (since Cristo is in reality, alive). Cristo himself fulfils the role of the mythic tricker or shaman. Symbols of his ambiguous status proliferate. He is both dead and alive, innocent and guilty; he is both man and tiger, both himself and every runaway fleeing before conquering forces. Murderer and lifegiver, devil and saviour, violent rapist and bridegroom of love, he embodies every dimension of the paradox which is human personality. His forty-day period in the wilderness is a shamanistic quest, and when he gets mixed up with the carnivalesque mock battle, he inhabits a liminal zone between dream and reality, between present and past. And, like the mythic shaman or trickster, he returns to society with healing for his people.

Fiction leads Cristo to spiritual reality, and indeed it is the nature of carnival to show the king his own face in the grotesque mask of the clown. Mirroring and reflections, then, are important aspects of the liminal. Magda's home, during the wake, is a landscape of inversions and shadowy reflections :

A single lantern was hanging behind her, dim, accentuating a wave of shadows crowding the house, still abstracts, they appeared at times cast up through the floor by the living souls that stopped and seethed again in the brilliant bottomyard under her feet. . . .

The lights suspended from the floor, over everyone's head, were intense fuel lamps unlike Magda's ancient upstairs illumination; and the tall stilts and wooden posts upholding the house sent stalwart confirming shadows to the water. (pp. 50-51).

In this passage, Harris, with great economy, transforms a common enough Guyanese setting—the "bottom house" beneath raised living quarters—into a mythic network of inverted images representing the mirror-reflection of the self creating its identity from the shadowy non-self reflected in the Other. Dominating this scene of reflections is the "compulsive oblique mirror of Magda's countenance": the face of the whore reflecting respectability's self-righteous image. In her gown of royal purple, Magda is the archetypical sacred prostitute.

It is in Magda's face that Sharon finds her reflection—Sharon, the virgin whose "purity" of image has been retained at the cost of three men's lives. Sharon stares into Magda's countenance "for all the world like a dark flickering terrible mirror reflecting every dim consciousness in the house" (p. 77). Watching the two women we realise the falsity of all polarising dualities; the traditional male "naming" of woman as "unattainable idol . . . on the highest blossom in the world or . . . compulsive fantastic whore with its black roots in the wilderness" (p. 87) is seen to be totally inadequate.

Stripped of her "virgin" image and cast out of society as a witch, Sharon moves, under Cristo's shamanistic tutelage, from misconception into a true

“conception.” In the embrace of Cristo the tiger, she receives the death wound that brings her to a truer dimension of life. She “felt she was suffocating and dying on a scaffold . . . crushed in the arms of a wild beast” (p. 84), but realises that she is really “in the arms of the universal bridegroom of love, pierced by all the ecstasy of constructive innocence” (p. 85).

Magda, unable to face the void and discover her own paradoxical nature, is repeatedly associated with the adjective “sculptured.” Because she refuses to be “broken”, she cannot share the vision that is available to Sharon and Cristo when they are wounded and exiled by society. Like other of the villagers, she is anxious to preserve her “armour” whole against any invasion of her identity—false though that person may be. Sharon and Cristo, though, take the perilous journey into the self. As they sit, retelling Cristo’s dream-encounter with his past, their world is filled with radiance. For, springing from their recounting of myths of origins,¹¹ the spirit of Anancy stretches a web of new relationships where before there had been a void :

The spider of dawn had appeared and the moon had far descended. The morning star spun its long frail threads to touch scattered islands of cloud in a delicate wheel whose radii and circumference rolled on every high peak, foothill and valley. (p. 98).

From the point of view of Magda’s “sculptured” structure, Sharon and Cristo are the dispossessed—eternal scapegoats and runaway slaves. **But** from the new vantage point of visionary relationships, symbolised by the spider’s web filling the void and so becoming itself the axis and hub of the world, they and the baby in Sharon’s womb are found to be the creators of a new world.

FOOTNOTES

¹Barbara Babcock-Abrahams, “‘A Tolerated Margin of Mess’: The Trickster and His Tales Reconsidered,” in *The Journal of the Folklore Institute*, Vol. 11 (1975), pp. 147-86. Ms Abrahams borrows her title from Aldous Huxley.

²The title of Chapter IV in Victor Turner’s study of symbolic ritual, *The Forest of Symbols* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967).

³Arnold van Gennep, *Rites of Passage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), pp. 15-20.

⁴See Mary Douglas’s study of taboo entitled *Purity and Danger* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966). Ms Douglas observes that “our pollution behaviour is the reaction which condemns any object or idea likely to confuse or contradict cherished classifications.”

⁵Turner, *Forest of Symbols*, p. 97.

⁶Wilson Harris, *Tradition, the Writer and Society* (London: New Beacon Publications, 1967).

⁷Wilson Harris, “History, Fable and Myth in the Caribbean and the Guianas,” in *Anagogic Qualities of Literature*, ed. Joseph Strelka (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1971).

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 122.

⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 126-28.

¹⁰Wilson Harris, *The Whole Armour* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1973) p. 34. All subsequent references are to this edition.

¹¹Mircea Eliade discusses the potency of retelling myths of origin in his *Myth and Reality* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963).

Taster : RECENT GUYANESE WRITING FROM THE U.K.

by STEWART BROWN

Roy A. K. Heath, *The Murderer*, Flamingo/Fontana Paperbacks, pp. 190, £1.95, paperback.

Roy A. K. Heath, *Orealla*, Alison & Busby, pp. 255, £8.95., hardback.

Wilson Harris, *Carnival*, Faber & Faber, pp. 172, £10.95., hardback.

David Dabydeen, *Slave Song*, Dangaroo Press, Pinds Hus, Geding Sovj 21, 8381 Mundelstrup, Denmark. 72pp. £2.95 pb.

Grace Nichols, *The Fat Black Woman's Poems*, Virago Press, London, 64 pp. £2.95. pb.

Grace Nichols, *i is a long memoried woman*, Karnak House, 300 Westbourne Park Road, London W11 1EH, 80pp. unpriced.

John Agard, *Limbo Dancer in Dark Glasses*, Greenheart Press, c/o 30 Abergavenny Road, Lewes, East Sussex BN7 1SN 51pp. no price.

James Berry, Ed. *News for Babylon; the Chatto Book of Westindian-British Poetry*, Chatto & Windus, 212 pp., £4.95 pb.

The recent crop of important works by Guyanese writers exiled in the UK constitutes a rich literary harvest; this brief review constitutes just a taster.

It is interesting to speculate on influences on a writer's development. With Roy Heath, perhaps the most widely read Guyanese author, one can perhaps discern the shadowy presence of Edgar Mittelholzer haunting his style and concerns. Certainly the hero of Mittelholzer's classic study of a psychotic, *The Piling of Clouds*, is a forebear of Galton, the central character in Heath's prize winning novel, recently re-issued in this paperback edition, *The Murderer*. What is so disturbing about Galton is his ordinariness; his claustrophobic upbringing, his adolescent hangs-ups about sex, his social unease—all are familiar enough. It is the shock of such mundane pressures producing, by a kind of inevitable logic, the tortured soul Galton becomes that so haunts the reader of this justly acclaimed novel.

Ben, the key figure in Roy Heath's latest novel *Orealla* is also driven, by a compound of deep psychic hurts, to commit murder. But this novel perhaps owes as much to Wilson Harris as to Mittelholzer, contrasting as it does the communal, spiritual and moral values of traditional Amerindian life—represented by the idea of Orealla, a village in the far bush which Ben's "buck" comrade Carl asserts to be the last outpost of his people's traditional culture—with the crass, petty, vain intrigues of Georgetown society in the 1930's. Ben is a complex character deeply embroiled in emotional traumas with Tina, his model but barren wife, and Mabel his fiery, passionate mistress. In a passage which is a trigger to all the subsequent events of the novel and is typical of Roy Heath's dark evocations of character, Ben is impelled by a fundamental need to assert his separate, free identity;

He had to do some evil deed, just one, as an epitaph to his old criminal life, before the

women appeared from nowhere to domesticate
him like a sheep or a hog or a dog wrenched
from its freedom on the streets and alleyways . . .

Ben is possessed; his inability to reconcile his self-image to the lot fate has assigned him culminates in a startling dreamtrial sequence which is the real climax of this disturbing and compelling novel.

Wilson Harris has written a new novel of his own, and like most of his previous work it seems beyond influences, an unparaphrasable expression of Harris's unique and idiosyncratic talent. Readers of the first issue of the revived **Kyk-Over-AI** (no. 30) will have read an extract from the novel which provides a far better taster of the book than I can give here. Essentially it develops the idea of Carnival as "the terror of dying, the bliss of reciprocal penetration of masks" through a typically Harrisonian psycho-drama which intrigues, enthralls and, at times, exasperates. For me Wilson Harris's work has become more approachable, easier to read, in the magical-realist tradition of works by other South American writers like Marquez and Borges rather than in the Caribbean tradition of an essentially socio-realist approach. His work is certainly an 'acquired taste'; perhaps, like other exquisite dishes, only really appreciated by the connoisseur.

Guyanese poets have been winning prizes all over the place in recent years. Grace Nichols won the Commonwealth Poetry Prize for her brilliant sequence **i is a long memoried woman** in 1983. Edward Kamau Brathwaite is certainly an influence discernible in both the style and the concern of this her-story of the Caribbean experience, but Grace Nichols's work is imbued with her own particular sense of gender-hurt. There is a distinctly sensual quality in much of the writing, as in the excellent **Sugar Cane**,

He cast his shadow
to the earth

the wind is
his only mistress

I hear them
moving
in rustling tones

She shakes
his hard reserve

smoothing
stroking
caressing
all his length
shamelessly

A truncated version of **i is a long memoried woman** is included in **The Fat Black Woman's Poems** but although it selects the stronger individual poems in the sequence it loses the "pout" and long suffering weariness that the full

sequence evokes so powerfully. **The Fat Black Woman's Poems** is a treasure of a book all the same. The title sequence locates the heritage of the "long memoried woman" in the self assured persona of a 'fully rounded' contemporary heroine. She knows herself, knows her place—in every sense—and knows what she wants. A black advocate of "fat is a feminist issue" she's nobody's stereotype of femininity and she "ain't no Jemima", she

curses in Swahili/Yoruba
and nation language under her breathing

at a world that must learn to accommodate **her**. The other sections of the collection are made up of short poems whose characteristic tone is nostalgic for

a backyard
where the sun reaches down
mangoes fall to the ground
politicians turn cruel crowns

and poignant images of that life from the "long memory" like

those women
sweeping in the childish rivers
of my eyes
and the fish slipping
like eels
through their laughing thighs

Grace Nichols's language is like those fish, lithe, shining, **life** sustaining. David Dabydeen's 'creole' is much rawer, as unrefined as the sugar that dominated the lives of those for whom it was/is the language of self. David Dabydeen, in a scholarly and lucid introduction to the fifteen poems that make up **Slave Song**—the 1984 winner of the Commonwealth Poetry Prize—asserts that the 'vulgarity' of the language reflects

the vulgarity of their way of life. There is little grace, peace, politeness in their lives, only a lot of cane . . . The language is angry, crude, energetic. The cane cutter chopping away at the crops bursts out in a spate of obscene words, a natural gush from the gut, like fresh faeces. It's hard to put two words together in creole without swearing. Words are spat out from the mouth like live squibs, not pronounced with elocution.

Slave Song employs that language brilliantly to convey the harshness of the cane-cutters'—and their women's—lives.

Wuk, nuttin bu wuk
Maan noon an night nuttin bu wuk
Booker own me patacake
Booker own me pickni.
Pain, nuttin bu pain.
Waan million tons 'ne acre cane.

O since me baan—juk! juk! juk!
 So sun in me eye like taan
 So Booker saach deep in me flesh
 Kase Booker own me rass
 An Booker own me cutlass—
 Bu me dun cuss . . . Gaad leh me no cuss no mo!

(Song of the Creole Gang Woman)

A graduate of the 'University of Hunger' speaks? Such languages makes no concession to the metropolitan reader of poetry and for that reason, perhaps, the poems are followed by 'translations' into standard English and a commentary that contextualises the drama of each individual poem as the introduction sets the scene for the sequence as a whole. Though I am glad to have all the information contained in these glosses I have some reservations about all this apparatus—but only to the extent that they **distract** from the poems themselves—begin to neutralise or domesticate the anger that is live in the language itself.

John Agard won the Casa de las Americas prize for his **Man to Pan** sequence in 1982. **Limbo Dancer in Dark Glasses** collects a group of more recent poems which all explore the metaphor of the limbo dancer as the symbol of the West Indian **survivor**, somehow keeping his identity and his dignity while bending over backwards to avoid the perils of a hostile world where "stick is the whip/and the deck is slavery" as Brathwaite puts it. John Agard acknowledges the sparking influence of Brathwaite and Wilson Harris in making him "aware of the limbo dance/slavery connection."

The poems are characteristically ironic, full of puns and John Agard's wry, black—in both senses—humour. He is a celebrated performer of his own work but unlike much of the recent wave of performance rants these subtle, deceptively simple poems don't **depend** on the personality of the performer for their effect. However, because they are intended for performance many of the best poems are quite long and difficult to effectively quote from but the concise 'Once' has all the hallmarks of Agard's wit and style,

Once they gave a smile
 & called me ethnic

once they looked amazed
 & called me kinetic

once they applauded
 & called me magic

now they say get out from under there
 we know you're hiding under that stick
 come out now or we'll shoot you hear

Other poems are less restrained in their political commentary, though never teeter into polemic. A poem like 'Come from that Window Child', dedicated to Walter Rodney's widow, recalls Martin Carter's 'This is the Dark Time My Love' in the lyrical poignancy of its critique

Come from that window child
to live for truth ain't no easy fight
when some believe power is their right

Come from that window child
a bomb blow up daddy car tonight
but daddy words still burning bright

Come from that window child
tonight you turn a man before your time
tonight you turn a man before your time

That echo in the last line of "when a city of clerks/turn a city of men" from Carter's 'Black Friday 1962' reinforces the comparison. John Agard is a worthy inheritor of that mantle.

Guyanese born poets are well represented in James Berry's impressive anthology of poetry written by authors whose roots are in the Caribbean but who have lived substantially in the UK. Perhaps the most interesting new writer in **News for Babylon** is Frederick d'Aguiar who grew up in Guyana but is presently studying in the UK. Many of d'Aguiar's poems utilise folk forms and a language live with the authentic tone and rhythms of Guyanese speech to comment on aspects of Caribbean history and its people's present condition. The character 'Old Mama Dot' dramatises that concern in vivid poems like 'Doctor Mama Dot'

She measures string from navel
To each nipple in turn;
Where the string is shortest
I am knotted in pain. She kneads
Deep into my belly, as if to drive
The devil out of my enforced fasting.

The bush boiled to a green
Alluvium, I must drink
In one headback slake,
For the fevers to subside
And a return to bouncing around.

Word comes that Chatto are to publish a full collection of Frederick d'Aguiar's work this summer. My tip for the next Commonwealth Prize.

TRADITION AND CHANGE IN MUSIC IN GUYANA AND THE WEST INDIES.

by OLIVIA AHYOUNG

Introduction :

The opinions expressed in this article have been formed from some fifteen to twenty years of private and formal music teaching, workshops, radio broadcasts, and currently teacher training, mainly in Guyana. References to the West Indies are centred on Trinidad, Barbados and Jamaica, which I feel are sufficiently representative of certain musical characteristics in the region.

The cultural traditions of any people or country are almost inevitably tied up with other aspects of their community life, and the West Indies is no exception. Despite its position on the northern coast of the continent of South America, Guyana has always been culturally linked with the West Indies, which has experienced a confluence of cultures (British, Spanish, Dutch, French, African, Amerindian and Indian) brought about by its diverse history.

In the colonial past here in Guyana, from among the six races which comprise our communities, the British made the strongest contribution to the music and culture of the people. The music of this small elite group enjoyed both a superior and respected position, and represented status and social position. This was easily achieved because this small elite group ruled the land. They used every means to promote their music as being superior, and desirable, and to underline the belief that if anyone wanted to achieve some measure of respectability in the society they had to adopt their cultural values. The result of all this was that a snob attitude was created among those of us who inherited this background and had the opportunity of "classical" music training. Generations of young people were taught and are still being taught the art of piano playing in preparation for the grade and diploma examinations of the Royal Schools and Trinity College of Music. They helped to create an audience of music lovers who go to hear performances based on the classical repertoire, but to this day they have remained a minority number. Classical concerts were and continue to be an elite affair, for the average Guyanese or West Indian is not familiar enough with classical repertoire to appreciate it. To the minority who attended these concerts the vast majority was considered "uncultured", because they had no desire to listen to this type of music, which really related to very little in their everyday experience. The average West Indian could not be concerned with the aesthetic value of music, music existing for its own sake and beauty. Because of his background music for him served a functional purpose. One reacted to it. It was therefore not very natural for him to sit quietly throughout a four movement (section) work lasting about twenty or more minutes without wanting to respond after every movement. Up until some years ago, this was common practice, but in recent years audiences have become more educated in their responses. Although the number of concert-goers remains small, a greater cross-section of the public is involved. This is due to the fact that 1) radio in Guyana and television in the West Indies have made people a little more familiar with this type of music, and 2) the region has produced performers of an interna-

tional standard with whom our audiences are familiar and therefore want to support. In the process, some of them learnt to like "classical music", but this European style of music continues to have interest and relevance for only a small percentage of the people. It can never be considered as "music of the people".

Folk Music

On the other hand, many of the peoples who were brought to live and work in the West Indian regions, came from cultures where music had not only reached a very high standard of development, but was also functional, being tied in with work, welfare and worship. To these people, music was inextricably bound up with their lives, and they continued its practice (song, dance and drumming) despite the fact that it was proclaimed savage and barbaric by law. This view relegated it to a position where it had to be practised underground. This "music of the peoples" was of an oral tradition, so many streams of ethnic music entered and blossomed into a rich and varied body of folk music. Used as a medium of expression it was rapidly assimilated, becoming an integral part of daily life. In Guyana, the pioneer in this field has been Vesta Lowe, who in the mid-fifties had been a rural youth instructor in the Agricultural Department. She graduated from Tuskegee University, U.S.A. and on her return to Guyana began collecting the Boat Songs, Work Songs, Que-Que and Cumfa rhythms of the hinterland and rural districts, from the inhabitants of these areas. She proceeded to popularise these songs by presenting them in choral form through the Dawson's Music Lovers Club, and the Vesta Lowe Choir, at concerts given throughout the coastal region. As a result, audiences became aware of this aspect of Guyanese culture. This was further enhanced by the publication of some of these songs in a little booklet entitled **Guyana Sings**, dedicated to the 4H clubs of the then British Guiana. These songs were generally sung in creolese, and performed by people mainly of African descent. Within the West Indian region, these songs are very similar in character, to the extent that a few are claimed by more than one territory. However, there is a marked difference between the West Indian and European-style folk-song, especially as regards rhythm.

But traditional folk music no longer flourishes. Technological advance has made rural communities less isolated, and as a result more urbanised. The atmosphere in which folk music thrives hardly exists any more. What exists is a situation where much of the folk art is staged in an attempt to rekindle the dying interest in this art form. But removed from its natural habitat, folk art tends to lose some of its natural flavour. I suppose however that this is one way of preserving the art. An example of this is the Masquerade of Guyana, which is going through a very lean period. During her stay in Guyana to establish a very successful School of Dance, Haitian ballerina Lavinia Williams noted and collected the steps of the Masquerade, and later choreographed them, and others have followed suit.

So with art music appealing to a very small percentage of the population, and folk music no longer having the same effect on the masses of the people, the time is possibly ripe for the establishment of a truly West Indian style of music.

Composition

Every country has some specific method of making its own music. In Guyana there are a handful of people who have written music (mainly songs, with a few piano compositions and a smattering of larger scale works). Among the much older generation, the majority of whom are now deceased, were names like Chapman-Edwards, Martin Sperry, Nichols, Dummett, Koulen, DeWeever, and Smellie. A worthwhile contribution in this field was the compositions of Major S. W. Henwood, a former Director of Music, who encouraged the members of the then "Militia Band" to compose. The composers included Harry Mayers, Alan Briggs, and Clem Nichols whose "Dear Demerara" is still performed in the concert repertoire.

The art of composition was really fostered through the Guyana Music Festival first held in 1952. A special composition class was established to encourage musical settings to Guyanese poems, and this later gave rise to two collections of Guyanese national songs. (Contemporary composers who are writing national and patriotic songs in a style which reflects our West Indian culture are Hilton Hemerding, George Noel, Eddie Hooper and Olivia Ahyoung, as well as a number of others who use the pop idiom as a means of expression). Among earlier composers of national songs are two ministers of religion — Rev. Hawley Bryant who wrote the words and music of "Song of Guyana's children", and Rev. Mortimer Cossou who wrote "My Native Land". Notable contributions have come from the pen of Percy Loncke, Walter Franker, Cecile Nobrega and Horace Taitt, Hugh Sam, Valerie Rodway, Bill Pilgrim, and R. C. G. Potter, the composer of our National Anthem. The latter three are among our most prolific composers of songs, with Potter's works reflecting the Moravian church music tradition. None of the composers listed above can be considered to be professional, by which I mean one who can make a living by composing large scale works like a symphony or concerto. The only Guyanese who approached this standard was Philip Pilgrim whose musical setting of A. J. Seymour's "Legend of Kaieteur" stands out as a monument among local and West Indian works. Originally intended for orchestra, the work was written for three pianos, two soloists and a choir of 100 voices. It was performed in this way in 1944 and in 1970, but for the 1972 Carifesta performance, the instrumental music was rewritten by Bill Pilgrim for two pianos and steel orchestra. As far as is known, it was the first time that a steel orchestra was used in an extended work of its kind, and served to point up the need for our indigenous instruments to be fully recognised and used in non-traditional ways.

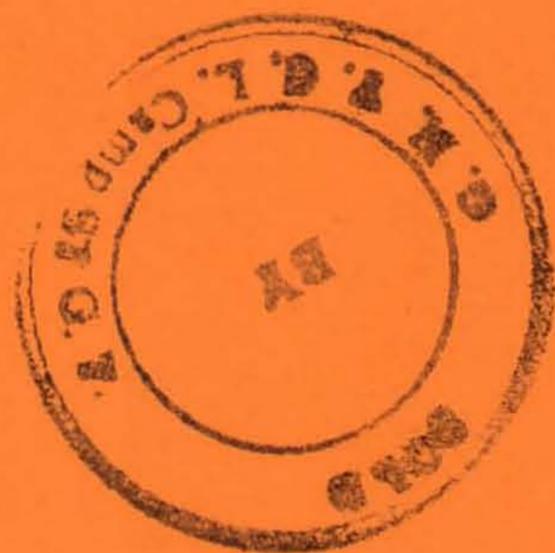
But despite the fact that composers like George Noel, Eddie Hooper and Hilton Hemerding have shown an understanding of the need for our national songs to reflect a more indigenous style, and have done so in their compositions, it is in the field of pop music in the West Indies that we have begun to see what can be regarded as a local and indigenous pop style. The leader in this field has been Jamaica, where the style known as reggae, an outgrowth of the Rastafarian songs, has immense popular appeal, and is beginning to get wide recognition and acceptance outside of Jamaica. It has developed out of the basic rhythms and style of the main type of Jamaican folk music—the Mento. A

similar situation exists in Barbados and Trinidad where a style known as "Dub Music", the chief practitioner of whom is Gabby has been enjoying immense popular appeal. This music is characterised by a heavy driving repetitious beat, over which is sung a series of nonsense syllables, but unlike Jamaica, it cannot be safely assumed that this style arose out of their folk music. In Trinidad alongside the calypso, has developed the SOCA or Soul Calypso,, which shows influences of black American soul music, while utilising the soca beat that shows the East Indian influence. This is not a definitive description since much debate still ensues about this new development in the calypso song tradition which became the craze of the 1978 carnival.

But despite its popular appeal, this type of music tends to get monotonous after a while, for it does not embody a wide range of musical ideas. I think this is partly due to the fact that many of the growing number of composers of this type of music have had little if any formal musical training. Guyana's experiments in the field of pop have resulted in the creation of two beats—the "BHOOM" and the "LOPI", both of which enjoyed brief spells of popularity—one in the 60's and the other in the 70's. In each case it was boosted by one person, but never caught on in popularity.

Change is inevitable, and many more changes will have to be entertained before a definitive West Indian style of music is created. The answer I feel is with the composers. Each group has to change his attitude to the other. By this I mean that the classical trained musician must be cognisant of the rich folk heritage and the current pop idiom, while the pop compose should see the need to equip himself with the composite techniques of classical music. Together they can create a style which would not only be able to express a wider range of ideas than is currently possible, but also have relevance and appeal to the masses of West Indians, the majority of whom are young people.

Music we are told is a universal language. It must therefore speak to the West Indian in a meaningful way, while having universal appeal. This then should be the goal of the West Indian composer.



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