KYK-OVER-AL
Volume 2
Issues 8-10

June 1949 - April 1950

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June 1949-April 1950.

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THE GUYANA CLASSICS LIBRARY

Series Preface by the President of Guyana,
H. E. Bharrat Jagdeo

General Editors:
David Dabydeen & Lynne Macedo
Consulting Editor:
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SERIES PREFACE

Modern Guyana came into being, in the Western imagination, through the travelogue of Sir Walter Raleigh, *The Discoverie of Guiana* (1595). Raleigh was as beguiled by Guiana's landscape ("I never saw a more beautiful country...") as he was by the prospect of plunder ("every stone we stooped to take up promised either gold or silver by his complexion"). Raleigh's contemporaries, too, were doubly inspired, writing, as Thoreau says, of Guiana's "majestic forests", but also of its earth, "resplendent with gold." By the eighteenth century, when the trade in Africans was in full swing, writers cared less for Guiana's beauty than for its mineral wealth. Sugar was the poet's muse, hence the epic work by James Grainger *The Sugar Cane* (1764), a poem which deals with subjects such as how best to manure the sugar cane plant, the most effective diet for the African slaves, worming techniques, etc. As John Singleton confessed (in his *General Description of the West Indies*, 1776), there was no contradiction between the manufacture of odes and that of sugar: "...a fine exuberant plant, which clothes the fields with the richest verdure. There is, I believe, scarcely any cultivation which yields so lucrative a return per acre as under favourable circumstances, than that of the sugar cane. So bountiful a gift of Providence seems not only calculated to call forth the activity and enterprise of the agriculturalist and merchant, but to awaken also feelings of a higher and more refined enthusiasm." The refinement of art and that of sugar were one and the same process.

The nineteenth century saw the introduction of Indian indentureship, but as the sugar industry expanded, literary works contracted. Edward Jenkins' novel *Lutchmee and Dilloo* (1877) was the only substantial fiction on Guiana, and whilst it was broadly sympathetic to the plight of Indian labourers, it was certain of Britain's imperial destiny, and rights over mineral resources. It was not until the period leading up to

Guiana's Independence from Britain (1966) and the subsequent years, that our own writers of Amerindian, African, Asian and European ancestry (A. J. Seymour, Wilson Harris, Jan Carew, Edgar Mittelholzer, Martin Carter, Rajkumari Singh et al.) attempted to purify literature of its commercial taint, restoring to readers a vision of the complexity of the Guyanese character and the beauty of the Guyanese landscape.

The Guyana Classics Library will republish out-of-print poetry, novels and travelogues so as to remind us of our literary heritage, and it will also remind us of our reputation for scholarship in the fields of history, anthropology, sociology and politics, through the reprinting of seminal works in these subjects. The Series builds upon previous Guyanese endeavours, like the institution of CARIFESTA and the Guyana Prize. I am delighted that my government has originated the project and has pledged that every library in the land will be furnished with titles from the Series, so that all Guyanese can appreciate our monumental achievement in moving from Exploitation to Expression. If the Series becomes the foundation and inspiration for future literary and scholarly works, then my government will have moved towards fulfilling one of its primary tasks, which is the educational development of our people.

President Bharrat Jagdeo

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KYK-OVER-AL
Volume 2
Issues 8-10

June 1949-April 1950

DEDICATION

This Volume is dedicated to the memory of A.J. Seymour, poet; editor; scholar and pioneer of Caribbean cultural production. He gave a lifetime of service to the literary arts of the region.

INTRODUCTION

First published in Guyana in December 1945, *Kyk-Over-Al* was to become one of the most significant and long-running literary magazines in the Caribbean. Over the course of some 50 issues it has featured work by many of the leading writers from Guyana and the wider Caribbean, publishing the early poetry and fiction of such groundbreaking authors as Wilson Harris and Martin Carter, as well as important critical essays, histories, and reviews. Between 1945 and 1961, the journal was edited by the poet A. J. Seymour, a "*committed literary figure and cultural architect*" whose editorial notes and frequent essays for *Kyk-Over-Al* represent landmark contributions to the forging of a Guyanese literary culture.[1] Following Seymour's departure from Guyana in 1962, the journal went into abeyance until a revival in 1984 under the editorship of Seymour and the poet and novelist Ian McDonald. With the death of Seymour in 1989, McDonald became sole editor. The magazine has continued to appear intermittently into the 2000s, with activist and writer Vanda Radzik joining McDonald on editorial duties.

Kyk-Over-Al was founded by the British Guiana Writers' Association and the British Guiana Union of Cultural Clubs, of which Seymour was Honorary Secretary. Costing a shilling and with a cover design by Cecil E. Barker, the first edition of the journal declared its intention to "*...cultivate among British Guiana's writers the art of setting out a point of view persuasively even when wholly uncompromising; always giving short shrift to the brow-beating and the intolerant; that it will assist our readers with the enquiring and challenging mind; and that, in pointing the way to a clear appreciation of British Guiana's problems, it will contribute towards the efforts of all our people to achieve full responsibility in personal and community decisions*."[2] The name *Kyk-Over-Al* ("see over all"), taken from the ruined Dutch fort at the confluence of the Essequibo, Mazaruni, and Cuyuni rivers, was meant to signify the need "*for quick and wide vigilance and the expression of an alert people*."[3] As Seymour

made clear in his editorial notes, the magazine was to be actively engaged in the project of building the Guyanese nation and of shaping a unique culture. *Kyk-Over-Al*, he wrote, will be "*an instrument to help forge a Guianese people, to make them conscious of their intellectual and spiritual possibilities.*"[4]

Seymour's ambitions for the magazine chime with the upsurge in nationalist sentiment and the increasing agitation for political sovereignty that spread like wildfire across the Caribbean in the middle decades of the twentieth century. Against this backdrop, as Nelini Persram has observed, what "*raged in the debates and expositions of Kyk-Over-Al assisted in the conscious articulation and awareness of an emerging Guyanese culture, something unprecedented in the country's history. For Seymour the central interest was how, with the historical influence and domination of the language of English, the Guyanese could take the old colonial world and remake it into their own nation.*"[5] Indeed, Seymour stressed the need for Guyanese, and Caribbean peoples more generally, to "*make an act of possession somehow of our environment and the faster the better*."[6] Many of the stories and poems that appeared in the early issues of the magazine can be read as a direct response to Seymour's enjoinder. The first issue, for instance, carries a fascinating piece of short fiction by Wilson Harris, **'Tomorrow**', which provides an early glimpse of some of the themes (if not yet the unique prose style) that he would explore over the course his long career. Intriguingly, the story gestures to what would become a central concern in Harris's work – the necessity of developing an original aesthetic appropriate to the remarkable landscapes of Guyana:

"There was only one picture in the room. A picture of the Kaieteur Fall. When he saw me looking at it, the old man said—

'I like that.' He seemed to be seeking words to express his thoughts. 'It has power. Beauty. Mystery. It is a symbol for this land. The symbol of power waiting to be harnessed. Of beauty that goes hand in hand with terror and majesty. Of the mystery that lies in men's hearts, waiting to be explored, given form and direction and purpose'."[7]

In a later piece of short fiction, '**Fences Upon the Earth**' (published in issue four of *Kyk-Over-Al*), Harris can be seen still struggling to find a form of narrative expression adequate to the environmental experience of Guyana. At the end of the story, the narrator declares: "*Yes. I know what you will say. The words I have used are inadequate. Forgive me. I know it was inevitable that it should be so. The whole thing had been secret and wordless*."[8] As Reinhard Sander has observed, this "'*secret and wordless' thing is an encounter with the Amerindian presence in the Guyanese interior, an encounter that provides some insight into the profound and disturbing impression that the Guyanese landscape and its ancestral inhabitants were to leave on the mind of the future novelist*."[9] Indeed, the description of this encounter seems to move us a step closer to a prose more familiarly 'Harrisian' in style and tone:

"For the first time that I could remember I looked upon a human being standing upon the earth, not falsely, by force or subterfuge, or bravado, or by any sort of empty pretension, but very simply, as though to own the earth were to carry the most natural and easeful burden in the world . . . His limbs were powerful. They had the perfection of the young trees that stand rooted in the forests, breathing forth an ageless symmetry in their being".[10]

That Harris, one of the Caribbean's most acclaimed and original authors, should first publish in *Kyk-Over-Al* is testament to the journal's significance. There is a real frisson to be had in browsing through the yellowing pages of early issues and seeing formative works by poets and novelists who would go on to play a defining role in the development of Caribbean letters. Fifteen years after '**Tomorrow**', for example, Harris would publish his first novel, *Palace of the Peacock* (1960), a visionary re-telling of the quest for El Dorado that sought not only to reanimate eclipsed historical perspectives, but also to imaginatively redeem a past that had never existed. In this novel, as he would do in the twenty-two that followed (the last being *The Ghost of Memory* in 2006, over 60 years since his first appearance in *Kyk-Over-Al*), Harris sifts through the ruins of history, searching for signs of its Utopian negation in the form of the unborn potential of cross-cultural community.

Harris's longstanding emphasis on the redemptive force of cross-cultural community can be seen in embryo in a number of the poems he published in *Kyk-Over-Al*. Many of these were later included in his collection *Eternity to Season* (1954), which seeks to weave together Homeric myth with the landscapes of Guyana and the lives of its people in a manner that foreshadows Derek Walcott's epic reworking of Greek legend in a Caribbean context in *Omeros* (1990).

Alongside Harris, Martin Carter was another consistent contributor to *Kyk-Over-Al*. Indeed, his first published piece of work – a 'fragment' from '**An Ode to Midnight'** – appeared in issue six of the journal. This poem, with its "*deliberate archaism*" which "*does little to distinguish it from the many pastiches in* Kyk-Over-Al *that cast back to classical and romantic structures of poetic expression*", represents, as Gemma Robinson puts it, something of a "*deceptive entrance*" by Carter into Guyanese literature.[11] It would not be long, however, before Carter's more familiar poetic voice – passionate, committed, protesting the squalor of colonialism in a language of lyrical beauty – would resound in the pages of the periodical. Here he is in '**Death of a Slave**', for example, excoriating the brutality of plantation labour in stanzas at once both savagely forthright and dense with the gravity of history:

> "cane field is green dark green
> green with life of its own
> heart of slave is red deep red
> red with life of its own.
>
> day passes like long whip
> over the back of slave
> day is burning whip
> biting the neck of slave".[12]

It is worth comparing this poem as it appeared in *Kyk-Over-Al* in 1952 with the version published two years later as part of the collection *Poems of Resistance from British Guiana*. In the latter, the same stanzas are rendered as follows:

"The cane field is green dark green
green with a life of its own
The heart of a slave is red deep red
red with a life of its own.

Day passes like a long whip
over the back of a slave
Day is a burning whip
Biting the neck of a slave".[13]

The addition of a series of definite and indefinite articles ("The cane field", "a slave") to the 1954 version subtly alters the rhythm of the poem: the *Kyk-Over-Al* piece has a punchy ferocity, a clipped cadence that is softened in the later rendering. While the tone and metre of the latter is perhaps more successful at engaging the reader in the subject of the poem (Carter's aim in his lyrics, observes Robinson, was always to "*pursue the goal of collective feeling*" and to challenge his readers to join him in making sense of the world[14]), there is something about the brute simplicity of the earlier construction – especially its undifferentiated evocation of the slave as simply "slave" ("neck of slave" / "back of slave") – that speaks to the terrifying, dehumanizing violence of slavery.

Comparisons such as this highlight how immensely interesting are the contributions to *Kyk-Over-Al* for those looking to track not only the contours of Guyanese literary history, but also the fascinating genealogies of individual poems and prose pieces. The republication of the journal in the *Guyana Classics* series will make easier the task of throwing light on the literary development of Guyana's most significant authors. In addition to Harris and Carter, *Kyk-Over-Al* included work by a range of other significant writers in the early stages of their careers. Edgar Mittelholzer, for instance, contributed a number of intriguing poems to the journal (see issues three and nineteen). The "*first of his generation to emigrate to the UK to make a serious career of writing novels*", Mittelholzer was a pioneer, penning such important works as *Corentyne Thunder* (1941), *Shadows Move Among Them* (1951),

and the *Kaywana* trilogy of historical novels (1952-58), which cover over 300 years of Guyanese history.[15] The work of Jan Carew, whose novels *The Wild Coast* (1958) and *Black Midas* (1958) are compelling re-workings of the *Bildungsroman* in a Guyanese context, also features in the journal, as does that of Roy Heath, who contributed some rare early poetry to issues seventeen (1953) and nineteen (1954), some twenty years before his first novel, *A Man Come Home* (1974), was published.

Of equal interest when reading through early issues of *Kyk-Over-Al* is the vast array of literary pieces by contributors whose career did not subsequently flourish, or whose work has never received the same kind of attention as that of writers like Harris or Mittelholzer. The journal enables us to reconstruct an often overlooked portion of the literary field in which those more celebrated authors were working. The dynamics of literary consecration and canonization tend to produce relatively attenuated literary histories, marginalizing certain writers and obscuring the diverse range of work with which more well-known texts may well have been in dialogue; *Kyk-Over-Al* allows us to recover some of that rich tradition and to develop a more fine-grained understanding of the evolution of Guyanese literature.

This is especially so since in addition to fostering new literary talents, *Kyk-Over-Al* sought to preserve and bring to attention the work of earlier Guyanese writers, thereby not only "*moulding a Guianese consciousness*", but also "*recording its tradition*", as Seymour put it.[16] In illustration of Seymour's point, the second issue selected the poet Walter MacArthur Lawrence (1896-1942) for "*honour and commemoration*", republishing a selection of stanzas from his poem '**Ode to Kaieteur**' and featuring a number of essays on his work.[17] This issue of the journal was notable, too, for what, as Petamber Persaud has observed, may be "*the first recorded call for a local literary prize*", with James W. Smith, the Honorary Secretary of the British Guiana Writers' Association, arguing for the establishment of a literary award in the form of the Leo Medal for poetry, The Webber Medal for fiction and The Clementi Medal for non-fiction and drama.[18]

In preserving the Guyanese literary heritage while also supporting and even launching the careers of some of Guyana's most well-known and critically lauded writers, *Kyk-Over-Al* not only helped to shape the contours of Guyanese literary culture, but also contributed more generally to the 'boom' in Caribbean writing in the 1950s. Indeed, the journal was one of a number of literary magazines that flourished across the region in the middle decades of the twentieth century. These included such periodicals as *The Beacon* in Trinidad (first published in 1931), *Tropiques* in Martinique (1941), *Bim* in Barbados (1942), *Focus* in Jamaica (1943), *Orígenes* in Cuba (1944), *Asomante* in Puerto Rico (1945), and *Caribbean Quarterly*, which was launched by the University of the West Indies' Department of Extra Mural Studies in 1949. Alongside such outlets as the BBC's *Caribbean Voices* radio programme (which ran from 1943 to 1958 and featured readings of work by writers such as George Lamming, Una Marson, V. S. Naipaul, and Sam Selvon), these magazines provided a new forum for the circulation and discussion of Caribbean literature, encouraging into print a whole host of emerging literary talents.

In comparison with many of these other journals, *Kyk-Over-Al* was, as Laurence Breiner has observed, "*remarkable for the high quality of its poetry from the very beginning*."[19] This was down in large part to the frequent contributions made by Harris, Carter, and Seymour himself (Harris contributed some 37 poems between 1945 and 1961, Carter some 24, and Seymour over 40). The journal also "*made pioneering efforts in literary criticism, and opened its pages to writers of the whole region, even publishing translations of works from the French Antilles*."[20] Indeed, Breiner suggests that *Kyk-Over-Al*'s outlook was "*closely tied to the dream of the West Indian Federation*."[21] In a similar vein, L. E. Braithwaite has argued that the magazine moved from a purely Guyanese to a West Indian position with the establishment of the University College of the West Indies in 1948.[22]

The pause in the journal's publication in 1961, occasioned by Seymour's departure from Guyana, occurred just as the country was entering into a period of intense ethno-political hostilities that rent the fabric of society. That *Kyk-Over-Al*

should fall silent at this time seems poignantly apt given its stated aim to help build the nation and its commitment to fostering a collective Guyanese consciousness. Against the backdrop of race riots that pitched communities against one another, the journal's *raison d'être* perhaps appeared hopelessly Utopian. And yet such Utopianism was, and remains, fundamental to thinking beyond the apparent impasses and entrenched divisions that mark the present; and to imagining the possibility of a radically different future. As Martin Carter put it in '**Looking at Your Hands'**, published in *Kyk-Over-Al* in 1952, "I *do not sleep to dream, but dream to change the world*".[23] The last word, however, should perhaps belong to Seymour, who expressed similar sentiments to Carter in a poem published in the third issue, and which in many ways encapsulates the ideals behind the founding of the journal:

> "To-day they hope
> But to-morrow belongs to the people.
> To-morrow they will put power behind their brow
> And get the skill in their hands.
>
> To-morrow
> They will make a hammer to smash the slums
> And build the schools.
>
> Like a River, the people hold history in their hands
> And To-morrow belongs to them".[24]

Michael Niblett
University of Warwick

Notes:

[1] Nalini Persam, 'The Importance of Being Cultural: Nationalist Thought and Jagan's Colonial World', in *Small Axe*, 15 (March 2004): 86.
[2] H. R. Harewood, 'A Message', in *Kyk-Over-Al*, 1.1 (1945): 26.
[3] A. J. Seymour, 'Editorial Notes', in *Kyk-Over-Al*, 1.1 (1945): 7
[4] Ibid.
[5] Persam, 'The Importance of Being Cultural', 86-87.
[6] A. J. Seymour, 'Editor's Note', in *Kyk-Over-Al*, 2.7 (1948): 2.
[7] Wilson Harris, 'Tomorrow', in *Kyk-Over-Al*, 1.1 (1945): 30.

[8] Wilson Harris, 'Fences Upon the Earth', in *Kyk-Over-Al*, 1.4 (1947): 21.
[9] Reinhard W. Sander, 'The Quest for Form: Wilson Harris' Contributions to *Kyk-Over-Al*', in *World Literature Written in English*, 22.1 (1983): 20.
[10] Harris, 'Fences Upon the Earth', 21.
[11] Gemma Robinson, 'Introduction', in *University of Hunger: Collected Poems and Selected Prose,* by Martin Carter and ed. Gemma Robinson (Tarset, Northumberland: Bloodaxe Books, 2006), 17.
[12] Martin Carter, 'Death of a Slave', in *Kyk-Over-Al*, 4.14 (1952): 53.
[13] Martin Carter, 'Death of a Slave', in *University of Hunger*, 88.
[14] Robinson, 'Introduction', in *University of Hunger*, 31.
[15] Michael Gilkes, 'Edgar Mittelholzer', in *West Indian Literature*, 2nd edition, ed. Bruce King (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1995), 127.
[16] A. J. Seymour, 'Editorial Notes', in *Kyk-Over-Al*, 1.2 (1946): 3-4.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Petamber Persaud, 'Preserving Our Literary Heritage: *Kyk-Over-Al*, Part 1 – 1945-1961', in *Guyana Chronicle* 30th July (2006). Web. 1 March. http://www.landofsixpeoples.com/gytodaysixelevenjs.htm
[19] Laurence A. Breiner, *An Introduction to West Indian Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). 78.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.
[22] See A. J. Seymour, 'Kyk at 50', in *Kyk-Over-Al*, 46/47 (1995): 19.
[23] Martin Carter, 'Looking at Your Hands', in *Kyk-Over-Al*, 4.14 (1952): 52.
[24] A. J. Seymour, 'To-Morrow Belongs to the People', in *Kyk-Over-Al*, 1.3 (1946): 11.

ISSUE 8

GUYANA PUBLIC BUILDINGS

EDITORIAL NOTE

To watch over all the Guiana scene and to maintain intellectual activity in British Guiana and in the West Indies at its highest level; to be a forum for challenging ideas and opinions interestingly set out with which the reader may not agree but which are perfectly compatible with the free play of intellect; to gather from everywhere — from a Professor of History at Oxford, or a classroom of Colonial students in Cambridge, or a Vicarage in Guiana — ideas and influences which will improve the quality of our thinking; to present with the impassioned language of poetry some evidence of the gradual opening of mental frontiers in the Caribbean — these are the aims of *Kyk-Over-Al.*

The reading public for the Home Service of this Little Magazine must be in our W.I. Federation; if it is to help lift the intellectual life of the Community, and help our nationhood to come in our time.

The first problem therefore is to, create a reading public that will support every issue of *Kyk-Over-Al*, and pay a cheerful shilling. We make an appeal to readers and hope they will respond and complete the subscription form found elsewhere in this issue. Our advertisers are already our patrons in the best sense of the word and we gratefully acknowledge their subsidies to culture. For the second problem, that of contributions, it is heartening to see the new names coming into the Tables of Contents because the roll call of writers in B.G. is soon exhausted, and names quickly come round again. We follow the magnificent amateur tradition known to Olympic Champions and in exchange for an article, often cajoled, sometimes bullied, we tender that laurel leaf, a complimentary copy of the issue.

We have faith in the readers and writers in our Community and as a family circle, we will increasingly have things to say one to the other that will bear the hearing. But we need practical support and we are asking for it.

—A.J.S.

THE GIFTS OF THE FAIRY GODMOTHER

by Frank A. Collymore

"I give her Health,
        And Intelligence,
And Sympathy
        (That rare essence),

And Imagination,
        Life's spring, and Laughter:
All these my gifts
        I give your daughter".

"But what of Beauty,
        Fairy Godmother?
Can you not spare
        Her this one other?"

"O, she who has
        My gifts shall hold
All Beauty's dower
        When time is told".

A MARRIAGE SONG FOR DEATH

by A.J. Seymour

When your appointment comes,
Heavily, Death, you take our bodies
We your brides
We come blind with the world within
And spirit expires like love upon your lips

(The little bites of passion leap
Against your lips upon our bodies everywhere)

Insatiate —
The little children, the old men
Dried sticks for limbs —
You claim your will
Indifferently in Europe or Ceylon.

(Your eyes are fish and dull
You fumble queasily)

We myriad brides possess ourselves
Like women nightly against their men
Retreating to the inner fastnesses
Where no man calls them wife, or buys their thought.

(You triumph only on our limbs
Spirit laughs coquette and flies your touch)

AGAINST MY OLD AGE

by A.J. Seymour

The ancients purchase peace intent in towers
Watching for bursting light the East and Patmos.
They wither to spirit.
                    The years quiet to stone
the tide that plunges and rages in the heart
And smashes boxwood craft.

The eagle has talons, they can pluck the sight
The dazzling star usurps the long-held spirit
The human topples over in divinity.

Oh that I mastered — but the blood must shrivel
Before the vast abysmal heart can heal.

TO THE MOON

by James W. Smith

(Selected from a forthcoming book of poems *Parchment & Quill)*

Praise to the gods who moulded from
A stream of flowing flame, a face
To shine with heavenly brilliance such
As yours: and bathed your head in dew,
And froze your very tears, that now
Your smile with frigid beauty pierce
The gloomy cloak of night, and warm
The icy chambers of a heart!

Queen of the night, supreme you reign,
And ride upon the azure plains
In chariots of the whitest foam,
With steeds that paw the vacant air!

SPRING EQUINOX

by Wilson Harris

(2 sections from a poem-sequence)

I

Like the living shell of shameless love, Arian Island
rests and moves
on the border of a fading world,
beyond Kykoveral, beyond Mazaruni mouth, beyond the strange
legendary rock which chains
the mythical prisoner.

Arian Island! forgive a name —
names cannot name the nameless lust of God —
the horns of the leaping ram of waving water
have ventured far from ocean
and bend
like long breakers of memory combing the world,
combing the river of the world, combing Guiana.
Long breakers combing the world
combing the river of the world, combing Arian Island
greet and move to tears of mist
this vast sunlight that lies upon the world
like a huge butterfly
misty and mountainlike
its back hunches in space!
huge dwarf
who prowls beneath the trees
and moves with a wound of light:
whose form of mystery and night
fades and is discovered in each leap or splash,
is not chained to the human heart
to history or suffering or light
or myth or empty gods
but is vaster than delight
in a strange and chaotic turbulence whose body
moves
faraway in this mighty world and casts off
fragments of stationary illusion
like this well of shadow and this ghost of sand and light.

V

Where Arian Island rests and moves again
where
the lonely thief of glory is chained
to muse upon dustless fabric of the sky,
dark waters and fading visions of men.

Where vision is not enough
on these dark green waters
full of reflected light
full of music like strange lisping tongues
of delight
faraway upon the swift chaotic crumbling
pause
of each distant island in the waters of earth,
each distant island
where the lonely dreamer abandons the world
and salutes the world
with longing echo for a voice of his insufficient muse
of men and boats,
his cloudlike muse
of strange elusive forms of the world
whose wide arms beckon him on
and seek him with a gift
or a curse and a dreamlike constancy.

Where his marriage with actual freedom, his broken unity in heaven
is the daring chaotic moving bridge of living form
in the waters of space so wide and so broken
with the fever of the sun's fury and desire.
for this remote coupling of a stranger lust.

For Racial Harmony

THE CHALLENGE TO BRITISH GUIANA

by Vincent T. Harlow

I believe that B.G. and the British West Indian Islands have the chance of playing a part in the growth of that great association of peoples which we call the British Commonwealth of Nations. Let me tell you why I think so and also how and why that opportunity might so easily be missed.

A phrase has come into fashion lately which you have probably heard. It is Plural Societies. Now a plural society or community is one which consists of more than one racial type. These communities represent a world-wide problem, for where white, black, yellow and brown races live together in the same country they don't find it easy, as you know, to forget their issue of differences in order to work together for the good of the community as a whole, and yet if they don't (or won't) learn to work together in that way, the end, the inescapable end, will be the most frightful inter-racial conflicts. By comparison the world wars, which we have already endured would look like short-lived and comparatively secondary affairs. I am quite sure that I am not exaggerating when I say that the future peace and happiness of mankind depends, more than anything else, on whether we can get rid of this inter-racial bitterness and jealousy and replace it by a spirit of co-operation, by a loyalty to something bigger than the particular group which happens to have the same colour of skin.

Now this business of plural or mixed communities is one which affects very specially the British Commonwealth, for this Commonwealth of ours happens to include among its members practically every race-type under the sun. Now before I come to my point about the part which the British West Indies and Guiana can play in this matter, let me give you one or two examples from other parts of the Commonwealth to show how wide-spread this problem is.

I am going to take first of all Malaya, that great peninsula in the Far East beyond Burma. Now in Malaya there are Malays

and Chinese in almost equal numbers. Malays are a happy-go-lucky and a most attractive people but they dislike work on plantations, they dislike work, in tin mines and in business, and the result has been that the hard-working thrifty Chinese now control the greater part of Malayan industry and Malayan finance. But the fact remains that Malays and Chinese must live and must work together if Malaya is to have any chance of becoming a coherent and self-reliant community standing on its own feet. Malaya today is no more than a geographical expression, and what Britain, and the Commonwealth as a whole, hope is that Malaya will become something more than a geographical expression, will in fact become an integrated community moving on step by step until it is a self-respecting self-reliant nation. In order to assist that process, the British Government has devised (after careful consultation with the various sections of the people) the new constitution called the Malayan Union, in which Malays and Chinese will be fellow citizens and co-operators. But Britain cannot force, nor can any other Power, the growth of this larger Malayan loyalty. It depends upon the people themselves.

Now let me take another example, and one which is of interest to very many people in B.G., the case of India. What a tragedy it is that India has been partitioned! There Muslims and Hindus are dependent upon each other. Economically they are interlocked and yet, as you know, Muslims and Hindus have not been able to work together politically, and the upshot is two separate states — the Union of India and Pakistan. But the future of India, that great sub-continent, depends upon friendship and the closest co-operation on the part of those two great new dominions and my own hope is that partition will be temporary, that gradually, as they learn to work together, learn to work in the economic field (because Pakistan needs India, and India needs the materials that Pakistan can produce) that there will be a coming-together so that India, in some future time, may again be reunited as she was before. There is the problem on a gigantic scale.

Next door to India is another example—Ceylon. Ceylon is divided into two types of people—the Singhalese and the Tamils. They are different in race, different in religion, both of them very intelligent and attractive people. Now there was

a great danger that when Ceylon became a self-governing dominion, working the British Parliamentary system that these two peoples would remain politically apart, that there would be perhaps permanently a majority Singhalese party and a permanent Tamil minority party. If that had happened the Tamils would not have enjoyed liberty as we understand it. They would have been constantly under the domination of the Singhalese. But very fortunately, the Singhalese behaved wisely and far-sightedly, and in the present Government there are both Singhalese and Tamils, working together as colleagues. So you see the problem is not insuperable but it is there as it is in many other parts of the Commonwealth.

My last example is in Kenya, in East Africa. In this country there are a few thousand white settlers, most of them men who served in the First World War and who went out with their wives and children rather like the pioneers in the old days in North America and Australasia. They introduced new crops into East Africa and with those new crops they are providing revenue for building schools and hospitals for the Africans. Without the enterprise of the British settlers, Kenya would be a very much poorer place today but the fact remains that it creates a problem, for these Englishmen naturally wish for the institutions and political freedom that they enjoyed at home. Side by side with them are a vast mass of African tribes varying enormously in cultural development, some of them extremely primitive, and some developing rapidly. And to add to the complexity of the picture there is, as in B.G., a considerable Indian community. The latter came into the country as contract labour to build the Uganda-Kenya railway. They are doing valuable work as middle men, as small businessmen and dealers; but to amalgamate the British settlers, the great African population and the Indian into an interlocked community requires patience, tolerance and imagination on the part of all three, and on the part of Britain who is responsible and is giving a guiding hand.

—Now where does the West Indies, where does B.G. come into the picture? Here are Plural Societies too but with a difference. Here there are white folk, coloured folk and black folk with Indians and Chinese and many of these elements have lived together in some of the islands, and here too for

over three hundred years. Of course there have been bitterness and animosity partly as a result of slavery, and there still are tensions between group and group but, as I said when I was lecturing here, there is less racial prejudice here in the Caribbean, the British Caribbean Area, than anywhere else in the world where black and white live together in the same territory. That is why the situation is hopeful.

Now I am not forgetting that_ there are terrible problems still to be faced particularly in the islands — the problem of over-population, the problems of poverty, disease, the great need to create incentives, so that people will be more willing to work hard in order to give their children chances of improvement which they did not have themselves; but the West Indies and B.G. are moving together towards self-government and with active support of the British people, and the British people who are having a hard struggle themselves, are, as you know, paying out very large sums of money to help the West Indies to stand on their own feet.

Have you thought of the tremendous influence which the West Indian Islands and B.G. could exert by their examples? Consider Africa, emergent Africa. It is in the melting pot, invaded by western ideas, western mechanization. African tribes who have lived for centuries, in fact thousands of years, in complete isolation, are now wanting bicycles, radio sets and not yet realising that to earn these things involves transforming their whole manner of life. It involves adopting the tempo of the industrialized societies of the West. We in Britain have had to go through that ordeal in our own industrialization. You, to some extent I think, in the future will have a similar ordeal, but you have behind you experience, you have had three centuries of British language, law and institutions. You are thus in a position to set an example, and that example cannot only influence Africa positively and constructively but also the Far East. I would go as far as to say too the Southern States of the USA.

I believe that the British Caribbean territories can succeed in this, — I am sure they can triumph over race prejudice and work loyally together as a group; and I hope that the group in the end may be a federation, an association of general democracies, where white, brown, black and yellow are really citizens.

That is the test of democracy. The outward forms of democracy are important, of course, and I think they will vary according to the background and the temperament of the different peoples who adopt and adapt it. But the essence of democracy is this respect for the individual personality, combined with the individual's respect for the community. Each member must be free to develop his own individuality, following his own bent, yet all the time serving his neighbours, owning a wider loyalty, loyalty to the multi-racial community to which he belongs.

If the British West Indian Islands and British Guiana can achieve that within the next ten or fifteen years — time is short — then you can give a real lead to these areas scattered across the world where Plural Societies exist. If we don't solve that problem, or rather if the peoples concerned do not solve that problem, then there will be inter-racial wars on a world-wide scale. The whole progress of the human race will be set back. In place of the expanding communities we need, loyalties knitting societies together into a more and more stable form; there will be disruption and hatred and the whole progress of the human race will be held up and perhaps almost indefinitely postponed. And so, as I see it, this is the opportunity and this is the challenge which faces you here in B.G. now today. Goodbye and good luck to you.

(Text of a broadcast given in B.G. by Professor Harlow while on tour as a British Council lecturer).

Home for the poet

POETRY AND SPIRITUAL VALUES

by A. J. Seymour

T. S. Eliot is the most distinguished poet living and writing in English today, and certainly the greatest poet I shall ever have the good fortune to meet, and from reading his recent work in poetry and prose, particularly the *Four Quartets* and that complementary pair of books *The Idea of a Christian Society* and *Notes towards the Definition of Culture*, I have begun to see much more clearly how Eliot's strong sense of tradition is making him grapple with the problem of identifying his poetry with spiritual values.

Some years ago, I became interested in the delightful literary conversation on poetry and belief that I. A. Richards and Eliot carried on in their books, *Science & Poetry* (by Richards), *The Use of Poetry* (by Eliot) and the *Principles of Literary Criticism* (by Richards).

You know how sometimes we align our achievements and our aspirations with those of a previous personage in history. As Eliot remarked in that conversation he was having with Richards, it was Matthew Arnold who brought the religious issue explicitly into the discussion of literature and poetry, and I cannot help but think that both negatively and positively Arnold's influence upon Eliot has been considerable.

Arnold and Eliot do not compare as poets — Eliot is far greater; but as critics, both have a schoolmasterly cast of thought and emphasize discipline, both have exquisite taste and a most happy choice of quotation, both reach, with marked differences, towards a reconciliation between poetry and spiritual values, and, I believe, both are the most satisfactory men of letters of their respective ages.

This is a line that may provide material for a more ambitious essay and that will certainly repay the reader's pursuit through the pages of their essays. I shall stick to my shoemaker's last and state the point around which these notes are grouped, namely that the critical judgment on the quality of our civilisation, implicit in the course of Eliot's development

as a poet, raises the question of the assessment of the poet's function which every generation finds it necessary to make.

I came to T. S. Eliot with admiration for his own creative work and also for his influence on creative literature, for there too, his comment had the span of the eagle's wing, soaring in the empyrean, and to my wonder and delight, when I met him in 1946, it seemed that by work and maturity and prayer the eagle's wing had been transmuted into grace. Because Eliot moved and talked as a man does when he has acquired essential humility. His mind touched ideas and images with grave deliberate courtesy, and his spirit reached out in reverence towards everything with which he came in contact. I was conscious of rich and unimaginable reservoirs of personality of which one finds inadequate trace in the flower of his poetry.

Trace of that quality there is however in '**East Coker**' for humility is a theme that rises to the surface in that poem so many times — in the Good Friday image, in the echo which is a quotation from the blind Samson, in the figure of the silent funeral, in the finely attempered expression of mood from St. John of the Cross, and explicitly in the lines,

"The only wisdom we can hope to acquire
Is the wisdom of humility; humility is endless".

and that humility also expressed itself in his attitude to literature in the remark he smilingly made during our conversation —

"One must write as one can and be grateful that one can write at all".

Eliot belongs to a long line of writers in the English language who own, at least in part, something akin to the possession of themselves in their inspiration, and with him, the negative capability that Keats remarked upon, the faculty of waiting for the moment of poetic intuition, instead of turning for aid to faculties less potent, has been rephrased in a religiously-toned word, humility. Sometimes the creative writer is poised, like standing water at the turn of the tide, between poetry and mysticism, and he becomes the descendant

of Ezekiel, the Vates of the Old Testament. The prophet approaches the mystery of life and death from the moral side where social action is decisive, while the poet opens the door of the beautiful, and when Eliot can write in '**East Coker**': *"I said to my soul, 'Be still and let the dark come upon you which shall be the darkness of God' "*, there he puts the full weight of his present leadership of the English poetic tradition into a protest against a completely secular world and into a recall to spiritual values.

As a poet, Eliot has not the spiritual super-abundance and excess that Hopkins and Yeats have owned as of right, that overplus that strains language with its vigour. Nor has he that access of love possessed by St. Paul and St. Augustine, that sweeping-through of the personality by wonder and love. If there were not Dante and Milton and Hopkins to show that the conjunction is possible, one might be tempted to say that deep reverence and personal humility will affect the greatness of a man's poetry, and one can also examine the writings of St. Augustine, and of St. Paul, and find in their pages the same intensity and superabundance possessed by the great poets.

But perhaps the relative understatement of Eliot's work, his poetry of meiosis that is so very English, is born of the limitations on great poetry exacted by the modern age. Perhaps this moderation in Eliot's case has come from his Puritan and New England background and from his banker's training; yet these have given his poetry that exactness and precise use of language so needed and so important in the modern world. But a young West Indian feels it is all too controlled; the depth of the intellectual perception is not squared by the vigour and excess of the emotional expression.

Upon recent English poetry Eliot has had the effect of the straw to show where sits the wind, and conversely, he has always anticipated and influenced with his poetry the direction of contemporary work. Many have acclaimed him as their spokesman in the '**Waste Land**', but so far, not many have followed him out, piping the music of the '**Four Quartets'.**

In the wider field of letters Eliot adds his testimony, — to Whitehead, Schweitzer, Berdyaev and C. S. Lewis, who in one way or another have been suggesting the need for a new spiritual dynamic and a religious regeneration in men's hearts. The testimony is all the more telling as his work is the record of a man who has solved a personal problem and as much as it has been possible, who has shaped his own living into the unity of a work of art. This is a quality that makes for greatness, and this sense of a planned life has compelled the admiration of many. Here is a poet whose greatest poem is his own development.

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"*Home is where one starts from*" is a line that occurs in '**East Coker'** and it is interesting rapidly to look at the places the poet may consider to be his home.

First, there is the national identification. As a base for his activity the poet has sought nationalism of thought and language, and among for instance, the Scots poets and the Welsh School, there are writers who are intent on preserving a valuable minor culture, enshrined in a historic language, and striving to prevent it from being ironed flat under the road-maker of progress. Valuable though their work is, the very sense of protest tends to confine their activities in the category of "minor".

On the other hand, there is the fact of the English language and tradition becoming a nursery for diverse talents, so that W. B. Yeats, James Joyce and Eliot and Ezra Pound, and in our generation Dylan Thomas, uproot their native bloom from Ireland and America and Wales, and transplant into the English tradition. Throughout the British Commonwealth there is evidence of the same flexible assimilation by the English language, of what can only be termed racial and geographical characteristics. There is no doubt that the chorus of the English language is being enriched by soloists who show the impact of their Canadian, Australian, South African or West Indian history and environments upon their voices, and in time these component parts of the English-speaking world may develop their own speech as America did and may claim to have as she does, separate languages.

These, however, are both variations on the same theme — the national preservation of a minor culture enshrined in language or the emergence of national, racial or geographical characteristics of a community that uses as its instrument the great English solvent of speech — and an important question that emerges is, can the poet today win great art from a nationalistic background?. Can he find there the body of support for his best work? In his own or in the English language, the poet must look to find a strong tradition that buoys him as he creates, and he must be fertilised by the belief of the people of his community that poetry and the arts contribute to human happiness, and that as the flower of the society, they represent the imperishable records of the happiest and best hours of the most sensitive and discriminating people in the community.

To say the least, it is doubtful whether in our modern world these conditions for great art exist, and whether in those societies that do have a surplus of mental energy there is a genuine belief of the community in the value of the arts. In the deficient society where all mental energy is needed for economic preservation and expansion of the community, the artist is the eagle with clipped wings, but although maimed he cannot help himself, he has to be an artist though the very nature of his work will reflect the condition of his society.

Generally the poet is the rebel against society, especially that section consisting of hostile and indifferent people and stubborn circumstances. In the past, the rebel found material for expression in natural surroundings where, with the proverbial exception of man, every prospect might please him. The nightingale and the star, and the autumn mourning for its love, and daffodils that come before the swallow dares — to attempt a catalogue of the natural surroundings that have stimulated poetry, is to awaken the sleeping beauty of the poetic tradition. Poetry does not lend itself to closed compartments and to generalisations, but whatever aristocratic origins and flavour it may have had, are dying away with more democratic and even plebeian additions of practitioners who arise as a result of the 19th century introduction of compulsory education in Europe and America. Now in the 20th century has come the education of

what had been depressed and dependent intelligences in the colonies of the European powers. It is true to say that poetry always comes before prose, and just as Homer stands near the beginning of the European civilisation, so the image-making intelligences in the colonies are the first signs of new tributaries of influence coming into the present stream of modern civilisation. In general, one may say that the psychic and physical contraction of the world, and present complex social conditions, have had the tendency to frustrate the poet's response to natural beauty, to increase his rebellious tendencies, and to give them a political shadow.

Decreasingly, therefore, may the poet look upon his nation as home since he may not find in that environment the security of tenure and background possessed by his aristocratic predecessors. Of course, "*spirits are never finely touched but to fine issues*" and there is a sense in which because of his sensibilities the artist is always a dealer in the choicest and subtlest and best, and the poet is an aristocrat, even though he may be dispossessed. But as Schweitzer describes it, modern man is in an unfree economic position, with a resulting loss of spiritual independence and security, so that the poet tends to become politician.

Just here there is an engaging by-path where we could stop and examine another tendency, the way in which the nationalistic poet in these days of the domination of trade-unionists may develop and become similar to what is claimed to be the great mediocrity of Soviet literature written for the indiscriminate minion. But one refuses the by-path as one has always to be distrustful of the extension of political pressure into the field of critical thought, especially where a foreign language is concerned and where judgment is based on antagonistic masses of organised opinions.

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In Art and Poetry, Jacques Maritain has a paragraph full of meaning where he calls poetry the divination of the spiritual in the realm of the senses, and he goes on to argue that it is the glimpsing of the spiritual in the flesh, the search after a super reality that one can touch in any symbol and find at every

crossroads where the singular and the contingent meet. And this for the poet can be the road home.

We happen to live in a peculiar phase of the world's fashion of thought, where, to state the fundamental truths behind the fact of man living in God's world, is to provoke a certain uneasiness in the minds of many of our friends. This was not true in the days of Dante, who perhaps, more than any other, is the poet who found his way home to God, nor was it true for Milton of the **'Paradises Lost and Found'**, Donne of the '**Holy Sonnets**', nor almost contemporary with us, for Hopkins pre-occupied with the wrestlings of his spirit.

Eliot's work has the additional merit in that the particular is shown as part of the universal as he has worked his way through from literary criticism to a critical analysis of the weakness of our time, and both in poetry and in prose, he has rung the bell and warned us of the need for religion once again to be made a backbone of society.

A discussion such as this may end here on this germinal note, or continue for a much longer period of statement, argument and suggestion. I choose to bring it here to its close and to return, like the musician, to the opening chord, to that overwhelming personal impression with Eliot, that here was essential humility, that the words from the *Upanishad* in the '**Waste Land**', "*Datta, davadham, damyata*" (self-surrender, sympathy and self-control) had borne fruit in the '**Quartets'** and that by maturity and prayer the eagle's wing of the early verse had been transmuted into grace.

...as handsome does...

BACKGROUND

by Eugene Bartrum

To men like Thomas Greene set-backs uphold rather than dampen their determination but as he looked at the worried expression on his wife's face his spirits sank. "*Being wife of the manager of the 'Yawak' Saw Mills isn't as pretty as it sounds, my dear*", he said forcing a smile with his wife.

Lucille Greene looked intently at her husband before going over and sitting on the edge of his desk "*Don't you ever get tired of working all the time?*" she asked. "*Sometimes I feel like flinging those wretched charts and plans into the fire. Can't you spare some time to talk to me?*", she passed her hand lightly over his greying hair "*Is it worth it Tommy? Is 'Yawak' worth more than anything or any body else. Look at your face as haggard as a man twice your age.*"

Thomas Greene rolled up a chart of the Essequibo river. *"When you put it that way Lu-Lu, what can I say? Managing an industry which upkeeps a community is a little more than a full time job*." He got up and took the small figure of his wife in his arms "*It could never mean more to me than you darling. Nothing could. You know that*". He lifted her to a comfortable settee and setting her on his knee he asked *"Now, tell me what's ruffling your pretty little face?"*

She wriggled out of his arms and pouted as she sat beside him "*Tell daddy what's wrong! That's it! That's always it. You make me feel as if I am married to my father. I am a woman, Tommy. Not a baby. The mother of your two children. Yes, I am worried. Worried about you and about them. When you were made manager I was happy and proud. But now? I prefer you were still just foreman."*

Greene lit a cigarette. *"You are worried, Lucille*" he said "*Because you have heard that I'm not liked at 'Yawak'. The people of the island are saying that Graham & Graham has insulted them by making an ordinary foreman manager of the 'Yawak' Saw Mills. An ordinary labourer who worked on the flats. They are saying that I haven't got background for such a responsible position. The most important position in their community."*

He let out a strong puff of smoke and studied its spiral progress into the ceiling. *"Logically, my dear, those people are right. The manager of an industry which is the economic mainstay of a community must please not only the owners of that industry but every member of that community"*. He watched the smoke disintegrate into columns, almost fill the room and fade to give place to another puff. .

"*So far*", he said with emotion, *"I have not pleased them*".

He turned abruptly around and looked at his wife *"Lucille"*, he said, *"Don't you really think it's worth it?"*

She shook her head firmly, *"No, Tommy. It isn't. How can it be? These people don't like you. You can never please them. They are holding secret meetings all over the island planning ways and means of getting rid of you. While you are racking your brains and ruining your health trying to please them, they are prejudiced against you. They say you are haughty, you are a tyrant. Don't you see you are fighting a losing game".*

Her husband said. *"Perhaps, my dear..Perhaps."* And she continued *"I was at the market the Saturday after you dismissed an engineer. A cruel looking Buffiandah man came right over to me and said 'You husban' tink he ah Gawd, nah'. Ley he go on. Gie jackass lang rope he sah hang heself. But tell he dis fo me. Even Gawd self nah too much fo awee handle'. I ignored him but left the market afraid and worried. Tommy, these people hate you. Can't you ask for a transfer to one of the mills in Georgetown? You told me that Mr. Roberts said he could always arrange that for you. Pam and David will soon reach High School age. I don't want to nag, Tommy. But it is because I love you that I worry so much".*

Greene frowned as he got up, *"You should have told me about that half-breed"*. His wife said impassively *"What good would that have done?"*

He started pacing the floor. He could not bear to think of his wife and children being subject to insults and unhappiness because of him. Because of his obsession to remain at 'Yawak'. He was tortured with the desire of improving what he had helped build up, of making the people realise that their welfare was his chief concern. But would they ever? Was his family not worth a million times more than a lot of ingrates. What does a man get by being a martyr? — Touching words spoken at his funeral or a shot in his back if he is not careful.

He stopped by his wife and tilted her chin, *"Don't worry Lu-Lu"*, he said, *"It won't help, and I need your help* ". He sat heavily beside her and pressed her head gently against his shoulder. As he stroked her hair, its coolness settled his thoughts.

"I never told you this before, Lucille", he said, *"Because...maybe because I was ashamed"*. He lit another cigarette. "*Shortly after my fifteenth birthday, my mother died. She was a widow drawing a small pension from my father's employers. With that and the little extra she earned by sewing odds and ends for kind friends she paid the rent for the room where we lived, fed us and sent me to High School. I had passed my Junior Cambridge and was reading for the School Certificate. Encouraged by her, and probably a little spoilt, I had every hope of a brilliant future. With her death those hopes were shattered. I had to leave school and for two years I knocked about Georgetown with no regular employment loafing on friends. At school I was captain of both the junior football and cricket elevens. The boys lauded me. Those same boys were now looking at me with scorn. They were right. I was nothing more than a tramp. I was fast losing my self respect. My clothes were torn and dirty. Shame made me determine to leave Georgetown".*

Lucille squeezed her husband's arm, *"If it hurts, darling, you needn't tell me"*, she said softly.

"It did once, my dear. It doesn't now", he said. She nestled closer to him, *"Please go on then*", she urged. Greene sighed heavily, *"I read an ad in the papers about men being wanted to work at a wood grant in the Essequibo River. When I applied, the gentleman who interviewed us looked me over carefully and asked 'How old are you?' I lied and told him twenty-one. He said 'work on a wood grant is damned hard work. Don't you think you would be happier behind a counter in Water Street?' I said 'No, sir, I like hard work'. When he signed me on he said 'I have my doubts, but you look strong enough'. He was right in a way. I weighed one hundred and ninety pounds".*

His wife felt for his biceps "*You, are stronger now I think*", she teased. "*Outdoor life keeps you fit*", Greene said, shaking his head.

"Well, that's how I came to 'Yawak'. This island then was dark and bewildering. The mill was a little troolie shack. The men lived in two ramshackle troolie ranges with caked mud walls and floors.

Mosquitoes were our best friends and snakes were frequent visitors. The men didn't seem to mind. They were hard and tough as the crabwood and greenheart logs which gave them their grub. At first I was unhappy and inclined to return to Georgetown. But when I remembered the scornful faces of my school mates I preferred it here. Gradually I became tough myself, but in the nights as I lay in my hammock and thought of what I may have been, I was disheartened. The manager was an unprogressive old Barbadian who seemed happy in his indolence. The foreman was a slave trader. We worked from six to six, seven days a week. The men were too tired to bathe at nights. They slept in their muddy overalls. They laughed at me when I washed up before retiring. It was a miserable existence. As I had no expenses besides paying for my rations and there was nothing else to spend on except illicit alcohol, and I seemed not to be able to like the taste of it, I saved some money. I intended leaving when I had enough to give me a start somewhere else. Then the manager died".

His wife asked *"Was the foreman made manager?" "No"*, he said, "*Oh no, Mr. Roberts was sent from the town office. He was a young man and I wondered when I saw him whether he would stick it. A finer more straightforward looking man I never saw before. Character was imprinted on every line of his face"*. His wife said "*Your hero, Mr. Roberts*", Greene smiled, "*He was my ideal of a gentleman. In one year he made 'Yawak' habitable. The month after he came he broke down the troolie huts and built wooden cottages and ranges. He encouraged the married men to bring their families. He built a cottage for himself and turned his old quarters into a club for the men. He gave us night lessons. He lent me books and when he heard I had my Junior he made me take a Matriculation course from Wolsey Hall. He spent hours in the night coaching me. That man was undaunted and tireless. A year after he came an epidemic of typhoid broke out in the island and the foreman died. He appointed me foreman. It was a pleasure working with him. You could do nothing short of your best".*

Lucille saw her husband's face light up *"'Yawak' progressed. Squatters were encouraged. The people found that the soil was good and soon there were flourishing farms all over the island. Mrs. Roberts came and opened a school for the children. And as the years passed by, happy years, a school and a church were built by the Anglican body, good roads were made, an electric lighting plant*

was installed. A sportsman, himself, Mr. Roberts encouraged the men to form cricket and football teams and made good fields for them. The Roberts' cup is still our trophy, as you know".

He looked through a window at the craft moored alongside the stelling filled with dressed greenheart and crabwood boards, awaiting the tide to sail for Georgetown. "*For fifteen years*", he said, *"I worked alongside a man who brought a desolate island from darkness to dazzling lights. He had a lot of faith in me. Enough to recommend me to fill his place when he retired".*

He turned, looked at his wife and smiled. *"In the midst of all this, a girl came to 'Yawak' to spend a holiday with her father, the headteacher of the Anglican School. I fell in love with her. Her father did not think an ordinary foreman a suitable husband for his daughter. But we loved each other too much to regard his objections. There was no power then big enough to separate us. We were married".*

His deep-set eyes enquired of his wife in a language stronger than words. *"Is there such a power now?"*

Lucille Greene tightened her hold around her husband. *"Tommy"*, she said, *"Oh Tommy. I have been terribly selfish. I love you now much more than I did then. If you leave 'Yawak' I will be separated from you and that would kill me. If you leave 'Yawak' you will leave yourself here. That strength and determination which is yours could never go with you. 'Yawak' is you. It reflects your personality. We won't leave. We can't leave. We belong here. We will make the people realise that you are their friend".*

Greene kissed his wife. *"With God's grace and your love we will my dear"*, he said.

One evening two years later, Lucille Greene sat on the edge of her husband's desk, humming a bar of a popular shantie sung at the mill when business was its best. Her husband's deep baritone voice joined in the refrain:

Brown-skin gall nah wash he bady
Till rain come down
Wai! Wai! Wai!!!
Wai! Wai! Wai!!!
Brown-skin gall nah wash he bady
Till rain cone down.

They laughed together and then she helped him unroll a chart of the Essequibo River and as they went through the company's various wood grants in the vicinity of 'Yawak', she made notes on a pad at his dictation.

When they had finished she said *"Tommy, know what I heard a half Indian saying at the market on Saturday"*, Greene smiled wryly. "*Can't even guess?*" He shook his head. His wife said "*It was an old man. He was standing in a group of others and saying, 'Wah Mistah Greene do fo 'Yawak' only Gawd an awee ole buck man know. Awee wah bin hey since dis islan' full wid snake an' tigah. He an' Mistah Roberts mek dis place ah good place. Mistah Roberts was ah good man but he caan' come close Mistah Greene lil toe self'. I couldn't help looking in their direction. And as I did so I saw each one of them shaking their head reverently, while one muttered "Yes Boy, Gawd nebba bex wid ugly' ".*

She threw herself into her husband's arms *"I can't help being a baby now Tommy"*, she said between tears and laughter. *"This is much more happiness than one woman can stand".*

Leaves from

THE LECTURE GOER'S NOTEBOOK

The man in the Georgetown street was aware during the first half of 1949 of intellectual leaven working in the community.

Perhaps the most distinguished of the visitors in Guiana, lecturing and investigating was Dr. J. A. Venn, President of Queens' Cambridge, one-time Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge University with some seven generations of University dons, lecturers and professors of that name behind him in an unbroken line, who at the Bishops' High School on February 4, 1949, delivered the Inaugural Lecture of the W.I. University Extra-Mural Department in British Guiana. Dr. Venn stressed the importance of Economics against Science in Agriculture before a full mixed audience, and more than one listener was conscious that the lecturer, on this academic subject, with his choice phrasing and wide range of allusive illustration in fiction and history was also projecting a bold and independent personality and unconsciously preparing the way to some degree for acceptance of the Commission's Report on the Sugar Industry. Now that you know the man from his lecture, you would tend to acknowledge the report to be forthright and impartial.

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Professor Harlow came to British Guiana in what will be remembered as the Week of the Professors, the pre-Easter weekend. In the gallery of portraits one is the vivacious face of Lady Huggins seen for four days in Georgetown, who, though not a professor was touring the British Caribbean in order to perform the offices of one and to embark upon a US Lecture tour on '**The Challenge of the Caribbean**'. As they listened to her easy but perhaps too impromptu talks to audiences some were doubtful of her capacity to do justice to the West Indies in her lecture tour of the States.

The main features of Professor Harlow's lecture in the Town Hall, Georgetown, on the British Commonwealth in the

Modern World were his analysis of the conflict engaged between the two dominant world-ways of life in the struggle areas of the world, his insistence that in the regional groupings of power units in the Atlantic, the Pacific and the Indian Oceans what mattered most was that the Asiatic peoples should feel equal with the Europeans and at home, and finally his exhortation to the British Caribbean peoples to make actual the possibility of a moral lead to the world that they possess in the happy and hopeful racial admixture seen in this area.

Harlow who is Beit Professor of the History of the British Empire at the University of Oxford and was travelling on a lecture lour sponsored by the British Council, gave two other addresses, one to teachers on the way in which he would conduct class lessons in British Guiana history — he made some telling observations against emancipation's aftermath of resentment, although he paid no attention to the Dutch administration here in the 18th century nor to the origins of Asiatic immigrants. The members and friends of the B.G. Historical Society heard Professor Harlow speak at the British Council on the use of documents and sources of reference and the principles that guide the historian in his attempt to recapture and encapsulate the life and thought of a past age.

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Philip Sherlock, Vice-Principal of the W.I. University College and Director of Extra-Mural Studies lectured on April 13 in the Town Hall, Georgetown, on the trend of literature in the Caribbean. Sherlock stressed the need for West Indians to take pride in their folklore and the vivid concrete W.I. proverbs originating from West Africa as being the roots of our literature. He told the audience the story of how folk tales became known as Anancy stories and illustrated with readings from V. S. Reid's novel *New Day*, the new wind blowing through the Caribbean.

— Aesop

<u>Civic Research</u>

HOW GEORGETOWN GOT ITS STREETS

by N. E. Cameron

There is much to interest people about "our streets" even to the point of fascination. First, we may recall some difficulties over spelling. Is CUMMINGS STREET to be spelt with one or two m's? The old street plaques carried three different spellings — one spelt with one m, the other with two m's while both were spelt with an s at the end; another with two m's without the s. Actually the person who gave his name to Cummings Street and Cummingsburg was Thomas Cuming.

Then there is PRINCES STREET which some people call Princess Street, and ALBOUYSTOWN which is commonly spelt ALBUOYSTOWN. Then there is the difference between Newmarket as one word and New Garden as two separate words.

To the visitor two additional peculiarities stand out. One is that while "our streets" are very wide, often less than half of the width is utilised for traffic; the rest being wide green parapets solely ornamental. The parapets provide a welcome relief of green, but take the place of much-needed pavements.

The other is the number of canals or trenches which run through the town. These were far more numerous in the past. All of our avenues are filled-up trenches — East Street, Main Street, Carmichael Street, Hadfield Street, etc.

The trenches are one of the features which remind us forcibly that almost all of Georgetown was once estate land, the cultivation being sugar or cotton; the trenches belong to the drainage system of the estate, hence also some of the streets are still called 'Dams'. Brickdam was the middle dam of an estate. Kelly's Dam and Packwood Dam were 'backdams' of estates. Company Path was a common dam between neighbouring estates. The Railway lines were 'Company Paths'.

Some of the streets bear the names of old estates or of their owners or attorneys; e.g., Vlissengen Road after Vlissengen Estate; Bourda Street named after a famous Colonist, Mr. Joseph Bourda. While the division into wards helps us to form

an idea of the growth of the town, yet some streets indicate former boundaries. Thus North Street and East Street were evidently former limits to certain wards, and Middle Street would be the Middle Street of a ward from Lamaha Street to Church Street.

FORSHAW STREET is the only street in the city named after a coloured man. Forshaw was prominent in securing Queenstown from the proprietors of Pln. Bel Air, and the Council thought it fitting to name a street in that ward after him. A little history revealed that he was a very wealthy Solicitor while his wife was a fine mulatto lady, and they entertained in grand style, the Governor being a frequent visitor at his home.

HADFIELD STREET was named after the architect to whom we owe the Public Buildings; and HALEY STREET after the Town Planner to whom we owe much of the present layout of the city including the alley ways for improved drainage.

The naming of the streets of Alberttown is interesting. Why are they named First Street, Second Street, and so on to Sixth Street, and not after persons as in the case of the majority of our roads? The answer is that Alberttown was bought collectively some time after Emancipation, and the owners settled in it as a village and named their streets in that way. A similar system was used in Lodge Village and Albouystown which were bought at about the same time.

A few of our streets are named to commemorate events. The Napoleonic wars caused a great deal of excitement here. Just as the last war was of vital interest to us, as a German victory would have meant a change of nationality, so a French victory in 1815 would have meant that the Colony which had already been previously owned by the Dutch and French would have experienced some more changing of hands. Hence the British victory is commemorated here in the names Waterloo and Wellington Streets.

Suppose you were to ask why was BREDA STREET so named? It was to commemorate the Peace of Breda in 1667. Surinam was at that time owned by the English and as English and the Dutch were at war, there was a lively attack by the English Colonists of Surinam on the Dutch of Essequibo, Berbice and Demerara. The Peace of Breda was made at the

end of this war and, it is good to remember that by this peace of Breda, Surinam passed to the Dutch while the Dutch handed over to the English the city which after became known as New York.

Civic Pride

AT THE LIBRARY

The Reference Department

Someone came into the Reference Room of the Georgetown Public Free Library not very long ago and asked me this question — "*How many books were published, for the first time, in Great Britain during 1946?*" I am sure many of you have no idea of the answer to that. Well, I didn't either; but I thought for a moment, and decided that the best place to start looking for information of that kind would be in the *World Almanac* or in *Whittaker's Almanac*. It took me a few minutes, but I finally got the answer from *Whittaker's*. The number of new titles for 1946 was 9,903. That is one type of question that could be asked a reference worker.

The policy of all libraries is that no one should be allowed to leave without having either received the information for which he came or the knowledge where he may find it..the words "*No*", "*We haven't it*", "*I don't know*", should never be heard. We try to live up to that rule, but of course, there are limitations imposed by the collection of sources at hand, and our Reference Library has still a lot more to grow, but we try to do our best at all times.

The Young People's Section

The other day while looking through a book on sewing, in the Young People's Section of the Library, I came across a scrap of material with some stitching on it. This had been demonstrated in the book and obviously the borrower had been painstakingly practising what was shown. This set us thinking and gave us an idea. The word "*competition*" kept going through our minds. With the result, we soon hope to have a competition. We shall invite all juvenile members to take part. Any piece of work, which they have done themselves and which they learnt through a library book, we shall ask to be presented to us for display at an exhibition at which two prizes will be given to

the best work among the girls and two for the boys. We aim at encouraging them to be interested in what they read. This competition will include any work on sewing, carpentry, doll-making, book-making, toy-making and any such handicraft. Parents will be asked to send a note stating that each item of work was done solely by the borrower, and the boy or girl must be able to say which library book helped them.

The Reading Room

The Reading Room is comfortable and is a suitable place where members of the community can spend a profitable hour or two in healthy intellectual recreation. Its main purpose is to encourage the citizens here, to indulge in more and better reading. It is very important in these days that the public should be correctly informed about current events. To be able to express an opinion or to vote intelligently we must be well-read and well-informed. Our Reading Room is bound to play an important part as the source of information and knowledge to all, don't you think? To all who make use of it, it will enable them to arrive at a decision on various matters affecting their welfare, and to be their own judge as occasion demands.

The Adult Lending Department

Everyday new faces appear in our Library and inquire: "*How can I join the Library?*" In this book-using civilisation of ours the man who does not make use of books, places himself at a grave disadvantage with his fellows. I think Doctor Johnson summed it all up neatly when he wrote: They who do not read can have nothing to think and little to say.

It is our desire to make our readers feel more at home than they can be in any other public institution. Because of this, we used to have chairs and tables in the Adult Lending or Home Reading Department for readers who may be old and feeble or even fit and active, but at the same time appreciative of extra bits of comfort. Unfortunately, these chairs and tables had to be done away with, as quite a few members insisted on misusing them by coming in and taking naps in the Library. However, we look forward to the day when we shall be able

to bring out those chairs and tables again, for we do realise how much more pleasing it is, to be able to sit down and examine the books we are interested in, instead of being compelled to browse standing.

(Selections from a recent series of broadcasts by the Staff of the Georgetown Public Free Library over Station ZFY, 'The Library meets the Community'.)

An Artist Speaks of the —

OLD WINE IN NEW WINESKINS

by E.R. Burrowes

John Apie, a nineteenth century painter has said that "*Art is more godlike than science. Science discovers; art creates*". It is reasonable to subscribe to this statement, because the primary aim of art is to select forms and colours according to the artist's aesthetic taste and the artist expresses himself in such a way as either to awaken pleasing and empathetic emotions or to shock the mind into awareness and indignation.

There are numerous forms of interpretation in Modern Art: Pablo Picasso's Cubism, Dali's Surrealism, Jankel Adler's Dissectionism, Ben Nicholson's Abstractionism, Henry Moore's Monumentalism, Georges Roualt's Distortionism, and a myriad of other "isms" that have shocked their way into twentieth century art. These new subjective statements are not to be dismissed, as they often are, as mere whimsicalities and conceits born of unbalanced minds, or the warped and obscene visions oozing up from the abysmal depths of schizophrenia. The forms of modern art as exemplified in the paintings of Picasso and his contemporaries, in the music of Stravinsky and Dizzy Gilespie, in the prose of James Joyce and Aldous Huxley and in the poetry of G. M. Hopkins and T. S. Eliot are vivid reflections of the century in which we are living and are not only, intensely human documents but also intellectual monuments equal to, if not surpassing many created in the past. All modern art forms are the result of one great impulse, to which we give the comprehensive title, Expressionism. This impulse is a result of and is chiefly discernible in times of great spiritual tension and it has been recurrent from the Renaissance to the present day. For example, Giotto who is classified as the father of Modern Art found his inspiration in the life and teaching of "*Christ's Poor Man*", St. Francis of Assisi. St. Francis taught that God is love and ever present in the manifestations of nature; Giotto expressed this teaching in his work and was therefore the forerunner of naturalism and the high priest of humanism in art.

We often state the fact that we are living in the age of the machine and the atom, but few of us pause to think of the implications involved and fewer try to analyse our emotional reactions to it. The experience of many generations hath shown that the spiritual and the temporal are intimate in correspondence and are linked by esoteric forces which few if any of us fully understand.

When the world moved with the stately dignity of the 17th and 18th centuries, people delighted in the madrigal and the soothing delicacy of the harpsichord. They moved with the languorous grace required by the courtly minuet and the pavane, or with the lightsome abandon of the contre danse. Hogarth painted such biting satires as '**The Rake's Progress**' and '**The Marriage a la Mode**', Rowlandson took a leaf from the pages of Swift and caricatured the people of his time as he saw them, a generation of Little Clowns and Yahoos with small-swords sticking out behind like stiff tails from their wide skirted coats. Francis Boucher and Fragonard delighted the debauched French nobility with the opulent forms of nude courtesans masquerading as Graces and Goddesses. It took three revolutions, two political and one industrial, to purge the world of the honey-sweet poison induced by this Circean draught.

But before the convalescence of the world had been safely passed through, the 19th century came with its smug inanities, and behind a curtain of shortsighted complacency the stage was set for the enactment of the tragedy of the 20th century. With the closing of the first act in 1918, people went wildly in search of an interlude light enough to relieve the tension of a world but recently at war. They gave in Jazz and swing a musical if noisy sigh of relief. But creators like Picasso, Matisse, Roualt and Paul Klee in painting, like Sibelius, Stravinsky and, Ravel in music, and like Joyce, Huxley and Eliot in writing, expressed their indignation by introducing apparently new art forms which in reality are not nearly so new as most people believe.

It is however the truth to say, that the intellectual blade sharpened on the whetstone of human suffering is cutting deeply into the spiritual excrescences in, an endeavour to expose the tender truths beneath — truths that will show

the silver cord in music which stretches from Beethoven's symphonies to Stravinsky's music for the Ballet and on to the frenzied spasms of Dizzie Gilespie's Be-Bop; and in painting passing from Rembrandt's god-like use of light and shade to Gauguin's primitivism on to Graham Sutherland and Jankel Adler. These are just a few of the many turning points in the intellectual progress of Art. Turning points, but not innovations. The origin of Picasso's Cubism is found in the art of ancient Egypt, in the mosaic patterns of the early Arabian and Moorish Moslems and in the stiff formalism of Byzantine art. And Signorelli, Paolo Ucello, Memlinc, Peter Breughel, El Greco, Velasquez, Goya are all brewers of the various vintages of art which we now designate as Modern. So modern art can be referred to as "*Old Wine in New Wineskins*".

What is the connection between all this and art in British Guiana? I should like to preface my answer by referring to a quotation from a broadcast of mine when I said that "*The art of British Guiana is the art of the Caribs whose carven symbols in situ on basalt, known as Timehri, truly represent the primitive source without which no country can claim an art of its own*". Apart from these, we who practise art, being merely the offspring of aliens from other parts of the earth, have "*gone a whoring after the strange gods*" of the three European countries that have in turn guided the destinies of this colony. The result of our efforts has been the giving birth to an illegitimate hybrid which has neither the virility nor the aesthetic virtue of its mixed parentage. A gloomy picture, but not altogether without hope.

There is an important factor which must be considered and which could assist in keeping modern art alive in British Guiana; the people who visit Exhibitions and who purchase the works of art on show. These people are to a great extent responsible for the type of art work produced.

Most of these patrons who claim to be art lovers are merely sentimentalists at large, who are concerned only with being able to recognise a landscape because of its topographical exactitude, or a portrait because of its recognisable features. This is a devotion, not to art, but artifice, not to interpretation but imitation. They would be satisfied to see year after somnolent year the same inane essays in paint; nice little red-roofed or troolie-thatched country cottages with orderly

companies of coconut trees all standing at attention on their best Sunday school behaviour.

There have been some attempts made in the past by Guianese artists, to identify their work with the modern trends prevalent in Europe. This writer remembers R. G. Sharples' illustration of a stanza from the *Rubaiyat*, '**Here with a loaf of bread beneath the bough'**, Wilson Minshal's '**A man and a dog watching a tree grow'**, the writer's **'Rocking in rhythm**', **'Diggo Do**' and '**Jetsam**', Reggie Phang's '**Unmarried Mother**' and Basil Hinds' '**Jive**'. But the Working People's Art Class first exhibition in April of this year, was an outstanding example of the aesthetic progress being made in British Guiana.

The work at that April exhibition was of an unspoiled freshness, in which modern primitivism and even intellectual abstraction were pleasingly demonstrated, and therein lies the hope of a future development of a typically Guianese art. I believe men like Wharton, Waddy, Bowman, Webb, Craig and Samuels, all members of the Working People's Art Class will be remembered as those who greatly assisted in laying the foundation of a true Guianese Art, our own wineskin.

In Cinema Fashion

A TRAILER FROM TOYNBEE

by R. M. Pattison-Muir

Over a year ago I was asked to give some lectures based on Professor Toynbee's book *The Study of History*. Only two of the six volumes were to be found in this country, and they were privately owned. The volumes were out of print, and could not be bought second-hand. A lucky owner would sell his bed and last stick of furniture before parting with them. Barbados saved the situation, and the librarian of Codrington College generously loaned me the other volumes. At odd intervals I read pages, find them intoxicating, decide that everyday somehow time must be found to enjoy them, but alas, long intervals elapse during which the main design fades from the mind.

Professor Toynbee's approach to history gripped me. He is not concerned with separate nations, and their isolated histories, but finds unities in wider societies, which are marked by distinctive cultures. These civilisations composed of groups of peoples with spiritual centres supplying the life that overcomes challenges, rising from both physical and human environments, are the subject of the historian's study. He classifies them. He marks their growth from the great number of primitive societies. Twenty-one have emerged from that stage, and of these eighteen have perished. He analyses the causes of their growth, traces the course of their breakdowns and disintegrations.

Theories that have dominated modern thought are put into the dustbin; all racial ideas for example based on blood are shown to be without foundation. Predestinarian theories of the breakdowns of civilisation are dismissed, such as that they are the incidental consequences of a running down of the clockwork of the physical universe. Science demolishes this. Sir James Jeans writes, "*Taking a very gloomy view of the future of the human race, let us suppose that it can only expect to survive for two thousand million years longer, a period about equal to the past age of the Earth. Then, regarded as a being destined to live for three score years and ten, Humanity, although it has been born in a*

house only seventy years old, is itself only three days old... Utterly inexperienced beings, we are standing at the first flush of the dawn of civilisation...In time the glory of the morning must fade into the light of common day, and this, in some far distant age, will give place to evening twilight, presaging the final eternal night. But we children of the dawn need but give little thought to the far-off sunset". So, according to the scientist, we are not facing Armageddon, but enduring the teething troubles of childhood.

Another belief rejected is that civilisations succeed one another by a law of their nature which is the common law of the cosmos, in a perpetually recurrent cycle of alternating birth and death. This is the Hindu idea. "*For Hindus the World is endless repetitions, not a progress towards an end. Creation has rarely the sense which it bears for Europeans. An infinite number of times the Universe has collapsed in flaming or watering ruins, aeons of quiescence follow the collapse and then the Deity (he has done it an infinite number of times) emits again from himself worlds and souls of the same kind".* (Sir Charles Eliot's *Hinduism & Buddhism*). Toynbee contends that the shuttle which shoots backwards and forwards across the loom of Time in a perpetual to and fro is all the time bringing into existence a tapestry in which there is manifestly a progress towards an end, and not just an endless repetition in the likeness of the shuttle's own action.

Gibbon attributed the decline and fall of the Roman Empire to the triumph of barbarism and religion. He painted a magnificent picture of the Empire. "*In the second century of the Christian era, the Empire of Rome comprehended the fairest part of the earth and the most civilised portions of mankind. The frontiers of that extensive monarchy were guarded by ancient renown and disciplined valour. The gentle, but powerful, influence of laws and manners had gradually cemented the union of the provinces"*...Its decline and fall is *"a revolution which will ever be remembered, and is still felt by the nations of the Earth"*. The Christians within corrupted, and the barbarians,without destroyed it.

Gibbons was the victim of an illusion. Truth is told by St. Gregory the Great of the Sixth Century "*Today*", he once declared to his flock "*there is on every side death, on every side grief, on every side desolation; on every side we are smitten, on every*

side our cup is being filled with draughts of bitterness...(On the other hand) those saints at whose tomb we are now standing lived in a world that was flourishing, yet they trampled upon its material prosperity with their spiritual contempt. In that world life was long, well-being was continuous, there was material wealth, there was a high birth-rate, and there was the tranquillity of lasting peace; and yet, when that world was still so flourishing in itself, it had already withered in the heart of those saints." The hearts of the world of the Antonines had withered under all its brilliant surface. That was the reason of its fall, and the new civilisation of the West which was to replace it was founded by St. Benedict and St. Gregory.

The growth of a civilisation is not shown by its expanse over other territories. Militarism and imperialism may indicate a dying civilisation. Mastery of technique is not a sign. The inventive power of the Amerindian who made the first dug-out canoe and shaped the first bow and arrow and conceived the idea of the first matapee is as great as that of the engineer who takes the last steps in the long development from the corial to the liner, from the arrow to the tommy-gun. In the power of self-determination Toynbee finds a criterion of a people's civilisation. Individuals see the vision and succeed in convincing some of their contemporaries of its truth. Their elan inspires others who catch its spirit. The majority are disciplined into it by methods of imitation, and this spirit of the people proves itself against challenges. Challenge and response is a clue to growth, and the right response rises out of spiritual sources.

The failure of the vision in the leaders, mechanism of life, intractability of institutions, resting on one's oars, idolising the past, intoxication of victory mark the downward path. Professor Toynbee is not a dogmatist. He proceeds strictly by the scientific method, collecting his facts, deducing his theory from them and testing it again by the facts. Rich illustration from history, literature and science illuminate his remarks.

...the music was speaking...

TROUBLE MUSIC

by Celeste Dolphin

When the drum beats came pulsing through the darkling Sunday afternoon, it was Mrs. Darwin who first heard them. She had been rather silent in the car for the last hour or so while her husband discussed with Elliott Harvest Browne and Skerrett the future of the East Coast countryside through which they had been driving.

Rain after midday had given the green of the grass a special live freshness and the drops of water that had defied the sun bent the blades and gave them a sparkle like new grass. This was particularly noticeable outside Beterverwagting.

Mrs. Darwin had never been out to this part of the tropics before, so she found very pleasing the quaint narrow red road with two ribbons of concrete running parallel to the green savannah on one side and what she decided was a picturesque Dutch sea wall on the other. Every now and then as the car drove very slowly along she would notice a huge tree, its giant arms clustered thick with leaves spreading out into picnic shade. And in little streams that drained the land — she had heard Skerrett refer to them as trenches — there were ducks sailing quietly in twos and threes. Involuntarily she smiled at a huge black sow shepherding thirteen piglings in single file — she was the kind of person who would count them and would notice even from the car their pink bristliness of recent birth.

And how the cows stolidly kept their backs turned, or would condescend merely to incline their heads in the direction of the car. Once a cow mooed after her calf, a slow sustained call.

Mrs. Darwin quickened. Why, it was a cello note, and curious at her own sympathetic reaction, she waited for the answer. But the car had passed on.

Settling back in the comfortable' upholstery of the Daimler — evidently Mr. Elliott Browne did himself rather well — she refused to allow the wearying hum of the men's conversation

to impinge on her consciousness. So she looked up at the clouds through the open top of the car.

Was that a drum beat?

There it was again. Now she could hear the pattern of the regular rhythm repeating itself. Four notes grouped together, following after a short pause, upon two notes, one short and sharp, and one defiant. And to her as she listened the four notes held the slumbering sinuousness of Africa. They seemed sleek and powerful, as if somehow the word African were coupled with the words instinctive emotional passion, as if a people were pouring their escape into their music, into music, providing a basic sound pattern to move the world's emotions.

Suddenly she was a child again, seeing African tribal chieftains entertain visiting royalty, both in their impressive ceremonial dress. From their retinue come the drum beats. And in the little girl, standing behind her uncle in the visiting party, begins a chain of thoughts which later trouble her into the study of anthropology.

But Mr. Elliott Harvest Browne was saying something to her. As usual his voice was aggressive. But then she knew quite a few successful business men who spoke like that. Also she remembered that he had had to act host at three of his chain-hotels along the Coast.

"Quiet, Mrs. Darwin? Dr. Darwin has been telling us that he has the greatest respect for your taste. Do you mind my asking you if the Enmore '28 we had at Belfield yesterday was not streets ahead of the L.B.I. '327?"

As she was about to reply, Skerrett broke in half-laughingly: *"There you go again Mr. Browne. Isn't that why tourists remember British Guiana mainly for its waterfall and its rum?"*

Dr. Darwin smiled in his mild mannered way: *"And both those liquid things intoxicate one, don't they, Mr. Browne?"*

Mr. Elliott Harvest Browne smoothed the back of his hair, flashing the two heavy diamond rings on his left hand.

"Yes; you know doctor, frankly speaking, Kaieteur leaves me a little cold. After all it's only a mass of water that keeps on falling over a rock, and yet people come from all over the world, and go into raptures, and stand silent and later say that they had been hypnotised before that water. I don't mind telling you that some of

them even want to write poetry about it; you know Doctor, I have seen Kaieteur scores of times — it's part of my work in public relations to take up important people like you or General Morgan or Lord Trefgarne — but frankly, that L.B.I. '32-33 — I'd put in in the scale against all those tons of water" — he paused here for effect, and flashingly smoothed his hair again — *"and I'd forget the water"*. Then he looked around for approval,

Mrs. Darwin thought that at this point Skerrett looked more than a little uncomfortable. But obviously he had to remember that he was merely the manager of the Hotel Kasbah and so could not openly contradict the owner of the Elliot Harvest Browne chain of British Guiana Hotels.

Mildly Dr. Darwin insisted, pulling the lapels of his coat together: *"But surely you don't mean us to take you seriously Mr. Browne? In the course of my work I have seen falls in Africa, America and Asia and I think Kaieteur is the most superb sight I have seen."*

"I give it up, Doctor. I can't understand what you learned people see in these things. Of course I am a practical man, and as my favourite saying goes — it takes all sorts to make a world."

While she was listening to them with a polite smile, Mrs. Darwin felt the need to hold on in her mind to the drum beats.

How far back they carried her, those drum beats. Lagos, as a child, and the way the sun beating down upon the earth split the hard clay into little baked earth islands.

The light and the sun and the heat had seemed all exaggerated, almost vulgarly so, to one who had come from a temperate country, and even the child felt that, dressed in her careful protection against the climate — white sun helmet with navy gauze veil to preserve the sight. Objects in the distance were hazy and unreal in the shimmering hard white heat coming up from the ground. And although awed by the magnificence and pomp of royalty entertaining royalty, what stood out most in the memory after all these years was the monotonous compelling insistence of African drums beating out rhythm.

As she grew up, she used to wake at nights and hear those drums beating in her mind. And yet not frighteningly so. When once she had asked her mother about it, she had patted her head and said it was all intermingled with love of music, and the strange power of music, and that maybe if one went

down to the heart of things one might find that a continent like Africa would yield possessions other than material ones that the rest of the world might be glad to share.

It was that remark that had set the young girl off on a vague search after what the various races had to contribute to the world's happiness, and it was not until she became secretary to George Darwin, the anthropologist, that the mist cleared in her mind. She knew then that she had found her life's work. Reminiscing, she ran over her absorption in her work, then later her marriage to George Darwin, and she stopped for a moment at a remark he had made then, that they were lucky to have at their disposal, not so much her formal training in music, as her interest in primitive dances and the innate sympathy with which she could recreate the story behind the dance from the very rhythm. More than a little self-consciously, she blushed at her own vanity, and brought her mind back again to the drum beats she had just heard.

The car slowed down almost to a standstill to make room for a long sleepy dray cart to pass. But what were they saying now?

Skerrett was trying to change the conversation to prevent Elliott Browne from making an exhibition of himself. "*In the course of your work, Dr. Darwin, you must have been to all parts of the world*", he said — to Mrs. Darwin, it seemed a little wistfully — "*I have never been beyond the Beacon, but I have always envied people who have been away and had the broadening effect of travel. Of course I know, that although undeveloped, we have places of interest here and people come and enjoy them. I find ...*" Mr. Elliott Harvest Browne was not to be undone.

"*Oh, we have beautiful places, all right. Take Imbaimadai, for instance. Frankly, that's a beauty spot. I remember when General Douglas was there — was it the General Skerrett? You know, Doctor, I have had to be the guide to so many important personages who come to my country that sometimes I get quite confused with all these stories of what happened to me and to them. No. I think it was Air Marshal somebody or other. Surely Skerrett, you should remember these names you know. Anyway this Air Marshal was interested in geological formations, and he said that for sheer beauty of terrain, Imbaimadai was unequalled except perhaps for some of the country around Ben Nevis.*

But he talked your line of business, Doctor. He was intrigued with the Aboriginal Indians at Imbaimadai and things like their intonation — you know what I mean — the Makushis you know. Frankly I told him that my considered opinion was that the sooner we got rid of those Indians the better for all of us. They are a cunning lot — you'd be surprised to hear what those Makushis did me at Ireng — and they're a hindrance to the advance and development of civilization. So far as I can see, they will never do anything for British Guiana. Don't you agree with me, Doctor?"

Dr. Darwin blushed. His wife knew from the introductory cough how embarrassed he was to have to contradict his host.

"Well, ahm, it just depends of course, it just depends on the point of view. It's difficult to predict what benefit any one race will give to mankind. These Amerindians to whom you refer — merely from the Christian point of view, who are we to judge whether or not a particular race should be allowed to survive or become extinct. Why, that was Hitler's heresy. And as for their cunning, that is only their response to the challenge of their environment. Every community does the same and in our civilized world, we look upon the foresight of the commercial man as a factor of success. Foresight and cunning are almost the same".

Dr. Darwin paused. *"Forgive me, Mr. Browne. I have been allowing my emotion to run away with me. Really, what I was thinking was, that in British Guiana, an anthropologist with a flair for history finds here a most interesting situation because here are your six people living together without any great friction among the communities. British Guiana is to be congratulated on how well she is proceeding with a wonderful experiment.*

This is a digression, perhaps. You know, I have worked along with one of your people, Dr. Ralph Bunche, and the qualities that impressed me most about him were the keen mind and his unflinching intellectual honesty. Of his learning I need not speak, but I know that he has held for years an important position in the working Committee of the non-self-government territories under the United Nations. I thought to myself and remarked to my wife, that as a representative of the African peoples, he brings to his work an equipment that fifty years back we would have refused to admit could be found in African peoples. It's things like that make it difficult for us to judge a people".

Elliott Browne laughed contemptuously. *"The Africans? Oh, Doctor, it's my turn to say that you are not serious. I'm so proud that I have pure European blood in me and that I have nothing in common with the work-shy, love of fun and entertainment that the Africans have.*

All my life, I've worked hard. I'm not ashamed to admit it Doctor. Hard. I've known what it is to go without food for days, tramping along the Ireng, working diamonds. And it's those sons of guns, the Aboriginal Indians, who nearly did for me. That's why I have a grudge against them. But I won through. I suppose it was the Scottish blood in me, and now forgive me for what may seem like boasting to ourselves, now I'm the richest man in British Guiana. I couldn't have done that if I had had any African or Amerindian blood in me".

Mrs. Darwin found that she was suddenly interested in Elliott Harvest Browne's past history. Why was it that her instinct, so sure in many of these instances, was telling her that this man, successful and good looking in a large, florid way, was uneasy about his antecedents and was wanting to convince himself. But surely only yesterday, there was something Mr. Skerrett had let slip. Yes. I think he did mention that Elliott Browne had gone to great expense to change his name from Ezechiel Brown to Elliott Harvest Browne — some vague story about deed poll and changing a baptismal certificate, something to do with colour or nationality.

However it was up to her to say something, for the first time since they left Belfield, and to restore the conversation to a quiet tone.

"Mr. Browne, pardon my breaking in, but what is that faint throbbing sound I'm hearing? Are they African drums? Is there a ceremony in progress somewhere? Because if there is, I'd like very much to see it, if it's possible and if you gentlemen don't mind".

Darkness had thickened and lights had already been switched on in the big closed car, but she could see that now they were driving slowly through the beginnings of a residential area.

The men were nearly all conscious of the change in atmosphere that her voice brought about. Her husband smiled at her and Skerrett volunteered to reply.

"There may be, Mrs. Darwin. We're in Kitty now, and this is a kind of suburb to Georgetown proper. But now and then we have an African ceremony. Mr. Browne, shall I tell the chauffeur to follow the drum beats and take us to the place?"

Elliott Browne looked at his watch. *"Yes, Skerrett, we'd have some time still. Let Greaves take us to where the drums are beating so that we can show Mrs. Darwin where American Jazz comes from".*

He paused to offer cigars all around, but no one accepted and he began to light his own, speaking between the preliminary puffs.

"It's all right, Doctor, for you to talk of the experiment in living together that we are carrying out in British Guiana. But take these dances. What's the point anyway? A senseless out-of-date back-to-Africa pretence they keep up. I have never been to one of these things you know Doctor, although Brigadier Handley had thought he'd like to have seen one. I dissuaded him. Only a lot of negro spirituals — I suppose that must come in — and the inevitable intoxication of these African dances. Hear those drums!"

There was hardly need to say that now. They were slowly getting nearer to the centre of the drum beats and the air was pulsing with the dull low pitch of the notes coming steadily through the dark. What Mrs. Darwin had first heard as faint sounds had strengthened and become a clear regular rhythm. With a start, she realised it was very near indeed to the Lagos rhythm that had troubled her as a child. It was not quite the same, she decided, one of the notes was too defiant, it spoke too loudly. But apart from that, the grouping of sound was the same.

Did George know the rhythm? She turned to him and found Elliott Browne regarding her politely. Her glance told her that he was not sympathetic, but that if she really wanted to stop, they would do so. She took refuge in words.

"George, these drums are very near to the Lagos rhythm I told you about. You know, Mr. Browne, when I was a child, I was once in Africa at a big ceremony when all the tribal chieftains for miles around came to acknowledge a visit from royalty. And although only a child then, I've always remembered the drum beats I heard there. And it seems the same somehow".

Elliott Harvest Browne was the perfect host. In a few minutes Mrs. Darwin found that they were all out of the car

and walking along one of the narrow Kitty lanes to a small but brilliantly lit cottage where the drums were beating.

As she walked near her husband, Mrs. Darwin looked about her and let her critical observation and quick imagination have free rein.

The drums dominated the scene. They had the air tense and thick with sound. Little groups of men, women, boys and girls stood outside the house on the burnt-earth road looking in or moved aimlessly about. The music had absorbed them and they paid no particular attention to Elliott Browne's party.

Mrs. Darwin gradually became conscious of a curious expectancy. She was not so much standing in a crowd as in an audience of people waiting to take part in some drama. Slowly the feeling took her that something had to happen.

The group had been silent, but now Skerrett began to talk in an undertone to the two of them, while Elliott Browne stood a little apart from the others looking on intently.

"I suppose, Dr. Darwin, you'd know that it is said that on occasions like these, the rhythm of a particular dance may search out the blood of the tribe to which a descendant belongs. I just heard some one nearby whispering that this was the Ibu rhythm, one of the most powerful and compelling of them all, and that a person who has only a slight portion of the blood, may find that the rhythm will pull him, even against his will, to dance in that circle there. We've had some unusual cases in the past of persons coming to laugh at these dances and then the music catches them and takes them into the dance".

From where they were, they could not see the drummers but suddenly the drums changed one of the notes, and with a slight shock of surprise Mrs. Darwin realised that now it was the same as the Lagos rhythm. The defiant note had been subdued and what she was hearing now was the same grouping of notes with exactly the same dynamic value as the rhythm she had heard years ago as a child.

She was so intent on her reaction to what was a discovery for her alone that it took a few seconds before she realised her husband was touching her arm to attract her attention.

Wonderingly, she turned where he indicated. He was pointing to Elliott Harvest Browne who was acting strangely as though he were slightly intoxicated. His eyes were half shut

as though under some inner compulsion and his throat was working convulsively. His feet were moving him steadily, by inches, towards where the drum beats came from, so slowly that he seemed to be battling with himself and still at the same time, half unaware.

Curiously the rhythm tightened and the drums seemed to shift the intensity of the beats as a group one note up the scale. It was as if the music began to reach for one's throat.

Mrs. Darwin was conscious of just missing the experience of an overflow from her unconscious. The music seemed to be speaking. She could not answer. The words for the answer were not there within her. It was as if the music had a life of its own, independent of the drums and the drummer, or as if a nation of people were speaking, or a tribal consciousness were awake, or even a racial memory was being stirred.

Infinite sadness came upon her, as the sense of disappointment grew more acute. In spite of all her training in music she could never find the answer. Those doors could never open for her. She didn't have the key.

It wasn't her race, nor her memory being called, but she could hear a call being made. And in a strange way, the call was good; in so far as the categories of good and evil could ever be imposed on music and beauty, it was a good thing, because it brought harmony and peace within the hearer. It spoke deep.

And Elliott Harvest Browne was out in the hard earth circle before the cottage, and he was stamping the earth with others, in a curious dance that they all seemed to know.

CHILDREN'S DORCAS CLUB

OPENING OF THE CLUBHOUSE. On Wednesday, December 8, at 5.15 p.m., His Excellency the Governor, Patron of the Club, graciously came to attend the Service of Dedication and to declare the formal opening of the building. When he remarked, on arrival, that he was glad to see us all "*looking so gay*", I could not but reply that if we looked gay it was because we were very happy. For it was indeed a very happy and auspicious occasion. Fifteen years ago we had dreamt of "*the need of a piece of land as a playground and a possible building spot*." That afternoon saw the fulfilment of that dream.

Late in 1941, the Vicar and Vestry of St. Philip's Anglican Church granted us the use of what is actually an abandoned cemetery. Our playground has resulted and now the much-desired clubhouse.

Two simple ceremonies preceded the opening proper. One took place in the forenoon of September 9. The previous afternoon the Contractor had informed me that the men were expecting the cornerstone to be "*christened*"! The following morning he sent asking that I should be present. The Contractor, the workmen, and the caretaker were the only others there. Into a leaden casket were placed a copy of the 1947 report, a copy of the aims and objects of the Club, a programme of the last Annual Meeting, a copy of the 1948 Joy Fair magazine-programme, a copy of the New Testament (the chapter relating to "*The Greatest Thing in the World*" being initialled by me at the request of the Contractor), and some coins. This casket having been sealed, it was placed in the pillar and I was given a trowel with which to place the cement over it. When it was really and truly covered, the Contractor recited some prayers, at the conclusion of which I expressed the hope that the building would always stand as a symbol, as the children pledged themselves, "*for truth, and righteousness, and Thee*".

When my Committee learnt of the foregoing ceremony, they asked that a service should be arranged at which they could

be present. This took place on Sunday afternoon, October 3, at 5.15 p.m., by which time the rafters had gone up. It was a very simple but inspiring ceremony lasting hardly more than twenty minutes. It was conducted by the Rev. N. Birnie and Rev. H. Worlledge, the Rev. D. C. J. Bobb, acting Minister of Trinity Church pronouncing the benediction. It took place in the open air.

(from the President's Report)

Summary of

BASIC COLONIAL POLICY IN THE MODERN WORLD

by St. George Cooper

In essence, the colonial problem is a human problem, and policy is the mere machinery in the relation between the governing and the governed, for whatever the aims of the Colonizing power, the problems still remain. It is a problem of coloured peoples everywhere craving to exercise their abilities and to occupy the posts of power and responsibility in their own land, and the emergence of a highly educated middle-class of colonial peoples brings to the forefront the question of a re-orientation of the aims of the Colonizing powers.

Colonies need plenty of planning of the highest order for rapid development towards self-government, for it is this promise which alone gives moral sanction to the colonial system. The aims of many of the Colonial powers are similar, with the possible exceptions of France and Russia and in this essay an attempt is made, of necessity inadequate, to give a bird's eye view of the general policies of some of the colonizing powers, — British aims are omitted because so well known — but there is not much of an attempt to describe or compare them, though this lays the article open to the criticism of imbalance.

Of the six great colonising Powers, Great Britain, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, the United States and the USSR, the latter two, reject the colonial idea, and Russia, in particular, speaks not of colonies but of autonomous regions and national areas. In general, one finds among these Colonial powers two broad conceptions of policy — those who declare their aim of assimilating their colonies, making them provinces of the metropolitan country, and those with the alternative policy of development towards self-government on the basis of their own cultural tradition.

THE FRENCH POLICY

No one could have predicted in the 18th century that France would have become an exponent of assimilation, for at that time, she had an extreme disregard for native institutions. But the revolutionary creed provided the foundation for the French Colonial system and in 1895 the French Ministry of the Colonies was established. Thus, her Colonial policy today reflects at once her devotion to the Revolutionary doctrine of the rights of man, with the emphasis on equality and fraternity rather than on liberty.

Assimilation means civil equality. This conception of her colonial problem implies that France's psychological approach is different from the British. Mumford and Browne sum up the situation in the very title of their inspired little book *Africans learn to be French*. Eboue evolved a new policy based on the native elite in which the idea was to make an African and not a French elite out of Africa. The French were able to pursue a policy of assimilation because France knows no colour bar either in the colonies or at home, although professional students of International Affairs have recently questioned the truth of this statement. But it remains true that the French treat the possession of French culture, rather than the race of the individual, as the criterion of status. By contrast, it is interesting to quote Lord Harlech, who once wrote "*The Englishman has naturally an instinctive dislike of assimilation. We like to keep our life distinct from that of other races whether European or not. The more another people acquire our culture, our outlook and our social habits, very often the wider becomes the gulf between us*".

Absorption of French culture has made Frenchmen and French citizens out of her colonial peoples. Thus her colonies are now departments of overseas France. Direct representation of her colonies in the Paris Parliament has forged a close link between the political institutions of France and her overseas territories. The system however would appear to have more of a psychological benefit — a get-together — rather than a political one. It must be noted however that the context of assimilation changed when masses of new subjects wanted to be assimilated. It would have meant large numbers of

overseas representatives and the projection of local politics in the French Parliament. The Assembly was the compromise.

The Minister for the Colonies in France is surrounded by an elaborate organisation aimed at enabling him to take decisions in minor and more detailed things than the British Secretary of State is expected to do. The former has associated with him an Inspectorate organisation of experienced officials who visit the Colonies and report on their findings to the Minister and gives advice. They visit every two or three years and cannot hold an administrative position in a colony even if there is an urgent need for staff. They must be completely detached. For more specific advice on Colonial matters, there is the *Conseil Superieure de la France d'Outre Mer*, which in turn has a Council on economic affairs and another on Legislation. The French were early in building up specialized Advisory Bodies to deal with aspects of Colonial policy, but policy-making for the French Empire is centred in Paris, where legislation is made by Presidential decree. In the British system, the emphasis is on the administrative autonomy of the system in the colony. Thus the French and the British operate from different points of view. The French aim at a uniform system of administration and their colonies cannot cut across the system. They have gone far in formalising the relationships between their Colonies and the Mother Country, but there is greater autonomy in the British Colonies.

In the economic sphere, France has latterly devoted her main energies to Africa and has spent great sums of money there on public works. Recently they have begun to apply metropolitan labour laws to Africa and have done much good work in the field of curative and preventive medicine. They have also begun to foster co-operative and credit societies, starting in North Africa.

It is in the educational field that the French take great pride. Missions have played a comparatively small part in their educational system, quite unlike the British, and then only under strict official control. The establishment of the Lycée on traditional French lines in nearly all her colonial territories, has given France competent colonial civil servants, soldiers and professional men, her repudiation of the social colour bar makes a strong appeal to her colonial peoples; her citizens of

colour in her Old Colonies have risen to high office. There are not many citizens yet in "*Afrique noire*", and these find that fewer positions of responsibility are available for them than there are for their fellow Africans in the neighbouring British colonies. Realizing that there is no static condition in the colonial problem, there is now close collaboration with some of the Colonial powers, particularly the British, Dutch and Belgian in the study of colonial problems.

BELGIAN AND DUTCH POLICIES

The liberal and experienced Dutch, have been a first class colonising power for some 350 years. The Belgians on the other hand, have been a colonising power for barely sixty years.

The Dutch Colonial Empire lies mostly in a densely populated part of Asia whose civilized peoples enjoy an ancient and refined culture. Belgium's colonial empire ,on the other hand, lies in a swampy and heavily forested part of Africa and is peopled by primitive tribes. Both powers reject all idea of centralisation or uniformity in their colonial empires. Both, as subscribers to the Rights of Man reject the colour bar. Belgium's colonial policy shows signs of strong French influence, and Holland, by her long and close contact with the British has learnt a good deal from the latter's colonial policy.

The Congo atrocities have left Belgium much leeway to make up, and she now concentrates on laying social and economic foundations. To prevent the abuses which have now passed into history, the Government of the Congo is subjected to strict Parliamentary control. The Belgium Parliament controls colonial policy and the Budget, and the King exercises power by decree on the advice of his Minister for the Colonies. He is assisted by a Colonial Council. The Governor-General of the Congo has restricted legislative power which must be confirmed by decree of the King. There is no legislative Council but an advisory Council.

In 1908, the economic structure of the Congo was founded on rubber and ivory. The huge concessions of an earlier day are now much smaller, but the Congo is still mainly a land of

companies. In the Huileries on Congo, for example, the interests of Leverhulme are prominent. On the social side, Government, missions and companies have done fine work for health and education. The policy is to raise the masses before training an elite, and natives are not encouraged to go overseas to study. Great emphasis is placed on the education of women on the principle that "*you educate a man and you educate an individual; educate a woman and you educate a family*". Recently technical, agricultural and medical schools and others in veterinary science, etc. have been set up, so that natives may be trained to supersede Europeans in schools and industry. Industrial concerns in the Congo give the African special training to take a larger share in skilled labour. The same policy is applied in the Banks. All this is consistent with the aim of economic and political autonomy with the emphasis, so far, on the economic, rather than on the political side.

Indonesia, like the Belgian Congo, has a past that has had to be lived down, for on the one hand a Belgian King exploited the Congo for 25 years, and on the other, the Dutch East India Company exploited Indonesia for 200 years. During the short British administration of Java in the latter half of the Napoleonic Wars, Sir Stanford Raffles had valued Javanese culture at its full worth, and made native welfare his first aim. Raffles, a liberal-minded Englishman under the influence of men like Adam Smith, studied the local forms of political organization and, gave constitutional backing to village autonomy. He declared also that the ultimate control of land was vested in his administration, and decided that Government should obtain its revenue by charging rent to be levied as its share of production. But his occupation was too short to prove the efficiency of the Rafflesian system.

Today, the Governor-General of Indonesia is appointed by the Crown and is responsible to the Dutch Parliament. The Volksraad or Legislative Council consists of some sixty members, Javanese, Europeans, Chinese and Arabs. Recent developments in Indonesia are too well known to bear repetition here, nor does space allow a description of the illogical system of rule in Java or the princely rule of the outer provinces of Sumatra, Borneo and the Great East. In the

economic sphere, the mass of the Indonesians are engaged in peasant agriculture, the majority of the Europeans in large scale agriculture, oil and tin production. The Co-operative Movement is vigorously encouraged by the Dutch. Their scientific institutions are among the best in the world. The Dutch have done a lot for health and education in their colonies. Big business has played its part in this, and the missions have shared the burden of education with the state. Promising Dutch students go on to the excellent University of Batavia.

One of the lessons the Dutch have learnt is that Governments must provide adequate expression of opinion of those bodies in the community whose opinions are uncongenial—that is, the politically active sections of a population must be adequately represented.

RUSSIAN POLICY

Like the French, the Soviets stress equality and fraternity far more than liberty. The traditions and governmental machinery of the USSR are alien from those of the West, but some observers feel that some valuable lessons — particularly those in the field of social psychology — can be learnt from Russia's treatment of her dependent territories.

The Colonial areas within the Russian system comprise the whole area East of the Urals, the five Soviet Republics between the Caspian and Russian border, Russian Turkestan, etc. The principles of Russian administration and political organization fall under 5 main heads (1) Industrialisation (2) Democracy by Participation (3) Socialisation (4) National Self Determination and (5) 'Cultural Autonomy'.

Russia felt there could be no effective social progress without industrialisation or economic equalisation, and she ensured that the rate of industrialisation varied in such a way as to balance inequalities — that is, the more backward the area the more the industrial potential put into it. She had a theory of social change providing for the changes to be geared into one another. She was therefore not afraid that the rate of change would be too great.

She argued that industrialisation could only be carried out by the active participation of all elements in the community, and proceeded to organize the rank and file of the population in three ways, *viz***.** Political, Producers and Trades Union. By this method she obtained a high degree of social permeation. Politically, the village soviet is the smallest Political unit ,and is an omnicompetent authority. It can criticise the working of the Soviet system and the shortcomings of officials — it can write the Central Government on matters of foreign policy if it likes — it can undertake enterprises of its own. Many, it is said, still find it inadvisable to criticise the system itself.

Under Socialisation, there is common ownership and planning of economic resources, and with that, is obtained 'working class' supremacy. Russia makes use of the incentive of nationality, since the Russian Republics are based on the principle of nationality. Unlike the British Dominions however, these Republics cannot secede because of the economic structure. A fantastic emphasis is laid on local cultures which dig up legends of the past to bolster up the national sentiment of the people, and to develop them, so that one day, they may be fitted into world cultures which shall be *"national in form and international in content*". This phrase sums up the term 'Cultural Autonomy' where the principle is, that all the traditional elements are given the fullest value they can bear. This emphasis on national forms is a lesson some observers believe can be drawn from the Russians, and might apply particularly to Africa where the complex and heterogeneous society poses a problem for deciding what units must be regarded as candidates for autonomy.

The Soviets are carrying into the remotest corners of their backveld the agricultural, mining and industrial revolutions which they began in their western republics a quarter of a century ago, in order to raise everywhere the standard of life nearer to that of the most favoured regions. They have achieved wonders in the field of mass education. Doctors and teachers go to all parts of the USSR side by side with the technicians and agricultural experts.

Professor Eric Walker of Cambridge writes:

"The distinction which the USSR thus draws between the cultural, spiritual idea of the nation, and the political idea of the state, is not new; it has often been drawn in practice, as Welshmen, French Canadians and Afrikanders well know. But the stress which the USSR lays upon it does constitute a contribution to the art of politics, at all events, as this art has commonly been practised in continental Europe and the USA.

It is a distinction which the Powers will have to draw clearly, both in the Colonies and within their own bodies, if they are to avoid repeating one of the greatest mistakes of the peacemakers of Versailles".

Condensed from a talk in Barbados

THE POETRY OF DEREK WALCOTT

by Frank A. Collymore

There are some of us who write poetry: to us the spirit comes and goes, and we are deeply grateful if, at some time in our lives, it is our great good fortune to be blessed with the divine gift. But there are others, a select band, who are poets from birth: to them poetry is all in all, the very breath of life; and I do not think I am mistaken when I make this high claim for Derek Walcott.

'A CITY'S DEATH BY FIRE' is a sonnet occasioned by the recent disaster in Castries:

After that hot gospeller had levelled all but the churched sky
I wrote the tale, by tallow, of a city's death by fire,
Under a candle's eye that smoked in tears. I
Wanted to tell in more than wax of faiths that were snapped like
wire.

All day I walked abroad among the rubbled tales,
Shocked at each wall that stood on the street like a liar;
Loud was the bird-rocked sky and all the clouds were bales
Torn open by looting and white in spite of the fire;

By the smoking sea where Christ walked, I asked why
Should a man wax tears when his wooden world fails?
In town leaves were paper, but the hills were a flock of faiths
To a boy who walked all day, each leaf was a green breath
Rebuilding a love I thought was dead as nails,
Blessing the death and the baptism by fire.

You will have noticed many component elements in this poem: the swarming imagery, the deft turn of phrase; the religious motif — above all, the high poetic fervour. Here, one feels, is the spirit of poetry shaping its own ends through the mastery and sincerity of the writer. Perhaps some of you may think he has taken too great liberty with the traditional

sonnet form: but this is a matter which lies outside the scope of this introduction.

In another poem: **'ELEGIES: THOMAS CHATTERTON, SIDNEY KEYES AND OTHERS'**, the imagery shocks, startles or convinces us into acquiescence; and the last couplet with its echo of Keats' "*half in love with easeful death*":

> "I am as young as they died, and am proud in their trade of fames;
> I fear death, inmate of my hand, leaps wall to join their names."

Only a poet, conscious of his calling, could have written that.

Echoes...there must always be echoes. Every artist must draw upon the accumulated heritage of his particular art; and so one is aware of many echoes in these poems: of Gerard Manley Hopkins, whose genius so profoundly influenced the trend of modern poetry; of Auden, especially in the skilful use of half-rhyme and assonance, and of the arresting generalisation; and, above all, of Dylan Thomas, with whom our poet seems to share a close affinity. But there is no suggestion of pastiche: it is obvious that Walcott's style is derived from many sources as a result of his wide and sympathetic study of the moderns, but it is his own compound.

There are other formative influences also: it is difficult to read any of these poems without observing the great part played by the ever-vital myths of the Christian Tradition. This religious imagery is apparent everywhere, and is one of the focal points of the young poet's experience. The others are the social and geographical background of his environment. Derek Walcott, the West Indian: speaks in '**TRAVELOGUE**', and you will note that this poem is altogether different in feeling and in treatment: the style is astringent, harsh even; the author labours under no false delusions; and you will find this Caribbean pride exemplified in many other of his poems.

Derek Walcott is still a youth, and so you will find in his work the concomitants of the youthful vision: all its idealism with its capacity for love and friendship, and too, the reverse side of the picture all its swift capacity for being hurt, its uninhibited despair.

For, to the youth, the progress of time is not to be measured by the same clock as it is to those who have attained maturity. In our youth we are able to keep pace with time — its progress is ours; later, we lag behind, and, as we watch its waters outpace us, we are only too conscious of its rapid flight. But, in the first flush of early manhood, when we are able to keep abreast of the river, days and months are disconcertingly long, and there seems to be little, if any, prospect of accomplishment.

This tragedy of youth is unfolded in a poem he calls **'IN A YEAR'.**

But there is no real cause for despair. Such tension may spring from a variety of causes. In his case I would suggest that the tension is the result of the consciousness of the conflict of life caught between love and hatred, between the spiritual, the material, between the terrible beauty and the callous indifference of nature. From such cosmic opposites he strives to find release. The pattern of this striving is his poetry. And here he realises the futility of purely human effort—hence his omnipresent religious imagery.

In what is perhaps his most ambitious attempt, the strange and deeply-moving '**ST. JUDAS**', he has attempted to reconcile these Opposites. Of this unorthodox conception of ultimate values Mr. Harold Simmons writes in a review which appeared soon after the publication of *25 POEMS*:

"This poem is divided into five sonnets, each of which is a link in the chain of fate that leads to the crucifixion of Christ...Sonnet by sonnet traces the conflict in the mind of Judas Iscariot — Iscariot, the sentimentalist attracted to Christ by his loquacious poverty; the development that destiny had ordered that the most sentimental of the apostles will betray Christ: Judas doubting that Christ is God's son; then darkness over the earth, the death of Christ; the light out of the darkness, Judas' death and suicide -all in all, History and Fate are one."

There are so many other poems I should like to discuss but a few references must suffice.

In '**AS JOHN TO PATMOS**' there is conveyed the dazzling sunlight of the Caribbean and a complementary picture of

spring in a fogbound land can be found in '**LETTER TO A PAINTER IN ENGLAND'.**

In another poem, Walcott, the West Indian, looking forward beyond the confines of a smug materialism to the limitless realms of the creative imagination set free to work in his own community writes, "*Love is here and under your feet*" in **'CALL FOR BREAKERS AND BUILDERS'.**

The creative imagination working through love, perhaps the answer to all poets' seeking: the theme is again apparent in the last lines of the long poem, '**THE YELLOW CEMETERY'**.

I should like to emphasise what I consider to be Derek Walcott's two greatest qualities in these 25 poems. I have said but little of his technical accomplishments. I have not attempted to criticise his work; I have preferred to approach this collection from a purely personal standpoint: these poems have given me very great pleasure, and I wanted, if possible, to communicate this pleasure to others. But I consider that you have heard enough to be aware of the remarkable power and range of his imagery, that *sine qua non* of all poetry; and enough too to convince you of his sincerity. These two qualities then, imagery, the vital product of the poetic imagination, and sincerity, the ballast by which the former is kept in touch with the here and now of the human heart, combine in a poetic fervour sufficient to assure me that Derek Walcott is a poet of whom any community might well be proud.

ST. SIDWELL'S CHOIR GUILD

The St. Sidwell's Choir Guild commenced its year with a debate the judges of which were Messrs. J. I. Sam, J. Glasgow and H. David, while the subject was '**That there are no composers of the 18th and 19th century to compare with those of the 16th and 17th century.'**

The Pound Sale organised by Mrs. Wilson for this organisation has realised to date of writing the sum of $90.00. Mrs. Wilson desires to thank all those who contributed to make the sale a success. The Vacation School for Choirboys was held in the Vestry during the month of April at 9 a.m. The Choirmaster, Mr. Brindley Benn lectured on '**Voice Culture'** and the **'Care of copies of Manuscript**'. One of the Choirboys, F. Hughes read a paper on '**Standing and Kneeling**', and the morning ended with a gramophone concert of Church music. The pieces played were Merbeke Communion Service and Choral works from Handel, Byrd and Purcell.

The Annual Recital will take place on Wednesday, June 22. This will feature works of Sir Arthur Sullivan, Handel and Bach; two pieces of Sir Hubert Parry will also be performed **—** '**Hear my words'** and '**I was glad'**; the Coronation Anthem.

<u>Book Review:</u>

POEMS OF THE WAR YEARS

— (Edited by M. Wolman)

The strongest impression I received from this anthology is one of mind controlling heart. There is no frenzied outcry, but rather the acceptance of something so colossal that personal rebellion is useless. Caught into vast complexities there is only one way for decent men to act.

"We are leaving the mountain snow
Once more it is our turn to go ..."

This restraint is a decided contrast with the work of the 1914-18 war poets. There is none of the almost unbearable poignancy of Wilfred Owen, for instance. Compare '**Greater Love'** with Roy Fuller's **'Epitaph on a Bombing Victim**' and see the dryness and terseness of the latter writer. Or compare the numbed despair of '**Exposure'** with Alun Lewis' '**All Day It Has Rained**'. The second poem may almost be called "*peaceful*" in spite of its close. There is hardly any of the Galahad-like ecstasy of Julien Grenfell or of Rupert Brooke. Although many of the present writers were as young at the time of writing, they had grown up in the uneasy inter-war period instead of the semi-idyllic pre-1914 years. This background has given them a worldly attitude far removed from any fine poetic frenzy — disillusioned indeed but neither cynical nor bitter. There is still comfort to be had in nature and there is also the comfort of the kinship; this sense of belonging to some great cycle of development, beyond any folly of man to alter is stated several times; with Hardy-like simplicity in '**THE CHILD'**.

Wombs are not withered by decrees
Of tyrannous assize;
On life's unconquerable knees
The child triumphant cries.

He is the dedicated bud
Upon the desolate bough:
The April which is unsubdued
Within our wintry woe.
(Soutar)

Love, in such a life of terrors and distractions, takes a second place, but has not lost its power to move and to inspire. The poems to wives and sweethearts say the same old, sweet things, with an added sharpness of danger.

For you abide
A singing rib within my dreaming side;
You always stay.
And in the mad tormented valley
Where blood and hunger rally
And Death the wild beast is uncaught, untamed,
Our soul withstands the terror
And has its quiet honour
Among the glittering stars your voices named.
(Alun Lewis).

The strongest feeling seems to be that of making a part of some great unity: And one woman, after her loss, can pray:

But if a new design for those who mourn
Is shaped through pain,
O Spring, lean forward with creative hands,
And hew this stone again!
(Phoebe Hesketh).

A good deal of this book is the work of recognised poets, including the Poet Laureate and Mr. de la Mare, and the younger writers of the generation of Mr. Auden and Mr. Spender, and presenting work by those who, if they had lived, had evidently intended to become so — such writers as Sidney Keyes, Alun Lewis, John Jarmain. Consequently there is considerable attention paid to the mechanics of verse. There is still much of the freedom of free verse but it too appears to be under control. The stanza has become again much more

definitely patterned and the formal sonnet has been used to good effect. Rhyme is very frequent but not essential and there is considerable use of assonance.

Mr. Auden is here; included is the haunting '**Lay your sleeping head, my love'** whose charm for me I still cannot explain. His influence can be seen but that of G. M. Hopkins is equally noticeable; '**The Runner**' is handled much in the manner of **'The Hound of Heaven'** and I liked, too, '**The Man in the Bowler Hat'**, a not-too-distant brother to '**The Man with the Hoe'**. Many of the writers are intellectuals and make easy use of their knowledge, as in the two fine sonnets of Mr. Roy Campbell and Mr. John Gawsworth. There is very little of the move now so evident in prose articles — of looking backward; only one writer has spoken in the voices of the dead. Oddly enough, there is not one poem dealing with the sea. The airman, the gunner, and the infantryman speak or are spoken for; the sailor and the merchantman do not exist even in passing reference. The most ambitious poem, in length, treatment and variation of form, is '**The Wilderness**' of Keyes, a surprisingly confident piece for so young a writer.

As the anthologist says in the preface, it is too soon for a definite collection of war poetry. I hope when such a collection appears it will include brief biographies. And that individual poems will be more readily found. In the present volume the work of each poet is strewn throughout the book, making any comparison difficult. Long after I had laboriously flipped back and forth from index to page I discovered that the poems are arranged under invisible subject headings. Such a real division, though somewhat peremptory, would have the advantage of showing a list of titles. As it is now the poems are listed only under the author's name, demanding a pretty bit of hunting.

It is difficult to recognise young greatness at close quarters. It may be that it is incipient, in modern guise, in this anthology. There is certainly good craftsmanship and sincerity; whether the divine flame can burn in the tempests of this traditional period can be decided only by our grandchildren.

—MARGARET LEE

<u>Book Review:</u>

FLOTSAM — Poems 1942-1948 — (by Frank A. Collymore)

The West Indies is an archipelago with the islands like seed broadcast upon the sea, and so I took Frank Collymore at his word where he says in his first poem that "*words are the poem, the incalculable flotsam, that which bore them vanished beneath the hurrying drift of time...words float upon the surface, a broken message*".

I took him at his word and I went treasure hunting and the clues belonged to the sea. Was Collymore using the sea as a theme or was the sea using him? I wondered Probably both.

As direct evidence, there was the fine '**Hymn to the Sea**':

"Like those who live on small islands
I must always be remembering the sea",

and in those five stanzas he rings Barbados with memories of sight and sound and smell. In '**Schooner'** "*the sails' saga is told in slow syllables as we plunge onward"* and night is "*a fugue of forgetting....hooped around the sea's endlessness".*

When Colly thinks of **'Background**', "*here by the sea the tumbling rock obtrudes, and already on the gimcrack bungalows the seal of the salt kiss is set*". '**Walking along Newhaven**', the poet lets you know that "*upon you falls the sound of the sea*", and stillness comes in through the open window of a mind "*across the windswept bay...he long deliberate curve of the bay*". '**In the fragment of a day'**, "*the sand is firm where the lipping tide sets the seal of its incessant kisses...and lithe figures, naked girls, still breastless, mahogany and ebony, run shouting and laughing, their bodies etched in sunbright-darkness along the glittering sand".*

'Requiescat 'records that "*never wind that buffets the bleak hill shall rouse his spirit with its salt sea breath"* and for contrast, in '**Call to Arms'** "*on your ear beats the long murmur of the wave"* and *"seeping through to consciousness a warmth and drowned wavesong".*

Or listen to these...."*and I watch for you to go as you used to go, by the wave by the weed by the turning sand"*..."*are you hurried by the beck and sway of underwater forests through the deep archway of tides?"* or "*the garden by the sea where with my dream-known friends I share Love's' anonymity*"; and there is the snapshot of "*two returning from our seabathe, hungry, whom the waves have buffeted"...*

Consciously or unconsciously the sea-music around Barbados slips into Collymore's poems until they become as he confesses "*as much a part of me as any other. Salvaged from all the surging flotsam of years".*

— A. J. S.

Book Review:

NOTES TOWARDS THE DEFINITION OF CULTURE

—(by T. S. Eliot)

I looked to T. S. Eliot to see what we in the West Indies could take from his notes to help us in the emergence of our own way of life. But of course there is no recipe for planning a culture.

I was at first dismayed to see that Eliot thought our problem in the West Indies "*where several uprooted peoples have been haphazardly mixed*" insoluble in the sense that "*we do not altogether know what we're doing*". But as I read on, I said to myself "*this is an instance where the onlooker does not know more than the player in the game*" and I re-echoed the catch from Wordsworth that sums up the attitude of a young West Indian "*Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive but to be young was very heaven*". Looking back at the movement and direction of the past fifteen years makes one confident that the positive development of culture which Eliot terms a miracle is already making its appearance in this region.

In Eliot's other reference to the West Indies, he claims that in the problems of the relation of every part of the world to every other which has the baffling problem of culture as an underlying factor, there is the question of what culture is and whether there is anything that we can control or deliberately influence.

I doubt whether we can control or influence culture but I have listed some different senses in which Eliot has given variations in meaning to the word. First we take the usual three meanings where culture is the development of an individual in personal refinement, or the development of a group until it assumes the moral, intellectual and artistic leadership of a community, or the development of the complex background of thought and belief of a whole society. Culture he claims can also be refinement of manners as in the aristocrat, the best representative of the upper social class, or close acquaintanceship with the accumulated

wisdom of the past, as with the scholar, or the ability to manipulate abstract ideas as in the intellectual, or the lover of the arts.

Culture may also be that which makes life worth living, the element that was worth while in any civilisation that is now extinct, and Eliot goes on to say that culture can also be identified with the way we are living, and have lived, our religion as a community — think of the Jews and you know what I mean. Finally there is the intriguing attempt to define culture by illustrating the characteristic activities and interests of a people.

The list Eliot offered in the book prompted me with a gleam of mischief to match it from Guiana and to suggest that our culture in Guiana has the sun and malaria, and August sports and Kaieteur, and black pudding and souse and pepperpot and qwehqweh dances and Tadgah; and sugar, the Sea Wall and little white wooden houses standing on stilts out of flood water, and crowded matinees and porknockers.

Eliot stresses, and rightly so, the fact that culture's first meaning is the way of life of a community and I agree that culture is a product of lived religion and that therefore our modern world having lost its religion, its culture, its way of life, is now rapidly disintegrating. We can see that from the way in which our European culture fragments into the specialists at the top who are unrelated one to the other. The essay grows into an analysis of modern civilisation and its structure, and therefore, does not come to a conclusion in its subtle and sensitive argument; the debate continues in your mind after you have closed the book. It is rightly named *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*.

But Eliot is also an aristocrat in the Aristotelian sense; he believes that power should be in the hands of the aristos, the best, and his chapter on the class and the Elite is most stimulating. Eliot has stressed elsewhere his preoccupation with the quality of the well-educated rather than the large number of half — or moderately-educated persons in any community, and belonging as he does to the elite of the English-speaking world, Eliot emphasizes the value of the superior family and the superior class, in preserving and passing on the best elements of a community's way of life.

There is, of course, more than a resemblance here to Professor Toynbee's creative minority who are the spearhead of any civilisation.

A distinction is sometimes drawn between the creative minority and those who wish to plan a culture, to the disapproval of the so-called planners. Rather, it seems to me those persons in a young community who seem to want to give direction to the community's creative efforts — they are themselves a product of the natural expression of the community and they are guided by what Ruth Benedict is understood to have termed *"the unconscious canons of choice".*

I wish I had time to contradict Eliot and argue that no new culture can grow naturally in our present artificial civilisation, but to those of us in the West Indies who wish to push ahead too rapidly, Eliot has the restraining word of wisdom. He writes *''You must wait for the grass to grow, to feed the sheep to give the wool, out of which your new coat will be made".*

—A. J. S.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Mr. Editor,

This is Goethe-Jahr, Goethe Year. In the city of Frankfurt on the Main, where he was born on August 28 two hundred years ago, a great festival has been arranged. Some of the great men of the world will go there to give and listen to addresses in his honour. They will each find a different message in Goethe, and they will all be right for he has left works or even pages which the youth of each generation can and does by some instinctive and passionate interpretation make its own. Not only each generation but each man. They will differ among themselves, these great men. But on one point they will probably all agree: the lights are going out over Europe, one by one. Significant it is that the two men whose lives have been most influenced by the Goethe experience are not in Europe! Thomas Mann listening to angelic laughter in the bright California sunlight. Albert Schweitzer, living out a life of Christian service among God's forgotten people in the disease-ridden villages of Africa.

Strange Message, this Message of Goethe! To understand it we must put ourselves outside the central intellectual tradition of the West. That tradition is dualistic; it divides the world and man, drives a firm wedge between nature and spirit, body and soul. Goethe saw that this tradition made for disaster. Nature and the body were shut out from the discipline of spirit. The intellect pursued its way, disembodied spinning a web out of itself e.g. Berkeley, Hume, Kant, etc., and science developed apart from the whole life of man, unmindful of any ideal conceived in wider terms than its own.

It is not certain how much of Goethe's thought derives from Herder's nature-philosophy. He was undoubtedly influenced by him. He knew nature to be the ancient mother of all things. One continuous, form-producing process could be seen at work in all things, organic or inorganic, and in man and in art. "*The great works of art are at the same time the greatest works of nature produced by men according to true and natural laws*". This was his profound intuition — an intuition he could not

then establish intellectually. We in a later day with our greater knowledge can build in the missing steps. The world is no longer described in terms of mechanism but of organism but the pendulum will swing further, is already swinging. We have begun to think in terms of persons and the highest fruits of personality which are religion, and morality and art.

Strange man, this Goethe! Are we any closer to an understanding of him today? The question may well be asked, for recent criticism is agreed on one thing only, that Cains a contemporary of his came closer to the truth of his life than any one else. Strange fate, to be thus misunderstood. But Goethe himself must bear the blame. You will remember how in *Truth and Poetry* Goethe looks back from his calm old age and recounts the story of his childhood, youth and early manhood. Unwittingly he draws a false portrait. He embalms his youth in the serenity he felt in old age. But that was not how it was when he was young and the blood, hot. Indeed if the tone of his story were true there would be no room in his life for Werther; and all his works grew out of his life. But the several hundred letters that have come down to us confirm the truth, hinted at by Werther. It is good to find in the young Goethe the anguish and the stress and the sense of waste we know so well. It restores the touch of humanity to his Olympian figure, brings him closer to us. If he suffered as we do then his life and works can bear a meaning for us.

Goethe was the first great writer who found himself unsustained by any myth or widely-acknowledged framework of beliefs and ideas. Already in his day large areas of Europe lay outside Christianity. Science had begun to conceive the universe in unimaginable terms; the universe was no longer tidy or habitable. Goethe had nothing to work with except himself. But it was enough for he saw clearly that if the universe was continuous he could reach the centre of things by plumbing the depths of his own nature. "*True symbolism arises,*" said he to Eckermann, "*whenever the particular represents the universal not as shadow but as a living and instantaneous revelation of the inscrutable*", and again: "*all my works are fragments of a great confession*". In these sayings he affirms the necessary character of modern literature — the imaginative transformation of what the writer has seen and felt and known.

The West Indian writer should keep these sayings steadily in mind for the society in which he grows to manhood looks at the world with borrowed eyes and to those sayings, final in form and wisdom, let him add this. *"What you have inherited from your fathers possess it truly so as to make it your very own".*

—Lloyd Searwar

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Dear Mr. Editor,

Inquiry has disclosed the information that under present plans for rebuilding the burnt-out areas of Georgetown there is no provision for the erection of a Cultural Centre. This will come as painful a surprise to member clubs of the Union of Cultural Clubs, and the general public as it was to my organisation and myself.

Members of our community who actively interest themselves in or support musical and dramatic presentations had received with satisfaction the impression from the daily press, that in this rebuilding scheme the Theatre and Concert Stage would, at last, be given a home in which they could gracefully abide and thrive. People of all sections and strata of our community who have for years striven with almost untutored talents in attaining a commendable level of competence and artistry in surroundings for the most part incongenial, must have entertained lively feelings of encouragement. Their hopes will now receive a setback.

There are, indeed, many institutions and services without which we cannot afford to do and, surely, the Theatre is a primary one in our educational and cultural progression It is realised, of course, that in formulating priorities there are community needs that will reasonably be catered for before others; but, this should not be allowed to tend towards abrogation of responsibilities equally important though perhaps less urgent.

So many worthy purposes could be adequately served by a building into the design of which were in corporated our various requirements. In addition to an auditorium and stage it might well accommodate a small art gallery, a music room, offices, e.g., the chambers of West Indian University

lecturers, Tourist and Information Bureaux, British Council local headquarters & c. Revenue from these and from local clubs and societies who use it should make nominal the actual maintenance allocation needed from public funds.

It seems fitting, and advisable, in the interests of the entire community that, at this time of projected development of the material and human resources over the whole colony, we should be alert to safeguard the balance, to preserve and develop concurrently the quality and standards we are attaining in the fields of music, drama, painting and poetry. It is a bitter thought that, in this colony, accommodation of any sort for the beneficial reception of even the finest visiting concert or dramatic company would be wholly dependent upon satisfactory commercial arrangements with local cinema houses, whose stages and lighting arrangements are entirely inadequate and unsuitable.

In these circumstances, I would suggest to the President of the Union of Cultural Clubs a plan for immediate action: That a Special Meeting of the Union be convened, to which interested members of the public and the Legislative Council should be invited, to discuss the desirability of obtaining from Government a pronouncement as regards intended provision of such a Cultural Centre in Georgetown. This should be done at the earliest possible time, and subsequent action placed in the hands of a Committee whose personnel might include representatives from the Union arid members of the Legislature.

—A. A. D. MARTIN,
Georgetown Dramatic Club

<u>The Editor looks at:</u>

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

***Bim* No. 9,** made first class reading. It was a pleasure to read again an Edgar Mittelholzer story and '**Tacama'** is a fine example of what to me is Mittelholzer's particular genius—the effective exploration of a character's psychological mood with an unusual economy of means.

The letters of Thomas Walduck provided Major Woolf and through him the readers of *Bim* with an important section of the social history of Barbados in 1710 while Collymore's '**Impressions of #1 Tour**' make very delightful reading indeed. It's a pity he could not include all his impressions in one issue.

The poetry is of a high quality, perhaps higher all round than has ever appeared in *Bim,* and the work of Lamming, Collymore, Ruby Waithe and Telemaque particularly thought-provoking.

In *Timehri* No. 28 one was most interested in C. M. Bernard's '**Music In British Guiana'**, his analysis of the four types of music played in Guiana, the way he relates the physical characteristics of a culture-group to that group's expression and the importance of the effect of the economic and and social developments of the country upon the growth of a genuinely Guianese music. Bernard sees the need for instruments of the New Philharmonic Pitch, for guidance of talent, higher standards of criticism and self criticism, and a country-wide co-ordinating organisation.

C. S. Webb was instructive though dull on the '**Mammals of British Guiana'** while Giglioli includes a challenging article on the economic effects of mosquito control in the colony through DDT**,** showing the population increment and the increased vitality that will prove invaluable in Guiana's future progress.

Report of the West Indian Conference: (Third Session)
One of the notes struck in the Report of the W. I. Conference (Third Session) concerns the need for "*equipment and trained*

technical personnel, which are more urgent for industrial development than the need for financial capital." This development is necessary if the standard of living in the Caribbean area is to be raised, but the West Indian already experiences doubt whether there are adequate safeguards upon the operation of the C.D.C., to ensure that in the development, colonial resources will not be drained away but be dammed to provide that rise in the standard of living.

Industrial Development of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands:

In a trans-Atlantic forerunner to the C.D. & W. Acts, the USA leads the way in industrial development in the Caribbean with this report on government action in Puerto Rico planned to raise the standard of living of its rapidly growing population. This translation of thought into activity dates from 1932 when a hurricane laid waste half the island and Federal lending and emergency powers were made available; and it is an experiment in socialism that does credit to American capital and efficiency.

The Caribbean can learn a lesson particularly from the industrial training programme, further stimulated by the establishment in 1948 of a 2,500-student School of Industrial Arts attached to the University of Puerto Rico. The School will provide a large and skilled body of labour in the island and help reduce the imports of textiles and other goods by arranging for processing from raw or semi-processed materials.

Incidentally the Report discloses that Puerto Ricans have an inherent aptitude for delicate precision work and that they were known for their needlework from the pre-war years.

Dr. Rafael Pico of the United States Section of the Caribbean Commission, writes in his preface that the success of the programme depends largely one the enthusiasm and determination of the leaders and the peoples of this area.

Footnote:—It has been announced that 30 scholarships to the School of Industrial Arts in Puerto Rico will be offered students from other Caribbean countries, British, French, Dutch and American.

International Theatre Institute — Bulletin No. 1: Armand Salacrou, Chairman of the Executive Committee, describes this informative and bilingual December, 1948 bulletin as a "*first rehearsal*" of the work of the Institute and appeals to the 14 National Centres to supply the editors with regular information.

The summaries of plot and Press reactions of plays in these European countries provide valuable insight into the social and intellectual values of each community and one noteworthy feature is the way in which plays successful in one country are presented to audiences in other languages and countries. Egypt, Hungary, Roumania and the Union of South Africa are countries in which National Centres of the Institute had not yet been established and the reader will probably notice in their data a note of conflict between community values that is deeper than in plays recorded in Atlantic civilisations.

The beginnings of an important framework for international understanding.

SIXTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE B.G. UNION OF CULTURAL CLUBS

At the Annual General Meeting held at the Georgetown Public Free Library on Monday, February 23, 1948, the following were elected to the Committee of Management for the year ending February 28, 1949:

President: .... E. O. Pilgrim.
Vice-Presidents: .... N. E. Cameron.
.... Mildred Mansfield.
Hony. Secretary: .... A. J. Seymour.
Hony. Asst. Secretary: .... Celeste Dolphin.
Hony. Treasurer: .... J. W. Smith.
Members of Committee: ..... Theophilus Lee,
.... R. I. Janki, Dorothy Taitt.

As in previous years, this Committee worked in full co-operation with co-opted representatives of organizations affiliated to the Union, and to these, the Committee is grateful for valuable discussions and ready assistance in planning Union activities.

MEMBERSHIP

During the year two clubs ceased to meet, namely, Club 25 and the Harjon Literary and Social Club, and one club—the Woodbine House Club—relinquished its affiliation. Additions to the list of affiliated organizations were the Regnal League, the St. Sidwell's Choir Guild and the B.G. Music Teachers' Association One Club, the Bartica Welfare Association approached the Committee but failed to take up affiliation.

DEBATING COMPETITION

The annual debating competition for the Patrick Dargan Memorial Shield which is sponsored by the Union, began on May 26, 1948, and concluded its series of fortnightly public

debates on August 25, 1948. Seven clubs took part and the following subjects were debated: that party government is harmful; that private monopolies are public evils; that British Guiana's future depends to a greater extent on its mineral rather than its agricultural resources; that profit sharing is the cure for labour troubles; that sex equality is impossible; that federation with the British West Indies would be advantageous to British Guiana; that modern civilisation is a failure; that now is the time for the introduction of Universal Adult Suffrage in British Guiana.

These propositions were debated at the same hour in these principal centres, the C.Y.O. building, the Central High School and the B.G. Ex-Servicemen's Hall. Occasionally other buildings were used e.g. the Main Street Hostel of the Government Training College for Teachers and the last debate in the series took place in the Georgetown Public Free Library.

A combination of circumstances prevented the final debate from taking place as planned but after discussion in full committee, the Shield was awarded to the Christ Church D.Y.M. and presented to the leader of that team by Hon. John Fernandes. The Catholic Youth Organisation was runner-up. Other competing clubs were the African Welfare Convention, the B.G. Teachers' Association, the Central High School Old Students' Association and the Guianese Academy Old Students' Association.

The Union is under a great debt of gratitude to the members of the public who kindly consented to act as Judges and to the press for its co-operation in what is being increasingly recognised as an important community service.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Union Dance—Early in the Union's year, the Committee was pre-occupied with an attempt to raise funds, and the planning sub-committee transferred its attention from the proposal of a Fair to that of a Dance. After many weeks' planning and one postponement, a Dance under the auspices of the Union was held on Friday, June 4, 1948, at the Central High School. Unfortunately member clubs did not on the

whole give their support to this special effort which realised the sum of $70.30. For this, the Committee is grateful.

MONTHLY MEETINGS

As far as possible, the last Monday evening of every month remained the night chosen as Union Night and the following meetings were arranged by the Committee:

On April 6, at the Georgetown Public Free Library, representatives of the Union clubs met Professor Millot and Messrs. Sherlock and Bernard Williams of the Staff of the W.I. University College, and discussed with them various aspects of the University's work, especially that connected with the Extra-Mural Department.

On May 31, at the Government Training College for Teachers, Main Street, the Union sponsored an Open Discussion on the book *Welfare & Planning in the West Indies* by Professor T. S. Simey. Three speakers introduced the discussion, Mr. G. W. P. Roberts, B.Sc., commenting on the origins and the economic basis of W.I. Society, the population trends, and family life; Miss Lilian Dewar, B.A., on education and the dilemma of the West Indian middle classes, and Mr. I. R. B. Robinson on the Social Welfare schemes advocated by Professor Simey. Each of the papers presented was of a high order, and the Committee is indebted to these friends of the Union for their co-operation and for the lively discussion that followed.

On June 28, at the C.Y.O. Hall, Robb Street, representatives of clubs engaged in youth activities presented a joint Youth Forum. The organisations represented were the Arundel Young People's Fellowship, the Catholic Youth Organisation, the Muslim Youth Organisation, the Christ Church D.Y.M. the Comenius Youth Movement and the Tabernacle Youth Movement. Each speaker detailed the aims and history of his group, and at the end of the stimulating discussion and exchange of views, each representative declared that he had gained new and valuable ideas on Youth Club work to report to his organisation.

On July 26, in the Reading Room of the Georgetown Public Free Library, Mr. N. E. Cameron, M.A., Vice-President of the Union delivered a lecture on '**Cultural Life in Jamaica**',

a comprehensive account of the intellectual life of the island in its various phases. An abridged version of Mr. Cameron's address has since appeared in one of the half-yearly releases of the magazine *Kyk-Over-Al*.

On August 23, 25, 26 and 28, the Union held its Annual Convention. A full description of the Convention appears later in the body of this report.

The September 27 meeting of the Union in the Georgetown Public Free Library was devoted entirely to the discussion by member clubs of "*grievances*", and comments and suggestions on the ways in which the working of the Union could be improved.

The attendance was small but the Committee noted for discussion suggestions and comments made by speakers representing the following clubs:— the New Age Society, the B.G. Science Club the B.G. Writers' Association, the B.H.S. Old Girls' Guild, the Children's Dorcas Club, the Central High School Old Students' Association, the St. Sidwell's Choir Guild and the Society for the Promotion of Refinement among Children.

On October 25, at the British Council, the Union held a successful '**Evening with Shakespeare'**. In a room with seating accommodation for 50, more than 120 persons crowded and remained during the two-hour programme of recorded song, dramatic readings, poetry-readings, illustrations of the plays, incidental music and film.

The music of Mendelssohn and Sibelius, the dramatic interpretations on gramophone recordings of speeches by Hamlet and Henry V (interpreted by John Barrymore and Sir Laurence Olivier respectively) the well-known settings by Arne to the Shakespearean songs, the explanation of modes of illustrations to the plays, dramatic readings from '**Romeo & Juliet**' and **'Much Ado about Nothing**', and two film scenes from '**Macbeth'** — these were all combined into an '**Evening with Shakespeare'.**

There was no Union meeting in November or December, but on Tuesday, November 30, under the auspices of the Union, the study group of the B.H.S. Old Girls' Guild presented a 15-minute broadcast over Station ZFY on the History of British Guiana.

On Friday, January 28, 1949, in the Library of the Bishops' High School, representatives of clubs affiliated to the Union held an informal discussion on the relationship of the Union to the West Indies University Extra-Mural Department. The topics discussed ranged over the nature of the lecture courses desired by member clubs, the problem of adult education and the possibilities of research work in British Guiana.

THE FIFTH ANNUAL CONVENTION

The Fifth Annual Convention of the Union, at which every member of every member club had the right to be present was spread over the week August 23 to August 28, 1948.

The Public Session on Monday, August 23 at the Town Hall, Georgetown, took place under the chairmanship of the President, and addresses were delivered by the Vice-President of the Royal Agricultural & Commercial Society, Mr. S. L. Van B. Stafford, K.C., the President of the Federation of Civil Service Associations in the British Caribbean, Mr. C. Holman B. Williams, M.A., and Miss Margaret Lee, B.A. Mr. Stafford instanced the Children's Dorcas Club and the Society for Promotion of Refinement among Children and spoke on the Union's responsibility to children. Miss Lee developed her talk upon the need to provide the growing faculties of the secondary school population with "*food, support and encouragement*", and Mr. Holman Williams outlined the economic basis of culture in a community and the obligation to share with less privileged sections of the population. Musical items interspersed the programme.

On Wednesday, August 25, in the Georgetown Public Free Library, an Exhibition Debate was held as part of the Patrick Dargan Memorial Shield Debating Competition on the proposition "*That now is the time for the introduction of Universal Adult Suffrage in British Guiana*" between the Christ Church D.Y.M. and an impromptu team. T he Judges were Dr. Claude Denbow and Messrs. C. Charles and J. Barry Austin.

The Music & Drama Session took place on Thursday, August 26 in the Town Hall, Georgetown. The B.G. Philharmonic Orchestra played a Beethoven Overture and Three Dances from German, the Maranatha Male Voice Choir

rendered an item, and one-act plays were performed by the B.H.S. Old Girls' Guild and the Georgetown Dramatic Club.

To bring the evening to a close, a combined choir comprising members of the B.G. Philharmonic Choir, the Dawson Music Lovers' Club and the Maranatha Male Voice Choir sang the chorus from Handel **'Let their celestial concerts all unite'** under the baton of Major C. E. Darlington.

The final Session of the Convention, the Tea & Talk, was held on Saturday, August 28, on the Bishops' High School grounds, and after tea had been served at 4 p.m. groups discussed the relationship of the Union to (a) the secondary school population (b) the rural community and (c) the adult population in Georgetown who have not had an opportunity to enjoy the finer aspects of living.

The group leaders, Mr. N. E. Cameron, Miss M. Mansfield, Mrs. D. J. Taitt and Mr. R. I. Janki then reported their findings to the Convention re-assembled in the Oswald Parry Hall, and the President's thanks brought the meeting and the Convention to a close.

CO-OPERATION WITH THE ROYAL AGRICULTURAL & COMMERCIAL SOCIETY & THE BRITISH COUNCIL

The close and cordial relationships with the Royal Agricultural & Commercial Society and the British Council recorded in previous reports, were maintained during 1948 in many directions but mainly through the Union's representatives on the Combined Cultural Committee, namely the President, Miss Mansfield, Vice-President and the Honorary Secretary.

KYK-OVER-AL

Kyk-Over-Al continues to be the medium for publication of notes on the Union's work and that of its clubs, and of addresses delivered at Union meetings and to the Convention. The Committee regrets that Member Organisations are not taking full advantage of its services as a calendar of proposed club activities and as a record of their achievements.

NUCLEUS

During the year, the Committee began the issue of a monthly report to member clubs on the Union's activities in roneoed form of *Nucleus*, an innovation which has been commended.

The Committee records its handing over to the new Committee interim reports on the work in progress of two sub-committees, one investigating the suggestions and comments on the Union's working made at the Union Meeting of September 27, 1948, and the other pursuing the findings of the Convention discussion groups.

THANKS

The outgoing Committee places on record its grateful thanks to all organisations and individuals who assisted the Union during the year under review, especially the lecturers named in the Report, the British Council, the Free Library, the Bishops' High School, the B.P.I., the Press, Station ZFY, the Y.M.C.A. and the many well-wishers and friends who performed the duties of judges at the Patrick Dargan Memorial Shield Debates.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Reader:

Kyk-Over-Al has been published every six months since its first appearance in December, 1945, and between that issue and this June, 1949 number it has carried contributions from writers whose names are well known in British Guiana and the Caribbean.

The price is 1/- per copy for this literary and critical magazine which appears in a limited edition. With this 8th number, an attempt is being made to stabilize the magazine with a subscription list of well-wishers who will receive two half yearly issues (post free) for 60 cents. The first target is 500 subscribers, and as a step towards that end you are invited to take advantage of the special offer of $1.00 for two Annual Subscriptions, naming the person in British Guiana or overseas to whom you desire the second copy of each issue to be sent as your gift.

For your convenience and response to this appeal, a Subscription Form is attached below which you may complete and post with your Inland Postal Order or cheque.

—A. J. Seymour,
Editor

ISSUE 9

COMMENT

The West Indian legislatures will be soon discussing Closer Union proposals and I am reminded of Shelley's remark when I consider that whatever the politicians may decide, artists and writers are already emphasizing the intellectual and artistic unity of Guiana, Honduras and the West Indies and helping to build a Caribbean nationhood.

It is with these problems of making a nation that this issue of *Kyk* is mainly concerned and we have here an unconscious anthology consisting of the thoughts of an interested sociologist, a slightly irritated artist, a student whose eyes were opened at an American University, a poet seeking his values in American aggressiveness and reminders of our diverse racial strands and the non-English elements in our B.G. speech.

An editor should point out, however, that these articles are perhaps precipitates of some of the influences at work in B.G., in the past six months, assisting the community's intellectual development.

There is the influence of the W.I. University. Dr. Waites didn't move around much perhaps but ability and sincerity are evident in this published extract from his paper on '**Some Difficulties of Socio-Psychological Research in the WI**'. All those who attended Mrs. Colman's training classes will agree on the value of sessions that threw together so many people of various social strata and diverse intellectual curiosities, and many others were impressed with the quality and skill of Mrs. Colman's Town Hall lecture on '**Western Europe today**'.

Another important element in this intellectual fertilising was the address at the Union's August Convention delivered by General Sir Ronald Adam. It was not so much the prestige of the Chairman of the British Council or the learning and diplomacy of an UNESCO official and British cultural ambassador; it was the innate sincerity and easy friendliness of the man with his audience that made the greater impression. Guianese were proud too of Robert Adams's screen success, enjoyed his lectures and acclaimed the quality of his acting

but in the larger attitude towards vehicle, I agree with R. B. 0. Hart that British Guiana has advanced beyond the unreserved acceptance of the situations of *Men of Two Worlds* and *Emperor Jones.*

Like the University and Norman Cameron with his plays, the Union of Cultural Clubs and the Library are engaged on long-term projects designed to stimulate interest, stir thought, create critical values and dispense information and during the year the Library has sponsored lectures and broadcasts on modern poets and aspects of life in England in the 18th Century, while the Union has organized its Convention discussions and Shakespeare week lectures and other activities.

A community's enrichment comes from all sides, and I'm happy to record the receipt of two magazines, *Adam* and *De Stoep*, which may represent the beginning of a real cultural liaison between British Guiana and the non-English speaking peoples in, and on the shores of the Caribbean. *Adam* is an international review printed in London in English and French, which projects modern Dutch literature and which was received from Albert Helman in Paramaribo. Helman is the pen-name of a Dutch writer born in Surinam who has published several novels and who now occupies an important official position in that country. Incidentally, it is remarkable to see the similarity between B.G.'s interior and the account Albert Helman provides of Surinam's interior in his article '**South-South-West**' in the July 1949 issue of *Adam*.

De Stoep, printed almost entirely in Dutch (to the disappointment of English readers) was received from Dr. Hartog, Director of the Cultural Centre in Curacao, a branch of the official organization set up (British Council-wise) to encourage cultural co-operation between the Netherlands, Indonesia, Surinam and the Dutch Antilles.

But after one has named these influences, there is still a debt to be acknowledged to the persons and groups that have been contributing everywhere in B.G. in an unspectacular way to tolerance and kindliness, the pedestal on which stands a people's way of life and about which Sara Veecock so wisely reminded us at the August Convention. They are the builders of the great pyramid which *Kyk-Over-Al* is attempting to portray.

—A. J. S

Public Building, Georgetown

SYMBOLS

by Cleveland W. Hamilton

The moon's loaned gold's in wrought with sapphire light
And woven with the fleece of seraphs' skirts.
The crystal necklace of the vigil night.
Hewn bright upon an angel anvil, flirts
With cloth of blue. The blood of Christ is shown
In bars of sterile flame
Where sank awhile to rest the gory day star
Which has known
Earth's centuries of weeping woe and shame
For Crucifixion's deed...

But yonder floats a wisp of sacerdotal white
Flecked with strong threads of frowning green —
This green's God's ire
At the black curse of homicidal sin —
The white's the chast'ning purge
Of Pentecostal fire!

IS THERE A WEST INDIAN CULTURE?

by J. Arthur Waites

Is there a West Indian culture? Perhaps I shall be criticised for asking this question. West Indians may feel that there is some air of "*superior*" attack upon the one process that must one day bind them together as a nation: whilst so many researchers may be disturbed because they have described it before the question was raised. But I am concerned for the students of social affairs who are in constant danger of believing that "*West Indian culture*" is in the same category as these described by Malinowsky, Benedict, Mead and others as Samoan, or Maori, or Papuan or Kwakiuil. Possibly the only West Indians who can be legitimately regarded as such are the Amerindians of British Guiana, an indigenous people mostly living in the jungles and swamps of that vast country. Of the "*culture*" usually associated with our textbooks of social science there is little evidence. What, then, is this thing constantly referred to as "*West Indian culture?*" Is there something which is unique to the peoples of the British Caribbean that can be legitimately compared with what we regard as a "*pattern of culture*" or what Ruth Benedict has described as that which is created through "*unconscious canons of choice*"?

Simey in his *Welfare and Planning in the West Indies,* has been cautious on this theme:

"So far as language and the arts generally are concerned all the evidence that there is goes to show that the Negro and other peoples in the Caribbean territories have inherited a large amount of miscellaneous material from a variety of cultures, and that they are in process of constructing an individual and typical culture for themselves out of these materials."

Faced with a situation of this nature, the incoming investigator may well wonder where to begin in his search for cultural factors in the West Indies. For some, a fascinating study has been that of logging Africanisms. This is leading to

similar research among East Indians, Chinese, Portuguese and the minority-peoples of the West Indies. Though of some importance for the understanding of *ab origio* racial sources of the African peoples, it must be remembered that most contemporary West Indians have been less influenced by African Tribal mores than many children of English missionaries. Also many coloured peoples have little that is African in either their blood or their training: what Madariaga calls "*yearning towards whiteness*" has been so powerfully prevalent in the West Indies for so long that there must have been, in numerous families, a conscious effort to suppress African influences. After all, we are dealing with the "*now*", the psychological stresses the black or coloured person today find their conflicts in the "*now*" social structure rather than the "*then*". There is almost as little justification in spot-lighting the African ancestry of many present-day coloured peoples in the West Indies as reminding the British Royal Family of their Germanic origins.

Many researchers follow Simey's advice and concentrate on *"the general study of the selection or 'screening' of culture-traits, so as to explain the survival of some or the decay of others"*. Others like Dr. Eric Williams have been concerned with slavery, economic and racial problems, in the West Indies.

It will be observed that the general line of approach of these investigations is that of listing the minimal factors observed in the ever growing body of West Indian 'culture'. This I believe is an incomplete approach. It is like listing the symptoms of a physical illness without taking into account the causes for them specific to the individual invalid: for this reason alone it becomes so difficult to compare the West Indian culture-traits with those obtained elsewhere. I believe that we must first study not the blossoming culture-factors of the West Indies but that which accounts for their blossoming.

The important sociological feature of the modern West Indian set-up is the disintegration of the traditional British culture pattern. It is only by this process of disintegration that the "*unconscious canons of choice*" which are specific to the West Indies can and will appear. For up to a recent date, West Indians have been prevented from the processes of voluntary choosing, which alone create a recognisable independent 'natural' pattern of culture.

This is not the place to discuss the complex history of British influences in the West Indies. But it must be clear that until half a century ago the British had a domination of the coloured peoples of the West Indies that precluded the emergence of cultural norms other than those based upon British tradition. The West Indies mirrored that "*acquisitive society*" that was Britain: poverty, prestige, power was determined here by a colour line. Rewards went to those who patterned their behaviour on the British codes. West Indians were still a 'subject' people. Today, however, whilst the hallmark of quality is still largely British, more and more West Indians are recognising the possibilities of independent nationhood. Peter Blackman writes:

"*Already many West Indians know by experience that England does not know how they live and in the nature of things cannot greatly care what is the quality of their lives. The jolt of this first shock to their carefully nurtured Englishry once past, these men do not hate England. They simply determine that it shall no longer be possible that the English nation shall have the power to interfere with their lives.*" (From **'Is There a West Indian Literature'** published in *Life & Letters*, Nov. 1948).

The difficulty is, however, that in their eagerness to develop a West Indian culture they tend to either overstress such indigenous culture-traits as they have so far produced or attempt to create a culture pattern. Therefore, we must attempt briefly to describe the nature of this present-day West Indian culture and also indicate the importance of realising that a created culture is a false and un-natural culture. It is the task and duty of the social investigator to attempt this project, despite the many difficulties.

For the purpose of this paper we may recognise the following types of culture-patterns:

(a) A national culture, (b) A group culture, (c) A satellite culture, (d) A colonial culture, and finally, what I have coined to meet the descriptive needs of modern West Indian culture indices, (e) A foetal culture.

A national culture consists of all those historically created designs fur living, both explicit anal implicit, which have created for a whole society a recognisably unique pattern of behaviour and thought. In this way we may differentiate between an English national culture and say, a French national culture.

A group culture exhibits marked differentiations in the patterns of cultural norms between groups or classes within a given nation. I shall try to show later that such a culture is revealed by East Indians in their relation to the overall cultural pattern of British Guiana.

A satellite culture is that described by T. S. Eliot in *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* as:

"One which preserves its language, but which is so closely associated with, and dependent upon, another, that not only certain classes of the population, but all of them, have to be bilingual. A nation of weaker culture may be under the influence of one or another stronger culture at different periods: a true satellite culture is one which, for geographical and other reasons, has a permanent relation to a stronger one."

A colonial culture I restrict to the recognisable pattern of culture produced by the admixture of a dominant foreign culture and that of a subjected indigenous or supplanted native culture. Such a culture would be that of most West Indian islands during the "*Domination*" period, prior to the more recent developments of specific West Indian cultural norms.

A foetal culture is one which is in process of development, not yet detached from Colonial patterns of culture, yet revealing sufficiently unique integrations to claim a probable separate differentiation of behaviour and thought patterns from those to which it was formerly subjected.

The analogy to the human foetus is evident. In no real physiological sense can the human foetus be said to be an independent creature: yet daily it continues to develop characteristics which are unique. At birth the foetus ceases to be a foetus and becomes a child: an individual always for ever after unique and yet always dependent for its basic structure upon the specific features of its procreators.

Thus must be the future of West Indian culture. It cannot — and it appears that many West Indians hope it shall never be — completely uninfluenced by the British womb in which it is growing to fruition. Nor will it ever be free from the cultural norms from which West Indians were wrenched before they became West Indians. As Eliot states: "*The culture which develops on the new soil must therefore be bafflingly alike and different from the parent cultures.*" Perhaps in only one regard does our analogy break down: some child psychologists have stated that the child's first cry at birth is one of rage and despair at being brought into a new world. We may assume that the birth of West Indian culture will be accompanied by a cry of mingled conquest and relief.

The difficulties presented to the foreign social investigator (and indeed to enquiring West Indians) lie in assessing the relationship of cultural elements culled from national, group, satellite and colonial patterns of culture, and those unique differentiations of the new foetal culture. At the moment, no existing work makes these differences clear. Elements of group patterns are regarded as national factors: differences between satellite and colonial factors are overlooked: foetal factors, which may well be but transitory or developmental, are regarded as permanent and unalterable features. And there are those who would force a premature birth (or indeed a ruthless Caesarian birth) of West Indian culture. These in their way are no less dangerous for the future nobility of West Indian culture than those who urge that they can (and must) mould this precious foetus to their determined pattern. It will be well to remember that wise French proverb: "Le temps se venge de ce qui a ete fait sans lui."

It is indeed tempting to the social investigator in the West Indies to record a mass of items regarded as unique to this part of the world. Two dangers arc inherent in such a process: first, it may by assumed that a pattern of culture can be identified completely by obtaining the sum of individual cultural factors, and second, that such distinct cultural activities may be assessed as features of a **national** culture whereas they may only be features of a **group or class** culture.

So far as I see it I do not believe that we can yet refer with confidence to a **national** West Indian culture. What is evident

are cultural factors which are new and unique to certain groups within the West Indian framework: but there are as yet lamentably few unique integrations which are to be found in **all** groups, as must occur before we can designate them as forming a national culture-pattern. We have seen, for example, that even the name "*West Indian*" is not as widely accepted among the peoples of the British Caribbean area as may be supposed. There are calypsos in Trinidad, a "*school*" of art in Jamaica, Amerindian pottery in British Guiana and so forth but the only factors which integrate them at the moment are those associated with geographical and political predetermination by British influences. If we are to regard these elements as West Indian merely on such grounds, then we must go further and regard West Indian culture as a minute segment of something larger still — British Colonial and Dominion pattern of culture.

The investigator must clearly differentiate between the cultural trends of racial and class groupings within the West Indian scene and retrain from regarding them as a national culture. Unfortunately, this has not been done as frequently or as clearly as might have been the case in the works of some eminent writers on the problems of culture in the West Indies. The commonest error (discoverable in the writings of both Williams and Simey) is a tendency to neglect the cultural factors of groups other than those of West Indians of African descent. It is true that persons of this lineage have numerical and to some extent cultural ascendency over all other racial groups. But the investigator who begins his work in either British Guiana or Trinidad will quickly realise that the potential influences on West Indian culture by East Indians are far from being rightly relegated to mere footnotes. The East Indian is no appendage to African-dominated culture in the West Indies.

East Indians in British Guiana were brought from India to supplant African labour on the plantations. Their labour was used to undersell African labour. Most of them were illiterate and their social conditions on the sugar estate extremely bad. Their wages were considerably less than those paid for equal work to other racial groups in Guiana. Their period of indenture was five years, after which they were at liberty to

pursue such life as they wished or could. Today however, many have become prosperous farmers and merchants by their thrift and initiative and their Eastern technique of "*stooping to conquer*". In the Guiana of today, East Indians occupy foremost posts in the professions, the business world and the political life of the country. They are developing community and cultural traits distinct from those of the African and mixed peoples. But can these factors unique to the East Indian groups be called West Indian? Certainly they can in the sense that African and Mixed factors are: but the truth is that at the moment they are a racial group, segregated in so many ways from other analogous groups which go to make up the polyglot society of West India. So far what we see of development along cultural lines in the West Indies is largely confined to racial or social groups within the wider framework. And at the moment the groups *qua* groups are almost as much separate from each other as they always have been.

Where, then, is the linkage between the various groups of the West Indies in respect of culture? That there is such a linkage no one can deny, particularly if they are conversant with the books and articles of West Indians such as Dr. Williams., Prof. Arthur Lewis, A. J. Seymour and many others. A close analysis will reveal, I believe, that this linkage is to be found among a limited number of "*top-level*" West Indians only. There are scholars, artists, lawyers, politicians, business men whose productions link with each other throughout the Caribbean. But is this to be regarded as the "*West Indian*" culture? At the moment, I would prefer to state that their efforts cannot in any way be regarded as national: as indeed they themselves form at the very best but a minute group of the whole society of the West Indies. That it is from this source that a future national West Indian culture will be directed no one can doubt. I suggest, however, that the investigator must consider their cultural productions and linkage as being the elements of a West Indian Elite.

It is mainly because of a West Indian elite group, taken from most of the racial components that has led to the rapid disintegration of the British culture in the Caribbean. In the early days of the "*domination period*" the norms of the

British pattern were highly integrated. As one old planter told me "You *knew where you were, what to do and who was who"*, The social stratification and the delegation of functions were rigid. It was clear which post was *"white"* and which was "*native"*.

The problems of "*whom to invite"* were at least limited to the white population. In such a distinct framework the cultural pattern is integrated. But this pattern was bound to disintegrate as soon as West Indians themselves were trained for and obtained posts previously restricted to white persons.

Robert Lynd's list of "*of courses*", in respect of social invitations alone, begin to blur when, as in British Guiana, the Colonial Treasurer is a coloured West Indian and the First Puisne Judge an East Indian.

It is true that, for a large number of the West Indians who came to form the new elite, they were often content (apparently) to "*fit in*" with the local Colonial British culture pattern and to create a middle-class appendage to the existing social stratification. But as the British culture pattern never appears to grant full equality of status to the Colonial coloured person as does for example, the French, it is clear that by the pressures of partial exclusion from the white "*in-group*", the West Indians of the elite group should develop some independent identity of form and function.

As Eliot writes:

"However moderately and unobstrusively the doctrine of elites is put, it implies a radical transformation of society. Superficially, it appears to aim at no more than what we must all desire — that all positions in society should be occupied by those who are best fitted to exercise the functions of the positions...But the doctrine of elites implies a good deal more than the rectification of such justice. It posits an atomic view of society."

It seems clear that the West Indian types of elites — the intellectual, political, artistic, moral and religious — shall in the future be partially responsible for the development of a recognisable unique pattern of culture that is West Indian. But it is a danger for the investigator to regard their present efforts as forming a **national configuration**. Whilst as a group they certainly are responsible now for a limited but

admirable body of cultural activities, it must be remembered that they are but a "*group*": one of many groups that are to be found in the West Indies. It may be well to recall that the East Indian racial group in British Guiana is in the process of developing a unique pattern of culture quite as voluminous and novel as that of the elites. Whilst one springs from an inter-racial intelligensia, the other originates from an overall racial group with numerical domination of an entire country. The most serious aspect of culture springing from West Indian elites is that they meet as individuals or, at the best, representatives of their racial groups: they are little more than members of a *"culture committee*". If people persist in regarding the cultural activities of certain elite-groups as a new West Indian culture pattern, then we shall be led to an ancient but erroneous belief, that culture is the property of a segment of a society. If such were to arise, West Indians may merely displace the burden of British culture for a no less irksome burden of the culture of one of their own minority groups.

The gravest danger to the modern investigator in the West Indies is that he shall be made the tool of those who desire to shape the West Indian culture of the future to their fancies. My objection is not to the feeling of goodwill behind such hopes but the danger that always ensues from an attempt to direct the nature of a people's development culturally. We have seen the result of "*guided*" culture in Nazi Germany: we witness it today in Russia: we must not see it tomorrow in the West Indies. The sources of this direction of culture are both British and West Indian. It is clear that money from the British Government for social investigation is expended for a purpose. It is not idle to suggest that such a purpose may be the ascertaining of sociological and psychological facts in order that pressures may be brought to bear upon the direction and nature of West Indian cultural developments. Within the West Indies one can see similar attempts being made by regional and racial and elite groups. Thus we may discover that the social investigator is to Colonial administration what the spy is to military tactics.

The considerations of the social investigator in this regard are not political but scientific. A culture of a people rises spontaneously from the people. A culture resultant of

direction is at the very best a bastard creation variable only by the source of the direction, internal or external. It is true of course that every culture must he confined within pressure boundaries, even if they are only geographical. But the danger observable in the West Indies is that of a planned culture, the end result of which no one can foresee. This has been stated with greater clarity by Eliot in his book:

"For if any definite conclusions emerge from this study, one of them is surely this, that culture is the one thing that we cannot deliberately aim at. It is the product of a variety of more or less harmonious activities, each pursued for its own sake...a class division of society planned by an absolute authority would be artificial and intolerable: a decentralisation under central direction would be a contradiction: an ecclesiastical unity cannot be imposed in the hope that it will bring about unity of faith, and a religious diversity for its own sake would be absurd.

Of Society we can only say : 'We shall try to improve it in this respect or the other, where excess or defect is evident: we must try at the same time to embrace so much in our view, that we may avoid, in putting one thing right, putting something else wrong.'

Even this is to express an aspiration greater than we can achieve for it is as much or more, because of what we do piecemeal without understanding or foreseeing the consequences, that the culture of one age differs from that of its predecessors."

<u>Protest Against</u>

GUIANA TODAY

by Dennis Williams

Each day we die a little death beneath the sun. By noon the positive is scorched into a pointless neutral and a whole population gasps, its heat turning dully on a still sharp point. This is the first thing. The most important. We are still dominated by the sun—strangers in a land we call our own.

There is no Guianese people. Only an accumulation of persons — end products of a various history. Images in mud of the distant alien. Here patterns kill us, and the spiritual bullying of foreigners forever consent to the act. Incoherence, apishness, sentimentality, uncreativeness. And always the blighting frustration of a land which has got us down. Think for instance on our emotional life — caught up within a mesh of influences. There is some pattern here. We mob the returning prize fighter in an ecstasy of appreciation, and mourn the death of our only composer. We no longer return from "*away*" with unfamiliar accents (not generally, anyway) but are expected in a vague way to be better fellows for it, polished cultured. "*He would do well abroad*", and so on. Always the sanction and blessing of the "*civilized*" countries, which is our hallmark, for want of native values — a tacit admission, of course, that there is no good here. The emotional cohesion is only superficial, resting inevitably on alien standards. A collective local response to anything at all is simply unimaginable.

The truth is, we are a lot of persons and a lot of races, with a super village mentality. To begin with, we are in no way at all adapted to this land in which we live — the first thing the savage does. Our dress is ludicrous, as are most of our other habits. We allow the sun to wilt our inspiration daily instead of enjoying it as the Mexicans do (same hours of work &c.). We eat unintelligently for our climate, and build our houses even more so. In all the innumerable trivia of our own social and domestic life we chain ourselves to our irritating string of invalid habits which are unfriendly to the human in these latitudes and which consequently rob us of the impulse

toward that cumulative finesse which is the art of living among all civilized peoples. There is no vision here.

Rather, we cling to a dream of a very negative quality. The person in Guiana looks outward. Naturally. But the aggressive European pattern is always strange, aloof and unfriendly. There is no substantial link. Here we are up against history, race and culture. We can never change our spots, never build Georgian townhalls or Renaissance churches, or create the frescoes of Piero della Francesca: so we create a myth — an edifice which is nearly secure enough to make us forget our troubled yesterdays in the accomplishment of those peoples most like us. Our real heroes are the American Negro, the Indian in India, the Chinese in China, and for those of indistinct and diverse origin — the European in the world. Our heroes function of course in a purely decorative way, showpieces of our different and differing races, brilliant enough to cast the sharp reflections in which we bask. Actually their existence is quite removed from ours and touch us in no other than in a very remote and universal sense. Nevertheless the dream persists and with it the inevitable flow of "*coloured*" magazines, etc., the nightly oriental music and periodic rites, the "*national*" dress, the special holidays, special pages in the news, special graveyards — ''*that the pattern may subsist, that the wheels may turn, and still be forever still.*" Our insularity is paradoxical.

So our position remains immovable. But our smug edifice is strong only at the top. At the bottom it rests on the calypso, which is the faint heart of all Guiana. But it rests heavily, and one common touch would yet fail to make our whole world kin. Undoubtedly there is a Guianese pattern — a part of the whole which is an assured West Indian pattern. That faint residue which would surely continue to drift around if the Caribbean Sea should tonight drown our posturing and "f*antastic tricks*" in a single movement of history. But here in Guiana it is too vague and impalpable to amount to anything like an influence, far less a way of life and even much less a contribution to the universal spirit of all men. It is a prostrate frustrated something lying beetle-like on its back, awaiting the touch of the interested hand. A considerable point is, how good is it for the beetle to tilted over by any but its own effort?

II

Someone said a nation gets what it wants. True. It falls in very beautifully with Lamarck's conception of creative evolution. The tragedy lies always, of course, in wanting the troublesome things. The will of a nation is certainly a very powerful thing, and I believe that Michelangelo grew out of Renaissance Italy in precisely the same way as Lamarck's hypothetical giraffe grew a long neck. I know of no better explanation. When Italy grew full enough of great men she ceased any longer to produce Leonardo, Dante, Raphael: and the usual horde of imitators and mummifiers closed the lid on her creativeness.

There is a signal in Guiana today which might well end in paradox. The prophets are beginning to arise. They will of course suffer the common fate of the breed. But the question is does Guiana really want these men? Let us face it at once. We are so far an uncreative people by the only standards we know — historic. We have no folk life, and consequently no folk Art. So we start without entrails. The calypso — unifyer of all West Indian peoples — a not of this soil. Our building songs and shanties (at best an expression of only one facet of Guianese life) are now only very interesting ethnographical pieces. The mood persists in various pale atavisms — cumfa dancing, shaking, etc., but these things are regional and invalid. The things we have all brought with us still remain potential. There has been no marriage consequently no issue. Meanwhile our prophet has characteristically been keeping his nose to the wind, and out of the complex of influences within and without, is seeking a new orientation —the orientation from which "*Guiana*" will emerge only as legend. Does Guiana really want this man — an artist who is not only Guianese but a prophet of the whole new world, a believer in the concept of Cosmic Man, of which Guiana with its diverse bloods could be such an apt birth-bed.

I think there can be no Guianese spirit as such. The idea presupposes an emotional unity which could be the result of only a greater unity — race, religion, art. None of these could ever constitute a single ideology in Guiana, so the violability of a truly Guianese culture seems to me to be a very remote

one. Besides, the picture of the contemporary Guianese is proof perfect. He is a man riding a 'ticker' bike or a Vauxhall toward an indistinct Nirvana quite unoccupied with any convictions of 'high' art. The snobbery of opera houses and museums touches him not at all, is not really a part of this goal on which his unconscious eye is fixed, while he weaves the pattern which will be the concern of history — not of the self-conscious intellectual in his midst.. This, of course, is as it should be. The civilisations of Europe have sanctified Art, placed it in a different and distant little world, the Gothic Cathedral mummified in the museum. The European no longer lives art. It exists on the surface of his life, a beautiful cream, a veneer. He is going toward no Nirvana.

The Guianese, like all the other peoples of our New World has been emancipated from a background, his history short and unformed. He is a young man with a hope. His incoherent shiftings constitute his common denominator with all the rest of Columbus' world. Here blood is new in a way that does not go for Europe. Here is clay for the sculpture which will be Tomorrow's Man. The man with a different and complex yesterday, seeking other values, exploding myths, creating a way of life human and universal. This mid-twentieth century has already questioned the idea of air-tight national pigeonholing of peoples, and nothing now happens anywhere which is not the concern of the whole world.

Take the artist as pilot. Take the European painter. In a way he died toward the end of the 19th century. A part of him did, anyway — his smug insularity. For the first time in his history he looked out on the world. Shyly at first — toward the Art of Japan. He absorbed the influence of the Japanese print. Then he discovered the primitive — African Negro, pre-Columbian, Oceanic sculpture, the art of Siberia, cave paintings. These influences were profound, infused European art with red blood. The artist was the first to sense the coming significance of the peoples who played the role in contemporary art that they are about to play in contemporary living. The European prophets.

In this western hemisphere, here in these Americas, there is all the potential. The human lives here who has all the atavisms in his blood. Guianese man is a microcosm of

American man, capable of fashioning the universal. A fascinating prospect! Beneath this sun which is all the colour of the world walks the man who is all the races of the earth. His hope is founded on marriage. His home the world.

GUIANA

by Horace L. Mitchell

Guiana is a big, brown child,
A girl-child, gentle and gracious grown
Playing in the sun,
A child of piety and of peace
Praying in the sun.

Her hair is the hair of virgins,
Green forests intact of chaste treasures
Swaying in the sumptuous symmetry of seduction
That beguiles and yields innocently
To the wind's wooing;
The ravishing rivers of her arms and legs
Are elegant charms of transport
That lie welcoming
Between sloth's stagnation
And activity's goal
As a salvation of her hinterland hopes,
Sinuous and shapely,
Supinely stretched in the sun of her destiny.

Her soul is the whole arbour of splendour
From Pointa Playa to Skeldon,
Like the sun's,
And her gaiety is flamboyant and fresh,
Frolicsome sometimes frivolous,
Like the sun's;
Her laughter is the daughter
Of frustration's anguish running wild,
A forlorn, frightened child
Seeking specious self-expression
In syntheses of european echoes
As in a comforter of progress
That's but a mist of truth,
Kissed by the deluding sun of disillusion,
Dissoluble and doubtful
As dacoits of death.

But nobility and royalty
Course her veins,
Guiding reins of righteousness
That rule in the sun's saddle
And wilt last till the sun is done.
In her veins of Essequibo
Nobility rises in Roraima's altitude
To kiss God's cloud-cheek
And stamp her proud elevation
On the sky's scroll
As a landmark for celestials;
Her royalty is the rapture
Of gold's glory diamond-studded,
Her peerless pedigree which Eldorado holds
In trance-like taunt to tease posterity.

Her voice is a vapour of drums.
Kaieteur in rainbow crescendo
On Potaro's lips
Sipping in the mist of mobile magic,
Voicing hums of happiness.
Nature-bestowed solace to stunted industry.
In a seance with Time.
But the vapour is going
And there's a knowing
That tomorrow
Her sorrow, sympathy's son,
Nurtured on alien charity,
Like a blind beggar,
Will die,
A fly swatted on a wall,
And her voice will cry
Her orientation
In volcanic pent-up vent.

The gentle child will come of age,
As children come
Of Time's evolution born
In this world's nursing home,
Then the dormant urge
To surf and surge the shore
Of grand accomplishment, splashing.
Will foam and fashion, lashing
Her beautiful, brown body to a billow of action.

Posterity, astronomer of fate,
Safe in the sanctum of his scrutiny,
Peering through Time's telescope
Of incidents been and to be seen
Will ken her realisations
As the earliest star of the state utopian.

<u>Recognise it?</u>

THE LANGUAGE WE SPEAK—1

by Richard Allsopp

If instead of its present designation, this article bore the title 'What language **do** we speak?' the reader's mind would at once have answered *"Why, English, of course, if you're talking of British Guiana and the West Indies?"* The same answer is often given by West Indians to inquiring people in England but I have deliberately not asked the question since my intention here is neither to query, criticise nor recommend, but simply to **observe** certain facts about the way we speak. A full thesis on the subject would of course fill much more than this magazine so I shall limit my observations in this article to little more than a classified examination of the words (not even the expressions) we use and leave the reader to his own conclusions.

Before I begin two things must be clear. The orthography in the case of many words, it will be seen, is conjectural but I think any Guianese may be relied upon to recognise the sound and meaning of the words being "*described*"; secondly, no apology is offered for the meanings of some of the words used, as here they serve the purpose only of academic examples of the particular class of words being discussed.

Let us begin by looking at a few words in general use among us: Stelling — bateau — beautician —jumbie —dharoo — worker — grabble. Of these none is to be found in the *Oxford Concise Dictionary* except the last two and then they are not "*our*" words. The words are all known to and used by all ˊgood' Guianese, but the first is Dutch, the second French, the third American, the fourth local of African origin, the fifth local of Indian origin, the sixth English with a special local connotation (seamstress) and the seventh English but with an exclusive local meaning (— to seize violently).

Perhaps then with such examples before us we may more readily concede that some at least of our words are non-English. This would already be a remarkable concession if the question were being argued, but a further distinction may be forced from us by our island neighbours for none but a

Guianese would know what were "*a stelling, bateau or dharoo*" — just in case you query the second of this trio, let me remind you that a Guianese bateau is not just a boat but a canoe, a dinghy almost restricted to use in backdam trenches — "*and incidentally*" a Barbadian or Trinidadian would ask "*What is 'backdam'*?" and what would you call "*trenches*"?

So perhaps we had better fall back on the language we speak in British Guiana, and call it Guianese for the sake of correctness and discuss that language. There will be lines of coincidence with other languages of other West Indian territories but they will be ignored from this point onwards. The B.G. language, of course, draws its distinctive characteristics from the multiple origins of its population. Without discussing history and racial proportions, let us for the sake of simplicity and quickness, classify the words we shall discuss in order of bulk under the headings:

Localisms, Africanisms, Frenchisms, Americanism's, Indianisms, Dutch, Portuguese and Spanish. These terms admittedly are dreadful, especially the third — (Gallicism is already a word with its own meaning) but they are clear and I think will be justified by the examples. **Localisms**. These, the greatest class, fall into two or three groups the first of which consists of words of the people's invention: **bambacious** (also bombacious) — officious (corruption of bombastic); **blind cent** — coin (a cent) defaced by age or damaged; **botheration** (noun and adjective) (as noun) trouble, bother (as adjective) disgusting; **bush rum** — rum made under cover, without licence, and usually overproof; **freck** — a small remuneration for services to be rendered or already rendered; **ruction** (adjective) — aggressive (usually of children); to **womanise** — (of men) to seek the company of women persistently for personal pleasure.

And there are some English words with additional meanings: **coolness** — a misunderstanding between two parties; **freeness** — unrestrained behaviour, generally of a group making merry; **Pointer** — stiff mid-rib of leaf of a coconut-branch used in the making of brooms (hence pointer-broom).

Them are also combinations of two or more English words to constitute entirely new words belonging to our society and

environment: **bottom-house**—(1) the space under a house built on pillars, (2) a dwelling room in this space, (3) also adjectival use as "*bottom house*" cricket; **bad minded** —malevolent; **clear-skinned** —(adjective= — a nebulous term denoting a type of Negroid person of light-brown or near white complexion. (The term is further complicated in its application to Indians). **Cycle-shop** —an establishment for the repair (not sale) of bicycles; **light-skinned —** (see clear-skinned; **punt-trench** — estate canal for conveyance of puntloads of cane to the sugar factory; **punt-trench-dam** — footpath along punt trench for the mule and muleteer engaged in drawing the punts.

Africanisms. On this enormous class we can only touch lightly, for to it belongs nearly the whole of what is called "*creolese*". The distinctive marks of this class of words are (a) the frequency of the pure open vowel "a" (pronounced "ah" and (b) the repetitive element as in "big-big". etc.; **bakra** (adjective) — white (people) (corruption of a West African word mbakara — those who rule); **big-big** (adjective) — boastful, ostentatious, 'high and mighty'; **jub-jub —** a type of confectionery; **Kuh-kuhbeh —** a form of leprosy; **mattie** — fellow, another, each other (e g. to beat up mattie — to fight each other); **paokoo or quashie** — almost synonymous terms for an idiot.

It should be noted in passing that "*creolese*" is the dialectal form of expression of the masses. It is inelegant but expressive and although it is understood by the great majority of the population, its users mark themselves as belonging to a certain branch of the community and their progress in that community is generally restrained. Even those who admire it and appreciate its incisive brevity will not use it in serious conversation within ear shot of those whose esteem they crave.

Frenchisms we consider next, since, by my reckoning, there seem to be more of them than a first cursory examination reveals, words such as **bateau, beterouge, cabane, fete, flamboyant, logis, masquerade, patois, pot** (of pot de chambre) are well-known and distinct French words which would not justify the use of the ugly term Frenchisms. But few of us realise that when we say **four cents a piece** (French quatre sous **la piece**); **sill up to Versailles** (French **jus'qua**

Versailles); **at him** (—at **his house}** (French chez lui); **a touched mango** (French mangue touchee)**; How is the sick?** (French le **m**alade); (Where is) **the dead?** (French le mort); **all two (**French tous les deux) — and all our reflexives: pick yourself up, carry yourself, move yourself, kill yourself out — few of us realise, I say, that there we have English words used in conspicuously French patterns, which is what the term Frenchisms is intended to convey.

Americanisms we need again only lightly touch on since their presence becomes, alas! daily more blatant what with the irrepressible force of the cinema *inter alia*. Terms such as: **o.k., guess, guy, reckon**, must now be admitted, but of more interest to the searcher are such words as **book-store, drugstore, beautician, mortician** which are clear, functional and sometimes, as in the case of the last two supplying so real a need.

Indianisms: It is perhaps curious that words of Indian origin have not found their way into general use but the reason may be that the Indians who use them still speak their languages and live grouped in rural communities, so that their words have remained enclosed, whereas the African has simply grafted many of his words and speech patterns on to English. The Indians among us, like the French in Europe have contributed to our vocabulary mainly in the field of food and dress: **Rhoti, dholl, pourrie, masala, sharoo, sari, urni, baba, sala,** are terms requiring no explanation to any 'good' Guianese, but there are other parts of speech, e.g. **braiga, paisa** also in frequent use,

Dutch, Portuguese and Spanish would seem, even when taken together again curiously enough, to be a rather small group. Space does not permit of any examination but the following groups are examples in order — **drogher, gilder, koker, stelling, pratash, bacalao, vamoose** (vamos), **no canoca** (no conozco).

And there we must leave the subject — merely subject, and hardly entered upon, for we have not really **examined** the origins nor at all traced the semantic development of these words. We have confined ourselves to words and have dealt with no expressions. The whole interesting field of "*creolose*" has been overlooked. And even when all these were done we

would have the enormous examination of the phonetics and the syntax of the language — and this for British Guiana alone. Imagine all this to be done a dozen times over for the West Indian islands — with the added complications of a developed patois in some of them —before we can say that we in the West Indies are fully aware of the language we speak.

From the sixth talk in a series of broadcasts

THE CHILDREN OF GUIANA

by Celeste Dolphin

If Guiana had a picture gallery for its children, there would be six portraits on the wall, and as we have seen they belong to the children of the Amerindian, the African, the Indian, the Chinese, the Portuguese and the European races. As Edward Parry, one of the bishops of Guiana once said—"*We are the dear land of the six peoples.*"

If we take the roll call by ages, Cornelius, the 7-year-old Arawak boy at Cabacaburi on the Pomeroon, is the youngest of them all. Kenneth, the Chinese boy at Wismar, whom we met on the wharf on another river is 8, just one year older. Teresa is 9, the little Portuguese girl, who lives in Albouystown and who wants to be a nun like Sister Mary Elizabeth, and the two 10-year-olds are Ranjit, the Hindu boy at Port Mourant and the little English girl. Elizabeth, who goes to Bishops' High School. That leaves only Joseph, the boy of African descent who had won a Scholarship and who comes down by train early in the morning from Buxton to go to school at Queen's College.

I enjoyed getting ready the broadcasts on these six children of our country, Guiana, and speaking to you now, I have a vivid memory of their faces and the faces of the older people from whom we learnt our history.

I remember how Joseph's father described the 'Middle Passage' as it was called, that voyage across the Atlantic in the years before the slave trade ceased in 1807, when the slaves were brought in crowded ships from West Africa to the West Indies, and how the captains kept apart those who spoke the same language, as a safeguard against insurrection.

And then there is Uncle Stanley telling a reluctant and even unwilling Teresa of the way the Portuguese came in 1835, perhaps under the pressure of famine in Madeira, how they soon left plantation work and went into the retail trade, importing their wines and onions in their own ships from Madeira. And I remember away in Port Mourant the Hindu boy, Ranjit, sitting with Sita and Hassan at the feet of his

grandfather, while he tells them of the Hesperus bringing the first batch of East Indian labour to British Guiana in 1838, how the priests kept alive the Indian way of life with the Jhandi and the Phagwah festival and the celebration of the Ids. And up at Wismar, there was the Chinese boy Kenneth, whose Uncle Albert, the land surveyor, had, as a hobby, hunted out all the facts about the Chinese in British Guiana . The stories he told of the first immigrant ship, the Lord Elgin, how the rice fermented below deck on that disastrous voyage and of Wu Tai Kam and his experiment in Chinese settlement at Hopetown. And of course, the *"first child of Guiana,"* Cornelius, the Arawak boy, whom we saw on the landing at Cabacaburi. We heard his teacher tell the story of the long trek of his ancestors from Mongolia, over the Behring Strait, and down the Rocky Mountains and on, naming the Caribbean sea, and his mother related the story of how the Carib God, Louquo, peopled the earth after the Great Flood by throwing bits of cassava over his shoulders.

We have looked at a series of portraits, in isolation. Before we say goodbye to them, let us just for a moment lift the curtain of time and see what has happened to our little children, let us look at Guiana in 7 years' time, and follow their careers.

Teresa, the Portuguese child has grown into a beautiful girl of 16. She is still at school, at the Charlestown Convent now, and the desire to be a nun has not left her. She is waiting to finish school and then she will fulfil her desire. Elizabeth is 17 and now preparing to go to the University at Leeds. Her father will soon be retiring and going back home to less exacting service in England, near the town where he was born. Joseph. Ramjit and Kenneth, are all at Queen's College. The differences in age have kept them apart but the Principal has already grown to look upon them as his best candidates for the Guiana Scholarships for each of the next three years.

And Cornelius! He is still in the Mission House with Father Hale and he is undecided what he would do. You see, like his father, he may become the captain of his tribe, but Father Hale is asking him to stay on with him and to take his place at Cabaceburi.

It is up to them now.

During the talks in this series, we paid special attention to the dishes that were peculiar to the various sections of the population. We talked about roti and currie as belonging to the Indian, and Vingadoll and Malashadush and bul-de-mel as being essentially Portuguese. We spoke of the Chinese Towsapaing and the African metagee and conki cakes. Then we spoke of the Amerindian and his cassava bread. And we should add roast beef, potatoes and cabbage, and puddings, as peculiarly English dishes. But as we know, these foods have all been part of our lives as Guianese. We all eat end enjoy roti and currie: Vingadoll is a special Christmas morning dish in many of our homes, and when we had our wartime flour shortage, we had nothing else to eat but cassava bread, and we did enjoy it. especially when toasted. The delicious Chinese cakes and the African and other dishes have all been absorbed in the Guianese way of life and we find them on the tables of all the peoples, at one time or another.

This fusion and what we may call this assimilation, has not ended with our foods. It has happened too with the races themselves. In our talks, we have spoken of these children as pure racial types. But you know, of course, that in a country like Guiana, where for so many generations, peoples have rubbed shoulders together and worked and played together, many of us have mixed blood, and many of us belong to two, and sometimes even to three, of these racial types.

Some people say that the greatest problem facing the world today is that of how the various races of mankind can learn to get along with one another. And they say too, that the solution lies in places like British Guiana, where different races, with varying backgrounds, have learnt to live together in harmony.

The hope of that solution and of that harmony lies, as we have seen, in the hands of these children of Guiana.

A WEST INDIAN STUDENT AT AN AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

by Ian R. Carew

Every year an increasing number of students from the W.I. are going to institutions of higher education in the US. In the past decade the student enrolment in the US has increased by more than a hundred times. With such a phenomenal increase, we can no longer make the matter of selecting a University a matter of speculation. The Government, the student, the parent and the community, should know about American schools and what they have to offer. It will be necessary to touch on Educational philosophies in Europe and America, on pre-University education and on education in terms of the Government, the community, the school and the home, and along with this on adult education.

The concept of education as a privilege to be shared by a chosen group of intellectuals is one far removed from the needs of our modern societies whether these societies be in Tibet or in Arizona.

We now stand on the threshold of a new age, an atomic age. Even if we take a conservative view of this age out of the wild claims and counterclaims of a multitude of writers we must face the issue that this atomic age has placed our civilization on trial. To meet the challenge of this age we must develop new values and new philosophies, and above all we must inspire in our youth a quest for knowledge. Our schools must encourage and strive to develop creative impulses from the elementary classes. Our youth must hold like a torch before them the philosophy of Descartes *"I think, therefore I am."* For today men need more than ever the ability to question age-old shibboleths.

To understand University and College education today we must first have a general idea of the number of Universities in the US, their rating end geographical distribution. There are over 1,700 institutions for higher education in the US. Of these 1,031 degree-granting institutions are listed by Lovejoy in his *Guide to American Colleges and Universities*; there are 337 listed in the first grade, 491 in the second and 203 in the third.

However, one must bear in mind the impossibility of measuring with a yardstick the intangibles and imponderables that confront those who seek to rate such a multitude of higher education institutions.

It is a mistake for a student from these parts to attend schools like Lincoln University or the Tuskagee Institute which are listed in Lovejoy's *Catalogue of American Universities* as second and third grade schools respectively. For the same tuition fees and the same cost of subsistence one can get training of a much higher quality.

It is also unwise and short sighted for West Indians to flock to one or two schools, and to neglect dozens of other schools that offer wider and more interesting social experiences, more opportunities for scholarship aid and in some instances inexpensive board and lodging. It might be well to find out, for example, whether there are student co-operative houses on or near one's University Campus. These co-operative houses offer inexpensive living to students, and the experience of living with diverse groups of American and foreign students is an invaluable one. Some Universities have special endowments for the assistance and entertainment of foreign students.

Today there are over three hundred West Indian students at Howard University; most of these students aspire to study either dentistry or Medicine. Howard does not have the necessary facilities to accommodate even a fraction of these students in her professional schools.

The situation in the United States with regard to Medical and Dental schools is one that certainly needs clarifying. Since the end of the war many of the first rate professional schools have to select classes of 75 from seven to twelve hundred applicants, and the gaining of a B.Sc. degree is no guarantee that one will get into a professional school. Many students with degrees and outstanding scholastic records find their careers stymied by having to apply year after year in vain.

This problem affects American students to some extent but it affects foreign students more acutely. Many students today with B.Sc. degrees are going to medical schools in Europe. There are West Indians at Brussels, the University of Paris,

Geneva, Zurich and Lausanne. The European schools, even though they have inferior equipment, encourage larger medical classes. The schools I have listed, however, are recognised by the American Medical Association. The dual training in America and Europe is sound and definitely gives one a broad intellectual perspective.

The student from the West Indies must from this multitude of Universities and Colleges select with discrimination the one he will attend bearing in mind the factors that will apply to his own individual case. He must first as Bacon advised in his essay on '**Travel'** equip himself with "'*The currency of the realm"*. This is an important factor, for the days of working one's way through College in the first rate institutions of higher education in the US are over. College today is an expensive venture and those with slender resources might well consider going to Europe rather than the US.

The West Indian, too, must in choosing a College or University bear in mind that the gaining of a degree is not all in education. Along with the rigid degree requirements one must seek after broad social and cultural experience, must look into and study the sociological phenomena in the society outside of the campus, must meet diverse groups, visit factories and farms and must study the history and government of countries. These things will broaden intellectual and cultural vistas and enrich our experiences.

For such experiences as these the universities situated in the densely populated metropolitan areas afford ample opportunity. One of my professors at the University of Western Reserve, Cleveland, Ohio, who had a flair for sardonic humour once told us of Chicago, that it is the only University in the world where Jewish professors teach Catholic philosophy in a protestant institution to Atheist students! This gives some idea of the varied and interesting experiences that one can expect at such an institution.

The Anglican educational programme represents a new experiment in the history of western Civilization.. You might say like Keyserling that America is merely a powerful materialistic epilogue to Europe, but if she is, then she reveals the material inconsistencies of Europe in a stark and graphic manner. The Europeans with their esoteric

philosophies of caste, of educating a ruling class, are forever confronted with the archaic images of abject poverty and wealth, of privilege and deprivation, of haves and have nots. America has not eradicated these paradoxes from her society but she is sowing seeds for the regeneration of human society. If these seeds languish and die then America will epitomize the supreme indictment of a declining civilization. The West Indian therefore, who studies in America comes face to face with this challenge, which from a worldwide perspective reaches into his own society.

Our educational system, especially on the secondary school level, is but a left-over from the British 19th Century Public School, and in many cases this education does not equip us to meet the needs of this age in which technics play a role so vital that invariably we can measure the standard of living, the number of schools, hospitals ,the quality of housing, by the yardstick of a single factor like industrial production.

The West Indies and the South and Central Americas are becoming more and more aware of the immense invasive potential of American technics. We must be prepared to take from America and the rest of the world all that we can use and adapt to the needs of our West Indian society, one of whose main problems is a demographic and ethnic one. The twin forces of economic development and education will solve this problem.

The education that I have in mind however, embraces training in polytechnic skills, the encouragement of handicraft on a much larger scale, the functioning of libraries under trained Library Scientists who must in addition to the sponsoring of cultural programmes for the public benefit, recommend to the Board of Education ideas for School curricula and the selection of textbooks, and also be able actively to help in adult educational programmes.

The needs of our society are such that the West Indian student, whether this student studies Medicine, Dentistry or Engineering, or any other profession, must also acquire a knowledge, and a more than superficial one, of the Social and applied sciences.

Our economy in its present state cannot support a very elaborate school system, but we cannot afford to wait until

our economy becomes a healthy one to put progressive education into effect. So every individual who goes to a University must be prepared to aid in educating his countrymen voluntarily.

In the West Indies and in many of the countries of South and Central America a number of paradoxes constantly mock those of us who are wont to turn aside and live complacently in the realms of satisfied nothingness. These paradoxes appear in the form of a facade of modern or semi-modern cities, and behind them semi-feudal plantations controlled by an oligarchy of absentee owners.

Tolstoy once observed about an American Minister, that he knew all the languages, had studied all the sciences, and had read all the books. The only fault he found in this Minister was that he'd never learned to think.

American University education is one that meets the needs of the American people primarily, and in many cases the needs of the American people are different and sometimes diametrically opposed to our own.

The pitfalls of the stereotype and of regimentation are two of which the West Indian must be forever wary. One must always maintain the right to think even when ground out of an educational assembly line.

This is a difficult task, for sometimes in the American University there is no place for the independent thinker, the rugged individualist, the intellectual rebel who baulks against the irksome chores of recording meticulously and docilely the thoughts of another man.

We in the West Indies cannot afford to become cogs for our society demands of us that we become versatile and flexible. We must build new structures while the American inherits complete structures already built.

Our reaching and striving in education must be more restless, more dynamic than that of the American.

In science, in art, in philosophy, in music, let us examine all that we can, but let us accept only that which we can use without blighting our own endeavours.

The time is ripe for the birth of science, art and literature in the West Indies. It is time that we said like the Brazilians. *"Down with grammar; down with the sonnet; down with the*

Olympian gods. We are children of a new land. Let us make free verse that is full of bold images, cast in new moulds. Let us write a new literature that is truly our own one that smells of our earth and represents more truthfully the dreams of our people."

The two main ethnic groups in the British West Indies and British Guiana are either of African or Indian ancestry. Both of these peoples have a rich cultural heritage.

In Brazil, a civilization is growing up dominated by African cultural influences. Gilberto Freye, the world-famous sociologist says in his book *Masters and Slaves: "In this land it seems as if the hot and oleous airs of Africa had mitigated the harshness of Gothic architecture, canonic discipline. Vesigothic law. It is a land in which Europe governs but Africa rules."*

If we have doubts about our racial identity or entertain any illusions about it, it might be well for us to come to a definite and realistic solution before leaving for the United States, for in that country all illusions and doubts will quickly be shattered and dissipated.

Discrimination on the campus and discrimination with regard to public transportation, housing, restaurants and everyday social contacts is a problem that in one way or another almost all West Indians will have to face and Lovejoy's guide (supported by Dr. Alvin Johnson and the Commission on Higher Education) states that discrimination in one form or another has existed against such minority groups as Jews, Catholics, Italians, Orientals, Puerto Ricans and Latin Americans.

The problem is not limited to the individuals who are denied admission. Even for such of the minority group students as are admitted, the unhappy consequences of intolerance can be and often are, profound...The frustrations of social discrimination in dormitories etc. strike at the personal dignity of the affected students from minority groups.

This array of facts I have listed must not, however, be accepted without such mitigating considerations as the generosity and hospitality of individual Americans of all races and colours. Skin colour is not the only criteria for judging individuals in America. Creative ability, integrity, and intelligence will always hold a high place in the judgments of Americans. Julius Richmond, a Guianese, the only Negro

in his Dental Class at Columbia, because of his outstanding ability, rose to an eminence above his white class-mates. This is one of many similar examples.

Intolerance in the US drives the coloured races to find some area of racial pride and cultural orientation so that Langston Hughes in his poem **'America has never been America to me'** says, *"I am a Negro black as the night is black…black as my Africa"*. This search for a cultural orientation drives us to study the achievements of Negroes in History, in Africa, in America, in Brazil, in the West Indies, and the rest of South America, and what one finds in this search creates the basis of racial pride and cultural orientation. There is a whole new world of knowledge to explore in this direction, of Ashanti art, and Bushongo industry, of Egyptian civilization, the oldest and longest lasting in our recorded history, and of Brazil, this dynamic new land where the European, the African and the Indian have fused to produce an art, an architecture and a music that is one of the epics of our modern times.

This is what America drives us unwittingly to discover.

PALACE OF THE STILLBORN

by Wilson Harris

The wheel turns slowly
wheel of life and love
the waterwheel at the railway station
feeding the iron locomotive of desire. Smoky
distant world
wraps the trees
in a border of loose dusty memory
when the train is gone from the station of life.

The ancient chimney of estate
is cloudy ideal
like a finger of caution
or a finger of departure. Smoke

from burning heaps
broods
upon moving cattle
and turns blue with dark
bitter intense pain
in the labourer stoking an inner life of passion
stoking hidden fires in the burnt red earth of love
coagulations of blood upon a diseased highway.

Some forsake and some are forsaken
lovers of antiquity. Exiles who labour
whom the brittle shell washed by the remorseless sea
house in interior palaces
of the imagination only. Born unwilling to breathe perhaps.

SEA MUSIC FOR UNDINE

by A.J. Seymour

Waters are blown chords
To her begetting of the sun.

In these drowned distances
The seabed's mountains are her islands
Her 'tween-tide harbours to dry her Trade wind hair.

These fabled waves once trespassed on her touch
And tangled weed within her legendary hair

But now her singing flutes the broken windbreath
And strews the flowing sea hollows
Frozen in a plunge of green cellophane.

II

Eve's wonder swam there in her paranymphal eyes.

To enter through those portals was to find
Eden again, like Adam
The trees marvellous by the eternal river
And the shade shaped for the dream of lovers
Drowned in each other's arms
But creation asleep in God before the beginning.

The grace that would burgeon into her soul
Lay awaiting the spasm of explosion
To mushroom
And people new universes with her particles.

No stranger passed those priestess pupils
No wanton union lay
With the body of her spirit
Caressing of its hands and limbs.
One was to live there, not take a room.

III

Come heart, see
Your dismayed schooners sigh their torn sails into bay water
These lawns of the lake after the buffeting sea.

Love runs a swift valley between dark hills.
And after
The taxing sands, banquet your harvest.
Heart, from the warm hills made light with green.

Love's gathered grace breathes perfumes through the night.

Slake your huge hurt
Heal whole and brew no quarrel
Now you leap easy to Love's touch.

All the world's wells Love's selfsprings put to shame.

THE REALITY OF TRESPASS

by Wilson Harris

The tragedy of America (and we in the Caribbean are a part of the Americas) is that the diverse peoples in the Americas have not yet understood the impulse of movement that started streams of peoples fleeing from institutions of bondage in Europe and Asia. This fatal misunderstanding is the paradox of the American, who clings to a past security.

Those who are dismayed that the American writer seems never to go beyond one great novel or poem have spoken the paradox of America and have admitted that the whole substance of a new world must nourish the bloodstream of the living person for him to understand the adventure of the old world who moved away from a past security.

We who inherit the world still shirk the responsibility of a continual discovery to disclose the reality of man's freedom or man's total collapse. What becomes clearer at any rate to the active mind is that freedom can not be solved in the old context of changeless spiritual law or proprietorship of this universe by a changeless God. The whole structure of ownership or possession is being challenged, and the concept of spiritual law reveals itself in actual terms as a changeless and stationary refinement of the material world entirely out of keeping with the complex reality of living forms.

This fundamental chaos of movement is something that has to be laid bare by a tremendous poetic and cosmic insight passing beyond and abandoning a worship of the fossil symbols of Christendom.

The individual is not the starting point nor the goal of the human world and we must abandon symbols of arrest that bind masses of people in acquiescent and collective contentment with conditions of want, hunger and oppression — conditions deemed insoluble by the Christian thinker.

And when this feeling of actual abandonment of a mere bone or fiction of life has passed into experience it will be the necessary rebirth and liberation and daring for the human

person to embark upon a second great movement out of the bondage of the past. It will be the renunciation of a philosophy of despair with the human world.

In the meantime while the old world artist seems to go from one triumph to another, in reality he retards the final liberation of the new artist because he makes the environment of the world more rigid, colder and less free. He clings to physical collapse as freedom of the spirit, and this powerful and binding tyranny of the spirit feeds his effort to subdue the world in terms of a humility that is more arrogant and penetrating and disarming than any physical persuasion. It is because this climate of unfreedom prevails that the American artist is reduced to impotence in the collision of events that he cannot record in his present loss of direction between the reality of freedom and the replay of unfreedom.

The tremendous poetic and cosmic insight which will yield or surrender the image of a past security has not yet appeared anywhere, but the overwhelming desire for a new living world is present to my mind in Whitman and in Hart Crane, who revolted against Eliot's "*perfection of death*" and saw the necessity for some kind of motion.

Whitman was the crude pioneer of the new world who sensed the inadequacy of the static myths. He exclaimed:

> "Come, Muse, migrate from Greece and Ionia,
> Cross out please those immensely overpaid accounts"

This spirit of great movement or migration is the only genuine tradition, to my mind, the new world poet has inherited from the past. But it is a tradition which has been flouted and despised and regarded as evil, which has been reduced to one — not of genuine release and change — but rather one that insists upon the transplantation of static disciplines into a new soil and a new world. The result is that only a negative freedom of association has so far been able to develop in the new world: a freedom of association confined to dreams alone, confined to the ivory tower alone. This freedom of spirit in the midst of extreme restriction that is tantamount to a denial of all movement is the Machiavellian cynicism of our twentieth century aristocrat and poet and teacher.

Whatever genuine expression of movement the American poet has achieved today is expressed only in a form of expectancy rather than action, an anguish of longing which I find in the verse of Archibald MacLeash.

> "They are not words at all but the Wind rising
> they are voices
> Also none among us has seen God
> ...We have thought often
> The flaws of sun in the late and driving weather
> Pointed to one tree but it was not so
> As for the nights I warn you the nights are dangerous
> The wind changes at night and the dreams come
> It is very cold there are strange stars near Arcturus
> Voices are crying an unknown name in the sky."

It would be an interesting and revealing task to study in the poetry and art of the Americas as a whole how this watershed of expectancy runs down the length of two continents and what resolution is emerging to demand fulfilment creatively so that the full streams of life may spill across the ridges of inaction into the famished and bitter wells of isolated peoples in the Americas. One may well ask in parenthesis — how conscious has the American people been of the necessity for a living discovery, and for the release of the living genius of the world?

This is not an easy question to answer. But it appears that the expectancy of the American people is found in their refusal to share in doctrines of negation and perfection. It is clear that the naked collision of events has starkly challenged people to seek a new approach to life. This naked insecurity of the people has its everyday drama in the landlord and tenant relationship. This drama — in epic proportions — has been revealed, to my mind, no more effectively in its raw inconsistency and its demand for a solution than in the simple, eventful and moving dialogue of John Steinbeck in *The Grapes of Wrath*.

The Grapes of Wrath is the naked insecurity of people who wrestle with each other, and are unable to penetrate into, or to discover the inner reality of their movement, who are

unable to discover the comprehensive reality of trespass and the comprehensive reality of the human person, who prefer in their confusion to uphold the myth of possession and private property. But a certain trust in the violent power of association makes this venture into the unknown more than a semblance of movement. This violent trust or faith seeks to overcome that negative power of association which in spite of religious trappings is fundamentally a lack of faith in the human person.

Can the writer today possess religious trappings, can he be a Christian today and still have faith in the human person? It is significant that Steinbeck in an intellectual fashion deals with this circumstance. This is how Steinbeck expresses his feeling on this thing:—

"Casy spoke again, and his voice rang with pain and confusion. 'I says: 'What's this call, this sperit? An' I says: 'It's love. I love people so much I'm fit to bust sometimes.' An' I says: 'Don't you love Jesus? Well, I thought an' thought, an' finally I says: 'No I don't know nobody name' Jesus. I know a bunch of stories but I only love people. An' sometimes I love 'em fit to bust, an' I want to make 'em happy. I'll tell you one more thing I thought out: an' from a preacher it's the most unreligious thing, and I can't be a preacher no more because I thought it an' believe it."

So that finally Casy's attachment or love for the people is synonymous with his abandonment of religious or Christian trappings. In a crude way he comes close to the Red Dean of Canterbury.

Let us try and sum up *The Grapes of Wrath* as simply as possible. A people thrown off the land, out of their home, fleeing from bondage as it were, looking for freedom. Amongst them are two characters that reveal the whole nature of their conflict: Tom Joad and Preacher Casy. Joad who has just come out of prison is on parole and is therefore not free to leave his state. Circumstances compel him to break the law and to flee with his people. He is the symbol of the necessity that drives and the sentimentality that holds them back to die. Their fear of insecurity, their desire to die on the land, and the whole evasive social responsibility that has been

the world they know has been experienced by Tom, who is a really heroic figure.

Where does Casy come in? Casy is the intellectual decision on the part of Steinbeck that the people have faith in each other and in the earth. Casy is the preacher who has decided not to be a preacher in a church any longer. He has "*put down the dictionary*" in the Buberian sense. So he becomes at last a genuine teacher, a genuine student of life and a poet who lives among the people. This intellectual decision is Steinbeck's supreme evocation of the muse of life, of the earth, of something which one might call the Unknown God, something that cannot be called spiritual simply because that is the emphasis of an over-refinement of life. Steinbeck has sought to lay bare the ground that the American poet and the poet of the new world has to discover which would give the impulse to a new direction in the literature of the world. He has sought to lay bare the necessity for movement and a genuine freedom of association to bring the most fruitful and far-reaching contacts between persons — between man and man — and between man and his environment, the world.

OPEN LETTER TO WEST INDIAN WRITERS

by A. J. Seymour

Dear Fellow Writer,

I lift my spirit from here in Guiana where I sit writing the English language, and look up North in the directions that lead to those two capitals of the English-speaking world, London and New York. If I had a telescopic eye I would rake those massive cities with their millions teeming the streets bent on the various business of living, and, perhaps wistfully, I'd note the libraries and Concert Halls, and the museums, and art galleries, and their countless opportunities for mental and spiritual growth. But sitting here I let my imagination rove the Atlantic and I ask myself these three questions which may have occurred to you at one time or other. (1) As West Indians, why do we write? (2) What do we and should we write about? and (3) What can we West Indian writers take from the United Kingdom and the United States of America to help us to build our own West Indian tradition?

Why do we write?

The first and fundamental answer most West Indians will give, like the answers given by creative writers the world over, is that we write because we must. We write because the urge comes to us to put the thoughts and emotions down upon paper, because very often the emotion and the thought come to us on the wings of the words that we find shaping in our minds, and like Blake, we are merely God's secretaries, writing down the thoughts inspired in us. I don't suppose there is any answer that can go deeper than this urge and this is true for the writer in the same way that the composer of music is conscious of an unbidden world of music whirling in his head as he walks along.

But having made a note of this basic urge there is some autobiography to be written, with your permission and pardon.

Choosing only three names, I think it would be a valuable insight into some of the mental and spiritual conditions in

the West Indies, if we could put together the record of the impulse and circumstances that resulted in J. E. Clare McFarlane (a man who has written his name into the literary history of the West Indies) writing his first poem in Jamaica, or my friend of the chiselled form, H. A. Vaughan in Barbados or Alfred Mendes in Trinidad. I could think too, of a company of others writing in English in Guiana or Honduras or the islands of the Caribbean, known or unnamed or forgotten but linked by this urge, which is half personal and half environmental, to put their thoughts on paper. It is not that we want to prepare a synthetic formula for encouraging a West Indian School of writing, but it would be useful to see the variations in the situations that ended in words upon paper written by a West Indian with imagination.

My own writing goes back to the time I left school and found myself relieved of compulsory reading and writing; I felt the need to write merely for the love of it and composed essays on the perennial topics of life and literature. This happened at a time in my life when Mr. Emerson and Mr. Galsworthy each took me by the hand —I have of course often thought back to the quality of my sponsors — and led me through the gateways of English literature, The Essays and the Saga have been my Pillars of Hercules

After some years, in 1938, came my first poem, a thing of trifling merit, but I can never look at it without being taken back to an afternoon in the Post Office Stores Department when some pianist began to practise blues music in the nearby studio of the radio station ZFY, presumably for that evening's broadcast. The piano was out of tune and rather tingling in the booms because of age, the music was sentimentalistic, and the playing was incompetent, but it was as if somehow a key turned in a door, because, as I was listening half-tired, suddenly words began to come up into my consciousness out of somewhere I had never known existed, they began to link themselves together into meaning and they had an emotional power that startled me into being alert and eager. I was delighted and so intent on seeing what more words there were to come up from the unknown, that I didn't know when the music stopped because the words were still coming. From that day to this I have always been humble and grateful before the

uprush of consciousness that finally takes its separate existence away from me in words upon a page.

I suppose that like myself you have been conscious of the indifference and discouragement which beset the young West Indian who wants to be a writer. He can expect little or no reward for his labour and he generally meets with no encouragement from friends and relations. Up to a few years ago it was seemingly considered a sign of effeminacy or eccentricity for someone in the West Indies to want to be a writer. I remember the advice against it given me on so many sides when in 1937 I was thinking of publishing my first book of verse, and I have too a vivid memory of an interview not more than 2 or 3 years ago when an important official, in a tone that implied contempt, advised me "*to stick to poetry and literature and to leave alone other activities*." If I hadn't reserved them for my autobiography I could give instances of rebuff and rebuke even higher up in the community hierarchy. The West Indian writer has to battle against the ogres of indifference and hostility.

When you consider the lack of encouragement and the lack of reward, it is inevitable that West Indian writers will always be playing the role of Dick Whittington, and going abroad, perhaps to seek their fame and fortunes in other countries. I can think in recent years, of Edgar Mittelholzer in England, and George Campbell in New York. I know more about Mittelholzer's work and he repeats the pattern of all exiles, who see things through foreign eyes: standing amid the alien corn, he goes back to the well of memory that his own Berbice and Corentyne districts have become.

The West Indian writes to let those at home and abroad see the West Indian mental attitude expressing itself, a task and a duty that no one else can perform for him. An investigator like Simey may come near to capturing the quick of the West Indian mind but even while he is catching it with his alien point of view, it is a different thing. Harold Stannard was perhaps the man who, because of his inherent sympathy and quick wit, has come nearest to seeing how the West Indies look from the inside, and who adjusted his own vision to us, without moving from the rich and broad European tradition in which he stood. Many of his remarks and his writings have

the quality of uncanny revelations of the West Indian spirit and I think many of us in the region would like to see the University College institute an annual series of Harold Stannard Lectures to bring from other parts of the world lecturers in history and civilisation.

Some one might argue of course that the West Indian mental attitude has not yet emerged fully and that a great deal of West Indian writing is self-discovery, with a community discovering values already patent in its activities. That may be so, and especially in a young community there is a sense in which this very discovery is the functional relation of the artist to his society, just as it is part of the duty of the West Indian writer to help create a West Indian audience. But if a nation is to be born it is important that the area view of all events in the world should be cultivated and only the West Indian can do that.

Of course, this brings us on to the assessment of the West Indian quality and I would like here to develop one feature of the argument that we sometimes come up against,— the relative inability of English and American critics fully to understand what the West Indian writer is trying to express.

The critical standards of England (with the emphasis that Stephen Spender has recently recorded of spiritual discipline) and the critical standards of America (with inducements of material pride) do not apply without modification to the West Indian writer. Clarity of expression, power and economy of means are desirables everywhere but while interpreting the values of his society the West Indian writes in a tradition where the sun strikes deep shadows into the ground, where the vegetation's sudden growth is an almost visible thing, where in the society and perhaps in his own blood there are mingling strands of temperaments from different races, living at peace with one another. So the editorial requirements of Russell or Manchester Square may easily become (unless we are careful to safeguard ourselves from the possibility) the imposition of an alien framework from without the area into which the West Indian writer is requested to accommodate his work, not without damage to his personality.

For instance, it seems to me that on balance, desirable though its stimulus has been during the past few years, one has to be careful of the BBC's fostering influence upon a special type of West Indian writing (that type which is quickly assimilable by the ear) unless the producers of literary programmes are either West Indians like Una Marson or carefully advised by them. You see what I mean. For the English writer there are other influences to offset that of the BBC but to the West Indian this institution is often the only chance to display his work and to get an audience and in a world where the incentive of reward counts so strongly and where the West Indian writer can expect so little for his work, the BBC incentives may make him write, perhaps not in the way that best advances his work, and the schoolmasterly admonitions of the BBC critic, for instance, following the present English ideal of discipline and cutting sharply across the area's characteristic of exuberance, may be followed too eagerly, so that the values and nexus of his West Indian audience may be forsaken or thrown overboard.

To sum up the reasons why the West Indian writes, I say that he writes because he must, and despite the lack of reward and in the face of discouragement. It is good that he does so because he is helping the West Indies to discover and express their own values. The West Indian writer, living abroad, although cut off from the living experiences of the region is calling on his memory and his emotions recollected in tranquillity: he is the West Indian in exile and he still retains or should retain, an area point of view towards events and people.

Now let's see what the West Indian writes about.

What do we and what should we write about?

I think you share with me the wish that at no future date should the Dominion of the West Indies pass an Act to legislate what topics should be the fit subjects for a writer's exercise, and what follows here is no substitute for a Schedule of Approved Themes. Because as an important modern writer says, we must write as we can and be grateful that we can write at all.

The quarry from which the writer takes his material is primarily the stuff of his own mind and soul, however you

define those two hardworked words, and in the formative work of many West Indian Writers you're sure to find preoccupation with their reactions to the sun and the sky and the sea, and the way one's love looks when she smiles. That, of course, is the way of the poet, and the short-story writer serves his apprenticeship in a similar manner by looking within himself and creating linked episodes and characters that posture in situations he has conceived or read about. But in both instances you will see the vagueness of recollected symbols, the beloved one bears a family resemblance to all the beloveds of the ages and the short story could have happened on the steps of the Capitol, or within hearing of the traffic in Piccadilly or by Collier Corner in Camp Street. With a smile of understanding we realise the young writer is lyricising his immaturity.

There is, fortunately, a limit both in time and intensity to the extent of this lyricising but while in this phase of an apprentice handling the recollected symbol, the writer may be tempted into some of the most disturbing excesses of limitation. (Edna Manley has dealt with the Jamaican evidences of this tendency in her article '**Art in the West Indies**' and it is true also of all young communities). But it falls out that gradually and waveringly the writer's attention tends to move from the pre-occupation with his own states of mind into the objective regard of social problems around him. (I'd like to note in passing that many a West Indian has come full butt on to social problems because he was a journalist but the examination of the West Indian writer who is a journalist and so has to grapple with the reality behind the news is important and should be reserved for a separate set of paragraphs. Let us keep our attention on the more creative writers).

The West Indian writer is likely therefore to pass from art's sake to life's sake, partly because of the sharpening of his intelligence and his skill in communication and partly because his social responsibility grows, and he becomes aware of this primary literary tradition — that one must check one's reactions to the pressures of the environment by a conscious valuation of that very environment- And then, speaking for life's sake, there are the demands of a West Indian audience. The writer must let them read, and also lead them to read about themselves.

Again with your permission and pardon, I shall let a personal reference point the writer's growing recognition of the need for a West Indian audience. My own work in a public information bureau led to an awareness of Guiana's history which necessarily had repercussions on my own creative writing, but in a somewhat larger field though still within the Guiana frame of reference, the principle is the same. When a future historian comes to analyse and survey the trends in Guianese literature and he happens upon the history of the periodical *Kyk-Over-Al*, he will probably at some length trace the progress from the purely literary to the social and critical in the outlook of that periodical. He will show that this progress took place under pressure of the editor's need to create and maintain an audience. I cannot of course attempt to anticipate our future historian when he passes his judgment on the values inherent in each successive issue and answers questions such as these: "*Is the quality high?*"' and *"How many persons read it?" Is the editor compromising between his conflicting desires to keep the quality high and to have as many readers as possible on all levels in the community?"* But fortunately it was a young community which had its intellectual and artistic associations linked together for joint action in the framework of a Union of Cultural Clubs and this framework allowed its organ, the periodical *Kyk-Over-Al*, to draw contributions from, and to touch all racial and social levels in British Guiana.

If there is one thing that is emerging it is that there is a community of writers in the West Indies and surely this letter is evidence of that. I speak of this community here because West Indian writers are themselves the centre and most important part of the West Indian audience. Henry Adams has a sentence in his *Education* where be says that if a man's readers are the right 500, his ultimate audience is 5,000 or 50,000. We in the different units are a special high-level West Indian audience. We can learn from one another, we can discuss one another's problems, we can assist with our pens one another's argosies of merit and hope being launched out to the growing reading public, now that the West Indies are beginning to spell out the syllables of their history. As poets and playwrights and novelists and editors of periodicals we

may be operating in different fields and with different degrees of success, but this community of the passionate few is a live one, and both consciously and unconsciously, I believe I can discern a movement to complement and reinforce the effect of one another's efforts. (For instance, it may be that Eric Williams makes a point of some aspect of life in the Caribbean. Then it is likely that there is a poet in Jamaica in whose work we can find a seconding of the motion).

There is no doubt that this community will grow and of the many things that West Indians expect of the University College in Jamaica, one great hope is that the University will be a home and nursery of this community and of the creative West Indian spirit: when the University is in full operation, the West Indian writers and readers-to-be in their early years will mingle their attitudes to art and history. But of the great potential audience, we West Indian writers are ourselves at present a primary and influential art.

Of course, there's a dilemma here. In the region, the West Indian middle class is just beginning to emerge, and as Simey says, they are few and not in touch with the ruling caste above them of persons who are not friendly to the West Indian spirit if they think about it at all, nor with the masses below them who are preoccupied with the struggle for existence and very often have neither the income nor the training and inclination for patronising West Indian literature For these upper and lower classes, the doctrine of ''*the imported is best*'' is one that generally applies beyond foodstuffs and textiles to literary products. Not all members of the awakening middle class have power or courage equal to desire and obviously the number is few for whom the West Indian writes.

Well, how can we best increase this audience? There are the large choir of West Indians writing poetry, the critical essays of a McFarlane, the historical economic approach of an Eric Williams or an Arthur Lewis, — these are part of the West Indian spirit moving over the face of the waters, but it is in the novel and the play I suppose that the greatest attraction lies for a West Indian audience. Walter Adolphe Roberts and V. S. Reid, in Jamaica, Edgar Mittelholzer and A.R.F. Webber in British Guiana and C. L. R. James and Alfred Mendes in Trinidad are some of the West Indians who have used the novel

form to put a mirror up at the face of West Indian society. Our novelists have resisted the temptation to look for their subjects outside the area but their work is all too-little known or read within the region where it can best be appreciated, and it should be part of the programme of our Little Reviews to bring these novels before the public. I must admit that few of our novelists have yet acquired the technical proficiency of European or North American writers but a full audience will be created only with the awakening of a certain social responsibility and with the beginning of pride in the West Indian spirit which will itself mature

The policy which seems to emerge from this is that, like Samuel Butler, we must write for ourselves and for tomorrow's masters, rather than for today's. Emphasis must be on quality and this is all the more necessary if we are to carry out what Lilian Dewar has called *"the act of possession"* (in a recent article on '**Simey on Education**', Lilian Dewar wrote *"we must make an act of possession of our West Indian environment before we can talk of West Indian culture")*. Only the master can prepare and preserve his right to possession.

Finally, let us come back to the journalists. I draw certain distinctions between the attitude of the West Indian journalist and the attitude of the West Indian creative writer. Journalists present and analyse facts as they are and it is a good thing for the true facts of any matter to be made available. Often however opinions are not fully separated from the facts and these are presented as they would seem to a person who writes by a policy (a newspaper has to give its own public what it wants because it has to sell); and often the facts may be facts of reaction rather than facts of reason. But generally journalists cannot escape the sense of being writers of a day that is implicit in the name of their profession and generally they follow the public mind.

Creative writers are not so bound by the facts or the confines of the day, or the immediate problems of the area. They are the pilgrims on the golden road to Samarkand; they will go always a little farther. In themselves they are the guides of the public mind and without consideration of a policy to sell a paper or defend a party, they follow, in the words of a very fine journalist, the truth as they see it for the God of things

as they are. As in so many other instances, Aristotle has the last word — *"Poetry is something more philosophic and of graver import than history, since its statements are of the nature rather of universals, whereas those of history are singulars".*

Of course, a man may be both journalist and creative writer, but when such a man adjusts his vision to the creative task, he is more in the realm of ultimate long-term values than expedient short-term ones, It is an unfortunate accident in present West Indian history (which time and better wage rates will remedy) that basic education levels in journalism are not as high as those in other professions. When our West Indian University graduates begin to invade this field, as they will, there will be a change, and these distinctions and reservations of mine may lose their validity.

Let us take one last look at these distinctions before we leave them, and we may find a hybrid, where a creative writer is persuaded or compelled for a while to use his power in what is journalism. But generally, the end products of the wilting activity are clear either as journalism or as literature, and you can tell the horse from the ass.

What shall we take from the UK and the USA?

The distinctions between the journalist and the creative writer took us into the realm of values, and we must remain there if we are going to answer the last question of the three — what can the West Indian writer take from the English-speaking world?

It is a searching question and we can only glance at the answer but one begins by acknowledging what we in the West Indies owe for the circulation of books and ideas and music, and indeed the very transplanting of the tradition that adheres to the English language and to the models of government that Anglo-Saxon democracies have evolved. In one sense we cannot know too much of this tradition we are taking over and remaking into our own, and we must remember the manner in which that Anglo-Saxon way of life grew in the peculiar racial and cultural ferment that took place for centuries within the boundaries of the British Isles. It was fed by the broad European tradition, where through the accidents of history (an accident which is responsible also for

my writing in English, though a number of other racial urges help to guide my pen through the tangle of words) the order of Rome, the proportion of Greece and the religious spirit of the Jewish people acted and reacted upon the youthful groupings of the peoples who have now become Italy, Spain, and Germany and France. The same process of assimilation and ferment we must undergo to make the West Indian nation and the approach must be a critical one.

The West Indies stand in the line of two main streams of influence, one from the UK and, because Negro Harlem will always have its peculiar attractions and repulsions for a West Indian, one from the great concourse of coloured people approaching half a million who live in New York. (There is another possible stream from India but it has not yet begun to exert its potential influence).

Superficially, England stands for tradition and "*form*", both in the artistic sense and in the sense of social responsibility that Galsworthy has described in one of his short stories. America on the other hand has a certain massive "*formlessness*" which appeals to the people of a young country.

But there is an underground connection between the too streams of influence and their impact on the West Indies. When America received her great waves of immigration from Europe in the 19th Century, people who had lived with fierce antagonistic loyalties on adjoining square miles of territory in Central Europe and had frowned at one another from beneath beetling brows and fluttering flags, suddenly knew a sense of release into being Americans speaking the English language, and to them this new language, English, brought new brotherhood in which all the old passionate antagonisms were dissolved. America as an epilogue has solved the problem of national and cultural divisions that has split Europe apart, but perhaps because of her emphasis on material values or corresponding lack of emphasis on spiritual values, America has failed to solve the black and white problem. As another epilogue of Europe, to which Asia and Africa have made unique historical contributions, the West Indies is a pocket experiment of racial and cultural factors which can perhaps solve the black and white problem where America has failed.

You may ask what makes me think so? Well, one of the creative elements in West Indian life that neither Europe nor America seems to have retained in their make-up as an inherent quality is that of religious values. It seems to me that the world has got itself into such a situation that only recourse to non-earthly values can put it fully right again. Partly because of slavery where the African slave could feel the worth of his personality only in a church society, religion is more important to the West Indian than it is now to the European. Dostoevsky's novels, for instance, seem to appeal to West Indians more than the novels of Tolstoy, and at is significant that in his essay '**Civilisation on Trial**', Toynbee should look to the African Negroes ("*...said to have an unexpectedly pure and lofty conception of the nature of God and of God's relation to men*") to be the race which might he able to give mankind a fresh start.

Therefore perhaps because of the racial temperaments that are now peculiar to West Indians, we come with a special point of view to the treasures of English and American literature that belong to us also, because the language is our language and we take what we need and leave what we do not need.

To illustrate that special point of view, although there is no time to develop it, it is worthy of note how unbelievably far we are from France with its critical Latin spirit and of the remainder of European tradition, how near to German, how far from Italian literatures of the day: and every West Indian must have experienced that strange jolt to the spirit that occurs when we read a book that obviously was written for UK eyes only because of its reference in the third person to the colonies and to colonials. The spirit seems to say then "*Friend, this book was not written for you. You were never in mind as part of the audience when the writer of this book phrased his sentences. You must write your own books for yourself and your people to read.*"

On the USA side, the West Indian comes with somewhat puzzled eyes and ears upon the note of protest against racial discrimination that runs like a dark theme played upon drums through the poetry and prose of coloured Americans. Even in a book like Langston Hughes's *Dream Keeper*, a book of poems specially selected for young people, where one appreciates

what is a triumph in modulations and musical variations with one's responses being used as the notes, and one appreciates the way in which poetry naturally flowers out of American negro speech — even here, to a West Indian, the note of protest obtrudes like the soft sound of muffled gongs. In the recent Hughes and Bontemps anthology *The Poetry of the Negro* there is a feel about the poems in the Caribbean section which is different from those in other parts of the book. In sociological terms that difference comes perhaps from the fact that unlike the coloured American who is part of a black minority in a white continent, the West Indian is in the majority in his region.

My intention is a simple one. I believe that it is better — more stimulating and more creative to be a West Indian writing in this region today than to be a writer in the UK, or the USA. Because we live in a young community, the influence of a creative writer here is much greater than that of writers in an older and more established society. A West Indian writer can partly express, partly create the values of his region: he is helping to lay the foundations of a new community and eventually a new culture, and thus partly escapes the frustration that may beset his counterpart in London or America.

The West Indies is a small manageable cultural unit at the beginning of its responsible history, and we writers have a chance to help shape it from the beginning. That is the great common responsibility and opportunity for you and me.

From a broadcast—

THE UNIVERSITY MEETS THE PEOPLE

by Rebecca V. Colman

When the ancient universities of Europe, like Oxford, Paris, Bologna, Cordova and others began to develop, roughly 800 years ago, there were no extra-mural departments, that is, departments with organised lectures and courses of study outside the walls of the universities. But on the other hand, those old universities were not so highly organised as they are today. They started off without any walls; there were no colleges as we know them — not for many years. Students old and young simply gathered around the teachers —wherever they happened to be, usually in their homes, sometimes in the open air.

In the famous case of one mediaeval lecturer, Peter Abelard, history records how the students emptied the schools of Paris to follow him wherever he went. Even when attacked by his colleagues and virtually exiled from the University, he was still able to draw students from all over Europe to hear him. They didn't say then "*Oh I went to Paris*" but rather "*I studied under Peter Abelard*" or whoever it happened to be. And so it has always been. The real university is not confined to one place or selected places. It is to be found wherever students co-operate freely tor the extension of the bounds of knowledge. Thus, more by accident than design, certain centres of learning in Europe gradually established a reputation for scholarship. These centres attracted more and more of the best students and teachers, and in time colleges were built and the universities as we know them developed.

Now it was in the spirit of those very early years, before colleges were built, that extra-mural departments have developed. It was felt that in the case of the older universities like Oxford and Cambridge, higher education was fast becoming the prerogative of the few, particularly those who could afford to pay the high fees. Many people inside the Universities too, felt that they were becoming cut off from everyday life because not enough ordinary people living ordinary lives had anything to do with them. As the famous

committee which set up the Oxford extra-mural department in 1907 put it:

"a living University is not a self-contained and independent unit out an organ of society growing with its growth and nourished by its vitality"

and it was hoped that through the extra-mural department a new energy might be imparted to academic life inside as well as outside the walls. And in fact over the past 50 years some of the best work of the English universities has been done in connection with external studies. Research of many kinds has been undertaken by extra-mural tutors, often helped by their adult students. For example, at the end of this recent war, when Britain was carrying out a series of surveys covering conditions of work and production problems in her major industries, an extra-mural tutor in North Staffordshire with the co-operation of some adult students, carried out some research into conditions in the pottery industry, and the report they published contained material which has been of national value. Class members themselves have won adult scholarships and gone inside the universities to study for degrees. Some have become famous. Many have won positions of public responsibility and not a few are members of Parliament. The English extra-mural department in effect have brought a two-fold benefit, new life to the older universities, and to the people as a whole the opportunity to share in the advantages of higher education, thus helping themselves to become more effective members of the community in which they live.

Out here in the British West Indies, the new University has well and truly started in the original spirit of the old Universities of Europe. As many of you know, the teaching staff and the students are not waiting for the buildings to be completed. They have already started their work in temporary buildings at Mona in St. Andrew, Jamaica.

In England, adult students often refer to the extra-mural department as the People's University, meaning not just the organisation which provides lecturers for the people, but something which they themselves actually run. Adult students

over there form their own committees in each town or village. They decide on their programme of classes, apply for extra-mural tutors, and take full responsibility for organising the courses successfully. British Guiana has already taken a lead in this direction out here. One Sunday at a meeting I attended in Agricola, a local committee of 10 prospective adult students was elected by the audience on the spot. They have chosen their Chairman and Secretary. The success or failure of the extra-mural department in British Guiana (as over all the West Indies) depends upon the people who make use of it.

1949 Convention Review by the Hon. Secty.

INTELLECTUAL LIFE IN BRITISH GUIANA

The B.G. Union of Cultural Clubs owes its birth to the visit to British Guiana in 1943 of Mr. Harold Stannard who was travelling around the West Indies as Cultural Adviser to the British Council in this region.

Mr. Stannard made a profound impression on the Guianese people with his addresses to various groups, and in some of his lectures he deplored the insularity of these Clubs (I use his words) "*which were keeping alive the love of learning and of the arts, and which were ploughing a lonely and difficult furrow so far from the world's intellectual centres*". It is under his stimulus that the many streams of mental and artistic life in the community were brought in happy contact with one another, and so gathered strength from their confluence as the British Guiana Union of Cultural Clubs.

The time was ripe when Mr. Stannard came. For the last 20 years the descendants of the peoples who had come into Guiana from Africa, Asia and Europe to live and work here, have been evolving a way of life of their own. Innumerable clubs and groups have sprung up in answer to a community urge to give expression to a varied intellectual curiosity, and although the mortality rate was, and still is high, the persistence with which these clubs are replaced reflects the vitality of the urge and may be traced even in the Union's limited 7-year span of records.

The Union is an association of organisations, in Georgetown and in the rural areas which count among their aims, the mental and aesthetic development of their members. The framework the Union provides is one in which its affiliated clubs share activities, but the Committee of Management has gone beyond that and attempted to put into focus the intellectual life of the community. In its attempt to build a tradition, it also seeks to commemorate those persons and events in Guiana's history of which we can all be proud, despite our differing origins.

Union Clubs fall roughly into 3 groups. First, there is a substantial group of High School Old Students Associations and Youth Clubs sponsored by religious denominations, and these become affiliated to the Union in their search as young people for personal development. Then there is a main body of literary, dramatic, musical and adult debating Societies, and of Art and Science groups which are supported by members of older age. They are each specifically pursuing one main line of endeavour, but they seek fellowship and all round development in the Union, and they are conscious of the value of a framework which may be able to co-ordinate and focus their efforts, and to insist on higher intellectual and artistic standards. There is a third group, a heterogeneous collection of associations of teachers, journalists and welfare workers, which incidentally promote higher cultural standards for its members. In short, the Union is a framework which can embrace any organized group of persons pursuing a development activity in the extra-economic field.

In a review of the Union's activities, it is perhaps best to dissociate the internal and external aspects, to consider first the domestic relationships, — "*the friendly and active co-operation among clubs*" which is one of the declared objects of the Union — and then to see the Union's relationships with other sections of the community and the general public: as the objects state, the Union is "*to take joint action and make joint representation in all matters affecting culture in British Guiana.*"

For easy identification, it has become the policy to hold Union meetings on the evening of the last Monday in every month. Union Night has taken various forms, but the Committee of Management has been influenced by the consideration that projects should not be planned for the Union's programme, which could be carried out as well by constituent Clubs acting on their own. All Union meetings are open to the public as well as to members of member clubs, and although specific pleasure or benefit flows to club members taking part or assisting as audience, many activities are direct presentations to the community of co-operation among the clubs. One of the endeavours of the Committee to ensure friendly co-operation among the affiliated bodies is a Better Acquaintanceship campaign with clubs interchanging

guest speakers, or the Union bringing together on one platform speakers from various bodies (as with the Youth Clubs) to share experiences, syllabuses and techniques.

There is one type of club and public service upon which the Union has been continuously engaged, the high-level discussion of important topics, books and reports affecting British Guiana and the West Indies. At one time or other the Union has discussed the West Indian University and West Indian Federation, it has examined closely the Reports of the Royal Commission, and the 1944 Caribbean Conference, and meetings were arranged at which introductory speakers on certain aspects of those two important books, *Capitalism and Slavery* by Dr. Eric Williams and *Welfare and Planning in the West Indies* by Professor T. S. Simey, led the general discussions which followed.

But Union discussions have ranged farther afield and also back in time. At one presentation the Union used the resources of its member clubs to present Europe in the 17th century. Not only were lectures given, but the panel of speakers used the piano and the epidiascope to crowd into 2 hours the main development of history, literature, art, science and religion of the continent of Europe between 1601 and 1700. The enthusiasm with this was received, encouraged the Union to repeat the idea, on a more ambitious scale for Europe in the 18th century, and with an even greater response.

This next section of the review passes more definitely from the active and friendly co-operation of clubs to the projection of the Union upon the community as a director of its intellectual life.

Perhaps the most important single activity of the Union, so far as the public is concerned, is the Debating Competition which it has sponsored every year since 1943 for the Patrick Dugan Memorial Shield. Generally 9 or 10 debating clubs and societies take part in this competition which honours the memory of an important Guianese advocate, ensures that the propositions debated relate to problems facing British Guiana, and by the public fortnightly meetings arranged for the competition when the same proposition is debated at different centres in Georgetown on the same night, reaches out to the general public and stimulates further discussion in homes and work-places.

An Union act of even greater value than the Debating activity, and one the benefit of which will grow with years, is the collection of a library of more than 300 books, pamphlets and papers on Guiana or written by Guianese; many of them are rare and most of them are now out of print. But for this collection, many of these books which stand at the beginning of our Guianese tradition may probably have perished and joined other things violently destroyed or silently gone out of mind.

Each annual convention is an occasion at which every member of every Club has the right to be present, and convention time is really Open House to the public. There are presentations of dramatic and musical anthologies with the member clubs of the Union appearing on the same platform. In this way, the Union has annually brought together on one programme, the music and drama that spring from Africa, America, Asia and Europe, and the performance last year by a combined choir of several of the Union clubs which sang choruses from Handel's '**Samson**' points to the possibility of great developments in this field.

The Shakespeare Week which the Union sponsored this year for the first time seems to have come to stay. Planned to take place around the date April 23, traditionally observed as Shakespeare's birthday, it consisted of an essay competition open to all young people under 18 in British Guiana, a series of public lectures at various city centres delivered by citizens prominent in the cultural field, radio talks and features planned to synchronize with the project; a display of books at the Georgetown Public Free Library and a welcome, though belated, showing by one of the commercial cinemas of '**Henry V'** for school children and adults.

The Union is in close touch with other bodies working along similar lines; with the Royal Agricultural and Commercial Society and the British Council, it is represented on the Combined Cultural Committee, and there is a liaison with the West Indian University Extra-Mural Department. Already, previous conventions have discussed the Union's responsibilities to the secondary school population which leave their training institutions every year, to the mass of adults in a community of varying social and cultural strata and to the people who

live in villages and other rural communities. This year's Convention follows other lines of responsibility and will attempt to discuss and formulate the standards desirable in the press and the broadcasting system, and there are also to be formulated at some future date, the Union's statements of standards desirable in those other media of information and education which influence and determine public taste — namely public libraries and the cinema.

One of the Union's most important reachings out of the hand to the community, *Kyk-Over-Al*, is instance of co-operation between the Union and one of its affiliated clubs, the British Guiana Writers Association. Their half-yearly literary and critical publication, *Kyk-Over-Al*—watching over the Guiana scene—takes its name for an old Dutch fort now in ruins to remind us of our Amerindian and Dutch heritages, and it is generally becoming recognised in British Guiana and throughout the British Caribbean as an instrument to help forge a Guianese people, to feed their discussions of the country's problems and way of life with information and opinion, to make them conscious of their possibilities of spirit and the intellect and to record common pride in the literary and cultural tradition of the past and the achievements of the present, without in the least detracting from the group aims of clubs or their autonomy.

There is no Muse of fire to work upon your imaginary forces and unlike dramatists, secretaries may not ask an audience to piece out with their thoughts the imperfections of their rough and ready pens, but the social scientist would probably describe the Union of Cultural Clubs as an instrument to help build a community in British Guiana.

In this "*dear land of the six peoples*" as a former Bishop of Guiana affectionately described us, history shows that the pursuit of economics and politics has tended to keep apart the main sections of a community and even to bring them into active competition. It is in the activities of literature, music and the arts, that the hope lies of knitting together all the diverse elements in a young community. Because no matter what may be the race or the social level, when individuals meet for the enrichment of the mind and the refreshing of the spirit, then true community begins to emerge.

REVIEWS

The Poet of Guiana, Walter Mac A. Lawrence

Throughout the West Indies there has been a flowering of literature and the arts which proves that a nation is being born in this region. This literature is full of the underlying agreement and has the family signature and when you look at the fine quality of the literary work being released today in any part of this area (Victor Reid's novel *New Day* written in Jamaica and Derek Walcott's poems written in St. Lucia) — you will realise that the feel and direction are the same.

In British Guiana the contributions to this national literature emerging have not been as many as they might have been, even by those Guianese writers now living, and among the dead we number only a few whose work has been published in book form. Leo's *Poetical Works* and his *Local Lyrics*, A.R.F. Webber's novel *Those that be in Bondage*, Mittelholzer, are names we remember immediately (and they are not many) and I am glad that P. H. Daly has done this service to the memory of Walter Mac A. Lawrence, by selecting and editing his poems.

As I know Lawrence left behind him a mass of stories and poems and it was a labour of love for Daly to go through this material and make available to the public this addition to our Guianese and West Indian literature, every Guianese should get a copy for reading and for his library, both as an act of homage to a fine poet and also as an investment in the West Indies.

The collection has been truly named *The Poet of Guiana* because Lawrence was essentially the country's poet. Guiana made him her lyre, and for 20 years he celebrated the sounds and sights of Guiana both on the coast and in the forest. In a special sense we would look upon him today as the poet of the Hinterland and he wrote compelling and attractive verse about our rivers, the Essequibo and the Mazaruni, and about our national asset, Kaieteur.

Lawrence can create fine pictures of the moonlight and other natural effects. I find that morning was a theme that

attracted him most of all: in these 40 pages of his poetry you will come upon passage after passage where he develops an image based on morning. Once it is *"the silver dawn has blushed into the rosy glow of morn…with the radiant marbled sky all ravished by the tropic sun"*, on another occasion he calls it *"the glory of skies when the morning comes up once more"*, then it is the line *"or ever the rosy fair finger of Morning re-opens the glittering portals of day."* You will find other gems scattered through the pages, and there is the complete jewel-poem **'Dawn'** in this collection.

One important feature about Lawrence's poetry is the massiveness of his conceptions. **'The Ode to Kaieteur'** has it and I find that it is mixed in all his portrayals of Guiana's forests and hinterland. He likens the forest to a *"great cathedral unlit, and draped in twilight mystery"* or he will call on the southern breezes to *"blow the crimson twilight out"*. There was perhaps something continental about him and that is the quality which British Guiana brings to West Indian Federation.

In his technique also there was this tendency to the long rolling rhythm and to the highly latinised word and he was a master of the long metres that Swinburne made popular in Victorian poetry. Daly has, and I think rightly, stated that Lawrence's work has on the whole an architectural form which his rhetorical ambiguities never affect. But generally his lines run pure in their massive periods, as in his '**Allegory on Guiana**' composed in 1931 on the Centenary of the Union of Essequibo, Demerara and Berbice. The fair maiden Guiana, is instructed by old man Time but despoiled by strangers from afar.

In his introduction Daly has stressed Lawrence's ability to tell a tale in verse and there will be others like me who would wish that there were in evidence more of the long poem **'Meromi**.' This is a story of a Guianese Garden of Eden where Meromi dies and her husband Hector is broken-hearted but the Avenger by the force of his will orders the villain Lucius Wilson to leap into the river and slay himself.

I was disappointed at the exclusion of certain poems by Lawrence that I have grown to love —**'Futility'** with its striking theme *"the flowers are dead"*, the section about Echo and its roundelay from Meromi and the lines beginning:—

"O beautiful Guiana"

that children in British Guiana should all have by heart: and there are one or two extracts from his long philosophic poem — '**Meditation**' — that I looked for in vain. But then I suppose an editor has his reasons and his preferences,

In the history of Guianese poetry, the place that Walter Mac A. Lawrence holds is a high one. In the encouragement that he gave to younger writers like myself and in his own life and work, he was a type of the human spirit overcoming limitations. This book of poems, published seven years after his death, is typical of that triumph over circumstance of which he continually sang.

Poetry is one of the cementing forces that make a nation and Lawrence takes his place as of right among the writers who are trumpeting to bring the West Indies to birth.

— A.J S.

Dennis Williams' Paintings

The work of Dennis Williams in his four studies of the plantation is to my mind a momentous and significant happening—an important statement of the problem of values by a modern artist. In his first statement, so to speak, Dennis Williams stirs plantation figures to life. They appear like mythical figures whose mutilation in the past have succeeded finally in cutting to the bone their sentient anguish. The huge moon face of seer or saint or rapist rises to overwhelm in abstraction the peculiar anguish of the woman of the plantation. This study has a perspective of fable—a perspective of peculiar innocence that has its roots in a conviction of universality.

Dennis Williams suddenly in his second statement retires from the fabulous into a severe compression that is at once profound, perhaps a sinister fusion of the anguish of the woman and the intentions of the seer. In this deep retirement the strange eyes of the artist view with an intent and tremendous resolution or irresolution the fabric of his world. He is a revolutionary perhaps. The roots of chaos lie beneath his contemplation.

When I saw Williams' third statement—which was some weeks after I had seen the first two—I must confess I was taken by surprise. The third painting was a re-statement of the first study but with major transformations. The revolutionary of the second painting had gone deep or had disappeared temporarily and in his place the early plantation figures had acquired a degree of sophistication and knowledgeability that was in one sense an acceptance of the world on its own terms: in Machiavellian terms perhaps. This masterly compression reveals what Kenneth Romney-Towndrow at the Berkeley Galleries describes as Williams' "*strange and rather ominous sympathy between the urgently primitive and the most sophisticated eroticism of the School of Paris*." And this remark may be studied as a corollary to a degree of passion in Williams painting similar to the feeling in West African art. To my mind the same memorable and compelling mysticism works miraculously in William's work as in West African art which has deeply influenced the European genius of modern times.

In Dennis Williams' fourth statement the whole problem of his work comes to light: the problem of a fusion that is universal or of a free association. Williams has poured a degree of colour and light into this painting that is a variation on his sombre treatment in the other studies. Here the sophisticates of the plantation, the figures who appeared as symbolic appearances of night life, of city life in the third painting are definitely set for the ball, for a gay time. There is a movement of gaiety in this painting that may appear entirely divorced from the amazing compression of Williams' intent contemplation of the world in his second painting. But this I believe would be misleading. The gaiety of this fourth movement is surprising perhaps, but nevertheless profoundly the opposed facet of the second painting. Here the artist is just as intent on a retirement but in terms of light and colour. He still has to solve the problem of a marriage of day and night. So that the roots of this fourth painting lie either in evasion or in the artist's consistent revolutionary contemplation of toe world in order to meet its challenge of complex unity in a venture into the world of meaning and substance,

The closest parallel to Dennis Williams' painting in the West Indies is in the work of Wilfredo Lam, the great Cuban painter. Williams' work is, like his, an amazing compression of the mystical, the tragic and the beautiful. And both artists are vitally concerned in their work with the approach to the particular and the universal.

—WILSON HARRIS

A Note on *Colour Prejudice*

A psychological debt is not paid with words of admission by the guilty party. One would think that both Margery Perham and Sir Alan Burns would be intelligent enough to realise that. When she in her broadcast on the '**Colonial Dilemma'** and he in his book *Colour Prejudice* (both of course addressed to an English audience) made statements to the effect that the coloured or colonial peoples, must "*forget the past*", and stop *"brooding on past injuries*", and realise "*that the handicaps under which their race labours are not due to the machinations of others but at a very large measure to their own short-comings*", one can only say that racial tensions are not eased by these words Australia, the USA and South Africa are too near with their legal and social discrimination policies against coloured peoples, and just as the Nuremburg Trials were necessary after the last war to prove the guilt of the German aggression, so it seems there will have to be some emotional satisfaction given to the coloured peoples of the world, before the new leaf can he turned in relationships between them and a dying Europe. Words don't do that.

This has been negative so far but in April a positive appeal against coloured prejudice in the manner desired by the W.I. Royal Commission was made in British Guiana. In his Town Hall lecture on the Commonwealth, Professor Harlow had asked for harmony between black and brown peoples in Guiana and the President of the B.G. Union of Cultural Clubs, seconding the vote of thanks, made a most impressive impromptu appeal to the English living in Guiana to co-operate in their own conduct against prejudice. It was a classical "*Et tu Brute*".

I don't suppose it is fair to suggest that the Board of Trade should mark certain books '*'Not for export*", but most coloured people must have felt sorry to see Sir Alan Burns blundering his way into the complex web of relationships that we call colour prejudice. Poor Burns! In so many places he turned in his book of that title and put his foot into it and the pity is that he was obviously trying to be hopeful. The truth seems to be that unless the British civil servant is given the special training

for work in the colonies advocated by Major Sir Ralph Furse and Professor Simey, the career of the civil servant will unfit him for properly understanding the psychology of West Indians and other typical educated coloured persons. He is not sufficiently Christian to believe in the worth of the individual, and in his manipulation of the conventional courtesy of the Civil Service he does not fully appreciate other values than his own. Even historians like Coupland, Eric Walker or Harlow underestimate the great bank of emotional resentment in India, or South Africa or the West Indies, which they think they can conjure away with an appeal to reason. A US State official like Blanshard or a British colonial governor like Burns amuse with their conscious or unconscious attempts to besmirch the respective British colonial or the US Southern States records — they amuse but hardly do more.

Simey does better than the others because he was an expert. He was a social scientist trained to the sympathetic approach, detached as a Professor should be, from actual administration, and living in the West Indian environment for a short period only. (Incidentally, Burns had not read Simey).

Surely there should be a scientific approach by Europe and America to this matter of racial relations, this problem of the 20th Century which is so important that millions of people remember the atom bomb mainly as a frightful engine of destruction dropped by a white upon a yellow civilisation.

— AESOP

HIS FINEST HOUR

by J. A. V. Bourne

Christmas Eve!

Georgetown is in festival mood. There is a nip in the breeze and the sky is bright with the glorious light of the full moon.

In the garden of a cottage in Church Street, crickets chirp musically and away in the distance, comes the faint sound of carols...but little Margaret Ann does not hear...she is sound asleep.

Two hours ago, Margaret's Christmas party was in full swing. On a gaily decorated table in her drawing room a huge cake, surrounded with bon-bons and chocolate creams, feasted the eye.

Parcels of gifts were piled high and the Christmas Tree, beautifully lighted with red and blue lights and glittering stars, held many gifts from her little friends.

The children danced merrily around this table to tunes on a gramophone. Everyone chattered happily in anticipation of the dainties displayed before them. A big tray of ice-cream brought immediate silence as cups and paper spoons were shared out. Her little friends sat on the carpet in friendly groups and the joy of eating added to the entertainment.

Then the party was over and the last little one had departed. Margaret was on the point of going to bed. But she couldn't wait for Santa Claus, so she begged her Mother to undo one of the parcels, as she was impatient to see what it contained.

"*What a beautiful doll, Mummy!*" she exclaimed and she hugged it to her bosom and danced around.

Now, the cottage is silent. Margaret is asleep. Beside her lies her new, beautiful doll.

II

In a heap in the corner of her bedroom there are lots of old toys that have had their day. Discarded now, many of them broken, they lie in sad disorder.

Among them is a little man of a RAG DOLL, nicknamed Victor. Poor fellow, no one notices him nowadays. His playtime hours are over.

In dreams, nothing is impossible. Margaret stirs in her sleep and dreams...!

...Who is that waving his stick and dancing merrily across the floor?

Margaret is astonished; she rubs her eyes.

"*I wonder if he can see me*?" she thinks to herself.

There is a wonderful blue twinkle in the room and all the toys are alive.

The rag doll beckons to her imperiously.

"*Come!*" he whispers in a clear, crystal voice, and she follows him into the drawing room.

Victor is not as tall as the low coffee table, but nothing daunts him. Springing on to the piano stool, he waves Margaret to a seat and then says: "*Listen!*"

He plays '**Nelly Bly**' on the piano. Margaret sits in the Morris chair and listens, fascinated. Dreams can have a touch of joy, too!

Suddenly. Victor stops and, turning to her, points with his finger. In a soft, crystal voice, he says...

"Lo-o-o-ok!"

Gliding through the drawing room door is her new dolly. She is dressed in a bronze taffeta suit spiced with dusty pink. She enters, and Victor advances and takes her little hand in a friendly way.

"*What is your name?*" he asks.

"*Fanny*", the new Christmas doll replies.

"Where have you come from?"

"A Christmas tree."

Margaret laughs, amused at this conversation.

Victor becomes serious. *"I must show you around, but first let us play. I am fond of music, you know,"*

The piano stool is twice his height, and Fanny is only ten inches in her high-heeled shoes.

"Hold my hand." he says, and whispers a magic word *"Kratos!"*

They soar into the air together and alight on the stool. Together, they play a marvellous duet by Mozart. Before it is finished, Teddy Bear, who is silently looking on from a corner, makes a hop towards the piano. He is jealous and shakes the stool. A black elephant lumbers across the room

and joins him. Together they shake the stool and Fanny falls off. Trying to save herself, she grasps a cord of knitting wool which is hanging from a nearby table. They all become entangled in the strands. Victor jumps down and joins in the fray.

He picks up his wand, which is lying on the carpet, and strikes right and left. Teddy is the first to extricate himself, and he hops on to the Rocking Horse, away from the crowd, and rocks selfishly.

Soon the others are free. Victor waves his wand over the sleeping wooden doggie and he jumps to life.

"March!" he cries and, led by himself and Teddy Bear, they troop round the drawing room.

Margaret sits watching the players in utter bewilderment wondering what will happen next.

Victor advances towards her.

"Join us!" he says in his crystal voice. But Margaret is reluctant. Bending forward, she picks him up gently and places him on a nearby coffee table.

"Speech!" someone cries. Victor waves his wand and there is silence.

"Fellow comrades," begins Victor. *"Tonight is **our** night. Our final night. **Our finest hour!** Never has so much been owed to us by so many!"*

"Toil and tears!" the crowd murmurs.

"Tomorrow is Christmas Day. Tomorrow no one will notice us again. You see that Christmas Tree," he points with his wand... *"it is filled with NEW toys, fresh delights for the children in this house to play with."*

There is a deep pause.

"Yes", sobs Teddy Bear, *"We'll all be thrown into the corner and no one will play with us any more."*

"That's why we should make the most of these last few moments. Let's start on the chocolates and bon-bons." cries the elephant.

Bow-wow harks approval.

"Silence, all of you!" cries the Rag Doll, and continues:

"Our life is at the end. Our playfulness over...and Margaret Ann will soon have no more use for us. Playmates all, this is our final hour. What shall we do? Now shall we spend it? Shall we go down into forgetfulness, unwept, unhonoured and unsung...or shall we

take up arms against a sea of oblivion and march against the new toys?"

"Tears and toil!" someone shouts.

Victor pauses and Margaret Ann feels that tenseness of the situation. Everyone looks at Fanny, but no one moves.

Victor gazes around for a while, and then continues:

"Playmates. I see that my words do not move us to warlike acts. But, although I am a battered rag-doll, I still have sawdust and courage in my boots. You see this wand? Watch!"

And Victor jumps down and running towards the wall of the room, he reaches up and touches a little switch.

There is a tiny click and, immediately, a Great Wind sweeps across the drawing room from an electric fan...blowing down papers and tossing the branches of the Christmas Tree helter-skelter. Balloons are blown off and sail around the room, adding to the confusion. One bursts with a loud bang as it touches the piano. Toy motor cars run here and there, and a fire-lorry crashes into Teddy, knocking him into the corner...

Victor runs around the room wildly, shouting: *"Kratos! Kratos!"*

An aeroplane soars swiftly through the air. Fanny hides under the piano stool. There is pandemonium...

When will it end...?

Time passes swiftly in Margaret's dream. Presently, a clock strikes...One, two, three, four, five...!

Our finest hour!

Suddenly, everything is quiet.

Dawn has come and this long and exciting dream has faded. Little Margaret is smiling now in her sleep—smiling happily. She tosses, becomes restless...her hand reaches out and grasps her beautiful new Christmas doll.

Gradually, her eyes open...open wide through the window into a new and happy Christmas morning.

Tumbling out of her cot, Margaret, now fully awake, cries excitedly...

"Mummy! Mummy!"

"What is it, darling?" her mother answers, coming into the bedroom.

"That rag doll, Victor!" She points to the corner. *"See him? Last night I dreamed...*

(With acknowledgments to the 1948 Xmas Tide)

ISSUE 10

EDITORIAL NOTE

In the belief that despite its acknowledged shortcomings it would be welcome to readers and writers in Guiana and the West Indies, the present issue of *Kyk-Over-Al* is devoted almost entirely to a Summary Survey of Writing in the West Indies. This departure from the form of miscellaneous contributions is not unknown among little Reviews and in this instance it had additional persuasion as the immediately available material allowed an Editor to bring forward the publication months from June and December to the less competitive ones of April and October.

With this tenth issue, *Kyk-Over-Al* completes its second volume and it becomes possible and convenient to carry through certain re-organizations. For instance, the page-size of *Kyk* No. 11 will be smaller than in this issue, with an increase in the number of the pages, and at the same time the publication will be under the literary management of an Editorial Board consisting of Richard Allsopp, Eugene Bartrum, Celeste Dolphin, H. B. Hinds, Lloyd Searwar and the writer. There are many reasons for a Board where there had been only an Editor,—for one, there are more persons engaged on preparing and obtaining contributions, and for another the personnel of the Board will be able among them to cover several facets of Guianese community life. Apart from their general interests, the members of the Board are respectively knowledgeable and specially interested in education, the short story, music and drama, painting and philosophy.

It is under this new literary management that *Kyk* No. 11 will appear in October, 1950. For that issue Cameron Tudor has promised to keep a long-standing agreement to write an article on History or the Historians in the West Indies; Allsopp will review the history of the Guiana Scholarship; and Searwar has promised to organize a Symposium on Man. One of the features to be added is a section reviewing films.

—A.J.S.

THE LITERARY ADVENTURE

of the

WEST INDIES

by

A. J. SEYMOUR

KYK-OVER-AL, APRIL, 1950.

INTRODUCTION

Although this is not the Dictionary of the English Language I find much comfort in Samuel Johnson's confession, hands down, when the lady mentioned by Boswell asked him how he came to define pastern as the knee of a horse. The celebrated Doctor at once replied: "*Ignorance, Madam, pure ignorance*." Because that is the answer I will give to any charge of omission or inadequate perspective where this essay on the literature of the West Indies is concerned. And I add a remark made in British Guiana last year by Vivian Edmiston, an American educationist, "*the trouble with pioneers is that they are less able and less well qualified than the people who come after them.*"

This is pioneering work with all the scars of adventure upon it, but the idea to put together these observations and I fear, often impromptu comments, arose a few years back when I found myself exchanging with fellow writers in the West Indies courtesy copies of our respective bids for immortality within the covers of books. I could find in the bookshops many an essay on the work of the contemporary English and American writers but I could not as Solomon puts it, drink running water out of my own well. There was nothing readily available on the literature being shaped in the West Indies. The little reviews carried occasional articles and even individual studies but there was nothing to record the overall design of a region's search for its literary soul. Rather presumptuously I am trying to help create such a record.

The scope of these essays (which will be read, I hope, in conjunction with the '**Open Letter to West Indian writers**' published in the December 1949 issue of *Kyk-Over-Al*) has been limited by the books that came to my hand and I trust readers and fellow writers who can correct my omissions and evaluations will not hesitate to do so. Because this is part of a co-operative movement to put on record the Literary Adventure of the West Indies and truth and comprehensive grasp cannot at present inhere in one man. Some fellow writers may feel that I have not done them justice and there

are conspicuous absences, e.g., that of the novels of Walter Adolphe Roberts, but may I hasten to assure one and all that the answer is Samuel Johnson's.

THE DISTINCTIVE WEST INDIAN QUALITIES

SYNOPSIS:
Writing in the West Indies at the end of 1948 — the spirit of the literary movement expressed by Telemaque and Clarke, Edna Manley, A.J.S. Peter Blackman, Bryan King and Swanzy — the oral tradition in the West Indies in (1) Creole folklore and (2) Amerindian legends — factors that modify the West Indian's assimilation of English literature—Gray's Elegy — the Sun in temperate and tropical countries.

At the end of 1948, the position of literature in the British West Indies was more favourable than it had ever been before. Derek Walcott, the 19-year-old school teacher in St. Lucia had published his *25 Poems* and this little booklet of 36 pages was being hailed, discussed and debated throughout the British Caribbean. Not even George Campbell's *First Poems* had made such a stir in the West Indies and drawn such attention as this book that began "*Inspire modesty by means of nightly verses.*" Alfred Knoff in New York had already accepted and was printing Victor Reid's novel *New Day* which is remarkable for an advance in language technique that borders on the poetic, and for enshrining in liquid prose some aspects of the political development of Jamaica in 1944. Edgar Mittelholzer's new novel of Trinidad *Morning at the Office* had probably been written and typed, though it had not yet been accepted by Hogarth Press in London. Langston Hughes was seeing through the Doubleday Press in New York the last proofs of his anthology *The Poetry of the Negro* which included the first selection published in book form of poems by writers in British Guiana, British Honduras, Jamaica, Barbados and Trinidad. Robert Herring, the editor of the English magazine *Life and Letters* had devoted two issues during the year to West Indian Literature, publishing work by Edgar Mittelholzer, Carberry, Ingram, Lamming, Virtue, Reid, Herbert and others. *Focus II* under Edna Manley had gathered together from Jamaica a 5-year crop of poems, stories and plays for its 1948 issue.

The Guiana Book was just off the *Argosy* Press in Georgetown. In Barbados, Frank Collymore had published *Flotsam* his third book of poems and in Trinidad there appeared *Burnt Bush*, the joint collection of two poets, H. M. Telemaque and A. M. Clarke. The editors of *Bim* in Barbados and *Kyk-Over-Al* in British Guiana were deciding to improve the quality and increase the sales of these periodicals on a West Indian basis. Throughout the year the '**Caribbean Voices'** programme of the BBC had stimulated writing of all varieties in these islands in the Caribbean.

Never before had literature been so alive in the West Indies.

THE SPIRIT OF THE MOVEMENT

I have said that this West Indian literature is no one man's dream but the dream of a people now beginning to be born; for evidence I have put together three statements of this spirit of the age finding expression in the various islands and countries in the region.

Here are some sentences written by H. M. Telemaque and A. M. Clarke in their preface to *Burnt Bush*. Dedicating their work to the New West Indian, they write:

"We are predominantly negro with Carib in both and a touch of European in one...It is the Caribbean in fact that has produced these poems...Trinidad and Tobago have educated us. We have nursed at their breasts and although the 'doctors' who controlled our infant diet were mostly English, we have had Caribbean nannies, the descendants of the famed and forgotten Kingdoms of Africa. We have toddled on Caribbean hills and plucked Caribbean flowers...We have stood without umbrellas in the open, under the bright Caribbean sun, and we have seen the trees burn and awaken again in their sweet glory of foliage.

So our poetry will have the doctor's diet but the limbs that stride and run upon the hill and the voice that halloes from the river where we bathe must have the Nannies' accent... Our figures of speech, our imagery will have come from the pulsing experiences we could extract from these lively lands, and our symbols, from the threads of social custom and from nature and from the literary tradition of the English language and from the fathomless depths of the veins."

The next voice is that of Edna Manley from Jamaica, wife of Norman Manley, and a distinguished sculptress in her own right. This passage comes from the lecture given some years ago on '**Art in the West Indies**' to a Social Welfare group in Jamaica.

She referred to the "*astounding phenomenon*" of a large collection of drawings and paintings by Jamaican elementary school children which she had to help judge. They depicted the yellow hair, pink faces and even blue eyes of the casual white person who passed on their horizon, but not a single work portrayed the features or characteristics of a Jamaican face, and she wrote:

"It was a problem that is linked with the colonial rule, in all coloured countries, a problem that is part of the domination of a foreign power...I met...poems where every metaphor, every image and symbol was inspired by a northern climate and a northern geography...one image stands out particularly vividly in a poem by a young lad, who had never left the heat of the St. Andrew plains, and yet he wrote 'the icy winds that pierced my soul'.

Our job then was to peel off layers and layers of artificial insincere, unthinking expressions that had no more genuineness of feeling than a parrot that has learnt a set of phrases which it repeats whenever its memory is evoked by a set of circumstances. We had to start by trying to open our eyes and our ears and hearts to our world around us as we saw it..."

Then I add this passage written in Guiana:

"...West Indian literature? What is it? It is a body of writings—histories, poems, novels, short stories, etc., produced by West Indian writers which express the West Indian atmosphere, as a whole (if they can) or catch the spirit of the peculiar qualities which distinguish (and yet link) the individual islands...In the Caribbean, the sun lays a different emphasis and a deeper shadow upon everything; and that difference is the beginning of the West Indian point of view. In this blazing sunlight, even the literature of the English language reads differently as if both Britain and America need to have their outlooks slightly re-adjusted in these sun-drenched lands."

I have gathered three other comments (written in a temperate climate) on the desirables of West Indian literature and perhaps as a result less subjective and also, in a curious sense, remote from the first three. It is as if these triplets of statements were made, first from the centre and then from the circumference of a circle. But here they are.

A West Indian living in London, Peter Blackman, in his article **'Is there a West Indian Literature?'** *(Life & Letters* Nov. '48) outlined the social conditions which have made the work of West Indian authors "*derivative in poetry and negligible in prose!*' They are, he says, the lack of a leisured class in the region, a deliberate expatriate attitude to the colonies by the Englishman and the fact that "*English patterns of thought, English canons of beauty are taught and accepted even at points where they are hostile to the self-respect of most West Indians".* Then Blackman goes on to add that "*...with the emergence of West Indian nationalism these facts and their consequences are being questioned and explored today."*

Quite the most interesting feature for me of this article is the recipe Blackman provides for the W. I. novelist "*who will one day make a great and permanent contribution to the literature of the world*." He must shrink nothing, neither Africa nor Europe nor any other continent that has helped to make the West Indies. He must have a deep understanding and a deeper sympathy when uncovering the violence and deceit of interracial dealings, a warm faith in human destiny and a better life, stern self-discipline, and courage against criticism.

In *Bim* No. 7 (June 1946) Bryan King, Fellow of Pembroke College, Cambridge, and one-time British Council Representative in Barbados, analysed what he considered necessary qualities in West Indian poetry. Born in St. Kitts, he had looked for W.I. imagery to remind him of native sights and sounds, for W.I. folk song, and for W.I. subject matter, for instance something about Columbus, Drake or Touissant L'Ouverture; but on reflection he decided that he should first seek out West Indian poets. With their "*awareness, perception, sensitivity, imagination and capacity for rhythmical expression; they will have (their) foot firmly planted on a W. I. soil. They will write about what interests them and about their own experience; in forms of rhythms which come naturally to them.*" He would not dictate

the subject, he says, whether epics about Columbus' or Hannibal's marches, odes to the Frangipanni or the Daffodil "*we must be careful to judge them by aesthetic standards rather than by their contribution to W.I. nationalism. They must be poets too and if true to themselves, they won't be able to escape producing something which has a special meaning for us. Thus they will compel us to remember poetry and enhance for us the brightness of our own W.I. world.*"

H. L. V. Swanzy has never been to the West Indies but he is producer of the BBC programme '**Caribbean voices**', and in the September 1949 issue of the *Caribbean Quarterly* he has discussed the qualities he perceives in the 750 odd manuscripts of prose and poetry by contemporary West Indians that have passed through his hands. "*The grand themes for tragedy and eventual triumph*" he claims "*are the self-realisation of a people through the acceptance and sublimation of the facts of slavery and the colour bar.*" Swanzy considers the effect of geography upon the spirit and puts into words what seems to him "*the very great problem in a potential Caribbean literature...the easy drift, the acceptance of the facile and immediately brilliant, the lovely flower that so quickly becomes over-blown.*"

"*The possible existence of something unique in West Indian poetic writing*"—that is what Swanzy makes the main subject of his enquiry. "*All the better writers show signs of their origins, and a more elaborate psychological examination might reveal even deeper mysteries,*" so he declares, and he seems to detect the special flavour of a new voice in the work of three Trinidad poets, Lamming, Herbert and Telemaque.

THE ORAL TRADITION IN THE WEST INDIES

At the back of West Indian writers there lies a considerable oral tradition in proverb and tale which is often neglected, sometimes despised, and certainly not as well known as it should be.

In the West Indies, the early narratives are folk tales brought in the slave ship companies from West Africa and handed down orally from generation to generation. There are also the tales told by the Amerindians as folklore of their individual tribes and of these, collections have been made by missionaries.

In addition to these tales belonging to the African and Amerindians there is a large body of creole proverbs which show in concentrated form all the qualities that mark man as a philosopher—perception, droll humour, wit, logic and pathos.

To illustrate what I mean, I shall give you a few of these Guianese creole proverbs, collected by Rev. Alfred Hardy in the 1890s when he was a Methodist minister here—"*Rockatone a ribber bottom dont know what rocka tone a road feel—(a proverb that has special, meaning for Guiana, this land of rivers).—Cockroach ebber so drunk, him no walk, in de fowl yard — when cockroach hab dance, him nebber ax fowl. —When blackman tief, him tief half a bit, but when white man tief, him tief a whole sugar plantation. —Sickness ride horse back come, tek walk foot, go away. —If mud fish come from ribber bottom and tell you alligator hab teet, beliebe him.*" You will have noticed the frequency with which domestic animals and insects and insensible natural objects occur in these proverbs. There are the cockroach, the fowl, the alligator, the rockstone, the river. In the great body of Shakespearean literature, scholars have shown that the imagination of Iago is peopled with images of beasts and animals looked at with ill-will, but here the references are homely and good humoured.

This preoccupation with the natural world is found also in Creole folk lore. At the end of the century, Mr. Lewis O. Inniss of Trinidad made a collection of folk tales and translated them out of Creole patois French. He tells us that some of the Creole idioms are untranslatable and he deplores the fact that the expressive gestures of the story-teller are lost, but his collection is full of stories how Morocoy (the tortoise) was invited to Gabilan's party (the chicken hawk) and how Compere Macaque (the Monkey) passed verdict on Compere Tiger for cursing his mother—the unpardonable offence where the Creole is concerned—and so on. In these stories occur the names and opinions of Compere Lapin (the rabbit), Compere Chien (the dog) and Compere Cheval (the horse), Compere Zagrien (the spider), Compere Babiche (the alligator), and Macomere Crab and Macomere Paan (the peahen). The stories that Inniss retells run along the lines of how the crab got that crack in his back and how the frog beat the horse in a 3-mile race and so on.

Dorothy Clarke is one of those who have done for Jamaica what Lewis O. Inniss did for Trinidad. She has selected 12 stories from the folk tales that abound in that island telling of *The Adventures of Brer Nancy* and published them in the Caribbean Home Library under that title. Instead of the monkey being the hero and the central figure as with Trinidad tales, these Jamaican stories are based on the cunning of the spider. Like yourselves, I often wondered why Anancy? I recently happened upon a manuscript in the late J. G. Cruickshank's possession which tells some of the strange beliefs of the African slaves. These beliefs varied from tribe to tribe but some had it that man was created by a great spider whom they named 'Anancy'. In that sentence you have a parallel origin to the mythology of Homer whose gods begot the heroes and ruled the world of men. The Nancy stories are an epitome of foresight and craft in personal relationships.

I want us to be fully conscious of the oral tradition of folk tales and proverbs, nourishing the imagination, that has come from West Africa and been handed down from generation to generation. Their wit must have been a release for the imagination of the Africans who provided slave labour on the sugar plantations of Cuba and the other West Indian islands. There were no tales of great heroic days of the past such as Homer could recite by the hour to the people who flocked about him in the open air in the Greek villages. The Africans had no Troy to mourn for lost warriors and by comparison their oral tradition seems perhaps mean; but their imaginations were sustained by these stories, in which animals of the forest and the village were personified to show courage and strategy and also an innate sympathy for the underdog and the handicapped (like the Africans as a people).

To this oral literature, that we may describe as the African heritage, we must add another body of tales from the Amerindians. I speak about this with some diffidence because I realise how little these tales have entered into the nourishment of the folk imagination of West Indians. The legends of the Caribs, Arawaks, Warraus and Acawaoios are now, it appears peculiar only to Guiana (and perhaps British Honduras) and these legends deal with stories that the Amerindians hand

down for generations of how the haiari root first came to be used to slay fish, how the great water-serpent's skin gave the red and green colours to the parrots and the scarlet purple and gold to the macaws, and how the alligator got the notches on his skin. But these legends do not only speak of beasts and animals. They tell stories that are parallels to Genesis and Exodus and the wars of Homer, stories of how the whole world was made and of the floods and how the earth was re-peopled after the destruction of the flood, and of wars between the tribes, and how the tribes became separate peoples.

And even beyond that do these legends go. They provide a hero who stands out of the group tradition and who has a resemblance to Ulysses of the Homeric legends. The name of this hero is Amalivaca and researchers state that this name occurs in tales found over an area of 4,000 square miles in this region. Amalivaca seems to have come from nowhere at the time of the abating of the great flood and he travels from tribe to tribe, imparting knowledge of a special kind, teaching the Amerindians how to make canoes, carving mystical signs upon the rocks—our Timehri—and then passing on to another tribe to share his knowledge there.

THE WEST INDIAN AND ENGLISH LITERATURE

We are left now with the task of a brief assessment of the legacy of the English language and literature taken over by the people living in the British West Indies, and I shall confine myself to a short statement of some of the factors and influences that modify the West Indian's assimilation of English.

Literature often expresses the response of the creative writer to his environment and there should be some experience of that environment by the reader for him properly to appreciate the literature. Some years ago when I had the good fortune to be received by Mr. T. S. Eliot, we discussed how being in London had helped me to appreciate fully the imagery in his lines "*when an underground train in the tube stops too long between stations, and the conversation rises and slowly fades into silence.*" Mr. Eliot said that he had not quite realised how localised and metropolitan the imagery was, and we contrasted

that with the universal image, used in the same book which everyone could understand *"of music heard so deeply that it is not heard at all but you are the music while the music lasts."* That is an extreme instance of the problem of appreciation that lies before the West Indian reader of English literature.

A great deal of the paraphernalia of the English poetic tradition is concerned with the seasons of a temperate climate, with its winter, spring and autumn, with its flora and fauna of the English countryside, the woods and the oak and the willow, the daffodil and the musk rose and the eglantine, the nightingale, and the eagle and the skylark and the swallow. The English poetic tradition has early in it the lyric "*Summer is a-coming in*" and how traditional are the references to the shepherd leading flocks by the brooks through the vales and over the meadows of the English countryside. Then again a large part of the patriotism and nationalism of the English is based on the immediate experience of the concrete repositories and relics of English history such as the cathedrals, the monasteries, and cloisters.

GRAY'S 'ELEGY'

If we take only a single well-known poem, such as Gray's '**Elegy'**, and look critically at the imagery —the curfew, the herd, the lea, the glimmering landscape, the ivy-mantled tower, the moping owl, the rugged elms and the shade of the yew tree—we shall see how much the West Indian imagination has to take for granted without the immediate experience. From that let us think for a moment of the large proportion of nature poetry in the English tradition and then we realise what a maimed appreciation we West Indians really bring to the reading of poetry written in England. Of course these drawings and paintings of English literature are transcripts of reality and I can speak of the disconcerting experience—there is no other word—of seeing for the first time the countryside and the relics of history that correspond to the images in one's mind stored there as a result of reading English poetry and history. But for the moment I want to emphasize the essential unreality of the images stored by themselves in the minds of readers in the West Indies.

In the West Indies, Nature is a stubbornly-tamed factor. Vegetation grows rapidly, we have forests instead of woods, bush instead of meadows, and we have to protect sugar and banana plantations and rice fields and provision farms against the encroachments of a tireless Nature which assumes the role of flood, drought and hurricane. The greenheart is our greater oak and the silk cotton tree with its forbidding memories is our yew tree.

THE SUN

Merely as an instance, I'd like to include a few references to the sun, selected to show the possible difference of response this single natural condition evokes from the English poets and from peoples of the West Indies.

To the poets of a temperate climate, the sun is a part of a landscape that observes order and proportion and falls into place. John Donne could write, in a love poem, "*Busy old fool, unruly Sun... since thy duties be to warm the world, that is done by warming us.*" For Milton mourning Edward King, the sun, the day-star, is an image of resurrection "*that with new spangled ore flames in the forehead of the morning sky* ;" Blake singing to the Muses, looks to find them perhaps "*in the chambers of the sun that now from ancient melody have ceased.*" In the '**Ancient Mariner**', Coleridge creates an almost equatorial heat to revenge the slain Albatross, "*All in a hot and copper sky, the bloody Sun at noon right up above the mast did stand;*" but I wonder is not this imaginative effort part of the bizarre effect of what is a strange poem in the English language?

In the tropical civilisations however and in the West Indies, the sun is the great life-giver. The Story of Egypt is the Story of the Sun and the Nile, with the sun as the creator-god and with the Sun's mythology spreading its weight over the nation. So it is perhaps in the West Indies.

Listen to these extracts—this first one from Jamaica has a quality that makes it a dedicated voice.

"I hold the splendid daylight in my hands
Inwardly thankful for a lovely day
Daylight like a sacrament in my hand
Amen..."

and the same George Campbell, writes later in New York "*And the sun bath followed me...Will it draw me back to the region..Where it draws up the trees to its sun face...*"

In a '**Portrait of Mr. X'**, Collymore uses it to illustrate his dreams of the image of "*the golden mystery of hidden suns, each sun a wild and glittering stallion tameless by night, but gelded for diurnial thoroughfare,*" and Derek Walcott in St. Lucia can speak of "*the sun's brass coin on his cheek.*"

Here finally is a complete poem on a West Indian's reaction to the sun...

Sun is a shapely fire turning in air
Fed by white springs
                    and earth's a powerless sun.

I have the sun today deep in my bones
Sun's in my blood, light heaps beneath my skin.
Sun is a badge of power pouring in
A darkening star that rains its glory down.

The trees and I are cousins. Those tall trees
That tier their branches in the hollow sky
And, high up hold small swaying hands of leaves
Up to divinity, their name for sun
And sometimes mine. We're cousins.

Sheet light, white power comes falling through the air,
—All the light here is equal-vertical—
Plays magic with green leaves and, touching, wakes
The small sweet springs of breathing scent and bloom
That break out on the boughs.
                    And sun has made
Civilisation flower from a river's mud
With his gossamer rays of steel.

(2)

These regions wear sharp shadows from deep suns,

The sun gives back her earth its ancient right
The gift of violence.

Life here is ringed with the half of the sun's wheel
And limbs and passions grow in leaps of power
Suddenly flowing up to touch the arc.
Upon this energy kin to the sun
To learn the trick of discipline and slow skill,
Squaring in towns upon an empty map
Hitching rivers to great water wheels,
Taming the fire to domesticity.

(3)

Sun is a shapely fire floating in air
Watched by God's eye. The distance makes it cool
With the slow circling retinue of worlds
Hanging upon it.
Indifferently near
Move other stars with their attendant groups
Keeping and breaking pace in the afternoon
Till the enormous ballet music fades
And dies away.

Sun is a shapely fire
Turning in air
Sun's in my blood

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

SYNOPSIS:
Sketch for a historical background—the slave-trade from Africa into the West Indies—African element predominant in present West Indian population and also at present in literary life — Comparison with growth of literature in South Africa, New Zealand and Canada.

I'm told of strange Catholic religious survivals among the Spanish Arawaks in Guiana and of Cromwellian folk tunes among the Jamaican Maroons, but the Spanish, Dutch and French legacies probably never had a real opportunity to work into the thoughts and feelings of the permanent inhabitants of this region and these elements have been almost obliterated and overlaid by the English element in the story behind the literature of the British West Indies. We have seen in the Trinidad folk tale how the French language element persists, and in the special form of popular lyric that we call the calypso, we see the Spanish musical marriage with African rhythm and French patois. Of course, when one remembers the unpredictable ways in which the folk imagination of a people can express itself or be stimulated, it is probable that the tang of idiom from foreign languages has become part of the W.I. outlook, as in the French patois that interlards Trinidad and St. Lucian speech. It is possible to show what I believe is a pleasing necklace of the sound of place-names which belong to Guiana alone and where Spanish, Dutch, English and Amerindian names mingle. There the romantic elements in language have come up to literary consciousness but like the visible and invisible proportions of the iceberg floating in the ocean, there must have been a much greater unconscious stimulus or enrichment than we can express..

Unfortunately there has not yet been written a social history of the West Indies, a volume that records how the common people, as well as the important people, lived and worked in this region between 1500 and the end of the 19th century. There are governors' despatches and diaries of

plantation owners like Chas. Waterton's, there are volumes such as Professor Newton's that tell of the impact of the European nations on the West Indies and describe the broad development of Spanish, Dutch, French and English policies. But although these volumes relate the system of government that the Spanish devised, and record the first transportation of Christian negro slaves born in Seville and other parts of Spain to Hispaniola in 1502, the account is not concerned with the story of the life of the people. The history by Bryan Edwards has a valuable first-hand description of the characteristics of the Creoles in Jamaica in 1793, and the emerging society of mulattos, sambos, quadroons, and mustees. (The mulatto was the offspring of a white father and a black mother, the sambo the offspring of a mulatto father and a black mother, the quadroon of a white father and mulatto mother, the mustee of a white father and a quadroon mother). But apart from that there seems to be little or nothing readily available and we must work forward largely on conjecture.

THE SLAVE TRADE

It was in 1518 that the Spanish began a system of government contract for the transportation of Africans from the slave markets of that continent to the gold mines of Hispaniola and the plantations of the West Indies. The early contracts conferred on slave-trading firms in Lisbon and Genoese in Seville the right of bringing in quantums of 4,000 slaves without paying duty or tax, but the records describe the confusion into which the system soon fell and the contraband of cargoes of slaves which merchants of all nations were soon pouring into the West Indies. It was a ferry of infamy from the heart of Africa, a stain of race spreading across the ocean.

There is no reliable total estimate I can find of the number of Africans who were poured into the Caribbean as a labour force of which disease and hardship took their toll. But we can frame an idea from the following facts. In 1517 the Spanish Government authorised the importation of 4,000 negroes annually into Hispaniola. Then between 1562 and 1563 Sir John Hawkins, taking part in the slave trade for the first time, secured about three hundred negroes which he disposed

of at Hispaniola. Bryan Edwards estimated the total importation of negroes into all the British Colonies of America and the West Indies between 1680 and 1786 at 2,130,000, being an annual average of 20,100.

It is stated that the British Slave- Trade reached its utmost extension shortly before the American War of Independence and there were then a hundred and ninety-two slave ships which had room for 47,000 negroes. But between 1502 and 1807 there are three centuries of this contraband or organised slave trade.

I labour the point of this forced immigration of the African because this element predominates in the population of the British Caribbean. It is true that in Trinidad and British Guiana there are at present considerable numbers of East Indians, and that throughout the area can be found small communities of English, Chinese and Portuguese. Except perhaps in Jamaica, the English have nearly always been birds of passage in these parts, completing tours of work at an administrative level and never directly identified with the life of the area. Of the others, the Chinese and Portuguese have been intent mainly on making their way in the economic life of each colony and have made little or no contribution to literary expression. Then again the original immigrants of these races were chosen from among the labouring classes and had no strong tradition of education in Fukien and Kuangtung or Madeira, the districts from which the originals of the B.G. population came.

The East Indians suffered from the same handicaps of lack of education and even in 1946 there was in B G. a 44% illiteracy among the East Indian population. The conditions under which they came to work in the West Indies have kept the majority congregated on sugar estates and have largely contributed against this majority pouring into the stream of the community's life the undoubted contributions that a Indian-based culture can bestow. Perhaps this will all be rectified when the new Indo-Caribbean Institute in Trinidad gets into its stride.

It is possible to argue that circumstances placed greater emphasis on the African's personal response than in any of the other racial elements. The African was aggressively uprooted from his tribal and family connections, and set down

in the W.I. in personal loneliness with the insufferable conditions of slavery ever present to keep any spirit of unity from fully developing again. The Europeans, the Madeiran Portuguese and the Chinese came in coherent groups and the Indians were allowed to bring their priests to help them to retain their way of life.

The personal response to situations is in many instances the beginning of a lyric urge to literature, and there may be some relationship between this heritage of lack of community and personal loneliness, and the present African predominance in the literary life of the West Indies.

I am on difficult ground here without the back-bone of historical evidence running through my speculations to give it the rigidity necessary in a theory, but I want to suggest that it is only among the creole population of the West Indies in the last hundred years that we can look for the kind of environment that would allow West Indian literature to emerge. First of all, apart from the English who were slave owners and the Africans who were slave-owned, the other elements only came after Emancipation in 1838, many of them are perhaps still affected by their heritage of labouring class characteristics, and it is only now that they can be said to have come out of their own cultural context and to have fully mastered the English language. But there was a great web of relationships between the black and the white, already existing before 1800 dawned, and the small influential English and the vast inarticulate African element had given rise by then to a creole society of mingling bloods in all percentages which ran the gamut from purest African to purest English stock (For British Guiana, Gravesande's country, there is a quiet and stubborn Dutch streak to be added to the record.) By 1800 the African and the Creole had lost their languages and dialect, (I refer you to Cruickshank's *Black Talk* for a graphic account of how slave-ship captain and slave owner co-operated in this divide-and-conquer strategy and to Chas. J. Latrobe's report to Lord Glenelg in 1838 on '**Education in Trinidad and Guiana'**) and had begun to take English as their tongue.

Dialects were emerging which in the truest sense were non-literary vernaculars. Some observers claim that physical

broadness of the African's mouth and his own speech tradition changed vowel values and that the rhythm of the African temperament modified pronunciation generally. I cannot confirm and we must remember also that there was little or no reading matter for creoles and Africans to keep the well of English undefiled, not until the Christian missions at the beginning of the 19th century began sending out ministers to teach the slaves to read the Bible and to set their feet on the high way to education and personal development.

I would like to quote here a relevant passage that I wrote some years ago in another connection.:

''The hostility of estate authorities, the outmoded legislatures which centred all power over the mass of uneducated peoples, in the hands of a few land owners—in this context literature is impossible. Of course there are books, books written by travellers from Europe, by resident ministers who record the habits of the people, by governors with a literary flair, by visiting naturalists. There are letters from soldiers stationed in the West Indies and despatches from officials, but no literature, no body of writings written by people born and growing up and dying in the framework of a West Indian life. Life as a whole is too stern a struggle for these economic slaves, disease exacts a heavy toll on vitality and even on life—there is no literature.

And then the thing begins to happen There are no dates but here and there in various colonies, a creole declares he wants to write a poem or book. The style is heavy, crude perhaps—there is a 'Voice from the Woods'. Then taking another instance from Guiana in 1883, Leo is writing from an invalid's bed. Notice that one is living in the woods as a schoolmaster, the other is on a bed of possible pain. Then, the creoles, the coloured people begin to form a middle class, education carries them as a group to higher, intellectual levels. There is a possibility of two generations of culture in a family so that the children may take over where their parents left off. People become conscious of their own West Indian outlook on life and things, and want to express it...and in this ever-enriched complex of cultural activities, more and more persons arise with the urge upon them to express themselves and the feeling of their country and there one has the beginning of a West Indian literature."

In his book *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, Thorstein Veblen has supported the necessity for the urge to write, the leisure to do so and the basic accumulated education in a language to come together before writing or literature can emerge. And we can place those requirements against the picture that a West Indian economist like Arthur Lewis draws of the conditions in British Colonial territories. There private foreign enterprise restricts and stifles the development of the enterprise of the peoples born in the area and has carried out a policy of using colonials only as manual and clerical workers. We can see then how social conditions have told against the emergence of literary effort in the British Caribbean.

COMPARISON WITH COMMONWEALTH LITERATURE

The development of literature in the West Indies runs a parallel course to its development in other parts of the British Commonwealth where English is the principal language, namely in Canada, New Zealand, South Africa and Australia. The parallel is not an exact one and the difference lies in the fact that the transplanted communities in those regions were European.

The position in South Africa is perhaps illustrated by Alan Paton's novel, *Cry, the beloved country,* first published in September 1948, already in its tenth impression, a fact which at least testifies to the widespread interest it has aroused.

For our purposes, we should observe that there are eleven million people in South Africa of whom 2.5 million are white, (more speaking Afrikaans than English), one million are coloured people and the remainder, 7.5 million, are the black people of the African tribes who have not been accorded the benefits of education.

Paton's novel supports our main contention that no literature in English can yet appear in South Africa that expresses the aspiration of the indigenous African or Dutch strain, and in his book *Africa Emergent*, Professor Macmillan tends to support this view. This makes more remarkable Paton's sympathetic study of the Zulu priest, Rev. Stephen Kumalo. In 1946 Kumalo leaves Ndotsheni (pronounced

Indotshen) in Natal to go to Johannesburg, the great city, to find his sister and his son. He arrives in the city in time to learn that his son has shot an English-speaking South African, Arthur Jarvis, who is the foremost champion of the natives and their advancement. Kumalo's son is tried and condemned to be hanged but the dead man's father, old Jarvis, is so moved by the evidence of his son's purpose that he, for the first time, becomes conscious of the native problem, feels a bond with the father of his son's murderer and devotes his wealth to regenerating the village and tribal district in which Kumalo lives.

It is a solid yet poetic cry of the heart over South Africa to show how the sorrows of sons can bring two races creatively together if they work the way of love not that of anger, but it also has a mirror of the broken tribes, and the consequent urban deterioration of Africans dispossessed of the land, the poetry of Ixopo and the hills, the sullen resentment of the Africans and their incipient political gropings.

Perhaps one of the most impressive features is the way the author follows the reactions, both sufferings and sins, of the bewildered umfundisi, Kumalo, who never lost his simple faith in God.

The picture of Johannesburg is clear and arresting and a South African in our midst vouches for the authenticity of the spirit of the book.

For the settlers, New Zealand was England with winter in July and among them there was a strong leaven of educated men and women who took with them and kept alive a love of books and learning; in Canada the strains from England, Scotland and France interacted one on another. Of Australia I know nothing so I cannot say whether the pattern would be the same. But weighted, the parallel still remains; there is a colonial period through which these literatures pass as apprenticeship before they find their own feet.

Let me illustrate by these extracts from Alan Mulgan in the PEN Book, *Literature and Authorship in New Zealand*:

"In the early days, there was little leisure for the pursuit of letters and if any so engaged himself, the public he could appeal to was small. All this time New Zealand was going through the slow process of finding itself. Most of the older generation of colonists were born overseas and were at heart English, Scottish, Welsh or Irish…They naturally saw things through the eyes of their homeland. They thought in terms of April Spring and Snow Xmases or robins and hedgerows. Indeed some off them deliberately tried to turn New Zealand into another Britain—what was native was inferior...But New Zealand-born writers like Jessie Mackay, and Eileen Duggan carry the sights and sounds of New Zealand in their blood. To them a tui (a native bird of the bush with striking appearance and song) is not a curiosity, but something vital."

Alan Mulgan remarks that the 1914-1918 war stimulated New Zealand literature by deepening the consciousness of nationality The new generation breathed in April autumn and sunbathed in long December-January holidays and the poets did not apologize for New Zealand, but accepted it as their life. Their art, he says, sought broader fields; it had come of age, and referring to Eileen Duggan he claimed that it was "*part of her shining achievement that she has written with such natural ease of New Zealand subjects and made them live to people who perhaps had never heard of that country save as a geographical expression. She has given universality to the local, which is the mark of high literature*".

It is surprising how similar in tone is the introductory essay to the *Book of Canadian Poetry* which A. J. M. Smith contributes as compiler and editor. English-Canadian poetry goes back to the end of the 18th century, to the songs of the Haidas (those Skittagetan Indians of Queen Charlotte Island who developed in isolation a remarkable and individual culture of their own), and to the French-Canadian songs taken over from Old France. Smith describes Canadian poetry as "*the record of life in Canada as it takes on significance when all the resources of sensibility, intelligence and spirit are employed...some concentrate on what is individual and unique in Canadian life, others on what it has in common with life everywhere.*" Then he goes on to detail as factors that prevented the growth of Canadian literature, the general lack of wealth and leisure and the fact that the

large majority were engaged on the hard task of subduing the wilderness. But most of all, Smith stresses what he calls the stifling effect of the colonial habit of mind as described by a Canadian in 1864.

I want to provide you with a few selections on this colonialism:

"Colonialism is a spirit that gratefully accepts a place of subordination, that looks elsewhere for its standards of excellence and is content to imitate with a modest and timid conservatism the products of a parent-tradition in abstract and conventional patriotic poetry…One of the most damaging of the results of colonialism is the feeling of inferiority and doubt it engenders and the remoteness it encourages. The colonial attitude of mind sets the great good place not in its future, but somewhere outside its own borders, somewhere beyond its possibilities. Thus a direct result may be a turning away from the despised local present, not towards the mother country but towards impossible hopes and noble dreams…To consider the realities of the life around as too modest or too coarse for the attention of poetry is a temptation that faces the poet in a colony."

The West Indies has passed through its colonial phase.

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We have approached the spirit of the West Indian literature that we are discussing in these pages; let us ensure that we are agreed on what we expect literature to be and depict.

Literature is the record of the best thought and imagination of a people. We ask of it that it mirrors the society of persons and that it ennobles and refreshes and delights us; that it throws a veil of wonder over familiar things, that it surprises us with the daring of the creative imagination, which shows resemblances between dissimilar objects. Sir Richard Livingston puts it this way that when we read literature, we paint pictures on the walls of our minds which would otherwise be bare, we enlarge the understanding of the nature of life that we gain from our individual experience. Through reading we are able to compress into our minds a

living picture of the way people lived in past centuries, the events that stirred them and the expression of their thought and feeling.

Individual works of literature are generally created by men and women who combine breadth of interest with a certain poise of judgment and they reveal in an unmistakeable way, their own personalities in their writing. But they write always from the background of a body of literature that has shaped their own imaginations and given them their direction, although their own talent or genius sustains the development of the form.

Generally the lecturer or historian has before him the bulk of a particular body of writings and they express the thought and aspiration of successive generations. In the books that form the literature of a people the lecturer generally points out all the conflicts of opinion and opposing arguments, all the strengths and weaknesses of groups and of individual minds that have shaped that people's history. The better to savour the distinctive characteristics of a people's literature, I looked at some literary histories, and it seemed to me that the growth of the literature corresponded with the growth in subtlety of the language and with the growing ability of the people in a region to govern itself and to produce men who could record its life and who could maintain the way of life of that people, despite the pressures exerted on it by other ways of life in adjacent regions.

How this culture of a people can be developed even in a densely peopled region like Europe, history has already shown. Taking European art alone, a Professor of Fine Arts at Edinburgh University has described the characteristics of the paintings of various countries — the French with their precise elegance and sense of balance, the tendency in German art to over-elaboration and an ever present desire to express the infinite and the intangible, the Dutch to be ponderous and boisterous at the same time, the Italian to excel in its richness of material and idea and a consciousness of the limitations of the medium.

And this does not only apply to the Old World. Sir Ronald Adam in his recent visit to B.G. mentioned his great interest in the way the peoples of Europe originating for instance from

various parts of Spain and from Germany were being assimilated into their new environments in South America, at the same time that they were mingling with the immigrant African and the indigenous Amerindian strains. New cultures were everywhere arising in South America, he said.

Let us look upon literature therefore as one of the main manifestations of a culture, even of one that is coming to birth, and we realise also, I hope, that West Indian literature arising in the territories that lie between the Latin South and North American continents, is now beginning to emerge from its swaddling clothes and to find its own voice.

What we shall do in these pages is examine together the writings of people in the West Indies in their various categories — the little review, the poetry, the short story, the novel, then a group section on drama, biography and critical essays. In our attempt to do justice to the range of writing, it is likely that we run the risk of becoming a catalogue of names and an anthology of brief extracts in their respective classes, but at the end, we shall have made some acquaintance with the personalities of the writers and their work, and perhaps we shall have come to an appreciation of the values to be found in these tropical blooms.

THE LITTLE REVIEW

It is difficult to over-estimate the importance of the little reviews appearing in the West Indies because they have been and still are the nursery of literature. Literary and intellectual groups in a colony use them as an outlet for their work and also as a medium for experimental writing; and in their pages we can see how the West Indian writer is creating his poetry, short stories, novels and plays and how he discusses the quality of his social and historical scene, preserving memories of the past, building a public attitude where the local traditions are woven into the pattern of daily living, and generally developing island and regional cultures.

Traditionally the little review in Europe has been the vehicle for experimental writing and free expression of criticism without concession to the convention of commerce. In Britain, there has been a recent island outcrop of periodicals displaying literature and the arts on a regional basis (e.g. Wales, Scotland and even a smaller unit such as the Reading area of England), and at the same time making available the best ideas from outside the area. In the West Indies also the little review has begun to express West Indian culture.

It is unfortunate that I cannot discover the first little review published in the West Indies. *Timehri* (1882) does not qualify for this honour as this periodical is scientific in outlook and was the vehicle for preserving the learned papers read at the meetings of the Royal Agricultural & Commercial Society, an Englishman's club away from home. (The 1944 Centenary issue of *Timehri* published two sonnets by Sir Cecil Clementi on Kaietuk (better known as Kaieteur) and Roraima, but this and other occasional literary inclusions do not make *Timehri* a little review, as the index of the first 26 issues (1882-1944) corroborates). However let us attempt an ordered survey of the position in the West Indies and analyse the purposes and achievements of the little reviews.

In Barbados, there is *Forum* (1931) which aims at being a platform for the discussion of West Indian affairs, interchange of ideas between West Indians at home and abroad, information

of the activities of literary clubs in this region, and the publication of West Indian literature by which the Editors mean (in addition to stories and poems) books reviews, biographical sketches and essays on West Indian history.

To my way of thinking it is in its historical articles that *Forum* has been most valuable and among the issues I remember a long essay on **'The West Indies since 1834'**, by DD M.T., H. A. Vaughan's contributions on the **'Approach to and the Childhood of Sir Conrad Reeves'** and F. A. Hoyos on Dr. Eric Williams' contributions to West Indian historical literature; but there is a wide range of critical thought in the essays, which discuss for instance the influence of Lincoln and Aggrey as well as the origins of the calypso.

Bim (1942) published by the Young Men's Progressive Club and edited by F. Collymore and W. Therold Barnes began its career with a variety of slight short stories, articles, woodcuts and illustrations, light verse and humour. The nonsense verse has remained a permanent feature of *Bim*'s table of contents but more serious and experimental fiction were soon introduced, the verse deepened into poetry, Collymore published two of his own one-act plays and before the fifth issue, *Bim* was laying under contribution talents in Trinidad and British Guiana such as Edgar Mittelholzer, Jan Williams and Gordon Woolford. The Editors have stated their conviction that they dislike mass production and that the preservation of individuality must always be of paramount importance. *Bim* has contrived to be true to this conviction while at the same time reaching out to significant writing in the West Indies.

The casualty of little reviews is always a heavy one and I am sorry that Trinidad's *Beacon* (edited by Albert Gomes) ceased publication around 1936, because writers in that island have to rely on *Youth* or Barbados' *Bim*. Trinidad writers are keenly aware of the need for a little review. At present the more established writers like Carr and Ramon-Fortune, Herbert and Lamming send their contributions to *Bim* or the BBC, or to an occasional anthology of West Indian literature compiled by an English periodical (*Life and Letters* devoted its April 1948 issue to Jamaica and its November 1948 to the West Indies) . Other writers tend to contribute to *Youth* the official organ of the Trinidad and Tobago Youth Council.

The August 1947 issue of *Youth* for instance carried poems by Errol Hill, Penco, Ruby Waithe, literary articles by Alfred Mendes and the late T. M. Kelshall, and discussions on West Indian history, the Steel Band, West Indian Spirituals and folk-tunes, as well as a pen portrait of Telemaque with one of his poems.

Papa Bois (1947) is a miscellany of verse and prose written by a group which met once a month at Judge Hallinan's to read and discuss their literary efforts. *Papa Bois* is the little old man who is the rural deity of the forests of Trinidad and Judge Hallinan considered his gay vitality was a bond holding together this heterogeneous group which included Edgar Mittelholzer, Carr, Errol Hill and Neville Guiseppi. Perhaps the editor has imposed some of his own personality upon this collection but it conveys an air of urbanity and perhaps even an unreal detachment from the West Indian scene. This is of course apart from the essential satire of Mittelholzer's **'Island Tints'**, where with his artist's background he discussed colours... "*the pink of Caucasian skin; complexion of ruling people (God bless the Secretary of State for the Colonies)...*"

May 1946, saw the first issue in Grenada of the *St. George's Literary League Magazine,* edited by Robert M. Coard. The magazine contains Marryshow's memories of the Old Lads' Union of 1908 (in continuation of an older cultural group in Grenada, the Y.M. Mutual Improvement Society) and together with this background of the old days, it provides articles, stories, poems and notes on the activities of some ten literary and social groups. Sir Arthur Grimble in his foreword, relates the present leaders of the island community to the strong cultural tradition of Grenada in earlier days, and the reader is grateful for a glimpse of a little review that is just being born, and about to serve its community.

In British Honduras in 1945, the St. John's Literary Society in Belize, launched a quarterly, *The Outlook,* edited by Philip S. W. Goldson. From the beginning it seems that the *Outlook* realised that its existence depended on its appeal to the community and accordingly regular feature articles on the Sports and Statistics of British Honduras and on life in Panama, rub shoulder's with the Archives of the S. J. L. S. and essays

on '**My favourite composer**', the power of the press and '**the need for discipline.**' In the January-March 1947 issue, the President of the S.J.L.S. declared that several periodicals had been born because of the demand for more facts and views about British Honduras, and that the issue had grown from 500 copies in 1945 to 1,000 copies in 1947. In that issue of the *Outlook*, the editorial dealt with immigration, and the contents ranged from a diary of the colony and an account of its statistics through poems and articles to a historical examination of the claim that Lieutenant Cook who visited British Honduras in 1765 was the same as the Captain Cook who discovered Australia.

In Jamaica, *Focus* has appeared twice, in 1943 and 1948. Edited by Edna Manley, *Focus* is a collection of short stories, essays, plays and poems which she says give "*historically a picture of contemporary life and philosophically contain within them the germ of the future*." Both issues of this Jamaican anthology were published by the co-operative efforts of the contributors.

I consider *Focus* to be very important because one cannot fully realise the degree to which a West Indian community has begun to produce its own literature until one has experienced the fine quality and abundant quantity of writers who are producing literature and drama in Jamaica. 1943 *Focus* included essays and the 1948 issue included legends in addition to the stories, poems and plays, but in these collections the stories are forward-looking and critical studies, many of them on unorthodox lines, of social conditions in Jamaica. As Edna Manley wrote, "*freedom of style…requires a high type of critical judgment, but to refuse freedom is to deny the artist his gift of prophecy and so limit his contribution to pure entertainment and decoration.*"

I shall not enter into a detailed discussion of the contents of *Focus* as they will fall into the categories of poetry, stories and plays which we are dealing with separately.

Kyk-Over-Al (1945) which I have the honour of editing is published jointly by the B.G. Writers' Association and the B.G. Union of Cultural Clubs. This half-yearly literary and critical periodical has set itself the task of helping to forge a Guianese and West Indian people, taking pride in the intellectual and artistic achievements of their country and also to bring to the

making the best creative thought from the Caribbean and beyond its borders.

Beginning with an almost exclusively literary point of view, *Kyk* quickly passed to an examination of all the cultural manifestations of West Indian literature and history, co-operation etc. and to surveys of the social scene. One issue was devoted to a Memorial for Harold Stannard and contained tributes to his intellect and sympathy from a wide variety of West Indians and others. Among its contributors, *Kyk-Over-Al* has numbered, Stannard himself, Professor Harlow, Sherlock and Edna Manley from Jamaica, Frank Collymore from Barbados and Raymond Barrow from British Honduras.

Some experimental writing has been published, particularly the poetry of Wilson Harris, who is working out a personal metaphysical approach to European and American contemporary literature.

There are many periodicals and magazines that cannot answer the aim of little review. *Timehri* in British Guiana is one and so is the *Caribbean Quarterly*, the organ of the Extra Mural Department of the West Indies University College, although the editors Sherlock and Pearse state their intention to include original literary work every quarter, either in manuscript or a reprint of what has appeared in one of the West Indian territories. The April-June number for instance contained several book reviews and a poem by Derek Walcott, and these shared the same contents page with articles on social science research, botany, archaeology and agriculture. However the editors seek, in their own words, to establish and strengthen the tradition of the book and of learning in the Caribbean and that makes the journal a fellow traveller with the little review.

We may discard the commercial magazines like *Madame* and *Caribbean Post* to name only two Jamaican ventures and the same is true of *Caribia* , the pictorial annual news round-up published in British Guiana. We shall have also to exclude *Spotlight,* the *West Indian Observer,* the *Guiana Times* and the Christmas miscellanies of the newspapers.

POETRY IN THE WEST INDIES

There are several poets in the West Indies whose work may be called "*considerable*" and would repay careful analysis.

Some of them live in Jamaica, for instance — George Campbell, M. G. Smith, the McFarlanes both father and son — but to name only the outstanding writers in this curve of islands in the Caribbean, St. Lucia owns its Derek Walcott; Barbados, its Collymore and Vaughan, and Trinidad has Telemaque and a group of young writers.

Publishing facilities in the area are very limited, and although the chronicler has primarily to seek collections of poems published in book form, (a practical though not an accurate way of assessing a poet's faith in his work), he still has to supplement these sources with magazine material.

We shall be looking on an island basis in some detail at the work of these writers but there are perhaps two points we should keep in mind as we embark on our tourist journey.

The greater part of the Poetry in the West Indies is being written out of the inner urge of the peoples of African descent. Can one say that the alchemy of time and racial mixture in a matrix of civilisation have shaped this urge into a deferred *"Singing of the Lord's Song in a strange land"*?

And the second point is that generally the poetry is concerned with the physical and psychic environment of the West Indies, including protest against the social and economic conditions under which coloured people live in a colonial region. Although early in the day, for a literature that is being born, there are real touches of satire in the poetry written by Walcott, Mittelholzer and Vaughan, and they can be found side by side with the type of "*direct*" (as opposed to "*oblique*") poetry which Professor Tillyard would persuade us must emerge first in a colony where unpractised readers require a description of objects together with the poet's comment upon them.

But the huntsmen are up in America and we shall look at the Jamaican record.

JAMAICA

It is drawing a long bow at the target to sit here and create for you a thumbnail sketch of poetry in Jamaica, but I am lucky to have for guide a small collection of books and booklets that have from time to time appeared with poetry and criticism written in that island. Most valuable of these for my purpose has been the book of essays *The Challenge of our Time* by J. E. Clare McFarlane who founded the Poetry League of Jamaica in 1923, and for this section of the Survey, I have drawn largely upon his two essays on the '**Poetry of Jamaica**' and on his **'Inauguration Address to the Empire Poetry League in Jamaica**', delivered on September 19, 1923.

Before 1923, there were a number of writers, and McFarlane like a poet calls them tiny candles in a night of intellectual and spiritual apathy, their little flickering flames snuffed out at last by the adverse winds of discouragement and indifference. There were two names however that sounded through these winds, those of Claude McKay (1891-1948) who had published, while he was a Jamaican constable of 20, his first books of poems *Songs of Jamaica* in 1911. McKay was a farmer's son born in Clarendon, Jamaica, and apprenticed to a cabinet maker and wheelwright before he joined the police force. Another book was published in Jamaica, his *Constab Ballads*, but in 1912-13 he left for America and remained there. The greater part of McKay's poems therefore belongs to the USA but there are at least 2 poems I have found that are Jamaica's. Once in a shop window he saw:

"Bananas ripe and green and ginger root
Cocoa in pods and alligator pears
And tangerines and mangoes and grapefruit
Fit for the highest prize at parish fairs,

Set in the window, bringing memories
Of fruit-trees laden by low-singing rills
And dewy dawns and mystical blue skies
In benediction over nun-like hills.

My eyes grew dim and I could no more gaze
A wave of longing through my body swept
And hungry for the old familiar ways
I turned aside and bowed my head and wept".

and there is '**Flame-Heart**' where he tells us..."*so much have I forgotten in ten years...but still remember the poinsettia's red, blood red, in warm December".*

The second name is that of Tom Redcam (Thos. Henry McDermot) who moved into journalism and literature from schoolmastering and who had by 1923 established a reputation as a poet by his patriotic songs and other poems published in the newspapers. Redcam died in 1933 at the age of 63 after writing for more than 30 years. He left no printed collection of his work but such was his reputation that in the year of his death the Poetry League of Jamaica crowned him Laureate posthumously in the Ward Theatre, Kingston. The Mayor of the city presided and before an audience of several hundred persons representing all sections of island life, messages were read from the Lord Bishop and others.

I have been able to obtain only one poem by Redcam, his **'San Gloria'** where he asks the captain of wide western seas, probably Columbus, "*doth thou recall San Gloria's spice-censed breeze?*" and then describes the unchanged scene:

"San Gloria's wood-carved mountain frieze
In the blue bay is mirrored now
As when thy white sail wooed the breeze

Yet through the wood the peony flees
And frets with gold the night-dark bough
Down the long avenue of trees.

Still flowering gyneps tempt the breeze
The yellow guava ripens now
Rich-hearted ipomea please

Dost thou remember things like these
Where thy great soul inhabits now?"

McFarlane gives the opinion, that nowhere as in the poetry of Tom Redcam do the romantic episodes in the history of Jamaica stand out so vividly.

The Poetry League seems to have provided a framework for encouraging a poetic literature in Jamaica, by lectures and discussions and by encouraging and fostering the teaching of poetry in schools. Books began to appear presenting the work of Jamaican poets; first in 1924 *From Overseas*, an anthology of Dominion and Colonial Verse edited in England and sponsored by the Empire Poetry League, featured 9 poets. Then in 1930 the Jamaican anthology appeared. This was called *Voices from Summerland* and edited by McFarlane, and then individual poets began to release their work. *Daphne, Hills of St. Andrew, Hill Songs and Wayside Verses, Tropic Reveries, Wings of the Morning, Flaming June,* these books appeared and took their places on Jamaican shelves.

We cannot examine the individual books here, but I record McFarlane's opinion that *"the outstanding characteristic of Jamaica's poetry (in 1928) was a delicate but well-defined emotionalism; a mixture of joy and sorrow, a consciousness of the beauty and wonder and seeming tragedy of life."* He claims that his first duty as a critic is to discern the soul in poetry, the divine intent and then to examine the form. By this touchstone, he dismisses McKay as a spiritual pagan who does not acknowledge a moral government in the Universe, despite his pure diction and almost Hellenic perfection of form. He takes as typical, these lines from H. S. Bunbury:

"Man
And the God he might be
If he came from the darkness of night
To the knowledge of Thee".

Tropica is a poet whose work comes very near to this quality, McFarlane tells us, and here is a sample:

“Gold lights through the lignum vitae
The swell of the sea afar
In the sunset’s dying roses
The flash of the Evening Star.
An echo of half-heard music
Wandering alone, apart
A feeling of world-old sorrow
Rising within my heart”.

For McFarlane, Arthur Nicholas lacks just the energy which outstanding achievement requires. Albinia C. Hutton and H. C. Bennett are two Jamaicans who take the hills as their province of celebration, Mrs. Hutton with sentiment as in her lines:

“My beloved, are you dreaming
Of those heights where stars are gleaming”

but Bennett who lives among the, hills, shows their challenging influence in lines such as:

“The riots of thy lusts arose
Proud incense of that proud altar
Whose spires, in rage enormous, leap
To stab the heights of Heaven”.

There is Lena Kent who understands with sympathy the inner significance of nature and who in her **‘Hymn to Night**’ can say:

“Lean low; we would entwine
Our idle fingers in your raven hair”.

There is Constance Hollar who used a gorgeous imagery and jet like rhythm in her verse:

“To John on far off Patmos isle
There came a voice like sword of gleaming power
It flashed upon that tranced hour
A flame that burnt beyond the day and night
The voice said “Write”. “

And there is Arabel Moulton-Barrett whose intellectual power comes out in a stanza such as this:

"How speeds the earth?
Now Time the tyrant strideth past
The stars are in his mighty hands
On lagging Day to cast",

or from this poem **'The Lost Mate'**:

"Oh, could I sing to thee
Song of the Sun
Wandering on
Vagabond worlds that go
Carolling through
Would I could sing of them
Woo thee anew
Song of the Seraphim
Deep in the sky
Straight would I gather it
Loitering by..."

In 1938 McFarlane claimed that there were two legitimate sources of Jamaican poetry —African with its emotion and mystery, rooted in the manners and emotional qualities of the common people, their irresistible humour, their simplicity and innate kindness. Claude McKay stands at the head of that tradition. Then there is Tom Redcam, with his roots in the great past of English poetry, but no less Jamaican, and from him stems the influence of English thought and tradition. *"It would be very strange if the literature of England did not leave enduring marks on thought and expression when one considers the educational process that the majority have to undergo."*

But McFarlane goes on to say that whatever the sources and the influences and qualities that an individual poet gathers and builds into his personality, the great criterion is sincerity. If the poet has this sincerity, we must regard his work with respect and if he be a great soul, then his work will contain new combinations and patterns of thought and feeling that interpret the cultures that meet in him.

McFarlane himself published a volume of 60 poems in 1924 many of them typifying his patriotism and loyalty, and in 1930 a blank verse romance of Daphne the peasant girl who meets Clement the city dweller, their love in the St. Andrew hills of Jamaica, and their reunion in the ethereal hills of the spirit. The soul of the dead Daphne re-invigorates the dying Clement and he revives and returns to Jamaica. Here is an extract from this book *Daphne:*

"in yonder East
There breaks a dawn, 'fore which this little day
Must seem but night, and e'en the good it holds
The shadowy semblances of things to come
A dawn shall breathe through all the frame of things
Visible and invisible — a power
To fire anew creative energies
And men shall build".

There are several other Jamaican poets whom we must put in this first phase with J. E. Clare McFarlane but we must move on to a second large group of writers whom for convenience, I shall call the Edna Manley group. Edna Manley edited the 1943 and 1948 issues of *Focus* and in the introduction to the earlier collection she claimed that the work there had sprung directly out of the great changes that had taken place and were still taking place in Jamaica.

With these younger poets, George Campbell, M. G. Smith, P. M. Sherlock, H. D. Carberry, K. E. Ingram, Basil McFarlane and the others there is a new outlook and one that is national. The form too is different, with a rejection of the easy iambic rhythm for a short line and a direct image, somewhat reminiscent of the Imagist movement in the teens of the 20th century.

The most outstanding of them all and their type, George Campbell has a stature that grows with the years. His *Focus* inclusions and the body of writing in his *First Poems* (1945) establish him as one of the most important poets in the British Caribbean. There is an insight and a rare gift of phrase that jets sudden enlightening passion into his poetry:

"Daylight like a sacrament in my hands...
Now we're tenants at will no longer
There's more room..."

There is a tendency to be violent in matters of race and social justice, mingled with a curious appeal to the religious. He can write *"Holy be the white head of a Negro, Sacred be the black flax of a black child"*; or *"My love a crucifix to place, Within time's hands"*; and also *"O how I hate you, Moneyman, your metal hands, twin coins in your face..."*. Here is one of the stanzas from George Campbell's '**Worker**', a poem which begins:

"Why praise him lightly when he turns to die?
....
Measure him? His death is living
Living for the land which knows no death
He wears the silken day, the veils of night
His hands that hungered at your heart a time
Are now the trees and paths, his epitaphs
The stars can tell with their sphinx eyes
He's Earth, her lover, and surmise."

Of recent years, M. G. Smith has added to his nature-loving a strong national and social feeling but I record here the memorable lines:

"The wind breathes a mellow oboe in my ear
...The waves are lines of epic,
The sea a deep quotation..."

P. M. Sherlock's passionate rhythm and religious urge come out best perhaps in the lines:

"His naked body broken and torn
Knows nothing now of Bethlehem's peace."

Basil McFarlane, son of J. E. Clare McFarlane, can say in a philosophic but bare etching of words:

"To know birth and to know death
In one emotion...
This is the final Man"

Carberry, Ingram and the others all provide variations that enrich and reinforce the pattern of Jamaican poetry today — a pattern that has the urgency of an emerging nation.

I am very conscious that I have not in this rapid sketch done justice to the poetry of Jamaica that we can group either as Georgian and aesthetic under McFarlane or modern and national under Edna Manley and there is much delightful poetry I would like to read to you. But I must leave these two groups now and consider briefly three or four other writers whose work stands outside of those two umbrellas.

Walter Adolphe Roberts, though born in Jamaica went at 18 to the USA, was war correspondent in 1914 and has been journalist, editor ,historian and novelist. His poems which are distinguished work bear the tang of his travels and knowledge of history — San Francisco, the Roman peacocks, Washington Square, a Cuban monument — and of the work I have seen I would select for reference here, his '**Maroon Girl'**.

"She is Jamaica poised against attack
Her woods are hung with orchids; the still flame
Of red hibiscus lights her path and starred
With orange and coffee blossoms is her yard"

Then I should mention Una Marson. Of her four books of poems I have seen only *Towards the Stars* her 1945 collection, with the marks upon it of her life in Wartime London and her longing for Jamaica. Her poems can be very strong in their feeling but most often the quality is quiet and simple as in this extract:

“Long had I thought
    Of Death
And all his mysteries
And then they told me
    You were dead
I had seen him
Sitting in the anteroom
Eager to be summoned
So when I heard
You had received him
I was silent”

Then there it Archie Lindo, better known as a playwright, who published *My heart was singing*, a book of poems in 1945, His ‘**Bronze**’ has a great deal of power, but his verse is full of a sentiment which responds to stimuli such as diving boys, faces in a restaurant and unemployment. I like this poem of his.

“I saw a Lignum Vitae tree
One evening in October,
And every branch upon the tree
With violets covered over
The ground was blossom carpeted
For weary eyes to sleep on
And if these eyes had tears to weep
What sweeter place to weep on.”

Almost, finally I mention Vivian Virtue who published *Wings of the Morning* in 1933. As a master of the villanelle and the sonnet, Virtue writes poems that celebrate beauty as well as protest against social conditions and their imagery is more often than not from the Bible — Iscariot, Magdalen, David and Ruth. Here is part of a poem of his:

“And here among the holy hills
About the doors of God
Whose rapture down the evening spills
A fleeting period.

Turning a bend of this green pass
Blessed to linger in
Where the great mists deploy and mass
We meet you, Magdalen..."

As the vehicle for her ideas, Louise Bennett uses the Jamaican dialect which is the common language of Jamaica, rather than English, among the greater part of the population. Blanshard says that she has done more than anyone else to develop and preserve the local dialect and Dr. Eric Williams considers her one of the important intellectual forces in Jamaica. One can easily understand why these claims of her influence are made for her because I'm told that she writes her poetry (generally it's a poetry of social protest) and then goes from village to village, reciting it in colourful peasant costume with considerable dramatic ability

Here are three stanzas from her poem on the colour bar in Jamaica —

"Wen red-kin hitch awn to much pon w'ite
W'ite people tun them back
An dem fraid fe talk to black people
Les people tink them black
Me sorry fe po red-kin for
Dem don' know wey dem stan
One granpa w'ite an F'oder granpa
Big, black, African...
Since edication an religion
Can' stop de cola-war
We need a dose a fire fe
Bun dung de cola-bar."

I have been concentrating on trends, but that the spirit of poetry is alive in Jamaica, there can be no doubt, and the crowns, and coronets of this aristocracy of literature belong to the future of the island.

Perhaps an epilogue is Tom Redcam's question to Columbus:

“Oh, Captain of wide western seas,
Dost thou remember things like these
Where thy great soul inhabits now?”

BRITISH HONDURAS

In the best sense, there is a literary tradition in British Honduras although the population is only 61,500. Every year, September 10 is celebrated as a holiday with literary competitions, as well as processions, patriotic meetings etc., because on that day in 1798 at the Battle of St. George’s Cay, the Baymen of Belize, shattered the last Spanish attempt to conquer British Honduras. In the small community in Belize, there is a group pursuing literary and cultural pursuits organised as the St. John’s Literary Society of which the Founder and President is Mr. J. L. Blackett, a headmaster of St. John’s School, Belize.

Between the Society and the annual competitions, literary work is kept alive in this Central American British possession and much of the verse refers for inspiration to the courage of the Baymen.

James Sullivan Martinez (1879-1944) is regarded as the Colony’s poet. He served in the 1914-1918 war but by trade he was a cabinet maker who spent his spare time writing poetry. In 1927, he published *Caribbean Jingles*, a collection of his poems in English and in Creole dialect. His poems are said to show a keen understanding of human nature and to have dealt with every phase of British Honduran life, thereby awakening in his community a feeling of pride and a love for their home. He is best in his dialect work and he made a considerable contribution to the British Honduras way of life. This extract from his poem ‘**British Honduras — My country**’, gives some indication of his quality:

"British Honduras; my country so dear
Where my cradle was rocked and attended with care
Where the first breath of air and the first gleam of light
Was poured in my nostrils and blazed on my sight
Where my playmates and all those most dear
Have joyed with my laughter and grieved with my tear..."

The best poetry written in British Honduras today comes from Raymond Barrow who also has the sense of the Mayan and Spanish history of this country and can write of the splendour of —

"Placing one's footprints in the sands where keels
Of ancient vessels must have beached and drawn ...
And palm trees murmur of deep sunken things
Of buried treasure chests...and Morgan's gold..."

In one of his poems Raymond Barrow has recorded the West Indian values in a sonnet that begins:

"Low is the wind upon your English moors
Dark is your city with its midnight sleep
But I, unbraced must wander out of doors
Walking your highways where the snow lies deep..."

and walking there, he goes back in memory to:

"Bamboo groves and waving sugar cane
Savannahs stretching wide to distant hills
and...
Faces brown beside a tropic sea"

But even in an anonymous poem in the *Outlook*, the quarterly magazine there is a fresh quality —

"I meant to do some work today
But a blackbird twittered in the mango tree
And a butterfly flitted across the yard
And all the leaves were calling to me"

The literary movement in British Honduras is a live one.

ANTIGUA

Among his unpublished poems, Reginald Henry in Antigua has work that falls in the West Indian pattern — romantic theme, fierce social protest as in his '**Out of the Night'** (a poem for coloured West Indians) with a picture of the New Negro standing firm and free — "*none shall dare deprive him of his right*" — and he writes of the swimmer and the mosquitos and the sacred roses that had pricked the hands of Jesus.

Reginald Henry can write of the Silent Harp —

"Touch thou the silent harp alone
It sings for none, nor thee
But when its strings gave vigorous tone
Then had'st thou company"

but his best poem is '**Creole Tableau**' where he describes early one Christmas morning "*a woman riding with her child, a man who led the ass".*

"She was so young and pretty and black as ebony
The child upon her bosom was sweet and black as she
They made a perfect picture one instant framed in light
Journeying to an hostel ere Xmas Day grew bright.

And I saw another picture, a sketch of long ago
Another man and woman journeying through the snow
Journeying to an hostel upon another ass
Another little Baby laid on a bed of grass..."

ST. LUCIA

There are two persons at least who have published books of poems in St. Lucia. One is Howick Elcock who published *Alpha* (1949) and the other Derek Walcott who has published *25 Poems* (1948) and *Epitaph for the Young* (1949).

Howick Elcock need not detain us long. An occasional felicity of image relieves otherwise undistinguished didactic verse such as where he calls St. Lucia: "*the Helen of the Caribbean*" or as in a poem called '**Sunset'** —

"The hills are left all void of light
That keeps them fresh and green
I turn to skies and chance to see
Their golden sheets a flare."

Some of the 36 poems are what their names imply, homilies on Rum and the Wages of Sin but a noteworthy feature of the project is the fact that there are 19 other poems written to the business houses in St. Lucia where Elcock improves advertisement with his gift of verse.

Derek Walcott, now 20 years old, has an amazing image-making facility. Images drop from his pen as normally as statements come from a speaker's lips. He has the tumbling poetic shorthand of the modern English poet such as Dylan Thomas, Hopkins and Auden, where under an intellectualised emotional tension, the sense is overlaid thickly by the images and sometimes too thickly for easy communication.

Walcott's poetry has to be read and re-read in order to extract their meaning, but like a young pianist his virtuosity is at present greater than his interpretation. The message has not yet been fully shaped it seems, which this significant West Indian poet will later deliver to his region and perhaps the world. At present what one is very conscious of are the echoes from English verse, the personal elegiac note struck in many of his poems, curious for a poet writing in a young area (as if with his omnivorous reading he has taken upon him too early the inevitable pessimism of the Western and European world), the social protest which is forthright and vigorously made against racial and class conditions, and most heartening, the religious motif that threads nearly all the poetry that Derek Walcott has written.

The long poem '**Epitaph for the Young**' displays the same verbal and image-making facility but the 12 cantos modelled on Dante and on Ezra Pound's work of protean flux are perhaps too full of the spirit in these lines:

"I hang my strut of words, actor's apparel
On the dry wood work of worm worn traditions
Fishing the twilight for an alternate voice..."

Some of his work is social reporting although at a level that amazes the reader with its elements, and like guides, echoes from Eliot, Joyce and Pound pass and re-pass through the lines. There are fine jibes at the Civil Service and federation, and the satiric tone in the beginning extends to the Lady on the promontory which for Eliot is a fine reconciliation. This tone is used also in the early autobiographic sections of the '**Epitaph**'—

"While like an arrowing pylon my hardening talent
Shot to the clouds, the boy I was is weakening
I hear the power I possess knock at my roots
And see the tower of myself whose height attracts
Destruction, begin a crazy crack and waltz, of ruin"

(One wonders whether there Walcott is not expressing the dilemma of a poet who finds himself developing without a tradition to root in). But the poet voyages from island to island like Ulysses and from experience to vain experience until he finds Mary and the chapel at the end of his voyaging.

As an instance of the present phase of Walcott's poetry I include some extracts from his '**As John to Patmos'** which records his feeling of community with the Caribbean area.

"As John to Patmos among the rocks and the blue live air hounded
His heart to peace as here surrounded
By the strewn silver on waves, the wood's crude hair, the rounded
Breasts of the milky bays, palms, flocks and the green and the
dead

Leaves, the sun's brass coin on my cheeks
So I will voyage no more from home, may I speak here."

BARBADOS

At the present time, poetry in Barbados is overshadowed by Frank A. Collymore and H.. A. Vaughan.

Collymore began writing poetry when he was about 49 years old and his first book *Thirty Poems* appeared in 1944. Since then the Pierian spring has been very active and as if to

make up for early barren years, he has published two other books *Beneath the Casuarinas* (1945) and *Flotsam* (1948).

Collymore's reviewers have remarked upon his gift of cadence, his sensitivity and receptiveness to momentary moods and impressions, be it an old nurse or an old beggar or the rain on the street, and there is much in these three collections garnering among them 100 poems, that reads like that well-known definition of an essay, the remarks made by one well read and well bred man to another after dinner. Margaret Lee has noted the parallels in Collymore's poems to Keats and Hardy and Eliot, and another reviewer Swanzy claimed that his maturity, never entirely luxuriant or overflowing, is a talent one would not expect to find in a tropical setting. Collymore has generally a conversational style with modern rhythms and cadences out of which his lyric gift for phrase can shine suddenly and effectively. Speaking of the Resurrection of the Body, he writes:

"Yet the trees look to the sun
And from our scattered essence spire
In dim cathedrals"

A tolerance born of a long experience tempers his sentiment with a mild irony that can make him smile at himself.

He has a yearning back to childhood and this comes out in his '**Hazy Days**' and '**At Thirteen**' and in the delightful light verse on fabulous beasts with his own illustrations that star the pages of *Bim*. The first book of his poems had in it a strong element of the personal and of love poetry. In the second, impersonality, a philosophic approach and an emotional chronicling of the Barbados scene are more apparent, e.g., as in '**This Land', 'Minute's Magic'** and that fine poem with the philosophic beginning:

"To each his lonely symbol:"

In *Flotsam*, the third book, the sea around Barbados sighs and curls into his writing while the lyric gift sharpens, as for instance where he describes night on a schooner as a —

"Fugue of forgetting
While the stars rush silently in swooping curves and the night
Is hooped around the sea's endlessness."

Against the spontaneous singing that produces Collymore's poems, one can place the carefully-filed and highly wrought output of another poet. Perhaps occupation affects temperament. Collymore is a College Master but H. A. Vaughan is a magistrate and a historian so you would expect Vaughan's poetry to have a more chiselled finish. His emotion is more disciplined and his self-criticism stronger and he works in the traditional forms with very considerable success. Perhaps his limited output (he has published only one book *Sandy Lane and Other Poems,* 1946) may find its source in the penultimate of this collection of 30 poems.

"If I am silent let it be for this,
That all my love has had its valiant say
And Beauty's self takes all my praise amiss."

Like Collymore, Vaughan has echoes; there is that optimism and desire to remedy social conditions that characterize the work of Browning but there are also echoes of A. E. Housman as in this opening "*Lad, be a traveller, trip and roam*" or in the strong chiselled lines of the epigrams. Probably the sociological conditions of Barbados are responsible for this type of nationalism that urges Vaughan, if one may term it so. He celebrates in these finely-carved epigrams the distinguished Barbadians of the past such as Conrad Reeves, he creates the poem '**Revelation**', that W. I. anthologist's gem, he praises Dark Voices and the names of labourers' houses, and he can express sympathetically the dreams of the Tudor Street shop girl.

Howard Hayden is right when he says "*Vaughan's poems are a true answer to the present insistent call for West Indian art. The background is Barbadian but the essence is universal.*"

Other names occur beneath the poems written in this island, and among them, W. S. Arthur, A. F. Critchlow Matthews, Therold Barnes, C. G. Drayton, Karl Sealy, Anna Sealy.

In two of Arthur's poems, he resurrects the past of racial memory and he goes back to his childhood days in Africa —

"I hear the tom tom's loud insistent thud
And straightway all the long forgotten thoughts
Of buried centuries come surging back to mind"

and in '**Affinity**' he plays with the re-incarnation theory:

"Have we not met before, some other place
Some other time than This?"

Although he can write poems like the '**Woman'** with telling directness and bare outline, much of the verse of Critchlow Matthews has a Rossetti flavour with emphasis on colour and the memory of beauty. Writing on the death of Philip Pilgrim in the '**Unturned Folios**' he says:

"You did not weary us with waiting long
So early came the sweetness of your song"

Therold Barnes is a writer of occasional verse with a flash back to the early story of the earth, but he can strike off a picture of "*lank sinister palms cross-honing their blades*" and in his **'Of Arrows, swords and spears'** he sketches the cane brake,

"Jam packed and sardined
with blades that are new"

Geoffrey Drayton has a quiet verse full of nostalgic memories with a tinge of phantasy in them.

TRINIDAD

In his introduction to the first anthology of Trinidad poetry, *Best Poems of Trinidad (*1943) , A. M. Clarke provides a sketch of the cultural history of that island from the year 1936 when Albert Gomes edited *From Trinidad*, a 50-page book of fiction and so closed an epoch in which the *Beacon*, a Little Review, had been an active force. The Ethiopian struggle with

Italy, the discovery of the cultural possibilities of the Calpyso and the Shango by an English journalist of the Auden school recording the 1937 strike, the war, bringing in its train some freedom from economic worry, the impetus given by the visit of world famous musicians — all these have their place in the background.

Offering his collection of Trinidad poetry, Clarke suggested that its characteristics might be the universal sense of frustration and the harsh uncouthness which precedes virtuosity and which is found in most original work. But although he hoped preoccupation with local colour would overrule the tendency to ape European and American writers and to write about Alpine snows and golden-voiced nightingales, his desire was to reveal genuine artists and not people with a label marked West Indian, or artists with a parochial mind, as he wrote "*poetry was too great a form of art to be limited by the mere geographical, social or political horizon.*"

Albert Gomes is the West Indian prototype of the poet become politician and I chose this 6-line poem to illustrate his essentially transforming insight —

"I opened the door and suddenly the night
Struck with the strangest wonder and surprise
The worn out furniture of eye and mind
Re-made it seemed, was glowing in warm light
The stars and houses, trees and darkened sky
In love's vast splendour now were limned."

Alfred Mendes is a novelist but he has a poetic vision which can describe the flight of the aeroplane in lines like these —

"High in this secret air, space secret-silent
Virgin parts suffering the lusty thrust
Of this huge phallic member, earth's dark crust
Two thousand feet below; we, piercing and vibrant
Assault heaven's midmost secrecies."

Ernest Carr has a flair for the philosophical e.g. "*A day holds all eternity*"; he can look upon the leaves and call them "*sun-hoarding granaries*" and he can also write in the poem **'Earth'** —

"Mother I am weary
I would thy call were soon
To the twilight of thy bosom
To the rest that is thy boon."

and in a similar mood C. Arnold Thomasos, who has a tendency to images of dry leaves and the grave's narrowness, can write of the grass on the grave of his beloved:

"Did your roots touch the eyes
As I touched them once ?
Did you hear the muted cries
As I heard them once
With anguished heart and sighs?"

H.M. Telemaque is perhaps the most important of the poets writing today in Trinidad. His poems, collected in *Burnt Bush* are slow snapshots of his emotional reactions to nature and to his African heritage. He is conscious that the trunks of trees "*pillar their free frontier of earth*" and he has seen "*frail-stemmed vines in hidden tracks show strength in eloquence of flower*". He can evoke successfully by clear and sharp images the presence of place in Courland Hill, Tobago and the island of Trinidad and even in their absence he can evoke the deep rolling moan of the Niger and salute those who lifted into shape the huge stones of the pyramids of Egypt —

"as bloody pains of toil strained
Like a hawser at their hearts."

Telemaque disdains metre and rhyme and at times his lack of rhythm operates against the success of his poems. However the rhythm of '**Little Black Boy**' is delightful and he often achieves the musical sentence. But he remains immobile with his slightly despairing photographs and does not move forward to a challenging position, his "*heaviness is the heaviness of dreams from drowsy gifts*" and the early-Eliotesque note struck in the opening of the book persists that:

“All around us is the burning
The restless groping
Of trapped hands
The desperate grab
Of singed fingers in the fire.”

Neville Guiseppi has published three books — *A Modern Pilgrim's Scrip* (1938), *Verse and Prose* (1940), and the *Light of Thought* (1943). In this third collection he is concerned somewhat didactically with the problems of modern civilisation such as “*the sad and tragic tale of human life*”, the eternally mobilised army of the unemployed, and in past and present the bitter cup the African drinks. There is a contrast between the pessimism of some poems which extinguishes the Christian feeling of others to leave the book with a pervading tone of despair. ‘**The Meadow’**, ‘**Mood’** and **‘Morning’** are however genuinely lyrical as this extract from the last shows —

“Softly steals the morning light
Over field and hill
Robed in garments clean and white
Dawn peeps — shy and still.”

In his *Poems in all Moods* a collection of 100 short pieces published in 1937, Alfred M. Cruickshank has many apostrophes to Haile Selassie and other political figures with inevitable damage to the quality of the verse. Here and there the reader of the didactic and moral poems is refreshed by images such as this: “*what is hope? a star set on a rope dangled by angels in the sky*” or “*what is death? a stopping of the breath, a ceasing of the heart to weep.*”

My favourite is that 5-line tribute to Madame Alyce Fraser Denny—

“When madame sings it seems the stars stand still
Hushed is the whispered music of the spheres
And high above, in God's most perfect heaven
Like chiselled marble, mute, the angels list
When Madame sings.”

Telemaque's **'Burnt Bush**' poems were published with the poems of A. M. Clarke. Another instance of co-operative publishing is *Wind in the Palms* (1945) —21 sonnets and a long descriptive poem on clouds — written by three young men, Joseph E. Penco, Gaston Lorre (Errol Hill) and Lennox Oscar-Pierre, and presented by the Trinidad and Tobago Youth Council.

Penco's work at present has a Keatsian flavour in its colour and form and even the slow leaden rhythms, that we associate with Keats ...

"Hilly clouds
Like to far distant shores with snowy risings
Or large mosaics of enormous pearls
On slabs of milky marble, roughly hewn."

Gaston Lorre has a pictorial imagination and a flair for the romantic and even extravagant phrase. For him Barbados is:

"A jewelled rock that sparkles in the sea
Radiant in sunlight, silvered by the moon",

and he begins a sonnet on sundown with

"Slowly, majestically, setting to rest,
Hand maidened by a blush-faced complement
Like dutious flocks at their bold lord's descent
The sun surrendered to the embracing west."

G. W. Lamming, (born in Barbados but writing in Trinidad) is at present an exponent of the slow passionate rhythm with loaded words meshing their meaning. These tend to obscure the main architecture of the poetry. Probably under the influence of modern psychology and Auden, the earlier clarity of '**Forest Hills' —**

"There is a mountain of fear in a backward glance
And secret dells of wonder cleave like magnet
To the traveller's trepid step..."

has been exchanged for '**February 1949' —**

"Beware the infant gesture! Tread lightly this rubbled past
Where obsolete and intimate are tolerable synonyms"—
...subtle prediction
Of poets in peculiar attitudes in faraway places
Who strike their balance by the patient
Selection of syllables and the dissolution of tears."

There are others like A. M. Clarke and C. L. Herbert who may be bracketed as fellow travellers with Telemaque and Lamming respectively, but to examine their work would bring these viewpoints more into the category of the catalogue. To complete this partial record I mention Jan Williams' *The Unknown and other poems* (1945?) (written outside of the West Indies) and Gilkes L. Cobham's *Anthurium* (1941).

BRITISH GUIANA

A Guianese lover of his country's tradition is likely to know more of the poetry written in British Guiana than in other parts of the Caribbean, but the lecturer has to preserve the scale of his comparisons.

In his *Anthology of Guianese Poetry 1831-1931*, N. E. Cameron has examined the material available for study of the past and we learn from him of the early publication by non-Guianese. Colonist writes **'Midnight Musings in Demerary'** (1832), in 1838, Simon Christian Oliver of Grenada, the schoolmaster of African descent at St. Augustine's Buxton, greets Emancipation, then Dr. Henry G. Dalton writes in 1858, a verse description of a journey from Georgetown to the Essequibo and its tributaries. In 1867, two Guianese, Roberts and Belgrave, published 7 poems, one of which '**Vesper Cogitations**' based on. Gray's **'Elegy'**, is written at St. Luke's Church, West Coast, Demerara, with the significant spirit of these lines —

"Some Negro warrior here may rest
Of Hannibal's spirit once possessed
And all that patriot's zeal..."

In 1873, Thomas Don, elderly schoolmaster, publishes his *Pious Effusions*. The subject matter is a reproduction of

biblical episodes written in an attitude of prayer and British Guiana's first African author reveals fervour but little knowledge of verse technique.

Then with a leap in 1883 there is Leo, (Egbert Martin). Confined to an invalid's bed and dead at 28 years of age, Leo published two hooks of poems, *Poetical Works* (London, 1883) and *Local Lyrics* (1886) and won a £50 prize in an Empire-wide competition in 1888 for 2 additional stanzas to the '**National Anthem**'.

For the first time in Guiana there is a poet with complete command over the technique of his craft; the first collection showed a strong moral leaning, partaking of the Victorian outlook and in the second, Leo achieved a group of poems and songs of remarkably high quality, with a full cantabile verse.

> "The stars have spirits and the sky and breeze
> The water and the flowers and the trees
> And they come forth at night and wander near
> Wherever woods are thick or streams are clear."

or —

> "Thy shaded soulfulness of eyes
> Thy brow as morning clear
> No Hindoo guards his sacred charm
> With half such sleepless care ..."

or —

> "Beauty of ocean, beauty of river, beauty of lake,
> Beauty that comes in dreams and the living tunes that wake,
> Beauty that gleams and glows for the very beautiful's sake,
> These are the themes of song."

The lyrical gift of Leo spreads its influence to all the West Indies.

Walter MacA. Lawrence (1896-1942) played all the instruments in the poet's orchestra; sonnets, rondeaus, rondels, the long narrative, the ode, the triolet, he was the

master of all and the rolling rhythm of the Swinburne metres was his delight. For 20 years, he celebrated the sights and sounds of. Guiana in his verse. **'The Ode to Kaieteur'** has the power of falling water in the concluding stanzas, and the rivers of the Mazaruni and Essequibo have been enshrined in his poetry as well as the coast —

"Oh beautiful Guiana,
O, my lovely native land,
More dear to me than all the world's
Thy sea-washed, sun-kissed strand
Or down upon the borders
Looking out upon the Deep
The great Atlantic blown
Into a fury or asleep
At morn, at noon, — or better
In the crimson sunset's glow
I love thee, O, I love thee — "

But for the need for proportion, must more could be said of Lawrence e.g. that morning fascinated him and he played the lover with many fine images on that theme, both in jewelled lyrics and in the long poems, '**Meromi', 'The Allegory of Guiana'** and '**The Woodlands**'.

Perhaps Lawrence wrote too much and the vision sometimes faded and allowed trite effects to enter and the sonnets are not successful as a genre. But I must close with a few lines from the '**Ode to Kaieteur** 'to let you feel Lawrence's power —

"And falling in splendour sheer down from the height
That should gladden the heart of an eagle to scan
Where, where is the man that before thee is thrilled not
    that scorneth the impulse to humble the knee
With the sense of thy majesty resting upon him..."

During his life Lawrence published a 15-page philosophic poem '**Meditation**' on the rise and fall of empires, and the regeneration of the heart, and in 1949, his *Selected Works* appeared posthumously, edited by Mr. P. H. Daly.

Of my own work I can say little except that A. J. Seymour published *Verse* (1937), *More Poems* (1940), *Over Guiana Clouds* (1944), *Sun's in my Blood* (1945), *Six Songs* (1946) , *The Guiana Book* and *We do not Presume* (1948). Perhaps I can record the obvious — that the poetry has had a bias towards the historical and the religious, that the author has written long poems on the legends of Kaieteur and of El Dorado and the discovery of the West Indies by Christopher Columbus, and that a strong religious consciousness comes through in his verse.

Contemporary Guianese poetry displays a varied talent. One must mention Wilson Harris, a young poet of considerable power who is forging his own vocabulary and his own metaphysical system —

"the horns of the leaping ram of waving water
have ventured far from ocean
and bend
like long breakers of memory combing the world
combing the river of the world, combing Guiana..."

Among others there is Cleveland W. Hamilton who has prodigal imagery, and Frank Dalzell who has a strong streak of social protest, in their occasional poems.

No account of Guianese poetry should exclude mention of the *Anthology of Local Indian Verse* (1934) edited by C. E. J. Ramcharitar — Lalla, as the first evidence, perhaps in the British Caribbean, of Indians contributing to the English-speaking heritage. In his foreword, Rev. Hector Chick remarked upon the distinctively Indian characteristics to be found in this competent but undistinguished collection e.g. the presence of the Buddhist doctrine of Nirvana as the poet longs to be caught up in the realms of everlasting peace, and the passion to realise the divine —

"I shall not die:
Are not the sky, this tree,
Parts of the very "Me"
And the Eternal I?
Only this clay
Shall find its former home
Still shall by essence roam
In Thee to endless day..." (J. W. Chinapen)

Rev. Chick mentions also the sensitiveness of the Indian to the delicate touches of beauty in common things, as in 'Lalla's **'Weeding Gang'** and '**Leaky House'**.

"I know the girls are coming
I hear their saucepans jingling
And their cutlasses a-tingling
Which as their music-instruments they play
Then once again their singing
They resume, until the ringing
Of their voices mingles with the whistling breeze"
('**Weeding Gang**')

and this poem reproduced in its entirety —

"Drip — drip — drip
All night long.
This simple song
Kept ringing in my ears
Drip — drip — drip.

Drip — drip — drip.
On the bed
And on my head
Its dripping music broke
Drip — drip — drip.

Drip — drip — drip.
In my soul
Beyond control
The music lingers still
Drip — drip — drip". ('**Leaky House'**).

THE SHORT STORY

There are only a few West Indian writers so far who have had the stamina and intellectual discipline and time necessary to write a complete novel, but almost everyone who writes has at one time or other written a short story.

There are perhaps many reasons for this. This literary form will have an attraction for West Indians, with their strong story- telling tradition going back to Anancy days and to the pithy proverbs crystallizing a people's sharp observations and the workings of the mind. Then because the West Indian can seldom rise easily to dominance in his own social environment, the artistically-minded ones will desire to create another and compensatory world in which they satirize the vices of the upper classes, rationalize their own dilemmas and portray the powerful forces working in the lower classes.

But a reason that may perhaps at one and the same time explain the large number of stories and their indifferent quality is the fact that this is the literary form that generally editors in the West Indies encourage with prize competitions. The short story writer always studies the policy and personality of the judges and he produces a suitable story, though one that may not be true to his artistic vision. I suppose that in every field, a young artist has thus to compromise with his vision but in that of the short story in the West Indies, the result on the whole is work of indifferent quality.

Perhaps it is true to say that the best short story writers in the West Indies are those who are on the road to the novel because they have served or are serving their literary apprenticeship by close observation of human behaviour in a context known to them, by accurate and compelling transcripts of the natural world they can see and touch. Edgar Mittelholzer is to my mind the best writer in this field in the Eastern Caribbean and perhaps the best in the British Caribbean; he has had the advantage of having lived in British Guiana, Trinidad and Barbados and I think he is the nearest approach to the professional writer that we have

produced. Unlike V. S. Reid he has not been a journalist although he has contributed to the press and in addition to his ceaseless activity in fiction, his range as an artist includes painting, poetry and criticism, a many-sided practice of the arts which enriches his fiction. It is surprising how often Mittelholzer returns to his early and formative experiences in Guiana. His '**Tacama'** with its fine inter-relation between character and environment and the touch about the black jungle ants keeping a history of their race, and his we know not whom to mourn are instances of this inspiration, and in this form as in that of the novel he has used fully his observations of the life and habits of the East Indian population. Perhaps his main characteristic is that he works with an unusual economy of means on the delineation of psychological slates.

In the Eastern Caribbean group there are many other competent practitioners in this field. There are few collections of short stories and a lecturer cannot properly assess the approach and unique outlook of individual writers on a few published efforts but *Bim* is the principal vehicle in this part of the West Indies for the literary short story and an analysis of its contents will be of value here.

In their plotted stories or their picturizations of emotion many of the short story writers featured in *Bim* both entertain and criticise the social scene in Barbados. For instance Therold Barnes often deals with the clubroom type of story as in **'Common Ground**', and both in '**The Last Chapter**' and '**The Book**', he makes short stories out of what are situations for the novel. Collymore has a whimsical touch as his '**Twin Ending**' shows (to an emotional dilemma in the eternal triangle) or **'There's always the Angels'**, and Karl Seeley searches among the emotions of the lower and middle classes to find pessimistic or dramatic reactions to life. His stories, **'The Fields are High**' and '**The Tree and The Ping Pong'** are typical. The stories are based on situation rather than character and they leave in the memory vivid snapshots of men and women in the grip of circumstance.

In Jamaica, national consciousness has developed more than anywhere else in the literature of the British Caribbean, and there is a school of Jamaican fiction headed by Claude Thompson, Victor Reid and Roger Mais.

In my opinion the best short story that Claude Thompson has written is '**Unleavened Bread'**, published in 1948 *Focus.* That has a plot movement which is not present in any of the 16 vignettes collected as *These My People* (undated) and the girl Secreta and Grandfather have a rounded vitality and perhaps represent the creative elements in a new Jamaica. Even paced with the plot there is development in the boy's character that is in the best short story tradition.

In the tales in *These My People*, Thompson has portrayed two main aspects of his vision, one depicting the squalid conditions on sugar estates in Jamaica, as in '**The Children that Sit in Darkness**' while at the same time preserving country customs and the farmer's outlook in his '**Spring Planting**' and '**Song in the Rain**'; the second trend providing descriptions of the bitter social conditions in Kingston at the time when unemployment was at its height. Vignettes like **'Marching Men'**, '**Monday Mawnin**' and '**The House of Many Doors'** are nothing less than social studies of Jamaica life where the proud descriptions which sketch in the compelling physical background of the island are swift, the images poetic and the dialogue excellent. The reader sees the people's dilemma and also perceives the individual man or woman problem of an Amos, berserk from his "wife's" infidelity, or Marilyn without a job because of an amorous employer, going home to the house with many doors to join her unemployed husband.

In spite of it all, Claude Thompson gives his reader the sense of the indomitableness of a people in an emergent Jamaica. It is an outdoor prose that he writes with sharply etched social reporting and there is not the subtlety of an Edgar Mittelholzer character analysis.

Roger Mais has published in Kingston, Jamaica, two collections of short stories, *Face and Other Stories,* 1942, and *And Most of All Man* in 1943.

Though dealing with social conditions as Claude Thompson does, Mais is more subjective and inclined to analyse the mental states of his characters; and he obtains his efforts by broad sweeps of colloquial prose showing how the characters react to their environment.

Among other things, the indigenous short story in the West Indies should be a mouthpiece for the mass of the people and express their thoughts and hopes and inevitable fears of unemployment and it is around this theme that Mais in *Face* has written six of the sixteen stories dealing with the servant class. It is proletariat literature, written sympathetically from the inside and while the two, '**God made Little Apples'** and **'Red Dirt Don't Wash'** are more typical of Mais' talent with their introspection and frustration, the story '**Afternoon Delivery**', of the iceman and the parlour-maid, has a condensed vigour and a swift movement that make it eminently readable.

There are other thoughtful vignettes of pictured emotion in '**The Pond'**, the title story '**Face'** (which describes a child's reaction to a quarrelsome tramcar neighbour), the '**Letter and Lookout**' and an engaging feature is the intercalation of pages of poems between successive stories.

The 1943 collection *And Most of All Man*, shows an advance in the quality and structure of Mais' stories. First of all, he contributes a foreword and a Prologue which set the key and bind together all the stories in the book. In these he states that he is writing the story of *"Man, the eternal protagonist amid eternal process"*, — whom he met on the top of a hill in St. Andrew, Jamaica, dirty, hungry and in rags.

In *And Most of All Man*, the philosophy is more mature and the plotting is better, and instead of the reader being almost on top of the story situation, Mais has adjusted the microscope of his social and human examination so that the stories are more objective. '**Flood Water', 'The Springing**' and **'The Earth in Season**' are vignettes in the manner of the earlier collection and they deal with situations in the life of the peasant on the land but already they show a sureness and an advance which will be more apparent in the **'Month of the Beautiful Stranger**' and **'Crooked Branch'** and '**Without Benefit of the Moon**'. In these three more shapely pieces of work, Mais explores the family context and its inter-relation with the thoughts and feelings of the boy or lad as yet uncertain and frustrated before the challenge of the world, and the impression is that he has caught the adolescent's wonder and growing apprehension of the world. One may hazard the opinion that

in these short stories, Mais portrays the young Jamaica coming to manhood.

This pattern however does not include '**The Noose'**, a compelling, though not quite successful story based on the 1865 Morant Bay uprising.

The Cow that Laughed and other Stories by R. L. C. Aarons, is a collection of 17 stories and sketches. Perhaps the reader finds in Aarons a wider range of theme than in Mais and Thompson, e.g. obeah, madness and a ghost story, a tale based on a legend of Spanish Jamaica in the '**Spirit of the Moneague**', and two companion studies showing the gloom and pleasure of a girl child of servant class in' **Dancer**' and '**Madam**'. The most sympathetically treated however are the characters in the rather static stories, **'Late Flowering',' Beauty Comes to Mr. Povis'** and '**End of Term'**. Here Aarons seems to lay his hand on the heart. '**The Outsider** 'is a moving story based on the triangular situation and in another pathetic sense so is **'Mrs. Arroway's Joe'**, which is related to the group of '**Late Flowering**' and '**End of Term**.'

As a footnote to this incomplete record of the short story, I add this paragraph on four B.G. writers — Leo (Egbert Martin) is known to have published in 1885 *Scriptology,* a book of four short stories but they are not now available. K. H. Cregan for many years was the outstanding short story writer in British Guiana, but he followed the conventions and even one may say, the specifications of the *Strand* magazine story. At the other end of the scale, can be seen early in the thirties, Guy de Weever who published in the *Canada West Indies Magazine* a series of short stories which caught the Demerara spirit with the themes centring around Jordanitism, black pudding and obeah practices.

Among the present B.G. writers, perhaps the most considerable is Eugene Bartrum who is developing economy of means and artistic colloquial rhythms very close to everyday speech.

I bring to an end this very cursory account of the short story in the West Indies with mention of the collection *Dreams, Devils, Vampires* (1940) by J. A. V. Bourne. Bourne is the only Guianese writer who has gone to Poe as a model and who compounds bizarre themes with a dash of the mysterious.

THE NOVEL

The novel generally is a mirror of life in a society; the characters move through its pages, following their loves and hatreds, their triumphs and disasters. Perhaps in every novel there is a legitimate heightening of emotion that we term dramatic, partly because the writer, in his selection of episodes, has to choose those that will best hold the interest of the reader and so is guided to the plateau land in a society rather than the flat uninspiring everyday country of the emotions. How far this may be carried towards an unreal world can be seen in the even more highly dramatized and sensational sequences of the cinema where the time to be spent on absorbing other people's experience is shorter, the average intellectual level of the audience is lower and the impact sometimes violent. It forms a pyramid in dramatic values, life, the novel and the cinema.

Of course, another reason for the apparent heightening may be that in the actual living, one's senses have to acquire a certain protective dullness against the sharp stings of successive experiences. Then one may say that the novelist restores to living the quality that it really had and that, for instance, the Eighteenth Century is preserved for us in the novels of Fielding more accurately than Squire Allworthy himself could confirm.

There are not very many novels I have read that are written by West Indians on the West Indies and for our purposes we can follow the chronological sequence which will lead us into the ever deepening complexity of sociology and racial tensions; we can look at the fluctuations of life in the West Indies through the novel,

The first novel I'd like us to examine together is *The White Witch of Rosehall* by H. G. de Lisser (1929). *The White Witch* is a novel based on life on a Jamaican plantation in 1831 when a young Englishman, heir to a Barbados plantation, is attempting to win his spurs and learn estate conditions as a book keeper on the estates belonging to a thrice-widowed, strong-willed, pleasure and power-loving beautiful woman.

The jealousy of the overseer, the ugly temper of the slaves, caused by rumours of approaching emancipation and their eventual outbreak, the immediate contact with obeahistic practices connected with Haiti and the dramatic foreshortening of perspective that makes the idealistic Englishman the centre of a battle of wills between the owner of the plantation and a coloured girl whose grandfather is a witchdoctor — De Lisser has mixed these ingredients into a highly-flavoured sensational novel which has a coarse vitality of its own. De Lisser as editor of the *Gleaner*, had an unique opportunity of publishing his own novels in the Xmas issues of *Planter's Punch*, a shilling magazine which he largely wrote himself and he seems to have favoured a compound of the eerie and mysterious. This supernatural element is apparent also in '**Poltergeist'** (published in *Planter's Punch*, 1933) a tale of modern Jamaica and London. He is credited with having published some fifteen novels.

The title character in the *White Witch* Mrs. Annie Palmer, gradually changes as we go through the story, until at the end, we have lost sympathy with her. We realise that beauty, power and an emotional nature have led her through the doors of madness. Ashman, hard overseer as he is, is shaken by her power over the unknown but the unfrocked clergyman Rider gains in nobility towards the end. The hero does not fare so well; perhaps de Lisser was unsympathetic towards him.

The second novel on our list, *New Day* by Victor S. Reid, also has Jamaica as its locale and it brings us from 1865, the date of the Morant Bay rising that was put down so bloodily, to 1944, when Jamaica received her new constitution.

Reid used the method of depicting four generations of one family that Galsworthy uses so effectively in the *Forsyte Saga*, and in contrast to life on de Lisser's plantations, he provides a picture of country life at Salt Savannah in an estate overseer's family. Pa Campbell was near white and religious and aloof from politics but one of his sons, Davie, became involved in the local resentment and it is through the eyes of a younger son, John, that we see the events that led to the 1865 rising and that leaves Pa Campbell wantonly butchered on the ground by the Queen's redcoats before his children's eyes. Davie fled to one of the small islands off Jamaica with the girl

he loved and his brother John, founded a settlement and died there in a hurricane. His son becomes a successful merchant and dies of smallpox and it is left to his son Garth to become an English barrister and found the first Trade Union in Jamaica and fight for the new constitution granting the island partial self-government.

Structurally, the novel is the story of a night of memories of old John Campbell before the new day dawns. The historical pegs are used effectively and the style, particularly, in the first half of the book, is liquid with poetry. Perhaps the most important feature of the novel is the advance in technique shown in the use of the Jamaican dialect which is adapted here and which becomes an attractive medium. This is not the English of Mayfair; it is a possession of the West Indian passing from the Colonial phase into a new literary nationhood of its own. The story cracks somewhat after the middle and the style becomes more pedestrian as the author deals with modern Jamaica and delineates the shadows of contemporary figures. But the thing has happened — that a West Indian of the people writes the story of the people in a way that outpaces the achievement of a better and parallel book *Cry the Beloved Country*.

It is some years since I read Alfred Mendes' novels of contemporary West Indian life, *Pitch Lake* and *Black Fauns*, and fire has destroyed the copies known to be in British Guiana, so it is on memories and a previous analysis that I call. The earlier book *Pitch Lake* to which Aldous Huxley contributed a foreword, is concerned with the life of the Portuguese lower middle class in Trinidad and it bears the marks of the disillusioned thirties of this century. In the novel there is no balanced personality; all the characters display sensitiveness to their surroundings, there is evidence of culture (one character is shown as possessing remarkable musical ability) but one has the impression of an unstable people, whose emotions are always simmering and perhaps it is the hotchpotch of nationalities and racial strands that throws their ready sensibilities one against the other. This book has the '**Hamlet'** touch. The books that count in the world's history are books that in the main portray endurance and patience and the success of heroic qualities. *New Day* has this quality but *Pitch Lake* has not.

The second novel by Mendes *Black Fauns* gives the impression of an extended short story. The plot is subordinate to the authentic picture of Negro life in Trinidad in the barrack-yard. Here are all the strange loyalties, the unpredictable clashes of personality, the traditional improvidence of the men and the gossiping philosophy of the women. Perhaps we would like to know more of the economics behind the sociology — why do these people have to live like this?

One does not necessarily expect a novel to be a racial or sociological study but Edgar Mittelholzer's novel, dealing with East Indian life on the Corentyne Coast, British Guiana, rings true to what one knows or expects of this racial group. *Corentyne Thunder* (1941) is for me a better constructed story than either *New Day* or the *White Witch*. The parts embraced in that unity are not as complex, say, as the supernatural elements in de Lisser nor does the story have to absorb such difficult elements as the historical pegs that Reid uses but there is all the plausibility of poetic truth and a new world is created into which the reader is drawn.

An East Indian cow-minder and milk seller lives on the Corentyne Savannah with his two daughters, and keeps the shillings from his sales in hundred-coin bundles in a canister in the mud hut. His life resides in the canister and his heart fails and his life ends when he discovers the canister empty. One of his daughters secretly loves a friend who commits a murder and takes the money from her father's canister to pay a lawyer to defend him in the murder trial. That is the story in three sentences but this novel of Ramgolall and his daughters is integrated into a wider context of village and estate life among East Indians in British Guiana.

Mittelholzer's style is very competent without rising to Reid's poetic quality and he uses his painter's skill to weave his visual descriptions of the Corentyne Scene into the fabric of his story. Ramgolall and the other characters, even the minor ones, are clearly conceived and projected and one is not conscious of the difficulty that the dialect occasioned Eyre and Spottiswoode before they persuaded Mittelholzer to amend and re-amend the speech in order to make it fully intelligible to readers in England.

In 1917 A.R.F. Webber who later became an important political figure in Guianese politics and who wrote the *Centenary History of British Guiana*, published a novel *Those that be in Bondage*. Like Mittelholzer, he was attracted by the complex picture of East Indian life on the Sugar Estates and the implications of the system of bringing labourers from India under articles of indenture; but unlike him, he deals with the abuses of the overseer system and the policy of managers and the influence on their morals rather than with human passions . He draws a picture of the chivalrous white overseer who married an East Indian girl in the face of estate convention and how their infant daughter is left an orphan at the end of a shocking tragedy. At least the author does that in the first half of the book, because in the second part he places the orphan with her aunt and her first cousin in Tobago and then proceeds to switch the main thread of the narrative over to the cousin, Harold. Harold becomes a priest of the Dominican Order, in a moment of weakness breaks his vow of celibacy and in great remorse, disrobes himself dramatically in a Port-of-Spain pulpit. His training as an architect helps him to obtain a living, he comes to B.G., is involved in the Brickdam Cathedral fire and finally when his offer to help rebuild the Cathedral with his fortune and skill is rejected by the Pope, he leaves with his cousin to begin a new life in England.

Written as a serial, the novel suffers from the shapelessness of being successive episodes. The characters are not fully round, although they have vitality, and, in the Eighteenth Century manner, the author keeps interjecting moral comments. Four chapters are merely descriptions of Tobago, in the best guide book fashion, there is the account of a riot on a sugar estate and many instances occur of the florid oratory and rhetoric that are characteristic of Webber the politician.

Yet one concludes the novel with the impression that the story is significant in its criticism of the plantation system. One can fairly say also that the Roman Church is not attacked, in spite of the dramatisation of the priest's conflict between love and the church.

Albert S. Ferreira in British Guiana has been working in the new literary form of radio. He has been writing radio plays

for Station ZFY, based on the lives of the great musicians and contemporary composers and he has also commemorated with his plays dates and events such as Remembrance Day and the arrival of notable visitors in British Guiana.

Of these, only one play has been published in fictionalized form — '**A Sonata is Simple'**. This is a charming short story written in memory of the late Philip Pilgrim and based on the friendship between a boy and a girl who were neighbours. Just out of his teens, the boy plays the violin and has the urge to compose music that captures the warmth and gaiety of the tropics. His mother wishes him to give up composing and become a concert violinist and is opposed in spirit to the girl who is the "*angle character*". How Ronnie at his recital throws off restraint and plays his own compositions to an applauding audience and the unfortunate accident that strikes him down immediately after a British Council Scholarship has been awarded him — Albert Ferreira makes from these a story that is full of warm sentiment.

FOOTNOTES

DRAMA

The 1938 Royal Commission remarked in its report that the people of the West Indies had a strong love for the dramatic, for colour and dance. The Commission wrote in its recommendations on Adult Education that *"for a people with the gifts of the Negro race, drama and music would be potent means of arousing interest, as they have in England."* Unfortunately there has not been sufficient cultural interchange in the West Indies, to provide a more-than-island audience and the Little Theatre Movement in Jamaica, for instance, has not yet so far as I know performed in other colonies but reports of performances and the scripts of some plays have found their way about the region.

In the West Indies dramatic performances are appearing I believe at two different levels. Among the middle class, there are groups of amateurs who present the plays of America and Europe. In addition to the Little Theatre Movement in Jamaica, there is the Mandeville Amateur Dramatic Society, in Barbados there is the group the Bridgetown Players, Trinidad has her Whitehall Players and in British Guiana there are the Georgetown Dramatic Club and the B.G. Dramatic Society, an East Indian group that performs the plays of Tagore and other Indian writers.

Then there is another dramatic movement at work in the lower classes. In British Guiana the revues and burlesques of Sam Chase, largely based on tropical events, are the beginnings of a people's drama in the way that the Elizabethan theatre developed and this movement is probably matched in other colonies where the dramatic potentialities of the West Indian people are slowly beginning to find an outlet.

So far there are not many West Indians who have turned their hand to this type of writing. Archie Lindo in Jamaica is perhaps the area's foremost playwright and he has dramatised the novels of de Lisser and Captain Reid and also written four plays of his own while George Campbell, M. G. Smith and

Cicely Howland especially (with her '**Storm Signal**' and **'Grandfather is Dying**') have also written plays in that island that have been performed with success.

In Barbados Collymore has written at least two plays of which we know and in British Guiana N. E. Cameron has written and produced '**Balthazar', 'Adoniya', 'Jamaica Joe'** and '**Sabaco**', plays designed to bring out the nobility of people of colour in Egypt and elsewhere that is inherent in their history and tradition. In response to a competition Basil Balgobin has written '**Asra'** (a political play on India) for performance by the B.G. Dramatic Society.

Under drama may perhaps be mentioned the Little Carib dance group in Trinidad under Beryl McBurnie where the W.I. scene is being patterned creatively into dance, and also the radio plays now being written and produced over Station ZFY by Albert S. Ferreira. There is a great future of possibilities before dramatists in the W.I. both in the legitimate theatre and its offshoots, and apart from the novel, there is no field so fertile for the creation of West Indian nationhood. It is when West Indians see themselves portrayed on the stage that they will best be able to cultivate their strengths and ponder upon their weaknesses. No writer has yet arisen adequately to combine this society direction with the creative pleasure that drama provides but the scene is already set for him or her.

HISTORY, BIOGRAPHY AND BELLES LETTRES

There are two articles by H. A. Vaughan on Sir Conrad Reeves, the first Negro in the Empire to be knighted and one who passed from printer's apprentice to Chief Justice of Barbados. Published in *Forum*, they read like the opening chapters of a long-awaited biography on this outstanding West Indian personality. They are entitled the '**Approach to Sir Conrad Reeves**' and '**The Childhood of Sir Conrad Reeves**', and Vaughan's literary skill imposed on his logical approach has produced writing of a high order in these articles.

The same is not true of C. V. Alert's biography of H. N. Critchlow, the first colonial to organize a trade union but Alert's book is a competent addition to the tradition of famous West Indians, written by a West Indian himself.

Biography is really personal history and it's a short step from these to the historians of the West Indian scene who are themselves West Indians and therefore express the incipient critical spirit of the region, notably Eric Williams. Primarily Williams is a scientist, massing his facts and marshalling his arguments against what he considers undue bias in previous historical writing on the West Indies, but *Capitalism and Slavery* has a trenchancy of phrase that is memorable. For instance Williams writes "*England, France and even Holland began to challenge the Iberian Axis and claim their place in the Sun. The Negro too was to have his place, though he did not ask for it; it was the broiling sun of the sugar, tobacco and cotton plantations of the New World.*" What is noteworthy here is that Williams stands as the representative of all those who venture into historical writing in more permanent form in order to express the truth as they see it and to correct what they consider are biases in the accounts previously set down by non-West Indians. This area view selects for its expression writers as diverse as A. R. F. Webber in Guiana and F. A. Hoyos in Barbados, and there must be many a local historian in the islands who has felt this prompting in his heart.

Of the specific critics of literature in the West Indies I believe that J. E. Clare McFarlane stands foremost. Attempts to assess the quality of individual West Indian writers have been made by many but there is a smaller band who have related their comments to the general West Indian scene. Of these we have looked at the ideas of Peter Blackman, H.V.L. Swanzy and Bryan King, but none has published a book of articles, essays and addresses as McFarlane has done in his *Challenge of Our Time* (1945).

Written against the background of the sick civilisation of Europe, McFarlane's essays propose that by changing the pattern and quality of the individual's thought there will eventually be changed for the better the individual's environment and the quality of public leaders. "*We offer you...*" he says "*...the inexhaustible riches of poetry to do this.*"

Of the 15 essays found in this extremely stimulating book at least two-thirds deal with the nature of poetry, e.g., studies in form, in the poetry of Jamaica and in the poetry of Pope and Bridges, and in the other essays, McFarlane relates these

themes to the state of civilisation in the world and the need for spiritual values and political safeguards in Jamaica. While urging with all his power a firmly based nationhood in Jamaica and the Caribbean, McFarlane seems concerned with retaining a religious outlook and spiritual basis in public affairs, and his studies in poetry are guided by this same desire to remove the intellectual conflict and spiritual disharmony in his environment.

THE SUMMING UP

Now, where does all this take us?

The West Indian is creating a literature of his own and the West Indian is criticising his environment. He is writing his own poems and novels and plays and his own histories. He is beginning to praise his own famous men. He is perceiving the need to write his own school books. He is testing the literary forms to see how much of his strain and stress they can bear. He is working on the problem of dialect, trying to make it answer the need of a unique expression that will yet link him to the mass of his fellow West Indians. He is separating the elements of the literary legacies that are his, assimilating those that he needs, and placing in the discard those that he does not need. To do this properly, he is sharpening his critical faculties and deepening his knowledge of the history of his antecedents. There is a bold stir, and an urge towards impatience because so many environmental influences are indifferent and even hostile to his growth, and time is swiftly running out. So in his Literary Adventure, the West Indian runs the risk of being slightly loud and even crude by other standards than his own, as the thrustful elements must predominate. There can be no Henry James no Jane Austen among the West Indian novelists. At least, not yet.

It is inevitable that literary criticism in a young community must become involved in some of the regions of sociology. It is only as the society develops, that these branches separate out more clearly, like the spokes from the centre of wheel, and one can take the body of work and assess it, without too much reference to its origins. The roads would have been laid, the tradition built, and glory already begun to inhere in a name. But in these early stages, the West Indian has to keep one eye cocked on the economic position and the political situation, he has to fill in the gaps of his own educational deficiencies, and what he writes must link him to the somnolent masses that he is trying to wake.

But the great Literary Adventure is on, that will one day help him to find himself part of a nation.

TORCH SONG

Range
Range in a tongue of flame over the ocean
Set alight Castries again, Roseau, Belize and Bridgetown
St. Georges, Kingston, Georgetown and Port-of-Spain
Consecrate these inns into altars.

Spurt them into matches aflame
With quick yellow hair.

This is the Pentecostal year.

Hover in the lightning of the spirit
And see beneath the torches the brown faces
All proud
That ebb from ink through chocolate to milk and back again

Tumble your Dionysiac juices
Dregged from half a dozen continents
Into the heady cocktail

But burn, burn the dross away
So we come clean into the larger air.

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We have a vigil to go
Over invisible Himalayas
We do not take much baggage
We travel light, with tightened belts
And the discipline of an armoured column.

When the woman History comes
Dragging with her heavy womb and knocks
Let the faintheart close his door
With the sick and the aged.

We have need for strong tall men
To pluck these ripe stars from the heavens.

Up in the cast comes the Pentecostal year.