

Paloma Mohamed  
**DUENNE**  
A Play

WINNER OF THE 1998 GUYANA PRIZE FOR LITERATURE

There is a character in Caribbean folk mythology known as the “Duenne”. This is the spirit of a child which first appears to humans as an abandoned “sack.” It attracts attention to itself by emitting the wail of a new born baby. If a curious passerby happens to merely touch the sack, the spirit of the dead child attaches itself firmly upon the back or shoulders of the hapless person and has to be carried around for the rest of that person’s life, becoming heavier and heavier until the person breaks under the burden and dies or until an exorcism is done and both the spirit and the person are freed.

*Duenne* draws upon the richness of this myth and other such myths as well as the folk in an examination of the concept of “birth / life.” How do we come into being? At what point do we become “alive?” What is our purpose in life? What if any, is our relationship with the creator?

But apart from these age old universal issues, *Duenne* examines positions that arise with any woman who becomes pregnant - issues of motherhood, of selfhood and choice on the physical, psychical and spiritual realms in the cycle of life.

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