

**BEACONS OF EXCELLENCE:
THE EDGAR MITTELHOLZER
MEMORIAL LECTURES**

VOLUME 2: 1975-1984

**Edited and with an Introduction
by Andrew O. Lindsay**

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The Caribbean Press

Fifth Series, 1975

**Racial Identity and Individual
Consciousness in the Caribbean
Novel**

Michael Gilkes

INTRODUCTION

There is a deeply significant setting to these lectures. As we in Guyana and the Caribbean move from out of the shadow of the past into the blossoming age of our political independence, we realise more and more clearly that what has been one of the unforgivable legacies of our history is the damage done to our view and appreciation of ourselves. When we disentangle those fashionable twins of politics and economics, we find that the economic system that generates and gives power to people with money (what we know as capitalism) enables them to attain widespread dominion over other peoples and other countries in the name of utilising and developing the natural resources found there (the political system that we know as imperialism).

Slavery is of course one of the most intense forms of imperialism and the people of the Caribbean must be among the most definitely damaged, most malformed human fruit of slavery anywhere in history. Since the quest for identity is accompanied by a quest for wholeness of personality, Dr Gilkes subjects a leading Caribbean novelist to the relentless analysis of inner and unconscious motivations. The tools of analysis are psychological and the lecturer points to the images of inferiority and lack of worth in his mind, and the sense of damage wrought by the rejection by the parent culture which had provided him with the tools of language and its built-in values (*"you gave me language and my profit on it is I know how to curse"*). Dr Gilkes discusses part of the psychological content of the Mittelholzer novels, and because the creative process comes from below the grasp of man's consciousness, he picks out from the unconscious harvest of Mittelholzer's recollections the major fluid images which typify a fragmented Caribbean consciousness and the bundle of emotional contradictions and inconsistencies that are involved.

Mittelholzer was an unusual example of Caribbean creature – heir to the fractured regional consciousness but

blessed with a creative spirit and with abundant energy and determination and the ability to use literary form to give effect to his images and ideas. He becomes the prototype and supreme example of the Caribbean citizen who has preserved in his own personality some of the more significant values of Western civilisation, through his love of music, painting, poetry and philosophy, and so has used his broken mirrors to let his readers see the inheritance of our society, and very important, what can be effected by private art to show us our predicament.

He therefore shows us the road along which we must travel to heal ourselves as a people. He has mirrored our society and given great pleasure and enjoyment to millions in the process. Dr Gilkes has made a sterling contribution to the Mittelholzer corpus, assisting us in our understanding of the novels examined carefully one by one, to seek in the character-analysis signs of the divided consciousness, or signs of the attempt of the physician to heal himself. He has had access to valuable unpublished materials in the possession of the author's widow and made skilful use of these additions to literary history.

A. J. SEYMOUR
September 3, 1975

I THE DIVIDED CONSCIOUSNESS

The problem of Racial and Cultural Heritage, the 'Search for Identity', has become something of a cliché in the discussion of Caribbean Literature. Indeed, the work of certain writers has often been praised or censured almost entirely on the basis of his racial or cultural stance arising out of a 'crisis of identity'. Thus we are told that the work of a John Hearne, or a V. S. Naipaul, or a Derek Walcott shows a 'dangerous' degree of Europe-orientation, or that V. S. Reid and Roger Mais embody an unresolved 'crisis of identity'. That George Lamming's work has, as its main impulse, a right-minded, peasant awareness, while the work of Wilson Harris is too individual, esoteric, cerebral. The possibility of a deeper response to cultural and racial identity, a response which is neither a revolt against, nor a passive acceptance of, a divisive condition, is too often denied, or missed, by commentators on the Caribbean novel. Revolt and acceptance, the twin products of our racial and cultural schizophrenia, tend with remarkable rapidity to become stock responses and as such prone to stasis. As Derek Walcott puts it in *What the Twilight Says*:

Once we have lost our wish to be white we develop a longing to become black, and those two may be different, but are still careers.¹

The 'search for identity', as I see it, comes from an awareness of a 'Division of Consciousness' – the result of racial, cultural and psychic disorientation – and is largely the product of a colonial Caribbean condition of fortuitous racial and cultural admixture, where no background of long established habit, no social, political, religious or cultural traditions exist to give a sense of individual stability. The Caribbean writer's need for roots within the context of his own landscape as well as for the cultured, metropolitan atmosphere in which his art can grow and flower, is a dilemma

which still exists and makes possible the apparent paradox in which the successful Caribbean writers – with few exceptions – live and work abroad, mainly in Britain and North America, but quarry their material from within a Caribbean consciousness.

This division of consciousness is a peculiarly Caribbean theme, the main leitmotif in the Caribbean novel, and one that is capable of a much deeper and altogether more meaningful formulation than ‘a search for identity’ suggests. It is the writer’s awareness of a racial and cultural split and his attempt, by examining his relationships to the environment, to the natural and historical condition of the Caribbean, and to himself, to define and to preserve the integrity of the psyche against the constant danger of disintegration; a threat presented by outer, historical and social, as well as by inner, psychological forces. And this is an enterprise, a theme, which is finally universal. It is the theme which may be seen as a major impulse in the Romantic and symbolist movements with their insistence on imagination as an associative art – an impulse towards unity of Being. It is the principle which underpins the psychological theories of ego-dissociation from Freud and Jung through to the work of modern psychologists like Erich Fromm, W. R. D. Fairbairn, R. D. Laing and Anthony Storr.

There can be no doubt that the question of racial and cultural identity is a central theme in the Caribbean novel: the lack of a continuous, coherent cultural and racial background – what Denis Williams has called the lack of “*the assurance of the indwelling racial ancestor*”² – drives the writer to ask over and over again “*who am I?*” And the astonishing rise of the Caribbean novel (already a rich field, a New World which we too often take for granted, but which has already begun to attract literary ‘explorers’) is clearly related in a very special way to the Caribbean writers’ sense of rootlessness, and the consequent need for a racial and cultural ‘pedigree’.

Although the attempt in the novel, to assert a positive Caribbean way of life – a Caribbean identity and culture – began with earlier writers like Claude McKay, C. L. R James and Alfred Mendes in the 1930s, it was Edgar Mittelholzer who first raised the question of the role of heredity itself: the phenomenon of racial admixture and cultural disorientation which is beneath the Caribbean writer’s deep psychological

need to define racial and cultural identity in an attempt to heal a division of consciousness.

Denis Williams, in the 1969 Mittelholzer lectures, discussing the obsession with blood and ancestry in the literature of the Caribbean, and of the arts of Guyana in particular, makes the following statement:

That on the one hand the problem has been stated by Mittelholzer and on the other, as I believe, resolved by Wilson Harris seems to me proof enough of our concern with it.³

Taking up this hint, I shall begin these lectures with Mittelholzer and end them with Wilson Harris, although antithetical in impact and style (each representing an approach to fiction directly opposed to the other) who are, in fact, the opposite elements of a dichotomy. That their work illustrates the negative and positive aspects of the racial and cultural schizophrenia of the Caribbean. Both Mittelholzer and Harris deserve close critical attention in their own right; but a parallel examination reveals similarities and differences which bring the question of division of consciousness into sharper focus. In their work the two main directions of Caribbean writing are more clearly seen. One, pioneered by Mittelholzer, looking outward towards a conflict with a 'parent' culture, and the other, looking inward, seeking in its own complex inheritance the raw material for new and original growth. The fact that Mittelholzer's work reflects a psychological imbalance – the result of a preoccupation with racial identity – has been demonstrated by a number of commentators, among them Frank Birbalsingh, Joyce Sparer and Denis Williams. Mittelholzer's own awareness of this imbalance, however, and his attempt to come to terms with it in his art, remain to be examined and documented, as does Harris's attempt to create an 'associative' art aimed at healing the breach in the individual consciousness of Caribbean Man.

The act of writing novels certainly meant a great deal more to Edgar Mittelholzer than merely the pursuit of what he called "*a pleasant career*". The title of the unpublished part of his autobiography, of which *A Swarthy Boy* is the first part, is in the possession of Mrs Jacqueline Ives, his second wife. It

was also a way of challenging society's laws, or righting wrongs in both a social and personal context, and, above all, a means of defining and justifying himself as an individual. *A Morning at the Office* (1950) was written with social purpose in mind. In a letter quoted by Mr A. J. Seymour in the inaugural lectures, the author had stated his aim:

To debunk certain fallacies held by people in northern regions about the people in the W.I. especially the fallacy that makes us out to be a backward half-civilised people.

A swarthy first child of fair-skinned parents, Edgar was a great disappointment to his father, whose resentment instilled in the child both a sense of having been deeply wronged by Nature, and an inordinate pride in his German blood. There can be little doubt that the father's negrophobia communicated itself powerfully to the child; for throughout his life Edgar Mittelholzer bore his sense of genetic injury like a mark of Cain. In much the same way Hubertus van Groenwegel, the central character in *The Harrowing of Hubertus* (1954), the second book of the *Kaywana* trilogy, bears the stigma of "bad blood":

It is the mad beast in me. It defeats my restraint when I least expect it to. I'm sure I have inherited it from my mother [...] Some mysterious intuition informed me of it – since I was a boy. Evil, evil.⁴

Mittelholzer consciously identified himself with the European side of his ancestry, and his work reflects his consistent, determined effort to be accepted by a European 'parent stock' and to reject the title of 'West Indian' with its legacy of racial admixture and 'impurity'. His desire to become "rich and famous by writing novels for the people of Britain to read" as he puts it in *A Pleasant Career* was, at a deeper level, the wish to be recognised and accepted as an individual in his right by a European 'parent'.

The young Mittelholzer, a 'swarthy boy' brought up in a household dominated by women, repressed and frequently chastised – even in his teens – who felt in the home that "my

masculinity was perpetually under attack", grew up with a major obsession: that strength of will was a prerequisite for individual happiness, and that his 'Germanic', European blood represented this 'strength' while his 'West Indian' blood revealed a 'weakness'. One thinks of Mittelholzer's hatred of the criminal mind and his bitter invective against the liberal, and therefore 'weak', attitudes of society. For Mittelholzer, strength and weakness, good and evil, were qualities unalterably fixed at birth. By relating these qualities to an exclusively genetic source, the question of one's own individual responsibility is neatly dodged and 'blood' becomes an acceptable external agent of control. In *A Swarthy Boy* we read:

People, I am convinced, are born what they are. Environment and 'traumatic' experience cannot change character. Put an honest, decent individual in a sewer and he will emerge honest and decent. Under the best conditions, a neurotic will remain a neurotic.⁵

This is a view only slightly less alarming than that of the controversial psychologist, H. J. Eysenck, whose theories include the idea that, on the basis of childhood introversion/extroversion potential, certain genetic types are "*predestined to become criminals and delinquents*".⁶

But then Mittelholzer regarded psychologists as either cranks or charlatans. The irrevocable influence of 'blood' reappears in novel after novel, running through the work like a frenzied leitmotif. Paul Mankay, hero of *Uncle Paul*, says:

It's blood. Environment only adds surface colour to our characters. What we are now we were from the day of our birth.⁷

Faced with the inner conflict between his German and Jewish blood, Mankay experiences a crisis of identity:

I hate, I admire, I hate, I admire. I get confused wondering who I really am.⁸

The 'war' in his blood produces in Mankay a division of consciousness:

You asked if I'm not happy. Well this is why I'm not. My split-ness. My two-ness. *Meine Zweideutigkeit*.⁹

This awareness of a "two-ness", the result of an early apprehension of genetic accident, is clearly Mittelholzer's view of the Caribbean condition of racial admixture; and any critical examination of Mittelholzer's work, it seems to me, would have to take into account the central importance of this psychic disunity which is embodied in his characters, since it is precisely here that the tension in the novels is generated. Frank Birbalsingh, in his excellent article on Mittelholzer,¹⁰ does not, however, see this as a focal point in the work. By assuming a "hidden conflict" which he finds "not in itself significant", in looking for moral schemata, selecting social reform, sexual love, and transcendentalism as the most important themes, he misses the deeper significance of what he calls "Mittelholzer's irrepressible tension". Looked at from the point of view of the author's preoccupation with "two-ness", however, the perversities of Mittelholzer's characters and the apparent lack of a coherent and social or moral theory are seen to constitute a very clear pattern in which Duality of Being is the main theme, and the reintegration of the psyche the chief impulse. And so, the hero of *Uncle Paul*, asked about his aim in life, replies, as Mittelholzer himself may have replied, "I've found the parts that are me, but my job now is to fit them together and make them stick."

In 1965, when his fortunes had declined and, he had tried, unsuccessfully, to find a publisher for *The Aloneness of Mrs Chatham* (1965), he was offered publication on condition that he agreed to omit certain passages which the publishers felt would be obnoxious to readers. Rather than alter his novel, Mittelholzer refused the offer. He endured fourteen rejections before he finally succeeded in getting the book published. His comment recorded in *A Pleasant Career*, on this bitter struggle for publication is curiously self-deceived:

Since the publication of *The Piling of Clouds*, I have lived under an ever-darkening cloud pall of opprobrium. The respectability I earned with *A Morning at the Office* and *Shadows Move Among Them* has long since vanished. My new

novel, due for publication in a few weeks' time, *The Aloneness of Mrs Chatham*, was turned away by fourteen publishers before it was eventually accepted by Anthony Gibbs and Phillips last September [...] But that's the kind of life to expect when you decide to make writing a pleasant career, and persist in this resolve even though you get caught in the blistering crossfire of a literary world that you have alienated.

This comment obscures the fact, that, far from being an attempt merely to pursue a "*pleasant career*", the writing of this novel was a deliberate embodying of his own extreme right-wing views on politics, sex, crime and English society, intended as a broadside against what he called "*the cloying syrup of Welfare-State ease*" and the "*over-ripe rottenness*" of English society, and written from a deep sense of disillusionment. England, it would appear, was finally too liberal, too left-wing to serve as the stern, Victorian parent-image so important to Mittelholzer. To change any part of the novel would have been a falsification of his own attitudes, and the deletion of any passage would have constituted "*emasculatation*" (a word Mittelholzer himself uses in the book's sarcastic dedication to the publishers and agents who refused to handle it). Acceptance by the British publishing world had to be on his terms; his individuality needed to be maintained at all costs.

A study of Mittelholzer's work reveals, in fact, a good deal more than a quest for personal satisfaction of "*a pleasant career*". One also encounters what Denis Williams has called "*a question of the relationship to the ancestor*": conscious attitudes which – often the result of unconscious motives – were ultimately responsible for the nature, and frequently for the content, of his work.

The sense of genetic damage which drove the writer, attuned to an Old World culture, to seek acceptance by a European parent body; finally widened an inherent psychic division into an irreparable gulf. Mittelholzer's outward-looking, Europe-orientated attitude to culture and racial pedigrees, acting upon his own inner awareness of a 'mulatto' condition, worsened a division of consciousness which is clearly and fatally reflected in his work. If we read Mittelholzer's novels

for their social or political wisdom, or expect to find in them an artistic embodying of coherent, explicit moral theories, then the effect of the work – with only a few exceptions – is extremely disappointing. Crude sensationalism, sexual titillation, morbidity and a certain marked facility in retailing bizarre incidents and in describing disturbed mental states are the characteristics which are most easily distinguishable, and which give to much of his work an undeniably popular, but sub-literary value. His commentators have therefore (and quite properly) tended to highlight the pioneering nature of his sheer energy and dedication to writing. As A. J. Seymour has shown us, the importance of Mittelholzer's work lies in its reflection of the artist's integrity and professionalism – qualities which are rare indeed, and which are without doubt among Mittelholzer's real virtues – and that if there is one important message that his work has for us, it is one that *"includes the value of strength, energy and persistence and the quality of dedication"*. Edward Brathwaite refers to Mittelholzer, indeed, sums him up as *"Guyana's finest storyteller"* and *"the historical novelist of Guyana"*. Frank Birbalsingh compares Mittelholzer's pioneering attempt with that of the nineteenth-century American novelist, Charles Brockden Brown.

And the comparison is, in many respects, extremely apt: I quote Donald Ringo from his book on Brown:

[...] all his works are imperfect [...] any interpretation [...] therefore, that seeks to resolve the critical disagreement his works have engendered must first go back to the man himself [...] for the study of his early life is most pertinent to the discussion of his art.¹¹

And this is Warner Berthoff, another American critic:

The main biographical impression he makes on us is, after all, of the energy with which he staked out a vocation in literature and applied himself to it.¹²

These remarks are about Brown, but could equally be made about Mittelholzer. Now the triviality of Mittelholzer's art *qua*

art cannot be denied, but the importance of his psychological themes takes his work out of the realm of the merely trivial and parochial. For when Mittelholzer's art is seen as an attempt at a deeper, psychological level, to resolve a body/mind split, a division of consciousness of which the author was himself aware, and which he often deliberately chose as his main theme, then the novels do not only become very interesting indeed, but also serve to embody, in a comprehensive yet fairly accessible form, one important aspect of the development of West Indian writing as a whole.

The theme of psychic disorientation is central, for example, in the work of Caribbean writers as important, as accomplished and as different as George Lamming and V. S. Naipaul in particular, psychic wholeness is presented as a continually retreating vision, always just out of reach. When this psychic disorientation is seen to be largely the result of the colonial Caribbean condition of fortuitous racial and cultural admixture and the accompanying lack of an "*indwelling racial ancestor*", then the importance of Mittelholzer's work in the literature of the Caribbean becomes evident.

In refusing to accept the possibility that environmental and sociological factors (such as his authoritarian upbringing with its vigorous suppression of spontaneity) might influence character development; and by attributing the formation of personality entirely to genetic inheritance, Mittelholzer was unconsciously reinforcing a personal, self-destructive myth, that of racial 'impurity' as an indication of the lack of psychic integrity. As Denis Williams puts it in the 1969 lectures:

Attuned to an Old World culture, one has come to view one's own condition as mongrel, one's own being, in fact, the most self-annihilating of fallacies; this is that the mongrel, lacking 'purity' of blood, *ipso facto* also lacks the virtues inherent in purity of blood: cultural integrity, wholeness of soul.

Mittelholzer sedulously developed what he regarded as the 'Germanic' side of his nature (with its insistence on strict routine, discipline and strength of will) cultivating a taste for the pessimistic philosophy of Schopenhauer and for the heroic, 'Teutonic' resonances of Wagner's music, nourishing

what was to become a highly oppressive super-ego. Such 'one-sidedness' of character, with its repression of the unconscious, leads, according to C. G. Jung:

[...] to attempt at mutual repression, and if one of the opposing forces is successfully repressed a dislocation ensues, a splitting of the personality, or disunion with oneself. The stage is then set for a neurosis.

Even as a young man, Mittelholzer was aware of a deep disharmony within himself and was constantly on his guard against melancholia and morbidity. The insistent note of despair in his novels is already present in the diaries of 1932/36: "*A very sombre week. The artificial necessity of living.*"¹³ is a typical entry. He read widely and tried different 'philosophies' (rather like a hypochondriac trying out different medicines) in an attempt to cure his tendency towards melancholia, but apparently with little success. Incidentally, Mittelholzer is represented by most of his commentators as influenced mainly by his childhood reading of Sexton Blake stories and 'Boys' Weeklies' (a view which his comments in *A Swarthy Boy* would seem to support); but he did, in fact, read very widely, as his diaries show. Between 1932 and 1938, for example, his reading (an average of a book a week) includes works by Hemingway, Hardy, Samuel Butler, Conrad, Shaw, Wilde, Zola, Voltaire, Dostoevsky, Goethe and Shakespeare. The later diaries (those of 1948, 1955, 1959 and 1960 are also extant) suggest that he kept up his reading. The entry on 14 March 1936 reads "*First attack of morbidity since institution of new philosophy has fizzled out*" The frequent use of battle-imagery (a prominent feature in his novels: even as a child he found war-games extraordinarily fascinating) seems also to reflect the deeper, internal conflict of opposing tendencies. Mittelholzer was perpetually 'at war' with his emotional urges. Even an apparently normal physical attraction to the opposite sex was treated as an 'infiltration' by the 'Enemy'. "*The impulses of the flesh returned,*" runs the entry for 8 October, 1932, "*Mastered them up to present,*" and on the last day of that year, the entry reads:

Year's Retrospect: The going is still rough and the combat fierce. The big shell from the gun of Eros burst, adding to the general whirl of the melee. Much destruction of illusions. And many acid burnings within. Much more sophisticated about women and life as a whole, much more of a philosopher.

In spite of the 'new philosophy', depression returned (aggravated by a hopeless love-affair), culminating in his attempted suicide on the night of 14 May, 1936.

This then, is the pattern which seems to have run through Mittelholzer's life, and it is also the pattern that informs the lives of almost all the principal characters in his novels; the attempt and failure to reintegrate, by effort of will, an inherited psychic disunity leading, in turn, to despair and an obsession with death. In his first published novel, *Corentyne Thunder* (1941), one sees this 'divided consciousness' already at work. Geoffrey Weldon, the son of a wealthy mulatto (but European-looking) plantation owner and a Guyanese-Indian peasant, is torn between loyalty to his father, who wants him to go abroad to study, and his love for the Corentyne coast and Kattree, an Indian peasant girl to whom he is related. Geoffrey finds it difficult to choose between these two 'opposing' qualities, and the dark prophecy which he makes to Kattree: "*One day [...] I'm going to commit suicide, Kattree, and people will wonder why*"¹⁴ is the *cri de coeur* of a man fatally divided within himself: a cry that echoes throughout Mittelholzer's work. The fact that Geoffrey's equivocal attitude towards racial and cultural origins reflects the author's own 'split' is acknowledged in the publisher's foreword to the first edition:

Edgar Mittelholzer, the author of this novel, is a half-caste of mixed English, French, German and Negro blood. All his principal characters are half-castes, and they are therefore presented with that intimacy of view which comes from self-revelation.

From the very beginning, then, a biographical approach to Mittelholzer's fiction is indicated. *Corentyne Thunder* is important, therefore, not only because it is Mittelholzer's first published novel (and also the first novel to deal with Guyanese

peasant life) but also because it is the first, though muted, appearance in Mittelholzer's fiction (in the character of Geoffrey Weldon) of the theme of division of consciousness – one of the main themes in the novel. There are other important themes in the book, but the main impulse is towards a dichotomy. Two ways of life, two opposing attitudes, are constantly juxtaposed: Urban is contrasted with rural, 'European' with 'West Indian', 'foreign' with 'local', 'intellectual' with 'physical'. This is, in turn, related to the theme of cultural and psychic division which informs most of Mittelholzer's work.

In fact, the character of Geoffrey, and the significance of his relationship with Kattree, provide what is perhaps the most interesting focal point in the novel, for he and Kattree are made to represent the two parts of what later becomes a familiar dichotomy in Mittelholzer's work: Intellect/Spirituality *versus* Emotion/Sensuality. Kattree and her sister, Beena, are the embodiment of natural beauty and goodness, as yet untainted by the outside world. They both reflect the unselfconscious openness of the land itself. Geoffrey is strongly attracted to the natural, physical vitality of Kattree and the Corentyne, but at the same time longs for the outer world of ambition and culture. He tells her:

Your sort of life is the sort of life I want deep in me, but, of course, my ambitious and artistic longings upset everything [...] I'd begin to dream of the cultured world beyond all this savannah and water, of London and symphony concerts [...]¹⁵

This is, of course, the familiar, hackneyed theme of the conflict between Nature and Nurture, with Kattree in the role of Noble Savage; but it is also a foreshadowing of what is now a much discussed and well documented problem: the Caribbean artist's crisis of identity. That the simple need for access to publishing houses was not by any means the most important reason for the exodus of writers which began shortly after Mittelholzer's departure for England in 1948, is attested to by the comments of the writers themselves.

In a radio broadcast in 1963 between a group of Commonwealth writers on the subject of the overseas artist living on London

(one of the *Caribbean Voices* broadcasts) Wilson Harris gave this as his reason for 'self-exile':

I came from Guiana because I had to gain a certain distance from the stage where I wanted to set these novels – the novels of the *Guiana Quartet* [...] I like the English landscape [...] I find that this is an enormous relief after the harsh South American jungle [...] I mean it's stimulating at one level but it's also – it has this claustrophobic character.

Jan Carew, in another, earlier *Caribbean Voices* discussion, had rejected the idea of a "return to one's roots [...] Africa or India or China or whatever land one's ancestors came from," since "this, as you know, is very difficult in the West Indian melting pot," and in the same discussion, Denis Williams suggested a solution:

Certainly, the way out of this dilemma, it seems to me, doesn't lie in turning back, but in facing the future – not in the absolute rejection of Europe, but in knowing Europe better [...] once we succeed in doing this, then we can accept or reject what we will from this civilisation.

What most of the Caribbean writers seemed to have in common, in the nineteen fifties and early sixties at any rate, was the desire to 'get out', as Lamming puts it in *The Pleasures of Exile*; to leave the Caribbean so as to avoid the atrophy of creative talent which remaining might bring about. In *The Middle Passage* V. S. Naipaul's nightmare, recalled by him after a return visit to Trinidad in 1960:

[...] for many years afterwards in England, falling asleep in bed-sitters with the electric fire on, I had been awakened by the nightmare that I was back in tropical Trinidad.

is a later expression of the same inner panic felt by Mittelholzer on his return to his homeland in 1956. He too records in *With a Carib Eye*, a recurring nightmare: the feeling of being 'trapped' by one's origins:

And then, with a shudder, I would awake to find myself in Bagshot, Surrey, or in Montreal, Canada, or on the Maxwell Coast of Barbados, and the relief would be tremendous.

George Lamming in a talk delivered at the 1st International Conference of Negro Writers and Artists, held in Paris in 1956, had already recognised the dilemma of the Negro/Caribbean writer as a manifestation of a more universal malaise:

To speak of the Negro writer is therefore to speak of a problem of Man [...] of man's direct inner experience of something missing [...] a condition which is essentially [...] tragic.

and it is this sense of incompleteness, of "*something missing*" which tortures young Geoffrey Weldon, as it had tortured his creator. In an early poem entitled '**For Me – the Backyard**' Mittelholzer expresses his disgust of polite collar-and-tie society which he rejects for the simple, more natural life of the Folk:

[...] And why should I even spurn
These little ragged clumps of fern
And the rickety latrine standing near
The old grey-trunked Tamarind!
Assuredly for me – the native backyard
Where bajak ants, without hypocrisy, troop by
And no gentlemen politely smile and lie.

In '**October Seventh**', however, a sense of the inadequacy of the simple, 'passional' life is clear:

Yes in me I am troubled
By some hungry want
That stirs the hollow of me
And will haunt
Will haunt me long after
This night with my passion
This night that is warm and stilled
Hath been brushed aside

In my usual fashion
With a smile and a chuckle
– And my empty laughter.

His short story **Sorrow Dam and Mr Millbank** is also centred around the conflict between a ‘civilised’, urban way of life, and the more natural: physical life of the peasants. The timorous bank clerk Mr Millbank – a Prufrock figure who, on his nightly walks along “*Sorrow Dam*” on the New Amsterdam east coast, is attracted more and more to the simple, and (as he imagines) quietly happy life of the poor East Indian estate workers and finally takes his fate into his own hands. The tongue-in-cheek story ends on a wry but pathetic note:

And Mr Millbank, despite all that was said, despite all that everyone did to dissuade him, went and lived in the little cottage he had built. And he still lives there and works hard and wades barefooted through the rain to bring in his cows. Like any of the peasants. Himself a peasant. The silly madman.

Geoffry’s crisis of identity, like Mr Millbank’s, embodies this split between two ways of life, but reveals at the same time another, more disturbing aspect – an inability to reconcile intellectual and physical urges. Against Kattree’s unaffected sexuality his own guilt-ridden condition appears neurotic:

There are so many things one would like to root oneself away from but just can’t. Where sex is concerned especially. I can’t help myself when it comes to sex. I’m like a piece of wood moving towards the centre of a whirlpool [...] In a way, the thought of sex irritates me. It seems so petty and contemptible. And yet it attracts me such a terrific lot that I can’t do without it. That’s what makes me want to commit suicide sometimes, you see.¹⁶

A clear case, one suspects, of what D. H. Lawrence called “*sex in the head.*” In fact it is this aspect of Geoffry’s inner division which predominates and which is ultimately responsible for his cynicism and rootlessness. In Geoffry

Weldon we recognise the prototype of the virile Mittelholzer hero whose fear of spiritual atrophy leads to deliberate sexual repression and a preoccupation with occult science and Eastern mysticism in an attempt to enter “*into the pure spirit of the Higher Plane.*” The need to find a solution to the conflict between Flesh and Spirit is the driving force behind Gregory Hawke of *Shadows Move Among Them* (1951), Hubertus Van Groenwegel of *The Harrowing of Hubertus* (1954), Mr Holme of *The Weather in Middenshot* (1952). Brian Liddard of *A Tinkling in the Twilight* (1959), Garvin Jilkington and Lilli Friedlander of *The Jilkington Drama* (1965) and Sheila Chatham of *The Aloneness of Mrs Chatham* (1965). Geoffrey Weldon is only the first of many Mittelholzer characters who, faced with an almost irreconcilable, inner division of consciousness, are drawn “*like a piece of wood moving towards the centre of a whirlpool.*”

The dark, menacing clouds over the Corentyne reappear as the gathering storm in the mind of the psychopath, Charles Pruthick (*The Piling of Clouds*, 1961) as surely as the lightning that “*flashed sharply*” in Beena’s soul is followed by the later, internal thunder which draws together Richard and Lindy and almost precipitates a tragedy in *Thunder Returning*, (1961) in which the hero, Richard Lehrer, can be seen as a more mature, more tortured Geoffrey Weldon, now finally alienated from the land of his birth and from himself. The cry of the goat sucker, which in *Corentyne Thunder* is an integral but unremarkable feature of the landscape:

[...]and once a goat sucker, lying flat on the road a little way ahead, said: “who-you?” and flew off in swift silence.¹⁷

is seen, in retrospect, as the first, perhaps unconscious, stirring of the theme of psychic division: the *Zweideutigkeit* or ‘two-ness’ felt by the hero of *Uncle Paul* (1963), and, indeed, by Mittelholzer himself. The intolerable, inner conflict of the individual – the division of consciousness which afflicts the young Geoffrey Weldon, forcing him to consider suicide as the only possible solution – is, then, the most notable (and the most disturbed) theme in *Corentyne Thunder*, and finally emerges as the central theme of the later novels.

The list of Mittelholzer characters who, like Geoffrey Weldon, come to regard suicide as a means of solving an intolerable inner conflict is a long one. It includes the lonely, brooding Harry Hoolcharan of the short story, 'We know not whom to mourn',¹⁸ Bertie Dowden and Sylvia Russell of *The Life and Death of Sylvia* (1953), Princess Esmerelda in *The Weather Family* (1958), Brian Liddard of *A Tinkling in the Twilight* (1959), Charles Pruthick of *The Piling of Clouds* (1961), all the main characters in *The Wounded and the Worried* (1962), and Garvin Jilkington of *The Jilkington Drama* (1965).

The problem common to most of these characters appears to be a psychic malaise: a conflict of opposing tendencies which expresses itself, essentially, as a struggle between what Schopenhauer called "*the will to live*" and the Freudian death wish. Indeed, the urge to self-destruction appears to be an important strand in Caribbean writing. One thinks of the divided Jake of Roger Mais's *Black Lightning*, of the general drift of Naipaul's characters towards an almost inevitable personal disintegration. (One feels, for instance, that for a character like Ralph Singh in *The Mimic Men*, suicide would be both an honourable and a logical decision). In St Omer's *A Room on the Hill*, the drifting John Lestrade finds in the suicide of his best friend, Stephen, a mirroring of his own death-infected view of life. Andrew Salkey's Catullus Kelly, in spite of his self-awareness, his spirited and intelligent, often hilarious parody of the role of the virile black stud, ends up almost suicidally alienated from himself and others on his return to Jamaica. "*A wicked waste o' brains*" as old Erasmus says, "*a mos' vicious 'ting to 'appen to a man with a honour degree.*" Even Sam Selvon's 'lonelies' manage to stay sane only because of their (and their author's) sustaining sense of humour. In Mittelholzer's work we see this constant tension between a life-instinct and a death-wish.

It is characteristic of Mittelholzer's writing that images of darkness and death are often juxtaposed with images of light and vitality and that often even while death by suicide is being considered, there is a paradoxical insistence on the beauty and joy of life. In *A Tinkling in the Twilight* (1959), for example, Brian Liddard, considering suicide, says:

I'd take a trip out into the country, and sit under a tree where no one could see me - on a fine day, of course. (p. 149) [...]. I would have to do it before the autumn came - in a lonely, bee-humming corner of Brameley Common, wild-flower perfume in the air, and the tinkle of the brook not too far. (p. 192).

In *The Life and Death of Sylvia* (1953), descriptions of Guyana's east coast under rain:

Here or there intruder weeds, fresh and green, stood unbowed, resisting the pelting drops. On occasional islets she could discern long-legged grey gauldings or white ibises, perched like elegant hieroglyphics against the uncertain background of drab wetness. (p. 77).

or of the city of Georgetown at dawn:

The patch of sky over the house-tops and the trees [...] glowed with a soft pinkness .. The cabbage palms stood out stern, jet-black against the clouds, but the shorter trees seemed to absorb some of the colour-of the dawn; [...] . the house-tops, too, glistened, the galvanised iron cool-looking and wet in the drizzly air. The rain was visible as flimsy threads [...] (p. 113).

have a tender, almost lyrical quality which is in sharp contrast to the oppressive, squalid circumstances in which the young heroine is forced to live, and finally to die.

The Life and Death of Sylvia (1953) is an early novel. The novel, or a version of it, had already been completed by 1948. Mittelholzer's diary entry of 29 July of that year reads: "*Rec'd letter from Macmillan's (rejected Sylvia).*" Here Mittelholzer attempts to portray the complex life of the colonial middle-class to which he himself belonged; but the considerable creative effort is finally undermined by an inherent, inner division. For Sylvia, like her creator, is born with a genetic handicap - "*black blood*" - and her tragic end is eventually traceable to this 'tainted' beginning. She has to fight against an unjust society as well as against her own conflicting desires and her vitality and good looks are constantly counterpointed by the ugliness and sterility of the society in

which she lives. The novel is an indictment of the New Amsterdam and Georgetown societies through which Sylvia moves as a tragic heroine. But Sylvia's tragedy is also a projection of the author's preoccupation with the psychological effects of genetic 'taint'; and the real tragedy lies, not so much in society's cruel rejection of the heroine, as in her own destructive psychic disorientation, the result of inherited characteristics: the Caribbean condition of racial admixture. Sylvia is not a tragic figure simply because she is an innocent victim of a coercive, philistine society; but also because (and this is the more significant reason) of her own irreconcilable inner division; her mulatto inheritance. There is a conflict within the heroine between her two 'selves'; an image that comes to mind when she thinks of her guilty, incestuous feeling for her brother David:

[...] she saw herself as two beings – one ugly and deformed, the other lovely and striving to be good and clean. (p. 163).

She is torn between an obsessive desire for sexual experience and an instinctive chastity. Sylvia seems, as a matter of fact, to be suffering from a form of mulatto angst, and her psychological identification with 'whiteness' reveals itself as a sexual preference. She has early identified with her English father, developing an oedipal fixation; and when he dies, her brother David becomes the object of her sexual approval:

David was fair-complexioned, too - not pinkish as her father had been. David's complexion was sallowish. Still, in certain lights, and especially after exertion when the blood was in his face, he could have passed for pure white. He showed every sign, too, of being masculine as her father. The warmth in her increased, spread through her limbs. Her heart bent faster. The impulse to run her fingers through his hair burned in her. (p. 143).

To Sylvia David's 'whiteness' is clearly indivisible from (perhaps responsible for) his sexual acceptability, and although she is attracted to the Portuguese boy, Benson Riego, who looms larger in her affections after David runs away to sea, her feeling for him is less wholehearted:

She knew that he attracted her only physically. Her body responded to him – but her spirit regarded him with a sneer. (p. 276).

Sylvia is not a racial snob (she likes Jack Sampson, a Negro friend who has “*an attractive laugh*”), but she unconsciously ascribes a racial significance to her father’s ‘superiority’ over her mother. Charlotte Russell, Sylvia’s mother, is certainly a selfish, a shallow individual. Nevertheless, Sylvia’s revulsion carries unmistakably racial overtones:

“Yes, *who is dat?*” said Charlotte into the ‘phone. Her dark Negro-Indian face looked really stupid, thought Sylvia. Stupid and weak. No character at all. (p. 131).

The novel is intended, basically, as an exposé of the hypocrisy and intrigue in a typical, colonial, West Indian society in the early- and mid-twentieth century. But Sylvia struggles as much against an oppressive, racially divided society as against her own ambiguous feelings – the familiar dualism of Spirit and Flesh – so that while, at one level, the book is an indictment of the class-structured, colour-based hierarchy of the colony (one of the novel’s strengths is the way in which cumulative, entirely convincing detail is used to evoke this atmosphere); at a deeper, psychological level, operating, as it were, through the heroine’s ‘divided consciousness’, the novel manages to be both a celebration and a denial of sexuality. For Sylvia, as for Samuel Richardson’s Clarissa, sex holds a terrible fascination, and like Miss Harlowe, she is at once attracted and repelled in her attempt to escape the strictures of an unjust society by a sexuality which she again and again equates with death. Sylvia, a more explicit heroine, regards her “*good luscious virgin body*” (p. 240) almost as a kind of sexual prize and treasure to be surrendered only at the expense of personal integrity or as a sacrifice in death. In her mind the thought of sexual intercourse is almost always accompanied by visions of rape or violence. But it is here that the similarity between Sylvia and Richardson’s heroine, Clarissa, ends. For, although they share an equivocal attitude to sex (which appears to them as both a

threat and an enticement), Sylvia's mental equilibrium is already adversely affected by a genetic taint: the mulatto condition. It is interesting to notice that the Creole heroine of Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea*¹⁹ also exhibits a lack of psychic balance which is related to a genetic trait. As Antoinette's faithful black servant, Christophine, says to Rochester (unconsciously implying that the real trouble lies within the Caribbean psyche): "*She is a Creole girl, and she have the sun in her.*" (p. 130). One is reminded of Wilson Harris's remark that the sun should be regarded as "*an adversary – one of two antagonistic principles – night and day – and only an association of these two principles provides release [...] the sun therefore is a great reality in the West Indian world in a more terrible sense than the poet realises when he exclaims: 'Sun's in my blood'.*"²⁰

Antoinette Cosway is as everyone says a "*white nigger*" and, according to her coloured half-brother "*is no girl to marry with the bad blood she have from both sides.*" "*Poisoned with the blood of both,*" as Derek Walcott might say. Antoinette, like Sylvia (although Jean Rhys's heroine is not, in a strictly racial sense, a 'mixed' Creole) is a type of the Creole Woman – a figure who "*unites in one flesh the opposing European and African poles*"²¹: an ethnic and cultural polarity which is also seen to be a moral polarity, involving questions of right and wrong, good and evil, strength and weakness.

It is significant that the unpublished *Angela Vimiero*, written as a sequel to *Corentyne Thunder*, reveals close similarities with Sylvia. Angela, a young Portuguese girl who grows up faced with all the frustrations and prejudices of Guyanese colonial society and suffers a traumatic emotional crisis, does not give in to a death wish (although she does consider suicide) but recovers her balance. For her, Clive Bell's *Civilization*, Schopenhauer's philosophy and the music of Wagner act as positive aids to will-power; and since there is never any question of an inherited strain of 'weakness' (i.e., 'black blood'), she is spared the total futility of Sylvia. Her habit of introspection – the taking of regular, psychological inventories of herself – is shared by the high-principled English heroine, Sheila Chatham of *The Aloneness of Mrs Chatham* (1965) – another beleaguered, but more mature, individual who wrestles with a hostile world and gains

a balance between spirit and flesh, strength and weakness. It is worth noting that Mrs Chatham also has an undamaged racial pedigree. Angela, who like Geoffry Weldon of *Corentyne Thunder* has been brought up in the countryside and feels a sense of kinship with the land, is also attracted to the world of “*reflection and education*” (p. 259); and the novel is a detailed account of her attempt to solve the conflicts between nature and nurture, material and spiritual, strength and weakness, an attempt which, for Sylvia, proves fruitless but is allowed, in Angela’s case, to have good hopes of success. Angela, happily insulated from the trauma of genetic ‘taint’, gradually learns to come to terms with a hopelessly dualistic Universe.

The idea of the individual’s need to achieve a healthy emotional balance so as to establish “*sympathetic rapport with the rest of mankind*”, the theme of *Angela Vimiero* is the truly creative universal theme, which, so often bedevilled in Mittelholzer’s work by the peculiar nature of the author’s own obsession with genetic ‘taint’, is never really given the central place it deserves. For this reason, Mittelholzer’s attempts at a creative art never quite survive the undermining effect of the psychic disorientation – the ‘two-ness’ – which was always present in the author’s own divided consciousness.

II THE ASSOCIATIVE ATTEMPT

It is generally accepted that the *Kaywana* Trilogy is Mittelholzer's most outstanding work. His *magnum opus*. A work which is certainly a great landmark: a Guyanese epic. This view, however, received an important qualification in the 1969 Lectures, when Denis Williams noted that, while not the greatest work ever written by a Guyanese, it was "*supremely the one which, for this nation, had to be written*". Williams was thereby highlighting the psychological and archetypal, rather than the artistic value of the work. For the progress through the trilogy of the ancestral 'blood' of the van Groenwegels reflects Mittelholzer's enduring preoccupation with 'two-ness' and the need for psychic integration. The pattern which evolves may be summarised as follows: an inherited strain of 'bad blood' produces an inner division (strong/weak, spiritual/sensual) which, if unchecked, leads to degeneracy and the death-wish; but, if resisted, can be channelled and redirected to good ends. The novel's historical framework serves mainly as a vehicle for the author's real concern with what is, in effect, a personal and psychological malaise; and Mittelholzer projects on to the event of the Guyanese past with its burden of violence and sexual guilt, his own sense of an inner conflict of loyalties. Part African slave, part white slave-owner, Mittelholzer deliberately fragments his personality, as it were, allowing these two conflicting elements of his psyche to act out their opposition to each other in terms of strength *versus* weakness or (in Hubertus's case) spirit *versus* flesh.

It is remarkable how closely Mittelholzer's embodiment, in the *Kaywana* novels, of a conflict between 'strong' and 'weak' elements reflects modern psychological views on the importance of patriarchal and matriarchal principles in society. According to Erich Fromm, (invoking Bachofen's theory of *Das Mutterrecht*: 'Mother Right' or 'The Maternal Law') since "*the principle of matriarchy is that of universality, while the patriarchal system is that of restrictions*"; a blending of both is needed for a full and 'sane' life, because:

If they are opposed to each other, the matriarchal principle manifests itself in motherly over-indulgence and infantilization of the child, preventing its full maturity; fatherly authority becomes harsh domination and control, based on the child's fear and feelings of guilt.²²

In other words, a situation develops in which the natural quality of each principle becomes exaggerated or perverted and a radical opposition between 'strength' and 'weakness' ensues. Any excessive bias towards either principle is equally undesirable, for, as Fromm puts it, "*A viable and progressive solution lies only in a new synthesis of the opposites [...]*"

Mittelholzer's twin themes, therefore, like his characterisation of Dirk and Graham van Groenwegel as 'strong' and 'weak', contribute an artistic rendering (whether conscious or unconscious) of this psychological theory: that a balanced union of the strong/male and weak/female principles alone can bring about psychic and social health. Mittelholzer's own awareness of inner conflict between the 'male' and 'female' aspects of his personality: "*Greensleeves weaving through the Sword motive from The Ring*" as he puts it in *A Swarthy Boy*, would certainly seem to have provided the background to his lasting obsession with 'strength' and 'weakness'.

The Harrowing of Hubertus, the central novel of the trilogy, is central in another sense. In it, Mittelholzer devotes himself to a study of the character of his hero. Hubertus, as he wrote in a letter to Mr A. J. Seymour (quoted in the 1968 Lectures) "*is a projection of a facet of my personality.*" And Hubertus is keenly aware that he is not an integrated being, that he suffers from a division of consciousness:

There were times when Hubertus believed that he possessed another self over which he had no control. It caused him to do and say things he would normally have hesitated to do and say. It sprang surprises on him. Yet he knew that he approved of this self; he did not regret its presence. (p. 17).

This suggests a psychological approach and prepares the reader for the low-keyed, introspective theme of self-discovery, Hubertus's awareness of an unpredictable, inner 'self' which he accepts as a necessary counterpart of his

outward, ego- personality is, in itself, an indication of psychic health. This is the 'inner voice' which makes its first appearance in the unpublished *Angela Vimiero* and which, representing the Unconscious Self, becomes less and less audible in the later work. By his conscious approval of this 'submerged' self, Hubertus apparently chooses the hard path of self-integration, the danger of which lies in the 'swamping' nature of the Unconscious. Superficially, his struggle is simply between 'low urges' and 'high principles', between flesh and spirit; but at a deeper level, it is also the conflict between the Ego and the Unconscious; and Hubertus's 'harrowing' carries overtones of a universal, archetypal significance. According to C. G. Jung, the 'inner voice';

[...]make us conscious of the evil from which the whole community is suffering, whether it be the nation or the whole human race. But it presents this evil in an individual form, so that one might at first suppose it to be only an individual characteristic. [...] But if we can succumb only in part, and if by self-assertion the ego can save itself from being completely swallowed, then it can assimilate the voice [...] ²³

Hubertus's 'harrowing' can be regarded as an 'individualised' form of the general guilt of the community of slave-owners and of the van Groenwegels in particular. Certainly the quotation from Jung might serve almost as a summary of Hubertus's attempt at self-knowledge. He does "*succumb only in part*" to his wilful, unpredictable 'inner self', but avoids the danger of psychic disorientation and manages to achieve a precarious balance between his opposed 'selves'. In fact, Hubertus's ultimate humanism – "*You ask about God. Sometimes, my boy, I want to believe that I myself am God*" (p. 270) – reflects his unwillingness to accept finally that any external agency, such as heredity, should be held answerable for one's inconsistencies.

He says to his friend:

Look at the number of changes we have suffered since 1781. From Dutch to English then to French then back to Dutch now English again. What do nations matter, Bentley! Why can't we be loyal to each other as members of the human species? (p. 293).

This is a far cry from the early, narrow jingoism of the van Groenwegels and points the way to later novels, like *The Wounded and the Worried* (1962) and *The Aloneness of Mrs Chatham* (1965) in which the problem of emotional balance and the need to transcend petty, conventional concepts of society are given a much wider significance. At the end of the novel, the questioning cry of the goat sucker first heard, in *Corentyne Thunder* returns with its suggestion of the need to explore one's identity:

Hoo-yoo!
They listened, and it came again. Far away amidst the trees
Hoo-yoo! (p. 294).

The old Hubertus is still victim of his divided nature, but now is no longer in any doubt of the need to find a solution from within himself.

Unfortunately, Mittelholzer was, it seems, unable (or unwilling) to follow his psychological theme to its deeper implications. It is as if a powerful super-ego stands guard against too close an examination of what he called "*a facet of my own personality*": Hubertus's intuition that his 'animal' self is as important to total psychic health as his 'spiritual' self, is never allowed to develop into a dialogue between Ego and Unconscious:

The novel fails ultimately as a work of art not because, as Frank Birbalsingh has suggested "*ethics are absent*", but because Mittelholzer does not explore the implications of his theme deeply enough, and so fails to create what might have been (and what the author apparently intended to be) a genuine psychological drama: a reconciliation of the opposing elements of the 'Old Blood' within the alembic of Hubertus's consciousness.

In *Sylvia*, Mittelholzer had retraced, to a large extent, the terrain of his own boyhood and young manhood; and in the figure of Milton Copps, was himself present to comment on the narrow coercive society whose strictures he so deeply resented. But, in the *Kaywana* trilogy, though still personally involved through historical and family ties, he is at a sufficient distance from his subject – Guyana's colonial slave-

history – to maintain a certain objectivity in the treatment of character and theme.

When one considers that the preoccupation with identity with a psychological and cultural split (the most persistent theme in West Indian writing) has its origin in colonisation and slavery, then the remarkable nature of Mittelholzer's sustained creative effort in the *Kaywana* trilogy becomes clear. For the conflict in the trilogy between 'strength and 'weakness'; is also the conflict between white and black, master and slave. The *Kaywana* trilogy therefore is not only an epic, imaginative record of the peculiar social and historical reality of Guyana, a national novel, it is also a prodigious, pioneering attempt to examine the cultural and emotional ambivalence which is a heritage of the Caribbean past. By embodying the conflicting claims of history and heredity within the violent, ambiguous fortunes of the van Groenwegel family, Mittelholzer, like Nathaniel Hawthorne in his short story 'Main Street' attempted to exorcise the ghosts of the past; and at the conclusion of the *Kaywana* trilogy might almost be saying, with Hawthorne:

Let us thank God for having given us such ancestors; and let each successive generation thank Him, not less fervently for being one step further from them in the march of ages.²⁴

Divided within himself, Mittelholzer sought in his work both to examine and to identify this 'two-ness'. If there is a tragic element which reduces his work from the category of the merely trivial, then it is to be found in the Faustian theme that underscores so much of his writing; the split in consciousness which leads to repression and a consequent death wish, unless repaired through an associative effort – an at-onement of the opposed, elements of a psychic division.

The novels in which this associative attempt is successful, at least in part, include *A Morning at the Office* (1950), *Shadows Move Among Them* (1951) and *A Tale of Three Places* (1957), *The Wounded and the Worried* (1962) and *A Tinkling in the Twilight* (1969). In each of these novels the main character (or characters) attempts to cope with an essentially schizoid condition and achieves a psychic balance, however precarious.

There is, in these novels, a process of psychic integration at work within characters and events – a process which is, I suggest, an indication of the extent to which Mittelholzer was able to achieve a creative art, relatively free from the undermining influences of what on the one hand he called (in *With a Carib Eye*) the “super-ego, stern Old School symbol of my parents and aunts” and what on the other we may consider to be the resurgences of a repressed libido. The tendency to regard *A Morning at the Office* as primarily a social tract: a sensitively written documentary study of colonial life in Trinidad which is, at the same time (as a kind of bonus), an entertaining novel, is unfortunate. The novel’s deeper, more complex meaning, like the writer’s attempt to produce an ‘associative’ art of fiction, has, as a result, generally gone unnoticed. Authors are not (perhaps fortunately so) always the most reliable authorities on what their work is ‘about’, for any important work of art has an independent life of its own; and the narrow view of *A Morning at the Office* as a social treatise is actually encouraged by Mittelholzer’s own remarks. The novel, he had said, was written in order to:

[...] debunk certain fallacies held by people in Northern Regions about the people in the West Indies, especially the fallacy that makes us out to be backward half-civilized people, it is really a grand tract nicely dressed up.

Indeed, Like *Sylvia* (1953) the book is an unsparingly honest and penetrating appraisal of a typically hierarchical, colour-based, colonial society. The name of the office (‘Essential Products Ltd.’) has an ironic Naipaulian ring: the firm’s activities – the export of sugar by-products such as jam and marmalade – are not only not essential, but also unconstitutional since they are permitted (thanks to the political influence of the firm’s white principals) in spite of a government ban. The office itself is a microcosm of Trinidad and, by implication, West Indian society, whose formal pattern of racial and social echelons is repeated in the organisation of the multiracial staff: the white manager insulated at one end, behind the frosted glass door of a private office, and the black office messenger at the other, physically separated by a wooden barrier from

the central area with its Coloured, East Indian, Chinese, French and Spanish Creole workers, each in a distinct role or category according to racial and social status. This compact framework, at once actual and symbolic, reflects the author's tight, artistic control as well as his deliberately objective view of his material. Mortimer Barnett, the local writer who depends upon advertisements to finance publication of his work and whose theory of novel writing exactly matches Mittelholzer's own in this novel, does, it is true, have a good deal in common with the author; but he appears only briefly near the end of the book, talks to Mr Murrain about his theory of 'telescopic objectivity' and leaves as quietly as he has come.

The climax of *A Morning at the Office* comes when Horace Xavier, the black office-boy (who earlier had surreptitiously placed a love-verse from Shakespeare's *As You Like It* on Mrs Hinckson's desk), simmering with embarrassment and anger because he suspects that he has been found out and is now a laughing-stock, finally explodes:

Horace strode through the barrier-gate with a crash. He was at Mrs Hinckson's desk in three strides. Mr Jagabir half-rose from his chair. Horace snatched the paper from the File tray. 'Boy! You gone off you' head!' shouted Mr Jagabir. Horace sprang round to face him.,
'Because I black? It's my paper! I put down de words on it! I got a right to take it back!'
He was trembling all over [...] 'Keep you' job! I don't want it! (p. 245).

His action is at once a protest against the barrier which a colonial society has erected to keep him out, convinced of the danger of his participation as an equal expression of the black West Indian's vigorous claim for respect and recognition as an individual. But the process of social emancipation in the West Indies is visualised as a restructuring and unification of all racial and national attributes of the region: As one of the characters says:

[...] if the West Indies was to evolve a culture individually West Indian it could only come out of the whole hotchpotch of racial and national elements of which the West Indies was composed; it could not spring only from the negro. (p. 248).

and beneath the novel's message as a social document urging the full and compassionate integration of different people and cultures, lies the even more urgent message: the need for personal integrity as a starting-point. This is a deeper, more complex theme and the real source, I suggest, of the novel's power.

For the characters in *A Morning at the Office* are linked together not only by their involvement, within the narrow confines of office and island, in the West Indian colonial situation; they are also united, at a deeper, more personal level, by a shared psychological impediment. This is the inner frustration which the central 'Jen fairy-tale' contains in an allegorical form, and which produces (in Mr Murrain, as well as in other characters) the sensation of being 'trapped in the skin'. The fairy-tale is closely associated with the character of Miss Bisnauth, who finds it a great consolation. Written by her literary friend, Arthur Lamby, the story involves "a little girl called Mooney [who] lived in a big house near the Canje Creek" (pp. 132–133) and whose nurse tells her a story about a terrible creature called a 'Jen', an indestructible and indescribably dreadful monster: "Once a 'Jen' is born and grows up we're told nothing and nobody can kill it." (p. 134). Mooney, alone upstairs one day, was visited by the 'Jen'. In the conversation that ensues, she finds, through her sympathetic interest, that the 'Jen' is really a lonely monster.

The description of the 'Jen' whose evasive nature is an important part of its 'badness' supports the interpretation of it as a projected aspect of the human psyche: a quality which, though capable of causing immense upheaval, if allowed to act, is nevertheless kept inactive through being suppressed or ignored. The 'Jen' appears to represent the repressed, creative self. Immediately after she remembers Arthur's fairy-tale, Miss Bisnauth thinks:

Arthur had genius, she was convinced. He would get far – but he must escape from that newspaper office. It was cramping his soul, killing his creative urge.²⁵ (p. 138).

This stifling of the creative urge was, to Mittelholzer, the most pernicious of the evils of the colonial condition. His New

Amsterdam diaries reveal the frustration of the would-be writer imprisoned in the West Indian colonial situation. The entry of 30 March 1935 reads: "*Depressed almost to point of insanity. Started writing a novel. Spirits soared!*" On 17 August 1935 he finds himself "*chafing to leave this disgusting hole of a town*"; and on 16 November 1935 he records:

Spirits continue fairly high, as a result of literary creation – 'Mr Gore-Drary Gentlemen'. (A short novel). Saving every cent in hope of going to London next year. Quite determined to go!

The following year, desperately disappointed, he attempted suicide. One is reminded of Derek Walcott's bitter observation: "*to be born on a small island, a colonial back-water, meant a precious resignation to fate.*"²⁶ It is no coincidence that 'Mooney' lives in the vicinity of Mittelholzer's New Amsterdam near the Canje Creek: symbol, for Mittelholzer, of the mysterious, forbidden interior. In *With a Carib Eye* (1958) Mittelholzer writes:

Unlike Georgetown, New Amsterdam is very near to the jungle. You can feel the mystery of unknown tracts of land simply by staring east towards the Canje Creek. (p. 137).

In Mittelholzer's work, descriptions of the interior (especially up river along the Canje) almost always convey a sense of threat and foreboding. This quality of menace received its most concentrated expression in *My Bones and My Flute* (1955), where the 'interior' becomes synonymous with the inexpressibly evil forces which attempt to engulf the characters.

Mr Murrain, the white assistant manager, has a scar on his left forearm – the result of a wound received at Dunkirk – which tingles whenever he suffers an attack of the "*trapped-in-the-skin shudders*". (p. 99). But although his traumatic war experience haunts him, it is equally clear that his life has been blighted by a much earlier experience. As a romantic young boy he "*had written idealistic sentimental verse and had ambitions of becoming an author.*" His cruel discouragement at the hands of his practical father, even though it is well-intentioned,

merely drives his creative urge underground, where it remains quiescent, occasionally rising to the surface as an embarrassing, unidentifiable itch. In everyday life he remains a misfit. Mr Reynolds, the coloured, homosexual salesman also possesses a 'Jen':

He was afraid of himself. He dreaded introspecting, for when he introspected he pitied himself and saw his loneliness as a thing of magnified terror and ugliness. (p. 195).

But it is in the figure of the gentle Miss Bisnauth that the creative nature of the 'Jen' is most readily observable. In her, the associative impulse of the novel finds its most sustained expression. She is not obliged to work for a living: her parents are wealthy. It is the creative activity of writing poetry and the wish to broaden her experience of people to this end that makes her choose to work in an office. She is the personification of the natural, intuitive imagination at work attempting to repair the broken relationships and hostile differences between people. Her 'Nightmare Moments' of self-doubt during which she experiences a temporary paralysis of her creative powers, reveal her identification with the 'Jen':

Am I really a kind lady, I wonder? Or could it be just the sentimental in me that makes me feel a great pity for humanity? She felt completely negative, desperately miserable. And lonely. She was the Jen. (p. 239).

Appropriately, it is in this penultimate section of the novel (headed 'The Jen') that Horace's suppressed frustration finally achieves release, and as he leaves the office for good, Mr Reynolds is already making a vow to "*get him another job tomorrow – easy as kissing hands.*" (p. 246).

The movement in the novel towards a resolution of inner conflict and, as it were, a freeing of the 'Jen', is reinforced by the arrival of the gifted, but as yet obscure, writer, Mortimer Barnett, whom Miss Bisnauth recognises as 'a high soul' – in fact another representative of the 'Jen'. She says:

I'm sure he's going to be famous one day. The world will recognize him. Everybody treats him now as if he's a silly

crank, Arthur says. They say he's mad [...] It's always the way. (p. 203).

When one considers that Mortimer Barnett's theory of 'telescopic objectivity' is, in fact, Mittelholzer's technique in this novel, and that the impotence of the 'Jen' – the repression or atrophy of the creative urge – often represents the writer's worst fear, it becomes possible to say that *A Morning at the Office* is, at its deepest level, not only an associative effort aimed at creating a whole out of the composite fragments of West Indian experience, but also a novel about an art of fiction that can make possible the controlled release of the repressed creative impulse. In fact the 'Jen' is obviously related to the well-known Grimm fairy tale of the "*spirit (or Jinn) in the bottle*" to Aladdin and his magic lamp, or to our own Guyanese folk myth of the 'baccoo' or baby in the bottle. Such folk myths conjure up the dual nature of the Unconscious as a potential force capable of causing irreparable damage as well as possessing magical creative power. The main impulse in *A Morning at the Office* then, is a beneficial, associative one, and Mittelholzer's stated intention in writing the novel as a debunking process, like Arthur Lamby's aim in writing the "*Jen fairy tale to debunk the old West Indian nancy-story*" (p. 238) belies the subtly controlled art with which he creates, from the superficialities of a typically fragmented West Indian situation, a momentary vision of wholeness.

In *Shadows Move Among Them* Mittelholzer attempted to give to this vision a local habitation and a name. Berkelhoost, the Reverend Harmston's plantation and mission, is in one sense, like Prospero's island: a tropical Utopia in which the shell-shocked Englishman, Gregory Hawke, learns to find inner peace. But, placed as it is in the Guyana jungle along the upper reaches of the Berbice River, Berkelhoost is also, in another sense, the mysterious, forbidding interior with its residues of past violence; the area bristles with the psychic influences of the great slave insurrection of 1763. The 'shadows' of the novel's title, therefore, have disturbing historical as well as psychological associations.

The whole atmosphere of Berkelhoost is one of liberal humanism, frankness and emotional and sexual freedom. The

Reverend Harmston's high-spirited, twelve year old daughter, Olivia, whose wild flights of imagination are a main feature in the novel, typifies the free, imaginative spirit of the place. For Olivia, it is as natural to see ghosts as to be intuitive about people, or to imagine her own feelings emanating from her as she says 'smoke'. Or like the Genie escaping out of the Green Bottle. This reference to the "*spirit in the bottle*" – recalling the story of the 'Jen' in *A Morning at the Office* (1950) – is no coincidence: for in this novel Mittelholzer appears to have set about giving his own repressed romantic and creative urge – his 'Jen' – a completely free rein. This is evident from his comments about the novel. In a letter to A. J. Seymour, he had written:

Perhaps I might mention that I am prepared to be judged on *Shadows* [...] It is a novel as I like, and want to write, a novel, I wrote it to please myself entirely, without a thought to publishers or public.

The result is certainly an extraordinary inventiveness in the handling of character and incident; but there is, because of the lack of emotional control, also a disturbing (but not entirely unexpected) mixture of the serious and the banal; the sincerely moral and the lubricious, the tragic and the trivial. For within this apparently ideal, liberal community stalks the harsh spectre of Authority: the super-ego that takes its revenges on the free ranging, libidinal imagination.

A closer examination of the novel reveals both of these polarities: the associative attempt – the activity, as it were, of the free creative imagination – and the disintegrative, undermining element of repression. The Harmstons believe that Gregory Hawke's nervous condition is the result of war experience, but it is later revealed that his marriage to a superior, dominating woman, now dead (incidentally, this is the first clear suggestion of the anima-figure of the domineering female which recurs throughout Mittelholzer's work) is responsible for his schizoid condition. It is Olivia who senses his trouble:

'He's two people' she explains. 'One of him is a kind of shadow; that's the him we know now. He's hiding the solid him from us [...] (p. 108).

Mittelholzer underlines the fact of his character's 'two-ness' by telling us that Gregory himself is at a loss to know how to "*achieve harmony between spirit and fevered flesh.*" (p. 194). His psychic dissociation is further dramatically revealed when, looking at his own reflection in a mirror, he suddenly feels, with horror, that the mirror image of himself is caught, frozen "*rigid with cold, in the arctic mirror.*" When Olivia's brother, Berton unexpectedly comes into the room, Gregory smiled: "*The boy had rescued him. He stepped back into himself.*" (p. 54). Indeed the novel is an enactment of Gregory's psychic recovery which takes place in the Guyana jungle. Split between the elements of spirit and flesh – represented symbolically in the novel by young Olivia who is an Ariel-figure, and her mature, sensual sister, Mabel, who is physically desirable – Gregory learns to reconcile himself to both.

I tell you what I want, (he says to Olivia). I want somebody like you – living spirit, volatile and light, and with no murky passions to beguile me and remind me of the instinct part of myself. [...] But the trouble is that the very passions in Mabel that I want to escape from are in me – and very strong and active. (pp 316–317).

Olivia, because of her childlike innocence and often embarrassing directness, is able to help him come to terms with his inhibitions and fears – to reconcile spirit and flesh – a process the success of which is reflected in his decision to marry Mabel and live in Berkelhoost.

This associative element – the positive impulse in the novel – is suggested in the general atmosphere of Berkelhoost. The Reverend Harmston is a Prospero figure who acts as father and teacher not only to his own family but also to the community as a whole. Now, it is true that in the novel Gregory gets the better of his own unconscious fears and inhibitions, but one is aware at the same time of another element – a negative impulse at work redressing the balance, as it were. It is almost as if, in the ambivalent figure of

Reverend Harmston the author's powerful super-ego asserts itself. Consequently, the extent of Gregory's cure, his recovery of psychic balance, is inexorably counterbalanced by an equivalent projection of animus, present in Harmston's brutality to his servant, Logan – the Caliban of the novel – and in the general insistence on stern discipline for even minor offences. For beneath all the liberalism and naturalness, the idyllic atmosphere of freedom and creative expression, lies a disturbingly perverse element of cruelty and sadism. The Utopia freedom of Berkelhoost permits an extreme looseness of behaviour, which is clearly compensated for by an equally extreme code of discipline. The whole novel reflects the author's equivocal attitude towards the regenerative nature of the interior – a nature which is also, clearly, terrifying. Gregory Hawke is seen to be 'cured' of his schizophrenia; but, one feels, the nature of the cure is almost as undesirable as the disease. One is left with the impression that the theme of regeneration proves too much for Mittelholzer to handle. *Shadows* is finally disappointing as a whole because the main associative and positive theme of psychic integration is too closely matched by the concomitant presence of destructive, repressive elements which contradict the insights gained and so render the associative attempt invalid.

Like *Shadows*, *The Mad MacMullochs* appears to have been written originally without thought of publication. Like Berkelhoost the MacMulloch plantation is a private community (this time on the island of Barbados), and is presented as a successful social experiment: an egalitarian society, unsophisticated but intelligent, where nudism is a way of life, uninhibited sexual expression is encouraged, and violence, greed and crime are virtually unknown. Behind limestone walls and a screen of casuarina trees, about one thousand people of different races live a harmonious, industrious and happy life, apparently free from the restraints, hypocrisy and corruption of the world outside.

The novel's similarity with *Shadows* is further suggested in the shape of the plot. Ronald Barkley, a 'local white' Barbadian, and his English/Canadian friend, Albert Grahamston, meet the two nubile MacMulloch girls, Evaline

and Euphony, who regularly come down to the public beach near a big tourist hotel in the hope of attracting eligible men. At first shocked and embarrassed by their unabashed directions (in reply to Ronald's complimenting her on her attractiveness Euphony says " *Thanks [...] And I'm quite intacta, in case you'd, like to know'.*" (p. 15), Ronald and Albert are gradually drawn by the girls' relaxed, uncomplicated natures and are invited to become members of the MacMulloch community. There Ronald meets Roxanne, the youngest of the MacMulloch girls and falls in love with her. Like Albert, who marries Evaline, he decides to marry and remain within the community where they have discovered a better, healthier and more worthwhile way of life than they had thought possible. The main theme is again social reform, and the novel's message is that if the MacMullochs are 'mad', then their form of 'madness' is preferable to the 'sanity' of the conventional but repressive and sterile society of the outside world. Within this framework, however, is the more personal and more interesting theme of psychic integration; for Ronald turns out to be another emotionally divided hero whose personal quest is for a sense of 'wholeness'. Lack of sexual inhibition is the most striking feature of life within the MacMulloch community, and it is this that attracts both Ronald and Albert. In fact, in many ways, Ronald is yet another Mittelholzer self portrait. He is eccentric, irreligious and gruff (" *'Is it just your manner', asks Euphony, 'or have you 'been terribly frustrated in sex'?*" (p. 25) and his discontent with life in general carries psychological as well as sociological overtones:

I've been spoilt. Sometimes I want to feel it's that. And other times I am convinced it isn't. Other times I am sure my attitude was shaped by sheer heredity. I was born to be as I am.

His reference to "*the old discontent, the old futility, the familiar Weltschmerz*" (p. 220) is an echo of the loneliness and frustration of spirit which so often plagued Mittelholzer himself. Mittelholzer's diary entry of 31 August 1948 records his pleasure sitting in Hyde Park on a fine day, but adds: "*and yet in me there is an emptiness. Weltschmerz?*"

Like *Shadows* (1951), *The Mad McMullochs* does reveal a deeper submerged meaning that goes beyond that of social reform. This is the idea of psychic division and the need for an associative effort, and the MacMulloch plantation, therefore, like Berkelhoost, serves not only as a focus for Mittelholzer's theories about culture, art, religion, education and sex; but also (and more importantly) as a symbol of the natural, emotionally integrated state denied the self-divided man. He is represented by Ronald, the uncompromisingly 'masculine' hero whose brusque manner disguises an inner emptiness and fear, and his decision to stay and become a part of the McMulloch community, underlines the associative impulse in the novel: the reintegration of the divided psyche. This effort, however, like the attempt to banish the spectre of sexual inhibition, exacts a vigorous and opposite reaction. As Frank Birbalsingh (comparing Berkelhoost with the MacMulloch community) observes:

Sexual permissiveness, in reality, is not so permissive, for [...] Both settlements deny more freedom than they allow and their civil and moral code contradicts itself.²⁷

The associative attempt in the novel does not, in fact, survive what Ronald calls, "*the 'super-ego' prohibiting voice*" (p. 17). Precautions which the community takes to preserve its privacy involve a complicated warning system of lights and buzzers and passwords needing to be changed every four hours. There is an outer as well as an inner wall around the estate, entrance to which is controlled by well guarded iron gates as part of a defence system which even has its own 'secret service'. Inside the estate the atmosphere, oddly reminiscent of a top-security prison is one of strict, military discipline. There is an 'Army Department', 'Defence Department', a 'Eugenics Department' (whose ominous function is "*to keep our population free of human vermin*" (p. 127) and a special section IND, where the 'undisciplined' members are obliged to live. In this nudist colony, sexual permissiveness appears to be the rule, but premarital intercourse is not allowed. Married couples must obtain a permit to have children, and are obliged to keep a record of their orgasms to enable the

'Health Department' to keep a check on the vitality of the community. The frank sensuality which is encouraged as a counter to "*morbid and unwholesome imaginings*" (p. 136) is nevertheless heavily tinged with guilt, in spite of the leaders' protestations to the contrary.

Stern discipline is necessary, one of them explains, because it "*prevents our men raping our women*" (p. 136). The list of contradictions seems endless.

The ambiguous nature of both the MacMulloch and the Berkelhoost societies which advocate individual freedom but impose harsh disciplinarian restraints and promote the serious ideal of personal and social integrity but waste their energies in irrelevant or trivial pursuits which are often opposed to their own ideals, reflects the deep malaise in Mittelholzer's work. This ambiguity, like the schizoid condition of the novels' heroes, is an embodiment of the writer's own inner conflict, the implications of which create a serious rift within the novels which tend to remain trivial with respect to the development of outward events: The attempt to present Berkelhoost or the McMulloch estate as successful utopias simply does not work. The triviality of Mittelholzer's social themes, however, is a result of the psychological necessity of his obsession with schizoid heroes; and the 'hidden' motives in his work do compensate for the poverty of his professed moral and social attitudes. For it is in the submerged meaning in his novels that his art most clearly reveals itself as an associative attempt: an attempt that is almost always vitiated by the very nature of his own divided condition. The atmosphere of the MacMulloch community, like that of Berkelhoost, peopled with the dark shadows of the Unconscious, contradicts itself with that inevitability with which the jungle will always reclaim any timid clearings in the interior. Mittelholzer's attempt to create an associative art comes, then, from his acute awareness of psychic division. The failure of his characters' attempts at personal integration is, indeed, implied by their author's own sense of inner division, his morbid concern with death and his consistent personal involvement in his fiction.

This, however, is not to say that Mittelholzer's art is always self-divided and fragmentary. *A Morning at the Office*

is, as we have seen, one completely successful example of the positive, unifying activity of his writing. There is another aspect of which the associative impulse of his art is frequently successful. This is the linking together of landscape and character in an almost musical harmony. *Of Trees and the Sea*, *The Weather Family*, two Barbados novels, immediately come to mind. We remember, too, the unfinished trilogy – the leitmotif novels, *Latticed Echoes* and *Thunder Returning*. In these novels, the leitmotif serves to link character and environment all within a Wagnerian musical framework. But the psychic fracture which had its origin in Mittelholzer's sense of genetic damage and in his anxiety about racial and cultural pedigree, proved to be extremely persistent. In fact it grew deeper with time. The later English novels depict Mittelholzer's attempt to jettison his Caribbean background in an effort to graft himself on to a European parent-stock. An attempt that leads not to a cure, but to a worsening of the disease. One is reminded of V. S. Naipaul's decision to adopt Britain as his literary capital; his vision, as a young man, of leaving the imperfect, culturally poor New World and going to the Old World flower. But this was a psychological rather than a purely literary impulse; Naipaul's anxiety about his status has a strangely obsessional note in view of his considerable success as a writer. In an interview recorded in *Transition*²⁸ he said:

I can't help thinking that I might have had much greater success, had been much better understood as a writer, if I had been born in England [...] when I find people offending the status of my writing I can get very angry. I have to protect that status, because there's no one protecting it for me.

But then Naipaul is well aware of the psychological dangers of any attempt to adopt a 'parent-culture'. Asked if he could not graft himself on to any main body, he replied, "*it is rather that the main bodies rejected the graft.*" Mittelholzer himself sought to resolve his own problems of cultural and national identity by rejecting his Caribbean background and adopting the Old World culture of Europe. From 1961 onwards, his novels deal exclusively with English characters

in an English background. The novels are a protest against the effeteness of the society which he has now adopted as his own. And for the health of which he now feels a certain filial anxiety. For Mittelholzer, success as a novelist depended upon much more than regular publication. The real need was for public approval of his private attitudes. Rejection of his work meant rejection of himself by the parent-body; and the novels – at their deepest level of meaning – were a protest at this ‘unreasonable’ course of action.

It is impossible not to notice the correspondence among the difficulties of publication from about 1961, the increasingly obsessive, dogmatic writing of the novels of this period, and Mittelholzer’s rapid emotional decline which ended in suicide in May 1965. It is true that as fewer and fewer publishers wanted to handle his work, and as his fortunes suffered, so he must have become dispirited and unhappy; but it is also necessary to say that his attempt to graft himself on to an Old World culture was not working. By 1961 it was already clear that the parent-culture had begun to reject the graft.

Uncle Paul, written in 1963, is in effect a study of this rejection. In a letter to A. J. Seymour (quoted in the inaugural lectures) Mittelholzer admitted that the hero, Paul Mankay, is:

[...] really an intensive character study of myself – though only I will know that. I’ve disguised the character too well for readers who are strangers to suspect.

And the main theme is the hero’s dilemma of racial and cultural division and his awareness of an impending disaster. The overt plot is, consequently, by no means the most significant aspect of the novel, and can be quickly set aside. The hero is part Jewish, part German. He has two names, one German – Charles Fricker – one Jewish – Paul Mankay. (It is interesting to notice that ‘Lionel/Lobo’ the divided hero of Denis Williams’s *Other Leopards*, also published in 1963, is also :

“[...] plagued by these two names [...] Lionel the who I was, dealing with Lobo [...] This alter ego, of ancestral times”. (pp. 19/20).

Mankay has been ambiguously involved with a neo-Nazi organisation in London, finally wrecking their headquarters and escaping to the Hampshire home of his sister, whom he has not seen for 10 years. The novel actually begins at this point, Socially and morally adrift, expecting at any moment to be tracked down by former colleagues seeking revenge, he suddenly finds himself the object of a young girl's hero-worship and, at the same time, pursued by his mistress, Delia, a blasé Londoner. Eventually he is discovered by two gunmen who have been searching for him, and in the ensuing gun battle both attackers are killed and the young girl, Valerie, dies after being hit by a stray bullet. The trite nature of the plot is obvious, but to the reader who looks beneath the superficialities of the story a surprisingly complex emotional drama appears, acting as a psychological compensation, as it were, for the triviality of outward events.

Paul Mankay is a schizoid character whose sense of genetic damage retards his emotional growth. His failure to achieve 'wholeness' is reflected by the pun on 'Mankay' (*manquer* is French for 'to fail' or 'to lack'). This failure, his lack of wholeness, poisons his relationships with others and alienates him from himself. Mankay regards his Jewish blood as a 'weakness' his German blood as a 'strength'. The result is a continuous 'war' within himself, a conflict of loyalties. W. O. Fairbairn, in his study of schizoid patients, relates repression to the 'internalizing' of 'bad' objects (that is, things which our ego will not accept, such as 'bad' parents or sexuality, when regarded as sinful, but things which are nevertheless necessary for emotional well being). This internalising process is aimed at giving us a sense of outer security, but such security is itself seriously compromised by the resulting presence within of internalised 'bad' objects. A vicious cycle is set up. As Fairbairn puts it:

Outer security is thus purchased at the price of inner security; and the ego is henceforth left at the mercy of a band of internal fifth columnists or persecutors.²⁹

The suggestion, in *Uncle Paul*, that the hero is defending himself against an internalised 'fifth column' – not merely the

neo-Nazi organisation of the novel's plot – is inescapable. Mankay does indeed feel the need to set up defences against the ever-present danger of psychic fragmentation. He says, "If I didn't try to adhere to one or two principles, I'd disintegrate. Cease to exist." (p. 161). His impassioned 'lecture' to his young nephew seems totally unwarranted. The boy, his feelings hurt, is crying in his room when Mankay bursts in:

"You've got German blood in you, do you know that? [...] fighting blood. You must be tough. Prepare for battle [...] the Jews always lose, boy [...] You mustn't be a Jew. Be a German." (pp. 89–90).

This outburst echoes Mittelholzer's childhood conditioning at the hands of his father: "[...] *just one drop of that great blood. Just one drop in your veins, and it makes you different from everyone else. German blood!*"³⁰ Mankay, since he speaks for the author, inevitably makes the link between Jew and African slave. "I'm a born warrior," he says. "I fight. I never surrender. I shall never be a slave." (pp. 155–156). Paul Mankay, forced to accept the 'bad', Jewish half of his nature, since it is a genetic fact, learns to internalise it; a process which sets up an insoluble conflict within his psyche. Like his author, he can neither ignore nor reject his undesirable racial inheritance, for it is essentially a part of his whole personality. Now, according to Fairbairn, this internal possession of a 'bad' object (which is nevertheless needed for full, psychic health) can lead to a tragic situation in which the patient accepts himself as 'bad' and 'destructive' even to those he loves. To Paul Mankay, young Valerie, who adores him, represents innocence and goodness. Consequently, he tries to warn her of his secret 'destructive' nature:

It's a fever in me, Valerie love. It burns and burns -and I breathe out the poisonous vapours, trying always though, not to let them reach others. I'm afraid of being found out.

The fact that she *does* die as a result of her involvement with him is proof of his 'lethal' nature.

Mankay mobilises the resources of his self-hatred and directs his aggression against others. Here is the reason given, in the novel, for Mankay's joining a Fascist organization:

"I want to see what it was to feel hatred. Can't you see how interesting it was for me? Me with a Jewish grandfather hating the Jews with a roomful of genuine Gentiles of Nordic blood, recording the minutes of our meetings and throwing out useful suggestions for action against the contaminating elements in our society. To the lions with all Jews, coloured people and Communists! [...] I enjoyed examining myself under the given conditions. I learnt a lot about myself!" (p. 51).

Mittelholzer was here revealing more than he realised. For in Mankay's schizoid role-playing we may also see the author's persistent, violent denunciation of 'human vermin' in its true light. It is an expression of the hating, anti-libidinal's ego's attempt to disguise the self-hatred which comes from the possession of 'internalised', 'bad' objects. What Mankay/Mittelholzer learns about himself is that his division of 'loyalties' is only a superficial indication of a deep, psychic disturbance; what he calls *"My split-ness. Two-ness. Meine Zweideutigkeit – the disease in my spirit."* This, then, is the fatal flaw which disrupts Mittelholzer's fiction and leaves his heroes resigned to their own social unacceptability, convinced that their 'badness' is the result of a genetic taint. *"It's blood,"* Mankay says, wearily. *"Environment only adds surface colour to our character. What we are now we were from the day of our birth."* (p. 79).

Mittelholzer's obsession with heredity as a once-and-for-all personality determinant denies his heroes any real, emotional development – any genuine mature individual consciousness. In the same way, his determination, in the later work, to confront English society criticising what he saw as its 'weakness' and liberalism, severely limits the scope and quality of the novels. In fact what had begun for the young writer in Guyana as a desire *"to become famous and rich by writing novels for the people of Britain to read"* as he puts it in *A Pleasant Career* eventually became a bitter, personal invective against the parent-figure, a society which had rejected him.

Among Mittelholzer's later novels, *The Aloneness of Mrs Chatham*, published in 1965 between *Uncle Paul* (1963) and his last novel *The Jilkington Drama*, is of special interest for several reasons. Mittelholzer himself considered it one of his most serious books, and the novel embodies most of his deeply-held views on sex, politics and English society. But while society's rejection of the principal male character (another Mittelholzer surrogate) is a main theme of the novel, there is another, more temperate – though no less personal – theme: the preservation of psychic integrity through withdrawal ('alone-ness') and self-discovery. These two themes are yoked uneasily together through the main characters, Charles Harpenden Lessier ('Harpo') and the heroine, Mrs Sheila Chatham. They represent the two impulses which run throughout Mittelholzer's work. One masculine disruptive and militant, the other feminine, quietly introspective concerned with inner space and 'wholeness'. They recall the two elements which, in *A Swarthy Boy*, Mittelholzer had said "have always lived within me, side by side and in restless harmony."

Their interaction provides the main interest and also the major disharmony, in the novel. Interestingly enough, *The Aloneness of Mrs Chatham* (1965) represents the final version of a work Mittelholzer had apparently begun in the 1950s. An examination of the six manuscripts which have recently come to light, reveals the shift of emphasis in Mittelholzer's approach to his art. One sees the novel undergoing a 'hardening of the arteries', as it were, during the shift away from an associative art, related to a Caribbean scenario, towards the development of a dogmatic, proselytising fiction involving English characters in an English setting.

The first version of *The Aloneness of Mrs Chatham* was written in Barbados in the 1950s and has a fully Caribbean locale. The main theme is the English heroine's need to reconcile flesh and spirit and the emotional crisis which results when the Lessiers, a St Lucian family visiting Barbados, enter her life of determined seclusion. Alva and his brother Herbert represent her sexual and spiritual selves, and through them Mrs Chatham, a widow, learns to be herself, alone but happy. It is a sensitively written novel, and Mrs Chatham's character and development are done with considerable skill

and restraint. There is no dogmatic discussion of society's values, no reference to the 'effeteness' of English liberalism, and there is no Harpo. There is none of the moralising, hectoring tone of the published, English version of the book. The main theme, Mrs Chatham's choice of life, remains central, and the novel ends with an evocation of both the English and Caribbean landscapes. It is almost as if two ways of life – Mrs Chatham's English reserve and the Lessier's tropical exuberance, (intellect and emotion), are finally reconciled within the heroine's individual consciousness. This is how the novel ends, in this first version: We are in Mrs Chatham's house on the Maxwell coast:

The sunshine had vanished from the walls. A mere flicker remained around the upper half of a picture – an English landscape scene of red-brick cottages and poplars and copper beeches. The lingering sunshine touched the dark frame with a pinkish aura.

Outside, the sea sounded very leisurely, crashing on the beach at longish intervals, and the casuarinas sighed softly and ceaselessly in the wind. From over at 'Crammere' came a loud bark of laughter, male and derisive. Virile. But it did not disturb the peace in the gallery here. Sheila, watching the wall, saw the sunshine fade [...] Now it had gone entirely, and the picture remained, solid and alone.

The intermediate manuscript version of the novel introduces Harpo Lessier who is given a central place while the theme of 'alone-ness' is de-emphasised. Many passages which show us Sheila Chatham's inner conflict, her need to find a balanced view of life, are cut. Harpo becomes, as in the final, published version, a mouthpiece for the author's extreme views on crime, politics, sex, religion and English society. In the published version, Mittelholzer's aim is clearly didactic. English society, he is saying, has gone soft, and through Harpo he expresses his dismay at its laxity and indifference. Mrs Chatham's search for peace, a balanced choice of life, has, in effect, become a secondary theme, one that has its origin in Mittelholzer's early, Caribbean-orientated work. This forcible linking together of Mrs Chatham's inner desire for personal and psychic integration and Harpo's violent condemnation

of English society creates a fracture in the book. It is a thematic discord from which the novel does not recover, in spite of the very fine descriptive passage with which the novel ends. The main theme of the early version – the need for a resolution of opposed, psychic elements – gives way, in the final version, to what had by then become a more urgent theme, the hero's bitter disillusionment with a society with which he can identify, but to which he can no longer relate. Mittelholzer's associative attempt had failed, and for him there could be no compromise.

In *A Tinkling in the Twilight* (1959) Brian Liddard, the timid hero, is painfully aware of a dual self in which inexorably opposed forces, flesh and spirit, are at war. Like Harry Haller of Herman Hesse's *Der Steppenwolf*,³¹ Liddard is a 'self-divided man' whose hubris is a deliberate divorce of heart and head; a rigid, dualistic thinking that is a kind of tragic folly, leading to romantic delusions and eventually to self-hatred and suicide. This theme is one of universal significance, and one which informs such important and seminal works as Goethe's *Faust*, Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* where, in the figures of Faust, Kurtz and Aschenbach, as one critic puts it: "*the hero of the ethical will crumbles under the onslaughts of instinct and its demons from underground.*"³² Mittelholzer's writing is, however tenuously, related to this great theme, and the severe limitations of his art must be attributed to his own limitations as a writer and thinker, as well as to the nature of his own, peculiar involvement in his fiction. In *A Tinkling in the Twilight*, there is a summing-up of the case against Brian Liddard:

Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, you see before you a kind of dragon-man, by accident English. At heart he is a Siegfried – but a pseudo-Siegfried [...] He is doomed because of his own personal myth – [...] what can this court rule other than a sentence of death for such an imposter? (p. 254).

In the light of Mittelholzer's sense of 'genetic accident', his cultivation of the 'Germanic' side of his character, his personal acceptance of the Old World bias of racial pedigree and hence of the most self-annihilating of fallacies – the myth of 'purity

of blood' – it is almost as if the author stands accused, with his hero as a 'pseudo-Siegfried' – doomed because of his own personal myth! Mittelholzer's authoritarian upbringing which characterised and to a large extent determined his development, seems to have created continued psychic damage by gradually including the genuinely sensitive, artistic side of his nature. This stern parental image, at once hateful and binding, lay behind his yearning for an Old World culture and the status he felt he had been denied by a trick of heredity. Instinctively hating and respecting authority, rebelling against any attack on his status as an individual, Mittelholzer, in his frequent, hysterical attacks against the 'effete' state of English society was expressing both his fierce individualism and his disappointment in a society that was finally too liberal, too left-wing, to function as the authoritarian parent-figure he hated but found necessary for his psychic well-being. Rejection by English society and the publishing world meant a rejection of himself as an individual by a parent-culture; and Mittelholzer's psychic condition, always precarious, doubtless contributed to his final, tragic self destruction. His novels reveal this gradual erosion of mental stability – the result of an obdurate, ambivalent apprehension of life – and his explicit subjects of sexual freedom, religious and social reform and transcendentalism often disguise deeper, more complex themes. These are the buried motives and ideas which are not always clearly identified by Mittelholzer, but of whose obstinate life he was certainly aware. Indeed, in *The Jilkington Drama*, published posthumously, Garvin Jilkington's deliberate choice of death by fire mirrors his author's own Buddhist-like act of self-immolation on May 5th, 1965:

"You know," says Garvin, "when I die it will be from an explosion resulting from an accumulation of too many meanings I keep weaving meanings together, and what a bewildering pattern they make! They send my head into a spin [...] and the meanings take shape and begin to weave and weave and overwhelm me with a weight of significance too great for me to bear. I feel I'm going to be crushed under the weight. I feel I'm going to be extinguished – or disintegrate – from the sheer pressure put upon me." (p. 86).

III THE NEW CARIBBEAN NOVEL

In the last two lectures, I have attempted to explore the darker, psychological reaches of Mittelholzer's novels, pursuing what we may regard as a theme of psychic division, a split in consciousness which seriously undermines the work. And I have suggested that Mittelholzer's art, looking outward towards Europe, towards a conflict with a parent-culture, exemplifies one important direction in Caribbean writing: it is a direction we notice again in the work of, for example, George Lamming and Vidia Naipaul. One is of course aware that there are real dangers in adopting a deliberately subjective psychological approach to the criticism of literature. Such an approach can lead (as C. Day Lewis once observed about the investigation of 'unconscious' imagery in poetry) to serious aberrations of critical judgement. As he puts it:

The penalty for too earnestly probing and tapping at the surface of the image is that we fall through into the black waters beneath it [...]³³

I am reminded of Norman Holland's fascinating study of 'unconscious meaning' in literature³⁴: in which the author, adopting a psychoanalytical Freudian approach, decides that Chaucer's Wife of Bath is really "*compensating for her own missing phallus*"; and that Macbeth's famous line "*Out, out brief candle*" is also concealed phallic symbolism. But a psychological approach to Caribbean literature is indicated, since it is certainly true that the continuing obsession with identity, with individual and personal status, is a part of West Indian life, whether based on the limited experience of the white 'outsider', like Christopher Searle, who, in his book *The Forsaken Lover*³⁵ says, "*I can only say that from what I have seen and read, the West Indian probably has a greater problem of identity than most other people,*" or on the more detailed, deliberately subjective, diagnosis of the 'insider'; like Frantz Fanon, a West Indian psychiatrist writing about Antillean society in *Black*

*Skin, White Masks*³⁶, “The Negro is comparison – he is constantly preoccupied with self-evaluation and with the ego-ideal,” or on the opinions of Caribbean writers and artists themselves, like Martin Carter who in the 1971 Mittelholzer Lectures says: “There are certain themes in the West Indian novel which are specifically Caribbean, I mean slavery and the quest for personal identity.”

Even the title of George Lamming’s semi-autobiographical *In the Castle of my Skin* (1953), a novel that has already become a classic of West Indian fiction, suggests the book’s concern with the protection and integrity of the self. The frequently-used image of the sea-crab, with its awkward, halting progress, its sensitive, stalk-like eyes acting as perceptors for the vulnerable creature within its protective shell, is closely linked with the personality of the novel’s young hero, ‘G’, whose growth to maturity (like that of James Joyce’s Stephen Dedalus in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, is hedged about by obstacles which threaten his individuality. The crab’s shell is a symbol (like the ‘castle’ of the book’s title), of the psyche’s defensive measures against the danger of disorientation and disintegration. The frail homes of the island folk, precarious chattel-houses which are frequently lost in flood or through eviction also represent the fragile, endangered selfhood of the people, and the unscrupulous activity of the politicians and landowners are thinly-veiled attempts to dispossess and destroy the individual. Just before ‘G’ (now a young adult) leaves the island for the first time, he thinks:

I am always feeling terrified of being known; not because they really know you, but simply because their claim to this knowledge is a concealed attempt to destroy you ... but they won’t know you. They won’t know the you that’s hidden somewhere in the castle of your skin. (p. 261).

This fear of “*being known*”, and therefore vulnerable, is part of a deeper psychological uneasiness; the lack of self-awareness. In George Lamming’s *The Emigrants* (1954), a Jamaican in a group of West Indians on the deck of an immigrant ship travelling to England, puts his finger on the West Indian’s problem of racial and cultural identity:

Doctor, nurse, lawyer, engineer, commercial man, women and men, them all that study an' call themself West Indies people [...] them all want to prove somethin'. [...] Them want to prove that them is themself. An' them got to feel an' search an' be 'fraid all the time 'cause them doan' know w'at it is them must prove. (pp. 66–67).

Lack of self-awareness, which, in Lamming's view is "*the basic characteristic of the slave*", is the real problem; and, for him, a meaningful, deliberate confrontation with the white world is the necessary prelude to any attempt at an assertion of West Indian selfhood. *The Pleasures of Exile* (1960) is a series of 'essays' – a tentative dialogue with 'the other', meaning the white man: the coloniser. It is a dialogue between Caliban and Prospero, between Lamming as representative of the colonised African/West Indian, and the European ex-master; and this confrontation underlies or is implicit in almost all his work. The theme of exile (within the framework of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*) is well-suited to the book, which is about Lamming's own attempt to come to terms with his self-exile in London. Fascinated by the "*pleasure and paradox of my own exile*" (p. 50) – of being free as an individual, but an 'alien' – convinced that "*I belong wherever I am*" (p. 50), yet unable to feel accepted by the Old World culture – Lamming writes with eloquent passion about the black West Indian writer's sense of loss, of "*something missing*", which leaves him always incomplete as an individual. This dilemma he feels, is a residue of the colonial situation, a state of things which the writer must set out to confront, in order to bring about a change. For Lamming, it is important, therefore, that Caliban and Prospero be brought together again with a new horizon: for, as he explains, "*it is only when they work together in the context of that horizon that the psychological legacy of their original contract will have been annulled.*" (p. 159). Once the ghosts of the past have been thus confronted and – hopefully – exorcised, "*each can return to the Skin without any inhibitions imposed by the exterior attributes of the Castle.*" (p. 159).

The cultural presence of the Old World is, then, an important and necessary ingredient in Lamming's writing; since his identity as a West Indian Negro can make sense, it

would seem, only in the context (albeit a renewed, purged context) of the European presence. Trumper, in *In the Castle of my Skin*, who discovers himself to be a member of the 'Negro race' only after his visit to America, says:

You ain't a thing till you know it, an' that's why you an' none a' you on this island is a Negro yet [...] (pp. 297–298).

Lamming's work is therefore Europe-orientated in the sense that it almost always involves a restatement, a re-examination of the Caliban/Prospero relationship. Chalmer St Hill, reviewing Lamming's *Water with Berries* (1972), might almost be referring to the author himself when he says of the novel's characters:

Seven years' sojourn have not been enough to qualify these artists for absorption into or for acceptance by the English community. The physical and cultural rejection results on the one hand in the disintegration of the individual, and on the other hand in menace to the continuance of an orderly society.

The political implications of this rejection are clear, and Lamming is always concerned about the artist's relationship to political events: a concern that runs through *Of Age and Innocence* (1958) and is central to *Season of Adventure* (1960) and *Natives of my Person* (1972). But the psychological aspect of cultural rejection, the danger to the psyche's integrity, is the more pressing concern; for the writer, already aware of an inner division, must resist the tendency towards psychic disintegration. In the author's note in *Season of Adventure*, Lamming reveals that the character, Powell, a ruthless political figure and a recidivist member of West Indian society, is really his *alter ego*: the dark side of his personality which has become split off in the process of leaving his West Indian roots:

Until the age of ten Powell and I had lived together, equal in the affection of two mothers [...] And then the division came [...] I forgot the *tonnelle*³⁷ as men forget a war, and attached myself to that new world which was so recent and so slight beside the weight of what had gone before. (p. 332).

The consequent awareness of 'something missing', of a lack of wholeness which makes the writer straddle two cultures, two worlds, in an attempt to create something whole and perfect, comes from a division of consciousness which is both an occasion for regret and a lasting subject for artistic creation. As Lamming puts it:

Powell still resides somewhere in my heart, with a dubious love, some strange, nameless shadow or regret; and yet with the deepest nostalgia. For I have never felt myself to be an honest part of anything since the world of his childhood deserted me. (p. 332).

This autobiographical element in the novel is also present in the character of Chiki, the painter who finds that his creative impulse has begun to suffer because of his psychological and cultural division. Caught between instinctive loyalty to his peasant origins – the world of the *tonnelle* – and his European orientated, Christian education (and I quote): "*he sees himself a prisoner condemned for life and beyond the grave to this external paradox*" (p. 189) and is half convinced that his creative talent has dried up. At the end of the novel, having, at the age of thirty-one, completed "*three massive canvasses*" (p. 187), he cries because he is afraid that his creative growth is stunted:

Chiki will not paint again because he thinks he is a man imprisoned in his paradox for all time: the paradox of what he is and what he cannot do. (p. 366).

At the time he was completing this novel, at the age at thirty-one, Lamming, like Chiki, had produced three massive canvasses, three major novels. After *Season of Adventure* (1960), his next published work, *Water with Berries* (1972) came twelve years later.

The need for exile and the urge to juxtapose cultural and racial qualities of 'whiteness' and 'blackness', runs through a great deal of West Indian writing. Lloyd Brown finds the West Indian novel significant "*largely because of the West Indian's unique position vis-à-vis the African past and Western present.*"

He locates a crisis of identity in the work of V. S. Reid and Roger Mais, and also suggests (and I quote) that:

Jan Carew of Guyana shares Salkey's perception of exile and dualism as the characteristics of West Indian Society. But while Salkey's bourgeoisie prefers what amounts to the exorcism of blackness, Carew maintains a delicate balance between two worlds. One is tempted to add, "*a precarious balance*".

Arthur Drayton argues that the consideration of the European factor in West Indian literature brings us back, as he puts it, "*to the urgency that characterises the sociology behind that literature.*" In his article on "The European Factor in West Indian Literature"³⁸ he finds that:

Vidia Naipaul [...] is a curious casualty of the European factor, with restricted possibilities of further contribution, not technically but philosophically, to West Indian literature.

Certainly it is in the work of V. S. Naipaul that the West Indian's sense of inner division, of self-alienation, achieves its most precise and disturbing expression. The young hero and narrator in *Miguel Street* (1959), like Lamming's 'G', learns as he grows up that people's *personae* – their apparent self-confidence and stability – are only facades behind which their fragile, inner selves crouch in fear. The formidable 'Big Foot', the terror of Miguel Street, turns out to be riddled with fear and insecurity; the silent, mysterious, 'Bogart', who sedulously adopts and develops a 'strong' image, is finally exposed as a sad, petty charlatan whose real desire is only "*to be a man, among women.*" (p. 12). Even the apparently stable, self-contained 'Hat' – the narrator's hero and a father-figure in the book – goes to prison, his emotional life in ruins. There is a constant drift towards social and personal disintegration; and the book ends with the hero's flight from his repressive, restricting island home.

In Naipaul's work, the home or house often stands as a symbol of the undivided self, and it is significant how frequently his characters' failure simply to attain the condition of being housed, of possessing a decent home of

their own, reflects their spiritual and psychological rootlessness. Of course this symbolic use of the house appears throughout English literature. One has only to think of King Lear's vision of 'unaccommodated man', or Jane Austen's use of the symbol (especially in *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion*) almost as extensions of her characters' attitudes; of Forster's *Howard's End*, Virginia Woolf's *Jacob's Room*, T.S. Eliot's *Gerontion* ("who stiffen in a rented house") to notice the relationship of Man's 'unhoused' condition to his lack of psychic 'wholeness'. As Gordon Rohlehr observes, writing in *The Islands in Between* about what is perhaps Naipaul's most considerable achievement:

A House for Mr Biswas (1961), moves far beyond preoccupations with race or the Hindu world in Trinidad, and depicts a classic struggle for personality against a society that denies it [...]

and the house which Mr Biswas determines to build is more than a dwelling; it is, as Rohlehr recognises, "*his personality symbolised, the private individuality which he must both build and maintain against the rest of the world.*" And it would be interesting to trace in detail Naipaul's use of images of house or home, and their significance in his work as a commentary on the self-hood of the individual. It is clearly a measure of Biswas's lack of wholeness, for example, that the first house he builds is little more than a clearing in the bush, unfinished, haphazard and open to the elements: the second house is "*not painted. It stood red-raw in its unregulated green setting,*" and his final house is an ugly, jerry-built affair, unplanned and dangerous, standing on rotten pillars. *The Mimic Men* (1967) opens with the image of a boarding-house as a synonym for the rootlessness and perfunctoriness of the hero's existence and ends with Ralph Kripalsingh behind a pillar, at dinner in another boarding-house. He is now completely self-alienated and withdrawn, resigned (at forty) to homelessness, acedia and decay.

Throughout Naipaul's work one is made aware of the forces of psychic disintegration which must be kept at bay. In an interview recorded in *Transition*³⁹, Naipaul himself defines this condition of the 'embattled' consciousness:

One must make a pattern of one's observation, one's daily distress; one's lack of status [...] If daily one lives with this, then daily one has to incorporate the experience into something bigger. [...] A person in this position risks going mad; I have seen it happen to others [...] and it is one of the great strands in my own writing. (p. 59).

An Area of Darkness (1964), like the early *Miguel Street* (1959), also ends with flight. The fear of loss of personality, of individual existence, is everywhere in the book. In Bombay, an Indian in an Indian crowd, Naipaul writes:

It was like being denied part of my reality [...] I was faceless. I might sink without a trace into that Indian crowd. (p. 43).⁴⁰

Naipaul's horror – it is not too strong a word – of 'taint', genetic or otherwise, promotes a corresponding respect for cultural pedigree and makes him admire the Aryan qualities which he sees reflected in the Sikh who befriends him on the train:

The Sikhs puzzled and attracted me: They were among the few whole men in India, and of all Indians they seemed closest in many ways to the Indians of Trinidad. (p. 222).

This is, of course, another manifestation of the West Indian's concern with identity. The 'wholeness' which Naipaul instinctively respects in the Sikh is a glimpse of his own "*superseded consciousness*" (p. 141) – the sense of ethnic and cultural traditions denied him in Trinidad – which his visit to India awakens; and his despair at the thought that "*something which was once whole had been washed away*" (pp. 187–188), a thought which applies to India as well to himself, leads to an attempt to protect his identity from further damage:

[...] to withdraw completely from nationality and loyalties except to persons [...] content to be myself alone, my work, my name [...] to shield all that I knew to be good and pure within myself from the corruption of causes. (p. 188).

But the nagging sense of incompleteness remains. The vision of the cave-dwellers of Kashmir as "*handsome, sharp-*

feathered men, descendants, I felt, of Central Asian Horsemen" (p. 129) is one that reappears in *The Mimic Men* (1967), where it is the hero's vision of a magnificent and unsullied past heritage, now lost. In Naipaul's later novels one witnesses the withdrawal of the ego in an attempt to preserve identity against external, disintegrative forces. In *The Mimic Men* (1967) Ralph Singh, adrift between England and the West Indies (one of the most frequent images in the book is that of shipwreck) is almost solely concerned with the preservation of what remains of his identity:

[...] it became urgent now for me. Before it had been part of fantasy, part of the urge to escape shipwreck and return to lands I had fashioned in my imagination, lands of horsemen, high plains, mountains and snow [...] Now I felt that need only to get away[...] (p. 145).

So, in an attempt to avoid further damage to his identity, Singh, crab-like, withdraws deeper and deeper into his shell. Ambition, purpose, love and feeling itself fall away. Near the end of the novel, during an encounter with a grotesquely fat prostitute, his awareness of himself as an individual is reduced finally to the absolute minimum:

The self dropped away, layer by layer, what remained dwindled to a cell of perception, indifferent to pleasure or pain; neutral perception [...] (p. 237).

Unable to see in the Caribbean anything other than a rubbish heap of broken cultures, the hero turns more and more to Europe and the Old World. "*There,*" thinks Ralph Singh, "*in Liège in a traffic jam, on the snow slopes of the Laurentians, was the true, pure world.*" (p. 146). But the vision of Europe and the Old World as representing freedom from psychic fragmentation or from the fear of emotional damage, is illusory. The problem of identity is not, finally, either a social or a cultural one. It is a psychological, and therefore universal, dilemma: the need for personal integration. In 'One out of Many', from *In a Free State* Santosh, risen from the gutters of Bombay to become an American citizen in

Washington, finds that his freedom is, in effect, a cruel process of disillusionment:

I was one part of the flow, never thinking of myself as a presence. Then I looked in the mirror and decided to be free. All that my freedom has brought me is the knowledge that I have a face and have a body, that I must feed this body and clothe this body for a certain number of years. Then it will be over. (p. 61).

Seeking to be free of a restricting, limited West Indian background, Naipaul, like Santosh, like most of his heroes in fact, discovers that true freedom involves much more than an establishing of one's individuality; of differentiation from the faceless mass of humanity. It also requires a strong emotional centre of balance which allows contact with others to be not damaging, but fruitful. As Naipaul himself admits in the 1971 *Transition* interview:

Having discovered and then overcome the great difficulty of writing, one is confronted with the intractable nature of truth, the difficulty of one's own position [...] and the fact that all one is now really seeking: a true communication with a society; is non-existent and impossible.

Because he considers 'a true communication' impossible, Naipaul sees freedom as a mirage, a vision of wholeness that always appears to recede as one approaches. The need to preserve and protect one's status as an individual becomes an end in itself: a defensive gesture against the disorganised, disintegrative elements in the world at large. Unable to graft himself safely on to a suitable parent-body, the writer must now be concerned to avoid damage to the self. Naipaul is finally unable to identify himself with the West Indies, with Europe and the Old World or with India. Indeed, the experience of India in *An Area of Darkness* (1964) begins with a sense of hysteria and ends with a resignation to rootlessness. The magic of India is offset by its poverty, fatalism and squalor, and once again the gold of the imagination is transmuted, sadly, into the lead of reality:

In a year I had not learned acceptance. I had learned my separateness from India, and was content to be a colonial, without a past, without ancestors. (p. 252).

This intensely felt dilemma, the need to preserve individuality and psychic 'wholeness' in a threatening, divisive world, powers Naipaul's writing, giving it an urgency and emotional validity which is peculiarly personal. It was what a reviewer of *The Overcrowded Barracoon* (1972) calls:

[...] this phenomenon, of a theme seeming to be embodied in the writer's personality so that all the overt themes in his work become subordinate.

But this, as we have seen, is equally true of Mittelholzer and Lamming: indeed, it is the most striking feature of the Caribbean novel as a whole, where the integrity of the personality is almost always the subject, and its establishment and preservation most frequently the main theme. The Caribbean novel is above all concerned with the problem of racial identity and the individual consciousness; and the work of V. S. Naipaul and George Lamming may be considered important and accomplished exemplars of one main line of development in Caribbean fiction which can ultimately be traced back to the work of Edgar Mittelholzer. This is the aspect of Caribbean writing in which the writer, aware of his cultural and racial schizophrenia, unable to ignore or accept the Old World biases he has inherited, nevertheless makes a vital and original art out of his dilemma.

This problem of racial and cultural division is also the important and significant basis of the poetry of Derek Walcott, who, however, accepting his role as "*the mulatto of style*", is at pains to make "*creative use of his schizophrenia*." With a self-aware, exceptionally wide-ranging sensibility and immense technical skill, Walcott is able not only to accept his genetic condition – he is a mulatto wrestling with the contradiction of being "*white in mind and black in body*" as he puts it – but to make out of it a major art. There is an impression of Walcott as a cultural, Janus-figure, reflecting equally a European and a Caribbean sensibility; an impression

that is curiously persistent. One feels that Walcott, deeply divided, sublimates his personal angst in art that his life is made livable precisely because it is lived in and through literature. In proclaiming his mixed heritage as a neutral, biological condition, for example, he nevertheless conveys what seems to be essentially a literary reaction, rather than a pragmatic attitude: In *What the Twilight Says*, his preface to *Dream on Monkey Mountain and Other Plays*, he says:

[...] mongrel as I am, something prickles in me when I see the word Ashanti as with the word Warwickshire, both separately intimating my grandfathers' roots, both baptising this neither proud nor ashamed bastard, this hybrid, West Indian.

Just as for the young Walcott "*there was no other motivation but knowledge*," so for the poet approaching [middle]⁴¹ age, his personal dilemma, his mulatto schizophrenia, consists, it would appear, of a dualistic literary heritage – of being "*wrenched by two styles*". It is as though a solution to the problem of division of consciousness is being deliberately sought through a formal art within which the personality itself remains carefully out of sight: the poet within a shell:

The sea crab's cunning, halting awkward grace is the syntactical envy of my hand; obliquity burrowing the surface from hot plain sand.

The metaphors here have a literary significance, for the poet is comparing the crab's "*cunning*" and "*obliquity*" with his own approach as a writer.

In Walcott's work there is always this clear-headed dedication to his art; and emotions, however urgent or complex, are made to serve the primary need of poetic development. The poet must learn not only to seek the meaning of his suffering, but to find for it a meaningful form to "*suffer in accurate iambs*," Walcott therefore regards his ambivalent heritage as a poetic strength, for it provides, as it were, the negative and positive poles between which the creative spark jumps. He represents, one feels, that aspect of West Indian writing which involves the acceptance of

'mongrelism' as a means towards a deliberately catalytical art: an art which, facing both ways, can make creative sense of both worlds of Caribbean and European sensibility. In fact, by describing himself as "*the mulatto of style, the traitor, the assimilator*" Walcott invokes (perhaps unconsciously) the image of the trickster or shaman – the spider-figure of West Indian/African folklore who traditionally acts as the agent (the catalyst) initiating a new state of consciousness in a *rite de passage*.

This new state of consciousness, a new and original growth in sensibility produced, as it were, by a genuine cross-fertilisation of cultures and races, is the main theme of Wilson Harris's work. His novels illustrate what must be considered as perhaps the most remarkable and original aspect of West Indian writing; one in which the condition of cultural and racial admixture itself becomes the 'complex womb' of a new wholeness of vision. A creative attempt is made to heal the divided psyche of Caribbean Man by looking inward, towards:

[...] a theme of a living drama of conception, the conception of the human person rather than the ideology of the 'broken' individual.

Wilson Harris is one of those writers whom we generally acknowledge to be 'important' but 'difficult'; and whose work critics and book reviewers continue to greet with a mixture of respect and puzzlement. Respect, because the writer's sincere commitment to his art is obvious, and his creative imagination clearly of a very high order; puzzlement, because the style and method of approach can often be bewilderingly obscure. Even Harris's more enthusiastic commentators – a small but growing number – are forced, from time to time, to admit to his maverick quality as a writer: his highly individual, indeed idiosyncratic, approach to the art of the novel.

His work follows an intricately woven, complex, pattern reflecting his own poetic and philosophical learnings,⁴² and has been linked with Blake, Swedenborg and Yeats; with the esoteric vision of the Christian mystics; with the world of modern surrealist painting. His art has even been compared (in its concern with 'complementarity') with the findings of

quantum physics and the physical sciences. And all of these comparisons are just. There is, in Harris's theme as in his fictional approach, a kind of omnivorous intelligence that absorbs and reflects an extraordinarily wide range of interests and ideas.

Yet Harris is not that intellectual absurdity: 'a writer's writer'. His work is profoundly relevant, not only to the Caribbean sensibility, but to thinking people everywhere; to anyone who is genuinely concerned with the quality of our response to life. His work seems eccentric or obscure precisely because it represents the imaginative daring which has always refused to accept fixed or static literary, cultural, racial, political or geographical boundaries. And because it is also that rare thing: a humane, integrated and honestly subjective vision of the world. What D. H. Lawrence once called "*a man, in his wholeness wholly attending*", Harris's work may appear difficult but it is never trivial or narrowly self-regarding. It is an art in fact, that implies a revolutionary change in sensibility; and in so doing, suggests an alteration – a new direction – in the form of the modern novel.

Harris's novels are quite deliberately unorthodox, written to convey 'subterranean emphases' consistent with a well-articulated theory of 'implosion'. This is a method of fiction in which the meaning of the work is to be found neither in the overt plot nor in characterisation: but within the numerous echoes, associations and reverberations of meaning: set up in the reader's mind as he enters the novel, so to speak. It is an approach which requires the writer's (as well as the reader's) openness to language less as a medium of intellectual meaning than of vision. In a talk, Harris had said:

This is the germ of the thing the writer feels when he says in everyday talk that 'a work begins to write itself', to live its own life, to make its author see developments he had not intellectually ordered or arranged.⁴³

In his deliberate choice of a theme of psychic reintegration, as in his choice of a fiction of 'implosion', Harris is the antithesis of writers like V. S. Naipaul and Edgar Mittelholzer.

Yet these writers are linked in a curiously ironic way through their shared concern for the genetic and cultural relationship to the ancestor. Where, however, Mittelholzer regards his mixed racial inheritance as a static, 'weak' condition: a damaging impediment in his effort to relate to a European 'parent'; Harris (himself racially mixed) considers this fact of admixture a strength and a vital source of new and original growth towards identity. He rejects the implied views of both George Lamming (who seeks self-definition through confrontation with the white world) and Vidia Naipaul (whose Old World bias forces him – as it does Mittelholzer – to reject the 'inferior', 'broken' cultures of the West Indies. For Harris, a new sensibility, and, consequently, a new Art, is the vital substance and goal of any true quest for identity or for wholeness. And by adopting a dynamic, experimental approach to the problem of divided consciousness, he is able to expand the theme of the 'broken individual' to universal proportions; finding in it almost unlimited creative scope for his own associative art.

Any study of Harris's work is necessarily incomplete, for the writer's vision is expanding all the time. He had completed a new novel *Companions of the Day and Night* and is already at work on another novel and on a critical study of the development of certain 'perspectives' within the twentieth century novel. A development he sees (and I quote) as a

[...] kind of imaginative alteration of the manner of the novel,
[...] through which one is alerted to visualise new sources of
the imagination.

It is a development which is also taking place within his own work, and this talk, therefore, of which only a little time remains, can serve only to indicate something of the complex nature of Harris's vision; and to demonstrate the continuing exploratory, associative activity of his remarkable imagination. Indeed, an exegesis of Harris's novels would require another series of lectures.

Harris's experience, as a land-surveyor, of the rainforests disturbing effect upon the normal centres of perception, its characteristic heightening of the less familiar modes of

awareness; encouraged in his sensitive, introspective mind the contemplation of larger themes – the nature of awareness, of Being itself. The unpredictable nature of the landscape, the deceptive ‘lie of the land’, where rivers and trees, rocks and waterfalls may contain both a threat and a bounty; where tacoubas wait in ambush just below the mirror-like surface of quiet creeks and rivers, impressed upon his mind the need for an unconventional ‘reality’. A less ‘tidy’ approach to art which could allow for, and embody, the unpredictable nature of life. If for Mittelholzer the interior represented a numinous, vaguely hostile presence, for Harris it became both a danger and a means of creative vision: both tomb and womb. For him the rainforest was neither pitiless, raw Nature nor a romantic symbol of an unspoilt world, but a ‘world-creating jungle’ like that which Blake’s ‘Tyger’ inhabits, a symbolic chaos out of which all creations are fashioned. Harris (unlike Mittelholzer) refuses to consider concepts like ‘strong’ and ‘weak’, ‘good’ and ‘evil’ or even ‘actual’ and ‘fictitious’ as self-evident absolutes or diametrically opposed definitions; Harris’s universe, like Blake’s is composed of contraries. And the purpose of his work is to convey the conjunction of disparate elements which contribute to his complex vision of reality as a ‘one-ness’ in which both Man and Nature (animate and inanimate) participate. This is not, however, the Romantic Vision: the ‘wise passiveness’ of a Wordsworth or the ‘negative capability’ of a Keats; but primarily an existential position in which the artist’s own creative leap is a prerequisite. For Harris, this ‘one-ness’ of life can be experienced and communicated only through ‘authentic’ existence and an acceptance of ‘dread’. Like Heidegger, who sees Man as thrown (*geworfen*) into existence, Harris regards ‘authentic’ experience as a conscious decision to face the psychic disorientation which this condition of precariousness creates.

The social and geographical contrast between Guyana’s extensive, densely-wooded and mountainous (but virtually unpopulated) interior and the overcrowded main city on the flat, alluvial coast provides Harris with a natural metaphor for man’s highly developed; but superficial outer existence and his neglected, undeveloped inner Being. And his interest in what is ‘unpredictable and hidden’ in the individual

is related to his fascination with "*the interior of a landscape within which men lose themselves to find themselves.*" Harris may therefore be considered an 'interior' writer in contrast to the 'coastal' Mittelholzer whose stylistic concern is for conventional characterisation and plot; and the 'contraries' which divide and fragment the work of Mittelholzer are accepted and used by Harris for new, creative development – imaginative explorations which employ symbol, metaphor and myth to suggest a reconciliation of opposites. Louis James's criticism of Harris's poetry in the Guyana 1966 Independence edition of *New World* may also be applied to his fiction: one may argue that:

[...] If everything is in flux, if qualities, values and substance are interchangeable – if time is collapsible, and all proportions relative ('The tiniest flake is a cliff, the merest trickle of water a deluge') the reader is desperately in need of something to hold on to.

In knocking away conventional props, the reader's habitual framework of reality, the writer risks forfeiting the very communication he seeks. But it is also necessary to say that the disordering of conventional response, of setting the reader adrift, as it were, is part of Harris's purpose. It is a deliberate disorientation of the senses in an attempt to establish a new awareness: an 'authentic' response. There can be no doubt that this creates a real difficulty of interpretation. Harris's work is frankly idiosyncratic. But, again, invoking the spirit of Blake, the writer might well say, in reply to charges of 'obscurity or 'eccentricity':

Both read the Bible day and night
But thou readst black where I read white [...]
Do what you will this Life's a fiction
And is made up of Contradiction.

What Harris finds remarkable in the West Indian is:

[...] the series of subtle and nebulous links which are latent within him, the latent ground of old and new personalities.

and his approach to character and situation in his fiction is therefore experimental and exploratory: a creative undertaking that includes the author's own developing self-awareness, and this concept of art as a tentative, exploratory and re-constructive attempt in which the artist is only a medium, himself a part of the creative process, makes Harris's work highly original and gives a consistency of style and purpose to whatever he undertakes. His poetry, novels, talks and critical essays all witness to his concern for a new vision of consciousness, a new dimension of feeling which will free "*the toy man, the exploited man*" from his prison of static, single-visioned perception.

This attitude informs, for example, Harris's critical response to the painting of Denis Williams – recorded in *Kyk-Over-Al*⁴⁴. Piet Mondrian, the great Flemish experimental painter had, in his later work, "*shattered volume and space. Planes no longer existed on his canvases*" and Williams, like Mondrian, is seen by Harris as a pioneer in the work of freeing the observer from preconceptions about painting – from an approach to art which traditionally 'coerces' and 'captures' the attention. Williams, says Harris, "*worked [...] almost as if he were an engineer tracing the stage-discharge curve of a river from plotted values.*" That Harris has in mind his own wish to create a New Art of Fiction is obvious not only from his concern with the artist's exploration of his own 'genius' within the framework of an experimental art; but also from his analogy of the engineer measuring the stage-discharge curve of a river. Harris had worked as a senior government land-surveyor in the interior of Guyana for many years doing precisely that as part of his job; and in *The Secret Ladder* (1963) his hero, Fenwick, is a government land-surveyor whose work of gauging the levels of the Canje river has the symbolic meaning of self-exploration and self-knowledge.

Palace of the Peacock (1960), Harris's first published novel, was in fact the culmination of several earlier attempts at novel-writing. These early novels are not extant, however, but a short excerpt from one of them survives in *Kyk-Over-Al*⁴⁵, entitled 'Banim Creek', and shows the author's fascination with the subtleties of human relationships within the brooding presence of river and forest; a subject which is central to the

later novels. Banim Creek is the name of a survey camp several miles along an interior river. A group of four men (they are to set up gauges and 'read' and record the levels of the river) are deposited at the camp as part of the survey team, and their relationship to each other is highlighted and illustrated by the arrival of an attractive Portuguese huckster whose husband mistreats her, and whose frequent visits to the camp create 'tides' of emotion among the men analogous to the river 'tides' which they must 'read'. The woman appears to represent a quality of compassionate love which the men pursue in vain, because of their own spiritual incapacity. She is the personification of one's conscience: that compassionate counterpart of the self which, forever fugitive and rejected, nevertheless has to be faced and accepted by the individual. She is the focal centre of the short story 'Tomorrow', Harris's first published prose work, and reappears in the early novels as the Amerindian mistress Mariella (*Palace of the Peacock*, 1960), the whore Magda (*The Whole Armour*, 1962) and the brutalised, illiterate Catalena Perez (*The Secret Ladder*, 1963).

In the later novels, *The Waiting Room* (1967) and *Tumatumari* (1968) a woman is again the unifying presence in the lives of others. But the scope of Harris's vision and his technique as an 'interior' novelist have widened to such an extent by this time, that these novels are themselves written as if taking place within the consciousness of a woman who, in a condition of dread – acute emotional deprivation – gradually begins to reconceive the broken past. In the symbolic figure of the blind Susan Forrestal in *The Waiting Room*, Harris had arrived at a type of fiction in which there are no individual characters in the conventional sense: all the 'characters' are contained within the process of memory of a single consciousness. The theme now is the universal struggle for a balance between the male and female principles, and the echoes and implications that emerge illuminate the universal dilemma of divided Man. The theme of psychic reconstruction, in which self-knowledge is acquired through arousal in a state of extremity, is now contained in a novel-form that itself mirrors this condition of extremity.

Susan's blindness allows her to reconstruct in a fluid, creative way, without the distractions of fixed, visual perception, the fragmented relationships which had been the substance of her life. Her mind is made peculiarly receptive to "*unknown modes of being*" by her 'helpless', blind condition, and she begins to 'see' the past in a new light. Gradually she comes to realise that her role as loved, abandoned mistress and blind, helpless wife had been disingenuous. She had secretly wished for sexual domination and had, in fact, attempted to control and use both lover and husband. They, too, also gain deeper knowledge of themselves through their relationship with her. In a sense Susan is the 'waiting room' in which they learn to reassess their own motives and reactions. At the end of the novel, placed, significantly, in the Guyanese interior, lover and husband (we are never quite sure which) undertake a voyage of self-discovery, described in the book as a "*voyage in pursuit of the nameless river of the world.*"

The Waiting Room is an art of extremity involving the writer's abandonment to an intuitive force within or, as Harris himself puts it in a talk entitled 'Interior of the Novel':

[...] a 'vacancy' in the nature within which agents appear who are translated one by the other and who reappear through each other, inhabit each other [...] push each other to plunge into the unknown [...] a constitution of humility in which the 'author' himself is an 'agent' in a metaphysical dimension compounded of losses and gains [...]⁴⁶

Having developed, in *The Waiting Room*, the technical approach which could embody both 'form' and 'formlessness', 'gains' and 'losses' in a single, sustained act of memory, Harris, in *Tumatumari*, turned again to a Caribbean locale. Here again, the novel is conceived as taking place within the consciousness of a woman in a condition of acute emotional deprivation. It is another attempt to use creative memory in order to reconstruct out of a broken past, an 'authentic' existence. Derek Walcott in a poem called '**Laventille**', said this about the Middle Passage:

Something inside is laid wide like a wound,

some open passage that has cleft the brain.
Some deep amnesiac blow. We left somewhere
a life we never found,

customs and gods that are not born again.

Tumatumari, like all of Harris's fiction, is an attempt to free the creative imagination from the prison of historical, 'dead' time; to repair the damage done by that 'deep' amnesiac blow. And Prudence, immersed in the "*well of the past*" atop Tumatumari Fall, suffering but held by the unmoving 'eye' of the waterfall, reaches through her helpless, deprived condition to a truer knowledge of the past; a reconstruction of the 'broken', 'history-less', individual. For Harris, this new "treaty of sensibility" is needed to bridge the gulf between history and present, lived reality. Between reason and emotion, science and art, man and woman. Only by accepting and digesting the contrasting nature of things - the paradoxes of which our universe is composed - can we break free of the one-sided assumptions that have hitherto guided our lives. The terrifying nature of reality, in which alien features continually appear to threaten mankind's orderly, logical advance, the fear of the dark self which Man distances and hides from consciousness at great risk. These must finally be faced. Only when this has been done and 'Authentic Being' achieved, can one begin to perceive the construction of future events going on within the broken, disordered past and present.

The implications of such a philosophy of psychic reconstruction can have far-reaching effects in the field of art or literature, as in life. One has only to think of the revolution in psychology caused by Freud's discovery of the autonomous unconscious, or of Einstein's equally revolutionary discovery of the Theory of Relativity; or of the discovery in physical science of 'Faustian' matter or 'anti-matter', or, in astronomy, of the 'black holes' in the universe (caused by imploding stars, beyond which whole new universes may lie) to see how revolutionary Harris's approach to creative fiction may be.

For by setting the creative imagination free in an atmosphere where 'gains' and 'losses' become wholly relative and where no static values exist, the possibilities of change, of new associations and new growth, become almost infinite. Harris is well aware of the difficulties involved in attempting to embody such a philosophy in his fiction. As the hero in *Black Marsden*⁴⁷ Clive Goodrich says, "*It's one thing to evoke a magical commonwealth (all races, all time). It's another thing to prove it.*" And each novel Harris writes is therefore only another stage in an exploration which must continually be going on.

Discussing the question of 'reality' in American writing, Lionel Trilling notes that:

[...] in any culture there are likely to be certain artists who contain a large part of the dialectic within themselves, their meaning and power lying in their contradictions [...] they contain both the yes and the no of their culture, and by that token they [are] prophetic of the future.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I should like to suggest that the importance of Mittelholzer and Harris is of this order. Mittelholzer's work may be said to contain the 'no' and Harris's-the 'yes' of the Caribbean reality.

An understanding of Mittelholzer's maimed attempts to achieve psychic wholeness – his deliberate use of schizoid heroes to project his own split condition – is, I suggest, an essential step towards understanding (for example) the peculiar nature of the irony and despair of a V. S. Naipaul, or the eloquent rages of a George Lamming. For in their work (as in Mittelholzer's) one finds the European presence as an ambivalent, disorientating factor, and in spite of their differing response to Europe and to the problem of racial and cultural identity, Lamming and Naipaul are spokesmen for a shared malaise: the intensely felt crisis of identity in which there is 'something missing' which makes "*a true communication with a society [...] non-existent and impossible.*" This overriding necessity to establish one's identity and to preserve the individual's psychic balance in a threatening, divisive world, is, as we have observed, Mittelholzer's central concern, and

the importance of his work may be seen in the complex psychological condition which it so accurately represents, and of which it is a symptom. For this condition of psychic incompleteness is at the centre of Caribbean fiction.

The importance of Harris's work lies in the fact that it suggests the possibility of a response to the West Indian cultural and historical reality which is neither a revolt against, nor a passive acceptance of, a divisive situation. Harris suggests an alternative response which, in refusing to be subject to sterile ideological biases, allows for a reinterpretation of both history and cultural identity. By pointing to the subtle correspondences (heterogeneous elements, rather than uniform identity) within the West Indian historical and social situations, he witnesses for an openness to genuine, creative change. In fact he frequently extends the boundaries of the Caribbean to include South America and the Third World, and attempts to demonstrate the far-reaching correspondences which, for him, give a truer picture of history. It is a wide, compassionate and open-ended view of history, one which refuses to set up stereotypes or implacable factions or blocs, and allows for a genuinely creative, visionary response to 'reality'. It is an attitude that derives from an acceptance of diversity, of bastard origin, of mongrelism not as a 'taint' – a wrong to be righted – but as a valuable source of new growth. Harris's dedication to the task of psychic reconstruction, his deep awareness that without contraries there can be no progression, links him (and through him, the Caribbean novel) not only with South America and the Third World: with writers like Amos Tutuola, Alejo Carpentier, and Gabriel García Márquez; but also with the visionary aspects of the European tradition of the novel, with prophetic and apocalyptic figures like Blake or Meister Eckhart. In fact with all writers, artists and thinkers whose concern is with the universal malaise of one-sidedness and for whom creative imagination is calling. It is possible to describe his work as 'difficult' or 'confusing', but unwise to ignore its importance. Harris's attitude to 'reality' is 'irrational', but only because he recognises that within apparently unalterable events there are subtle correspondences which are truer than the facts, that a new vision of reality, a

new consciousness, needs to be conceived. Like Gabriel Garcia Márquez, Harris regards 'reality' as magical: a fluid, shifting medium which:

[...] makes for a profoundly revised canvas – a thread of self-judgement one embodies in the communication of new form through old static inheritances [...] 'magical reality' [...] is radical in perspectives. Indeed, it is a kind of 'unconditional love', and the tasks of creativity become enormous [...]⁴⁸

This reference to 'unconditional love' as part of the process of the creative imagination reflects the 'matriarchal' aspect of Harris's work (counterbalancing, as it were, the strongly 'patriarchal' bias one finds in Mittelholzer's) and illustrates his approach to fiction as a reconstructive, liberating art. An art which, by incurring "a necessary burden of authenticity, obscurity or difficulty at the same time", is concerned not only to redress the balance of the Caribbean schizophrenia, but also to heal the divided consciousness of Man.

ENDNOTES:

- ¹ *Dream on Monkey Mountain and other plays*, p. 20.
- ² 'Image and Idea in the Arts of Guyana'. The 1969 Mittelholzer Lecture Series, p 10.
- ³ *Op. cit.*, p.15.
- ⁴ *The Harrowing of Hubertus*, p. 71.
- ⁵ *A Swarthy Boy*, p. 30.
- ⁶ *Crime and Personality*. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1964), p. 163.
- ⁷ *Uncle Paul*, p. 79.
- ⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 149.
- ⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 154.
- ¹⁰ 'Edgar Mittelholzer: Moralist or Pornographer?' in *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* (July 1969), pp. 88–103.
- ¹¹ Donald A. Ringo, *Charles Brockden Brown*. (Twayne N. Y., 1966).
- ¹² Warner Berthoff, *Arthur Mervyn*. (Holt, Rinehart and Winston N. Y., 1962).
- ¹³ 16 January 1932.
- ¹⁴ *Corentyne Thunder*, p. 263.
- ¹⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 260.
- ¹⁶ *Corentyne Thunder*, p. 273.
- ¹⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 172
- ¹⁸ *In West Indian Stories*. (Faber & Faber, 1960), pp. 20–27)
- ¹⁹ Penguin, 1968.

- ²⁰ *Tradition, the Writer and Society*. (New Beacon Publications, 1967), p. 10.
- ²¹ Leslie Fielder, *Love and Death in the American Novel*. (Paladin, 1970).
- ²² Erich Fromm, *The Crisis of Psychoanalysis*. (Jonathan Cape, 1971).
- ²³ C.G. Jung, 'The Development of the Personality'. No. 17 of *Collected Works* (Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1954) p. 185. [Author's italics].
- ²⁴ 'Main Street' from *Twice-Told Tales*. (Second series, Frederick Warne & Co., 1893), p. 70.
- ²⁵ [Author's italics].
- ²⁶ From the preface to *Dream on Monkey Mountain and Other Plays*. (Jonathan Cape, 1972), p. 14).
- ²⁷ Birbalsingh, *op. cit.*
- ²⁸ No. 40 (December 1971).
- ²⁹ *Psychoanalytic studies of the Personality*. (Tavistock, 1962), p. 65.
- ³⁰ *A Swarthy Boy*, p. 43.
- ³¹ [Editor's note: this was the title of the original 1927 German edition.]
- ³² H. Gross, 'Aschenbach and Kurtz: the cost of civilization', in *Centennial Review* (No. vi., 1962), p. 133.
- ³³ *The Poetic Image*. (Jonathan Cape, 1964), p. 135.
- ³⁴ *The Dynamics of Literature Response*. (New York: OUP, 1968).
- ³⁵ Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972.
- ³⁶ *Paladin*, 1970.
- ³⁷ [Editor's note: an outdoor shelter.]
- ³⁸ *Literary Half-Yearly* (Vol. xi., No. 1, 1970).
- ³⁹ No. 40 (December 1971).
- ⁴⁰ [Editor's note: this echoes the experience that Denis Williams recounts in his 1969 lecture, where he remembers "[...] a feeling almost of shock when confronted, for the first time in twenty years, with the West Indian mass in the dining-saloon. Shock yes, and confusion and alarm and even paradoxically, repulsion. This polyglot mass, this composite, this hybrid, this mongrel – who were these people?"]
- ⁴¹ [Editor's note: in the published edition a word has been omitted here for some reason and replaced by four dots. I have replaced the dots with 'middle', which seems to make most sense in the context.]
- ⁴² [Editor's note: it is possible that this may be a typographical error and that 'leanings' was intended.]
- ⁴³ Recorded in *Tradition, the Writer and Society: Critical Essays* by Wilson Harris (New Beacon, 1967).
- ⁴⁴ 'Two Periods in the Work of a West Indian Artist', in *Kyk-Over-Al* (Vol. 6, No. 20, Mid-Year, 1955), pp. 183–187.
- ⁴⁵ Vol. 6, No. 18, 1954.
- ⁴⁶ 'Interior of the Novel: Amerindian / European / African Relations', in *National Identity*, ed. K. L. Goodwin (London and Melbourne: Heinemann Australia, 1970).
- ⁴⁷ Wilson Harris, *Black Marsden: A Tabula Rasa Comedy* (Faber and Faber, 1972), p. 46.
- ⁴⁸ From a personal letter dated 6 February 1973.

Seventh Series, 1979

**Norman E. Cameron - The Man
and his Works**

Joycelynn Loncke

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J. L.

INTRODUCTION

Mathematician, historian, educationist, essayist, poet and dramatist, Norman Eustace Cameron, like many men of outstanding ability, has made use of his talents in a variety of fields, blazoning the trail each time for others to follow. As we describe his career as it develops and evolves, and as we examine his statements on politics, philosophy, history, culture and religion, we are impressed by certain constants which form the unifying elements in the works he has produced. We shall attempt to focus attention on those golden threads which, as in a tapestry, form the dominant elements in his output. We cannot, of course, hope to encompass all the ramifications of his work. There is matter here for three or four doctoral theses. Others will analyse and perhaps psychoanalyse his creations. Within the narrow limits of four lectures we can merely hope to present in capsule form a general appreciation of the man and his work and a succinct evaluation of his contribution to the history of literature in Guyana.

PROLOGUE

On the 19th September, 1979, in the early afternoon, the neatly dressed gentleman of seventy-six came before the members of the Constituent Assembly in the august halls of the House of Assembly, Public Buildings, and in his light but pleasant tenor voice, marked from time to time by a slight tremor, he carefully delivered the arguments he had prepared in a Memorandum on the new socialist constitution – a memorandum written in answer to the Guyana Government's call for the collaboration of individuals and organisations in the hammering out of the proposed constitution.

Exactly twenty-five years before, in 1954, Professor N. E. Cameron had sat in a similar chair, before a similar Commission, and had given evidence on the British Guiana Constitutional Crisis. Indeed he was the first to be called to do so. But how very different were the circumstances. At that time, the colony of the then British Guiana had been swept by the turbulent wave of political agitation which should have rolled on, unhampered, to spend itself in an early Independence, but which was arbitrarily, if not brutally, stemmed by decree and by the imposition of force by the colonial power that looked on in alarm at the new threat to its empire. In 1954, it took courage to depose before the Robertson Commission. In 1979, another kind of courage was called for.

When asked why, as a long-standing and staunch member of the Anglican Church whose local authorities had adopted a hostile position with respect to the proposed new Constitution of Guyana, he had gone against their position and had taken the decision to give evidence before the Constituent Assembly, Professor Cameron replied that he had always been convinced that every Guyanese should be free to contribute in a positive way to the growth and evolution of his country – *"This is a duty."* And in his gentle brown eyes there was a gleam of determination, and in his mild voice there was a ring of authority.

And once again, the attentive researcher sensed the presence of an iron will tempered by a humane vision, and inwardly posed the question: "*Who exactly is the man, Cameron?*"

I

*Mine has been a full life and complex
with notable contradictions. I think I am
essentially a child of the community.*

ANTECEDENTS

Norman Eustace Cameron was born in New Amsterdam on 26th January, 1903, and he was baptised in All Saints' Anglican Church not far from the family home in Pitt Street. He was the second son of George Johnson Cameron and Sylvia Elizabeth Cameron *née* Beete.

His father's earliest years were spent at Devonshire Castle in Essequibo where, as the son of an overseer, he was early imbued with a thirst for knowledge and the desire to rise. In fact, his whole life was marked by a singular devotion to studies. After an elementary education in Jonestown (now called Agricola), under headmaster Robert Dudley Thomas, George Cameron became a Pupil Teacher for a short while. But his real interest lay in medicine.

It is to be remembered that at the turn of the century salaries were so low, and the cost of education so high, that the majority of Guyanese could not afford to go to High School, much less aspire to study medicine abroad. Secondary and higher education literally cost a fortune. We are told, for example, that at one time the average salary of a schoolteacher ranged from *ten to fifteen* dollars per month, while at the same period, the fees for sending one child to Queen's College were *seventeen dollars and forty-eight cents* per term.

In such circumstances, George Cameron had to limit his aspirations to what was available. He successfully studied for the local 'Sick-Nurse and Dispensers' examination, gaining the certificate which would permit him to practise in town, village or estate. He also gained the Chemist and Druggist Certificate and for a while conducted his own Pharmacy in Saffron Street.

After some twenty-five years as a practising chemist and druggist, Cameron's father still felt the call to learn more.

Refusing to stagnate, he once again flung himself into preparation for another examination; this time it was the local examination of the Royal Sanitary Inspectors' Board. His efforts were rewarded with success, and he left the dispensary to go into sanitation, where he stayed until his death in 1938.

A mild and studious man, he was the perfect complement to his wife, Norman's mother, whose attributes were strength of character and organising ability. Sylvia Cameron came from Golden Grove – Nabaclis. She was a tall beautiful woman, an immensely practical person. Whereas her husband was brown, she was full black. In her son's own words, she was "*a dedicated mother and a housewife.*" Like all good mothers in the early days of this century and even today, she saw to it that her children grew up in the fear of God and in the sound knowledge of the Bible. Thanks to her strong influence, Norman Cameron developed very early a more than average acquaintance with the Bible and a decidedly intellectual interest in Egypt and the ancient civilisations.

We will see later how those early influences re-echo in the plays and in the essays.

CHILDHOOD

Norman Cameron's childhood was enriched by the many opportunities the family had for travel within Guyana because of the father's profession. These were difficult years financially. The family of four – for only two children survived infancy: Norman and his elder brother, Randolph Cuthbert – lived for varying lengths of time in various villages in Berbice, on the East Coast, on the West Bank at Wales Estate, on the East Bank at Farm, in the interior at Tassawini, as well as in Georgetown.

The children came into contact with their father's clients and acquaintances, who came from various walks of life. In the villages, they enjoyed listening to the racy tales of Anancy and discovering the rich heritage of folklore and superstition. They imbibed at first-hand the philosophy of the peasant farmer and the estate labourer, the realities of Guyana's flora and fauna, the patterns of life on the estate and in the village, and, together with those, smatterings of Hindi, echoes of songs from Madeira, African tales, rhythms and folk-sayings, which

were later to surface here and there in the literary works of Cameron.

The frequent moving of house meant that the Cameron children's education was subject to frequent interruptions. Norman's memories of early school days are a jumble of scattered images of tuition under his father, classes at Providence Anglican school under headmaster David McLean, two separate sojourns at public schools in New Amsterdam under headmaster Duncan McG. Stuart, and halcyon days in the savannahs.

What is important to note is that this period of his life – when the boy could roam with his brother and their friends, raiding jamoon trees, racing on rented bicycles, tormenting stray cats or standing round-eyed witnesses of a linguistically vivid mud-slinging match between angry villagers was a rude but healthy preparation for the rigours and peripeties of secondary school life and adolescence. Lessons in botany and biology were learnt direct from nature. A firm grounding was laid through direct acquaintance with life at the grassroots and in a youthful memory were created the first motifs from the storehouse of creole imagery. As Cameron later wrote:

[...] the open uninhibited life of town, country and sugar estate with a short spell in the Tassiwini (sic) Mines as a child and roaming the Berbice Savannahs on the one hand, and the cultural offerings of a multi-racial community with its sense of humour and tolerance on the other hand, found in me a keen learner.¹

But life was not all play and pranks. Young Norman Cameron was a bright student and it was while he was at Christ Church public school that he won a "*Government Junior Scholarship*" which was *not* the pre-war equivalent of the Government County Scholarship now called the Common Entrance Scholarship, but a more advanced scholarship based on the then Cambridge Preliminary Local Examination taken in all the Caribbean islands. His future was now assured; he could look forward to joining Queen's College High School in the January session of 1917.

ADOLESCENCE

At Queen's College, school days under headmaster T. A. Pope were relatively uneventful. At the age of fourteen, Norman Cameron was a healthy lad who loved athletics and cricket but whose whole attention was given to his studies in his anxiety not to "*let his parents down.*" The subjects taught at school were Mathematics, French, Latin, Religious Knowledge, History, Geography, English and Natural Sciences. Some measure of his application to his work and of his success lies in the fact that in 1918 he won the Percival exhibition with distinctions in English, Latin, French, Mathematics and Religious Knowledge.

It was the time of the First World War. All official cultural and educational institutions were based on British models, oriented towards the United Kingdom and the maintaining of British and, indeed, white domination. Cameron paints the following picture of secondary education in Guyana in those early days:

The picture was that boys without restriction could receive secondary education at Queen's if they could pay the fees, Catholic boys at the Catholic Grammar School; girls of white and fair complexion were provided for in the more established girls' schools, and there existed a mixed school for boys and girls open to all but utilised chiefly by the local 'aristocracy', a determining factor being the ability to pay the fees. With but one or two exceptions the teachers of these schools were Europeans. There were several small schools for 'young ladies'. One can see how in this set-up private schools for the children of the masses became necessary and sprang up following the inspired work of the London Missionary Society.²

As far as the curriculum of Queen's College is concerned, it was "*based on that of King's College, London*"³ to such an extent that a contemporary of Cameron could make the following statement: "*I knew the name and location of every single river the length and breadth of England, but very little about my own country.*" Serious studies in history began with the date 1066. No Guyanese history was taught.

The British, and inevitably white, orientation was also to be found in the very social system and in the norms and *mores* of the society. As Professor Lutchnan points out in his work, *Middle Class Colonial Politics*:

The new politician and his class did not reject the dominant values in the society. In fact, it was quite fashionable for them to emphasize their possession of these values. The claim was that 'their Britishness' is unquestionable. Their conceptions of Citizenship and of Justice is British. A denial of their prayer for Equality and Citizenship within the British Commonwealth of Nations would in such circumstances be a mockery of British Justice.⁴

Ironically when the very same group of Negroes and Mulattoes was given the opportunity for more participation in the Government through the amendment of the Constitution in 1891, they were for the most part too timid, too disoriented or too hypnotised by their new gains to envisage the cultural revolution.

But in 1920, those boys who had been fortunate enough to obtain scholarships to Queen's College were too busy with curricular activities to pause and reflect on the problems of class and society. School life was highly competitive, whether in sports or academic subjects. Certainly at this period of his life Norman Cameron was wholly involved in his studies, and was already demonstrating his particular proficiency in mathematics. In the eyes of his contemporaries he possessed a lucid and logical mind and an energy that was concentrated on the desire to excel. To his rivals even at that youthful age, he was a formidable opponent because of his obstinacy and his patience.

Cameron himself feels that his success at Queen's College was due to the fact of his being a "*late developer*"; at the crucial age of fourteen to eighteen, when many adolescents are either beset by problems of growing up, curiosity about sex or emotional instability, or else by other youthful distractions that draw their attention away from their studies, he was able to devote himself almost single-mindedly to his work at school. Could late development be also the reason why at this stage Cameron showed no particular keenness for writing? The

philosophical streak, the literary technique, were to burst forth later, at university level, with the consciousness of an identity and the deepening of his interest in the history of his people.

THE UNDERGRADUATE

In 1921, Cameron won the much coveted Guyana Scholarship when he placed first among candidates from Guyana and Barbados. The following year he entered the University of Cambridge to read Mathematics. The four years he spent in Cambridge were to have far-reaching repercussions on his work and on his lifestyle. True, he continued to excel in the field of mathematics, taking first class honours in Part I of the Mathematical Tripos in 1923 and graduating Senior Optime in 1925.

But during those years as an undergraduate, for the first time Cameron experienced difficulties in concentrating on his work. Climatically, he found it difficult to adjust to the cold. He had always belonged to that category of student who could work best in the early hours of the morning in the pre-dawn, post-midnight silence. This was fine in the balmy air of a tropical climate; in the freeze of midwinter the practical problem of keeping warm, and yet within one's means, was too great to allow indulgence in long pre-dawn reading sessions. Again when spring came, and summer followed, and a young man's thoughts turned to fishing, and punting, and picnics, how dreary to retire to the stuffy libraries and bend one's head over the pages of a book.

The restlessness, the wrestling with distractions, were symptoms of a deeper unease, a disillusionment before a vanishing dream, a gradual confrontation with the reality of an identity which Cameron was to discover with a soft shock. School days at Queen's College, when with his friends he had gaily chanted the ditties: "*What shall we do with the Kaiser?*" or "*What shall we do with the Kaiser's daughter?*" or had sung in an unmelodious voice '**Rule Britannia**' or '**God save the King**', did not prepare one for the dismay and the chagrin of not being served in the restaurant, or of not finding the 'digs' one wanted, or of not being admitted to certain programmes of study – because of the colour of one's skin.

Cameron fell away from the Church. He joined the Cambridge University Africa Society. He listened eagerly to eminent practitioners like Sir Edward Marshall Hall, K.C. who were only too rarely invited to speak at the Cambridge Union Society. He launched himself into research into the history of the Negro. *He began to write.*

Now it is always extremely delicate to determine exactly at what point in time a writer becomes a writer, conscious of his vocation, aware of making *the* choice or of being chosen by the Muse. For some it is a sudden revelation, for others it is a gradual process of trial and error, and in yet other cases, it is something the writer seems always to have known.

We remember in particular Ossian, or Pdmbaud, who at the age of sixteen had already mastered the art of writing, and was already creating a stir in literary circles in Paris. At the tender age of eleven, we are told our own Mittelholzer was scribbling adventure stories in his exercise books. Cameron, at the age of twenty-three, first caught the glimpse of the Muse. Could his marriage to Lurline have had anything to do with his swing from science to the humanities? So well do the mysteries of creation defy analysis.

When asked by Denis Williams what were the reasons or circumstances that led to his writing, Cameron replied:

In my time it was necessary to build up a literary heritage and have something to bequeath. Part of my dedication was therefore to write voluminously and substantially, opposed to the booklet or the one-work effort usual from black writers. I found myself doing a lot of writing which I would have been glad if I had found behind me. For instance, *Guyanese Poetry*, an anthology of a hundred years of Guyanese Poetry which I would have been glad to have found already there instead of having to write it. This is the work of a specialist in English, but I had to do it. Similarly, '*The History of Queen's College*', despite E. R. Moulder being a historian, there was no one to write it. I was obliged to do it. It was a need I felt. I am no historian, but it had to be done. We need these things [...]⁵

With this kind of motivation, it comes as no surprise that Cameron's motto: "*help where help is needed and least*

forthcoming", should have translated itself not only into literary and historical works but also into social and educational activities.

Almost immediately after publishing the first volume of *The Evolution of the Negro*, he launched a British Guiana Literary Society whose foundation members included Messrs Reynard, W. MacA. Lawrence, P. M. De Weever, E. R. Burrowes, L. C. Davis, C. A. Gomes, C. B. Rock, P. Ruhoman, S. E. Wills, K. H. Cregan, I. Lawrence, H. W. B. Moore, J. C. Potter, Reverend J. Dingwall, Reverend D. W. H. Pollard, Mesdames M. Rockliffe and M. Mansfield. Letters of support were forthcoming from Messrs Boston, E. A. Mittelholzer, A. N. Johnson, J. B. Harlequin, A. A. Thorne, J. G. Cruikshank. In the opening address to the Literary Society, Cameron emphasised one of its main objectives: "*It is hoped that an inspirational atmosphere will be created so that younger new members will be stimulated to greater efforts and higher ideals.*" The various peripeties in the four-year life of the Society are recounted in *Adventures in the Field of Culture*.

In 1936, Cameron contributed to the first ever *Negro History Week*, which was sponsored by the Negro Progress Convention. The Convention was a Guyanese-based organisation whose moving spirits at the time were E. M. Duke, Reverend Grant and E. F. Fredericks. The last had assisted Cameron with agents' lists and the distribution of *The Evolution of the Negro*. One of the important projects accomplished by the N. P. C. was the sponsorship of the School of Home Economics, now called Fredericks' School of Home Economics. Cameron was a member of the Advisory Board of the School. We have, recorded in *Life and Literature*, the address he delivered at the second graduation exercises of the school.

Other cultural organisations to which Cameron devoted his time were the Y. W. C. A., the R. A. & C. S., the Union of Cultural Clubs, the British Guiana Table Tennis Association, of which he was the very first President in 1948, and the Association of Masters and Mistresses, which he founded in 1953.

Cameron was instrumental in arranging a number of other cultural activities. In this sphere, mention must be made of the popular Shilling Concerts he initiated. The Shilling

Concerts gave musicians and artists the opportunity to perform before a wider audience than they would normally have reached. An account of these concerts is given in some detail, with humour and wit, in *Adventures in the Field of Culture*.⁶ One of the concerts that deserves mention here was held in June 1951 at which only music composed by Guyanese was presented and we are told “*even the piano by good fortune was locally constructed.*”

Perhaps the direction of these numerous activities can best be grasped by dividing the author’s career into phases. The first phase would extend from 1926 to 1934. In this phase, he published his first four books; he founded the B. G. Literary Society, and most important of all, he founded and directed The Guyanese Academy, of which he was Principal from 1926 until 1934.

The contribution of The Guyanese Academy to education in Guyana can best be assessed when we consider the numerous ex-students who have held and who hold responsible posts in Guyana and abroad. The site of The Guyanese Academy at 69 Brickdam is now occupied by the new Telecommunications building. The first phase represents “*a period of Freedom*”, to use the author’s own expression – freedom to write and to regulate his life as he pleased.

The second phase extends from 1934 to 1943. It begins with his recruitment to the staff of Queen’s College as an Assistant Master. Here, as a Government Servant, he was to a certain extent restricted by his duties and had to submit to a timetable and to responsibilities imposed by functional superiors. For one thing, commenting on political matters or participating in politics was forbidden to officers in the Colonial service.

This was the time of the Second World War, a time of economic hardship. The only book published by Cameron during this phase was his book on *Additional Mathematics* (1942). We are told by Cameron that “*when permission was sought to publish Additional Mathematics, the Deputy Principal of Q. C., Mr E. O. Pilgrim, was instructed to censor the work and to see that no information was in it that could be of help to the enemy.*”⁷

The third phase of Cameron's life would include the decade from 1943 to 1953, a fruitful decade in which he writes, produces and publishes his plays: *Adoniya*, *Jamaica Joe*, *Sabaco*, *Ebedmelech*; and he publishes as well two crucial works, *Interlude* and *Thoughts on Life and Literature*.

The fourth phase coincides with the nine years from 1954 to 1963, and represents a "period of literary inactivity partly due to political frustration."⁸ It is the time of the Suspension of the Constitution. Cameron prepared a memorandum on the Constitutional Crisis in 1954. The only literary work published was *Kayssa*. Apart from his unease politically, his appointment as Deputy Principal of Queen's College in 1958 was not conducive to creative work. Weighted down with administrative responsibilities he was unable to create new work, but nevertheless found an indirect way of expressing his ideas through pictorial exhibitions and exhibitions of books. He mounted two major exhibitions: (a) the Inter-racial Harmony Exhibition in 1962 and (b) the Pictorial Exhibition on the theme *150 years of Education in Guyana* (1963).

The fifth phase begins in 1963 with Cameron's retirement from Queen's College and his entry into the University of Guyana as Associate Lecturer in Mathematics and eventually Professor Emeritus. During this phase, he has produced many sociopolitical articles. Church activities never really ever suffered during this phase, but Cameron retired from these only four years ago, in 1975.

Our most recent vision of Cameron is that of a neatly dressed gentleman of seventy-six standing before the members of the Constituent Assembly in the august halls of the House of Assembly. In his light but pleasant tenor voice, marked from time to time by a slight tremor, he carefully delivers the arguments he had prepared in a Memorandum on the new socialist constitution. And as he speaks, the attentive researcher is reminded of the note written in the Cameron autobiographical notes:

Mine has been a full life and complex with notable contradictions. I think I am essentially a child of the community⁹.

II

*My Personal Philosophy of Life
is closely connected with the dual
problems of being and doing,
thought and action, or as the
Apostles put it, 'justification by
faith' and 'justification by works'.*

We have just briefly noted the activities and the personality of N. E. Cameron, and paused to examine the intellectual ingredients that created the climate in which his creative abilities could flower. We have seen that – unlike so many authors who begin by feeling their way cautiously until technical mastery is theirs – from the inception Cameron, the 'late starter', set his sights very high, his first effort in the literary *genre* being that epic *tour-de-force*, *The Evolution of the Negro*.

I say literary *genre* advisedly, because, although this work represents a major contribution to the study of the history of the nation, there are certain vital features of style, approach and conceptualisation which place it in the domain of literature.

Those who read carefully *The Evolution of the Negro* are aware of the fire that burns hidden but intense and fills our young author with an indomitable energy to seek out, to illuminate, to elucidate and to justify.

In 1922 (he writes) at the age of 19, the Author, a Guianese left this country, for Cambridge University, England. Applied to him, the word 'Guianese' connoted a native of Guiana, an Afro-American, a Christian and a member of the human family. At that time the Author saw himself principally as a member of the human family. He had the advantage of having been born in a cosmopolitan community and was thus able to mix freely with members of all races and peoples and be perfectly at ease with them. That he was an Afro-American meant little. That he was a Guianese meant less. In spite of everything he has always been at heart a Christian. It was not long after his arrival in England that

the fact of his being an Afro-American was forced on him and later, that his being of African stock was a matter which had to be faced. The tremendous realisation derived under circumstances never-to-be-forgotten gave rise to a series of thoughts and investigations which resulted in *The Evolution of the Negro* and parts of *Thoughts on Life and Literature, Guianese Poetry and Interlude*.¹⁰

In other words, as early as the period 1922 to 1926, this Guyanese writer was making the same psychological pilgrimage as that of the well-known group of black writers in Paris and drawing similar conclusions to those which were to be elaborated some ten years later by the poets of the 'negritude' movement; except that where they delve into the subconscious and, under the influence of surrealist experiences, come up with a poetry that masterfully transmits the Black man's dreams, visions and aspiration – this is the case of Césaire, bitterly rapping out in verse the rhythms that spell anger, protest and fierce loyalty to the sources – Cameron's contribution to the rehabilitation of the African takes the supremely lucid, practical and prosaic form of an educational treatise aimed at the dissemination of knowledge about the outstanding achievements of the Black man.

Being in Cambridge at that time meant that he was well placed to back up his project with practical research in the well-stocked libraries of the University town, and with fruitful discussion with African and other colleagues of his own intellectual stature. We are given a glimpse of the way in which ideas circulated among undergraduates providing intellectual stimulation and laying the foundation for future action, when Cameron discusses the role of the British emancipators Wilberforce and Pitt, and attempts to explain how they were early influenced in the direction of the abolition of slavery:

Everyone knows that Clarkson, Wilberforce and Pitt were Cambridge men, and that in college rooms most interesting questions are discussed, valuable or otherwise. Well, as far as Clarkson was concerned, we observe that the then Vice-Chancellor, Dr Peckard, had offered a prize for the best dissertation in Latin on 'Whether it was lawful to enslave

others against their will'. (*An Liceat invitos in servitutem dare*). Clarkson won the prize, but he had previously read a book by a Frenchman named Anthony Benezet who was the first to preach universal emancipation in the USA. This Benezet had known the African in his own home and was convinced of the injustice of slavery, i.e., of enslaving others whose only fault was to be weaker.¹¹

In the case of Cameron himself, it was not merely a matter of discussions in college rooms, but of a dedicated pursuit of research in the Cambridge University Library, in the British Museum, and indeed in Liverpool, where he made a special trip to collect material on the slave trade, since he knew that it was one of the most important centres of operation for merchants who were involved in that trade. In London, he was brought up-to-date with the latest currents of thought, and the latest activities of Marcus Garvey's 'back to Africa' movement through the agency of the Universal Negro Improvement Association.

We must remember that in 1925–1926 there were seven hundred and twenty-five tranches of the association in the USA, and some three hundred outside of the USA. There were branches in Cuba, Panama, Trinidad, Jamaica, Guyana, West Africa and South Africa.¹²

Again, it is important to remember that as early as 1916, the Pan-African Movement had been launched at a historical meeting in London, in which Henry Sylvester Williams played a prominent role. In England, Cameron became familiar with the works of E. W. Blyden, whose *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race* had been published since 1887, and he also read the works of the Pan-Africanist W. E. B. Dubois, who, from 1919 to 1945, was at the head of the movement, calling incessantly for the independence of African countries and freedom from imperialism.

At the same time, the word was beginning to bear fruit in the USA in the domain of literature. Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, Countee Cullen are the main voices quoted in the period 1918 to 1930 which is widely known as the period of the "Negro Renaissance". In short, the climate was ripe for Guyana to make its contribution through this major work, *The Evolution of the Negro*.

I cannot stress enough the importance of the four years spent at Cambridge for the development of Cameron's work and the lighting of the first flame of dedication to his society. As already noted, Cameron was moved with a new energy to seek out, to illuminate, to elucidate and to justify.

The Evolution of the Negro was well thought-out and constructed. First, the author would deal with 'classical' Africa, before the advent of the European colonisers; next, he would examine the various aspects of colonisation and the slave trade; then he would discuss Emancipation and its eventual implications for the youth of Guyana: Might not a message for the future be acceptable from one who had given so much study to the past?¹³

Each of the three books or sections is self-contained and a work in itself, yet together the three books form a complete entity in which the themes, like leitmotifs contribute to a total picture. But in spite of scientific intention and the formal chronological division of the work into three sections spread over two volumes, internally the method of selecting and presenting the episodes, and the very movement of the prose, are fluid, discursive and as 'informal' as the art of the African *story-teller*.

Charmed by the spell of the 'historian', we passively allow ourselves to be led back in time to the earliest accounts of African and Arab travellers in Nubia, Egypt, Abyssinia, Nigeria, the Motapan and the Congo. We pause with him to examine the great architectural achievements of the people of Zimbabwe; we admire the equestrian skills of the Mandingo warrior; we reflect on the status of women in the empire of Ghana, or the system of government of the people of Benin; or else we study with attention the beautiful objects of Yoruba art. Now we listen intrigued by the pearling sounds of the 'Kaffir piano' and the kora, or the deep voiced language of the tom-tom.

In this first section of *The Evolution of the Negro* something of the researcher's pleasure at tracking down – something of his joy at discovering – rare accounts of mediaeval Africa comes out in the prose. He is obviously fascinated and gratified at finding so much precious evidence to justify his belief that the 'dark continent' held deep in its arcana a

history that was no less impressive than that of other continents. And so he progresses from a panoramic view of African empires to the more detailed study of their industries and their technology before colonisation. He demonstrates and defends the importance of their indigenous technology as he examines the animal and fish products, the agricultural techniques, the arts of manufacturing and the products manufactured, the markets and the commerce, elements of African medicine, systems of education, religion and the creative arts as they existed untouched by western influences. Here indeed was what he referred to as "*justification by works,*" an attempt to "*uphold the prestige of a much misrepresented people.*"¹⁴

In Volume II, which was not published until 1934, the author deals with the advent of the Europeans and their institution of slavery. He studies the conditions within Africa that made the slave trade possible, the methods used by the traders, the kinds and categories of captives and the effect of slavery on their behavioural patterns, the economic question and the conditions in Europe which had a direct effect on the slaves in the New World, the relations between slave and master, the social sense of the slaves, the advent of emancipation and the Blacks' contribution to emancipation.

Throughout this first part of Volume II, although the tone and the style betray a sharp sense of the indignities that were meted out to the slaves, and especially to those who showed signs of leadership, the author manages to maintain a balanced view and to put forward a clinical or would-be clinical analysis of the economic and psychological motives behind the actions of the colonists. Let us look for a moment at the moral he draws from slavery:

We are told that it is very wrong for one to tempt another directly. If this is so then it should also be wrong for one or for a group to tempt others indirectly; and what greater temptation is there for a stronger than to see a weaker group of individuals? The urge to exploitation becomes great and often proves irresistible, and whereas it is for the strong to resist temptation the whole blame must not be laid on the exploiter.

It is on such a principle that movements like trade unions and cooperative societies are formed among the working and poorer consuming classes of more advanced countries. Scattered and weak, they are taken advantage of, oppressed and little respected. United and making sturdy moves to strengthen themselves by their own efforts, they not only secure better conditions of life generally, but, strange to relate, they also receive applause from their former oppressors. Both parties realise that when the weaker makes itself stronger the result is a retreat of the forces of evil that tend to attack both. This principle the weaker peoples have to learn, and, until they learn it and act accordingly, they will continue to be shunned, derided and abused.

Nature has her own way of enforcing her lessons, and slavery is not the only form of chastisement. We all have an idea of that portion of the history of the Jews which showed them as a stiff-necked and rebellious people. We know that whenever they lapsed into idolatry and unclean and undesirable ways they were chastised until they repented. When they relapsed they were chastised yet again. And so it went on. Even so I believe it will be and is with any other people. If they have not learnt any serious lessons from their past sufferings, they will continue to suffer in one way or another until they remedy their deficiencies.¹⁵

Again referring to the ideas which were abroad and widely accepted in the metropolitan countries during slavery, Cameron pointedly quotes from one of the sharpest thinkers in eighteenth-century France:

As early as 1749 the great and humane Montesquieu thus wrote with brilliant irony of those who denied manhood or humanhood to the Africans: *"It is impossible for us to suppose that those people (Africans) are men, because if we suppose them men, one would begin to think that we ourselves (Europeans) are not Christians."*¹⁶

Writing in the same ironic vein Cameron posits:

My most original attitude is in endeavouring to establish a higher level of humanity for the Africans during slavery in the Americas than that generally conceded.¹⁷

In fact, one of the merits of *The Evolution of the Negro* is its 'optic' which is quite new when we consider the orientation of most of the history books of the same epoch. Cameron is clearly, in this respect, in advance of his time. As A. J. Seymour so aptly spelt out in *The Making of Guyanese Literature*:

In order fully to grasp the significance of this work one has to remember the limited horizons of the 1920s and 1930s in order to realise the revolution in concept that was timidly and hesitantly forged by the author, but forged all the same. His purpose was to create 'the consciousness of ancestral achievement in the not distant past' in the mind of every Afro-American, and to dispel the sense of ignorance.¹⁸

"*The consciousness of ancestral achievement*" is particularly vibrant in the last chapters of Volume II, Book 1, where the author produces the argument that emancipation was not a gift, but that the combined efforts of countless Negroes contributed to the change in the *status quo*. He further presents a 'Hall of Fame', in which are named and described outstanding men and women during slavery. The chapter is a kind of pivot point which leads us directly into the third phase of this enormous work: 'An Outline of Negro Development from Emancipation to the Present, with Special Reference to British Guiana'.

Thematically, the third phase is a counterbalance to the first which dealt with agriculture, education, religion, politics, economics and culture *in Africa*, the difference being that these elements are now discussed as they exist *in Guyana*. The shift in scene from one continent to another coincides with the extension of black culture across the Atlantic, and is symbolical: Africa was once the home of the slaves; their home is now Guyana.

Again, although the third phase follows the pattern of the first, its dimensions are far more limited, and in fact are commensurate with the idea of a small new country rising out of the roots of the old. No vision of empires, here, no teeming millions, no lavish traditional feasts, no ebony masks nor golden stools, but a handful of unsung heroes in a population of mixed peoples, enouncing faultily the new

language they have come to accept, manipulating awkwardly new instruments in a new economic system, in a new environment they must learn to exploit. Their backs are bruised but their “*spirit is unbowed.*” They cautiously exercise their new liberty, and through half-forgotten memories of ancestral social values and recently acquired technical skills, they apply themselves to the patient task of building a new nation. Nor is this phase without its triumphs, in local government, agriculture and education.

It is to these successes and the lessons of slavery and emancipation that Cameron points, when he exhorts the youth of Guyana in the final pages of *The Evolution*.

In a sense the final pages of this work spill over into *Thoughts on Life and Literature*. As the author himself tells us:

The research for Book 2 of Volume II of *The Evolution of the Negro* was not nearly as wide as that for the previous parts. The principal subjects dealt with were Village Development, Agriculture and Agricultural Societies and Education. Chapters IV and VII on Guianese Literature and Drama in this work with parts of Guianese Poetry are to be considered as supplementary to Book II mentioned as above.¹⁹

And again in the same work he writes:

[...] the first chapter here included as ‘Message to the youth’ was intended to be the concluding chapter of the second volume of *The Evolution of the Negro*.²⁰

The Evolution of the Negro was intended to be a work of dissemination not a source book for specialist historians. Criticisms have been levelled at the author for not following a rigorous system of footnotes and page references. He has been accused of not attempting a critical analysis of his sources, although we know that he was aware of the possibility of their bias or misinterpretation by foreign or missionary travellers who were only too often apt to misunderstand, and therefore misrepresent, the traditions and religions of the so-called ‘heathens’. Without insisting on this aspect of his work, Cameron nevertheless took steps to avoid the obvious pitfalls. In the Introduction to Volume I he is careful to observe that

travellers' accounts can be most informative "*when read with a discerning mind.*" In cases where he came upon passages or descriptions that gave reason for doubt, he would compare them with other descriptions of the same period or else he would discuss them with the Africans themselves.

Something of his method of checking and counter-checking can be gathered from the Introduction to the two volumes, but especially from the Introduction to Volume I, where the author describes in great detail the system he followed in gathering information, and he lists the various documents he consulted. These include Travellers' Memoirs, Accounts of Voyages written in French and English, encyclopedias, articles in learned journals, translations from the Arabic into French, which he in turn translated into English. But the major sources for this part of the work were works by Jobson, Bandinel, Lopez, Crowther, Van Nyendael, Delafosse, Ibn Battuta, W. E. B. Du Bois, E. W. Blyden, Marmol Caravajal, Leo Africanus and Edrisi.

Cameron quotes extensively from his sources, and his method is to present selected extracts from these sources, extracts which have bearing on the themes treated in *The Evolution of the Negro*. The unity of the collection is maintained by his commentaries and summaries, comparisons and clarifications, which bind the episodes together and maintain the desired orientation.

By means of these interpolations he is able to maintain direct contact with the reader, varying his tone, using some sarcasm here, some light irony there, and more than once adopting the stance of a legal advocate demolishing the arguments of his opponent logically, lucidly and devastatingly.

In a section devoted to the status of the mulattoes, Cameron dips his pen in subtle satire:

If the blacks have come in for some rough handling from the pens of white writers the people of mixed origin have fared no better. The word 'mulatto' was adopted from the Spaniards by the English with all its implications. The various degrees of mixture of white and black were all given their names; thus the offspring of mulatto and black was 'cob',

that of cob and black 'sambo' while that of mulatto and white was 'musty' or 'quadroon', that of musty and white 'musty fine' or 'octoroon', other combinations requiring an advanced knowledge of fractions were 'nondescript'.

The white fathers of that heterogeneous progeny, after some hesitation, decreed that the offspring must follow the mothers and hence declared them to be all slaves. With some of the planters of North America it was the practice to endeavour to eliminate the black slaves by judicious selection, so that some boasted that all their slaves were of a brown or olive complexion. In the earlier days of the history of the colonies the method used was to decide on a course of action and to justify it afterwards. So, when it was decided that the mixed people should be slaves automatically, appeal was made to a very convenient law, a Roman law passed nearly 2,000 years previously, which enacted that children of slaves must follow the mothers.

As these were not in sufficient numbers to do plantation work in the West Indies, and as this work was intended to be performed by the slaves from Africa, their services were chiefly directed to mechanical trades and other technical branches of the activities of the settlements. With the development of the colonies, with an increased population, the necessity or expediency of thus reducing their own children to slavery disappeared, so that several masters declared their own offspring to be free. The offspring of the poorer whites, however, could still be sold.²¹

Or else he humorously intervenes with a personal observation:

To the type of individual who obtained his or her freedom during slavery, we have ever had a corresponding type of those capable of improving themselves without any help from organisations and leaders. Such persons are needed in abundance, because every self-made man and woman is a weight off the shoulders of the leaders. I sometimes feel sorry for the leaders of the race, because anxiety for the welfare of others is a heavy burden to bear. How much more universal happiness will there not be if all are assured that it is only themselves they have to care about! Some people speak of leaders in such a way as to suggest that these were only too eager to rush into leadership; if ever this is so, such thoughtless ones must be even still more eager to rush out.²²

At another time, Cameron looks critically at himself at work, and invites the reader to smile at the caricature of Cameron. Or else he engages in an imaginary dialogue with the reader, using the one-sided conversation as an excuse to explain the development of his own attitude towards the subject of slavery:

It is to be observed that I have dealt only with the enslavement of one people by another, not with the 'domestic slavery' of a given nation. It does not suit my purpose to tell of serfdom in England, Denmark, Russia, etc., where white people have been serfs of superiors of their own nation. Rather have I been at pains to remind the reader that white people, be they Germans, Britons, French, Spaniards, have been enslaved by other white nations, and also in some cases by nations not white in colour.

Why do I beg to remind the reader of this? Before I had made a study of slavery on a large scale, I was under the impression that it was only an 'inferior race' that could be enslaved. Writers on American slavery, whether they had intended it or not, had made me feel that when the Africans saw that they were being reduced to slavery they should all have died fighting to the last man, or else have slain themselves. I had interpreted 'Britons never shall be slaves' as meaning 'Britons have never been slaves in any wise at any time'. The reader will see that I was troubled, that I was studying the Negro slaves, and that I was bound to put some interpretation upon their acceptance of slavery or better, their supposed acceptance of slavery, and such a harsh slavery!

When, however, I began to look away from Negro slavery, I became wiser, and that incipient doubt of the grandeur of the African race began to vanish. I recollected that John Knox had been a slave and rowed as a galley-slave in Venice. Why had he accepted slavery and not killed himself immediately? Other such instances abound. I came across the following as a reminder that, a century ago, white sailors ran the danger of being made slaves in the Mediterranean.: "*Some English sailors enslaved*," from *The Times* of December 9, 1825.²³

But perhaps more important than this highly personalised technique is the originality of Cameron's approach to the subject. And again we must refer to the date of publication of Volume I of *The Evolution of the Negro*. Fifty years ago, Cameron

was attempting what only today, since independence, Third-World historians are belatedly calling for research based not so much on Colonial Office Records and what the Governors had to say about the colonies, but rather on what the people had to say about themselves and their past. Today, belatedly, attention is being focused on the 'Oral Tradition'.

Fifty years ago, in 1929, Cameron's policy as a *historian*, was to seek out wherever possible accounts written by Africans on Africa, evidence given by slaves on slavery, in short, to present the point of view of a people who in too many official history books remain 'voiceless'.

Hence in a prominent position among the works quoted are the writing of a certain Edrisi, a mediaeval writer whom Cameron discovered during his extremely wide reading of Edrisi he speaks in highest praise:

I came across an old *Geography* of the world written by a highly educated African Edrisi by name about the year 1150. He wrote in Arabic at the court of the King of Sicily, and was a Nubian by birth as an early Latin translation of his work shows by its title: *Edrisi Geographia Nubiensis*. It was a pleasure to see the patriotic fervour in a work partly about Africa by an African.²⁴

Again, in the Introduction to Volume II, Cameron writes:

I know that the world in general will enjoy a work dealing with this subject from the pen of a 'Negro'. I know this, for in all my reading of those times no work delighted me so much as a pamphlet relating the experiences of a young man who had escaped to England from slavery in St Vincent. His mildness, the lack of invective against his masters, his passionate desire for justice and the freedom which he had deserved, his constancy towards and love for his young wife, impressed me very much, and gave me a juster estimate of the life of those times than most of the books I read.²⁵

In view of the importance of *The Evolution of the Negro* for the history of literature in Guyana one may well ask what was the reading public of *The Evolution of the Negro* at the time of its publication.

First of all we must remember that *The Evolution* was published right here in Guyana, and at a time of economic depression. The Wall Street crash which hit the metropolitan countries in 1926 only started to have its effects a year or two afterwards in the colonies. Money was scarce and paper was scarce. Cameron was able to manage only a first edition for which he paid out of his own pocket. Helpful friends and well-wishers disposed of the volumes. Many bought a copy chiefly out of regard for its author. Others, intrigued by the title, read through the book from cover to cover. Buyers ranged from the cartman to the bishop. It was certainly not a best-seller, but it made enough of a stir for five hundred copies to be sold in three months. Cameron was able to cover the expense of printing.

One of the reasons for its not being as popular as it might have been is the erudite nature of some of the material and the author's sometimes too strong tendency to 'philosophize' or preach. In my article, 'The Plays of Norman Cameron: *The Price of Victory*' I refer to the "*philosophical character of his art.*" In his work, everything becomes food for reflection:

The bloody war of the Olubos becomes the subject of a philosophical debate on life and death. The physical battle between the two armed forces is translated into a conflict of ideas. The impertinence of Oranyan modulates from the insolence of a son towards his father into the audacity of youth in contrast to old age.²⁶

In short, there is a strong tendency to intellectualize problems, or to sacrifice attention to action in the interest of resolving an abstract problem.

Again some of the abstract problems that are dealt with at great length are strongly dated. For example the arguments used in Book 1 of Volume II to elucidate the question of whether the Africans, if they had been Christians, would have been victims of slavery at the hands of the 'Christian' colonisers, seem unnecessarily lengthy unless we refer to the ideas current *in those days*, at a time contemporaneous with slavery and *even in Cameron's day*, when well-meaning people had the temerity and the lack of taste to say to the sons of slaves "*Never mind. If it weren't for slavery you would not now be Christians*

enjoying the knowledge of the Kingdom of Christ!"

Even in the Introduction to Volume I in which we find the most spontaneity, the passage in which Cameron pauses to discuss the merits of the word *negro* as opposed to *African*, and attempts to exorcize the derogatory connotations that had come to attach themselves to the former term as opposed to the latter, now appears specious to the modern reader who may feel this a matter of "*much ado about nothing*." But at the time of writing *The Evolution*, the controversy was raging hotly with some people objecting to being called 'negro' and others using the euphemistic term 'coloured', or 'dark'.

But indeed all of this is of value for our own generation. We can see and measure the progress made by our fathers and grandfathers, can estimate more justly our own good fortune to have had others cover that ground for us.

What I am trying to say is that, because of those very weaknesses which date the work, the work can be considered to represent in itself a record of the history of ideas in Guyana.

III

*A people's ideal is largely responsible
for what they bequeath to posterity.*

The last chapter was devoted exclusively to *The Evolution of the Negro*, Cameron's magnum opus. He asks us "to bear in mind that in 1929 when the first volume was published there was practically no writer in the British Territories who had delved into this subject." It was not until 1956 that research into African mediaeval history was seriously undertaken in England. In this field of study the author may therefore be regarded as playing the role of *explorer* pioneer. The works could therefore lay claim to some originality of subject. (In the USA there were already writers like the late Dr W. E .B. Du Bois whose *The Negro* is a notable contribution).

While his picture is by no means complete, the research being by no means exhaustive, the author revealed in his work the existence of a degree of civilisation quite different from that usually conceded and indeed quite different from the general concept in Britain and the Caribbean at that time.²⁷

We saw that *The Evolution of the Negro* was intended to be a work of dissemination and justification rather than a source-book for specialist historians; but that because of the extensiveness of the author's reading and his scholarly method, it has indeed become an indispensable book of reference for researchers, and it has been so especially for those who have prepared dissertations on education, local government and the history of institutions in Guyana.

In *Guide to the Published Works of a Guyanese Author and Playwright*, Cameron refers in particular to the work he did in preparation for the third book of the trilogy:

The research in this portion was, to a great extent, from primary sources and also from books written on various relevant topics.

The sources were obtained from the Library of the Reading Room of the Royal Agricultural and Commercial Society (founded 1844) of British Guiana, from Archives and individual collections.

The subjects more intensively investigated were:

- (1) Acquisition and Management of Village Property.
- (2) The Development of Small farming including Agricultural Societies, Shows and School Gardening.
- (3) Educational Development.

Other aspects of life were treated more cursorily. The author went beyond the 'earlier years' and thus endeavoured to bring the story of development up to the date of publication.

The value of this Section of his work may be further seen from the number of students of Guyanese affairs who have acknowledged their indebtedness to it in their preparation for higher degrees, diplomas or literary prizes [...]

The Evolution of the Negro (2 Vols) has been listed among works dealing with Literature on the Negro in a Dutch Collection and in *Negro Year Book*, an *Annual Encyclopedia of the Negro*, edited by Monroe N. Work, Tuskegee Institute, Alabama; and it may be further stated that copies of this work, now almost out of print, are still being sought by Libraries abroad.²⁸

The story of the preparation of the manuscript, the story of the printing, publishing and selling of the book, is told with lively humour by Professor Cameron in *Adventures in the Field of Culture*.

If I have dealt in detail with *The Evolution of the Negro*, it is because all the evidence points to its being the most important of Cameron's works, because of its role in enlightening a public which was too long misled about a history of which they were vastly ignorant, and because of its role in upholding "the prestige of a much misunderstood people," it represents a beacon in the history of ideas in Guyana. But above all, the work is outstanding because of its 'optic' – the author seeks out the *economic* and *psychological* reasons behind the rape of Africa, not sentimentally, but lucidly analysing human behaviour and the power of the gun; because of its approach – the author does not approach the subject of the evolution of the Negro from the position of the Colonial Office, nor using *exclusively* documents written up by the coloniser, but rather, wherever possible, he uses as his point of departure what the African had to say about Africa, what the slave had to say about slavery, what the people had to say about themselves

and their history. And his stand as a historian was original in the Guyana of 1929:

The author does not contemplate the West Indian as a being some 130 years old but rather as dating beyond the vast waste of the slavery period back to his ancestral home whence he derived many endowments.²⁹

The Evolution of the Negro, coming as it does on the threshold of Cameron's literary career, ushers in all the major themes that he was to elaborate between 1929 and 1979: the themes of slavery, identity and conflict, nationalism and national development, and the philosophical themes of religion, war and peace, youth and age.

Before turning our attention to the plays, which represent the African Saga in dramatic form, let us pause for a while to observe our author's literary activities immediately after the successful publication of Volume I of *The Evolution*. We find that in 1930 he was busy founding the British Guiana Literary Society the benefits of which were intended to be "social, inspirational, educational and productive." In *Adventures in the Field of Culture*, he writes:

Fresh from the publication of a work which, with its companion volume was to be his *magnum opus*, the writer threw out the suggestion, at a meeting of the 11th April, 1930 when his partial literary survey of Guyanese writings was read to the Georgetown Shorthand Writers' Association, that there should be a Literary Society. The spirit of sharing was dominant, sharing in the joys of creative writing and publication.³⁰

But apart from the personal gratification and inspiration enjoyed by the members, the society was to fulfil a practical need. Having researched in depth into the various aspects of the evolution of the Negro including the educational aspects, and having arrived at the position where he could see everywhere the evidence of a new nation in the making, he felt the great urgency for encouraging efforts in areas other than agriculture, local government and education, and he turned his attention, naturally, to the area of literature.

Indeed he admits: "With the prospect of a New Nation in the making accented in 1931 it was of greatest urgency to make surveys of what had been accomplished in other fields like literature and further education."³¹

But here again Cameron came upon an immense *lacuna*: the absence of a comprehensive anthology and indeed, the absence of any written history of the literature of British Guiana. It is this *lacuna* that he hoped to fill by presenting his work, *Guianese Poetry*, which is an anthology of poems written by 'Guianese' during the period of a hundred years from 1831 to 1931. Here the word 'Guianese' is taken in the sense of resident in Guyana. This very valuable collection includes poems by better-known writers like Leo (Egbert Martin), S. E. Wills, H. W. B. Moore, J. B. Harlequin and W. McA. Lawrence, but it also includes selections from quite unknown poets like Simon Christian Oliver, a free Negro from Grenada who was a schoolmaster at St. Augustine's school in Buxton and who composed poems as early as 1838. Also included in the Anthology are poems by Thomas Don, who published a book of three poems in 1873. The poems of Don are dedicated to the Reverend N. E. Drew, and bear a strong resemblance to the *genre* of Negro Spiritual which was being produced in the U. S. A. at the same epoch.

The value of Cameron's collection of Guyanese poetry cannot be overestimated. It was the first of its kind by a Guyanese in Guyana, and it represents eminently his often expressed wish to help "to build up a literary heritage and have something to bequeath."³²

Since the pioneer effort of Professor Cameron, other anthologies have appeared, including *An Anthology of Local Indian Verse* by C. E. J. Ramcharitar Lalla, (1934), *Fourteen Guianese Poems for Children* by A. J. Seymour (1953) and *The Kykoveral Anthology of Guyanese Poetry*, (1954).³³

Another of the positive results of Cameron's research into Guyanese Literature touches his own development as a writer. From the stimulus of the Literary Society and the anthology he was encouraged to work at his own slim volume of poems which appeared some ten years later under the title *Interlude*.

Let us once again return to the author's own record of this period. In the Preface to *Interlude* he writes:

Interlude is a collection of my poems written during the period 1930–1934. This book is therefore closely associated with *The Evolution of the Negro*, Vol. 1, (1929), Vol. II (1934), and **Balthasar** (a Drama) and *Guianese Poetry* (both 1931). During this period there also functioned the B .G. Literary Society which the Author founded.

It is now easy to see how the poems came to be written. As a result of my researches in local poetry it became evident that there were certain gaps especially with respect to subject-matter. Thus in *Interlude* will be found references to Public Haunts like the Sea Wall, the Botanic Gardens, the Town Hall; popular games like Cricket and Football; local tales, and there is a poem – ‘Action and Co-Action’ – introducing proverbial expressions.

The Author had contemplated concluding *The Evolution of the Negro* with a ‘Message’ which was to take the form of some essays. It became clear that these, when appended to a volume, would make it too bulky. Moral and religious poems provided a means of giving expression to the idea of a ‘Message’.

The meeting of the Literary Society often provided the incentive to write the poems many of which were published in issues of the *Daily Argosy*. A few attempts at original forms will be found as in ‘**Night, Ye that labour, Sea Wall Scene II**’ with its rhymes at the beginning and at the end of each verse.³⁴

In my various interviews with Professor Cameron, he has always spoken with diffidence about his poems. He deprecatingly describes his poetical efforts as “*almost entirely due to the B. G. L. S.*”³⁵

Professor Cameron has been a more than competent poet, and the volume of thirty-four original poems published in 1944 contains some memorable gems, such as ‘**The Maroon**’, ‘**Ye that labour**’, ‘**Night, Peace**’, ‘**My Hurrying Heart**’ and ‘**Von Hoogenheim**’. ‘**Three Cricketing Resorts, Scene I**’ is a noteworthy poetical treatment of a scene at the Bourda cricket ground at which a group of onlookers, perched on a Saman tree comment, applaud, scream or groan at the cricket play re-enacted down below.

But if *Interlude* is an outgrowth of *The Evolution* in that a number of poems are directly inspired by the latter (an example of auto-imitation), it is in the plays that Cameron

achieves the most powerful and direct artistic expression of the 'Message' to which he so often refers:

The Author conceived of telling the story of Africa in drama, a sort of African Saga, by highlighting certain epochs. Thus came **Adoniya**, the Ethiopian wife of Moses in the early Rameses period (performed in 1943 and 1944). **Sabaco**, one of the rulers at the time of the Nubian conquest of Egypt (written in 1947, performed in 1948). **Ebedmelech**, the saviour of Jeremiah (written in 1952), **Balthasar**, which centred on the period of the birth of Jesus Christ (written and published in 1931).

Kayssa, the Unfaithful Queen, (written and performed in 1959), highlighted the spread of Mohammedanism south of the Sahara before the advent of Christianity to West Africa.

The Price of Victory (1965) is based on Nigerian legend; and **Jamaica Joe** (written and performed in 1946) takes us to the Caribbean and the USA.³⁶

The Trumpet treats of an event in Guyanese history since emancipation – the Angel Gabriel riots. It was published and performed in 1969.

The theme of religion runs through the **Three Immortals – Adoniya, Sabaco and Ebedmelech** – as well as **Balthasar** in which episodes from biblical history are evoked. Cameron indirectly examines the question of piety in a leader and the extent to which piety might be confused with weakness, or hypocrisy.

This is the dilemma of Sabaco. Sabaco's people expect their leader to be ruthless against the enemy, and harsh against those who break the traditional laws. They are aghast when he shows mercy, and are fearful for the state when he grants favours to the alien groups in the community. They ask themselves whether a 'weak' leader does tempt greedy neighbours to attack the country, or subject-peoples to plan insurrection. But though pious and peace-loving, Sabaco is morally strong and shrewd. He has studied human nature and, although he exerts all his influence to maintain peace, he is quietly preparing his people for the eventuality of war.

Messenger: My noble lord, the latest drum message is that the Assyrian hordes have turned back without a fight.

Zarrib: (*indignant*) Impossible, man, impossible. That is what the vulgar call a hoax. We never retreat, do we Cherrub?

Messenger: The drums beat that when the Assyrians learnt that Tirhaka was marching to assist Israel they retreated.

Zarrib: Is that your captain Tearhawk?

Sabaco: (*nodding*). General Tirhaka.

Zarrib: (*angrily*). So all this time you were prating about peace you were prepared for war?

Sabaco: The blind philosopher may have inward vision, Zarrib. We have to learn our lessons hard though they be.³⁷

War and Peace are the main themes of **Sabaco** and **The Price of Victory**. In the former, war is treated on an international level as we observe the building up of hostilities between the Assyrians and the Hebrews, and the role that is being prepared for Egypt under the wise leadership of the Ethiopian, Sabaco.³⁸ In **The Price of Victory** the question concerns internecine wars between the Oluboes and the inhabitants of Ife who both belong to the Yoruba tribe.

At the same time the King, Ogun, is threatened by dissention his own family, when young Oranyan returns from successful campaigns abroad to challenge the rule of his own father.

The conflict between father and son assumes the proportions of a conflict of generations, with the forces of Progress represented by youth, challenging the Wisdom of the ancestors represented by Age. The verbal skirmish between Ifa and Oranyan in Part Two of the play summarizes the pent-up emotions of the two generations. In the end progress under Oranyan, who is supported by the warriors wins, and Ogun retires, but not without warning his son:

Ogun : From the beginning of the old order we were faced with the problem of power and wisdom. Now, after years and years, we stand at the beginning, of a new era, and I see looming up the same monster threatening you – the question of power and wisdom. The qualities which lift to power are not necessarily those which make for wisdom. Power feeds on vigorous exercise. Wisdom thrives on quiet meditation. Can the same one exercise power and cultivate wisdom together? My son, remember the ancient god of power who would not brook his fellow god of wisdom – and with what frightful results for the people. May you never think, as you go from strength to strength, for I see much strength in you -

(Shouts of Hail Oranyan, the strong)

May you never think that wisdom must dwell in you alone. Seek always the wisdom of the past, the wisdom of your counsellors, the wisdom of the forest recluse. Truly have you said that some of our gods must go, even as Ogun must go."³⁹

The themes of slavery, identity and conflict are dealt with extensively in **Adoniya, Sabaco, Ebedmelech, Jamaica Joe and The Trumpet**. The playwright goes beyond the limited view of slavery and race in the context of the New World, to view them in a pan-historic light.

For this, he selects the period of the Pharaohs contemporaneous with Moses. In a note on Ancient Egypt and Ethiopia, the author writes:

The Egyptians evolved ink and paints of remarkable permanence so that the writings of scribes have come down to us and give a fair idea of the thoughts and activities of one of the first civilised peoples of the earth. Nowadays we do not study history merely to learn of the kings but also to know of their laws, their religious ideas, their economic and domestic systems, their games, their music and dances, their style of dressing, their songs and their manner of making love. There is much material for the dramatist.⁴⁰

The author's distance from the epoch being depicted means that he has a more balanced view, a more philosophical

standpoint, *vis-à-vis* his subject. At the same time he is able to comment indirectly on contemporary events by projecting the issues back in time to that distant period where they could be debated dispassionately.

In **Adoniya** for example, the Hebrews are the slaves of the Egyptians and colour prejudice is "*directed by a darker-skinned against a lighter-skinned people.*" Though the typical roles are reversed, the behavioural patterns are easily recognisable, and we are invited to reflect on the vanity of human ambitions.

Very many years go by, and we come to the period of Jeremiah the Prophet, the period in which Ebedmelech lives. He is an Ethiopian nobleman living at the court of the Hebrew, Zedekiah, who is his friend and patron. He has been raised to the highest echelons in the state, but finds himself to be, nevertheless, the victim of jealousy and a malicious attack on his nationality as an Ethiopian.

And so the ages roll on. We come to Balthasar who, legend has it, was the third Wise Man at the time of Christ. And here again the theme of slavery comes up, but it is briefly treated in a scene where Balthasar and Balphris, Queen of Egypt, are planning their escapade. When we note that Balthasar is an Ethiopian, black of hue, and Balphris is an Egyptian, in ancient Egypt before the Arab invasion, the scene becomes all the more significant:

Balthasar: Your opinion of me evidently differs from Sambo's.

Balphris: Though I know not his opinion of his royal master, yet it may be that we are of one mind concerning you. But to proceed. We leave here not in royal robes, with nothing that may remind us of royal rank. For myself I shall be disguised as a rude shepherdess, for your part, you shall make yourself into a slave.

Balthasar: What? A Slave! Never! Balthasar a slave! Ye gods of Ethiopia, what blasphemy! Your chosen son a slave! Nay, Balphris you do not understand heroic minds. To such the mere name slave is so obnoxious that, if all else should fail to avert this state, they will prefer a glorious self-destruction.

Balphris: I do understand heroic minds but differently from you. Suppose you were to learn that the queen of your heart, may I call myself that for the moment?

Balthasar: For always.

Balphris: Suppose then that you were to learn that I was made a captive and that the only means, after all other means fail, for you to be near me was to turn slave, would you then shrink from slavery?

Balthasar: 'Tis certain that I should be a willing slave for your dear sake.

Balphris: Then despise not slaves! For there are many of this class whom affections are the only tie that binds to life [...]⁴¹

The problems of 'identity' arise out of the slave/master situation, when the privileged slave has adopted the skills, the education and the way of life of the 'master' and rises out of his state either by personal effort or by patronage. The question is, does he in the process forget his origins? Enjoying the favour of the 'master' does he then spurn his own people, or refuse to identify himself with their cause? For an answer, let us turn back to *The Evolution of the Negro*, to Volume II, Book 1 on *Slavery and Emancipation: Noted Mulattoes During Slavery*:

In Mexico there was Vincent Guerrero who led the fight for Mexican independence. Born in 1782, he started his career as a mule driver, and in the struggle for Mexican independence he joined the army. There he distinguished himself and, after obtaining promotion after promotion, became head of the Mexican Republic in 1825. The good he did for his country is recorded by his biographers. But note this! One of his first acts was to see to the improvement of the masses; and on September 15, 1829, he declared that all slaves throughout Mexico should be free. However, the unsettled state of Mexican politics prevented his measure from being continued by his successors.

We find a similar sentiment among the coloured people of the British West Indies in slavery times. As an instance I may cite the case of a remarkable Jamaican, Lecesne by name. Invited to the dinner held in London in honour of the Emancipation of the British slaves, he made a neat speech on behalf of the Negroes. The opening words of his speech were: *"My Lord, I am myself sprung from that, till now, degraded and oppressed class; and although, from my birth, I possessed a qualified freedom, and for the few last years I have enjoyed what, in the abstract, may be termed absolute liberty, yet, as long as I saw myself surrounded by so much of human misery and degradation with which I was so intimately linked, I confess I felt it impossible to consider myself as wholly free."*⁴²

The account of Lecesne's speech is but a variation on the theme of Daphne Crosbie, the black Florence Nightingale of St Vincent who, once freed, spent her whole life buying the freedom of other slaves. Out of this situation is born the Moses of **Adoniya**.

Moses the Hebrew was adopted by the Egyptians, grew up in the royal family, was elevated to the rank of a Prince of Egypt, even while his people were the slaves of the Egyptians. But he never forgot his Hebrew origins so that at all times uppermost in his mind was the problem of how to help the ill-treated Jews, *"how to lead them from the land of Egypt."* Thus Cameron projects back in time the more recent problem of the black 'house-slave' who even while he 'enjoys' the privilege of doing lighter work or learning to read and write, or gaining an early freedom, is haunted by the bitterness of slavery and the pangs of sympathy for the 'field slave'. Or to put it differently the early educated elite who return to their country to lead the fight for independence:

Herald: The voice of Egypt is about to speak.

Pharaoh: Before your court rises, Lord Abiram, Egypt shall address a few words to Moses, prince of the Hebrews.

Pharaoh: Moses, this is a sad day for myself and the queen. You have been entirely as one of us. We have granted you every favour, even though our advisors may have opposed.

Little did we know we had taken an adder to our bosom. Little did we know the hand we had strengthened would have turned against us. We thought we had had your friendship, we imagined we had had your loyalty, at least we had every right to expect your gratitude. What can there be worse than ingratitude? To be deemed ingrate our sages declare to be the worst of curses, and that I deem you. I deem you Moses, former prince of Egypt, now prince of the Hebrews, ingrate.

Herald: Egypt has spoken.

Moses: Most excellent Pharaoh, I am bewildered. I hardly know what to say. Wrongfully condemned by your court, dishonoured and disgraced, I was the saddest of men. Now to fill the cup of my sorrow to overflowing I hear from the one I love best charges to which the whole of my life is a denial.

Guard: (*smites Moses in the face*) How dare you speak thus against the life-giver of Egypt?

Pharaoh: Egypt is his own avenger.

Moses: Well then. To call me ingrate. To accuse me of ingratitude. Know, oh Pharaoh: that every act of kindness is repayable by a finite amount of human service. Otherwise where is the justice in the world? Otherwise one is forever the slave of his benefactor. Does a son forever submit his will to him who gave him life? Or rather having rendered all the affection and service he can, does he not leave the rest to the Supreme Rewarder of all good turns? Much love and favours have been showered on me by you most excellent Pharaoh and your august Queen. I have tried to show love and to do service to Egypt in return. Must I then be deemed ingrate, if I stand by my people, if my heart bleeds for my people, if the inhumanities showered on them pour into my soul and grieve me and inflame my heart? No, most excellent Pharaoh. If I have not rendered enough to balance what has been done for me, then I can do no more, and the Supreme One Himself will repair you the deficiency. No, I am no

ingrate, but proudly bear the latest title you have conferred on me of Prince of the Hebrews.⁴³

Let us now turn to **The Trumpet**, and to a turbulent episode in Guyanese history. I refer to the Angel Gabriel riots. Here the conflict is not a direct one between slave and master, but between the recently emancipated creoles and the Portuguese shopkeepers.

We all know the background to the riots of 1856. The central figure was John Sayers Orr who was a 'creole', that is, a black man born in Guyana. He had travelled overseas and returned home to become a champion of the people. At first his call was for the economic improvement of the masses. His meetings were held at street corners and at the Stabroek square, and we are told that "*he gathered his audiences by sounding a trumpet which gave him the sobriquet of 'Angel Gabriel'.*"⁴⁴ But soon his encouragement of the Negroes and his call to them to take advantage of their freedom in order to produce more and earn more, became embittered by acid criticism of the Roman Catholic Church (he was a Congregationalist), and of the commercial practices of the Catholic Portuguese hucksters who were given preferential treatment by the colonial merchants.

We are told that a group of Portuguese men hatched the plan of beating him and his supporters with sticks and whips when he addressed them at a meeting that was to be held on the street outside the Roman Catholic Convent. But Orr who learnt of their plan did not put in an appearance. In the meantime a bill was passed forbidding the holding of 'riotous assemblies' and Orr was prevented from addressing the crowd at Stabroek. However, determined, he gathered the crowd around him in Alberttown outside his mother's house. He was arrested and tried. The case was sent to the Supreme Court and, on 29th April 1856, he was sentenced to three years imprisonment.

In the Introduction to **The Trumpet**, Cameron describes the happenings on that day:

[The people] resented this treatment of their champion.
A rumour that a Portuguese had stabbed a creole during an

argument in the courtyard brought matters to a head. They looted Portuguese shops not only in Georgetown but along the East Coast to Mahaicony and along the river bank too.

The Portuguese did not defend their shops but when the time of reckoning came put in their claims to Government for damages.

The looters found that after all the Portuguese were not the losers, for they were fully compensated at the cost of a tax which fell back on the looters.⁴⁵

On one level, **The Trumpet**, is the story of Zayzing, the brave shopkeeper of Alberttown who, because of his kindness to the people, could, with a clear conscience and firm confidence, keep the doors of his grocery open even in the height of the rioting. The other characters who appear on stage, Quamina, his common-law wife, Cuffy the tradesman, P. C. 7 the Policeman, S. M. the School Master, Mari the daughter and Manuel the shop assistant, are types supporting the role of Zayzing and, in the case of Mari and Manuel, providing the romantic interest.

On another level, **The Trumpet** is the tragedy of the masses who were powerless before the colonial machinery which was effective because organized, while they were not.

On a deeper level, it is a story about failure, the failure of John Sayers Orr to give adequate direction to his people. He must have discovered in the end that it was not enough to make the people conscious of the issues which affected them nor was it enough to stir them up, the leader must also have a positive plan or a constructive blueprint for a better society. Although the Angel Gabriel does not appear on the stage, he is the real hero of the piece. He is present throughout the action as each of the characters refer to him, pronounce on him, express pity for him or hatred of him in turn.

By the skilful use of the technique of 'the report' Cameron has succeeded in bringing alive the main protagonists representing the two forces that are locked in combat.

The plays of Cameron are built up around dramatic *situations*, rather than around a dramatic personality. In all of them, except **Balthasar** and **Jamaica Joe**, the major characters

tend to remain what they were in the beginning, showing little or no development or change. The main interest of the plays being the interplay between the various characters, and the way in which they react to various circumstances. And the dialogue is given its point by the lessons we learn from the situation, and by the philosophical conclusions that arise out of the action.

In fact the stories of **Balthasar, Jamaica Joe, Ebedmelech, Sabaco, The Trumpet, The Price of Victory** and **Kayssa** have been borrowed from biblical or historical sources. They are already known, and the playwright assumes that we are familiar with the basic facts of the story. He is therefore free to develop his interpretation of those facts and the dialogue which will bring the characters to life. So that what we look for is not so much the suspense of difficulties to be overcome or mysteries to be unravelled. What we savour in the plays is the *play of ideas*. In this sense the theatre of Cameron may be described as a theatre of ideas.

In his *Guide to the Published Works of a Guyanese Author and Playwright*, Cameron writes:

I may say at the outset that the 'form' and style of my plays were largely determined by a search for what I considered would represent the natural development of African entertainment of this nature.

Intuitively and by observation of the reaction of Afro-Americans to performance, I seemed to sense that 'straight drama' was not the medium in which I was to express entertainment or deliver a message from the stage.

The African story teller very often ended with some moralising either direct or in the form of a question. Hence I could not lose the opportunity of presenting some home truth or at least subject for reflection when a number of people had assembled together.

I think that the pattern of my plays is best illustrated by a necklace of many-coloured beads strung together and yet producing a pleasing and harmonious effect; rather than the gold collar all in one piece representing the craftsman's art.⁴⁶

In other words Cameron, the playwright, sees his work not as an architectural entity with fixed dimensions but rather as

“a rhythmic progression based on a motif which is elaborated and developed, or syncopated, turned inside out or repeated afresh, so that it seems to describe a circle that is fluid but always dynamic.”⁴⁷

IV

*Those who are disloyal to their ancestry
have less chance of creating something
with a truly distinctive mark.*

In the last chapter, I quoted Professor Cameron as saying: “I think that the pattern of my plays is best illustrated by a necklace of many-coloured beads strung together and yet producing a pleasing and harmonious effect.” The author considers drama as a compound art-form in which words, music, dance and scenic arrangement all contribute to the total effect. In the domain of language, he achieves a certain realism by the use of creolese or ‘broken-English’ in market-scenes, crowd scenes, or whenever the circumstances demand, as in **Sabaco**, when the peasant Peasalt comes to make legal representation before the august ruler. The author reverts to standard English, and even highly poetical English, when the Ethiopian or Egyptian noblemen speak. In the Biblical plays, highly researched realism is achieved when linguistic local colour is extended even to the swear words and exclamations used by the characters. In **The Trumpet**, Zayzing’s speech is heavily laden with the habits and mannerisms of the Portuguese dialect, in which the *s* is so often pronounced *sh*; the *h* is dropped or else added in the wrong places, and the syntax is sometimes foreign. For modern actors and for a young audience who are no longer familiar with this type of speech – since the old-time Madeira-born Guyanese have disappeared from our community – the language used here may pose special difficulties. Similar difficulties at a linguistic level are found in the play, **Jamaica Joe**, where Cameron attempts to render not only the American twang of the agent, who has been sent to Jamaica to recruit farm-labourers, but also the pseudo-American twang that some of the young men who are impressed by the agent, consciously ‘put on’. The use of words like *buddy*, and *O. K.* and the repetition of the interjection *man*, are all Americanisms which are perhaps now so acceptable

that they pass unnoticed but which at the time of writing – and we must remember that the play was written in 1946 – had freshly arrived and were freshly adopted by the young people in one of the early waves of ‘American Culture’ to reach the West Indies. The hero, Joe, is completely carried away by it, although he does not completely lose his shrewdness as we see in Act I, scene i:

Agent: Look here, buddy. The USA is a free country and will only use free labour. If we cannot find enough free people and free labour there will be no thought of forcing people to work for us.

Voices: Hear, hear; hear man talk.

Joe: Hear modern man talk.

Joe is clever enough to realise that only recently that very country called the USA had made extensive use of forced labour in the form of slaves. But then comes the rejoinder which Cameron inserts with particular relish:

Agent: It is not modern man, my friend, but democratic man. Believe me, modern man is no less savage than his ancestors.⁴⁸

But it is in **Kayssa** that the playwright’s versatile use of dialogue is most evident. The market women and the constable use a creole which is vivid and forceful in its imagery. Traditional dishes like foo-foo, corn pone and canki are referred to in the conversational exchange and form a counterpoint to the kind of speech used in the scene in Queen Benzou’s Boudoir. Queen Benzou and King Mensa converse always in standard English of a colloquial nature which befits their situation and the familiar ease of their relationship. But the same two persons change the level of their speech when they formally welcome the distinguished Arab guests to their court. This supple use of dialogue is realistic and helps to bring to life characters who belong to an epoch which is long distant.

Kayssa is also a noteworthy example of the Cameron techniques, by its combination of music, speech and the dance. The author often uses the device of a play within a play, or scene of entertainment within the play. In **Kayssa**, not only in Act I, scene ii is there an interlude of dance by Moorish artists summoned to distract the Queen, but also in scene iii a formal concert is presented in honour of the distinguished Arab guest Ibn Battuta. The concert within the play includes African melodies, a sword display, acrobatics and dances from Arabia. The whole action ends with the sounds of trumpets and the singing of an ancient Sudanese anthem. We are told that the music was provided for on an ensemble of indigenous African instruments which correspond to the flute, the xylophone, banjo, drums, horn and trumpet. We are also told that authentic Koromanti songs were used for the overture, the '**Song to a Ruler**' and the '**Song to Mensa**', and that the musicians who arranged and harmonised the respective songs were Superintendent DeAbreu, Mr F. P. Loncke and Miss Lynette Dolphin.

This type of mixed *genre* is much closer to the traditional model of the indigenous people of Guyana than the more specialised borrowed form of play that is nowadays the favourite of the more established theatre companies. As Cameron points out, the mixture of poetry and prose, the mixture of music and dialogue have been experimented with by most of the better known dramatists of the Caribbean:

Derek Walcott used the poetical form for his **Henri Christophe**, 'a historical play in verse' of Haiti's King, broadcast by BBC in 1951 and produced in 1952. His **Sea at Dauphin**, a tragedy of fisher-folk in St. Lucia (1954) makes effective use of blank verse and introduces a chorus of Dauphin women singing. His **Malcauchon or The Six in the Rain**, published in *Caribbean Plays* (1965), makes much good use of poetry in form and in language. Errol Hill's **Dance Bongo**, published in *Caribbean Plays* (1965), is a 'Fantasy in one Act written entirely in Verse.' Neville Labastide in his **One for the Road** includes 'Bingo's Song', the rhythm of which reminds us of the Guyanese masqueraders. In **Sleepy Valley**, a Knox Summer School (Jamaica) 1952 production published in *Caribbean Plays* (1965), four songs with the music are

appended. Published Caribbean plays (and of course these include Guyanese) tend to make use of the Calypso and other forms of song; the plays with a mixture of "a little of everything" in often taking the place of straight Drama.⁴⁹

The plays with a mixture of "a little of everything," like **Kayssa** and **Jamaica Joe**, point in the direction of folk-opera, a form that is now being experimented with by various groups all over the Caribbean.

Looking at the plays of Cameron in the development of drama in the Caribbean one may distinguish three major elements which point to future directions in the evolution of drama in the Caribbean. First there is what may be termed 'high drama', consisting of full-length plays on epic, historical or biblical themes, written in poetry and prose, and whose tone and content are classical in the wide sense of the word. To this category belong **Balthasar**, **The Price of Victory**, **Sabaco**, **Adoniya** and **Ebedmelech**. Secondly, there is the shorter play which is written entirely in prose, which is also interspersed with music, dance and skits, but which operates at a more informal level, drawing its main interest from topical and typical situations. **Kayssa** and **Jamaica Joe** are examples of this second category, and they indicate the evolution of Cameron's style in the direction of folk-opera. The third element is the type of social commentary which we find taken up by Bertram Charles's **The Alexin of our Cure** (1955), Frank Pilgrim's **Miriamy** (1963), Sheik Sadeek's **Fish Koker** (1965) and Francis Quamina Farrier's **The Plight of the Wright** (1966).

The plays express in dramatic form many of the ideas that were first enounced in *The Evolution of the Negro*, but they also look forward to some of the subjects dealt with in Cameron's essays.

The essays under the heading of which I include 'articles' and 'addresses', may be divided into four categories: religious, philosophical, political and cultural. The religious essays appear mainly in the *Diocesan Magazine* in 1975 and 1976, and they bear such titles as 'A Bishop Looks at his Churches', 'The Church and F. C. H.', 'How Jesus did it: A Pattern for All', 'On Conscience and Common Sense', 'The Role of the Church in

Guyana'. They have in common a very practical approach to religion and the assumption that God's help is required not only in our most ambitious undertakings but also in our most minor activities. Religion is a way of life.

The statement he makes on the role of the Church in Guyana is certainly apposite when we consider the philosophical message he bequeaths to the youth:

This writer regarded and regards Religion and the Church as providing training ground and training for one's participation in the affairs of one's country.⁵⁰

In the philosophical essays which include 'Message to the Youth', 'On Meditation', 'On Self-control, Forgiveness and Humility', 'Henry V: A Life Revolutionized' and 'The Philosophy of Marcus Garvey', the accent is placed on self-improvement and the spirit of preparedness. Cameron sees the individual as fulfilling a double responsibility which involves triple action: the development of self for the development of society, for the development of humanity. On the one hand there is the individual, and on the other hand there is the society represented by others, but the two forces cannot be divorced from each other since what is done by the one affects the other. The strong nationalism of the author is a consequence of the philosophical view that a better nation means a better individual, and a stronger individual strikes a stronger blow for humanity.

The political essays are for the most part articles submitted to the newspapers, but they also include a few booklets. Some of the more important political essays are: 'Thoughts on the Making of a New Nation' (1959), 'An Introduction to our Social Philosophy' (1965), 'Worrying Features in our Politics' (1964), 'Clearing the Political Air' (1963), 'Communism and British Guiana' (1964), 'Thoughts on a Cooperative State' (1970).

Cameron's method in the political essays is basically eclectic, in the sense that he criticises the weaknesses found in all systems, and selects for praise the 'good' elements in those systems. His main preoccupation is what may be good for Guyana, with the implication that, politically, Guyana must

select the best elements from any or all systems in order to forge her own.

The cultural essays have been collected mainly in *Thoughts on Life and Literature* and *Adventures in the Field of Culture*, but Cameron also published essays on education including his essay on agricultural education which was publicly acknowledged in 1963 by the then Minister of Education, Mr Brindley Benn, as one of the sources of inspiration for the founding of the Guyana School of Agriculture at Mon Repos. Other valuable essays under culture include the study on *Mahatma Gandhi* written for the Maha Sabha and the booklet entitled *The Guyana Library and Its Impact*.

In conclusion, any evaluation of the contribution made by Professor Cameron to the history of literature in Guyana must take into account the social and historical context in which he began his literary career.

It is true that throughout his work there is a strong religious element not only from the point of view of the choice of subjects. We know that he chose for his plays stories that were taken from biblical history; we know that of the thirty-four poems in *Interlude* at least five reflect directly or indirectly his belief in and faith in God; we know that he wrote a number of articles and essays – messages to the youth in which he stresses the value of Christian principles. But for him religion is always seen as preparation for, and an aid in, life. He is not an ascetic but he projects the image of religion as a way of life. But life, a full life, was not possible unless one knew one's past, one's identity, one's destination.

Like many West Indians then and even now, his secondary schooling in a colonial period was not geared to encourage a strong feeling of identity. One received a British education and as a colony of Great Britain one felt more allegiance to the United Kingdom than to Guyana. The literature presented to youth only European heroes, European kings and princes, European models, and unselfconsciously the young West Indian identified himself with these models. This was a situation of unreality, it meant that one lived in a kind of dream world from which one was rudely awakened when one arrived in the 'Mother Country' and discovered with a shock that one was not considered an Englishman. The French-

speaking, Dutch-speaking and Spanish-speaking West Indians have had a similar experience. Frantz Fanon described it well when he wrote: "*The negro becomes aware of the unreality of many of the statements he had repeated as his own, adopting unconsciously the attitude of the white man. It is only at this point that he begins his apprenticeship. And the reality has proved singularly resilient.*"⁵¹.

So Cameron, who in the 1920s discovered his real identity, starts out on his intellectual pilgrimage to the *homeland* of the ancestors. But he does not stop at research into ancient and mediaeval Africa, he is determined to contribute positively and constructively to the betterment of the people whom he only now regards as his own.

The publication of *The Evolution of the Negro* created quite a stir. From the cart-man who could not afford to buy a copy but who paid shilling by shilling each week until he had covered the cost, to eminent negro leaders like E. F. Fredericks, whose encouragement was unflinching both before and after publication.

Yet mark the date, mark the society and mark well the political climate in the then colony of Guiana. On the one hand the colonial government kept a watchful eye on the activities and publications of the more progressive men. Books were censored, secret despatches were sent to Great Britain giving information on any prominent citizen who threatened to become a force for change. Moreso as a member of that most colonial of institutions, Queen's College, Cameron's freedom was limited. He could not freely comment on racial injustices or on colonial injustices for fear of losing his job or of being barred from promotion to the end of his life.

On the other hand, the sensitivities of the creole society were such, their complex about slavery and blackness so great, that had he come out in the open to express plainly his sense of indignity at the social injustices and prejudices attached to the colour question, even those in whose favour he wrote would have been scandalised and embarrassed.

During our examination of the social commentary implicit in the works of Cameron, questions were raised about the role of the middle class, and the suggestion was made that the masses were betrayed by the so-called middle-class.

But it is easy to see how in such a context an educated elite who, after all had their roots in the soil, their roots in the masses, their roots in a recent slavery, were forced to engage not in a battle with arms and physical violence but in a battle of wits in order to safeguard whatever few gains had been made and at the same time to widen the breach so that others could follow. One of the earliest revolutionary leaders in the well-known episode in the history of Guyana had been a "house-slave". In 1929, a revolution through the use of arms would have been unheard of, would have been doomed to failure because of the military power of the metropolitan country and its allies. The battle for the dignity of the Negro had to be fought on a different plane. Those who had had the benefit of an education, albeit colonial, had to learn to use the same arms, psychological, economic and cultural, as the erstwhile colonial power. In his own way through the medium of the book Cameron has contributed to that battle.

Remember that the society in which he had to operate was only three generations removed from slavery and emancipation. In 1903, when Cameron was born, there were many people still alive who could tell you about slavery at first-hand, from their own experiences or else from the experiences of near relatives. Certain attitudes and prejudices survived slavery to extend their influence over a population which strove to forget the recent past and to obliterate from their memory what was only too often considered to be a 'shameful' past.

Ironically the shame, which should have fallen squarely on the shoulders of the perpetrators of slavery, was subtly transferred to the shoulders of the victims of slavery. So that the term 'son of a slave' became a term of abuse and contempt.

And this complete misrepresentation of the reality was accepted by the Negroes, many of whom tried to avoid any reference to that unhappy period of their history, or else, when they had to, would speak with a misplaced gratitude about the wonderful humanity of Queen Victoria, which they contrasted with the brutality of the local white planters. We have seen the reaction of Moses to the Pharaoh's accusation of ingratitude.

Some of the questions to which Cameron replies through the medium of the plays are questions which were seriously

and desperately debated by his contemporaries. Was the Negro so inferior that everywhere you looked he was enslaved by others, exploited by others, ridiculed and cursed by others? Why did not the forefathers choose death rather than submit themselves to such indignities? And even if for various reasons they were unable to commit suicide, why did they not all rebel, or all seek to escape to freedom in the great forests like the Maroons?

In *The Evolution*, Cameron speaks with great pride of the achievements of the 1763 rebellion under Cuffy, of Toussaint L'Ouverture in Haiti, Adoe in Suriname and Fedon in Grenada:

[...]men of great courage, and also impressive organisers and statesmen who could not have arisen or thriven where slave owners held the upper hand [...]⁵²

In the period of emancipation other leaders were called for and other tactics. Violence was not now the answer but a more subtle campaign in which the newly freed Negro must learn to use the weapons that were hitherto used against him; he must now excel at the language which had been imposed on him ; he must learn the deepest secrets of the ex-master's education and technology; he must try to surpass him at his own game if he is going to retain his newly won freedom.

This was the message of the Angel Gabriel in the play entitled **The Trumpet**. The message of John Sayers Orr to his people was that they should be industrious, productive, economically viable, that they should work towards the education of their children. We know what circumstances led to Orr's failure; we know that he trumpeted the objectives he hoped for prematurely, without first laying a solid foundation and without first taking precautions against deviations created by the massive colonial propaganda machinery.

And yet, other champions were bound to rise up. So in a more recent past, in **Jamaica Joe** the experiences gained as a farm worker in the United States of America, the training acquired from a formal education at night-school help to mould a future leader of the community. And so each age must contribute to the improvement of the next.

As a writer Professor Cameron has contributed to the preservation and dissemination of information about our past, not only historically, by the publication of *The Evolution of the Negro*, but also educationally, by treatises such as *150 years of Education in Guyana*, by the essays on village institutions, agricultural societies, and by journals such as *Adventures in the Field of Culture* which paint a vivid picture of the society of the recent past with its cultural, religious, social activities, and culturally, by his publication on *Guianese Poetry* and by his plays on the African Saga. Finally, we salute him because of the calibre of his life which is reflected in the numerous positive activities he has been able to pursue in the interest of education and national development and for the youth of Guyana. He has achieved during the span of fifty years from 1929 to 1979, his objective "to use the endowments of the Afro-American to uphold the prestige of a much misunderstood people, to strive to do his best for the country of his birth and, as a Christian, to enjoy a common humanity with the rest of mankind."⁵³

CHRONOLOGICAL PROFILE

1871:

28th February. Birth of Sylvia Elizabeth Cameron *née* Beete.

1875:

January. Birth of George Johnson Cameron at Devonshire Castle, Essequibo.

1891:

Constitutional Reforms in the Colony of British Guiana.

1900:

Birth of Randolph Cuthbert Cameron.

1903:

26th January. Birth of Norman E. Cameron.

1909:

Primary School education in various parts of the country up to 1916.

1914:

World War I breaks out. British Guiana prepares to send contingent of soldiers.

1916:

At Christ Church Primary School, Cameron wins Government Junior Scholarship.

1917:

Enters Queen's College Grammar School under Headmaster T. A. Pope.

1918:

Percival Exhibitioner with distinctions in Mathematics, English, Religious Knowledge, Latin and French.

1921:

Guyana Scholar, placing first among candidates from Guyana and Barbados.

1922:

Departure for the U.K. Enters Fitzwilliam College, University of Cambridge.

1923:

First-class Honours, Part I, Mathematical Tripos.

1925:

Graduate. Senior Optime.

1926:

Theoretical Course in Education at Cambridge. 23rd June marries Lurline Daly, daughter of distinguished Guyanese family. Return to Guyana. Inauguration of his own school *The Guyanese Academy* (1926–1934). Continued research.

1929:

M.A. Degree. Publication of Volume I of *The Evolution of the Negro*.

1930:

Formation of the British Guiana Literary Society.

1931:

Publication of **Balthasar** and *Guianese Poetry*.

1934:

Publication of Volume II of *The Evolution of the Negro*. Joined Queen's College as an Assistant Master.

1936:

Contribution to the first ever *Negro History Week*.

1938:

Travels to the UK, France and visits the Pyramids of Egypt.

1939:

Storm clouds leading to World War II.

1941:

Adoption of baby Joan.

1942:

Publication of *Additional Mathematics* in four volumes and also under one cover.

1943:

Adoniya.

1944:

Interlude. Memorandum submitted to the Committee on Higher Education.

1946:

Jamaica Joe.

1947:

Sabaco. Visit to Trinidad and Jamaica.

1948:

First President of the B. G. Table Tennis Association.

1949:

Warden at Christ Church, Guyana.

1950:

Thoughts on Life and Literature. Articles in *Kyk-Over-Al* and *Sentinel*.

1951:

History of Queen's College. Combined Cultural Exhibition.

1952:

Visit to the UK (Isle of Wight, Scotland) and attendance at the Oxford Mathematical Conference.

1953:

Three Immortals. Founding of the Association of Masters and Mistresses. Representative of the Guild of Graduates to Jamaica. (Election victory of the Peoples Progressive Party. Suspension of the British Guiana Constitution).

1954:

Memorandum submitted on the British Guiana Constitutional Crisis.

1955:

Publication of various articles, including '**Thoughts on Agricultural Education**' in *Timehri*.

1956:

Visit to the UK and the USA.

1958:

Appointed Deputy Principal of Queen's College. Booklet on Guianese Music and Composers.

1959:

Kayssa. '**Thoughts on the Making of a New Nation**'.

1960:

Elected Chairman of the Museum Committee.

1961:

Visit to the UK and Holland.

1962:

Publication of **Jamaica Joe.** Gilchrist Scholarships in the Caribbean. Book Exhibition and Inter-Racial Harmony Exhibition. Elected President of the Royal Agricultural and Commercial Society. Awarded the M. B. E. Removal of family to 'Sea Glimpse', Lot 4, Subbryanville.

1963:

Address to the *Maba Sabba* on *Gandhi*. Several articles in the press on Politics. Pictorial Exhibitions on '**150 years of Education in Guyana**'. Appointed Associate Professor of Mathematics at the University of Guyana.

1964:

Appointed to the full-time Staff of the University of Guyana. Elected Dean of the Faculty of Arts. More articles on Politics in Guyana.

1965:

The Price of Victory. An Introduction to our Social Philosophy. Evidence given before the International Commission of Jurists.

1966:

Guyana becomes independent under Prime Minister Burnham. *Guide to the Published Works of A Guyanese Author and Playwright.*

1967:

Vicar's Warden, Christ Church. *A Historical Account of the Parish of Christ Church, Guyana.*

1968:

President of the Royal Agricultural and Commercial Society. Warden of Christ Church and Trustee to the Y. W. C. A. Member of the Council of the Children's Dorcas Club. Examiner and Board Member, Land Surveyors. Appointed Professor Emeritus in Mathematics at the University of Guyana. *150 years of Education in Guyana.*

1969:

Articles in the daily newspapers including '**Black Power and Guyana**'. Publication of **The Trumpet**.

1970:

Guyana becomes a Republic. *Thoughts on a Co-op State. Adventures in the Field of Culture. Guyanese Library and Its Impact.*

1972:

First ever CARIFESTA held in Guyana. Awarded the Golden Arrow of Achievement.

1973:

Poetry and Philosophy in Drama (Extracts from the author's published plays).

1976:

Sir Alfred Victor Crane Gold Medal for outstanding contribution to Education. Articles in the *Diocesan Magazine*.

1978:

Death of Cameron's wife, Lurline.

1979:

Memorandum on the New Socialist Constitution presented to the Constituent Assembly. Norman Cameron Appreciation Evening held on Friday, 3rd August, at the Department of Culture, Carifesta Avenue.

The Edgar Mittelholzer Memorial Lectures, Seventh Series: **'Norman E. Cameron: The Man and his Works', delivered** by Joycelynne Loncke, Dean of the Faculty of Arts, University of Guyana.

ENDNOTES:

¹ *This I believe*. Unpublished MS, 6.1.

² *150 Years of Education in Guyana (1808-1957)*. (Georgetown, 1968), p. 35.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁴ H. A. Lutchman, *Middle Class Colonial Politics: A Study of Guyana with Special Reference to the Period 1920-1931*. MS Ph.D thesis, University of Manchester, 1967. Cf. *Patronage in Colonial Society: A Study on the former British Guiana* (Georgetown, 1970), pp. 5-6.

⁵ C. Dolphin, **'Great Guyanese Pioneers: Norman E. Cameron: An Introduction to a Study of his Life and Work'**, in *Kaie* (No. 4, July 1976), p. 67.

⁶ *Adventures in the Field of Culture* (Georgetown, 1971), pp. 29-39.

⁷ *Biographical Notes*. Unpublished MS, 2.3.

⁸ *Further Aids to a Biographer*. Unpublished MS, 5.1.

⁹ *This I believe*. MS, 6.1.

¹⁰ *Thoughts on Life and Literature*. (Georgetown, 1950), p. 171.

¹¹ *The Evolution of the Negro, II, 1*. Reprinted by Negroes University Press (Connecticut, 1970), pp 126-7.

- ¹² Tony Martin, *Race First: the Ideological and Organisational Struggles of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association*. (Greenwood Press, 1976).
- ¹³ *Thoughts on Life and Literature*, p. 172.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 8.
- ¹⁶ *The Evolution of the Negro, II, 1*, p. iv.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁸ A. J. Seymour, *The Making of Guyanese Literature*. (Georgetown, 1978), p. 96.
- ¹⁹ *Thoughts on Life and Literature*, p. 171.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 4.
- ²¹ *The Evolution of the Negro, II, 1*, p. 145.
- ²² *Ibid.*, p. 131.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, p. 7
- ²⁴ *The Evolution of the Negro, I, 1*, pp. ix-x.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. iii.
- ²⁶ J. Loncke, 'The Plays of Norman Cameron: The Price of Victory', in *Kaie* (13, 1977), p. 76.
- ²⁷ Norman Cameron, *Guide to the Published Works of a Guyanese Author and Playwright*. (Georgetown, 1966), p. 12.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*
- ³⁰ *Adventures in the Field of Culture*, p. 27.
- ³¹ *Guide to the Published Works*, p. 16. In 1931 Guyanese celebrated the centenary of the Union of the three 'Colonies', Berbice, Demerara, Essequibo.
- ³² C. Dolphin, 'Great Guyanese Pioneers', in *Kaie* (4, 1976), p. 67.
- ³³ See A. J. Seymour, *The Making of Guyanese Literature*, pp. 83-6.
- ³⁴ *Interlude* (Georgetown, 1944). p. v.
- ³⁵ *Adventures in the Field of Culture*, p. 34.
- ³⁶ *Guide to the Published Works*, p. 39.
- ³⁷ **Three Immortals: Sabaco** (Georgetown, 1953), Act III, scene ii, p. 87.
- ³⁸ Cameron presents his hero as Ethiopian, not Nubian or Abyssinian.
- ³⁹ **The Price of Victory** (Georgetown, 1965), pp. 27-28.
- ⁴⁰ 'Notes on Ancient Egypt and Ethiopia', in **Three Immortals**, p. 48.
- ⁴¹ **Balthasar** (Georgetown, 1931), Act I, scene iii, pp. 37-8
- ⁴² *The Evolution of the Negro, II, 1*, p. 147.
- ⁴³ **Three Immortals: Adoniya**, Act III, scene I, pp. 37-8.
- ⁴⁴ **The Trumpet** (Georgetown, 1969) p. 9.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁶ *Guide to the Published Works*, p. 23.
- ⁴⁷ J. Loncke, 'The Plays of Norman Cameron', in *Kaie* (13, 1977), p. 74.
- ⁴⁸ **Jamaica Joe: A Play in Three Acts** (Georgetown: De Sousa's Printery, 1962), Act I, scene i, p. 4. [Editor's note: first presented at Queen's College, Brickdam, on 5, 6 and 7 September 1946.]
- ⁴⁹ *Poetry and Philosophy in Drama* (Georgetown, 1973), p. 41.
- ⁵⁰ **The Role of the Church in Guyana**, in *Diocesan Magazine* (September, 1975), p. 260.
- ⁵¹ Frantz Fanon, *Peau Noire, Masques Blancs*. (Paris, 1952), p. 122.
- ⁵² *The Evolution of the Negro, II, 1*, p. 135.
- ⁵³ *Thoughts on Life and Literature*, p. 172.

Eighth Series, 1983

Art and Experience
Roy Heath

FOREWORD

When Roy Heath agreed to deliver the eighth series of Edgar Mittelholzer Memorial Lectures we were delighted. Although a prolific writer with several novels and plays to his credit, he is not widely known to the Guyanese public and this was a splendid opportunity for us all to get to know him better.

In the same Theatre Guild Playhouse where his play **Inez Combray** was successfully staged some years ago, Roy Heath's lectures were a great success and they stimulated much audience participation and discussion.

It is hoped that from these lectures young aspiring writers in the community will find some inspiration and a great deal of encouragement.

Lynette de W. Dolphin C. C. H.
Chairman, Department of Culture

INTRODUCTION

Sixteen years have elapsed since the inauguration of the Edgar Mittelholzer Memorial Lectures in 1967. Recurring enquiries seem to indicate that today's young writers need to be reminded of the terms of reference of this series of lectures and the subject matter dealt with by the lecturers so far. The terms of reference directed that the Edgar Mittelholzer Lectures "*should relate to a theme of contemporary Guyanese or Commonwealth Caribbean writing, or some aspect of the relationship between thought and history and the emergence of creative writing in the Caribbean area.*"

The first lecturer, Arthur Seymour, who drew on his personal knowledge of Mittelholzer for the four lectures he gave on '**Edgar Mittelholzer – The Man and His Work**' – brought a great depth of understanding to his interpretation of Mittelholzer as a human being and the literature that Mittelholzer left for us.

Denis Williams in the second series of lectures on '**Image and Idea in the Arts of Guyana**' explored the identity of the Caribbean person. He used the background of many years spent overseas to interpret the Guyanese identity *vis-à-vis* the Caribbean identity.

The next series, '**History, Fable and Myth in the Caribbean and Guianas**', was given by Wilson Harris, a very dynamic personality and very individualistic, exploring some of the conflict of our present society. He analysed some of the issues with which we have to come to terms – some of the inputs that contribute to the complexity of the Caribbean personality.

Martin Carter, in presenting the fourth series '**Man and Making – Victim and Vehicle**', looked behind the creative writing to the man who did the writing and examined his reasons for writing and his concept of his role. His lectures brought us into close contact with the identity of the group of people who find themselves in this region of the world.

Michael Gilkes, in the fifth series, '**Racial Identity and Individual Consciousness in the Caribbean Novel**',

analyses a number of Mittelholzer's works, referring at intervals to some unpublished works to which he was fortunate enough to gain access. He compares the work of Mittelholzer to that of some eminent, contemporary writers who explore the same 'division of consciousness' that dominates Mittelholzer's characters.

Gordon Rohlehr, in the sixth series '**Calypso and Caribbean Culture**', shared with us his views, his knowledge and his opinions resulting from long and dedicated research. His subject, the Calypso, has come out of the masses themselves and focuses a light on our total Caribbean Society.

Joycelynne Loncke delivered the seventh series of lectures on '**Norman E. Cameron – The Man and His Works**'. She outlined the enormous output of a Guyanese generally known as a mathematician and educationist, but whose prolific published works establish him as an essayist, poet, historian and dramatist. This contribution has taken its place among the existing Guyanese biographies.

Roy Heath presented the eighth series of lectures – '**Art and Experience**' – while on vacation at home in Guyana, at a time when his seventh novel had gone to press. All his stories are set in well-remembered Guyana scenes: Albouystown, Charlestown, Queenstown and Vreed-en-Hoop. In his lectures he examines the sources of fiction, the relation of art to history and the artist and his work as well as the experience with publishers common to so many Caribbean writers.

From this it will be seen that the Edgar Mittelholzer Memorial lectures provide not only an introduction but also a serious insight into the processes of creative literary thought in Guyana and the Caribbean.¹

I THE SOURCES OF FICTION

Story-telling, like painting and music, dates back to pre-Neolithic times, that is to say, the earliest period of man's history. Perhaps the most striking aspect of story-telling throughout the ages is its shifting centre of interest. Among the aboriginal Indians of South America story-telling attributes an importance to animals that matches man's. In fact the jaguar is almost invariably man's superior. Man steals fire from him, marries his daughters to him and in general treats him with a reverence reserved for the latter-day Gods. The jaguar emerges from these stories with the dignity of a hero belonging to Japanese fiction.

It is during this early planting period – as exemplified by the way of life of most aboriginal Indians North of the Amazon – that certain universal themes began to preoccupy the story makers: incest, disloyalty and rape characterise some of the most striking tales – striking to us, no doubt because they are the stuff of contemporary obsessions. But the most common themes are the origin of the stars, of fish poison, of fire, and so on, providing, as it were, a summary of the technology on which their way of life depends.

Most of these stories, then, appear to be functional, and do not depend for their effect on the identification of the individual listener with the characters involved. Yet, it is precisely this kind of judgement that must attract suspicion, for such tales may evoke an emotional response in the Indians as profound as our reaction to a classic novel. Nevertheless, they do not exploit an interest in individual behaviour, nor are they divorced from the destiny of the social group for whom they were composed.

This undifferentiated view of man as part of the animal world later lost ground to stories centring around the hero, who was to become the chief preoccupation of the story-maker, a remarkable development that took place late in early Neolithic times. In Guyana we have the opportunity of witnessing these two contrasting mentalities, the undifferentiated and the individualistic. The self-seeking of the

town dweller is alien to the psychology of aboriginal Indians who, as late as the early part of this century, could not even be persuaded to work for others.

This new culture-hero, while he represents an emerging individual psychology, is very different from the hero of later times. Far from being an ideal male, a model to be emulated, he is a trickster figure, unreliable and devious, often with an unbridled sexual appetite, who sounds a warning against the uninhibited individual ego. In his most primitive form he appears in the Winnebago trickster cycle of the Iroquois Indians of North America, while in Guyana he is Macunaima, the culture hero of the Arecuna tribe, who once used his magical powers to hoist the communal hut high into the air simply because he was angry with his brother.

Kwaku Anansi, hero of Akan folk tales, emphasises one aspect of the trickster figure, namely his ability to survive, thus presenting the Winnebago and Arecuna hero in an attenuated form, divested of many anarchical traits. It is worth mentioning at this point that, despite numerous developments in story-telling, the trickster figure has not disappeared: he lives on in the villain of fiction and drama, a figure of endless fascination who acts as a foil to our hero.

With the appearance of a culture hero came a parallel development in the length of the story, which was now told as part of a series. If the hero provided the connecting link to the parts his misadventures conformed to a pattern, so giving the often lengthy series of tales a unity to which the old stories of animals and humans did not aspire. The problems of unity and length are important since they anticipate the latest flowering of story-telling, the novel or long story in prose.

Parallel to the development of the short story into a series of tales, there arose a new form designed to meet the need for a historical record of traumatic events. In Guyana both the Arawaks and Warraus recount epic tales of their wars with the Caribs, late intruders into South America from the islands to the north. These stories are necessarily long and like all so-called historical records show their tellers, the Warrau and Arawaks, in a heroic light. This period was the heroic age when the Caribs, unable to stabilise their growing population,

penetrated South America north of the Amazon by way of the Orinoco, the Waini and other large rivers. Such long epic tales are characteristic of a certain historical time, and if my evidence is taken from story-telling among the aboriginal Indians it is not for want of examples elsewhere. The Ramayana epic in India, the Mandingo epics of Mali and the Homeric epics of Greece all serve a similar purpose and belong to a similar historical time. Interestingly enough the epic follows, broadly, the same line of development with regard to the hero as did the shorter tales. More diffused in their centre of interest in their earliest form, they sought to concentrate on the deeds of a few characters in their latest manifestations. What the Warrau did to the Caribs in the Warrau-Carib wars, as told by the Warrau, becomes, in the later heroic age, the successes of the Greeks through leaders like Agamemnon and Ulysses.

We see, therefore, a parallel development in the obsession with the hero-idea in both forms of story-telling. The ego is well on its way to establishing itself as one of the pivotal preoccupations of fiction as fiction or fiction as history. Fiction as history is in fact still the main form of history taught in schools and universities throughout the world, just as story-telling is unable to resist the fascination of the trickster figure in the guise of the villain, in the same way historical investigation is trapped by the demands of propaganda.

It must be obvious to many that nothing has been said about women and children in the history of the art of story-telling. The stories that have been collected among Neolithic peoples all tell of an art manipulated by male story-tellers. The heroes are almost invariably male until the late epics, and where a female protagonist appears she is a temptress – leading men to their doom in the forest or at the bottom of the sea – a bringer of disaster who, against all warnings, opens a box out of which fly all the woes of this world, or a faithful wife, ideal of man's wish-fulfilment. Children fare even worse, for it is only recently that fiction has ceased maltreating or murdering them, thus disclosing the unconscious hand behind the apparently conscious art of invention, just as the release of the age is an important aspect on the history of story-telling, so the role of women will provide a later impulse to the moulding of a new fiction, a matter to be discussed later.

Up to this point the direction taken by the story-maker's art appears to have followed a determinist course: a certain historical time gives rise to a certain type of story. Propaganda itself yields to the demands of the period. But if the role of propaganda is subtle in pre-literate times, its purpose becomes clear when the art of printing allows the dissemination of stories in a permanent form. The German oral stories collected by the brothers Grimm were brutal in the extreme. When the prince came upon the Sleeping Beauty he did not wake her with a kiss as the written version would have it: he raped her. The pressures operating at the time, overt and otherwise, obliged the Grimm brothers to modify these folk tales, in order to make them acceptable to the church and the new merchant class. It was all very well for the common people to regale themselves with stories of an unbridled imagination, but the wives and children of the middle class had to be protected. Stories were made to match the art of that period; a fey, prettified version of the bourgeois world, in which violence was banished and a longed-for order reigned. Organised religion became the master censor, which prescribed theatrical productions that were not put on at the Court or in the Church porch.

The reality in West Africa was quite different. Villagers were able to pursue their art, free from the interference of an umbrella-like religious organisation. The Gelede secret society among the Yoruba of Nigeria, formed to protect men from the power of women, have their poetry, songs, stories and dances. The vigour of public story-telling at the door-mouth was equalled by the vigour of private story-telling among the secret societies.

The theory of economic activity as the source of change, like every system of investigation, has its limitations. Old Chinese paintings in which humans are dwarfed by the landscape contrast sharply with African art whose subjects demand attention by their very posture. The cultural experience also has a formative influence. One would expect, therefore, the content of stories of one culture to have a recognisable stamp beyond the exigencies of historical time.

In West African stories the characters meet people without limbs on the road; an old woman begs a ride from a generous

young man, who is unable to get her off his back. These are stories in which their characters inhabit a nightmare world of terror and dismay. Other cultures at a similar historical time-stage are characterised by a gentler vision of fate. But it is a matter of interest that uncensored African and European art, which provide humans with a violent image of themselves in the world – even in the plastic arts the image is aggressive – should share such an oppressive world view.

It would be easy to get lost in the multiplicity of genres that emerge as the merchant class grows more powerful. Didactic or religious stories, fairy tales and others vie with one another for public attention, reflecting in their division of interest the division of labour that seeks to satisfy a growing demand for goods. But it is precisely in this period that a story-telling form emerges which gathers together all the threads of the art into a single genre: the novel, that is to say, a long story in prose. It is difficult and perhaps futile to attempt to discover the country that can claim the honour to the first novel. Modern research ascribes the earliest acknowledged examples to eleventh-century Japan where the novel flourished under the leadership of women authors, while Europe and China produced outstanding examples in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Characterisation in depth and a sustained story line were salient features of the new form. A middle-class art form, the novel chartered the course of middle-class aspiration and achievement, disappointment and disgust: in Europe it became more potent as cultural anaemia became more apparent. It was not the novel that discovered depth psychology, but rather the psychologists who took their cue from the new surgeons of the mind, following in the wake of practitioners like Gogol and Dostoyevsky, just as egrets forage for a meal in the footsteps of cattle. But the individual had no sooner come into his own than he went into swift decline. He was examined, analysed, dismantled, reconstituted, rejected, rehabilitated, reviled and even dehumanised. The trickster figure, once dressed in the garb of respectability to play the hero, now survives as villain and anti-hero, and social anguish has been translated into 'fictional' revulsion.

In West Africa the novel has gone its own way; unaffected by the profound pessimism of Europe and the United States it has been able to produce remarkable works like Buchi Emecheta's *Bride Price*, a masterpiece that draws its vigour from a powerful culture source. Gabriel Márquez has written the first genuinely South American novel, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and followed it with *Autumn of the Patriarch*, a novel of such magical evocations that it confirms fiction as an understanding art form.

The novel, then, has become a comprehensive form into which a variety of inventions can be poured. From Robbe-Grillet (French) and Wilson Harris (Guyanese), two of the leaders of the experimental school of fiction, to the detailed chronicles of some American writers, it covers a vast terrain. Any literate culture may borrow the novel and make of it what it will. On the one hand it has re-absorbed poetry and drama, history and myth, and on the other it has been fractionalised into numerous genres.

A development in fiction which might well prove to be one of the most significant, is its growing interest in women, who are often no longer appendages of men. Much of art can be described as reflecting male wish-fulfilment and anxiety. Not only are the majority of its practitioners men, but its subject matter too often betrays a male concern, so that adultery, violence and murder are its staples. In at least one country, where more than half of the novelists are women, the reader is made to confront the condition of a female psyche far removed from the illusions of male fiction. If Flaubert and Tolstoy warn against the tragedy adultery brings in its train Buchi Emecheta the Nigerian novelist ignores the subject. For her it is the very existence of men as the great manipulators that fuel her obsessive vision. Even the titles of her books, *Bride Price*, the ironic *Joys of Motherhood*, are disturbing to the male illusion.

Old people and children rarely achieve prominence in fiction, a fact as deplorable as the neglect of the female psyche. If children are no longer regularly brutalised or murdered with a ritual fervour they do not frequently appear, and where the demands of realism oblige authors to put them on stage they are treated with cursory attention. Our

interest in the condition of the very old and very young is no less sketchy than is our understanding of the human mind. This observation alone serves as a reminder that story-telling, despite its remarkable age, still has much ground to cover.

Modern psychology would have us believe that the source of fiction lies in the individual experience. Edgar Mittelholzer's recurrent themes can be traced to his childhood. Nikolai Gogol's mania for describing people's noses is attributed to a castration fear, and so on. Yet, the recurrent themes in Mittelholzer's books are the obsessions of the Guyanese Creole in pre-1960 Guyana, just as Gogol's preoccupation with sneezing, nose wiping and the disappearance of noses can be traced to Ukrainian eighteenth- and nineteenth-century stories. What appears at first to be an individual mania draws, in fact, on a pool of cultural experience. Yet, it is through individual experience that the author is able to empathise with a culture or with humanity at large. It is, therefore, useful to identify experiences which might serve as a starting point for a story capable of achieving resonance among a large group of listeners or readers.

It is axiomatic that first novels are frequently autobiographical; furthermore, they might possess a numinous quality subsequent books can never recapture. If the source of fiction is the individual experience its vividness often belongs to the power of recollection of childhood events. Childhood memories undoubtedly furnish much material for the subject matter of fiction. Some authors openly proclaim their intention of writing an autobiography, while others are convinced that their fiction is a made-up story. But neither autobiography nor fiction is what it seems, for the first is all too often an apologia festooned with inventions, and the second an invention anchored to a solid raft of truth. The author's unconscious intention invariably become clear after the third or fourth book: a one-sided treatment of a recurring theme, consistently weak male characters, a preoccupation with death, self-hatred and much else, which tumble out like the words of a patient under the influence of a truth drug.

But fiction as recollection is not all obsessive. The observant writer will look outward and note the behaviour

of others, the outline shape of a tree, the way a child cocks its head, speech patterns and a host of little things. For they all go to make up the kaleidoscopic background against which is to be played out the action that justifies the descriptive term 'story'. This detail is the hallmark of much contemporary fiction. Novelists from North and South America, the Caribbean, Africa, Europe and Asia all feel obliged to work this pattern. At first sight a novel, the most evolved story-telling form, is synonymous with detail. Yet the Bible story of Joseph the Dreamer who was sold into slavery by his brother conforms to the definition of the novel while lacking great detail: a long story in prose, it has a protagonist whose character is convincingly portrayed. Besides it boasts qualities that most contemporary fiction might well emulate. This magnificent tale refutes the contentions that the novel is a modern literary form and that it requires a detailed evocation of the environment in which the story takes place. Significant detail does contribute to its appeal: Joseph's megalomania, his rejection of Potiphar's wife, the symbolic importance of the number seven in his dreams, all help to cast the story's spell. Extravagant detail on the other hand is a convention of the contemporary novel, just as guns are a convention of the American cinema. The convention persuades us that it is indispensable. In the foregoing I have indicated that the sources of fiction reside mainly in the socio-economic condition and that the individual experience, while capable of imbuing a work with a numinous quality, takes its direction and broader vision from the socio-economic condition. In my view any forecast regarding the direction of fiction will have to take the above into account. Does experimental fiction give us a clue to the new directions or will the bias be in favour of the fiction of Gabriel Márquez's magical realism? I have no idea, for if the sources of art are identifiable its future is elusive.

II ART AND HISTORY

I must state from the outset that the word Art is used here in its wider meaning and includes, for instance, pottery.

This lecture has certain resemblances to the previous one, which is inevitable, for my intention is to discuss art in its historical context. The main difference is that the last lecture confined its attentions to story-telling.

Some two years ago I attended an exhibition of African painting and was struck by two things, first by its variety and secondly by the fact that many viewers were forced to revise very basic ideas about the artist and his work. For example, the sign-painter, to the surprise of many, might be the painter-artist as well. The African is creating in an environment in which the division of labour has not reached the stage where the alienated spirit makes a virtue of its isolation and obliges the artist to describe himself or herself either as a painter or a sign-painter. The lessons of an exhibition of this kind, of great value to all who strive to understand the function and importance of art, are particularly important to people of the Caribbean and the Americas, for, having lost much of their heritage in the trauma of invasion or slavery they are in danger of accepting norms which may be suitable for a certain culture or a certain historical time, but entirely unsuitable to their own experience. It took Columbia nearly four hundred years to produce an author like Márquez, who is capable of interpreting facets of a Columbian experience in a unique way, free of irrelevant influence. The problems of conveying the Guyanese experience, for instance, should not be underestimated.

To help set the scene I will cite another example from Eastern art. One of the most remarkable schools of painting is that of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Northern India. Unique in its stylisation, colouring and form, it is still hardly known outside India and Iran, since the powerful Western propaganda machine promotes a so-called 'ideal' beauty that has little relevance outside Europe. An acquaintance with this

sophisticated school of painting contributes to an overview of differing artistic modes and to an understanding of the relativity of art. In this period of rediscovery for Caribbean art a variety of models can be studied with profit.

Throughout the world there are rock paintings depicting hunting scenes, all characterised by great vigour and, at their best, considerable skill and control. They were all made by pre-Neolithic man, that is, man before he discovered how to supplement his food-gathering by planting. Whether these paintings were done by Australian aborigines or ancient inhabitants of the Sahara or France they are portrayals of hunting scenes. Man was a hunter/food gatherer and, patently, the painting of any other activity was not conceivable.

There are no scenes of people sitting round the campfire or of women carrying their babies on the interminable treks food gatherers make. The paintings were done by men and men saw hunting as the only activity worth recording permanently. The variations from culture to culture were variations in style and skill. The Australian aborigine of the North coast tended to see the scene as if he were standing above it. The Lascaux hunters of what is now France had mastered the art of projecting a solidity of form unique in rock-painting. But the same vigour informed this primitive art, wherever it was practised. Such rock paintings are not to be confused with Timehri rock art of Guyana and other parts of South America, which was almost certainly practised by planting peoples. The so-called mystery of Timehri art is solved when we learn that such work is still being done by the piaiemen of the Tukano tribe, who live on the Rio Negro. Even without this evidence the lack of vigour in the Timehri and Tukano rock art would give it away as having been practised by people who did not depend on hunting to the extent that pre-Neolithic people did. I will come back to the function of the rock art of Neolithic people later in the paper.

As I pointed out in the previous lecture on fiction the artist is creating within the constraints of a mould provided by a culture into which he was born. He is as free to map out his own course as a horse is free to take to the air. Individuality would come with the emergence of the ego as a psychological force in social behaviour.

The chief form of painting to follow the rock art of pre-Neolithic peoples – apart from body painting – was to be painting on pots. Here women came into their own, for it is they who invented the art of pottery.

As groups in the planting age were obliged to stay in one place while their crops grew they were able to experiment with cooking. Pots are always associated with planting peoples. It is tempting to conclude that women, who did not take part in the hunting of large animals, felt no need to express themselves as violently as men, and that their pottery art represented a gentler view of the world. But as I have shown above, the paintings on rock or elsewhere, of men of this period, are anything but vigorous. In fact they are often static, as in the case of the *piaimen* paintings of humans on the communal hut, who stand with their hands at their sides as if at attention. The loss of vigour is of the age and cannot be attributed to a sexual predilection.

A word about the *Timehri*-type rock art as practised by the *Tukano* of the lower *Rio Negro*. The *piaiman* must treat with a spirit known as *Master of the Animals* in order to decide how many humans are to die in exchange for animals killed in the hunt. The *piaiman* makes a journey to the rocks where the *Master of the Animals* resides and there carves animals and humans in a symbolic expression of the bargaining process. Here we see clearly how art expresses the need for a symbolic representation of a mythical belief. The *Eskimos* recognise a *Mistress of the Animals*, who controls the numbers of seals available for slaughter. This belief might well be implicit in the human condition and represent an intermediate stage between the belief in spirits and the belief in God. The environment in which the *Eskimos* live does not lend itself to permanent records in paint, but their sculpture displays the same tension and vigour characteristic of the art of pre-Neolithic peoples.

The preoccupation with animals is perpetuated in the paintings on pots; lizards, frogs, jaguars, all the animals that provide them with food or mythic symbolism figure prominently in this bestiary. In the age of metallurgy men would take pottery-making out of women's hands. It is worth mentioning that when women were relieved of pottery-making the art had

already been brought to a high degree of perfection. The Warrau tribe of the Xingu river (a tributary of the Amazon) are famous for their women potters, who are abducted by men of other groups on account of their skill. The Mayas of the Yucatan peninsula in Mexico still make the rounded cooking pots that were being produced in 2000 B.C., presumably by women, since the Mayas were then in the middle period of the planting age.

The conclusion that art in primitive societies has an exclusively mythic significance would be misleading. The Yanoama, who live between the Rio Negro and the Orinoco, are known to improvise songs that appear to serve no other purpose than the enjoyment of those listening. These songs seem to be no more than descriptions of sounds heard or things seen. It is interesting that the individual who is not a piai-man already has the opportunity of expressing himself in one of the classic art forms.

When we come to the cultures that grew out of the Amazonian and Guyana societies we see an evolution in modes as striking as the changes in the social organisation. The pots of the bronze-age Northern cultures of the Pacific Coast of South America depicted animals or humans in relief while those in the South are decorated with polychrome abstract painting. The rule is not invariable. Nevertheless the observation is accurate enough to prompt a reflection on the striking difference in style and content. The realistic portraits of the Mochica of Northern Peru – a culture which flourished in 900 A.D. or thereabouts – have the stamp of art produced in a city state. And that is precisely what the Mochica social organisation was supposed to be. The Ife portrait sculptures of Western Nigeria display the same tendency of city states to move towards a realistic art in works of such virtuosity that Art historians throughout the world have had to revise their views about the so-called primitiveness of African art.

Mochica art seems on the face of it to share the aims of a chronicle, and one can only suppose, in the absence of written records, that the merchants or officials who commissioned the pots were indulging tastes which, though the product of a certain cultural awareness, were biased in favour of a mundane rather than a mythic purpose. Some of

its scenes would make the censor in a Christian or Muslim state gulp with embarrassment. Out of the classless societies of the early neolithic cultures had developed a class society in which wealth was the prerogative of a relative few. In the old societies, especially the pre-neolithic hunter-food-gathering ones, there was little place for personal indulgence. Now wealthy patrons who could call on the services of the skilled potter had a freer rein.

This privileged class grew to the point of creating a demand so large that the successors to the Mochica – a people known as the Chimu – were able to mass produce their pottery by the use of moulds.

I could have chosen West African or Chinese pottery to demonstrate the same connection between art and the socio-historical process. In Nigeria alone we could move backwards in time from the naturalistic art of the Ife through the stylized realism of Benin, back to the brilliant stylisation of the Nok and the Igbo-Ogwu and further back still. Evidence of the effects of a mass-production demanded by a large well-to-do class is to be seen in Sung pottery in China, which followed the great Tang period. The Sung period is characterised by Celadon ware of a bluish-green which, though attractive, lacks the verve and imagination of Tang pottery.

What I am attempting to establish is that art is in the grip of history and that the individual creates within the conventions of a culture and a historical time. When this is firmly grasped the dangers of copying slavishly conventions and attitudes of another culture will become evident. Art is akin to myth and the function of myth is to heighten a culture's awareness of its position in the world. That Art functions in a historical context in primitive cultures is easy to demonstrate; however, the idea meets with great resistance when mooted in contemporary societies, where the individual appears to have greater scope to create inventions of all kinds.

The city state finally gave way to the large state, early examples of which are ancient Egypt, China, the Maya and Aztecs. A prerequisite of both types of political organisation was intense commercial activity. The latter type, the State proper, invariably produced in its earliest stages a monumental art, as can be seen in the pyramids of Egypt and the Maya, the great tombs of China and the temples and palaces of India.

The ruling oligarchy of the great state was dominated by a priest caste, guardians of an organised religion. The intimidating sculpture of the Mayas and Aztecs of Mexico was entirely religious in conception and was intended to last forever. The mastery of stone as a building material allowed these cultures to give an overwhelming physical expression to their religious beliefs in Gods that demanded a continual blood-letting. Ostensibly serving a religious purpose, ancient Egyptian painting managed to produce, in addition to the monumental art, a detailed evocation of everyday life that matches any secular art before or since. The innumerable mummies of animal Gods, crocodiles, cats, jackals, ibises and others reappeared in paintings of such vivid realism – a realism which overcomes the limitations of a profile stylisation – that the thesis of art reflecting a socio-historical position seems disproved. In other words, that kind of realism is not usually associated with religious art. Actually, unvarnished realism of ancient Egyptian art has a parallel in the facade temple sculptures of a number of Hindu temples in India built at the beginning of the first millennium AD.

In fact realism in art, if it was the creation of the city state, lived on in the temples creations and serves as a bridge to later figurative painting and sculpture. Perhaps there is no contradiction between thesis and evidence; nothing is ever lost. If we seek a religious aspect in the art of an oligarchy dominated by religion we must also expect to find a secular aspect as testimony to what came before. The animal motif, noted in aboriginal art of the neolithic and pre-neolithic periods, persisted into the Egyptian state, a fact that cannot be explained away by the observation that as less advanced people were conquered their Gods became admitted into the Egyptian pantheon. A dominant religion that has no truck with animals will find it difficult to accommodate animals into its religious beliefs. The animal motif persisted, and indeed persists because it is still active in our unconscious. Hinduism has its monkey God Hanoman, and Ganesha, its elephant-headed deity. Even Christianity speaks most movingly of 'the blood of the lamb'.

We see then that the great state which follows the City state produces a monumental art without abandoning naturalism,

which emerged at the time of the city state. The monumental religious sculpture of the Aztec was set off by a realistic lyrical poetry obsessed with blood and flowers.

An analysis of European and African feudal art would do little to add to our knowledge of the processes described above. The very word 'feudalism' never appears to mean the same thing in two countries. Furthermore feudal states are rarely what they seem. Feudal Ethiopia comprised a number of different cultures at various stages of technological development. The 'feudal' states of Italy often had a thriving commercial sector, while 12th century England, a conquered state of France, was the victim of a rigid feudalism which stifled all expressions of public art that could not be dressed in a religious garb.

If feudalism did not produce an art that was either technically or aesthetically inspired – except in its architecture – capitalism made up for this by the range of its inspiration. The European countries on the Atlantic seaboard in their quest for a new trade route to the East after the Turks closed the overland routes in the Near East, stumbled upon America and the mineral wealth of the Aztecs and Incas. The Spanish and Portuguese bourgeoisie failed to destroy the Catholic Church's feudal hold on the economy and prepare the ground for capitalism which required a labour force that was not tied to the land. Holland, England and Bohemia however successfully defied the Pope and thus found themselves in a position to engage in a scramble for the American territories Spain and Portugal had not yet seized. Cheap slave labour produced cotton, coffee and sugar that earned enormous profits and provided a concentration of capital which ultimately laid the foundations for industrial capitalism.

This brief sketch of the history of early European capitalism is necessary to the appreciation of the genesis of its art, differing as it does in many important respects from that of industrial capitalism, in which the pessimism of the ruling classes is reflected in the pessimism of their art.

A comparison between the drama of England, Spain and France points up clearly the effects of the social and economic influence. English and Spanish drama of the late 16th and early 17th centuries had shaken off most of the influence of Church

and Court and dealt, often with profound insight, with a wide range of themes. The plays of Shakespeare, Lope de la Vega and Calderon appear to have come from the same crucible. Shakespeare's more powerful imagination is, in my view, the corollary of the more powerful impulse of a bourgeois ruling class unfettered by a Church capable of maintaining its claim to be the guardians of morality. French drama, on the other hand, was still a near monopoly of the Court, whose essentially conservative vision patronised plays conservative in style and content. The unities of time, place and action had to be observed; no violent action could take place on stage. It was a theatre of words, unlike the comprehensive Shakespearian drama, which was played out before an audience whose composition was a sample of all the town-dwelling classes — a truly bourgeois drama.

There is no need to pursue the argument to the present day to prove that art is a reflection of a time, a culture and a prevailing class view. In the industrial countries the ruling classes are thoroughly demoralised. Even their favourite painting genre, the female nude, has a harassed, jaded look. Their flight into Cubism, surrealism and finally abstract painting is like the flight of someone who crosses one desert, only to find himself on the edge of another. The present is bleak; the future is bleak. The artist of the Caribbean and Central and South America, where he seeks models, must choose those that are relevant to his experience and not fall prey to the sophistication of an emotional desert.

III THE ARTIST AND HIS WORK

If I were to speak of African poetry immediately people would think of P'Bitek Senghor, Awoono and other poets whose fame has spread abroad. In other words the names of what I term 'Salon poets' would spring to mind. Yet there is a vast body of *oral* poetry, the authors of which are unknown outside their communities. Indeed the authors of the *traditional* poetry are not known at all. This state of affairs would be intolerable to the poet who writes down his work and seeks publication. Publication for him is a sort of vindication, a proof of his worth. I mention African poetry in this context because it can boast one of the largest and most impressive bodies of oral poetry in existence. There are riddles: A leopard is described as 'A flame on the hill'; epigrams: 'An egg breaks to reveal a messy secret'; lyrical poetry: 'My beloved's hands are as soft as liver'; political songs, praise poems: 'Ogun kills the father and smears the hearth with his blood'; funeral songs, religious poetry and much else. Instinctively our reader or listener asks himself, 'Who composed this?' on hearing or reading some outstanding composition, thereby betraying the type of society in which he or she was brought up. Even when poets were literate, their poetry was often not intended for publication. Today, writers and painters complain bitterly if their work is ignored by publishers and exhibitors or their worth is not recognised by an indifferent public. This petulance tells us as much about the artist as about the times.

It is part of the arrogance of urban dwellers to assume that the world is made up of urban dwellers. The fact is, there are still millions of people, perhaps a good half of the world's population, who still live in societies in which the poet does not strive for publication or his fame does not spread beyond the village boundary. I, as an urban dweller, am referring to the artist as urban dweller when speaking of 'The artist and his work'.

Why does a painter, a sculptor, a writer, a musician or any artist want to compose anything at all? And having done

so why not keep the composition to himself or herself? Is it an irresistible urge that provides the impulse to create, and vanity which obliges him to communicate the finished work? Curiously enough these questions – frequently put to artists – are precisely the questions most artists are unable to answer. They invite prevarication. But then why should the artist know why he creates? It is difficult enough creating anything worthwhile. There are people who have produced works in the art form they have chosen and kept them to themselves. Vanity, then, can hardly be the only impulse behind the creative urge. There are others who have communicated their work to others, but have hidden behind a false name. If vanity were the spring why do they resort to such a fiction? I believe that the explanation lies in that area where the relationship between individual and collective psychology is not properly understood. It would not be difficult to point to cases where vanity plays a part.

It is extremely difficult however, to discover the real and perhaps complex reason behind the creative urge. Where the gifted comedian finds an appreciative audience at school he might continue his work professionally, after leaving school. There is no doubt that in such a case the instinct to show off – a characteristic trait in children's behaviour – is the impulse behind the creative urge. Whatever role vanity plays the audience or the readership, in short the *public*, plays at least an equal role. If the creative urge lies in the artist, it has to find a co-relate in a public in order that it might be allowed expression. My belief is that the opposite is true: the urge is in the public and the artist is only its expressive voice. But this conviction would be difficult to prove within the scope of this lecture.

If it is true that the artist is a mouthpiece of his public, the question arises: which public? In most cases the question is irrelevant, since the public is usually at hand. However, in the industrial state, where the division of interest has created many kinds of public – the public of advertising art, of romantic or science fiction, of pop song, and so on – the choice is always important. An unhappy ending is not acceptable for the romantic fiction market, for instance, so the writer of such fiction must accept the constraints at the outset. In traditional

societies these constraints are accepted as a matter of course. A dramatist of the Kabuki school of drama in Japan accepts the stylisations without quibbling. For him there is little choice. In the industrial societies there are two types of choice: firstly the genre in which he will work, romantic fiction, science fiction, straight fiction, or crime, for instance, secondly the degree of adventurousness he will bring to his work. The painter might experiment with glazes on the same canvas where oil is the dominant medium. In the United States he might use his fingers or his feet or even other less expressive parts of his anatomy, in a display of orgiastic individuality the painter in a traditional society would judge to be perverse.

In the Caribbean the very small number of publishing houses and art galleries forces many artists to work with little hope of being published or exhibited. Theirs is a heroic task indeed. This and the frenzied individuality of some American artists, prompt another question. Do some people create for themselves? Are there artists who are indifferent to appreciation? The Americans who stamp on their painted canvases or sit on them have often been accused of sensationalism, which is an acute, even clinical form of vanity. Their apparent indifference to appreciation has earned them the appreciation of notoriety and in some cases the applause of critics. Andy Warhol, the 'canned beans' painter is still a household name in the United States. In Guyana an outstanding painter like Angold Thompson makes do with little exposure of his work, which requires a study in itself, not only for his brilliance, but because many people have associated work of that standard with artists whose consciousness has been heightened by living abroad and who have been able to convert a nostalgia for their country into creative energy. Since Angold Thompson is not alone in making do with what many would regard as insufficient recognition perhaps we ought to look for the reasons for his creative energy elsewhere than in public appreciation.

Many of the outstanding painters of the previous generation had to be stimulated by going abroad, a remarkable fact, considering that their medium was the most visual of the art forms. I am certain that painters like Thompson are benefiting from a release of public energy in the aftermath of

independence. Just as the Pentecostal and other sect churches, in the last twenty years, have extended their influence at the expense of former elitist Churches, taking advantage of the new post-independence spirit, so the new artists do not need to discover a national consciousness in themselves. What was latent in previous generations proclaims itself in this one. Going abroad is no longer necessary to exploit the creative energy.

What is even more striking than the release of energy is the content of the artist's work. In Thompson's painting there is nothing vague, nothing unidentifiable. White-hooded women and a lone saxophonist convey not only the mystery of the archetype, but the immediacy of a recognisable experience. Here I make the point I have made often enough in these three lectures, namely that the art work is ultimately dictated by the cultural and economic experience. If one objects that Angold Thompson's work resembles no other young artist's I can point to the fact that the teeth do not resemble the hands; yet their make-up reflects the demands of human biology.

I have heard it said that Guyanese do not have a pottery tradition, pottery and weaving skills having been lost in the time of slavery. In fact the opposite is true with regard to pottery. All the aboriginal Indian tribes of Guyana were expert potters. The East Indians' unglazed goblet used for holding water was as common a household possession as the mortar and pestle once were. Stephanie Correia's pottery provides an example of the new Guyanese art that is emerging and which draws its inspiration, not from imported values, but from a culture's indigenous experience. The production of her pottery shows an independence common enough in the colonial period, and which spawned a breed of self-made men who could be found in most of the well-frequented barber shops of Georgetown. Members of her family retrieve and prepare the clay she uses and even participate in the making and decorating of the pots. Aboriginal pottery, in danger of disappearing as the groups became absorbed in an economic structure new to them and abandoned their clay cooking pots for foreign produced aluminium ware, now serves as the starting point for a town- based pottery which acknowledges its inspiration in its forms and decoration.

I imagine that some of you may have expected me to speak of my own work as a novelist under this title 'The Artist and his work'. Having devoted the first half of the lecture to the subject in general terms I will with some reluctance do just that. I say 'with reluctance' because I do not believe that any writer can speak honestly about his books. At least not a novelist. Apart from the fact that much of fiction writing is an unconscious process, the novelist will invariably attempt to justify what he has done. If, for instance, his attention is drawn to similarities in two different scenes he might say, 'Ah yes, but in life things tend to repeat themselves'. And they do! But the repetition might have been unintentional. A weak story line may be defended by insisting that he is more interested in characterisation. And so on. Well, for what my remarks are worth here they are.

My first book, which was rejected by an English publisher because it was too long for a first novel, eventually came out in an expanded form as a trilogy. Had I accepted the publisher's advice I would have reduced its length and agreed to its publication in an attenuated version. This experience is far from unique. It now costs a publisher about £3000 – £4000 to bring out a novel, so that the author, concerned only with the worth of his fiction is only too ready to brand his editor as a philistine when his work is rejected. The editor will reply that she is trying to sell a marketable product. And, for the first time the wretched author will have to face the truth: he is trying to sell a commodity. The fruit of his imagination is measured for its value in the market place. Many aspiring authors have given up at this point, unable to stomach what they should have known in the first place. Many serious editors publish profitable books of little intrinsic value in order to acquire the resources that will enable them to bring out the occasional work of merit.

The first problem then, after I had a finished book in my hands, was finding a publisher. (If I have said nothing about the way I set about writing, it is because writing can only be learned by doing it. The observation may seem harsh but it is the fruit of experience). Having been refused publication I set about writing a much shorter novel set in an area of Georgetown with range yards. That was accepted by the

editor of the same firm which rejected my first book and my excitement was indescribable; so much so that by the time the book appeared I had completed two other novels. Publication is undoubtedly a spur to the imagination. It seems to me that there is a great need in Guyana for a popular literature on the lines of the Onitsha market publications of Nigeria. These usually-short pieces may be stories, exhortations to young men or women regarding their behaviour in public, rhymes, in short anything that the public cares to read. I have seen that sort of thing in Guyana, but only as an occasional, privately backed edition. Like the Onitsha publications they were poorly printed and badly written. In my opinion, that does not matter. I have always devoured these tales of pork-knockers, accounts of Kali Puja ceremonies and other pieces about Guyanese life. Now such pieces will not find an outlet with foreign companies, at least not with the traditional publisher. Some writers who have achieved success abroad are keen on contributing to this type of publication,, but can find no outlet for it. My way of tackling the problem is to incorporate similar material in my books. Thus, the last, *Kwaku*, has two riddles of my own invention, a number of others appearing in an as yet unpublished one, together with a Guyanese song composed in the twenties.

I must now broach a topic that crops up frequently in relation to the books of certain Guyanese novelists, including myself. I mean obscenity: 'Why is your book so dirty?' was the way someone put the question to his author relation. Let us forget the use of the term 'dirty' to describe the most powerful human drive aside from eating. We are what we are, I suppose, and if society finds sex dirty the individual author must bow to the social criticism.

But if the social judgement claims to override the individual judgement then the author has the right to enlist the support of groups who sing Kweh-Kweh songs with relish. Kweh-Kweh songs are not the gratuitously obscene inventions of un-Christian minds: rather they represent some of the most astonishing leftovers of the African heritage, sung in many coastal Guyanese villages to this day. Despite the violence practised on many of these songs by educated people, who have done to them what German censors did to fairy tales,

they continue to flourish as part of the pre-wedding celebrations. I will not expose a charming audience to the reading of any of these obscene wedding songs; but I must remind those who regard all sex in books as obscene that our oral literature is traditionally preoccupied with sex and such naughty matters. After all, even the middle-class 'Shower', the male version of which is the 'Stag party', has its salacious side.

Now how do I see my own novels? And what do I expect to be doing in my future work? After my first book had been published I was convinced that three more novels were all I needed to say all the things I wanted to say. In the event I am not even certain that what I have done in my fiction has any intrinsic worth. The price the artist pays for his egotism is a high one. On one level egotism obliges him to create, while the same egotism threatens to destroy him. Success not only goes to his head, it remains there, creating demands he can not hope to satisfy, I am acutely aware of all this and therefore try to shun gratuitous publicity.

As for my future work, if I do continue writing I will bear in mind the need to lay the foundations of a comprehensive Guyanese literature, which can boast not only a large number of novels, but also books for children, poetry, songs and so on.

Finally I want to touch on some of the influences which, in my opinion, have made my work what it is. A few are evident. There are scenes from my childhood about which I have written consciously: a Queenstown pillar box overflowing with letters in December; a man with a metal cylinder on his back spraying the alleyway gutters with a solution of oil; the Sunday *Argosy* and *Chronicle* being exchanged by neighbours; front doors left open, shadows of leaves glistening with points of light after the rain; roofs painted olive green; branches of lightning playing interminably in the Southern sky; traders unfolding bales of cloth in Stabroek market: scenes for all to see, but looming in retrospect like the contents of a vivid dream. Memories that rescue a page from mediocrity. If recollections provide significant detail the influence of master story-tellers inculcated in me an unflagging respect for the story, the structure on which every other element of the novel rests. Who were

these story-tellers? Nikolai Gogol, the Russian novelist stands out as the master of the written word, while the barbershop story-makers of my childhood and youth were the craftsmen of oral tales. I discovered African traditional stories long after I began publishing; but their incongruousness was echoed in what I had already written.

This brings me to the nature of influence. Sometimes a so-called influence is nothing but the stimulus that arouses what is lurking in the artist. Had I discovered African stories earlier I would have convinced myself that my interest in the incongruous was the result of an African influence. On the other hand there are genuine influences, which may indicate, for example, unexpected areas of behaviour or story manipulation. It is difficult for me to isolate these from the mass of authors I have read and admired. Perhaps I am too close to my work to know where my indebtedness lies. It may be enough to say that I am the product of all the influences to which I was exposed, especially the formative ones that came to the fore in the aftermath of Guyana's independence, when I began writing my first novel.²

ENDNOTES:

¹ [Editor's note: the (anonymous) author of these introductory notes listed the lectures in the wrong sequence. The correct order has been restored.]

² [Editor's note: The following biographical note appears at the end of the published lecture:

Roy A. K. Heath is from Guyana where he attended the Central High School. He went to England at the age of 24 to read Modern Languages at London University. Since 1959 he has been teaching at a London Comprehensive but his regular visits home have kept him in touch with the Guyana scene. He was called to the English Bar in 1964 and the Guyana Bar in 1973. His published works to date include short stories, essays and six novels, the first of which, *A Man Come Home*, was published in 1974 and described by the London *Times* as 'a concise, unsentimental masterpiece'. Christopher Wordsworth of *The Guardian* describes Roy Heath as 'a writer who must surely be ranked with the best of the Caribbean School'.]

Ninth Series, 1984

Ancient Guyana

Denis Williams

PREFACE

In 1983, the Walter Roth Museum was asked by UNESCO to prepare a travelling exhibition, *The Amerindian Heritage*, for circulation in the Caribbean. Upon delivery of this exhibition the following June, the Department of Culture, Ministry of Education, suggested that materials utilised in preparation of the catalogue could be presented to the public in the ninth series of the Edgar Mittelholzer Memorial Lectures the following November. This is a revised text of those lectures, which were delivered in four sessions: 19, 21, 23 and 26 November 1984. Chairmen of the lectures were, respectively, H. Desmond Hoyte, Prime Minister; Dr George Walcott, Vice Chancellor University of Guyana; Martin Carter and Dr George Walcott.

The materials presented derive from my investigations over the past ten years in the North West, the Mazaruni basin, the Rupununi savannas, the Upper Essequibo rain forest, the New River Triangle and the upper Berbice river. Materials presented on the peopling of the Central Guiana Coastal Plain derive from investigations at the Recht-door-Zee site Demerara river, and laboratory work at the Walter Roth and Suriname Museums conducted by my research assistant.

Archaeology, and particularly archaeology in a developing country, cannot exist without its sponsoring institutions and its publications outlets. I am happy to acknowledge the debt of gratitude owing to the now superseded Royal Agricultural and Commercial Society of Georgetown for award of their first Walter Roth Bursary for Anthropology, in 1970; to the Latin American Archaeology Fund of the Smithsonian Institution for a grant for salvage archaeology in the middle Mazaruni, in 1974; to the Upper Mazaruni Development Authority for sponsoring a survey of the upper Mazaruni in 1976; and to the Department of Culture, Ministry of Education, for provision of overwhelmingly the bulk of funding for fieldwork, research, equipment, museum development and publication over the past decade. Outstandingly, the Ministry

of Education funded entirely my research associateship at the Smithsonian Institution during 1980, a time of limited foreign reserves.

The progress which this publication documents over the past decade would have been impossible had the problems of archaeology not been sympathetically personalised by my colleagues Lynette Dolphin, Chairman of the Department of Culture, the late Shirley Field-Ridley, Minister of Information and Culture, Betty J. Meggers and the late Clifford Evans, both of the Smithsonian Institution.

Our President, L. F. S. Burnham, O. E., has many a time and oft given gracious and tangible support to the archaeological effort during the decade. To him and to the above-mentioned colleagues and institutions I acknowledge sincerest gratitude.

D. W.
D'Urban Backlands
31 December 1984

FOREWORD

Remarks by His Excellency President Hugh Desmond Hoyte, S. C., on the occasion of the inauguration of the ninth series of the Edgar Mittelholzer Memorial Lectures.

The Edgar Mittelholzer Memorial Lectures began in 1967, that is, some 17 years ago. They were instituted in honour of a great Guyanese creative writer who probed with power and imagination, in his most important works, the interplay of the complex cultural and social forces in the early colonial days and the raw emotions engendered by the times. It is understandable, then, why the terms of reference of these Lectures direct that they *"should relate to a theme of contemporary Guyanese or Commonwealth Caribbean writers or some aspect of the relationship between thought and history and the emergence of creative writing in the Caribbean area."*

This evening, Denis Williams will be presenting the first of four papers that will constitute the ninth series of these Memorial Lectures. To name those persons who have preceded him in past years will be to give a roll call of our most eminent and distinguished literary persons. Arthur Seymour, Denis Williams, Martin Carter, Wilson Harris, Michael Gilkes, Gordon Rohlehr, Joycelynne Loncke and Roy Heath. It will be seen, therefore, that this is the second occasion upon which Denis Williams will be delivering these Lectures. And it is fitting that he, of all persons, should be invited to speak to us at this time when we in Guyana and the Caribbean are seeking so desperately to create for ourselves an authentic cultural and political identity. In these circumstances, it is a matter of no small interest that he should have chosen for his theme 'Habitat and Culture in Ancient Guyana'.

I am not privy to what Denis Williams is going to say or how he is going to develop his theme and, like you, I am looking forward with great eagerness to hearing him. However, when I read the subject, two fleeting thoughts crossed my mind. In the first place, I do not believe that we can create and sustain a genuine national or Caribbean literature that is not informed and influenced by, and

interpretative of, our own culture – and I use that term with an acute awareness of all the difficulties involved in its meaning: but, on this matter, I would go along with the thesis of the French historian, Fernand Braudel,¹ that every state, people and nation tend to have its own ‘civilisation’ or ‘culture’; that habitat exerts a great influence on culture, whose characteristics range from “*the form of its houses to the period in which they are built, their roofing, to skills like feathering arrows, to a dialect or a group of dialects, to tastes in cooking, their particular technology, a structure of belief, a way of making love [...]*.” If we consider the multitudinous characteristics of our rich and diverse cultural heritage, it is impossible to accept that our writers cannot find in our region ample and inexhaustible material for the pursuit of the craft of literature. Indeed, we are compelled to join with the late Eric Williams² in his scathing stricture against a literary reviewer who, some years ago, in effect denied the adequacy, if not the existence, of such material. Williams wrote as follows:

Of one West Indian writer in the literary field, a local critic has recently had the audacity to suggest that he had turned his attention to English subjects because his West Indian inspiration has been exhausted.

Of course, that particular writer³ elected to renounce his West Indian heritage but that is an entirely different matter!

In their *Theory of Literature*, Wellek and Warren⁴ made the following perceptive remarks:

Literature is a social institution [...] But, furthermore, literature represents “life” and “life” is, in large measure, a social reality, even though the natural world and the inner or subjective world of the individual have also been objects of literary “imitation” [...] Indeed, literature has usually arisen in close connection with particular social institutions; and in primitive societies we may even be unable to distinguish poetry from ritual, magic, work, or play. Literature has also a social function or “use”, which cannot be purely individual. Thus a large majority of the questions raised by literary study are, at least ultimately or by implication, social questions: questions of tradition and convention, norms and genres, symbols and myths.

It seems to me, therefore, that no writings, wherever they may be composed, can bear the stamp of authentic Guyanese or Caribbean literature unless their themes are rooted in, and draw inspiration from, the Caribbean environment and culture.

The other thing that crossed my mind is this: for some centuries now, 'civilisation' was alleged to be the monopoly of the Europeans. Other people were 'barbarians', 'savages' and 'heathens' and were even alleged to have had no history and to have contributed nothing to the cultural and material development of mankind. Europeans of great eminence, like the philosopher Hegel in the last century, and in recent times the historians Toynbee and Trevor-Roper, have in the face of all the available evidence peddled this myth in as crude a form as the French *littérateur* and historian, Émile Faguet⁵ who alleged, "*Civilisation today has been created only by whites.*"

However, in recent years the work of serious scholars of all kinds – archaeologists, ethnographers, historians and other researchers who place truth and scholarship above malice and prejudice – have unearthed and organised an abundance of incontestable evidence which makes this myth unsustainable. The existence and contribution of the great centres of civilisation and learning in Africa and Asia, in Central and South America and in other parts of the world are now popular knowledge. They are no longer matters of speculation. And so in our own part of the world, and here in Guyana, in particular, we must go back and discover our history and study the cultural development of all the people who inhabit this land of ours, so that we can better understand our debt to one another and our contribution to the process of human development; so that we may take pride in these things and acknowledge and respect, as valid, their influences on our life and literature. Perhaps Braudel⁶ is nearer the truth when he speculated on "*the possibility of a certain physical and biological history common to all mankind which would give the globe its first unity well before the great discovery, industrial revolution or the interpenetration of economies.*"

Denis Williams has been doing remarkable work in the held of archaeology, anthropology and ethnography in what he has chosen to call 'Ancient Guyana'. It is of tremendous importance

to us as a people that he, a Guyanese, should be doing this work. Many decades ago, a pioneer in the field, Walter Roth,⁷ went to the heart of a problem which still besets us when he penned the following lament:

As is unfortunately the case with the majority of our British possessions, one has to visit foreign countries in order to complete the ethnographical studies of our autochthonous population.

Denis Williams cannot bring back to this country the large number of our valuable artifacts and the other archaeological material which now adorn private and public collections in many parts of the world. However, he has been instrumental in establishing the Walter Roth Museum of Anthropology in this country, thus ensuring that at least we can begin in a serious way to preserve, organise and interpret whatever new finds we may make and whatever material there may be lying around that has escaped the hands of vandals and plunderers. A few months ago, he completed a most valuable assignment for UNESCO – the construction of a mobile audio-visual display on 'The Amerindian Heritage'. His researches will undoubtedly do a great deal to break down the barriers of prejudice and ignorance, not only in our own society, but also in the wider region and, I venture to believe, in the world.

Denis Williams is an artist whose works have over the years excited us with their complex evocations and subtleties – a man who has thrown himself with zest into the business of life and living through a commitment to the practice of art. He is, as we all know, the Chairman of the National Trust, the founding Principal of the E. R. Burrowes School of Art, the founder and Director of the Walter Roth Museum of Anthropology, and a distinguished scholar who has studied, worked and travelled extensively in Africa. He has had the distinction of being Director of Art in the Department of Culture of our Ministry of Education, and visiting Professor of African Art and Literature at Makerere University of Uganda, among his many academic posts; and he was recently Visiting Research Scholar of the Department of Anthropology

of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington in the United States of America. His profound knowledge of African Art is distilled in his classic work, *Icon and Image: A Study of Sacred and Secular Forms of African Classical Art*, which bears the stamp of his authority, his scholarship and his polymathic interests. He is the author of several novels and other literary works and also of numerous learned articles on various aspects of art which have appeared in specialist journals in many parts of the world. As is usual with the best of scholars, he writes with an elegance and felicity that illuminate and give an exciting quality to his literary works. But, above all, he is an artist in all the many-splendoured meanings of that word. In 1973, the nation honoured him by conferring on him a national award – the Golden Arrow of Achievement.

It is now my honour and privilege to call upon Denis Williams to deliver the first in this ninth series of the Edgar Mittelholzer Memorial Lectures on his chosen theme: 'Habitat and Culture In Ancient Guyana'.

THE SETTING⁸

A hundred and fifty years ago, engineers drilling for water in Georgetown's Cummingsburg ward encountered two layers of decaying courida (*Avicennia nitida*) at depths of 12 feet and 50 feet respectively.⁹ Because at that time no means of dating such materials existed, it could only be surmised that at an earlier date the surface of the ground and hence the level of the sea had stood some fifty feet lower, implying that land and sea had subsequently risen to their present levels.

It was only recently that these phenomena came to be understood. Around 17,000 years ago, the sea stood 100–150 meters below its present level, and the Guyana coastline therefore lay much further seawards than at present. But as glacial retreat began to signal the end of the last Ice Age, glacial melt-water caused a gradual rise in the level of the world's oceans. As ocean levels rose worldwide, shorelines retreated. The sea reached its present level around 6,000 years ago. Inundation of the low-lying Guyana coast produced mangrove forests, wet savannas and herbaceous swamps. It was the remains of two successive stands of mangrove forest on the site of today's Cummingsburg that the civil engineers of nineteenth-century Georgetown had encountered. By correlating the depth of the lower of these remains with similarly deep but dated remains from a site at Ogle just outside of Georgetown, it can be concluded that courida forest stood on the site of present day Cummingsburg around 8,000 years ago.¹⁰ A still rising sea eventually covered this courida with a layer of silt. Around 7,200 years ago, mangrove forest was growing 18 feet below present ground level a bit to the south of Paramaribo.¹¹ Around 7,000 years ago, courida again gained a foothold 12 feet deep below Cummingsburg. For another thousand years the sea continued to deposit marine clays as the coast on which we live developed. Around 6,000 years ago the sea attained its present level. Mangrove forest covered the entire Guiana coast.

As this part of the coast rose with the rising sea, the land surface in the North West was behaving differently. In response to local buckling of the earth's crust, the land was actually subsiding. This subsidence was accompanied by a gradual rise of the water table, which, combined with the tidal influence, created a brackish swamp across the North West and Pomeroon districts. As the land surface subsided in these tidal swamps, an ever-deepening layer of pegasse¹² accumulated; but since subsidence of the land and accumulation of pegasse remained roughly in equilibrium, the level of the swamps remained stable. At present the original land surface lies 1.3 m below swamp level at Mabaruma under a deposit of pegasse around 80 cms thick.¹³ Northwestern Guyana may still be subsiding, but its environment of tidal swamps lying on approximately mean sea level has remain more or less unchanged for the past 6,000 years. For all of this period these swamps have been intensively exploited by man.¹⁴

Early man found an exploitable environment in the Rupununi savannas as well. These savannas are considerably older than the swamps of the North West and Pomeroon districts. Between about 9,000–10,000 years ago and 5,000 years ago the vegetation oscillated continuously between savanna woodland and open savanna, but from around 5,000 years ago open savanna has predominated.¹⁵ A dry transverse zone stretching southeastwards from central Venezuela to north-eastern Brazil comprises a number of savannas some of which are completely surrounded by forest. In this zone, the Rupununi savannas are continuous with the Brazilian Rio Branco savannas across the Takutu river. Much of its 13,000 km floods during the wet season as rivers overflow their banks and the waters of the Essequibo and Amazon systems mingle. Savanna-forest boundaries within the dry transverse zone appear to have fluctuated somewhat during archaeological time; areas now covered by forest in southern French Guiana may once have been under savanna vegetation.

The tropical rain forest which covers more than eighty percent of Guyana appears to have been of only marginal significance to the earliest migrants. Although miners today dredging river gravels in the forest occasionally detect (but seldom recover) beautifully flaked projectile points of jasper

or quartz, no pattern of settlement that is specific to the rain forest has been recognised in this country. Such artifacts may have been lost during hunting forays by groups based in contrasting vegetational areas – coastland or savanna.

I THE TIDAL SWAMPS OF THE NORTH WEST AND POMEROON DISTRICTS

SPATIAL OCCUPATION

In prehistoric times, the brackish swamps that characterise most of the North West and Pomeroon districts sustained a varied fauna comprising predominantly molluscs, crustaceans and fish. Elevated land on the peripheries of the swamps was exploited for a wide range of game animals. So were the wet savannas, which dried out sufficiently each year for hunting and fishing during the two dry seasons. Over the past 120 years, some thirty shell mounds have been recorded or reported on the edges of these swamps, many being of enormous areal extent. Some were occupied for several hundreds, or even thousands, of years. Even the least amongst them was permanent, for the reason that the kinds of food resources they represent remained more or less constantly available for considerable periods. Shell mounds are found only west of the Essequibo river. To the east, they are unknown until past the mouth of the Amazon; that is to say, they have not been recorded so far in Suriname and French Guiana. To the west, they are known on the eastern Venezuelan coast, on the offshore islands of Curacao, Aruba and Bonaire, on Trinidad and in most of the remainder of the Antilles on to Cuba. Shell mound dates from Trinidad are roughly the same as those for certain sites in the North West district.

In the North West, waterways are distinguishable from the surrounding swamps only by a continuous fringe of mangrove forest which extends upstream beyond the salt limit, approximately up to the point reached by tidal counter currents. Behind the mangrove are open swamps with tall herbaceous swamp vegetation growing in salty or brackish conditions; closed, one-storey swamp woods 10–15 metres high that may be slightly brackish or fresh; swamp forest inundated most of the year, with consequent deep pegasse formation; and marsh forest (or seasonal swamp forest) in which palms are well represented.¹⁶ Land and water meet on about mean sea level, and drainage

is poor. Additionally, this is the wettest part of the Coast, a fact severely affecting human settlement on such flat terrain. To the south, the crystalline rocks of the Guiana Shield Complex outcrop in forested islands and rolling hills that once formed the Pleistocene coastline and represent the furthest limit reached by the sea in recent time. Notwithstanding its relative harshness as a habitat for man, the resources of these swamps have sustained viable human populations continuously over the past seven thousand years and on to the present.¹⁷

The courida forest which grew on the east coast of the Demerara river 8,000 years ago, and again around 7,000 years ago indicate a marine influence locally. In the North West this marine influence would have been most pronounced in estuarine and low-lying areas where it would have promoted the growth of mangrove, the host of the mangrove oyster (*Crassostrea rhizophorae*), and provided conditions favourable for reproduction of clams (*Lucina pectinatus*) and conch (*Strombus pugilis*), desirable food items for early settlers. However, as brackish conditions came to prevail under the influence of the rising water table, these types of shellfish gradually disappeared and edible snails (*Puperita pupa*) became abundant. Correspondingly, human consumption of such snails intensified. Their shells form the overwhelming bulk of the majority of shell mounds in the area.

ECONOMIC SYSTEM

The earliest known settlers in the North West occupied Barabina hill at Mabaruma around 7,000 years ago.¹⁸ At present nothing is known about their origins, but they probably came from the west, since at the time of their arrival the coast to the east was still being formed. Possibly they entered the Aruka hills from the Barima river, which empties into the Orinoco delta. They were a small band, or a family group, who soon began to bury their dead in the residual clay covering Barabina hill at that time. The fill of these early burials is entirely free of the kinds of food refuse, comprising mainly snail shells, which later covered the crown of the hill to a maximum 1.5 metres deep. The location of the settlement permitted easy access to the hunting and fishing resources of the wet savannas,

around 10 kilometres distant, as well as to the surrounding swamp forests and rain forests.

For some considerable time after their arrival the environment appears to have been ecologically unstable under the influence of a still rising sea level. Thus, both marine and brackish-water shellfish were utilised equally, at least initially. Eventually, however, consumption of the brackish-water nerite initiated a pattern of subsistence that would survive among their descendants throughout the coming millennia. They collected these small snails off mangrove roots in the swamps and transported them to the hill top where bucket-sized storage pits in the ground,¹⁹ probably lined and covered with leaves, served to keep them fresh for use over several days.²⁰

However, this small zebra-striped snail (mean volume 1.2 cm³) may have represented only a final option in the complex pattern of faunal capture prevailing amongst these shellfish collectors; the composition of their refuse indicates a continual search for more acceptable and palatable food animals in the estuarine environment, the savannas, swamps and forests. In season, consumption of land crabs replaced the nerite entirely. This food preference was noted as late as the nineteenth century amongst horticulturalists in the Pomeroun district,²¹ the very high number of snails required per person per day having apparently always been a factor operating against voluntary adoption of the nerite as a basic protein resource. One of their storage pits contained between 27,000 and 61,000 of these snails. This represented a considerable cumulative investment of energy for extraction of the meat, a task probably performed on a day-to-day basis by women. Experiments show that seven to eight nerites were required to produce a gram of edible meat. This means that a single adult consuming his daily minimum protein requirement of 40 grams, using this resource alone, needed to extract it from around 300 snails.²² This meat could not be extracted raw; it was necessary to harden it beforehand by boiling, this again being most likely women's work. Since a journey to collect and chop fuel wood again made by women, was entailed, this added to the energy cost of the meal. Male energy inputs were the collection of the snails, transporting them through the

swamps, and starting a fire by friction. Capital inputs involved manufacture of water-craft and basket-ware by men.

But the energy expended by both sexes on the collection and consumption of nerites each day provided only part of the total daily energy intake of each individual. Additional calories were needed daily from vegetal foods such as seeds, nuts, fruits and other plant materials. Seeds of the turu palm (*Jessenia bataua*) occurring plentifully in certain shell mounds suggest that they were used, as they are at present, for making beverages. Recent practice also suggests that ite palm (*Mauritia flexuosa*) flour was a traditional staple. Sexual division of labor was applied to procuring, transporting and processing such plant food materials as well. For example, extraction of carbohydrates from the ite palm required felling, and splitting, the trunk. This was men's work, whilst processing turu seeds to make a beverage was the work of women. All of these activities were vitally necessary in supplying the food energy requirements of the group as a whole, including of course children, the aged and infirm, none of whom normally performed the tasks of food getters. In this situation, the collecting, transporting and consumption of nerites represented inordinate expenditure against the specific energy intake of the working group. Thus, the numerous hunting weapons scattered through the food debris of these shell fishers indicate constant endeavours to avail themselves of alternative low-investment high-return terrestrial protein wherever and whenever opportunity offered.

TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT

Warau in the North West say that during lean times they prepared a broth from the water in which the nerites were boiled, in this way obviating the necessity for extracting the flesh. Assuming this practice to go back to pre-ceramic times, the question arises: What were the cooking utensils made of? Gourds, which were early domesticated in Central America, could have served to boil liquids in conjunction with heating-stones. Thousands of unworked stones transported to Barabina hill top indeed suggest this use, though their present extreme state of weathering hampers verification. Hearths are always

numerous, some of the fires having evidently been kept going day and night inside the shelters both for security and to ward off noxious insects, just as at present.

Stoneworking technology changed little, if at all, during thousands of years; certain tools persisted even into proto-historic times. Basically, this involved collecting water-worn pebbles and chipping cores or flakes into a range of tools and implements. As chipping was usually very crude, certain types of tool or implement, such as projectile points or woodworking wedges, are recognisable as such only where their common characteristics are revealed in large samples. Of course the longevity of the types of stone tool was a reflection of the unchanging uses to which these artifacts were put. As a consequence, they often reveal quite clearly certain aspects of the shellfish collecting lifeway. For example, forest dwellers would be expected to have spent much time felling and cutting wood, dressing it and reducing it to the various objects and utensils of daily life. Axes, adzes, wedges, chisels and scrapers would have been especially important in this industry. The direction of cleavage of the prevailing rock material, amphibole schist, was cleverly exploited in manufacturing this range of tools, all of which require a relatively enduring cutting edge combined with a high level of resistance to fracturing, Figure 4.²³ Quartz chips were utilised for a range of smaller chisels, spokeshaves, gouges, scrapers, *et cetera*, that were evidently employed as finishing tools. The efficiency of this tool kit is evidenced in its wide distribution as well as in its remarkable inflexibility. A tool type, once developed, appears to have been subject to little modification through time, Figure 5.²⁴

Judging from the ubiquitousness and longevity of a type of crudely chipped and rather awkwardly stemmed projectile point, mostly made of amphibole schist, the throwing spear was evidently paramount amongst hunting weapons, albeit cumbersome and of limited effectiveness. A few spearthrower spurs and handle attachments from undated shell mounds indicate use of this weapon, but the extent of its popularity remains unknown. Darts were probably tipped with quartz chips. Birds were hunted with well-rounded water-worn pebbles that were employed as missiles but

whether these were propelled by hand or from slings is not known. Stone clubs of amphibole schist, of lethal weight, may have been used in hand-to-hand combat. Line-sinkers of amphibole schist in an astonishing range of weights and sizes imply exploitation of a variety of fishing grounds – creeks, rivers, estuaries and inshore waters. Abundant remains of Gilbacker (*Selenapsis herzbergi*) Stingray (*Trygon benettii*) and Kurass (*Sciadeichthys proops*) confirm estuarine and inshore as well as freshwater fishing. Choppers, scrapers and knives used in food preparation also exploited the direction of cleavage of amphibole schist for strength and a resistant cutting edge. After chipping, certain specimens were abraded for enhanced effectiveness but the technique of grinding and polishing remained unknown throughout.

Bone was infrequently utilised for making minor implements such as awls and fish hooks. The conch columella was early ground into decorative shapes, possibly as ornaments. Judging from recent practice in the area, palm fibres may have been used for making fishing lines, rope and hammocks, and palm bast or bark-cloth for garments. A knowledge of basketry is implied in shellfish collecting and fishing activities, the latter possibly incorporating use of fish traps.

An important development in the shellfish collection lifeway came with the introduction of pottery in its later periods. To a pre-agricultural people the inception of pottery-making had two lasting results. Firstly, food prepared in insulated contact with fire yielded a wider culinary range than could have been known under the system of heating-stones and roasted or smoked flesh. (Fish skulls are often recovered smoked). The capacity to prolong the boiling of liquids away from direct contact with the heating agent improved vastly the palatability of foods whilst simultaneously improving hygienic preparation. Stews, hitherto unknown, could be introduced and these would have revolutionised the cooking of meats and vegetables. A traditional Warau fish brew in which the cabbage of the ite palm (*Mauritia flexuosa*) was stewed could have resulted only from the capacity for sustained boiling made possible with the coming of pottery. Additionally, prior use of a variety of ceramic vessel shapes and sizes was a desirable prerequisite for the adoption of root

crop horticulture, when it finally arrived, with its emphasis on boiling, baking and fermenting. Secondly, possession of pottery eventually made possible acceptance of a whole new range of industrial processes that were dependent on the melting of resins, waxes, the extraction of oils, dyes, *et cetera*, all essential features of Tropical Forest culture.

MODE OF LIFE

Amongst the legacies bequeathed by shell fishers to peoples of the Tropical Forest pattern of culture was the art of body-painting, which subsumes knowledge of the extraction of oil from the nut of the crabwood tree (*Carapa guianensis*). Mixed with this oil, the dye of the annatto plant (*Bixa orellana*) produces a red pigment which may be stored in cakes against a multitude of uses, not least decoration of the person and of household utensils, and making pictographs. Such cakes were to become a prime article of trade with the Dutch many thousands of years later. They were prepared for use by being ground on a palette with small, well-rounded water-worn pebbles, crab-oil serving as a lubricant. The peculiarly acrid smell and bitter taste of this oil is effective in protecting the skin against insect pests, and thus it must have been highly valued by unclothed folk in the insect-infested environments of this country. Its prophylactic properties were probably of more telling significance to such folk than the colour of dyes which served as its vehicle, or even the beauty of the painted designs which coated the pill.²⁵

It seems unlikely that any activity in the shell-fishing lifeway could have been merely decorative.

Simple windbreaks were made of poles stuck at an angle into the ground and probably covered with leaves or mats. More ambitious structures were roofed with an overhang of thatch low enough to protect from the rain fires burning day and night just inside the dripline. At nights a torch fuelled with beeswax was lashed to one of the house posts, from which burnt wax dripping to the ground formed little craters and runnels that sometimes survive in the wet clay. Thus, floors were bare and often wet.

Since the amount of animal protein required to support high population densities seems never to have been consistently available, populations were evidently small, possibly even impoverished. Notwithstanding the enormous time-span represented by the shellfish-collecting lifeway in the North West, only thirty shell mounds are known in the 6,000 km² of swamplands. Mound areas ranged between 200–2,000 m². As there is no evidence of competition for space on dry land, large areas of which remained permanently unoccupied, the longevity of these rather small settlements suggests that equilibrium was consciously maintained between population size and available natural resources. However, there is no evidence of cultural control of population growth; the regulatory agencies may well have been natural, deficiency diseases for example. Inadequate hunting weapons could have meant frequent protein hunger notwithstanding the impressive bulk of their food remains. With such inefficient weapons, low-investment, high-return protein resources were evidently hard to come by on a regular basis.

PATTERNS OF HUMAN ADAPTATION

In a situation where potentials were lacking for even minimal modification of the natural environment in the interests of survival, the shell-fishing pattern of adaptation was continually exposed to changes in the physical environment. Alterations in rainfall, temperature and even in the nature of the coastline directly affected the character of the swamp resources and thus the subsistence options of those who were wholly dependent on such resources. For example, the earliest settlement at Barabina was abandoned in conditions of creeping environmental change as the sea level approached its maximum rise around 6,000 years ago. We do not know what these conditions were; from the viewpoint of subsistence they were marked by an initial abundance of mangrove oysters, clams and conch which were plentifully consumed at optimum sizes, followed by their rapid and complete disappearance in the exploitable environment. Simultaneously, nerites were steadily consumed. Thus, initially the exploitable environment comprised both brackish and more saline niches, after which brackish conditions prevailed locally.

Abandonment of the hill for some considerable time after its initial occupation indicates persistence of intractable conditions in the immediate environment. When settlement there was eventually resumed, environmental conditions had become relatively more stable and remained so for another 2,000 years. Even in this period, however, a fluctuating coastline periodically affected the food supply as exposed mud banks appeared and disappeared in cycles of hundreds of years, each exposure being marked by an abundance of readily exploited mussels.

Periods of relative stability alternated with drastic changes in the climate throughout Amazonia, when rainfall dwindled to insignificance. As rivers dried up everywhere and the level of the water table fell, the influence of the sea was felt far into the swamps. Loss of the nutrients that were normally transported from inland areas by the streams affected the biological productivity of the swamps. Swamp flora and fauna came under stress. Alterations in the specific gravity of the swamp and river waters resulted in a changeover of fish and animal populations in swamp and river. Most important of all, potable water became increasingly unavailable.

Around 1,400 B.C., during one such period of climatic stress, a group of shell-fishers was attracted to the perennial springs at Hosororo hill not far from Mabaruma. Because of this reliable freshwater source, they located their campsite on the creek bank at the foot of the hill. The prevailing salinity level of the swamps permitted simultaneous reproduction of both the mangrove oyster and the zebra nerite, oysters being far more abundant than nerites, though rather small in size. Nevertheless the mere fact of their availability was sufficient to occasion a shift in subsistence emphasis from nerite as an important protein resource. So, again we note that as regards other types of shellfish, this snail represented for the Hosororo folk only a final option in faunal capture.

These settlers brought with them the knowledge of making pottery. For tempering their potter's clay they utilised finely crushed and sifted nerite shells, as well as sand. However, sand being unobtainable around Hosororo Creek, much greater emphasis was placed upon shell tempering notwithstanding the fact that in the majority of firings it

produced a relatively inferior ware. The distinctiveness of this type of pottery and its relative rarity suggest its affiliation to similar industries on the northeastern coast of Venezuela. Similarities occur in tool types as well. As with other shellfish collectors in the North West, Hosororo folk buried their dead in shallow graves in the shell mounds, fished (probably with hook and line, perhaps even with nets), hunted a variety of land animals and birds and utilised palm nuts (and perhaps other parts of the palm as well) in their diet. What was noteworthy about them was that they were pottery makers.²⁶

The fact of their being pottery makers is of interest because the evidence from Hosororo Creek suggests that incorporation of this skill among their traditional technologies made little structural difference within the shellfish-collecting subsistence system. Further, at Hosororo Creek the subsistence system, as reflected in shapes and volumes of the three basic types of pottery vessels utilised, survived without modification the abrupt end of shellfish consumption following on drastic environmental change. It seems that, as a source of protein, shellfish was a lot less important in the littoral lifeway than the impressive volume of its refuse would suggest, and that the basic protein intake may in fact have derived from vegetal rather than animal sources.

Shellfish protein present in the shell mound would have satisfied the minimum requirements of less than a single adult each day, basing consumption on a modest figure of 40 gm per day per adult. Of course other forms of animal protein were consumed as well, and perhaps in significant quantities, but these remains would have perished. Even so, the picture of a group relying mainly on the consumption of shellfish for their intake of animal protein is less convincing in the Hosororo case than one in which the basic protein intake is assumed to have derived from vegetal sources. Two-thirds of the world population today consumes mainly a vegetarian type diet. If we regard the Hosororo shell refuse as representing only the most durable portion of their diet, which undoubtedly it does, then a better picture of that diet might result from reconstructing the kind of subsistence that could have been based on the resources of the surrounding forests.

Elements in the food technology included the grinding stone (*metate*), pestle (*mano*) (Evans and Meggers 1960:53) and nutting stone, all indicative of the preparation of wild plant foods. Frequent occurrences of the seed coats, shells and kernels of truli (*Manicaria saccifera*) and turu (*Jessenia batatua*) palms, sometimes charred, suggest their dietary importance.

Besides the rivers, estuaries and inshore waters, the exploitable environment of the Hosororo folk comprised also, at varying distances from their campsite, wet savannas, swamp forest and rain forest which, combined, provided an impressive range of food plants whose products, if utilised, would not have survived in the archaeological record. Various nuts, fruits, vegetables, starches, spices and beverages utilised by their descendants at the present time indicate the wide range of food options that were available to these shellfish collectors.²⁷ While the importance of shellfish collecting within such a range of food options remains to be fully evaluated, the evidence from Hosororo Creek suggests that it may not have been overwhelming. Indeed the evidence more persuasively suggests an emphasis on a vegetarian type diet that was supplemented by low consumption of animal food.

Deposition of shellfish refuse and other cultural materials shows occupation of Hosororo Creek to have preceded maximum marine penetration of the area. This implies that increasingly intolerable water quality in the swamps occasioned long-range population shifts as rainfall decreased, runoff diminished and falling water levels in the rivers permitted increased penetration of the tides.

The overwhelming preponderance of oyster shells in the shellfish refuse points to the environmental conditions under which the Hosororo mound accumulated. Whereas in other kinds of shell mound a brackish environment is indicated by a preponderance of snail shells (*nerites*), at Hosororo Creek an appreciably more saline environment is indicated by a preponderance of mangrove oyster shells, this being a marine mollusc that tolerates very high salinities but which ceases to feed and dies at very low salinities. Though small, the sizes of these oysters are comparable to specimens growing today in marine conditions on Trinidad. All else being equal, size is a function of population density on each mangrove

rootstalk. Thus, so long as they remained available in the exploitable environment at Hosororo Creek, they remained abundant. By virtue of their concentration there this shell mound is unique. Their accumulation over the better part of 200 years indicates the time span during which the swamp environment remained at least brackish, if not saline.

Quite suddenly, prevailing salinity in the swamps fell below the level permissible for survival of this mollusc, and even of the brackish-water nerite. With corresponding rapidity these shellfish disappeared. Surprisingly, their disappearance seems to have triggered no change in the subsistence system even though, probably due to the ameliorating conditions, a gradual population decline commenced almost at once. This is indicated by steadily declining frequencies in the cultural artifacts through time. However, an apparently unmodified subsistence system is indicated by a virtually unaltered inventory of ceramic vessel shapes and volumes, and of types of tools and weapons. Ceramic vessel shapes and volumes remained unchanged in fact in spite of the abrupt demise of the traditional shell-tempered pottery that had been introduced by the original settlers. It is true that this shell-tempered pottery had been in steady decline from the moment of its arrival in favour of sturdier sand-tempered types that had commenced to grow in popularity almost from the start, and which finally survived the earlier ceramics by many centuries. The introduction of these alternatives represents an advance in ceramic technology that was to have far-reaching social and economic consequences. Indeed, at Hosororo Creek pottery-making introduced a dynamic factor into the old shellfish-collecting lifeway which led to its eventual transformation there. This is because experiment enforced mobility, generated competition for isolated raw materials, introduced the artisan who was obliged to follow more or less exact technical processes towards acceptable, perhaps even competitive, standards of production with corollary concepts of productivity and exchange. However, notwithstanding its technological dynamism, its linkage with traditional foodways ensured that pottery-making remained typologically conservative. This typological conservatism is thus a measure

of stability or change in the food preferences and food technologies of the Hosororo folk through time.

Technical experimentation accompanied the development of the new pottery types. Pots made with clay bodies containing shell inclusions behave differently from those made with clay bodies containing other kinds of inclusions. Unless fired at an appropriately low temperature, subsequent chemical changes in the shell inclusions result in the disfigurement or total destruction of the finished vessel. Thus, temperature of the firing, and even its duration, needed to be controlled by the type and distribution of fuel. But more often than not, low firing temperatures of insufficient duration of firing produced soft, permeable wares that absorbed water like chalk and broke easily. Such vessels had to be rendered useful by vigorous scoring of the leather-hard clay with a polished implement to seal the pores, followed by addition of a slip inside and out, before firing. Often clay for the slip was obtained from a source other than that utilised for the materials that made the pot. All of these inputs did not necessarily result in an output (the finished vessel) that was of acceptable attributes, so that production of this kind of pottery was inherently uneconomical. There was a constant need for more durable and impermeable, more economical pottery ware, i.e., for a better ratio of output to input.

It is true that around three percent of shell-tempered pots made at Hosororo Creek were extremely hard and impermeable, and were produced by processes that were more technically efficient. These may have involved either occasional and inadvertent use in the clay body of salty water from the lower part of the creek (sodium chloride counters subsequent chemical changes in shell inclusions) or use of some alternative type of clay. The latter seems more likely.

Almost from commencement of their occupation of Hosororo Creek, the settlers began to comb the environment for better ceramic materials. In due course, alternative clay quarries were located as far away as Sebai Creek on the headwaters of the Kaituma river, a tributary of the Barima. Although it was the first source of raw materials to be utilised by these potters of three thousand years ago, so limited are such resources in the extensive pegasse swamps

of the North West that the same quarries are utilised by their descendants to the present day. Its clay produces pottery that is recognised by inclusions of very fine particles of water-worn quartz sand. However, Sebai is almost 200 kilometres from Hosororo, and thus direct exploitation of this source may have been problematical.

A number of alternative clay quarries in the Barima river were exploited on to recent times. It is possible that these provided further raw material options to the folk of Hosororo Creek, for shortly after the introduction of Sebai ware, various other inclusions begin to appear in their pottery, signifying a continual search for new materials. The success of their explorations is evident today in the variety of ceramic recipes that they have left behind. These also indicate the impressive distances covered in order to enhance their technological resources. A distinctive pottery type made of crushed soapstone indicates exploitation of steatite outcrops in the Blue Mountains on the headwaters of the Barama river some 500 kilometres distant from Hosororo.

Obviously such distances suggest that at some stage in the evolution of ceramic technology in the North West the acquisition of raw materials became functionally separate from their processing into ceramic vessels. As a developing technology produced its specialist artisans, these were no doubt supported by groups who came to exercise monopoly over the extraction of raw materials, with middlemen responsible for their distribution perhaps through an exchange network. As would be expected in such a situation, contrasting kinds of clay bodies came to be utilised simultaneously by the potters, who probably were women. This would hardly have occurred had the potters been obliged to quarry the clay themselves on the occasion of manufacture of each batch of vessels; the principle of minimisation of effort would have dictated selection of the clay body which experience had shown to produce the best results, and rejection of all others.

This principle certainly seems to have governed the range of preferred vessel shapes. Irrespective of the contrasting nature of the raw materials utilised over two centuries, these remained few and simple. Possibly resulting from differing locations of the respective quarries, as many as three contrasting

kinds of clay body were employed in the manufacture of the single most popular pottery type of the Hosororo folk (known as Mabaruma Plain), and although the popularity of each of these clay bodies fluctuated independently through time, the shapes and sizes of the respective vessels remained constant. These were the three vessel shapes that had been introduced by the earliest settlers (open bowl, deep bowl, jar) and whose technology had been based originally on the exclusive use of shell temper. These vessel shapes survived every subsequent technological innovation at Hosororo Creek.

These vessels were of the simplest shapes imaginable. They were distinguished by two important features: they did not include griddles and they were without decoration or formal development of any kind (rim or base embellishments, compound shapes, *et cetera*). The absence of griddles suggests the absence of agriculture since, judging from the food technology of recent peoples, this utensil is usually regarded as diagnostic of the processing of bitter manioc (cassava), the staple of the Tropical Forest lowlands. So it seems that this plant remained unknown as the settlers arrived at Hosororo Creek around the middle of the second millennium B.C. The conservatism of the pottery vessels utilised thereafter reflects the persistence of a subsistence system based on swamp living in which, evidently, the consumption of shellfish was not of vital importance.

In the archaeological complexes of Guyana, pottery decoration and elaborated vessel shapes are associated with the use of griddles. This suggests that such ceramic developments may have evolved with the coming of manioc domestication. This event implies certain preexisting technologies. For example, preexisting skills would be required in basketry for continuous production of such food processing tools as the *matapi* (press), the sifter and the cassava tray. The first is used to express the liquid from the grated cassava root, the meal being then emptied into the cassava tray to be dried before it is put through the sieve to produce flour for baking into 'bread' on the griddle. A *matapi* lasts 3–6 months, the sieve around 6 months. Since consumption of cassava products is year round in each household, basketry specialists would have been obligatory in a settlement of any size. This is a male speciality.

Both males and females were involved in production of the indispensable cassava grater, a high level of special skills being involved. However, production of this item being tied to specific occurrences of the requisite rock material, it was probably an article of trade from the remotest times. At any rate it can be assumed to have been an indispensable prerequisite for introduction of manioc subsistence.

Pottery manufacture is a female speciality. Just as the range of basketry utensils reflects various stages in the processing of bitter manioc, it is to be expected that the associated pottery utensils would likewise reflect stages in its processing and consumption. The pottery griddle is highly function specific, and thus its remains are easily identifiable with a subsistence system that was based on manioc. It is the single most important utensil in the entire system, for which no substitute can exist. Because its diameter and thickness are rigidly determined by the standard size of cake produced, even quite small fragments are easy to detect in archaeological remains. Where such fragments are absent in a sherd collection of significant size from a habitation site, the occupants of such a site would be assumed not to have processed manioc, though other domesticated plants may have been utilised.

Other kinds of pottery vessels are less easy to relate unequivocally to manioc-based subsistence. A large open bowl in conjunction with the matapi for receiving the expressed liquid could be paralleled in pre-agricultural societies. But here size is important since this liquid is necessarily handled in large quantities per family. For example, 45 kg of manioc root produces 7 litres of liquid, which in turn produces just 0.7 litres of the preservative sauce, casareep. Fifty cassava cakes, each 50 cm diameter, 5 mm thick, are produced. Consumed at the rate of 2–3 per person per day, a 45 kg batch of tubers provides an individual with bread for just 17–25 days. Thus, the manioc root is processed in large batches per household; in modern households, often the shell of an abandoned canoe serves as a receptacle for hundreds of kilograms per batch, because the real value of processing this cultigen in preference to the sweet variety is to enhance food storage and food preservation. This in turn permits vital

subsistence activities of characteristically small groups to be carried out at great distances from the hearth.

Liquid-processing vessels needed to be correspondingly capacious, so that theoretically the ceramic refuse from a manioc-based habitation site could be expected to exhibit greater frequencies of sherds of large processing vessels than habitation sites where this staple was unknown. That the Hosororo Creek site displayed no significant frequency variations in such vessels throughout suggests that no fundamental change in foodways resulted from the disappearance of the shellfish resource.

There is another category of ceramic vessel used by horticulturalists, the liquid-storage jar, which the Hosororo folk appear never to have used. In this the processed manioc bread is fermented to produce *paiwari*, an intoxicating beverage, as well as a wide range of other beverages fermented from alternative roots. Such jars are enormous; Sir Walter Raleigh's doubtless imaginative estimate of the volume of one which he encountered at a drinking spree on the Orinoco was forty gallons. The largest vessel excavated at Hosororo Creek held an estimated four gallons.

Thus, the introduction of manioc horticulture implies the prior existence of both ceramic and basketry technologies. If the latter ever existed at Hosororo Creek, its remains have not survived. As the second millennium B.C. drew to a close, the ceramic industry had accumulated a wealth of experience based on continual experiment and technical innovativeness even though the vessels produced remained typologically extremely conservative in shape. At around this time, however, as the settlement on the bank of Hosororo Creek was about to be abandoned forever, the first decorated pottery appeared there in small quantities. Elaboration of form is a characteristic of the new vessel shapes, but no griddles were detected. This may or may not have been an error of sampling, so that notwithstanding this suggestive typological development, direct evidence of the coming of horticulture at Hosororo Creek remains wanting. Significantly, however, these vessels were produced by the traditional ceramic recipes of the Hosororo folk. A continuing technology was thus, for some reason, beginning to express itself in new typological forms.

CULTURE AND RELIGIOUS FORMS

The earliest group of shellfish collectors at nearby Barabina practised almost exclusively secondary burial. Remains of the deceased, having been left to decompose in controlled conditions, selected bones were retrieved and reburied in a chosen spot at the campsite, perhaps even in the floor of the dwelling. A significant time lapse between interment and reburial is sometimes indicated by the remains of more than one individual, perhaps as many as five, in a common grave. No particular attention appears to have been paid to orientation of these remains, to the kinds of bones selected for reburial or to sex and age of individuals represented. These earliest burials appear to have been placed beneath the dwelling floors of the pioneer settlers, as may be inferred from the retrieval of beeswax from their torches in close proximity to the bones. As these burials concentrate on one small area of the hill, the earliest occupants may have been a small band living communally.²⁸

Later occupants did not as a rule practise secondary burial. In contrast to their predecessors, also, they were particular concerning orientation of the dead and consistently followed one procedure in their deposition. Evidently they were a larger group judging from the distribution of their burials over the entire hill but with the greatest density towards the crown. In the single example of secondary burial among them, the long bones of a young female were tied in a bundle and stored, presumably close at hand in the dwelling, a touching expression of human love that contrasts sharply with the comingled and disparate bones encountered in the secondary burials of their ancestors. Customarily, however, burials were flexed, possibly as a result of careful prior swaddling in a hammock or shroud of some sort, with the head pointing to the west, Figure 9.²⁹ This leads to the supposition that burials were laid out with respect to the changing position of the sun as it disappeared throughout the year between Cancer and Capricorn. As their hill overlooks an immense expanse of swamp and savanna, they were very well placed for such observations. At any rate it seems reasonable to infer from such orderly, even reverent, treatment of the dead the

observance of rituals specifically associated with belief in an afterlife.

At Hosororo Creek, the incomplete remains of two individuals, one adult and one subadult, were sufficient to indicate that secondary burial was the usual custom. Thus, once it had become established, this form of interment was probably observed throughout.

INTERRELATIONS AND CHRONOLOGIES

Opinion is divided concerning the time of arrival of the earliest pottery-making groups on the Orinoco. Whereas certain opinion would place this event as far back as around 2,000 B.C. the alternative view holds that it could have occurred no earlier than between 900 to 600 B.C. Obviously, reliable dating of this development is important in any attempt at reconstructing the evolution of pottery technology, and indirectly the history of subsistence, in northwestern Guyana. The discussion is complicated by the results of radiocarbon analysis of shell and pegasse which independently date pottery-makers at Hosororo Creek at around 1,400 B.C. Not long afterwards, however, shell tempering gave way at Hosororo Creek to pottery based on the use of alternative kinds of clay bodies, and it is these new pottery types which survived in the area during the ensuing three thousand years. At some stage, decorative and formal ideas characteristic of a major ceramic complex on the lower Orinoco become evident in this pottery. In the present state of our knowledge, the significance of the implied interaction remains unclear, though its certain result was the eventual end of the food-collecting lifeway in the North West.

II INTERCONTINENTAL HUNTERS AND GATHERERS IN THE RUPUNUNI SAVANNAS

SPATIAL OCCUPATION

The Rupununi landscape is visibly ancient. Its 13,000 km² is about equally divided by the Kanuku mountains into the North and South savannas, each characterised by sparse grassland dotted with gnarled and stunted sandpaper trees (*Curitella americana*), gallery forest and, on low ground, swamps or marshes that survive the annual floods. In the South Savannas, a fine-grained biotite granite with an age of around 1,800 million years³⁰ outcrops in flat pavements, turtleback hills, isolated rounded boulders and inselbergs. Amongst the inselbergs around Aishalton village, Makatau (*tau* is the Wapisiana suffix for mountain) is singular in having developed a cave system through the combined action of weathering and water movement as the original ground surface of the early Tertiary epoch began falling. This granite is weathered to a depth of around 1.0 cm in the open savannas and a lot more so, between 2.0 to 3.0 cms, inside the caves. These facts were noted and utilised by the earliest known settlers in the area, whose remains mainly comprise a complex of widely distributed rock engravings, or petroglyphs, that are valuable indicators of certain aspects of their subsistence strategies.

In Northern Amazonia, a lifeway based on hunting small game, fishing and collecting, called the meso-Indian (or Archaic), emerged after extinction of the characteristic big game of the late Pleistocene. A date at around 5,500 B.C. has been recognised for inception of meso-Indian culture in these parts. In Guyana, meso-Indian culture is best represented in the Rupununi savannas because of the high visibility of the associated human artifacts, comprising, besides petroglyphs, a range of beautifully flaked projectile points as well as specimens of the more crudely chipped tools and implements already noted amongst the shellfish collectors of the northwest littoral. Occurrences of similar artifacts along the

major rivers of Guyana and in the western highlands emphasise the importance of the Rupununi savannas as a cultural focus from which long-range forays were evidently made into the surrounding country, apparently by means of watercraft. Petroglyph distributions along the Essequibo and Corentyne rivers indicate one direction of such movement, with odd indications of the influence of savanna culture into the North West. Conversely, occurrences in the savannas of tool types that are characteristic of the littoral shellfish collectors suggest that hunter-gatherers in the Rupununi savannas 5,000 years ago did not exist there in total isolation. Moreover, it seems that at some time there had been better communication between the various savanna patches of the southern Guianas, facilitating the movement of peoples and ideas from eastern Venezuela across the Rupununi into southern Suriname and southern French Guiana. This is suggested by the distribution of the most durable artifactual remains of meso-Indian culture in the south: the stone tools and petroglyphs, the former left behind by hunter-gatherers at odd campsites or at hunting and fishing grounds as these folk moved across the land in the ceaseless pursuit of a viable subsistence, whilst the petroglyphs comprise an intimate record of some of their subsistence preoccupations.

During the fifties, investigations by the Smithsonian archaeologists Clifford Evans and Betty J. Meggers identified and defined an archaeological culture which they designated the Rupununi phase, comprising remains of the horticultural Wapisiana and Macusi, who entered the South Savannas during the early to middle eighteenth century.³¹ They encountered no prior occupations in the savannas. However, a pre-ceramic lithic horizon, or true stone age culture, was also identified by Evans and Meggers in the Rupununi savannas on the basis of a stone tool worksite which they discovered in the Takutu river basin, as well as on study of a few flaked projectile points that had been recovered at odd times earlier at scattered sites west of the Essequibo river. Interestingly, this combined collection represents two distinct stone-working traditions, the worksite debris on the Takutu being related to a technology of crude amorphous stone chipping known at several sites in northeastern South America

as exemplified at the Barabina and Hosororo shell mounds, whilst the projectile points, based on a highly sophisticated technique of flint knapping, refers to a tradition deriving ultimately from the Andes, Figure 10.³² This technique links certain sites on the Suriname Sipaliwini savannas and the Rupununi savannas North and South, with the meso-Indian type site at Canaima, in eastern Venezuela. The dual affiliation of these stone-working traditions of the savannas will be better understood as more sites are investigated. The tool inventories available at present point merely to the extraordinarily wide cultural reference of meso-Indian man in the Rupununi savannas.

The study of petroglyphs is a bit more rewarding if only for the reason that besides being permanent, petroglyphs are also both prominent and immobile. Petroglyphs are amazingly well distributed throughout the hemisphere, occurring even in areas, as in part of the Amazon basin, where the meso-Indian presence remains unsuspected. What is of even greater importance for prehistory is that they are basically of uniform content over very large areas, and may thus be subject to regional interpretation. Three great petroglyphic systems have been recognised in northern Amazonia, each more or less confined to a particular type of environment. Because of its intimate and distinctive character, each petroglyphic system comprises a unique record of human adaptation in a given environment. Together, they are also diagnostic of population movements across the hemisphere on contrasting time levels. These petroglyphic systems have been designated the Aishalton, the Kassikaityu and the Timehri.³³

ECONOMIC SYSTEM

Elements of the Aishalton petroglyph type are distributed throughout the hemisphere. They are of two kinds: geometric and biomorphic, the former consisting of simple non-representational figurations such as rings, concentric rings, straight furrows, frets, punctates, *et cetera*; whilst the latter represent a variety of game animals, fish, birds and humans, Figure 11.³⁴ The distribution of this petroglyph type evidently resulted from migrations of Archaic peoples southwards from

North America at a time when conditions permitted in the Isthmus of Panama. Various stemmed projectile points manufactured by flint-knapping techniques associated with such peoples and known from odd localities in the southern Guianas indicate that they eventually filtered eastwards into the Lowlands from a mainstream route down the Andes. Representations of such points in petroglyphs from southern French Guiana leave no doubt about the common authorship of both kinds of artifact, whilst illustrating the extremely wide range of penetration of the savannas by hunters and gatherers. As they pursued the savanna deer, monkey, sloth, peccary, agouti, *et cetera*; fished, hunted game birds and gathered vegetal foods, their settlements slowly spread across the landscape as favourable features, such as perennial water, swamps, forest and useful rock materials were encountered.

TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT

Unlike the shellfish collectors of the northwest littoral, these hunter-gatherers made ground stone tools. Polissoirs employed in manufacturing such tools were often located on their petroglyph boulders and indicate a variety of tool shapes and sizes. Reduction of stone by grinding imparted a knowledge of the varying properties of locally available rock material. In the South Savannas, diorite outcrops, characteristically weathered to characteristically shallow depths, were preferred for polissoirs, whereas granite, with a more deeply weathered crust, provided more acceptable host material for petroglyphs. Flint-knapping appears to have been employed only for manufacture of projectile points, quartz, jasper and chalcedony being commonly utilised. A remarkable outsize specimen of a projectile point around 40 cm long comes from the North Savannas. It represents the zenith of the flint-knapper's art in this country, apparently manufactured to some ritual or ceremonial end, Figure 12.³⁵ Specimens of the crude stone chipping which has already been encountered in the tidal swamps have been recovered in both the North and South Savannas, but the implications of these distributions are not yet understood.

Archaic man's thorough knowledge of the properties and behaviours of different rock materials is best exemplified in the manufacture of petroglyphs. His impositional techniques were based on the observation that as certain rock materials decompose, a weathered crust of variable thickness is generated, and this is always less hard than the fresh core. Archaic man knew also that besides being of relative hardness with respect to one another, rock materials weather relatively according to the local context – open savanna, cave interior, riverbed – and that each set of conditions enforced adoption of a specific technique of imposition. As each kind of rock material originates in a particular locality, acquisition of certain materials often implied long-distance trade, or securing of permanent rights to particular quarries, as appears to have been the case, amongst much later peoples, at Brownsberg in Suriname, Seba on the Demerara river, Quartz Island on the Mazaruni river or the quarry beneath several metres of water at the junction of the Kassikaityu and Essequibo rivers that was monopolised by the Taruma and continues to be by the Waiwai. Hunting or collecting expeditions provided continually new information concerning rare or unknown rock materials, as for instance the discovery of haematite by shellfish collectors in the North West who transported ingots of it many kilometers to their campsite, there to be confounded by the undreamt-of potentials of that ore. Not surprisingly, certain modern opinion holds that prehistoric man was a good geologist.

However, not many modern geologists are endowed with skills needed to make a good petroglyphist. That breed of Archaic man was first of all a good toolmaker, possibly also a good miner. To the foot of the boulder in open savanna or in cave was transported the particular rock materials needed for petroglyph imposition, each deriving from a specific quarry. The associated information was probably accumulated over generations. Tools needed for petroglyph imposition were manufactured *in situ* by a craftsman or two seated beside the boulder. The most commonly employed technique of imposition, known as pecking and abrasion, required a kit comprising four contrasting tool types: scribes, gouges, groovers and polishers. With the scribes, usually granite

exfoliations which were inherently softer than the host material, the preliminary sketch was drawn on the rock surface. This ensured a high level of precision, and thus of consistency, in applying certain elements, particularly those of the geometric category, to the rock. When the formal inflexibility through time of all of the petroglyph elements employed in northern Amazonia is remembered, it is obvious that this craftsman worked from a standard repertory, and that there was thus no room for personal whim or fancy in the conception of petroglyph elements. Indeed, such preliminary scribing may even have been intended to enforce adherence to tradition before imposition of the glyph.

Scribes did not need to be manufactured; any adequately pointed exfoliation flake served until the grinding facet became too large for accuracy. It was then discarded and another picked up. Gouges on the other hand were very carefully chipped from quartz pebbles to a roughly fist-sized ham shape tapering to a sharp point. The gouge was used to impose a row of contiguous punctates along the outlines sketched in by the scribe. These were then run together into a ragged trench whose uniform depth was predetermined by the thickness of the weathered crust, usually around a centimetre. Clearing of this into the standard petroglyphic furrow, around 2.5cm wide was achieved by use of the groover. This also was made of quartz, the hardest rock material available. Groovers were carefully chipped and ground to produce the cross section of the standard furrow. Once made, they were highly valued and were by no means disposable. The finished furrow, U-shaped in cross section, was finally burnished to a high gloss by use of polishers whose grinding facets, though of varying diameters, reflected the cross sections of the furrows. Highly kaolinised granite, produced by chemical weathering and thus available only in the recesses of the caves, was exclusively utilised. Burnishing imparted a metallic lustre to the walls of the furrow. On the fresh rock of the furrow bed, otherwise beyond the capacity of Archaic man to modify, this burnishing survived subsequent erosion of the furrow so that certain terminally eroded glyphs, no longer perceptible to the naked eye, may yet be evident to the fingertips. When wet, also, they reflect raking light differently from the eroded surface of the rock.

Petroglyphs indicate that the technological apparatus of Archaic man included a wide range of ingenious fish traps equipped with one-way valves, floats and balances that were employed for taking fish at differing habitation levels in shallow streams. A knowledge of basketry is implied. Traps were used for the cayman and the anaconda, and snares for small terrestrial game. The dog appears to have formed part of the hunter's armoury.

MODE OF LIFE

Petroglyph locations in the South Savannas show that siting of hunter-gatherer settlements was highly selective. The Aishalton petroglyph complex is located within walking distance of the forest-savanna boundary to the east, and two days' walking to the forest-savanna boundary to the south. Proximity to the forest ensured a diet of animal protein during times of lean supply in the savannas; for instance during the annual floods when the savanna ponds overflow, fish become scarce and pond dwellers such as cayman and turtle disperse. Being subject to extreme seasonal drought, savannas provide lower arboreal mammalian biomass than mature forest that is subject to a less seasonal schedule of plant productivity.³⁶ Since, in Guyana, 62 percent of all mammals are arboreals³⁷ it was both expedient and profitable to locate these savanna settlements near to the forest. Petroglyph depictions of arboreals such as monkey and sloth indicate that the savanna hunter-gatherers turned to the forest consistently in order to supplement a seasonally fluctuating supply of animal protein. Petroglyph representations of the ite palm indicate proximity to the savanna swamps as well. As amongst the littoral shellfish collectors, this palm may have provided protein and carbohydrates needed in the diet.³⁸ Thus, settlements were sited with a view to simultaneous or seasonally alternating exploitation of savanna and forest resources.

Proximity to Makatau mountain was evidently important also. A few typologically early petroglyphs of the Aishalton complex suggest habitation there by a small group of pioneers. They occupied only three or four of the several cave chambers at a time when other parts of the cave system were

still in process of formation. Subsequently, other areas became available as masses of earth were removed from between the granite boulders by weathering and water action. In the process, the remains of these pioneers were swept away as their living floors fell by a maximum 1.5 metres, so that today only the petroglyphs remain, but beyond reach of a man standing on the new ground surface. Although life in caves and rock shelters is well attested, the paucity of this kind of refuge in the savannas meant that alternative kinds of shelter had to be found eventually as numbers increased. Later campsites, indicated by a number of petroglyph boulders in the vicinity, eventually spread across the open savanna, at first around the mountain and then farther afield. The western flank of Makatau, where ascent is easiest, became covered with myriads of petroglyph elements of the geometric type, mostly punctates. So densely are these thimble-sized pits imposed over the surface that in parts the mountain gives the impression of an enormous fossilised sponge. They occur in such profusion on every degree of slope and on both curved and vertical surfaces that they could easily be interpreted as an erratic result of weathering were it not for the fact that identical pitting occurs also on various boulders in the surrounding savannas and, as on Makatau, these are associated with other, more distinctive, elements of the geometric class. This petroglyphic mountain represents a stupendous expenditure of human energy over an enormous time span. Such an expenditure of energy must surely represent an activity of supreme importance in the hunter-gatherer lifeway.

So we have a settlement pattern around Aishalton in which campsites are located in convenient proximity to the forest-savanna boundary, to the savanna ponds which sequester animal protein during the dry season and to the savanna swamps where palms³⁹, possibly the source of the starchy staple, could be harvested year round.⁴⁰ This settlement pattern is dominated by Makatau mountain whose petroglyph inventory suggests that it served as a centre of some social importance over an extremely lengthy period of time. The hemispheric distribution of elements that are characteristic of the Aishalton petroglyph complex implies that this settlement pattern reflects a lifeway which, with local

variations, probably formed the basis of hunter-gatherer communities throughout northern Amazonia and beyond.

PATTERNS OF HUMAN ADAPTATION

In this settlement pattern there are some indications of the way in which petroglyph manufacture related to subsistence. The preponderance of geometric over biomorphic elements at petroglyph sites throughout northern Amazonia indicates that these geometric elements represented a most important category of experience in the hunter-gatherer mind. Across the hemisphere, this class of petroglyph appears to have enjoyed the spatial and temporal inflexibility of signs rather than the flexibility that is characteristic of motifs in primitive art. What though was being signified? If we examine the geometric elements of a given assemblage, it soon becomes evident that certain of them are subject to combination with others, and even with a few of the biomorphic elements. In such combinations, no two elements produce the same configuration, even at a single petroglyphic boulder. Evidently no standard convention governed the association of elements in such configurations; in each case their combination resulted from a particular contingency which apparently owed nothing to individual whim. Since, also, they were imposed with no reference to any previously adopted pattern, they were obviously not alphabetical in intention.

Amongst geometric elements, combinations of punctates and straight furrows with each other and with biomorphic elements, mostly game animals and birds, suggest a convention of enumeration recognised by hunter-gatherers throughout the hemisphere. Such a convention of enumeration is not to be confused with a number system; hunter-gatherers never controlled a system of signs by means of which abstract quantities could be manipulated. However the convention of enumeration which they developed for their subsistence needs appears to have been quite complex; at present, only its very simplest applications are understood. These involve enumeration of a range of game animals and edible plants by means of punctates and straight furrows. Specimens of such enumeration are numerous and well distributed across the hemisphere. But

subsistence items were enumerated by use of more complex signs as well, such as concentric rings, rayed rings, concentric squares, spirals, *et cetera*, Figure 16.⁴¹ For the present such applications elude interpretation.

In what way was the convention of enumeration related to the obviously laborious and time-consuming task of manufacturing petroglyphs? Locational study of the Aishalton petroglyph complex permitted construction of a model comprising major activities associated with petroglyph manufacture. If one or more of these activities dictated the need for enumeration, then placing such activities into coordinated sequence should explain function in any part of the sequence. In the model, Figure 17,⁴² a residential base, *B.*, a petroglyphic boulder, *F.*, and two raw material sources, *R.*, can be inferred from the site layout. Activities relating to *B.*, *R.*, and *F.* were articulated by an unknown factor, *I.*, which either determined the type of element imposed on the boulder or resulted from its imposition. That is to say, petroglyphs either were manufactured as a result of some prior motivation or themselves motivated achievement of some desired goal. Thus, differences in the position of *I.* in the model with respect to *F.* should correlate with differences in the function of the kind of petroglyph produced.

This model proved useful in interpreting function in each of the three petroglyph systems of northern Amazonia, the indicated function differing in each case from the other two. In the Aishalton petroglyph type, all elements imposed on the petroglyphic boulder, *F.*, were selected from a fixed repertory of signs by lithic specialists working directly on the rock surface; that is, selection of elements preceded their execution. In terms of the above sequence of activities, pre-selection of elements resulted from contingencies represented by the factor *I.*, which therefore precedes *F.* in the sequence. In one specimen after another the ideational motivation for imposition of individual glyphs was identified with contingencies at *I.* Since elements in this petroglyph inventory were largely subsistence based, then the factor *I.* evidently represented a subsistence activity, mostly involving various forms of protein capture and gathering of wild plant foods.

This convention of enumerating subsistence items served as an accounting mechanism designed to maintain biotic equilibrium in the interests of man's long-term survival in an area of low primary productivity. In a subsistence system in which man did not produce food but lived entirely off the immediate resources of the environment, the maintenance of such equilibrium was literally a matter of life and death for the group concerned. Stringent measures adopted to safeguard against over-exploitation of these resources were incorporated in the most lasting manner possible in the subsistence round. Man's extractive behaviours in the animal and vegetable kingdoms were thus brought into ineradicable account in the mineral kingdom.

CULTURE AND RELIGIOUS FORMS

Did hunter-gatherers then, in the Rupununi savannas and elsewhere, account to stocks and stones for their subsistence needs? Although the answer to such a question is not detectable archaeologically, the ethno-historic record indicates that petroglyph imposition was a permanent expression of a symbiotic relationship held to exist between man and the animals of his environment. In this relationship, energy eliminated from the animal community through the needs of the hunter was restored to the animals by surrender of the souls of the human dead. The representative agencies were, on the one hand, a Master of Animals who controlled all game animals in great storehouses in the hills and, on the other, the *piaiman* who, on behalf of the community of the living, journeyed under hallucination to the houses in the hills to barter with the Master of Animals for vitally needed game. The community of the living contracted the souls of their dead in eternal replenishment of the vital forces of the natural world which sustained the living.⁴³ The myriads of punctates and other kinds of glyph covering the flank of Makatau suggest that to the hunter-gatherers of the South Savannas this was the House in the Hills from which their subsistence needs were regulated. Into recent times Makatau was known as the sacred mountain of the Atorai,⁴⁴ a much later horticulturalist folk of the savannas. Amongst many horticulturalists of

northern Amazonia, memories of the Man-Animal relationship persist in dances and dance texts which may no longer be understood; at times the texts are larded with words of a language no longer known to the singers. A Master of Animals was recorded among the Taulipang (Arecuna) of Mount Roraima in the first few years of the present century. In their *parischera* dance text, a *piaiman* wins magic hunting and fishing implements from the game animals, but soon loses them back to these animals and becomes their leader. Their *tukui* dance texts tell of a *piaiman* who, after numerous adventures, becomes the war chief and leader of the Dance of the Fishes. As the *tukui* is the dance of all the fishes and also of all birds, so is the *parischera* the dance of all hunted animals amongst the quadrupeds, especially the bush hogs.⁴⁵

INTERRELATIONS AND CHRONOLOGIES

Inception dates for a distinctive type of boulder punctuation, the pit-and-groove have been estimated at between 5,000–3,000 B.C. in the Desert Tradition complexes of Nevada and Eastern California.⁴⁶ Thus, it seems unlikely that similar manifestations in the Rupununi savannas, Figure 18,⁴⁷ [Figure 18: Pit-and-groove petroglyph (rock engraving) Aishalton, South Rupununi Savannas, belongs to a tradition dating perhaps as far back as 5,000 B.C. in North America. This petroglyph type is sometimes believed to have an astronomical significance.] could be earlier. Also, it has been seen that the kind of projectile point associated with the Aishalton petroglyph type affiliates with the meso-Indian tradition for which an initial date at around 5,500 B.C. has been recognized. Thus, the hunter-gatherer lifeway in the South Savannas may have been contemporaneous with that of the littoral shell-fish collectors of the North West. Certainly at some time these communities interacted, as is evidenced by the distribution of typical savanna petroglyph elements down the main rivers and into the Pomeroon district, whereas, conversely, the typical crude stone-chipping of the North West littoral was practised in the South Savannas.

Such interaction may even have been occasioned by one of the relatively dry periods which affected parts of Amazonia

around 4,000 years ago and again around 2,000 years ago. Remains of the pioneer occupants of Makatau cave are separated from those of later occupants by a period of sustained pluviation following upon relatively dry conditions. The time gap represented may have been considerable judging from the contrasting inventory of petroglyph elements employed by the later occupants of the cave system. The newcomers occupied chambers made available by the removal of masses of soil by water action through the caves. They used the bow and arrow, a weapon unknown to the earlier occupants. Excavation at the base of a major petroglyphic boulder of the Aishalton complex shows it to have been abandoned for a very considerable period before modern refuse again began to accumulate. There can be little doubt that the original hunter-gatherers of the South Savannas abandoned their ceremonial centre at Makatau under pressure of some external circumstance. If this circumstance was one or other of the 'dry' periods known elsewhere in northern Amazonia, then a terminal date for the Aishalton petroglyph type in the South Savannas would be 4,000 years ago or 2,000 years ago.

III CLIMATE STRESS AND SUBSISTENCE OPTIONS IN THE TROPICAL FOREST

SPATIAL OCCUPATION

The rain forest of southern Guyana provided long-term refuge to separate groups of hunter-gatherers during one or other, perhaps even both, of the relatively dry periods noted above. There is no evidence that these hunter-gatherers interacted, or even that they were contemporaries. Located in the extreme eastern and western areas of the region, their subsistence strategies differed vastly from one another, possibly reflecting access to contrasting resources. However, as no adaptive pattern is known on this time level that is specific to the rain forest, their contrasting lifeways are of interest, more especially so because at present the area is uninhabited save for a handful of Waiwai who are relative newcomers.

Although enjoying an *Am* climate in the Köppen classification,⁴⁸ significant rainfall differences locally affect climate, and possibly even vegetation. At the heart of the rain forest, the Akarai chain comprises the international boundary with Brazil to the south. Whilst its upper reaches have been classed as 'very wet' (mean annual 279–292 cm.), the plains to the northeast of the chain are classed as 'wet' (mean annual 218 cm.).⁴⁹ Hunter-gatherers occupied both of these rainfall regions during periods of sustained reduction in effective precipitation. Differences in local precipitation may have affected their respective adaptive strategies in one way or another.

From the northern slopes of the Akarai flow the north-trending Essequibo and Corentyne rivers, highways to the coast ever since Archaic times. The Essequibo is posted with hunter-gatherer petroglyphs to its farthest rock outcrops downstream, at Sherima, whilst both the Oronoque and New rivers, which empty into the Corentyne, display grinding surfaces and polissoirs indicating numerous vanished

populations there. Away from the mainstreams, nineteenth-century explorers everywhere encountered modified rock on minor creeks and tributaries, denoting occupations which contrast starkly with the present desolate aspect of the area.

At the base of the New River Triangle, Muri mountain, located just inside the border, is part of the Akarai chain. It is girdled by the East Muri river and the West Muri river, which unite to flow into the Oronoque. Muri is a rare and apparently mineral-rich geological occurrence known as a carbonatite, so radioactive as to render carbon-14 sampling useless. There are caves and rock shelters, always a rare sight in Guyana, and these were probably known to hunter-gatherers whose remains still sparsely dot the Muri river. Until recently these caves were occupied by the horticulturalist Taruma.

Across to the west, the upper Essequibo and its tributaries were explored and exploited by hunter-gatherers whose remains are numerous encountered on the Kuyuwini, Kassikaityu and Honawau. By far the most intensively utilised was the Kassikaityu, which rises in the Wassari highlands on the western border. The Kassikaityu hunter-gatherers doubtless knew that a day or two away to the north lay the Parubaru and Rupununi savannas. Certainly they occupied the headwaters of the Rupununi river; possibly they enjoyed contact with the savanna folk there.

ECONOMIC SYSTEM

Whereas the folk on the Oronoque and New rivers were hunters and gatherers strictly so-called, those on the Kassikaityu were specialised fishers and collectors who supplemented their supply of animal protein wherever and whenever possible by hunting and trapping terrestrial game. Differences in their respective subsistence systems derived to some extent from the extraordinary faunal productivity of the Kassikaityu when contrasted with other streams in southern Guyana. Also, during dry periods, differences in annual mean precipitation may have had a differential effect on runoff locally.

With regard to availability of fish, an extensive rock barrier, Crab Falls, effectively divides the Kassikaityu into

upper and lower stretches, the upper characterised by numerous rapids, relatively shallow water and a number of pools located at the foot of the rapids to which fish ascend at the beginning of the rains to spawn. Such pools are accordingly known to the local Waiwai and Wapisiania as fish ponds and are utilised as such. They were evidently also so known and utilised from the remotest times. Not all kinds of fish make the same journey to the same pools, so that fish populations vary from pool to pool according to species. More than this, certain evidence from the nearby Rupununi suggests that species may be stratified within a given pool. In cases, there may even be a diurnal changeover of species.⁵⁰ Thus, selective fishing was evidently a highly problematical matter.

The petroglyph assemblage on the Kassikaityu shows it to have been well within the capacity of Archaic man to find solutions to that problem. More than eighty percent of their petroglyphs represent a range of ingenious fish traps, each kind of trap having been designed for a particular fish species or range of fish species.⁵¹ Thus, there was a trap for haimara, which continues in use to the present; a trap for huri and yarrau, also still used; a trap for small fry to serve as bait in other fish traps; traps baited differently as to whether they were to be set for a day or a night catch; traps for a multiple catch or traps anchored at differing levels in the stream according to the horizon occupied by a particular fish species. Such traps were articulated by one-way valves, staggered bait chambers, springs, or floats, according to their expected function. Evidently they comprised an inventory of types and functions designed for harvesting the entire range of fish species known to inhabit the Kassikaityu, Figure 19.

Particular trap types were recorded as petroglyphs on adjacent boulders to serve as an index of the fish population available in a given pond. Such graphic signposts ensured man's long-term survival in this particular ecological niche at a time when famine prevailed elsewhere.

With the beginning of the dry season, the fish crop became annually available for a period of upwards of eight months. Since seasons of abundance alternated with seasons of scarcity in this annual cycle, storage was a necessary part of the production system. Countless numbers of polissoirs at

each petroglyph site suggest intensive seasonal cleaning, drying and smoking of fish harvests, Figure 22.⁵²

In the New River Triangle, a contrasting production system is similarly evident on rock outcrops in the beds and on the banks of various rivers and creeks. Here, a relatively poor faunal life enforced reliance on a staple of vegetal foods supplemented by animal protein as this became available in stream or forest. The distribution of hundreds, perhaps thousands of bedrock grinding surfaces and polissoirs over hundreds of kilometers of the Muri, Oronoque and New rivers indicates a certain long-term viability for this subsistence system, the area represented by it being a good deal larger than that occupied by the specialist fishers on the Kassikaityu to the west. All of these artifacts were made during an arid period, as indicated by their location below today's dry season water level.

The grinding surfaces suggest that this production system may have been based on the Brazil nut. If so, one enormous advantage of this staple would have lain in its capacity for indefinite storage, guaranteeing long term food security at low cost. It supported also the wide community dispersal that is indicated by distribution of the grinding surfaces and polissoirs.

TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT

These bedrock grinding surfaces were in fact rings of around 30 cm. diameter resulting from prolonged circular abrasion with a grinding stone so that a shallow (5 cm. depth) circular trench was formed around a central dome not unlike the circular trenches that children scoop out in the sand around their sand castles, Figure 23.⁵³ This singular type of artifact has not so far been reported elsewhere in Guyana, but is very widely distributed in the New River Triangle to its apex on the Corentyne.

Polissoirs are depressions made in the rock surface where stone tools were ground to shape. Some are saucer-shaped, whilst others are more elongated with U- or V-shaped cross sections, the latter resulting from sharpening and resharpening of cutting edges. Some polissoirs so closely adhere to the shape

of the finished tool that they almost suggest moulds for that tool type. So, although not a single stone tool was recovered in the New River Triangle, it was nevertheless possible to derive an idea of the types of tools that were manufactured there. Distribution of these polissoirs and their numerous occurrences indicate that ground and polished stone tools, particularly axes and choppers, were objects of daily use, Figure 24.⁵⁴ A fragment of a similarly ground and polished chopper was recovered at Crab Falls, on the Kassikaityu river. Of course the fish gear of the Kassikaityu folk implies advanced basketry skills, whilst distributions of their fish trap petroglyphs across most of the Upper Essequibo drainage and beyond imply capability of long-range travel. Such long-range travel meant provision of foodstuffs that would last days and weeks. As most nineteenth-century explorers were to learn, forest travel without adequate food supplies meant famine.

MODE OF LIFE

Spatial segregation of the grinding rings and polissoirs amongst these folk of the New River Triangle indicates segregation of the related activities; food preparation in the hands of women, with the men looking after tool making and tool use. On the Kassikaityu by contrast, fishing activities appear to have been integrated with food processing as a communal effort; no segregation is evident in the respective remains.

Amongst the specialist fishers of the Kassikaityu, traps were of two types: those by means of which the fish was trapped in the water through a variety of one-way devices (retentive), and those by means of which it was expelled from the water and thus suffocated (expulsive). Retentive traps exploited the enforced unidirectional movement of the fish in a restricted area, making retreat impossible, thus imprisoning it alive. In this way preservation of the catch was enhanced, releasing people for other activities. Such traps could thus be set at appreciable distances from the campsite and cleared at well spaced out intervals. Accordingly, they are more common in the Kassikaityu inventory and exhibit more ingenious design.

On the other hand, the catch from expulsive traps needed to be collected with minimum delay as a precaution against decay and predation, implying proximity to campsites, and thus at least temporary residence locally.

PATTERNS OF HUMAN ADAPTATION

Potential living sites were rare along the Kassikaityu for the reason that the low-lying banks flood most of the year. Intense fishing and fish processing activities around Crab Falls, indicated by the distribution of petroglyphs, polissoirs and grinding surfaces, is probably explained by extensive areas of land rising above 200 metres on the immediate riverbank. As fish resources were, and are, incomparably more abundant upstream from Crab Falls, occupation of the falls could have enhanced enforcement of proprietary rights with regard to the upriver stretch, particularly at a time of extremely low water. Increased depths downstream made fishing a more problematic enterprise, though of course fishing grounds extended well up and down the Essequibo river.

By contrast, the neighbouring Kuyuwini was apparently poor in fish, emphasising the fact that the rivers of Amazonia are not all equally well stocked. Whereas faunal life is abundant in some streams, it may be negligible in others depending on relative levels of acidity. In Amazonia, such faunal imbalance is reflected in settlement patterns. Acid streams which by virtue of this fact are more or less lacking in the microorganisms that form the base of the food chain are to that degree purer than streams with a more alkaline reaction; in their freedom from insect pests and insect-borne diseases they are therefore more attractive for residential purposes. From the subsistence viewpoint, however, these are known as 'starvation streams'.

At present, the Kassikaityu is uninhabited from mouth to source, though it is seasonally exploited by the Waiwai. It was occupied by the Taruma for around 150 years from about the beginning of the eighteenth-century. By the 1880s it was deserted. The legendary prowess of the descendants of these Taruma, still occupying the upper Essequibo during the first decades of the present century, was recorded by the

American anthropologist, William Farabee. "*They are the greatest fish-eaters of all the tribes. They know the habits and haunts of all the different varieties of fish and the food they prefer*".⁵⁵ However, their name for the Kassikaityu, River of the Dead, whilst indicating their fortunes on that fatal river, also points to its high level of fertility. It is doubtful that large settled populations could ever have been supported by the attested faunal richness of the Kassikaityu. As is hinted by the need to signpost the river, encampments were probably temporary, with the residential focus located on neighbouring streams such as the Kuyuwini. Today, the Waiwai maintain their settlements at a respectful distance from this aquatic Eldorado.

Fish trap petroglyphs are widely distributed, though not particularly numerous, in other parts of Amazonia. They occur on the Upper Amazon, on the Orinoco, in Suriname and in parts of Guyana other than the Kassikaityu. Variable stocking of the respective rivers may have been a factor in this distribution, though the specific conditions of water quality and physiography involved remain to be determined. Importantly, also, this distribution appears to reflect large-scale population movements across Amazonia during a time of environmental stress. Folk arriving in the New River Triangle in such conditions achieved an adaptation alternative to that of the specialized fishers on the Kassikaityu and elsewhere. The forests of the Amazonian Lowlands may conceal yet other adaptations that are specific to particular ecological niches.

CULTURE AND RELIGIOUS FORMS

A few occurrences on the Kassikaityu of an anthropomorph that is characteristic of the Aishalton petroglyph complex suggests that occupation of that river may have been from the savannas to the north originally, by folk bringing with them observances compatible with operation of the Man-Animal relationship, Figure 11:7. If so, these practices seem not long to have survived change to an alternative subsistence system based on abundant availability of animal protein.

INTERRELATIONSHIPS AND CHRONOLOGIES

A similar anthropomorph from the Waramuri shell mound in the Pomeroon inscribed on a stone club, along with other elements of the Aishalton petroglyph tradition, indicates interaction between savanna hunters and littoral shell-fishers at some unknown time. Being mobile, the artifact could represent trade except that it was made from slate, a rock material occurring only in the North West. So it may have been manufactured by a local craftsman acquainted with the savanna petroglyph tradition, possibly a migrant. Migration from the savannas is more positively indicated by the distribution of this anthropomorph on both the Essequibo and Berbice rivers, the distance from the savannas suggesting steady and purposeful movements of hunter-gatherers, not simply on hunting forays, but by stages that took them farther and farther into the rain forest. At Marlissa on the Berbice river, this anthropomorph, along with other elements of the Aishalton petroglyph tradition, occurs on a group of boulders with numerous specimens of the contrasting Timehri tradition, all having been imposed at a time of sustained low water which laid bare the riverbed outcrops. One or other of the major dry episodes of recent time seems indicated.

VI THE SPECIALISED COASTAL ADAPTATIONS OF HORTICULTURALISTS

SPATIAL OCCUPATION

Around 2,000 years ago, apparently during the already noted drought prevailing across Amazonia, the Timehri petroglyph type was migrating into the Antilles at the hands of Arawak horticulturalists from the northeastern coast of South America. These migrants are identifiable by their use of a distinctive type of ceramics known as Saladoid, the remains of which mark their progress through the islands as far as Puerto Rico. Affiliation between the Timehri petroglyph type and Saladoid ceramics is particularly striking on Martinique and Guadeloupe where certain of these petroglyphs reproduce a zoomorphic *adorno* (or pottery decoration) which is characteristic of Saladoid pottery. This degeneration of the Amazonian petroglyph stereotype accompanied loss of its original significance in its long trek northwards, suggesting that along a linear route, such loss in this particular petroglyph type may be an indicator of distance from its source. If so, this should help in interpreting some of its local distributions on the mainland, where specimens of the type occur as far to the west as the Andes. It appears to have been associated with harvest ritual amongst horticulturalists in Colombia. Other specimens are known as far to the south as Argentina.

In the Guianas, occurrences are known only on the Berbice and Corentyne rivers, the type site being Timehri Island, in the Corentyne. On the other side of the Akarai watershed, it is known on the Cumina, a tributary of the Trombetas, which empties into the lower Amazon. Important concentrations occur at Wonotobo Falls on the Corentyne, and this is significant because at this site it is associated with Saladoid pottery of around A.D. 50.⁵⁶ The known affiliation of Saladoid pottery with the Timehri petroglyph type in the Antilles suggests that a similar association at Wonotobo Falls around the commencement of the present era must represent a southeastward expression of Arawak migrations which were

currently being felt more strongly to the north. Similar association of this petroglyph type with Saladoid ceramics occurs at Puerto Cabello on the Central Venezuela coast. However, to date there is no evidence of a Saladoid transit of Guyana, either coastal or hinterland, to account for this settlement on the Corentyne. As has been seen, the ceramic sequence for the Guyana coast commenced around 1,400 B.C. In due course it displayed affiliation with pottery from the important site at Barrancas on the Lower Orinoco, Figure 25.⁵⁷ The North West was subsequently to feel, and possibly even to transmit southeastwards, ceramic influences originating as far afield as the Middle Orinoco, but of Saladoid ceramics it exhibits no discernible trace. This leads to the conclusion that the attested Saladoid migration to the Corentyne around A.D. 50 may have been seaborne; certain opinion holds that it may have originated on Trinidad, and it is as well to remain alive to that possibility.⁵⁸

If it is accepted that loss of iconographic rectitude in the Timehri stereotype is proportional to its distance from source, Saladoid movement along the Corentyne river would appear to have been progressively southwards. As this is the least explored area of Guyana, today wholly uninhabited, confirmation or rejection of this hypothesis must, for the time being, await the recovery of ceramics in archaeological contexts at some of these Timehri petroglyph sites. It may be conjectured, however, that during the period of sustained diminished run-off that seems associated with these long-range migrations, the lower stretches of the Corentyne would have been uninviting for settlement on account of the prevailing extension of the tidal influence. Today, the salt limit stands around 5° 30' N., well below Timehri Island (4° 50') and Wonotobo Falls (4° 23'). During a period of sustained diminished run-off, the salt limit could have stood further upriver. Hence, initially, the spread of these settlements would have been inland along the river.

This gap in our knowledge is certain to loom large as investigations proceed, since an explanation needs to be found for the early peopling of the Central Guiana Coastal Plain by pottery-makers of Orinocan affiliation. By around A.D. 300, such pottery-making horticulturalists had commenced

occupation of, ultimately, the entire coast between the Marowijne in the east and the Essequibo in the west. Since, at Wonotobo Falls, Saladoid pottery was replaced gradually by pottery of Barrancoid affiliation, the occurrence of similar Barrancoid pottery at an early settlement in the swamps east of the Corentyne delta persuasively suggests an ancestral affiliation of these swamp dwellers to early settlements up the Corentyne river.

On physiographic grounds, the coastal plain between the Orinoco and Amazon rivers can be divided into three great sectors. West of the Essequibo river the Northwest Guiana Coast is bounded on the south by residual soils of the crystalline basement. Except for a narrow fringe of recent marine clay along the shore, this enormous sediment basin is entirely covered with eustatic pegasse swamps overlying Mara clay. Other features of the Old Coastal Plain and Young Coastal Plain are absent.

The Central Guiana Coastal Plain lies between the left bank of the Essequibo river (the Essequibo islands may be less than 1,000 years old) and the right bank of the Marowijne river, which is the border river between Suriname and French Guiana. Its southern boundary is formed by remnants of some giant ancient delta of the Corentyne river.⁵⁹ All of the features of the Old Coastal Plain and the Young Coastal Plain are present in this immense delta, comprising by far the largest concentration of Holocene deposits along the Guiana coast.

East of the Marowijne river the residual soils of the crystalline basement approach very near the shore. The Southeast Guiana Coast therefore occupies only a relatively narrow fringe of alluvial deposits which widen somewhat towards the Oyapock, the border river with Brazil. Deposits of the Young Coastal Plain predominate in the eastern one-third of the coast, beyond the Island of Cayenne; those of the Old Coastal Plain predominate west of Cayenne.

The Central Guiana Coastal Plain comprises mudflats, grassy or herbaceous marshland, swamp forest and sand and/or shell ridges marking marine transgressive phases which occurred after the sea attained its present level around 6,000 years ago. Commencing with the earliest, these transgressive phases are known as Wanica (commencing 6,000–5,500 years

ago), Moleson (2,500 years ago) and Commowine (1,000 years ago) the latter date being associated with man's presence in the coastal swamps. The sand and shell ridges run one behind the other roughly parallel to the coastline, between 10 to 40 kilometers inland. These narrow, elongated elevations of up to 1.5 metres, with freshwater swamps in between and covered with dry forest, provided ready-made habitable land for early settlement whilst serving as corridors (to the present as a bed for roads and rail tracks) facilitating east to west movement across the swamps. These ridges exhibit, also, acceptable edaphic⁶⁰ characteristics. Today, they provide around 1,700 of the 5,500 hectares of cultivated land at Enmore sugar estate. They do not occur west of the west bank of the Essequibo estuary.

The sediments of the Young Coastal Plain derive by erosion from the Andes and are borne in suspension along the Amazon, which delivers something in the order of 1,000 tons of clay each year to the ocean. The resulting mud shoals are carried westwards along the ocean floor by the Equatorial Current. Combined with the local action of the tides, these westward moving mud shoals are borne shoreward, creating mudflats on some sections of the coast whilst other sections undergo erosion. Specially adapted vegetation soon establishes a foothold on these mudflats and dry land emerges. Less and less salt water intrudes behind the newly formed land and eventually a freshwater vegetation establishes itself there. Cycles of accretion and erosion follow each other. Thus, along the Central Guiana Coast the shorelines are subject to continual, sometimes rapid and drastic, change locally.

Certain features deriving from this intimate interaction between land and sea have proven extremely attractive to man. The type of clay minerals which mainly comprise the young marine clays do not belong in a tropical environment; they were produced by chemical weathering at high altitudes in the Andes where conditions are comparable to those prevailing in moderate climatic zones.⁶¹ Their presence in the transported clays accounts for the high fertility of the coastal soils, an extremely valued resource in both Suriname and Guyana. Because the estuarine ecosystems of the Central Guiana Coast effectively trap organic and inorganic nutrients that are

transported by the rivers, thus saving them from deposition on the ocean floor, faunal life in the swamps is extremely rich and varied, and this was perhaps the most attractive feature of all to the early settlers.

ECONOMIC SYSTEM

The earliest arrivals on this landscape of mudflats, marsh and forested swamplands would have been struck, as one can still be today, by the high biological productivity of the estuarine ecosystems of the Central Guiana Coastal Plain. True, in its pristine state this landscape may have been anything but attractive as a habitat for man, but this would have been offset by the unusual prominence of its subsistence resources, particularly as regards animal and bird life. Unfailingly between July and September each year the migration of millions of land crabs to the sea provided a harvest of high-quality protein for the taking, whilst a converse but no less striking migration of the giant sea turtle to the sand beaches between February and July offered a similarly accessible harvest of meat and eggs. As at the present time, dense populations of wading birds roosted in the mangroves and fed off the mudbanks, and the swamps abounded in shrimp and fish.

In economic importance these coastal swamplands are comparable with the Amazonian *varzea*, particularly when contrasted with the poor, highly leached soils of the hinterland. Because the coastal soils permit sustained yield cropping, settlements there enjoyed an incomparably higher level of permanency than those in the hinterland, where the slash-and-burn system prevails. However, as settlement of the coast was consolidated and expanded, systems of production, distribution and consumption of food do not appear to have remained static; as the adaptive system evolved, the economy was modified.

From prehistoric times to the present, segregation of habitation sites and arable lands from the surrounding swamps has been the central problem of coastal settlement. Dutch, French and British colonists, no less than the autochthones, have had recourse to one strategy or another in

attempting to resolve this problem; so much so that with hindsight it is possible to conceive of this kind of adaptation as the peculiar problem of Hydraulic Man, sandwiched between forest and sea and at once master and servant of the swamps.

Buckleburg, on the Western Suriname coast between the Corentyne and Coppename rivers, was settled by horticulturalists during the third century.⁶² They made pottery of Orinocan affiliation, known as Barrancoid. The site was subject to seasonal flooding by rain or creekwater, thus the problem had to be faced immediately of segregating habitation and horticultural areas from the swamps. Initial solutions to this problem remain unknown at present, though evidently the settlers soon found, or made, land dry enough for planting their staple: manioc pollen has been detected at the site. Being native to dry or even arid areas, manioc does not tolerate wet conditions and maturation takes about a year, so the garden plot selected would have been perennially dry, perhaps a slightly elevated creek-bank sufficiently free-draining to provide the moisture requirements of this plant. Even so, since manioc does not do well in highly fertile soils either; yields were probably poor, suggesting supplementary use of wild plant foods. However, such hardships, if they existed, were offset by the abundance of available animal protein. Their remains show them to have eaten deer, cayman and fish, though this particular area was probably beneficent in the supply of a much wider range of animal food. At present it is a major feeding ground for the bigger fish-eating water-fowl, with localised hatching colonies of various kinds of egret, red ibis and herons, in fact the richest by far and most extensive area of bird life anywhere along the Guiana coast.⁶³

In due course these early settlers were obliged to address the problem of permanently segregating their living and farming areas from the surrounding swamps. This they did by embarking upon earthmoving undertakings that were to modify the swamp landscape extensively. A mound raised in the swamps to around two metres high with a surface area of around 18,000m² served as a communal living platform, and with it was associated a complex of irregular farming plots similarly elevated above swamp level. Mound complexes and

ridged fields that were similarly designed to segregate living and farming areas in swamp terrain date from probably 500 B.C. on to the historic period in the Everglades of South Florida. Ridged fields were known also in the Maya lowlands from pre-Classic times.⁶⁴ This system, which was to survive for many centuries in western Suriname and eastern Guyana, concentrated the group residentially, moved all available resources to the group with the result that all of these resources were equally available to all of its members. Centralised control of the communal effort implied in construction and maintenance of the extensive earthworks probably underpinned this subsistence strategy. The longevity of the Buckleburg mound and its related raised fields implies a high degree of success, though eventually population pressure may have proven a limiting factor. However, the experiment appears to have survived for a few centuries.

The various mounds associated with this particular adaptive strategy on the western Suriname coast have been designated the Hertenrits complex after the best known of them, Hertenrits.⁶⁵ At present, one of these artificial mounds, surrounded by a moat, is known at Johanna, on the Canje river in Guyana.⁶⁶ Others may have been destroyed in recent times. So far, not all of them have been dated, but successor mounds to Buckleburg are characterised by use of a different kind of pottery, also of Orinocoan affiliation, known as Arauquinoid. This pottery dominated the Orinoco basin, parts of the central Venezuelan coast and llanos for almost a thousand years before the arrival of Europeans. Hertenrits was constructed somewhat to the west of Buckleburg around A.D. 685. It has been estimated that around 100,000 cubic metres of earth were moved in construction of this mound, which in the end rose sheer from a moat-like water body ranging between 20 to 100 metres wide – a virtual island village with a commanding view over the swamps that must have engaged the labour of several generations.

During that time its raised horticultural plots were being extended to east, west and south in a sprawling, irregular pattern, the plots varying in size, shape and orientation. Most of them were around 30 metres long, but larger ones reached as much as 80 metres. Plots raised around the Hertenrits

mound alone have been estimated at around 150 to 160 hectares.⁶⁷ When the total area represented by all of the raised horticultural plots in western Suriname is compared with that of the related mound platforms, the magnitude of capital inputs involved in this subsistence system is impressive. In addition, Hertentrits was radially connected by a number of pathways with other mounds in the complex as well as with the various units in the raised field system.

Taken with its size, this location with respect to the rest of the complex seems to suggest the position of sociopolitical paramouncy that is implied by construction, development, maintenance and control of this extensive system of earthworks. Its pottery frequencies through time not only indicate a steadily growing population, but also, in the increasing decoration and elaboration of the related vessel forms, suggests the gradual culmination of a sophisticated tradition. The nucleated social structure of the early Buckleburg community may have attained fruition at Hertentrits in centralised control of the labour force and the redistribution of foodstuffs. At what time habitation of the Hertentrits mound ended is not yet known, but the influence of its pottery continued unmodified at Prins Bernhard Polder, a site in the west of the complex area, almost on the Corentyne delta, until perhaps as late as the eleventh to thirteenth century.⁶⁸

On the eastern edge of the complex, a site at Peruvia, near the Coppename river, remains undated, but is of interest in having been located not on artificial mound but on a sand reef. The mound-platform/raised-field system does not appear to have penetrated so far to the east as Peruvia. However, raised fields associated with sand reefs eventually became the order of day right across the rest of the Suriname coast to the Marowijne river and beyond.

It seems that in the long run the mound-platform/raised-field system of horticulture could not survive in its traditional form in face of the population expansion which it had itself made possible. Population growth meant both mound expansion and the expansion of the raised field network. Of these two capital inputs, returns were evidently realised more rapidly on investment in more fields (new ones or extensions

to old) especially since in the swamp environment manioc yields were possibly uneconomic. However, the effect of unrestrained expansion of the farmlands to feed the steadily growing population that is implied by increasing potsherd densities on successive levels of the mound was to limit the energy inputs available for reciprocal expansion of the mound-platform. There seems a lesson to be learnt from the fact that the first addition to the Hertenrits mound doubled its areal extent; the second doubled the area of the first, but the third extension, with the mound already standing 1.5 metres above the swamp, merely elevated floor area by one metre without increasing it. With an enormous moat in the way, lateral expansion had evidently reached its limit, granted the farming commitments of the available human resources. Beyond a certain density, the growing population was obliged to contemplate an adequate new mound structure rather than extension to the old. Construction of each new mound platform was however simultaneously a drain on the efficiency of the food production system. It is perhaps for this reason that the sand reefs had already come to be tested for horticultural use even during Hertenrits times: they did not need elevating.

Residential occupation of the sand reefs represented an energy subsidy in the settlement pattern, costing no more than the energy expended in clearing the original forest. This development seems to have accompanied population expansion eastwards. With such a ready-made segregation of residential from farm land, energy costs could be further reduced by raising the related horticultural beds directly against the edges of the sand reefs. Intercommunication was effected by laying out these new beds, rectangular in shape, in a grid. In this way long, straight access routes were created that were also more economical to use in contrast to the tortuous lanes of the Hertenrits complex. These new efficiencies released further energies for food production, the success of the new system being attested in its eventual wide distribution. Sand reef residential sites with contiguous raised fields are known on the French Guiana coastal strip as well as across the entire Suriname coast. This tremendous expansion

of the culture made available a much wider range of subsistence resources, and these were no longer centralised within the group. The new dispersed settlement pattern permitted the establishment of proprietary rights over specific resources and thus stimulated trade on both the intra-group and inter-group levels. More, the distribution of sand reefs across the coastal plain of the three Guianas provided for almost limitless further expansion.

TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT

At some stage the reefs were themselves found suitable for manioc cultivation. These light, free-draining soils show a strongly acid reaction; if composed of sand, are easy to cultivate with primitive implements and are bordered by swamps rich in food resources on both seaward and landward sides.

Eventually, the culture seems to have turned back on itself and to have expanded westwards along these reefs in Suriname and Guyana. Details of these movements remain to be worked out with archaeological precision; they may not have been so neatly unidirectional, but the pattern is evident. Reef settlements were established on the east bank of the Corentyne and subsequently farther and farther westwards until the Demerara river was reached and crossed. Significantly, the Guyana settlements are not known to have been combined with raised fields; the custom of combined residence and farming of the reefs seems to have entered Guyana with these settlers, the single criterion having apparently been arable land of sufficient elevation in proximity to the swamps. Thus, whereas both sand and shell reefs were utilised in Guyana, so also were odd remnants of marine clays of the Old Coastal Plain which here and there obtrude into the younger landscape as low elevations in the swamps. Where such elevations border fresh water, as on the Abary river, they attracted long-lived settlements.

Dispersal of these settlements eastwards and then westwards from early beginnings on the Corentyne delta was enhanced by food processing technologies associated with bitter manioc cultivation. Indefinite storage of animal

protein, and of carbohydrates in the form of manioc cakes or flour, permitted planned long-range expeditions and systematic migrations on a hitherto unknown scale. The part played in the colonisation of the Antilles by the development of these food processing technologies with the coming of bitter manioc awaits investigation, but its role in the settlement of the Guiana coast, commencing around the opening of the present era, is evident. Trade networks emerging from this long-range mobility brought local specializations into interaction. Rock materials, particularly, flowed through such trade networks over considerable distances, both in Suriname and in Guyana. With rock materials probably also went made up stone artifacts such as tools, and implements such as cassava graters, rubbing stones, mortars and metates. Objects of more fugitive materials, such as feathers, curare, waxes, blowguns, *etcetera*, may have enlivened this commerce. All such interchanges, whether conducted along bush paths or streams, or both, were based ultimately on the ability to preserve permanently the starchy staple and various forms of animal protein.

The Hertenrits folk made extensive use of clay, shell and bone in their industries, in house construction and personal decoration. Ceramic technology was extremely conservative, notwithstanding its formal and decorative florescence in late Hertenrits times. It is thus one of the principal diagnostics of population expansion across the Guianas.

Bead manufacture represented an early trait of these coastal pioneers, the raw materials used at Hertenrits being ceramics, shell and bone. Shell appears to have been utilised before bone and ceramics. This industry achieved an impressive maturity at later sites along the Guyana coast to as far west as the Demerara river.

Wattle-and-daub houses were common to reef dwellers across the Central Guiana Coast. The framework and rafters of sturdy saplings were lashed together using one of several available plaiting fibres. By way of providing a vertical surface for walling up, the wattle was partly covered with palm leaves before application of the daub, Figure 29.⁶⁹ Palm leaves were probably used, also, for thatching, a deep roof overhang being necessary to protect the walls from rain. Walls

were smoothed with fine clay. When compared with the wall-less thatched huts used by most forest tribes today, such structures were relatively permanent and comfortable, reflecting contrasts between the respective settlement systems. However, temporary thatched structures were also used by the reef dwellers.

MODE OF LIFE

In its choice of tempering materials, the earliest Hertenrits pottery represents a technology based on the swamps, more than 99 percent of the sherds that have been studied archaeologically having been tempered with tiny fragments of ground up pottery, obviously for want of the more usual alternatives. The remaining less than one percent was tempered with either charcoal, the ash of a siliceous bark known as *cariapé* even more rarely, with sand and/or shell deriving from the reefs.⁷⁰ Since in their lengthy migrations these folk and their successors remained mainly 'tethered' to the coastal swamplands, their ceramic recipes remained unchanged throughout, even where, as they sometimes did, they took to copying the pottery designs of their trading partners or contemporaries. Thus, in all of their settlements or satellites across the Guianas a standard suite of ceramic types is utilised and this, taken with other characteristic traits, provides a ready diagnostic of movements and cultural alliances.

In the fifties Smithsonian archaeologists Clifford Evans and Betty J. Meggers first identified certain of these diagnostic traits at three sites on the Abary river and, following accepted scientific practice, defined an archaeological culture there known as the Abary phase. A distinguishing characteristic of the Abary phase was the suite of ceramic types utilised. Each was given a descriptive designation.⁷¹ Subsequent study of pottery collections in the Walter Roth Museum made at odd coastal sites over the past hundred years, as well as of coastal collections in the Suriname Museum, at Paramaribo, revealed sites of the Abary phase stretching continuously from the Marowijne river in the east to the Demerara river in the west.

These sites shared a number of other cultural features as well.

A cluster of ceramic traits at Mayo, on Trinidad, is so similar to those of the Abary phase that it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that they are related.⁷² If so, this would represent the ultimate westward expansion, during the seventeenth century, of the peculiar lifeway which seems to have been initiated around the Corentyne delta as far back as the third century, or perhaps even farther back at as yet undetected sites of a possible Arawak migration which colonised upper stretches of that river.

Other features shared by these coastal sites are secondary urn burial, practised from early times in the Hertenrits mound culture and surviving on to the later settlements on the Abary; wattle-and-daub house construction, known from the early reef sites in eastern Suriname right across the coast to the reef site at Recht-door-Zee on the Demerara river, and, characteristic of at least the later stages of the culture, manufacture of transversely and longitudinally perforated polished beads of semi-precious stones such as amethyst, agate and quartz.⁷³

PATTERNS OF HUMAN ADAPTATION

Abary phase settlements are exclusive to the swamps and reefs of the Central Guiana Coastal Plain. The sites make a well-defined cluster from the Marowijne to the Demerara river. At Seba, 150 kilometers up the Demerara river, a cache of half a dozen pottery vessels of the Abary phase and a few stone tools suggest periodic trips for quarrying stone. These folk traded with the forested hinterland and even with the savannas, possibly by relays. Raw materials for the bead industry derived, ultimately, from the Rupununi savannas, the central Mazaruni and the Ireng river to the far west. Polishing stones of jasper from the Ireng river appear to have found their way back across the settlements on the Suriname coast. These are all indicative of the later stages of the culture. After the nucleated settlement pattern of the mounds, the fully dispersed settlement system made possible by living and farming on the reefs generated new trade relationships. These trade relationships in turn stimulated that innovativeness which characterised the Abary folk in later periods,

providing mechanisms by means of which they were equipped to encounter eventual European penetration of the Guiana coast, during the seventeenth century.

Although the combination of mound building with raised field horticulture remained viable over several centuries in western Suriname, the potential of this settlement system for exploitation of the rich swamp resources of the Central Guiana Coastal Plain was by no means infinite. As population growth outstripped its infrastructural supports, an alternative settlement system became obligatory, involving a residential shift, inland away from the immediate coastline, on to the reefs. However, the combination of reef-dwelling and raised-field horticulture, eventually practised across the length and breadth of Suriname as well as in French Guiana, seems in the long run to have proven no more viable than the mound system, possibly on account of the capital costs of food production in a settlement pattern whose separate habitation units, taking into account the communal energy expenditures implied in raising the related horticultural fields, may have grown progressively more and more nucleated, with the attendant consequences.

Apparently also, the situation came to be complicated by competition for reef space from an entirely different people in process of migrating westwards from the French Guiana, or perhaps Suriname, hinterland, some time after A.D. 1,000. It appears that these groups, comprising the archaeological culture known as the Koriabo phase and who seem to have derived, ultimately, from the lower Amazon basin,⁷⁴ cultivated only the reefs, ignoring the swamp soils, as befitted a forest people. Their sites are distributed east to west across Suriname immediately behind those of the Abary peoples, in apparently mutually unwelcome contiguity, Figure 31.⁷⁵

Not surprisingly, when in due course the Abary phase recrossed the Corentyne (the first crossing having been in the mound-building days) these folk arrived in Guyana with techniques for cultivating the reefs only, similarly ignoring swamp horticulture. But notwithstanding the relative poverty of the reef soils, the coastal swamp dwellers enjoyed a high level of village permanency, denoting a successful adaptive strategy. Nibbi village on the Mahaica headwaters, mentioned

as trading with the Dutch on the Pomeroon in 1580,⁷⁶ was still a waystation for the Dutch on the Berbice river in 1670, at which time the villagers were observed to be living away from the swamps.⁷⁷ The Yale archaeologist, Cornelius Osgood,⁷⁸ described a small shell mound in the pegasse swamps behind Annandale on the east coast of Demerara, proving the continued dependence of the Guyana swamp dwellers on the swamp resources. Evans and Meggers estimate the duration of their Abary phase villages at between 50 and 200 years.⁷⁹ Sand reefs are extremely rare in the Holocene sediments to east and west of the Abary river,⁸⁰ and these are the sites where the culture was first recognised. The splinter group which set out for Trinidad in the late seventeenth century, if such was the case, may have done so in response to the Dutch presence on the coast, and not at all for economic reasons, since their settlement pattern was the most successful of the three known to the folk of the Abary phase. Neither of the previously tried two (mound dwelling plus raised field; reef dwelling plus raised field) could exploit fully the carrying capacity of the coastal swamps.

INTERRELATIONS AND CHRONOLOGIES

Abary phase specialisation in the manufacture of beads from semi-precious stone is probably to be dated only as far back as the beginning of the eighteenth century, at which time the Macusi appear to have begun arriving in the North Savannas in response to pressure from the Wapisiana in the south. Since no Abary phase sites are known from the hinterland, the factors in the associated trade in raw materials for this industry may have been the Macusi. If this is the case, then all sites yielding beadworking materials of this type would be late. Amongst these is the site at Recht-door-Zee, on the Demerara river estuary. Pottery from this site exhibits copying from ceramic designs of the Mabaruma peoples, using, however, the age-old ceramic recipes of the Abary phase. Abary phase ceramics absorbed on to an original Saladoid base elements of both Mabaruma and Koriabo phase pottery design, and to some extent bequeathed its design elements to certain of its contemporaries, notably a highly characteristic

Saladoid adorno, well distributed in the Antilles, which was adopted in the Koriabo phase. It would seem that the Abary folk relied heavily on both the Mabaruma and Koriabo peoples for such artifacts as could not be supplied in their own environment, for example cassava graters, which they were observed to be using during the seventeenth century. At this time the Taruma, later to become the major cassava grater manufacturers in Guyana, had not yet arrived in the country. The association with inland Koriabo peoples, begun on the reefs of Suriname, continued in Guyana, where the latter appear to have been sole factors in the trade in quartz crystals, and possibly stone tools, from the middle Mazaruni. However, Abary phase trade items have not been detected so far in the remains of contemporary archaeological cultures in Guyana.

CULTURE AND RELIGIOUS FORMS

If, as seems likely, the Abary phase represents an eastern expression of the Arawak migrations that began to colonise the Antilles around the beginning of the present era, then its linguistic affiliation would have been Arawak. The mortuary practices of known Arawaks seem to support an Arawak identity for the phase. Among Arawaks, urn burial was practised during all periods. This sometimes took the form of secondary burial of the head in a covered vessel; burial of the body or bones in a covered vessel in a sitting position, the head having been covered with a ceramic slab; or compound burial of an important personage and his wives in separate ceramic vessels in the sitting position, the heads covered with ceramic slabs.⁸¹ In one form or another such burials have been reported from the Hertenrits complex, from the Abary river, from Mon Repos⁸² (the latter two being Abary phase sites on the East Coast), as well as from a late site of the Mabaruma phase in the North West.⁸³ In the Antilles, similar burial practices for a Tainan (Arawak) cacique, accompanied by two or more of his favourite wives (as at Mabaruma), and with a protective head covering for the sitting figure, may be representative of this mortuary tradition.⁸⁴ Amongst Abary villagers, special mortuary rites for an Arawak chief involved

cremation of exhumed small bones accompanied by ritual compatible with belief in an afterlife.⁸⁵ As Raleigh observed on the Orinoco, "*The Arwacas dry the bones of their Lords, and their wives and friends drink them in powder.*"⁸⁶

SUMMARY

Around 7000 years ago, as new resources of shellfish began to become available with the expanding swamps, a small group occupied Barabina hill, just outside Mabaruma, which is thus the oldest known human settlement in this country. In due course, other groups settled elsewhere on the edges of these swamps. Today, their remains are identifiable as sometimes quite enormous mounds of shell refuse containing fish and human bones as well as the bones of terrestrial animals. Rarely, fragments of pottery are associated.

Of comparable antiquity is the hunting and gathering lifeway of early settlers in the Rupununi savannas who appear also to have entered Guyana from the west. Because they lived in an environment of limited food resources, these hunter-gatherers were obliged to maintain strict equilibrium between these resources and their perennial subsistence needs. This they achieved by means of a system of enumeration of subsistence items consumed by the group. The record comprised a standard repertory of signs which were imposed on the rocks of the savannas, today known as petroglyphs, an accounting mechanism through which restitution could be made to the animal and vegetable kingdoms by surrender of the souls of the human dead. Such restitution was conceived as replenishing the vital energy of nature upon which man depended for his indefinite existence.

Although neither littoral shellfish collectors nor hinterland hunter-gatherers were permanently attracted to the rain forest as a desirable habitat, both appear to have utilised its resources from time to time. However, there were periods of prolonged drought when the forested streams of the extreme south provided a viable habitat for migrant groups who subsisted there as specialised fishers with occasional hunting of terrestrial game and collecting of wild plant foods, or as

collectors of wild plant foods who supplemented their diet with some fishing and hunting. The contrast in subsistence emphasis was determined by the nature of the local resources, a high level of adaptive ingenuity having been exercised in each case.

Eventually, the shell-fishing and hunter-gathering lifeways were superseded throughout Guyana by another based on root-crop horticulture. A settlement established up the Corentyne river by A.D. 50, appears to represent a southeastward extension of Arawak migrations from northeastern Venezuela into the Antilles which were taking place at around this time. This important economic transition, from food collecting to food production, was not achieved overnight. It may have begun to occur as far back as 1,000 B.C. in northwestern Guyana. The occupation of Hosororo Creek during a period of prolonged drought commencing around 1,400 B.C., initiated a remarkable development in ceramic technology during the following two hundred years. Whilst, evidently, these developments paved the way for the transformation of the traditional collecting lifeway into one that was based on root crop horticulture, the precise circumstances attending this transition remain for the time being unclear.

At present, nothing is known concerning the development of those settlements on the Corentyne river that seem to have been initiated by the migrations of horticulturalists originally from northeastern Venezuela during the first century. However, in light of subsequent events along the coasts of Suriname and Guyana, this gap in our knowledge demands attention. On the present scanty evidence, it appears that these early settlers on the Corentyne were in some way affiliated to the band of pioneers who, during the ensuing centuries on to Contact times, devised a series of remarkable strategies for permanent residential exploitation of the rich swamp resources of the Central Guiana Coastal Plain. By A.D. 1,000, they had spread west to east along the Suriname coast to the Marowijne river, eventually encountering there the advance guard of a different westward-moving migration, which apparently had originated somewhere in the lower Amazon area. Both of these groups subsequently turned westwards and eventually entered eastern Guyana at different times and

at different places. Whereas the swamp dwellers stuck to familiar terrain in the coastal lowlands, the migrants from the Lower Amazon struck southwestwards from the mouth of the Marowijne river, through the forests, eventually to cross the Corentyne some distance upriver.

Over the centuries, both groups extended their range westwards across Guyana. Their distinctive cultures were first identified in this country and designated, respectively, the Abary phase (coastal) and the Koriabo phase (hinterland). Despite marked differences in history and culture, these two groups interacted with each other and, independently, also with the peoples of the Mabaruma phase, centred in the North West. These interactions established the cultural framework encountered, and subsequently utilised, by Europeans after around A.D. 1600.

Around A.D. 1670, European missionary activity near the mouth of the Rio Negro initiated a new long-range migration which peopled the forests of southern Guiana with the Taruma, commencing in the early eighteenth century. In what turned out to have been the final two hundred years of their existence as an identifiable tribe, the Taruma dominated the length and breadth of the southern forests and monopolised the supply of cassava graters and hunting dogs countrywide. A hundred years ago their trading excursions were reported as reaching to the Suriname coast along the rivers. Their pottery remains are well distributed in the Roraima highlands of Guyana from whence they penetrated the upper Mazaruni basin. To the east, they crossed the tracks of the earlier Koriabo folk on the upper Berbice. Their unique domination of the southern forests served as a model to the more recent Waiwai, their successors.

During the period of Taruma expansion across the southern forests, the Rupununi savannas to the north were being gradually peopled by migrants filtering eastwards from the Rio Branco savannas, first the Macusi and later the Wapisiana, the point of entry for both groups having been the South Savannas. In due course, under pressure from the Wapisiana, the Macusi were driven slowly into the North Savannas, and these are the positions held by the two groups

to the present time.

Thus, the major population patterns of northern and southern areas of the country lie on either side of the Contact watershed. Before around A. D. 1600, the peopling of the coastal swamps developed in interaction with the concurrent peopling of the forested hinterland by archaeological cultures known as the Mabaruma phase and the Koriabo phase, at which time the savannas to the south remained uninhabited.

The southern forests and savannas were peopled later by groups who had no direct contact with Europeans on the coast, nor is there evidence of significant interaction between hinterland and coastal groups at this time.

ENDNOTES:

¹ Fernand Braudel, *On History*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

² Eric Williams, *British Historians and the West Indies*. (London: André Deutsch, 1966).

³ [V. S. Naipaul].

⁴ R. Wellek and A. Warren, *A Theory of Literature*. (London: Penguin Books, 1963 and 1973).

⁵ Émile Faguét, in 'Aimé Césaire's Discourse on Colonialism', in *Carifesta Forum: An Anthology of 20 Caribbean Voices*, edited by John Hearne (Kingston: 1976).

⁶ Fernand Braudel, *op. cit.*

⁷ Walter E. Roth, *An Introductory Study of the Arts, Crafts and Customs of the Guiana Indians*. (New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1970). First published in 1924.

⁸ [On the facing page is a severely reduced and barely legible map of the administrative divisions of Guyana, with following caption: 'Since 1981, archaeological sites have been designated numerically according to the Administrative Map of Guyana which divides the country into 10 regions. Previous site designations are treated as names and are referred to in parentheses, e.g., 1-1:5 (Hosororo Creek N-11.')]]

⁹ Robert Montgomery Martin, *History of the Colonies of the British Empire*. (London: Dawson's, 1967), p. 120.

¹⁰ Th. Van der Hammen, 'A Palynological Study of the Quaternary of British Guiana', in *Leidse Geologische Mededelingen*, (29, 1963), pp. 125-180

¹¹ W. Roelvelld, 'Analysis of Two Sections of the Young Coastal Plain of Surinam', in *Geologie en Mijnbouw* (48, 2, 1969), pp. 215-224.

¹² [A peat-like, spongy layer of soil formed from decayed plant matter.]

¹³ D. Williams, 'An Interim Report on the Excavation of the Barabina Shell Mound', in *Archaeology and Anthropology* (4, 1, 2, 1981). Georgetown: Walter Roth Museum.

¹⁴ [At this place in the text is a map with the following caption which has been pasted on: 'Figure 1. Pegasse swamps of the North West surrounded by emergent rocks of the Guiana Shield. The first Guyanese lived on high ground surrounding these swamps. (1-5 represent different types of sediment; 6 archaeological sites. After Boomert, unpublished MS., by permission.').]

¹⁵ T. A. Wijmstra and Th. Van der Hammen, 'Palynological Data on the History of Tropical Savannas in Northern South America', in McGill University: *South American Savannah Comparative Studies, Columbia and Guyana*. 1967.

¹⁶ D. M. Laeyendecker-Roosenberg, 'A Palynological Investigation of some Archaeologically Interesting Sections in Northwestern Suriname', in *Leidse Geologische Mededelingen* (38, 1966), pp. 31-36.

¹⁷ [Figure 2: Mora Passage, North West District.]

¹⁸ 6885±85 B.P. (S.I: 5075).

¹⁹ [Figure 3: Storage pits for shellfish damage previous burials. Early writers interpreted the disturbed bones as evidence of cannibalism.]

²⁰ Capacities of storage pits ranged between 3.5-8 kg. edible meat (nerites) or 275-940 grams of protein. Based on the daily minimum requirement for adults of 40 grams protein/person the group size represented may have varied between 7-24 individuals. The protein requirement for adults is cited by Osborn. See Alan J. Osborn, 'Strandloopers, Mermaids and other Fairy Tales: Ecological Determinants of Marine Resource Utilization - the Peruvian Case', in *For Theory Building in Archaeology: Essays on Faunal Remains, Aquatic Resources, Spatial Analysis and Systemic Modeling*. Edited by Lewis R. Binford. (New York: Academic Press.)

²¹ W. H. Brett, *The Indian Tribes of Guiana: Their Condition and Habits*. (London: Bell and Daldy, 1868.)

²² The flesh of the nerite contains 18 percent protein. (Reay et al., quoted in George Borgstrom, 'Shellfish Protein - Nutritive Aspects', in *Fish as Food, Vol. 2: Nutrition, Sanitation and Utilization* (New York: Academic Press, 1962), Table 2.)

²³ [Figure 4: Stone artifacts of the shellfish cultures of the North West: a, b, choppers; c, worked water-worn pebble; d-i, wood-working wedges; j-p, line-sinkers; q-s, projectile points.]

²⁴ [Figure 5: Barabina shell mound. Quartz tools of the shellfishers. a-d, spokeshaves; e-g, scrapers; h-l, chisels; m, scraper-plane. Quartz was also used for hammer-stones and projectile points.]

²⁵ [Figure 6: Pictograph (rock painting) at Tramen, Karowieng river, Mazaruni.]

²⁶ [There is a sketch map accompanying the text here, with the following caption: 'Figure 7: Important prehistoric sites in the North West: Barabina Hill, Seba Creek, Hosororo Creek.']

²⁷ Everard im Thurn, *Among the Indians of Guiana*. (London: Kegan Paul, 1883) lists various plants used by the Indians. A comprehensive list of the floral resources of Guyana with some of their applications is given by D. Fanshaw, *Forest Products of British Guiana Part II: Minor Forest Products* (Georgetown: Forest Department, 1950). Floral and faunal foods of the swamp forests are listed by J. Gillin, *The Barama River Caribs of British Guiana: Forty Years of Cultural Adaptation and Population Change* (Unpublished Ph.D dissertation, Case Western University, 1972.)

- ²⁸ [Figure 8: Long bones of a young adult, bound and stored on a living floor, indicated by a storage pit containing shellfish].
- ²⁹ [Figures 9 and 9a: Burial of one of the earliest settlers in the North West is recorded in detail before removal for study].
- ³⁰ C. N. Barron, 'Notes on the Stratigraphy of Guyana', in *Geological Survey of Guyana*. (Georgetown: *The Daily Chronicle*, 1969.)
- ³¹ Clifford Evans and Betty J. Meggers, 'Archaeological Investigations in British Guiana' in *Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 177* (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1960). See also C. A. Harris and J. J. de Villiers, *Storm Van's Gravesande: The Rise of British Guiana*. (2 vols. Liechtenstein: Klaus Reprint, 1967, 1911).
- ³² [Figure 10: Stemmed projectile point, Semang River, Mazaruni, indicates the presence of Archaic groups in the area.]
- ³³ D. Williams, 'Petroglyphs in the Prehistory of Northern Amazonia', in *Advances in World Archaeology* (New York: Academic Press, 1985.) The Kassikaityu petroglyphic system was designated the 'Fish Trap' in this study.
- ³⁴ [Figure 11: Petroglyph (rock carving) in the South Rupununi Savannas displaying combinations of geometric, human and plant elements. These account for subsistence items extracted by man from the environment. Restitution must be made by man to ensure his long-term survival.]
- ³⁵ [Figure 12: Stemmed projectile point from Sawariwau, North Rupununi Savannas. At circa 45 cm. long, it was probably used ceremonially. Photo: Michael Corrica.]
- ³⁶ John F. Eisenberg, M. A. O'Connell and Peter V. August, 'Density, Productivity and Distribution of Mammals in Two Venezuelan Habitats', in *Vertebrate Ecology in Northern Neotropics* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1979), p. 187.
- ³⁷ I. G. Simmonds, *Biogeography, Natural and Cultural*. (London: Edward Arnold, 1979), p. 95.
- ³⁸ [Figure 13: Ite palm (*Mauritia flexuosa*) was an important subsistence resource in prehistoric times. It supplies a diet of flour, cabbage, a useful beverage and leaves for thatching.]
- ³⁹ [Traveller's snack from the ite palm (*Mauritia flexuosa*) will not survive in the archaeological record, so estimates of scope and quantities in prehistoric diets are mainly approximations.]
- ⁴⁰ [The ite palm (*Mauritia flexuosa*) was tapped by cavities in the trunk. The sweet sap was crystallised to sugar.]
- ⁴¹ [Figure 16: Geometric petroglyph (rock carving), at Aishalton, South Rupununi savannas.]
- ⁴² [Figure 17: Activities concerning petroglyph manufacture are diagrammed in order to interpret their social significance.]
- ⁴³ G. Reichel-Dolmatoff, *Amazonian Cosmos*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971.)
- ⁴⁴ W. C. Farabee, *The Central Arawaks*. (University Museum Library of Pennsylvania. Reprint edition. The Netherlands: Oosterhout N. B., 1967. 1918.)
- ⁴⁵ T. Koch-Grünberg, *Vom Roraima zum Orinoco: Ergebnisse einer Reise in Nordbrasilien und Venezuela in den Jahren 1911-1913*. 2 volumes, Berlin. Translated and edited by Walter E. Roth (Manuscript; Caribbean Research Library, University of Guyana, 1917.)

⁴⁶ R. F. Heizer and M. Baumhof, *Prehistoric Rock Art of Nevada and Eastern California*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1962.)

⁴⁸ [A tropical monsoon climate].

⁴⁹ Persaud, C., '**Regional Variations of the Rainfall Climate of Guyana and its Applications in Planning**'. Paper presented at the Seminar on Spatial Aspects of Development and Planning. Unpublished manuscript. Ministry of Works, Georgetown, 1983.

⁵⁰ McConnel, R., '**The Fish Fauna of the Rupununi District, Guyana**', in *Timehri* (43, 1967), pp. 58-72.

⁵¹ [Figure 19: Fish traps, Kassikaityu river. Location of the dots show placement of the bait. Figure 20: Fish trap designs, Kassikaityu and Upper Essequibo rivers, were inscribed on rocks to mark the locations of pools in the river to which differing species of fish annually migrate to spawn. Illustrations are all of the spring-basket type, known from Archaic times to the present day in Guyana. Figure 21: The box trap petroglyph type, Kassikaityu river, Guyana, and Caquetá river, Columbia.]

⁵² [Figure 22: Grinding surfaces on bedrock in the Kassikaityu river, Upper Essequibo, indicate use of ground stone tools in fish processing.]

⁵³ [Oronoque river, New river. Numerous doughnut-shaped grinding surfaces on granite outcrops on the riverbed indicate a lifeway based on wild nuts, probably the Brazil nut (*Bertholletia excelsa*) which is abundant in the area.]

⁵⁴ [Figure 24: This ground and polished stone axe, hafted in devil-doer (*strychnos spp.*) is unusual in retaining its shaft, having been buried deep in the river gravels of the Upper Mazaruni.]

⁵⁵ Farabee, W. C., *The Central Arawaks*. (University Museum, University of Pennsylvania. Reprint edition. (The Netherlands: Oosterhout N.B., 1967, 1918), p. 55.

⁵⁶ Boomert, A., '**The Saladoid Occupation of Wonotobo Falls, Western Surinam**', in *Proceedings of the Ninth International Congress for the Study of the Precolumbian Cultures of the Lesser Antilles* (Montreal, Université de Montreal, 1983), pp. 97-120.

⁵⁷ [Figure 25: The flanged incised rim in pottery decoration may be diagnostic of the emergence of agriculture at Hosororo Creek in the North West perhaps as early as 1,000 B.C.]

⁵⁸ Boomert, *op. cit.*, and Rouse, I., '**Diffusion and Interaction in the Orinoco Valley and on the Coast**', in *Proceedings of the Ninth International Congress for the Study of the Precolumbian Cultures of the Lesser Antilles* (Montreal, Université de Montreal, 1983). Rouse feels that early Saladoid pottery will be found eventually in the North West. This question is examined in detail in my forthcoming paper, '**Excavation of a Deposit of Crushed Sea Shells at Hosororo Creek, North West District**'.

⁵⁹ Brinkman, R., and L. J. Pons, '**A Pedo-Geomorphological Classification and Map of the Holocene Sediments in the Coastal Plain of the Three Guianas**' (*Soil Survey Papers No. 4*, Wageningen: Netherlands Soil Survey Institute, 1968), pp. 23 ff.

⁶⁰ [Relating to soil].

⁶¹ Janssen, J. J., '**The Development of the Coast**', in *Suralco Magazine* (1976), pp. 1-7.

- ⁶² Versteeg, A. H., 'Recent Archaeological Investigations in Suriname', in *Suralco Magazine* (1983), pp. 1–8.
- ⁶³ Schultz, J., 'Protected Wildlife along the Coast', in *Suralco Magazine* (1983), pp. 14–25.
- ⁶⁴ Versteeg, A. H., *op. cit.*; Lewis H. Larson, *Aboriginal Subsistence Technology on the Southeastern Coastal Plain during the Late Prehistoric Period*. (Gainsville: University Presses of Florida, 1980), p. 34; Ronald B. Nigh, *Pre-Hispanic Maya Agriculture*, edited by Peter D. Harrison and B. L. Turner; Book review in *American Antiquity* (46 (3), 1981), p. 707.
- ⁶⁵ Boomert, A., 'Hertenrits: An Arauquinoid Complex in Western Suriname (Part 1)', in *Archaeology and Anthropology* (3 (2), 1980), pp. 68–104.
- ⁶⁶ Goodland, A., 'The Mound', in *Journal of the British Guiana Museum and Zoo* (39, 1964), pp. 9–17.
- ⁶⁷ Boomert, 'Hertenrits ...'
- ⁶⁸ Versteeg (1983).
- ⁶⁹ [Figure 29: Daub fragment excavated from the remains of a house of the Abary phase showing impression of the leaf of a dhalebana palm (*Geonoma spp.*) which had covered the framework of wattle].
- ⁷⁰ Boomert (1980).
- ⁷¹ Wishart, Jennifer, 'The Abary Phase of the Central Guiana Coastal Plain'. Unpublished MS, by permission.
- ⁷² Evans and Meggers, *op. cit.*
- ⁷³ Wishart, *op. cit.*
- ⁷⁴ Hilbert, P. P., 'Pottery from the Kuminá River, Brazil, and its Affiliations with the Koriabo Phase of Guyana', in *Archaeology and Anthropology* (5, 1, 2).
- ⁷⁵ [Figure 31: Prehistoric cultures of the Guiana Coast. The Mabaruma phase emerged in the North West around the beginning of the first millennium B.C., and developed there during the following 3,000 years, during which time it was profoundly influenced by events on the Orinoco. Later it interacted with both the Abary and Koriabo phases which moved westwards across northern areas of the Guianas].
- ⁷⁶ Leechman, A., 'Notes on the Ancient Sites and Historical Monuments now existing in the Colony of British Guiana', in *The Official Gazette* (12 July 1913), p. 3.
- ⁷⁷ In the 1948 edition of Van Berkel's travels Walter Roth locates Nabi village on the headwaters of the Mahaica river. Leechman's identification appears therefore to be incorrect.
- ⁷⁸ Osgood, C., *British Guiana Archaeology to 1945*. (New Haven: Yale University Publications in Anthropology No. 36, 1946).
- ⁷⁹ Evans and Meggers, *op. cit.*, p. 181.
- ⁸⁰ Brinkman and Pons, *op. cit.*, p. 25.
- ⁸¹ Joyce, T. A., *Central American and West Indian Archaeology*. (New York: Hacker Art Books, 1973), pp. 207–209.
- ⁸² Boomert (1980), pp. 68–104.
- ⁸³ Verrill, A. H., 'A Remarkable Mound Discovered in British Guiana', in *Timehri* (No. 5, Third Series, 1918), pp. 20–25.
- ⁸⁴ Joyce, *op. cit.*, pp. 207–209. Van Berkel, A., *Travels in South America Between the Berbice and Essequibo Rivers and in Suriname 1670–1689*. (Translated by W. E. Roth. Georgetown: *The Daily Argosy*, 1948).

⁸⁵ Van Berkel, A., *Travels in South America Between the Berbice and Essequibo Rivers and in Suriname 1670–1689*. (Translated by W. E. Roth. Georgetown: *The Daily Argosy*, 1948).

⁸⁶ Hammond, Gerald (ed.), *Sir Walter Raleigh: Selected Writings*. (London: Carcanet, 1984), p. 118.

