

Across the Oceans

Multi—disciplinary Multi—continental Essays

Daizal R. Samad

Ashwannie Harripersaud



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INTRODUCTION

The works of Daizal R. Samad traverse a vast intellectual and emotional landscape, weaving together themes of displacement, identity, cultural memory, and the relentless pursuit of a sense of belonging. Samad's scholarship is marked by a profound engagement with the complexities of human existence, whether reflecting on his personal experiences in Malaysia, dissecting the psychological scars of colonialism in Caribbean literature, or reimagining education in a pandemic-stricken world. His essays and critical analyses do not merely observe but also interrogate, challenge, and often dismantle the boundaries between genres, histories, disciplines, and ideologies.

This collection brings together some of Samad's most incisive writings, each piece a lens through which the fractures and fusions that define postcolonial societies, literary traditions, and educational systems can be examined. From the vivid sensory immersion of his "Letter from Malaysia" to his sharp critique of institutional failures in *Teaching Excellence*, and from his exploration of diasporic identity in Kamau Brathwaite's poetry to his reimagining of classroom spaces for a pandemic era, these essays reveal a mind deeply attuned to both the beauty and brutality of the world. Samad's work resists easy categorization—it is

at once scholarly and deeply personal, analytical yet lyrical, rooted in specific geographies while speaking to universal human struggles.

At the heart of these essays is a recurring meditation on fragmentation and wholeness—how individuals and societies manoeuvre the ruptures of history through literature, education, or cultural memory. Samad does not offer simplistic resolutions; instead, he invites readers into the discomfort of unresolved questions, urging us to confront the legacies of colonialism, institutional system failures, and reinvention possibilities. His voice is that of a critical observer who is also, inevitably, a participant in the very narratives he examines—a scholar shaped by the Caribbean, Canada, Malaysia, Africa, and the Middle East, yet always questioning where and to whom he truly belongs.

In his **“Letter from Malaysia”**, Daizal R. Samad reflects on his experiences in Malaysia after arriving in December 1993. He is immediately struck by the Malaysian people’s warmth and hospitality, a kindness he first encounters on Malaysia Airlines and later in daily interactions. The country’s conservative yet humorous society helps ease his homesickness for Canada, though he remains deeply aware of his dual displacement—first from the Caribbean and now from New Brunswick, Canada.

Malaysia, he observes, is a land of striking contrasts. On the one hand, there is rapid modernization, with

construction sites, cranes, and the constant noise of progress as the nation prepares for the future. On the other hand, poverty is visible in dilapidated homes, roadside food stalls, and laborers' weary faces. The disparity is stark—a rickety taxi shares the road with a luxury Mercedes, while a struggling couple on a moped clings to their survival. These contradictions define the urban landscape, in which gleaming skyscrapers cast shadows over makeshift shacks.

The sensory overload in Malaysia leaves a lasting impression. The streets are alive with vibrant colours, street vendors' calls, and the ever-present blare of car horns. Traffic is chaotic, with aggressive drivers showing little regard for pedestrians and even children trying to cross the road. Yet during the disorder, there is a sense of community—friends visit easily, children play in the streets at night, and the sounds of music and conversation fill the air.

Food is central to Malaysian culture, and Samad delights in the abundance of flavours. Meetings are punctuated by tea and snacks, breakfasts are hearty feasts, and meals are served in open-air restaurants. He describes *roti canai*, a soft bread dipped in spiced pea broth, as a favourite street food. Even with the availability of Western fast-food chains, the local cuisine remains the heart of daily life.

Religion, particularly Islam, also plays a significant role in shaping the rhythm of society. The call to prayer

echoes five times a day, and Friday prayers temporarily halt academic and business life. Samad notes the contrast between Malaysian Islam and the version he knew in the Caribbean, emphasizing the people's deep devotion. However, he also observes a mutual ignorance between Muslims and Christians regarding each other's scriptures, highlighting a cultural divide.

Nature provides moments of beauty and nostalgia. Samad recalls forgotten tropical life details—the cries of cats in the heat, the sight of scarred stray dogs, and the proud crowing of roosters at dawn. Walking through a rubber plantation, he feels the wind moving like a living force, while monkeys leap through the trees above. The swaying coconut palms and banana plants remind him of the Caribbean, deepening his sense of connection and displacement.

One evening, a chance encounter with a young boy leaves a profound impact on his life. Desperate for help after his father's moped accident, the boy struggles to communicate in Malay, the national language, and rudimentary English. Despite Samad's inability to assist, the boy comforts him, saying, "Don't worry, Uncle." This moment of unexpected kindness from a child burdened by his own troubles stays with Samad, making him question his ability to make a meaningful difference in such a complex society.

The letter concludes with a mix of admiration and introspection. Samad acknowledges Malaysia's

resilience, its blend of tradition and progress, and its people's generosity. However, he also struggles with his limitations as an outsider, unable to bridge the gap between intention and action. He sends warm regards to his Canadian colleagues and students, leaving readers with a meditation on belonging, cultural contrasts, and the small yet profound moments that define human connection.

Through vivid descriptions and thoughtful reflections, Samad's letter captures Malaysia's beauty and challenges, offering a deeply personal yet universally relatable account of life in a foreign land. His observations reveal not only the external realities of the country but also the internal journey of adapting, remembering, and finding meaning in new surroundings.

In their critical examination of school bullying, Samad and Ashwannie Harripersaud shed light on a pervasive yet often overlooked crisis in Caribbean education systems in their research entitled **"The Bully and the Bullied: Paying Attention to Secondary Schools."**

Their work reveals how bullying—whether physical, verbal, or cyber—has become an institutionalized form of violence that undermines learning environments and damages young people's lives. While global studies show that nearly one-third of students experience bullying, the authors argue that Caribbean nations, such as Guyana, face unique challenges due to cultural

attitudes, inadequate policies, and a troubling lack of empirical research.

Samad and Harripersaud present compelling evidence that bullying is not merely "child's play" but a serious social issue with long-term consequences. Victims frequently suffer from depression, academic decline, and even suicidal ideation, while aggressors often develop antisocial behaviours that persist into adulthood. In Guyana, where systematic data on bullying is scarce, media reports of extreme cases—including student deaths—highlight an urgent need for intervention. Unlike developed nations that have implemented comprehensive anti-bullying programs, schools in the Caribbean often rely on punitive measures rather than prevention, failing to address root causes such as social inequality and toxic masculinity.

A key contribution of Samad and Harripersaud's research is their critique of imported anti-bullying frameworks that ignore regional cultural contexts. They argue that solutions must be locally designed, incorporating community values and involving teachers, parents, and students in the process. For instance, restorative justice approaches—which emphasize reconciliation over punishment—could better align with Caribbean communal traditions than zero-tolerance policies borrowed from Western systems. The authors also call for mandatory teacher training to identify early signs of bullying and

psychological support systems for both victims and perpetrators.

The study's most urgent recommendation is for Guyana and neighbouring nations to prioritize research, as data gaps hinder effective policymaking. Samad and Harripersaud advocate longitudinal studies to track bullying patterns and evaluate interventions, stressing that these initiatives must be funded by regional governments. Without such efforts, bullying will continue to sabotage educational outcomes and public health.

Ultimately, Samad and Harripersaud frame bullying as a societal failure rather than a schoolyard issue. Their work compels educators and policymakers to act decisively—not only to protect vulnerable students but also to disrupt cycles of violence that extend far beyond the classroom. In conclusion, creating safer schools is not just an educational imperative but a moral one, demanding collective responsibility across the Caribbean.

In **“Teaching Excellence: A Reaction to the Smith Commission Report and its Effects,”** Samad, Fraser, Fish, and Fraser critically examine the impact of the Smith Commission Report (1991) on Canadian higher education, arguing that the institutional responses have been largely ineffective while the report rightly highlighted the undervaluation of teaching in universities. The authors contend that recent initiatives

to improve teaching quality—such as faculty development workshops and teaching committees—merely replicate failed strategies from the 1960s and 70s under the Ontario Universities Program for Institutional Development (OUPID). Drawing on historical analysis, they caution that these measures will likely meet the same limited success as their predecessors without deeper structural reforms.

A key concern raised by Samad et al. is the lack of originality in current teaching "innovations." They demonstrate that many methods being promoted as ground-breaking—such as collaborative learning—were already in circulation decades ago. More troubling, in their view, is how discussions of teaching excellence have become dominated by debates over methodology rather than focusing on improving the education of educators. The authors critique this "method madness," arguing it reflects a systemic failure to address the real issue: universities continue to prioritize research over teaching in tangible ways. In support of this claim, they analysed 1994 academic job postings, finding that while 86% emphasized research expertise, only 64% mentioned teaching—and often as an afterthought.

The authors identified institutional infrastructure as the core problem. They noted that PhD programs train researchers rather than teachers, resulting in faculty who often lack pedagogical preparation. This issue is compounded, they argue, when universities replace

experienced professors on sabbatical with inexperienced instructors, particularly in crucial introductory courses. Samad et al. maintain that meaningful improvement requires restructuring university reward systems, suggesting that teaching must be valued equally with research in hiring, promotion, and funding decisions.

Ultimately, while the Smith Report successfully reignited discussions about teaching quality, real progress demands more than superficial reforms. They call for a fundamental rethinking of university priorities, warning that current efforts will simply repeat past failures rather than achieve genuine teaching excellence without systemic change. Their analysis serves as both a critique of superficial institutional responses and a roadmap for meaningful educational reform.

In his critical exploration of Brathwaite's *Rights of Passage*, Samad examines the poem as a profound meditation on the fractured identity of the African diaspora and the broader search for belonging in the West. The first book of Brathwaite's **The Arrivants** trilogy, **Rights of Passage**, traces the Black people's historical and psychological journey from Africa to the Caribbean and beyond, bringing together themes of displacement, cultural survival, and the quest for wholeness. Samad argues that while the poem centres on the African experience, its resonance extends to all West Indians, whose collective identity has been shaped

by colonialism, slavery, and indentureship. The essay underscores Brathwaite's rejection of racial hierarchies of suffering, instead emphasizing a shared history of resilience and the complex, hybrid sensibility that defines Caribbean identity.

Samad situates Brathwaite's work within the violent legacy of colonialism, acknowledging the specific horrors faced by African slaves and the suffering of Indigenous and indentured peoples. He cautions against measuring comparative pain, as such an approach only perpetuates the divisions imposed by colonial powers. Instead, Brathwaite's poetry highlights survival as a triumph of unity. The West Indian identity, Samad notes, is determined not by race but by a layered consciousness—a fusion of African, European, Asian, and Indigenous influences. This “complex of sensibility” transcends colour, offering a more inclusive vision of Caribbean belonging.

The motif of the search for home, poignantly articulated in the poem “Postlude/Home,” is central to *Rights of Passage*: “Where then is the nigger's / home? / In Paris Brixton Kingston / Rome?” The word “dividing” in this passage signifies the ongoing fragmentation of Black identity, a theme that Brathwaite reinforces through his innovative use of split words and disrupted syntax. Samad analyses this stylistic choice as a reflection of the diasporic psyche—broken yet persistently reassembling itself across time and space. The structure of the poem mirrors the cyclical nature of history,

linking ancient African civilizations to the Middle Passage and onward to contemporary migrations. Gordon Rohlehr's interpretation, cited by Samad, frames Brathwaite's historical vision as dialectical, where socio-economic forces intersect with deep psychological currents in the Caribbean consciousness.

Tom, the archetypal "Uncle Tom," is a key figure in this journey, embodies both the wounds of slavery and the enduring hope for regeneration. Samad explores Tom's transformation from a symbol of ancestral dignity to a broken yet prophetic voice. Tom's lament—"nothing / nothing / nothing"—captures the despair of cultural loss, yet his vision of future renewal suggests an underlying resilience. Tom's descendants, however, mock his perceived passivity, failing to recognize his spiritual depth. Samad argues that this generational disconnect reflects a broader West Indian dilemma: the rejection of ancestral wisdom in favour of hollow, performative identities. Brathwaite critiques these postures—whether the "bad-ass nigger" or the bourgeois arriviste—as dead-end reactions to colonialism that lack true cultural grounding.

The essay culminates with an analysis of "The Dust," in which Brathwaite shifts to Creole voices, celebrating the endurance of the folk amid poverty and political turmoil. Here, Samad highlights the poem's turn toward organic cultural survival—the rhythms, language, and daily resilience of ordinary people. Unlike the hollow posturing of earlier sections, the folk embody an

unconscious but potent resistance. The final poem, “Epilogue,” brings the journey full circle, returning to the imagery of the desert but now infused with hard-won insight: “There is no / turning back.” Samad reads this as a defiant step toward self-renewal, acknowledging the unresolved wounds of history while affirming the possibility of forging a new future.

Imminently, Samad’s essay presents **Rights of Passage** as a foundational text in Caribbean literature—one that confronts the brutal legacies of colonialism while asserting the redemptive power of cultural memory. As interpreted by Samad, Brathwaite’s work does not offer easy resolutions but instead charts a path toward wholeness through an unflinching engagement with history. The poem’s greatness lies in its ability to speak simultaneously to the specific African diasporic experience and the universal West Indian condition, offering a vision of identity that is as fragmented as it is resilient. Brathwaite’s masterpiece becomes not just a lament for lost homes but a testament to the enduring search for belonging in a world shaped by displacement in Samad’s reading.

Daizal R. Samad’s essay **“In Search of the Chrysalis of the Voice: The Language of the Slaves in John Hearne’s The Sure Salvation”** examines John Hearne’s novel **The Sure Salvation** (1981), which depicts enslaved Africans’ harrowing journey aboard a slave ship bound for Brazil in 1860. The novel explores the psychological and physical trauma of slavery while

highlighting the enslaved's resilience and dignity. Samad emphasizes Hearne's unsentimental yet profound portrayal of their suffering, noting how the narrative creates a sense of distance—almost like a mist or opaque glass—between the reader and the horrific reality of the slaves. Samad argues that this technique allows the reader to confront the grotesque inhumanity of slavery without being entirely overwhelmed by despair.

This essay examines the fragmented and delayed revelation of the presence of the slaves in the novel. Their suffering is first hinted at through sensory impressions—moans and a foul smell escaping the ship's hold—before they are physically seen. Hearne's approach mirrors Joseph Conrad's **Heart of Darkness**, in which African characters lack individualized voices, reflecting the limitations of European language in capturing cross-cultural experiences. Samad references Wilson Harris's argument about the necessity of language to articulate the "eclipsed identity" of the enslaved, who were historically stripped of individuality and reduced to commodified bodies. However, Hearne complicates this notion by presenting slavery not as an absolute erasure of self but as a metamorphosis in which the enslaved retain elements of their cultural and spiritual identity.

Samad highlights three enslaved characters who emerge from the collective anonymity: the Baluba boy, who serves as an interpreter; Tadene, an older woman

perceived as a potential instrument of control; and Mtishta, a young virgin subjected to sexual violence. The Baluba boy's multilingualism becomes a fragile thread of communication among the enslaved, offering a glimmer of unity during linguistic fragmentation. Meanwhile, Mtishta's inner monologue reveals her deep connection to African rituals and spirituality, allowing her to mentally transcend her physical violation. Samad notes that Hearne stylizes Mtishta's thoughts in English while evoking the structure of her native language, reflecting her cultural worldview.

The essay also explores the role of music and dance as alternative forms of communication when language fails. After being freed, the formerly enslaved Africans use drums and dance to bridge their linguistic differences, creating a harmonious expression of shared humanity. Samad connects this moment to the origins of Caribbean cultural practices, such as Guyana's Queh-Queh dance, suggesting that Hearne portrays the enslaved as active participants in forging a new, hybrid identity. The novel ends with a poignant contrast between the newly arrived Africans and the established Black community in Guyana, hinting at both division and the potential for unity.

Finally, Samad argues that **The Sure Salvation** challenges the notion of complete dehumanization under slavery, instead presenting a narrative of endurance, cultural retention, and the slow, painful emergence of new identities. Through its linguistic and

thematic depth, Hearne's work captures the resilience of the African spirit during unimaginable suffering.

Daizal R. Samad's essay **"Toward National Identity as by Phenomenal Alchemy: A Reading of K.S. Maniam's In A Far Country"** explores Maniam's novel **as** a profound meditation on the formation of individual and national identity in postcolonial Malaysia. The novel's protagonist, Rajan, undergoes a psychological and spiritual journey that mirrors Malaysia's struggle to define itself in the middle of its multicultural reality. Samad argues that Rajan's personal reintegration—his movement from fragmentation to wholeness—parallels the nation's quest for a cohesive identity that must reconcile its diverse ethnic and cultural influences.

At its core, **In A Far Country** is about the metamorphosis of the self, which is shaped by ancestral legacies, colonial history, and contemporary socio-political forces. Rajan begins as an emotionally detached observer, recording the lives of others—his father, his Chinese-Malaysian colleague Lee Shin, and the Malay-Malaysian Zulkifli—without fully engaging with them. His detachment reflects Malaysia's own fractured sense of self, where different ethnic groups coexist but remain psychologically segregated. Rajan's journey is one of retrospection, where he must confront the buried aspects of his identity—his father's despair, Lee Shin's tragic fate, and Zulkifli's indigenous wisdom—to achieve true self-awareness.

Samad highlights how Rajan's father, an Indian immigrant, symbolizes the displacement and cultural disorientation of Malaysia's migrant communities. His death from alcoholism and despair represents the failure of transplanted identities to take root without adaptation. Conversely, Chinese-Malaysian artist Lee Shin embodies the struggle to preserve cultural heritage while adapting to a new national identity. His suicide signifies the dangers of cultural purism in a multicultural society. Zulkifli, a Malay-Malaysian, represents the indigenous connection to the land, yet his racial pride blinds him to the necessity of hybrid identities. These characters are not just individuals but allegorical fragments of Malaysia itself, each contributing to Rajan's—and by extension, the nation's—evolving consciousness.

The novel's central theme is the symbolic quest for the tiger, which Samad interprets as the Aboriginal Muse—the spiritual essence of Malaysia. Rajan's literal and imaginative journeys to find the tiger reflect his search for belonging. Initially, he fails because he approaches the tiger with arrogance, either as a hunter (with a gun) or as a materialist (seeking dominance). Only when he sheds his ego and embraces humility and doubt does he begin to understand that the tiger is not an external entity but an internalized symbol of Malaysia's hybrid identity. The tiger cannot be possessed or controlled; it must be lived, just as national identity must be continually renegotiated rather than rigidly defined.

Samad emphasizes that Maniam's vision rejects both racial essentialism and rootless cosmopolitanism. As Rajan discovers, true Malaysian identity lies in acknowledging the past while dynamically engaging with the present. The novel critiques political and cultural dogmas that stifle this evolution—whether ethnic nationalism, materialism, or authoritarianism. Instead, it advocates for a balance between individual and communal identities, between tradition and modernity, and between doubt and clarity.

Samad presents **In A Far Country** as a blueprint for postcolonial societies struggling with multiculturalism. Rajan's journey—from alienation to self-reintegration—mirrors Malaysia's struggle to forge a national identity that is inclusive yet distinctive. The novel suggests that true belonging is not found in rigid categories but in the fluid, ever-evolving interplay of memory, imagination, and collective experience. Through Rajan's metamorphosis, Maniam offers a hopeful, albeit complex, vision of a nation that is still in the making—one where difference is not a source of division but of creative renewal.

Samad challenges the rigid Aristotelian distinction between comedy and tragedy in the essay *Comedy and the Comic in Tragedy: As You Like It, King Lear, and Hamlet*, arguing instead for a syncretic view where the comic and tragic interpenetrate in Shakespeare's plays. While traditional criticism (as seen in thinkers like Christopher Fry and Susanne Langer) posits an

irreconcilable divide—comedy as intuition and vitality, tragedy as experience and fate—Samad contends that Shakespeare's works dissolve these boundaries. The essay examines how comic elements function within tragic frameworks, particularly through figures like Touchstone in **As You Like It**, the Fool in **King Lear**, and the gravediggers in **Hamlet**, demonstrating that humour does not undermine tragedy but deepens its complexity.

Samad begins by criticizing the formalistic fallacy that separates comedy and tragedy into separate realms. He acknowledges that even Shakespearean comedies contain tragic undercurrents (**Love's Labor's Lost's** wintry ending, The **Merchant of Venice's** precarious balance), but he focuses on the reverse phenomenon: the presence of the comic within tragedy. Freud's theory of jokes as eruptions from the unconscious supports Samad's argument that clowns and fools serve a revelatory function, exposing truths through wit rather than diluting gravity. The essay then explores how these figures operate in **As You Like It**, **King Lear**, and **Hamlet**, revealing Shakespeare's rejection of absolutist divisions.

In **As You Like It**, Jaques' melancholic philosophizing contrasts with Touchstone's jesting, yet their dynamic illustrates the interdependence of sorrow and laughter. Jaques desires to "suck melancholy out of a song," seeking purity in emotion, but his failure to embrace life's contradictions leaves him isolated. Touchstone,

on the other hand, embodies the wise fool whose humor critiques societal norms without destabilizing the play's comic structure. Samad suggests that Jaques's inability to fully integrate the fool's perspective reflects a broader human resistance to syncretism—a resistance Shakespeare dismantles more successfully in **King Lear**.

The Fool in **King Lear** epitomizes the fusion of wisdom and absurdity, his songs and riddles exposing the folly of the king while offering fleeting relief from despair. Unlike Jaques, Lear's Fool does not polarize joy and grief but merges them, as in his paradoxical lament: "Then they for sudden joy did weep / And I for sorrow sang." Samad highlights the Fool's role alongside Poor Tom (Edgar in disguise), arguing that their interplay strips Lear to his existential core, enabling his tragic insight. The mock trial scene, where madness and sanity blur, exemplifies the sovereign place of comedy within tragedy—not as escapism but as a mechanism for confronting truth.

In **Hamlet**, the gravediggers' scene (Act V, Scene I) similarly dissolves boundaries. The clowns' morbid humour—debating Ophelia's suicide while tossing skulls—prepares Hamlet for his confrontation with mortality (symbolized by Yorick's skull). Their jesting does not trivialize death but underscores its universality, collapsing distinctions between prince and jester, tragedy and farce. Samad notes how Hamlet's own wit (e.g., "Alas, poor Yorick!") mirrors the

function of the gravediggers, revealing his—and Shakespeare's—rejection of rigid genre conventions.

Samad posits that Shakespeare's fools and clowns serve as "syncretistic arches," bridging opposed states (laughter/tears, sanity/madness) without erasing their autonomy. Their presence resists ideological absolutism, offering a model for engaging with life's contradictions. The essay concludes by suggesting that this vision remains vital today, providing a lens to navigate modernity's fragmented realities. By embracing the comic within the tragic, Shakespeare not only enriches his dramas but also equips audiences with a tool for understanding the complexities of human existence.

Daizal R. Samad's essay **Rebirth and Evolution in Theodore Roethke's "The Shape Of Fire"** explores Theodore Roethke's long poem "The Shape of Fire" as a profound meditation on the crisis of language, artistic creation, and psychological rebirth in the post-World War II era. Samad argues that Roethke's work engages with the fragmentation of both individual consciousness and the Word—language's capacity to capture an increasingly complex, multicultural reality. He contends that the poem enacts a shamanistic journey toward reintegration, where the poet's fractured self and the eclipsed Word are reborn through an intimate confrontation with the Muse.

Samad contextualizes Roethke's work within a broader artistic struggle: the failure of traditional language to encapsulate new, heterogeneous human experiences. He suggests that Roethke, like many post-war poets, faced the dual challenge of making sense of a fractured world while also healing his own fragmented psyche. "The Shape of Fire" thus becomes a ritualistic quest—a descent into primordial chaos to recover and renew both self and language. The opening stanza of the poem, with its cryptic question-and-answer dialectic ("What's this? A dish for fat lips. / Who says? A nameless stranger."), establishes this search for meaning, where the Muse remains elusive, its responses ambiguous yet essential for rebirth.

The essay draws parallels between Roethke's poetic journey and mythological motifs of death and renewal, from Odysseus's descent into the underworld to the African Limbo dance—a ritual of dismemberment and reintegration performed during the Middle Passage. Samad highlights how Roethke's imagery (spiders, wasps, and cracked pods) resonates with archetypal symbols of transformation across cultures, suggesting an unconscious alignment with universal myths of regeneration. Critics such as Kenneth Burke and Jay Parini have interpreted these images biographically (e.g., Burke's reading of "An old scow bumps over black rocks" as a regression to the womb), but Samad pushes further, arguing that Roethke's regression is not

merely psychological but linguistic—a return to the origins of expression itself.

Central to Samad's reading is the idea that "The Shape of Fire" stages the evolution of language alongside the poet's self-renewal. The poem moves from preverbal murmurs ("the worm comes without sound") to nursery rhymes, then to fragmented proverbs, and finally to lyrical clarity. The third section's proverb-like lines ("The dead will sleep in the shy ground") evoke oral traditions where wisdom is condensed yet unstable—a stage in language's maturation. Samad compares this to Chinua Achebe's use of proverbs in **Things Fall Apart**, where linguistic continuity is fractured by colonial disruption. For Roethke, the proverbs represent both the reclaiming of primal speech and its recognition of its limitations.

The poem's final section achieves a fleeting vision of wholeness, where the reborn poet apprehends beauty in transient moments ("light falls and fills, often without our knowing"). However, Samad notes that this epiphany remains tentative—a prayer rather than a permanent state. The closing lines ("A lively understandable spirit/Once entertained you." / It will come again. / Be still. / Wait.") suggest cyclical renewal, acknowledging that fragmentation and rebirth are perpetual processes.

Samad presents "The Shape of Fire" as Roethke's attempt to resurrect language from its post-war eclipse,

forging a new poetic consciousness capable of holding contradiction and chaos. The poem's power lies in its refusal to simplify either the self or the Word. Instead, it embraces the struggle to give shape to fire—to capture the ineffable in a world where meaning is always in flux. Roethke's work transcends personal catharsis through this image, offering a radical model for artistic and existential renewal in fractured times.

In his insightful analysis of **Dabydeen's** life and work, Daizal R. Samad presents a compelling portrait of the Guyanese-British writer as both a product and a critic of colonial history. Samad traces Dabydeen's journey from his birth on a Berbice sugar plantation in 1955 to his migration to England at the age of twelve, emphasizing how these formative experiences of displacement and cultural alienation shaped the writer's intellectual and creative trajectory. As Samad demonstrates, Dabydeen's academic work at Cambridge and London universities became not just a personal achievement but also a means of confronting and overcoming his youth's internalized racism, transforming shame into scholarly and artistic resistance.

Samad's examination highlights Dabydeen's diverse approach to postcolonial discourse, particularly his insistence that black studies must engage directly with contemporary racism rather than remain confined to academic abstraction. The critic draws attention to Dabydeen's strategic choice of Wolverhampton as the

site for his 1982 conference on black literature—a city indelibly marked by Enoch Powell’s racist rhetoric—as emblematic of the writer’s commitment to connecting scholarship with real-world anti-racist struggle. Through Samad’s analysis, we see how Dabydeen’s editorial work on *The Black Presence in English Literature* (1985) challenged the exclusion of black voices from the literary canon while simultaneously exposing the traditional English studies’ racist underpinnings.

Samad offers a nuanced reading of Hogarth’s *Blacks* (1987) in his discussion of Dabydeen’s scholarly works, showing how Dabydeen recovered subversive meanings in eighteenth-century art that previous critics had overlooked. Samad notes Dabydeen’s argument that Hogarth’s depictions of black subjects, while constrained by the racism of his era, contained subtle critiques of white moral decay that modern readers might miss without proper contextualization. The critic also observes how Dabydeen’s follow-up study, *Hogarth, Walpole and Commercial Britain* (1985), extended this analysis to broader critiques of British aristocracy, although Samad suggests that this later work suffers from thematic repetition.

Samad focuses on Dabydeen’s creative works, which he presents as the most radical and innovative aspect of the writer’s *oeuvre*. His analysis of **Slave Song** (1984) emphasizes how Dabydeen’s use of Guyanese Creole simultaneously celebrated and weaponized a language

traditionally devalued by colonial powers. Samad insightfully unpacks the collection's mock-academic "translations" as both a parody of anthropological condescension and an assertion of linguistic autonomy. In examining Coolie Odyssey (1988), Samad demonstrates how Dabydeen challenged celebratory immigrant narratives by foregrounding the persistent alienation of displaced communities, while his reading of The Intended (1991) reveals the unflinching portrayal of the psychological toll of racism in the autobiographical novel.

Samad engages thoughtfully with the critical reception of Dabydeen's work throughout his essay, acknowledging both the praise for its originality and the controversies surrounding its political commitment. He notes that some critics have accused Dabydeen of overreading historical evidence, while others have questioned the accessibility of his Creole poetry. However, Samad ultimately defends Dabydeen's project as vital and necessary, arguing that its power lies precisely in its refusal to conform to academic or literary conventions that would dilute its political force.

Samad's analysis culminates in a powerful assessment of Dabydeen's enduring significance as a postcolonial writer. He presents Dabydeen's body of work as both an excavation of colonial erasures and an active resistance to oppression. In Samad's reading, Dabydeen emerges as a writer who confronts uncomfortable historical truths while modelling new possibilities for

postcolonial identity and expression. The critic's essay ultimately does justice to the complexity and importance of Dabydeen's achievement, showing how his work continues to challenge readers and reshape understanding of colonial history and its contemporary legacies.

In John Hearne's **The Sure Salvation**, the character of Alex Delfosse emerges as one of the most complex and unsettling figures in Caribbean literature—a free Black man who orchestrates an illegal slave voyage, embodying the psychological fractures wrought by colonialism. Daizal Samad's analysis **From Slave to Sovereign: Alex Delfosse's Dream/Nightmare The Sure Salvation reveals how Delfosse's** chilling ambition to establish his own kingdom in South America masks a profound self-loathing and racial alienation, making him a tragic product of the very system he seeks to manipulate.

Samad meticulously dissects Delfosse's contradictions: a man who carries his legal papers of freedom in a wallet made from the skin of an Apache he killed, symbolizing how his identity is wrapped in both privilege and violence. Although Delfosse shares the Blackness of the enslaved Africans aboard the *Sure Salvation*, he vehemently rejects any kinship with them, declaring to Captain Hogarth, "Standish don't ply no foul trade...and whatever he plies, it sure as hell ain't among my people." His disdain stems from internalized racism, a desperate need to align himself with

whiteness—not just socially but also psychically. Samad highlights how Delfosse's polished manners and aristocratic affectations are a performance, a shield against his fear of racial contempt. When Hogarth later compares him to an "ape"—invoking Darwinian racial hierarchies—Delfosse reacts with uncharacteristic fury, exposing the raw nerve of his insecurity.

Samad argues that what makes Delfosse particularly terrifying is his cold, calculating agency. Unlike the enslaved, who are victims of the system, Delfosse is a willing participant in its brutality. He manipulates Hogarth into the slave trade, grooms the vicious second officer Reynolds as a pawn, and selects Tadene, an enslaved woman, to help control the other captives—all part of his grand vision to rule a kingdom of his own. Yet Samad reveals the hollowness of this ambition: Delfosse's dream of sovereignty is not liberation but a mere replication of the very oppression that he claims to transcend. His kingdom is not a haven for freedom but a grotesque parody of colonial power, where he merely replaces the white slaver as tyrant.

The novel's climax, where the *Sure Salvation* is intercepted by the British navy, becomes a masterful irony in Samad's reading. Delfosse, ever the strategist, manipulates Lieutenant Honeyball just as he did Hogarth, slipping into the caricature of a subservient Black man when convenient, only to reverse the power dynamic and force Honeyball to the brink of racial slur. Yet even in this victory, Delfosse's triumph is fleeting.

When the survivors are deposited in Abari (a fictional stand-in for Guyana), the mulatto clerk Weddington nervously assumes temporary authority, and Delfosse's final words—"It's only five hundred niggers you got to worry 'bout... I'll help you settle them in"—signal not just his enduring contempt for Blackness but also his inevitable role as a new kind of oppressor.

Samad's analysis ultimately positions Delfosse as a metaphor for the Caribbean colonial legacy. His journey from slave (in ancestry) to sovereign (in ambition) is not liberation but a deeper enslavement—to self-hatred—to the very hierarchies he seeks to conquer. In this light, **The Sure Salvation** becomes more than a historical novel; it is a chilling premonition of postcolonial disillusionment, where the tools of the master are taken up by those he once oppressed, perpetuating the cycle of dehumanization. Delfosse's tragedy is that he cannot imagine true freedom—only a darker reflection of the chains he was born to break.

In his insightful essay **"De-Differentiation in the Selected Works of Pater, Ruskin, Tennyson, and Rossetti,"** Daizal R. Samad examines how four major Victorian figures challenged the atomistic thinking prevalent in the intellectual circles of the nineteenth century. Samad begins by contextualizing the dominant psychological paradigm of atomism, which maintains strict divisions between art, society, and metaphysics. As Samad demonstrates through David Katz's writings, this worldview viewed all organisms—whether

biological, social, or artistic—as mere combinations of distinct elements that could be understood through isolation and summation. Against this backdrop, Samad introduces his central concept of "de-differentiation," the creative dissolution of artificial boundaries that allows for a more holistic understanding of human experience.

Samad carefully analyses how Ruskin and Pater initially pay lip service to traditional differentiations in their critical writings, only to subtly undermine these distinctions through their arguments. Ruskin's insistence that "beauty and ugliness are positive in their nature" and Pater's warning against confusing "things which right reason has put asunder" serve as starting points for Samad's exploration of how these thinkers ultimately move toward a more syncretic vision. The critic demonstrates how Pater, particularly in his essay "Style," advocates for a blending of historical scholarship and imaginative artistry, arguing that the recording of history necessarily involves an imaginative recreation governed by an inner vision rather than external reality. Similarly, Samad shows Ruskin grappling with the interplay between imaginative power and factual representation, ultimately concluding that pure creation is impossible without combining and contemplating existing knowledge.

The essay's examination of Tennyson's "The Lady of Shalot" reveals what Samad considers one of the clearest poetic expressions of de-differentiation in

Victorian literature. Samad's close reading highlights Tennyson's construction of two seemingly opposed worlds—the active, metallic realm of Camelot and the isolated, artistic existence of the Lady—only to demonstrate their essential interdependence through the Lady's tragic yet transcendent journey. Samad argues that Tennyson's poem warns against the dangers of viewing these realms as absolute or separate, instead suggesting that true fulfilment comes from their merging. However, as Samad astutely notes, while Tennyson compellingly presents the need for this synthesis, he stops short of offering a concrete model for achieving it in artistic or social practice.

Samad finds this missing architectural model in Rossetti's visual works, whose paintings and engravings embody the principle of de-differentiation through their formal and symbolic complexity. Through detailed analyses of works like "The Palace of Art" wood engraving, "Ecce Ancilla Domini," and "Beata Beatrix," Samad demonstrates how Rossetti creates visual spaces where traditionally opposed principles—male and female, physical and spiritual, life and death—exist in harmonious tension. Particularly insightful is Samad's reading of Rossetti's "The Annunciation," where he traces how the artist breaks from tradition to depict the Virgin in a pose that simultaneously suggests awakening, foetal position, and divine receptivity, thus collapsing temporal and ontological distinctions.

Samad maintains a clear balance between close textual/visual analysis and broader philosophical implications throughout the essay. He shows how these Victorian artists, working across different media, collectively point toward a revolutionary rethinking of human perception and social organization, acknowledging complexity without imposing false hierarchies. The critic's conclusion connects these nineteenth-century aesthetic concerns to contemporary needs, arguing that their "hopeful architecture of unity" offers vital insights for our own heterogeneous world. Samad's essay ultimately presents de-differentiation not as a collapse into chaos but as a necessary corrective to reductive thinking and a pathway to more inclusive, compassionate modes of understanding art and human relationships.

Daizal R. Samad's essay, **"Intention and Execution: A Critical Look at A. Samad Said's Salina,"** presents a rigorous critique of the novel, acknowledging its cultural significance and dismantling its literary merits. The essay argues that while **Salina** holds anthropological value as a portrayal of pre-independence Malay and Indian communities in Singapore and Malaysia, it fails as a cohesive work of literature due to weak characterization, structural flaws, and inconsistent execution.

Samad begins by recognizing the importance of the novel in postcolonial literature, particularly for allowing Malay and Singaporean readers to see

themselves reflected in fiction. However, he asserts that Salina is far from being a "classic" or even a well-crafted novel. The characters, particularly Siti Salina, are criticized for being clichéd—Salina is the stereotypical "prostitute with a heart of gold," trapped by fate and an abusive lover, Abdul Fakar, whom she inexplicably tolerates. The justification for her endurance—that Fakar resembles her childhood sweetheart—is revealed unconvincingly as a weak denouement. Other characters, such as Hilmy (an unrealistically naïve eighteen-year-old), Nahidah (a virginal Cinderella-like figure), and Sunarto (an ineffectual "protector"), suffer from inconsistent development and implausible motivations.

The essay highlights structural weaknesses, including repetitive refrains (such as the constant mention of factory sounds) and gratuitous political name-dropping. The dialogue often feels unnatural, particularly in Nahidah's sudden, incongruent lecture on Malay literature while in the throes of first love. Additionally, key themes—such as fate, morality, and social injustice—are poorly explored, with the novel oscillating between fatalism and moralizing without resolution.

Samad also critiques the novel's handling of sensitive issues, such as rape and prostitution, arguing that Said avoids delving deeply into their psychological consequences. Nahidah's rape and subsequent descent into exploitation are abruptly concluded, denying her

character any meaningful resolution. Similarly, religious figures like Haji Karman and Razman (intended as moral voices) come across as hypocritical or ineffectual.

Despite these flaws, Samad concedes that Salina captures Kampung life's claustrophobia and poverty and avoids an artificially happy ending. Ultimately, he concludes that while the novel is a significant cultural artifact, it is not a strong literary work. Overpraising it risks stifling the growth of Malay and Singaporean literature by setting a low standard. Readers may find its setting familiar, but a critical reading reveals its many shortcomings.

Samad and Harripersaud's essay *The West Indian Emerges: George Lamming's "In The Castle of My Skin"* presents a comprehensive analysis of George Lamming's seminal novel, **In the Castle of My Skin** (1953), positioning it as a foundational text in West Indian and post-colonial literature. The authors argue that Lamming's work anticipates and influences later Caribbean writers such as V.S. Naipaul, Wilson Harris, and Derek Walcott by dealing with identity, colonial trauma, and the search for belonging. The novel's protagonist, G, embodies the West Indian struggle to reconcile a fragmented sense of self during the psychological and historical wreckage of colonialism. Samad and Harripersaud emphasize that this existential crisis remains urgent as contemporary West Indians

navigate the legacies of displacement and cultural erasure.

The novel's opening flood, which critics have interpreted as a multifaceted symbol, is central to their analysis. While Charles Larson and Gerald Moore view it as a harbinger of social change, and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o sees it as the collapse of an organic, pre-colonial way of life, Samad and Harripersaud expand on these readings by drawing Biblical parallels to Noah's flood. They argue that the deluge signifies both destruction and the potential for rebirth, mirroring the West Indian condition—a people uprooted by slavery and colonialism, yet persistently seeking regeneration. The flood also marks a turning point in G's consciousness, as his ninth birthday is "rained away," foreshadowing his lifelong struggle against erasure and instability.

The essay delves into the novel's exploration of cultural amnesia, particularly through the blind acceptance of colonial myths by the villagers. A poignant example is the schoolteacher's denial of Barbados's history of slavery, reinforcing the psychological bondage that persists even after emancipation. Christianity, too, is critiqued as a tool of colonial domination, with the church and empire working in tandem to perpetuate subjugation. Samad and Harripersaud highlight how Lamming juxtaposes historical facts with personal anecdotes, creating a narrative that challenges official histories and reclaims marginalized voices. The

villagers' futile attempts to root themselves in the land—epitomized by Mr. Foster clinging to his flooded house or the withering pumpkin vine—symbolize the struggle for a stable identity in the West.

A key figure in the novel's political landscape is Mr. Slime, whose rise and betrayal encapsulate the pitfalls of early nationalist movements. Slime's Friendly Society and Penny Bank initially promise economic empowerment, but his eventual collusion with colonial powers exposes the limitations of bourgeois leadership. Although a moment of collective awakening, the workers' strike ends in disillusionment, underscoring the cyclical nature of exploitation. Samad and Harripersaud note that Lamming frames this betrayal as a historical crossroad, where the villagers remain trapped between old and new oppressors. The ambush scene, in which the workers hesitate to attack the landlord under Slime's direction, becomes a metaphor for the indecision and dependence of the West Indians on flawed leaders.

The essay pays close attention to Lamming's use of symbolism, particularly the pebble, which represents an elusive but enduring sense of self during chaos. In contrast to the fragile crab—a symbol of G's vulnerability—the pebble suggests an unbreakable core of identity, however deeply buried. The climactic cloud vision, in which G sees conflicting images of conflict and reconciliation, encapsulates the novel's central tension: the possibility of unity in the middle of

fragmentation. The question—“Are you not a brother?”—remained unresolved, reflecting Lamming’s refusal to offer simplistic solutions to the wounds of colonialism.

Samad and Harripersaud conclude by highlighting the novel’s unresolved ending. G’s departure for Trinidad mirrors the West Indian diaspora’s search for belonging, while Pa’s eviction and the Shoemaker’s demolished house reinforce the theme of dispossession. Yet, the pebble endures as a symbol of resilience, suggesting that the fractured West Indian identity is not irreparably lost. The essay positions **In the Castle of My Skin** as a prophetic work that articulates the West Indian dilemma with unflinching honesty while leaving room for hope. Lamming creates a narrative that is both intimately autobiographical and expansively political by blending personal memory with collective history, offering a blueprint for future Caribbean literature.

Samad and Harripersaud’s essay **An Imaginative Recreation of the History of the West Indies** presents a profound meditation on the complex cultural mosaic of the West Indies, bringing together the fragmented histories of its diverse peoples through an imaginative reconstruction of ancestral voices and experiences. The authors eschew conventional historical narratives in favour of a more poetic, psychological exploration of Caribbean identity, arguing that the West Indian consciousness is fundamentally heterogeneous—a product of violent collisions, forced migrations and

unexpected survivals. Their work moves beyond mere historical documentation to capture the emotional and spiritual dimensions of Caribbean becoming, revealing how the region's traumatic past continues to shape its present.

The introduction establishes the essay's unconventional approach, acknowledging the difficulties of recounting West Indian history without falling into divisive racial narratives or sentimentalizing ancestral suffering. The authors emphasize the challenge of reclaiming a history that European chroniclers relegated to footnotes, presenting their project as a "fractured narrative" told in hushed tones—one that honours the many-faced ancestors who haunt Caribbean lands and consciousness. This sets the stage for an imaginative historiography that privileges psychic truth over factual chronology, exploring how the West Indian identity emerged from what they term "a mystery of muddled consciousness."

The essay begins with the tragic encounter between Columbus and the Arawak people, reimagining that fateful October morning in 1492 not as "discovery" but as invasion. Through vivid prose, Samad and Harripersaud depict the generous hospitality of the Arawaks—offering parrots, cotton, and weapons to the Spaniards—only to have their kindness met violence. The authors underscore the prophetic symbolism of the Arawaks cutting themselves on Spanish swords, foreshadowing centuries of bloodshed. They paint a

poignant portrait of Arawak civilization: peaceful, artistic, linguistically melodic (quoting the Arawak phrase "Danshikabu"—"I love you"), only to be systematically exterminated through what Las Casas documented as unimaginable brutality—pregnant women gutted, children slaughtered. A haunting poetic interlude memorializes this genocide, comparing the felling of Arawak civilization to the axing of the Tree of Life, leaving the Caribbean landscape permanently scarred.

The narrative then shifts to the Caribs (or Cariban peoples), whom the authors distinguish through their fierce resistance from their Arawak cousins. Where the Arawaks met invasion with gifts, the Caribs fought—leaping to their deaths at Le Morne des Sauteurs rather than submitting to slavery. Samad and Harripersaud provide a crucial corrective to the colonial "cannibal" stereotype, explaining the ceremonial significance of consuming fragments of defeated enemies as spiritual incorporation rather than barbarism. They lament how Caribbean education systems have erased this ancestral legacy, leaving West Indians disconnected from indigenous roots that writers like Wilson Harris and Derek Walcott have tried to resurrect through literature.

The African chapter unfolds with harrowing intensity, recounting the horrors of the Middle Passage through both historical accounts and imaginative recreations of the voices of enslaved ancestors. Quoting Taussig's description of slaves packed "spoon fashion" in ship

holds, the authors emphasize the psychological terror of this "living death"—the loss of language, identity, and connection to the divine. However, they vigorously contest narratives of complete cultural annihilation (such as the Moyne Report's claim that slaves retained no traditions), highlighting survivals in *obeah*, carnival, creole languages, and musical forms that would evolve into calypso and reggae. They particularly excoriate postcolonial scholars who perpetuate colonial distortions or claim equivalence between indentured Europeans and enslaved Africans, seeing this as intellectual betrayal worse than colonial racism itself.

The European ancestral legacy receives nuanced treatment—acknowledged in language, institutions, and colourist values (the privileging of light skin) but sharply distinguished from the experience of enslaved peoples. The authors dismantle any false equivalence between poor white indentured laborers and African slaves, noting how Barbados' early white peasantry transformed into a planter aristocracy. They extend this analysis to East Indian indentureship, showing how British colonists strategically used Indian laborers (238,000 brought to British Guiana alone) to divide and control post-emancipation societies. The tragic result, as voiced through an ancestral lament in Guyanese creole, is generations of Afro-Indian conflict—"children gnaw[ing] upon the bone of contention like dogs of war"—while the colonial orchestrators watched.

The closing synthesis of the essay is visionary. Rejecting nativist claims to pure African, Indian, or European heritage, Samad and Harripersaud declare the West Indies "the only man-made culture on this scale in human history"—a "ragout" that makes America's melting pot seem like "an innocent cup of tea." They argue that home cannot be any single ancestral homeland but must be the Caribbean itself, with all its fissures and paradoxes. The West Indian muse is inherently fragmented, like the geography of the archipelago, yet this very fragmentation constitutes its genius. Ultimately, the authors call for a consciousness that sees "ALL" ancestors in every Caribbean person—Arawak, Carib, African, Indian, and European—as layers in a "wondrous rainbow carnival of consciousness." Their work stands as both an elegy for lost histories and a celebration of the cultural alchemy that produced the modern West Indies.

Samad and Harripersaud present a ground-breaking proposal for transforming traditional classroom spaces into pandemic-resilient **teaching and learning stations** (T&LS) in response to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) global educational crisis. The authors begin by contextualizing the unprecedented disruption to education worldwide, highlighting how the pandemic has exposed and exacerbated existing inequalities between wealthy and developing nations, with Guyana serving as their primary case study of systemic vulnerability. They critique the fragmented response of

the global community to educational continuity, noting how poorer nations like Guyana have largely followed rather than innovated, lacking both resources and political will to develop context-specific solutions.

The paper The Classroom Re-Imagined and Re-Designed: The Pandemic-Ready Teaching and Learning Station meticulously documents the global catastrophic impact of COVID-19 on education systems, contrasting the effective responses of countries such as Denmark and New Zealand with the disastrous approaches of the United States and Brazil, where the politicization of the pandemic led to catastrophic outcomes. The authors provide sobering statistics about Guyana's infection rates (showing a 20.55% positivity rate compared to America's 6.65% positivity rate) and critique the nation's inadequate testing and mitigation strategies. They emphasize how traditional classrooms cannot ensure necessary safety measures, making innovative redesign not only preferable but also essential for educational survival in pandemic conditions.

The authors' proposed solution lies at the heart of the paper: a completely reimagined classroom design that transforms conventional educational spaces into multi-winged, socially-distanced learning pods. The T&LS features four 15-foot wings radiating from a central teacher station, each containing five enclosed student ports constructed with nickel-lined plexiglass barriers to prevent aerosol transmission. The design

incorporates numerous pandemic-specific features: built-in hand-sanitizing wells, separate entry/exit points, numbered buzzers for student-teacher communication, elevated four-sided monitors for clear visibility, and a dedicated teacher port with computer controls. The authors provide detailed technical specifications, including $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch plywood construction for durability and careful measurements to ensure proper social distancing.

The paper anticipates and addresses potential implementation challenges by discussing necessary ancillary measures such as temperature-check stations, COVID-19 control rooms in schools, modified transportation protocols, and clear communication strategies for communities. The authors acknowledge the financial constraints facing poorer nations, estimating that each T&LS unit would cost approximately \$5,000 USD, but argue that this investment pales compared to the long-term costs of educational disruption. They propose building a prototype at the Berbice Campus of the University of Guyana as a proof of concept.

Samad and Harripersaud concluded by positioning their design as both an immediate solution for COVID-19 and a permanent preparation for future pandemics. They emphasize that their T&LS model maintains crucial face-to-face interaction while ensuring safety, complementing, rather than replacing, online learning platforms. The authors stress the versatility of their

design, noting its adaptability for various educational levels and other gathering spaces, such as conference rooms. Ultimately, they frame their proposal as both a practical intervention and a philosophical shift—a recognition that the pandemic necessitates a fundamental rethinking of how we structure learning environments to be resilient in an era of global health crises.

To read Samad's work is to embark on a journey through the tangled histories and contested identities that define our contemporary world. His essays do not merely analyse texts or social phenomena; they breathe life into them, revealing the human stakes behind academic debates. Samad's writing demands engagement—not passive consumption, but active reflection—whether he is dissecting the internalized racism of a character like Alex Delfosse in *The Sure Salvation*, challenging the pedagogical failures of universities, or reconfiguring classrooms for a post-pandemic future.

What unites these diverse essays is a commitment to truth-telling, even when that truth is uncomfortable. Samad does not shy away from exposing the hypocrisies of postcolonial societies, the inadequacies of anti-bullying policies, or the aesthetic shortcomings of celebrated novels. Yet, for all his critical rigor, there is also an undercurrent of hope—a belief in the transformative power of literature, education, and collective memory. His work suggests that while

history may fracture us, it also offers materials for reassembly, if we are willing to confront its complexities.

Samad's intellectual legacy is one of fearless inquiry and boundless curiosity, as this collection demonstrates. He seamlessly moves between literary criticism, cultural analysis, and educational theory, yet his work remains anchored in a deeply humanistic vision. These essays are not just academic exercises; they are acts of witnessing, preservation, and, at times, reinvention. They remind us that the stories we tell—about ourselves, our nations, and our futures—are never finished and always evolving. In that evolution, there lies the possibility of something new, something whole.

Samad's writings leave us with a challenge: to look beyond the surface, to question the narratives we inherit, and to imagine—with both clarity and compassion—what might yet be possible. Daizal R. Samad's works, whether poetic, fictional, or scholarly, move to one inevitable end: Truth.

Dr. Ashwannie Harripersaud

SECTION 1:

EDUCATION IMPERATIVES

THE BULLY AND THE BULLIED: PAYING ATTENTION TO SECONDARY SCHOOLS

(with Ashwannie Harripersaud)

1. Introduction

School-age bullying is a crucial issue that continues to challenge societies throughout the world. Results from recent international studies have indicated that school-age bullying remains a persistent problem in many countries. According to Abdirahman et al (2012) “about one-third of middle school children worldwide (roughly ages 13 to 15 years) report having been the victim of a bully.” While the news about violence in some schools by students and outsiders has also captured people’s attention, physical protection is only one aspect of school safety. Schools should be free from brutality of any type, including bullying, and these studies have shown that not all students feel equally protected and respected at school. Bullying in schools has emotional and psychological consequences that confound the most earnest attempts to teach and learn. This, of course, defeats the most foundational purpose of schools.

The word bullying, while universally recognized and generally understood, is used in a variety of ways. Bullying may range from innocent youthful prankishness to sexual harassment to racial and religious malevolence. Therefore, it is essential to identify exactly what type of aggression is being talked

about, as different types of behaviour that occur in schools need to be addressed differently. During the 1980s, the concept of bullying in schools changed so that it was no longer associated with the behaviours of males in playgrounds but included undesirable and harmful actions of both males and females. It was initially believed that the gender of the bully and the victim was the only distinction between boys and girls, but it became clear that there are more differences between the intent and consequence of the aggression that occurs during bullying.

1.1. Background and Significance

Newspapers and media worldwide have been reporting an increase in bullying within schools over the past two decades. Researchers from several areas of interest, including criminology, public health, and anthropology, are delving deeper into this subject. Smith & Kilpatrick (2022) state “the phenomenon [bullying] has warranted research attention in developed societies and is shown to have serious short- and long-term implications for individuals, families, and society as a whole.” Despite these growing concerns related to children's health and social function, few studies examine bullying in the Caribbean, particularly primary school bullying experiences.

Thus, the rationale for this research is to begin to close the research/analysis gap within the Caribbean by, first, providing an extensive national identification of the

main types of school violence—bullied, bully, bully-victims, and perpetrators of school violence—primarily physical, verbal, and bullying omission using a large sample of Guyanese respondents who attended public primary and secondary schools during the academic school years of 2013 to 2023. Second, this research explores some school, sociodemographic, and peer friendship characteristics of those participants that were identified as primary school-age victims or arrested development cases. This study makes three main contributions to the literature. First, school research, particularly those in the Caribbean that use a less general measure, has tended to focus on secondary students. Second, the exploratory analysis for Guyana is important to assist with effectively targeting and addressing significant transition/withdrawal concerns. Third, it augments one of the few existing databases, which include measures from multiple respondent groups, to analyse the health/social function presence of primary and secondary school-age bullied, bully, bully-victims, and other deviant individuals including those of non-participating tourism areas. The data does not account for a significant section of the country. However, the findings are still informative and useful. Results documenting that many differences exist by gender are particularly informative to health officials attempting to manage the disparities from a preventive management platform.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

A fundamental purpose of the study is to enhance our understanding of bullying behaviour in the Guyanese region and its relation to the rest of the world. The growing concern and data from the rest of the world lead to the question of whether Guyana has any singular related interpretations. Our methodology will investigate reasons for bullying behaviour in Guyana. It is our belief that given the distinct sociocultural structure present in Guyana, the reasons for such behaviour, while similar to those elucidated in the United States, may have a quirky originality. We first discuss the sociocultural perspective on bullying, then we review the methodological approach adopted in the light of existing research.

The paper's second purpose centres on introducing the audience to the interesting findings from global statistics, investigating physical injury as an outcome of physically bullied behaviour for each of the ten administrative regions, for students between 13 and 15 years of age. These statistics will be compared with those concerned with numerous types of illicit activity found during these developmental years. As the main body of research results is widely associated with earlier and ongoing studies of physical bullying, we shall use the limited paper space to summarize the implications of these results. We will assume that the reader is familiar with the predominant findings related to bullying and that the primary effects—lower

academic achievement, psychological distress, criminal activity, higher rates of substance abuse, and later ability to maintain intimate relationships—are shared characteristics in Guyana.

1.3. Scope and Limitations

Since this paper involves an analysis of statistical data, it is important to place certain limitations on the findings that result from the analysis. This paper uses global data to make statistical inferences about Guyana. However, global data does not always specify individual countries. For example, while there have been several crime victimization studies done in the Caribbean, the focus is normally on a single Caribbean country or on the Caribbean subregion. Apart from newspaper clippings or social media pages, this is not the case in Guyana. Although one hears innumerable stories about bullying in schools from credible sources, these remain largely anecdotal. In Guyana, no known and published research of significance has been done on bullying or its consequences. Certainly, there has been no serious work done examining any possible connection between bullying in schools and the astronomical self-harm and suicide rate in Guyana. Additionally, it would be interesting to have a formal study done to explore the bullying of teachers within and without the school environ.

Regionally, some studies do not measure bullying, have different measuring tools, or no measures at all that are

useful from a comparative study perspective. Measurement is a very important variable in relation to generating suitable statistics. Most countries in the global dataset are either high-income European countries, North American, or Middle Eastern countries. These subgroups of higher-income countries often have higher levels of social spending, which translate into data generated from school surveys. Generally, developing countries do not allocate large public resources to this type of social endeavour. Even if data is generated, the data is often not made readily available for comparative research.

Another important limitation is the limitation of meta-analysis. A meta-analysis is the combining of statistical data from different studies that examine the same problem. This technique provides a way to test the robustness of a hypothesis. For example, fewer than fifteen percent of statistical analyses remained significant after a methodological assessment. Data on the determinants of interpersonal aggression generally becomes suspect when spurious results persist in the econometric models. However, a meta-analysis of school bullying data is still in its infancy. Research from the field of clinical psychology indicates that social indicators that might be related to bullying activity are difficult to measure on a hard scale. Meanwhile, the rise of the practice of meta-analyses may have led some criminologists too far astray. Chen et al (2024) reports that “social indicators may pose significant influence on

bullying victimization. However, the association between social poverty and bullying victimisation has not been exclusively discussed.” The reliability of meta-analytic results ultimately depends on the reliability of individual estimates, on the quality of the study reports, and ultimately, the truthfulness of the non-representative human sample.

2. Literature Review

Bullying is a global issue. The negative impact of bullying is well documented and globally recognized. Past research points out that bullying exists in the Caribbean region. In addition, over the years, research on bullying in the Caribbean region has been conducted. These researchers discovered that the prevalence of bullying in the Caribbean region was relatively high. One study was based in Saint Kitts, while another examined the prevalence of bullying among adolescent students in Trinidad and Tobago. A comparative analysis of the prevalence of bullying in Cuba, Trinidad and Tobago, Antigua and Barbuda, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines was also provided. Unfortunately, but noteworthily, there is no such available statistics for Guyana.

Bullying consists of repeated harmful behaviours between peers, typically involving an imbalance of power. A review by Arseneault et al. (2010) examined the mental health impacts of bullying on children and adolescents, revealing a strong link between bullying

and serious mental health issues, such as self-harm and suicidal tendencies. The study also found that the negative effects of bullying can last into late adolescence, independently contributing to mental health challenges. Kallmen & Hallgren (2021) state “bullying was shown to have detrimental effects that persist into late adolescence.”

Since the early 1990s, schools have evolved into environments not only focused on learning but also marked by instances of harassment and peer victimization (Juvonen, Wang, & Espinoza, 2011). Bullying has emerged as a significant social issue, with research indicating that one in three individuals experiences some form of bullying—whether physical, verbal, or social (Misawa, 2010). The impacts of bullying extend beyond the immediate victims, affecting both individuals and perpetrators and potentially leading to short- and long-term consequences (Aleem, 2016). Victims often experience direct and indirect effects that can hinder their academic performance (Holt, Finkelhor, & Kantor, 2007). Nishina, Juvonen, and Witkow (2005) highlight that school harassment and peer victimization contribute to reduced classroom participation and overall school engagement, negatively influencing academic success. It may not be idle to assume that these would inevitably impact familial relationships.

Schools are crucial settings for student growth and development (Darling-Hammond et al., 2019). When

students receive support from their teachers, they tend to feel a greater sense of belonging, become more engaged, exhibit fewer behavioural issues, and achieve better academically (Konishi, Hymel, Zumbo, & Li, 2000). In contrast, toxic school environments can detrimentally impact students' academic outcomes. Academic success is vital globally, prompting numerous studies on the physical factors that influence educational performance (Steinmayr, Crede, McElvany, & Wirthwein, 2016). External factors, such as theft and vandalism, as well as behavioural problems, can negatively affect students' academic achievement. Additionally, internal factors, including symptoms of depression and anxiety, also have harmful effects on academic performance (Tremblay et al., 2012).

Bullying and peer victimization have both direct and indirect effects on victims, often resulting in poor academic performance (Holt, Finkelhor, & Kantor, 2007). The primary aim of education is to achieve high academic standards, and when those standards are not met, the learning process becomes ineffective. Therefore, it is crucial to implement various strategies to promote academic success; and if bullying is a hindrance to academic development, then it would be foolhardy to turn a blind eye. Inability or unwillingness to enact research is to turn a blind eye to a serious problem inhibiting educational development on a national scale.

Academic achievement reflects an individual's performance within the educational setting, encompassing the goals established in schools, colleges, and universities (Steinmayr et al., 2016). Motivation plays a vital role in determining academic outcomes (Effie, 2005). For example, students who lack motivation and find themselves in intimidating environments are likely to experience lower academic achievement (Dweck, 2007).

In 2015, the results of a survey for the Caribbean were compiled. This document provides insight into the prevalence of bullying. Unfortunately, results such as those described either cannot be found or are hidden in the report. Overall, the problem is that a gap exists in our current understanding of the prevalence of bullying in Guyana. The prevalence of bullying among Caribbean students is underestimated or hidden behind other considerations. As a result, the region is unlikely to consider the implementation of effective measures necessary to bridge this gap and benefit the region. It is against this background that the current exploratory studies were conducted.

Many researchers regard bullying as a global issue. The Kandersteg Declaration against Bullying in Children and Youth (2007) in Switzerland estimates that 200 million children and adolescents face peer abuse. There were some thirty scholars represented from twelve countries. Significantly, no nation from the Caribbean,

Latin America, South America or Africa was represented.

In the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) 2005/06 Survey, which involved 202,056 children from about 40 countries, 12.6% reported being victimized frequently, while 10.7% admitted to bullying others, and 3.6% identified as both victims and perpetrators (cited by the Kandersteg Declaration). Although bullying is widespread among youth, prevalence rates vary significantly across countries, influenced by cultural factors (Currie et al., 2012). Victimization and perpetration are more common among boys, who typically engage in physical, verbal, and cyberbullying, whereas girls are more likely to participate in relational bullying (Currie et al., 2012).

Compared to global studies on bullying in schools, there is a significant lack of research focused on the issue in Guyana. While international efforts have produced comprehensive data and insights into the prevalence and impact of bullying, the understanding of this phenomenon in Guyanese schools remains limited and somewhat superficial. As a result, official and academic attention to bullying in Guyana is practically non-existent, lacking the depth and urgency seen in other countries. The perspective and degree of import of the matter can be seen in an article published in a Guyanese newspaper, Guyana Times (2016): “Generally they [bullies] target people because they are jealous, as sad as that may seem. Both young and old

bullies compare themselves to you and if you're smart and they have a harder time learning, they lash out. They may be frustrated because your home life seems to be going well and theirs are not. You may be more skilful or well liked at work and they resent that. When their lives are unsatisfactory and they are unable to deal with it, they look for someone to be their punching bag. They lack control over their own lives and so they console themselves with having the control over someone's emotions and that makes them happy, for a while." This pathetically superficial statement itself should clearly explain why no noteworthy work has been done in Guyana.

In the Guyanese context bullying is clearly at a peak of severity: students are physically injured, hospitalized, and in several cases result in death. An article published in Guyana Chronicle (2017) highlights some of these cases: "The sudden death of 10-year-old Roseann Akeila Harris who was kicked to her abdomen allegedly by a classmate recently has once again brought to the fore how serious the issue of bullying is in schools [in Guyana] ... We have seen videos on social media of physical fights between students with their fellow classmates cheering them on and only last month, a 14-year-old student of Lusignan Secondary School, East Coast Demerara (ECD) was stabbed in the neck by another female student during a fight in proximity of the Beterverwagting (BV) Police Station."

2.1. Definition and Types of Bullying

Varying definitions of bullying exist across the literature. Gladden et al. (2014) present a uniform definition of bullying “bullying is any unwanted aggressive behaviour(s) by another youth or group of youths who are not siblings or current dating partners that involves an observed or perceived power imbalance and is repeated multiple times or is highly likely to be repeated.” Bullying is defined as a type of violence, intentional aggression, or harm inflicted on an individual or group of individuals by a person or people in different situations and settings. Statistics and studies on bullying appear to agree that repeated exposure to harmful actions creates a vulnerability pattern not only in the victim but also in the individual aggressor. Bullying includes several different types of private and public offenses, such as physical hitting or punching, kicking, stealing, including acts of extortion, verbal harassment, teasing, taunting, name-calling, making threats, and social aggression, which involves hurting someone’s reputation or relationships, destroying a peer’s relationship or social status, and humiliating someone in public.

Frequently, what encloses a group of children into a circle around the victim is the persistence of the act of bullying. Most definitions of bullying include some or all these types of acts, and as a rule, aggressive behaviours are characterized as repetitive actions. Bullying also includes destructive activities, as well as

the perpetration of harmful activities with the intention to injure, such as behaviours of exploitation, cavilling, sarcasm, or rumour-spreading. Finally, bullying is about the misuse of power, exhibiting intense aggression, the duration of which will generally lead to the necessity for discipline.

To examine and analyse this dilemma, it is important to understand the characteristics of bullies. Rivers & Smith (1994) presented the following observation on such characteristics:

Types	Typical characteristics	Examples
Traditional bullying	Direct physical (overt physical aggression or assaults)	Pushing, punching, and kicking
	Direct verbal (overt verbal attacks that are highly personal)	Teasing, taunting, or threatening behaviour directed at the victim's appearance, abilities, family, culture, race, or religion
	Indirect and emotional (covert behaviour that damages peer relationships, self-esteem, or social status)	Passing nasty notes, offensive graffiti, defacing or damaging personal property, exclusion, ostracism, and shaming

Types	Typical characteristics	Examples
Sexual bullying	Sexually bothering another person (may also be referred to as 'sexual harassment')	Inappropriate and unwanted touching, using sexualised language and pressurising another to act promiscuously
Cyberbullying	Aggressive behaviour or emotional manipulation delivered through digital technology, specifically mobile phones, the internet, and social media	Spreading false stories about a victim online, posting digital media featuring a victim online without permission, excluding a victim from participation in an online space

The table outlines various forms of bullying, including traditional, sexual, and cyberbullying, each with distinct characteristics. Traditional bullying can manifest itself as overt physical aggression, direct verbal attacks targeting personal attributes, or covert emotional behaviours aimed at damaging relationships and self-esteem. Sexual bullying, often referred to as sexual harassment, involves inappropriate and unwanted sexual behaviours, while cyberbullying takes place through digital platforms, involving actions like spreading false information or excluding someone from online spaces. Each type represents different ways in which individuals can be targeted, whether physically, emotionally, or digitally.

2.2. Theoretical Frameworks

The Theoretical Framework is a model to help display the linkages with other relevant work. In this chapter, several theoretical arguments that have been advanced to communicate with the interviewer at both an interpretive and quantitative level are considered. They are not attempting to test these theories; instead, they try to follow the lead of bullying research in general to suggest some broad connections with different areas of the literature. The theories considered in this chapter appear to be manifest both empirically and in the revealed preferences of the community and government regarding agreed-upon constructs that may appeal to individual-level choice.

Community members have bearers: people themselves, both young and old, who experience bullying daily. The choices these people make about their behaviour and other features, such as victims and perpetrators, bear on the various issues concerning the community's role in addressing these behaviours. It is important for the models to provide insights into the underlying choices that lie behind the observed bullying. The goal of the qualitative stage of the research is to reach a state of saturation. Whether the explanatory theories were generated through induction, deduction, or a combination of the two, these theories should be rich enough to reflect the complexities of reality.

2.3. Previous Studies on Bullying in the Caribbean Region

Previous research has been conducted in the Caribbean in youth development, violence prevention, and mental health in several individual territories. This research was not designed specifically to examine either bullying perpetration or victimization. The studies have been completed in jurisdictions including Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Suriname, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Barbados, the Bahamas, St. Kitts and Nevis, and Grenada. The research methodology has included self-report questionnaires and structured interviews, conducted in schools, the wider community, and the prison system.

Only one study specifically investigated bullying in the Jamaican context, and it did not address the phenomena from a youth perspective, offering an instance of adult xenophobia as an example instead. The study sought to measure nationality prejudice among Jamaican adults who were students and non-students from different regions across the island using a social distance scale. Most respondents expressed a sense of prejudice against all nationalities, except for Eurasians. Another research project on child-rearing beliefs among inner-city Jamaican mothers found that a preference was expressed for a more authoritarian, choleric, and neglectful parent-training model which, if operationalized, may place youth at risk for engaging in and being victimized by bullying. Religious and

cultural country-specific research has also been conducted.

3. Methodology

In this current research, the method of documentary analysis is employed to investigate the topic of bullying in Guyana. Unlike other research on this matter, which mostly utilizes surveys to collect data, especially from victims, this approach offers a different perspective – that in which documentary analysis is utilized to study the reports produced by various health surveys, and to examine these reports and use other sources to produce an understanding of the concepts represented in these narratives. This method was well suited to the objective of this research, which, as indicated in the previous section, is to explore the ways in which the problem of bullying is disclosed in this region through misrepresented and underrepresented data.

There are limitations to documentary analysis. Firstly, only a limited data set exists at any given time. High-quality data on bullying is difficult to obtain, primarily because it is considered a violation of human rights, private, and unofficial, and many researchers also ignore safety violations. Secondly, the sources of data differ in time, space, objectives, findings, and methodologies. Thirdly, violence is a social process, and researchers arrive at their findings from different sociocultural perspectives rather than from a mechanistic basis, although they do utilize statistics in

their studies. Consequently, the present chapter is aware of the need for social interpretation and the multi-methodological strategy. Indeed, this chapter has employed a critical research method to consider the socio-political consequences of bullying statistics and has reviewed prior research on related topics, such as harassment and criminal acts, to do so. However, these sources are limited in number; moreover, the discrepancies between the sources and the data sets do not facilitate further comparisons.

3.1. Data Sources and Collection

Secondary data were used in this study. The study used globally accessible sources in relation to data collection on the Caribbean subregion.

First, the focus was on 'in-school' violence or bullying and data on adolescents' participation, questions, and indicators regarding adolescents between 11 and 15 years of age from the Caribbean region. The data mainly included public institutions that provide instruction within various locations and settings designed to provide learning experiences. Data collection was exclusively for students' (adolescent) experiences in secondary educational institutions with a focus on occurrences while at school, traveling to and from school, and other events such as school trips. Therefore, only students enrolled in secondary educational institutions, in and out of school activities, and adolescents who had been bullied—being made to

feel bad or being hurt—during their lifetime were queried. Bullying indicators such as questions on bullying and childhood experiences of violence have been used in several population-based surveys. These questionnaires were administered via the self-report model through questionnaires. In this respect, as secondary data were used, the research did not involve adolescents directly.

3.2. Data Analysis Techniques

This research took global data from international online sources, yet the research was primarily conducted to investigate Guyana, and it only focused on the region's prevalence rate for the ultimately analysed time frame. The data was aggregated accordingly and subsequently compared against any means. Recent prevalence data from islands not recorded in the global area are known; therefore, where data was available from other reputable sources, the data was also captured. Data on bullying was of interest for the student population, but we acknowledge that different aspects of the bullying phenomenon are looked at, including the varied roles that the student can take on in the literature.

Data analysis involved data aggregation on different mechanisms both locally and globally to ensure a large representative sample. It also involved mainly qualitative activities, including some quality assurance to determine what prompted the high rates in response to bullying that were experienced. Such data can

provide important clues to national policy for education improvement and future development direction. It also involved a query of the visually displayed global information's statistical properties of any capture and if each is similar in some measure. A vast volume of intergroup bullying manifestations is normally found within these main types, but the main exists. Also, the word bullying has been expanded to incorporate variations that are included in the definition of the phenomenon. However, despite a vast amount of data encompassing these newer variations, prevalence is still used globally, ignoring half of the worldwide existence of bullying data simply because "bullying without power" is a problem in some regions in the country.

4. Global Statistics on Bullying

This section presents findings across regions of Guyana with respect to bullying. The data are consistent insofar as they use definitions of bullying as unwanted aggressive behaviour while remaining mindful of not establishing a mutually exclusive relationship between being a bully and being a victim. Bullying is a multiple and overlapping behaviour. In their respective reports on bullying issues, both institutions acknowledge the difficulties of drawing internationally comparable results. Country-level data range from as low as 0% to close to 30%. However, it is essential to note that it is inappropriate to interpret this data as 30% of the students in a country engaged in bullying at any given time. Bullying is not a one-time event but is normally a

repetitive behaviour encompassing all aspects of aggression. At any given moment in time, it is a subset of the student population who are the perpetrators of this kind of activity. It follows then that it is legitimate for more than one student to be identified as a bully at the same time. Under these circumstances, averages across countries are not meaningful. Every individual is unmistakably unique, even when they look identical to others and vice versa. The same could be said for others. To avoid the distortions introduced by including too many zeros, median data are included in the analysis. Furthermore, it is also recognized that self-report data are not always the most reliable.

4.1. Overview of Global Trends in Bullying

Bullying, a global anguish that is rarely expressed and little understood, exists in many environments. There are economic reasons for concern about bullying and its impact on people and institutions, but the primary reason for organizing a study on bullying is to add to our understanding of this complicated and distressing behaviour. This study attempts to explain the social context of bullying in schools and the many forms bullying takes. It also seeks to describe the life and culture within these institutions, to illuminate the roots of gender-based behaviours, and to create an organized body of information that can be studied in serious ways. The study further seeks to address and reduce, if not eliminate, behaviours that culminate in bullying.

This article presents work to quantitatively define the major contributing variables involved in school bullying, comparing data from various studies to survey research on this topic. The survey research is based on research that has been conducted in various nations. Because of the purpose and design of each study, no single study provides all the variables that illuminate the actions taking place within these educational sites. However, if a variable can be defined in a similar format, access to a wide array of data on a single topic makes it bigger and more important. Bullying in a school is a multi-variable topic in practice. Therefore, the more definitions of a particular characteristic of schools encompassed, the more comprehensive the explanation and understanding.

According to UNESCO (2019) nearly one in three students (32%) has experienced bullying by their peers at school at least once in the past month. In most regions outside of Europe and North America, physical bullying is the most prevalent, followed by sexual bullying. However, in Europe and North America, psychological bullying is the most common form. Cyberbullying impacts as many as one in ten children globally. Over one-third of students (36%) have been involved in a physical altercation with another student, and almost one in three (32.4%) has been physically attacked at least once in the past year. While data on sexual violence by peers is limited, evidence from sub-Saharan

Africa suggests that boys are more likely to be victimized by a schoolmate than a teacher.

Although teacher-inflicted physical violence is generally uncommon worldwide, in some countries, children report significant levels of physical violence from their teachers. Corporal punishment, a form of physical violence, remains legal in schools across 68 countries and is frequently practiced in many of them.

4.2. Key Findings from International Surveys

The Global School-Based Student Health Survey has been developed to monitor students' non-communicable disease-related risk behaviours. An unfortunate global feature is the level of reported physical fighting and bullying, particularly among students being bullied in a school classroom. In the Caribbean, Jamaica and St. Vincent and the Grenadines completed the survey in 2003 and 2002, respectively. This paper seeks to describe the central aspects of bullying in the West Indies, using these findings as a basis for the design of a survey that can be administered within the adolescent context, and appeals for such a region-wide survey to be administered within the educational context.

Bullying in the Caribbean appears to be widespread. St. Vincent and the Grenadines is the country with the highest reported rate of physical fighting in this report. About 32% of the general school population in St. Vincent and the Grenadines reported that they had been in a physical fight at least once in the past 12 months.

In 2003-2004, 15% of 13–15-year-olds had been in a physical fight at least once. St. Vincent and the Grenadines had a school drop-out rate of 30% within a year during the same period. Yet, 54% of students in St. Vincent and the Grenadines reported that at least one parent "rarely" or "never" asked about the school that their children were attending.

Two major international surveys, the Global School-based Student Health Survey (GSHS) and the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) Study, collected data from 144 countries and regions worldwide. These surveys reveal key factors that significantly influence the type, frequency, and severity of bullying experienced by children and adolescents. According to the findings from a UNESCO (2019) report, children who are perceived as 'different' in any way are more likely to become victims of bullying. These factors, summarized in table 2, highlight the global risk patterns associated with victimization in schools.

Influencing factor	Description
Sex differences	Globally, girls and boys are equally likely to experience bullying. Boys are more likely to experience direct physical bullying; girls are more likely to experience direct verbal and indirect bullying. Boys are more likely to be perpetrators of direct physical bullying, while girls are

Influencing factor	Description
	more likely to be perpetrators of indirect and emotional bullying. Girls are more likely than boys to experience bullying based on physical appearance. Globally, there are no major differences in the extent to which girls and boys experience sexual bullying, but there are regional differences. Girls are more likely than boys to be cyberbullied via digital messages, but there is less discrepancy between the sexes in the prevalence of cyberbullying via digital pictures.
Age differences	As children grow older, they are less likely to experience bullying by peers. Age differences are less pronounced for bullying perpetration. Older children may be more exposed to cyberbullying.
Not conforming to gender norms	Children viewed as gender non-conforming are at higher risk of bullying.
Physical appearance	Physical appearance is the most frequent reason for bullying. Body dissatisfaction and being overweight are associated with bullying.
Physical and learning disability	Physical and learning disability is associated with increased risk of being bullied.

Influencing factor	Description
Race, nationality, or colour	Bullying based on race, nationality or colour is the second most frequent reason for bullying reported by children.
Religion	Compared with other factors, religion is mentioned by far fewer children as a reason for being bullied.
Socioeconomic status	Socioeconomic disadvantage is associated with increased risk of being bullied. A similar relationship is seen between self-perceived social status and cyberbullying.
Migration status	Immigrant children are more likely to be bullied than their native-born peers.
School environment	A positive school environment reduces bullying.
Educational attainment	Overall, educational attainment is a protective factor against being bullied.
Peer and family support	Family support and communication can be an important protective factor.

5.1. Comparison of Caribbean Data with Global Averages

The Caribbean does not currently have a regional advocacy centre dedicated to awareness and prevention of bullying. Though some countries and territories have integrated anti-bullying campaigns into their health and wellness programs, there is still a gap between the percentage of Caribbean youth reporting exposure to

various acts of bullying and Caribbean discipline practices.

We have heard the testimonials of youths who have engaged in bullying actions and its victims. There has been a call from educators for better discipline practices in Caribbean schools. Positive discipline practices have been proven to lower bullying rates, yet our Caribbean region has bullying rates higher than the global average in just about every category. We do not have recent timelines to evaluate changes happening to these very high rates and the effectiveness of current disciplinary practices. We must also not exclude the unreported acts of bullying from the picture. In the Caribbean, children are expected to follow the rules and do as they are told while leaving critical thinking and evidence-based advocacy in the shadows. Bullying in the Caribbean needs to be taken seriously as a worsening social ailment which will inevitably confound any attempt at socio-economic and educational development.

5.2. Factors Contributing to Bullying in the Caribbean

The Caribbean region consists of many different cultures and languages and regional nations are socioeconomically diverse. At a stage of development of its educational systems where other priorities such as chronic truancy, high dropout rates, poor quality in learning resources, and heavy reliance on traditional teaching methods are more predominant, bullying may

not be seen as a priority. Bullying often goes unreported in the Caribbean, and hence the depth and intensity of this problem is often not fully recognized. One of the possible reasons for its low profile is the lack of significant violence often associated with school. The illusory peaceful environment of a school may send a false message that bullying is unimportant when, in fact, it may be relevant in disrupting an atmosphere conducive to teacher and student well-being. Common problems of the region include high rates of unemployment, poverty, and HIV/AIDS prevalence, and low measurable human and financial resources. While many of these factors are social and financial and are endemic, it is important that the physical school environment is safe and secure. The large number of dropouts reveals bullying as a significant challenge facing Caribbean schools. Of particular importance are the high numbers of primary school dropouts. This suggests that bullying is not a problem confined to a particular school type and that it must be addressed at an early stage in the child's schooling to have the most significant impact. The questionnaire evidence thus fills an important gap in the existing regional research that focuses only on perceptions but also on actual situational factors.

6. Impact of Bullying on Caribbean Youth

As young victims are usually ill-equipped with the means to deal with the loss of self-esteem, rejection, isolation, and exposure, they can become withdrawn

and develop a low sense of worth, manifest sadness and depression, and show dislike for school. As a result, they may absent themselves or run away from school. In addition, the inability to defend themselves and a fear of school may result in nightmares and sleep disorders. The experience can also negatively affect progress in school, contributing to lower performance and absenteeism, up to and including dropping out of school. Young victims were found to be absent from school at least 8 days per month, young witnesses 3 days, and young perpetrators 6 days in the three months preceding the research. Furthermore, a consequent lack of interest in pursuing an education may also be evident, subsequently limiting career paths and future life choices.

Reports suggest that major negative effects of bullying in schools include the impairment of a peaceful and safe atmosphere for teaching and learning as well as for morale. Some teachers and administrators may feel powerless to minimize or halt bullying or may be unwilling to address difficult issues and support problem-solving dialogues. Extensive bullying may also symbolize deeper institutional pathology and resentment of existing administrative and conflict management strategies. These beliefs may drive teachers and administrators' reluctance to address problematic behaviours, as well as the willingness of certain staff members to cheerfully ignore their existence. Although a minority of teachers may attempt

to set a different standard and approach bullying as a legitimate issue for intervention, they may be at collateral marginal risk.

6.1. Psychological Effects

Bullying is psychologically damaging and therefore can trigger the onset of anxiety and depression with often severe consequences, including mental breakdown, self-defeating behaviour, and psychological illness. This stress is experienced across the board when it comes to bullying, though the level of intensity may vary, with some feeling the effects in a more pronounced manner than others. Labels such as "weak," "coward," and even "nutcase" accompany bullying, and does nothing but harm to children's self-esteem, self-worth, and confidence. Indeed, in order to regain some degree of self-worth, the bullied becomes the bully to those perceived as weaker. Bullying produces a climate of fear for the person affected, and this fear can lead to people feeling vulnerable and reluctant to carry out usual day-to-day activities.

Children in abusive environments frequently act defensively, which peers, teachers, and other persons in positions of authority may perceive as "bad behaviour." This may lead to not only irrational punishment but may also be featured as justification for peers or others exercising further bullying activities. Defensive behaviour, perhaps in the form of violence, can become the expected behaviour on a constant basis, as the stance

taken is one of defiance to avoid being further victimized. Cowardly acts may, however, suddenly reach a breaking point, and the students in their minds may plan revenge on their mentors. This behaviour can torment the victim and can be the demise of almost any classroom teacher's efforts and children's own learning opportunities.

6.2. Social Consequences

Being bullied is known to have various short and long-term social consequences. At the very least, it impacts the way the victim interacts with peers and family members; therefore, it is common for victims to become more reclusive, more introverted, and to withdraw from social activities. They may avoid people with whom they were once close, feeling embarrassed or ashamed about the situation they are in. They may even appear frightened or withdrawn. The victim may find it difficult to interact with peers, appear lonely and unsociable, withdraw from activities altogether, and be reticent about discussing what is wrong. Over time, the victim is left with a reduced capacity for interaction with peers and significant family members.

This change in social or community behaviour is due to the feelings that the victims experience. The resulting emotions may manifest themselves in brooding, feelings of inferiority and self-abasement, shame, and hurt when playing. The victims experience a loss of pride, frustration, impotence, anguish, and other related

emotional problems when confronted with their bullies, especially on a daily basis. Such emotional problems not only lead to the victim's withdrawal from social activities but may also result in self-harm and suicide.

6.3. Educational Implications

In this article, we document the prevalence of bullying in the region and examine the factors associated with becoming a bully victim among Trinidad and Tobago high school students. The results of the T & T Study support the conclusion that girls are more likely to be victimized than boys and that bullies have high risks of fighting, skipping school, and carrying weapons. For bully-victims, the risk increases dramatically. To a lesser extent, bullying involvement also generates an additional risk of smoking and substance abuse. After trying to stop bullying, our findings support that the classroom is the most appropriate environment in which to first attempt to stop bullying.

However, bullying is not only a free-time or break-time issue. Schools where teachers are constantly dealing with disruptive behaviour within and outside the classroom are more likely to develop a hostile academic and social environment, which leaves students vulnerable to bullying behaviours even in the classroom. Therefore, comprehensive and well-thought-through policies are essential to address the increasing disorder indicators in a comprehensive school-wide manner, rather than just taking sporadic action

against bullying, policies. Policies and activities for reducing bullying can be sustained through the administrative structure and clear guidelines to teachers, counsellors, and social workers.

7. Interventions and Strategies

In conducting research on the most effective and evidence-based bully prevention and intervention programs, we found four key factors to consider in evaluating the programs:

- Content, i.e., what are these programs meant to achieve
- Method, i.e., how do they work
- Target, i.e., for whom were they developed
- Focus, i.e., type and severity of bullying addressed

Additionally, a program of intervention is more likely to be effective if it is comprehensive and deals with the various aspects of bullying, as well as paying attention to the roles of the other members of the school and community. Planning and Designing Interventions for Bullying provides guidance to schools on how they can establish or improve their anti-bullying policy and program. This guide also suggests other resources available for conducting research on bullying in schools.

Short-Term Strategies - Short-term strategies refer to interventions that may be only temporary but are

helpful in managing bullying behaviour. Such strategies may involve:

- Increasing the level of supervision and the presence of adults at times when the children are likely to be on their own.
- Contacting the parents of the bully and victim.

7.1. Preventive Measures

Preventing bullying must be a priority of every school, regardless of whether or not bullying is known to be an issue in that school. Bullying is immoral and damages the recipients. The negative consequences of bullying are not confined to individual children but can also affect other children, families, teachers, and the school. Over the past decade, there has been interest in initiatives to combat or respond to bullying in schools. It is reasonable to assume that the more recent attention to bullying stems from the higher awareness about detrimental consequences, as well as the increase in accessible media that may be broadcasting or reporting on negative repercussions of bullying to the public.

Over the past 10 years, there has been a vast amount of literature on suggested school-based prevention and coping strategies. In the United States, research on anti-bullying programs has led to national and state programs with designated funds and alliances. These resources do not only provide information on the negative consequences of bullying but also highlight the importance of programs and legislative efforts to

combat bullying. Other countries, including those in the Caribbean region, have launched similar programs and campaigns to combat, reduce, or manage violence and bullying in schools and beyond. Evidently, this is not the case in Guyana; there is no such campaign or program save for the presence of school councillors who are not trained to handle the issue of bullying. This neglect will have predictably devastating consequences.

7.2. Support and Counselling Programs

If prevention and early intervention efforts fail, children who are bullied or engage in bullying behaviour should be identified and referred to relevant school-based support programs or possibly external support organizations. Support or counselling programs should ideally seek to address the immediate negative consequences of bullying behaviour and to equip both the victim and the perpetrator with lifelong coping skills. A systematic review of effectiveness research has identified a range of school-based programs that effectively reduce the risk of bullying behaviour in the first place, including aspects of the school environment such as improved supervision on the playground, as well as direct support programs. Most of these support and counselling programs have been implemented and evaluated in the industrialized world.

Detailed information about the implementation of such programs in Germany has been obtained. Based on the described characteristics of the most successful

approaches, several programs can be considered potential contenders for being implemented and evaluated in the Caribbean. The programs described share two key characteristics: bullying is viewed as an issue for the whole school, not just the individuals involved, and staff members are supported to take a unified stance against bullying. These findings highlight the necessity of a whole-school approach to effectively reduce bullying and confirm the importance of staff training, as already emphasized in the discussion of protective factors. Such characteristics would ideally also extend to external partners such as parents and law enforcement.

8. Policy Recommendations

The most important value of collecting and interpreting data is its potential to inform policies and interventions. The results of the preceding chapters show consistently strong associations between bullying, health and wellness, academic achievement, and school management. This particular arrangement of risk factors is not likely to change because it is an inherent characteristic of the interaction between a loosely managed social environment and a significant group of young people where there is substantial inequality in social status. Young people who are unwilling or unable to respect the rules of the social environment will be easy prey for others who either want to show off or else just have the urge to establish some dominance in an environment where they feel impotent. Nonetheless,

such data can be used to help in determining the scale, intensity, and nature of the problem, and thus convey a measure of the resources and interventions that might be applicable or effective.

The Eastern Caribbean states are in the enviable position of having introduced a considerable range of measures to enhance the quality of their education systems since the 1970s. Many of these achievements are implemented through a healthy consultation process among decision-makers. In the context of the lack of statistical evidence about the true nature and impact of bullying, it is important to review the content and quantity of the data so far collected, make some preliminary conclusions, indicate what people who have used this data have found important (and conversely, what they ignore), and suggest some possible ways forward. This is imperative in Guyana.

8.1. Legislation and Enforcement

CARICOM member states have enacted legislation on all aspects of education; however, the point to be reckoned with is its rule of law. That is to say, legislation may often be enacted suggesting that all students and educational personnel in the region are protected against all forms of aggression and violence, yet no clear route to securing or contesting such rights may be available to them. Bullying in schools that proceed unlawfully is a very serious phenomenon that both children and teenagers experience. Its occurrence

is a crucial problem whether the participating child is a person who perpetrates it, suffers because of it, or one who witnesses it. Consequently, it is crucial to devise strategies at schools to reduce the negative consequences of bullying. Governments need to support the school staff and parents. School-based interventions serve as the most effective means of preventing bullying. If a child becomes a continuous target of bullying, he or she should report it to school staff, and the school staff—particularly counsellors—can assist the student in overcoming feelings of helplessness caused by the bullying.

To reach such designated interventions, many steps must be undertaken. The foremost step is the establishment of a platform on which to address the problem of bullying in schools across the region and to do so urgently. This can be done through a structured discrete subject area or by making bullying an element in an existing form like health education. Some Caribbean territories have devised education and social studies courses which require students to develop an understanding of human rights issues. In these and others, students are exposed to ideas, experiences, attitudes, and then actively engage in thoughts about human rights and citizenship education. Such an attempt yields a clear objective in that the curriculum calls for the enhancement of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that would encourage students not only to respect human rights but to participate in human rights

activities. Careful thought should also be given to holistic policy frameworks that incorporate relevant legal, pedagogic, curricular, and social measures in keeping victims of bullying behaviour physically and psychologically safe on school premises.

8.2. Institutional Policies and Procedures

In many Caribbean jurisdictions, there are wide-ranging rules and regulations related to the school as a public institution and as a place of learning. We know, for instance, that all educational institutions operate within the parameters of educational acts, and we also know that school rules and regulations are designed to control behaviours, to develop life skills, and to encourage norms that are in the best interests of the overall school population. While the government should create rules and policies relating to discipline in the public interest, the international convention does not specifically deal with rules, regulations, and guidelines impacting human rights as they relate to bullying, violence, and crime in public institutions.

While laws against assault are filtered through criminal codes to eliminate such negative social behaviours, we argue throughout this paper that such provisions as they relate to the school system are, given the membership of this organization, contradictory at best and hypocritical at worst. The Rights of the Child are of utmost importance. However, it would be useful to

examine how disciplinary measures within the school system run parallel or counter to those Rights.

9. Future Research Directions

We propose that future research on bullying in the Caribbean region be carried out by researchers from non-social science disciplines, including medical, legal, or public/philanthropic sectors. International organizations and nongovernmental organizations may be more enthusiastic about organizing and funding studies on bullying prevention in the Caribbean if it is more directly linked to overall development and wellness in the region. While some cohort studies have included traditional measures of bullying, future research should aim to measure different types of bullying and their consequences, such as cyberbullying. Furthermore, country-level studies of bullying should capture official statistics at the national level and record data on detailed measures of bullying.

There are few bullying prevention programs in the Caribbean that specifically address the unique issues faced by students and other stakeholders in the region. Current programs tend to use intervention models from Western schools that have not been evaluated using local methodological standards. As a result, policies often have not achieved their desired outcomes, and resources available for other programs are affected. Without ongoing prevention efforts to help them, targets of bullying behaviour carry the damaging effects

into adulthood. Evidence-based approaches should be developed. Neither the curriculum lesson nor the entire intervention can be uncritically imported from the West. A collaborative mixed methods approach involving stakeholders who are impacted by the program and those promoting it is needed for thorough and objective evaluation. The benefits of these concepts will be of help not only in reducing bullying in the Caribbean but also in drafting programs for the rest of the world.

9.1. Emerging Trends in Bullying Research

The results of the first International Survey do not mean that one out of every three children is involved in bullying. However, the number of children affected directly or indirectly by bullying is too high. High prevalence rates of bullying have already been established in several countries. Among the students, the number of bullies is always much higher in the north of Europe than in the south, and the number of victims is higher in the south than in the north. Studies from all the countries with social systems problems are still needed.

At a worldwide level, in terms of victims and bullies of both traditional and cyber bullying and their relationships with gender, findings of the present study show that boys were significantly more involved in school bullying than girls. The number of girls who are part of traditional bullying and general victims of

traditional bullying was both around 20% and 30% respectively. For traditional bullying, the ratio between boys and girls was very similar, in which boys who bullied others in school were around 30%; boys who were bullied by others were around 30%; girls who bullied others in school were around 20%; and girls who were bullied by others were also around 20%. For cyber bullying, the number of girls involved in cyber bullying was much lower than that of boys. The number of boys who were part of cyber bullying was between 40% and 50%, but it was only 25% for girls. The number of girls who were victims of cyber bullying was between 30% and 35%, and it was below 10% for boys.

9.2. Need for Longitudinal Studies in the Caribbean

There is a need for several longitudinal studies to be carried out in the Caribbean, which will have the capacity to measure and monitor the prevalence of bullying in the Caribbean over time. To monitor trends, several basic considerations related to the methodology and costs of the research must be carefully thought out. It is because of these considerations that an increasing number of countries have been conducting annual or biannual surveys. Understanding bullying problems through a focus on culture that encompasses a variety of research methods and perspectives might enhance our appreciation of bullying, perceived effects, and intervention successes specific to the culture. Countries in the region where few or no studies have been conducted must initiate projects, while those with a

sufficient number of studies over time can take their research to another level and conduct assessments of intervention efforts and get involved in translating and bridging the gap between research and action.

Conveying to Caribbean school personnel several elements of a comprehensive approach, as well as specific strategies for addressing victimization behaviours, is one step. Another is to help schools, classrooms, and individual students accomplish the objectives of increasing connectedness, teaching empathy and perspective, broadening viewpoints through critical thinking, and creating core ethical values. In truth, we do not know the extent to which Caribbean educators value or support foundational positive teaching strategies. However, it is clear how educational researchers and practitioners can increase their understanding of bullying issues in the Caribbean region.

10. Conclusion

Acts of bullying in the Caribbean region are generally low, even though Caribbean types of bullying remain common; most adolescents do not engage in bullying. When it comes to being bullied, 1 in 10 adolescents report such an occurrence. Girls are bullied more than boys, and the rates of adolescents being bullied increase with age for both boys and girls. Cyberbullying is especially important, as the rates are more than 10 percent. There are countries in the region that certainly

cannot be considered bullying-free based on the fact that around 1 in 3 adolescents report having been bullied. An analysis of bullying prevalence for the Caribbean can suggest the best types and ages for implementing bullying interventions, and this can be further enhanced by the knowledge of the best interventions for a given goal. This study found that bullying is still largely uncharted territory in the English-speaking Caribbean in terms of adolescent experiences. Even so, a lack of comprehensive bullying statistics in no way means that it is not a problem, for if we have learned anything, bullying is a serious problem confronting adolescents in the Caribbean.

10.1. Summary of Key Findings

The report found that, across the 35 countries in the Americas, Trinidad and Tobago had the highest rate of bullying of girls and the second highest rate of bullying of boys. While at school, it had the highest rate for girls and the third highest rate for boys. A survey found bullying to be one of the non-violent forms of victimization in schools, which saw a significant increase between 2000 and 2009. Jamaica was the seventh worst for girls being bullied at school, sixth for boys bullied at school, eighth for girls being bullied by girls, and fifth for boys being bullied by girls. Grenada was the third worst for girls being bullied at school and the eighth worst for boys being bullied at school, while Antigua and Barbuda were ninth for girls being bullied by girls. In instances of the countries suffering the

greatest increase in bullying, The Bahamas was the second worst, while the United States Virgin Islands was the third.

We are aware that there is a certain astringency to statistics; yet, they give us cause for worry across the region. That there are no numbers or stats being generated in Guyana, however, signals indifference or apathy, both reasons for alarm.

10.2. Implications for Policy and Practice

The Caribbean region has seen a proliferation of studies on bullying in recent years; the evidence is clear that prevalence rates in these unhappy biopsychosocial circumstances are as high as in other parts of the world. Children and adolescents are "bothered" by the occurrence of bullying behaviour. As a result, different rules, regulations, and, in some cases, advisory services have been developed by central, regional, and state-level bodies throughout the region to mitigate the problems experienced by individuals, society, and the economy as a whole. Some countries have codified policies designed to attain the objectives, while in other countries an integrated approach requires assessing formal and informal mechanisms that exist to address these concerns within complex school social systems.

The goal of all these policies is to reduce (ideally, to eliminate) the problem of bullying by promoting a social system that rejects violence of any kind as an acceptable response to the difficulties faced by

individuals during the school-age years. The weight of the evidence supports the finding that, to date, sound policies and robust practices form an important part of the solution to the problem of bullying in the region as well as in other parts of the world. Using a Caribbean lens, this chapter has sifted and sorted both victimization and perpetration evidence for cases that involve bullying and has contrasted global data with findings reported in the literature. The goal has been to draw meaningful conclusions and to make some generalizations about this global social, psychological, and health issue. With this task accomplished, the purposes of this article were revisited as well as the questions noted at the outset of the study.

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TEACHING EXCELLENCE: A REACTION TO THE SMITH COMMISSION REPORT AND ITS EFFECTS

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Abstract

This paper has been written partially in response to the Smith Commission Report, and partially in response to the reactions the report has elicited already. The Smith Commission Report voiced many valid concerns about teaching excellence; however, many of the so-called "innovations" that have been developed in answer to Stuart Smith's call for teaching excellence are, in fact, little different from those techniques implemented under the auspices of the Ontario Universities Program for Institutional Development (OUPID) in the 1960's and early 1970's. This being the case, the authors feel that the most likely result will be a similar lack of success. It is, therefore, our suggestion that an attempt ought to be made to change the infrastructure of the university system so that it supports good teaching and research with equal measure. This, above all else, should lead to real improvements in the quality of teaching.

Résumé

Cette étude a été faite en partie en réponse à la Commission du rapport Smith, et en partie en réponse aux réactions que le rapport a déjà suscitées. La

Commission du rapport Smith a exprimé beaucoup d'inquiétude concernant l'excellence en enseignement. Cependant beaucoup des prétendues "innovations" qui ont été développées en réponse à l'appel de Stuart Smith pour l'excellence en enseignement sont, en fait, peu différentes des techniques mises en oeuvre sous les auspices du Programme de développement de l'instruction dans les universités ontariennes (OUPID: Ontario Universities Program for Instructional Development) durant les années 1960 et au début des années 1970; et vont probablement avoir pour résultat le même manque de succès. Les auteurs pensent qu'une tentative devrait être faite pour changer l'infrastructure du système universitaire afin d'encourager et de permettre également le bon enseignement et la recherche. C'est cette tentative, qui avant tout, pourra amener à de véritables améliorations à la qualité de l'enseignement.

The publication of the Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Canadian University Education (1991) has occasioned a flurry of activity within Canadian Universities. The author harpooned a system in which "the quality of research publications is more important to the careers of university professors than is the excellence of their teaching" (Smith, 1991, p. 31). Over the last three years, officers and directors of teaching and learning have been appointed; numerous committees, programs and projects have been established to estimate, improve, and oversee the

quality of teaching; and localized pamphlets on teaching abound. It has become fashionable to speak of teaching, to "discuss" or "converse" about teaching, and we are treated to a fusillade of adjectives attached to the words, teaching and teacher. There is the good teacher, the great teacher, the terrible teacher, the collaborative teacher, the traditional teacher. We speak of excellence in teaching, outstanding teaching, effective teaching, and Smith writes about modest teaching credentials. Unfortunately, many of these attempts to improve teaching, though well-intentioned, are not at all original; and when we speak of teaching and the teacher a disturbing vagueness prevails.

Despite the fact that the university community seems to have been startled by Smith's conclusions, they are hardly a revelation. Moreover, the activities that his conclusions have spawned were already implemented three decades ago in Ontario, and with limited success. In a paper on the topic Elrick writes:

In the late 1960's and 1970's, there was a call to develop university teaching in Canada... Universities responded by creating centres, projects, and programs which encouraged faculty to use technology..., to attend workshops and seminars, to apply for leave time and travel grants, and... to assess teaching.... Traditional approaches, such as becoming more knowledgeable

in one's discipline, were forsaken....
(Elrick, 1990, p. 62)

The most significant difference between then and now is that the Stuart Smith message has now reached most Canadian universities. This is due, in part, to the call for accountability. There is little evidence that these frantically implemented but duplicative activities generated by Smith's conclusions will have any more success than those of the Ontario Universities Program for Institutional Development (OUPID) had back in the 1960's and 70's. There is no sense that we have studied and learned from the past. Baker (1992) gives Smith an 'F' or perhaps an 'F-' " for research (p. 103). We who have followed and acted blindly do not deserve a better grade. Having said this, however, we owe Smith a debt of gratitude. He has demonstrated the need to re-examine teaching in universities, thereby augmenting the analysis and experimentation undertaken previously.

In spite of the renewed focus on teaching in universities, there remains a paucity of analysis on this subject. There is very little published on effective university teaching, especially when compared to the preponderance of material published on effective high school and grade-school teaching (Triosi, 1983). The little that has been written about university teaching tends to ignore fundamental issues. The spaces that have been reserved for discussions, debates and dialogues on teaching run the danger of being usurped

by anecdotes from articulate and dominant personalities or by ideological debates concerning innovative teaching (eg. self-paced and collaborative) versus traditional teaching. Smith (1991), in his own way, has added fuel to this debate: "Still it is a general feature of universities that, the vast majority of the time, a person is standing in front of a room of students and lecturing to them. In this respect, things have not changed in a century or more" (p. 47). Incidentally, much of what passes for innovation has been around for more than two decades and much of what has been labelled traditional has evolved technically and substantially. The terms, we believe, often represent a fallacious distinction.

It has, as mentioned, become trendy to sit around and debate the ins and outs of teaching methods and philosophies. What seems to identify the outstanding teacher is the use of the newest and most unique bells and whistles that are regarded as key ingredients of outstanding teaching. In other words, it is not the teacher that is the focus, but rather the method that the teacher employs. This "method madness" appears to dominate these debates to the point that the teacher is very rarely mentioned.

One possible reason for the lack of focus on the teacher is that there seems to be a common belief that a great method will overcome any inadequacies the teacher may have. If one follows this path to its logical conclusion, teachers are essentially replaceable and

interchangeable and, therefore, hiring should be based on research expertise (knowledge) rather than teaching (the conveyance of knowledge). If one looks at the marketplace for academics, this does seem to be the case. Advertisements almost always emphasize the research area and ask for evidence of research prowess, but often merely pay lip service to teaching if, indeed, it is mentioned at all. An examination of the August-September '94 issue of University Affairs revealed that approximately 64% of 191 advertisements for positions mentioned anything about teaching, whereas approximately 86% made reference to research area(s) (the ones that didn't were either advertisements concerning administrative positions, positions in Education and the Fine Arts or limited term appointments). Of those that mentioned teaching, 51% of the advertisements mentioned the desire for both research and teaching prowess, 40% paid lip-service to teaching (i.e., "the candidate will be expected to teach" or "some involvement in teaching is required"), and only, 9% put the importance of teaching experience ahead of research (most of these resulted from the cases in which research wasn't mentioned such as Education, the Fine Arts and limited term positions). Furthermore, perhaps for fiscal reasons, it has become commonplace for administrations to replace veteran teachers on sabbatical with new, untested recruits. These replacements often have little or no teaching experience, and as the advertisements suggest, are often not asked to supply any evidence of teaching prowess.

Smith (1991) writes: "The PhD degree is a degree in research... There is nothing to guarantee that the PhD recipient has demonstrated skill in teaching" (p. 59). These new recruits often teach courses unrelated to their area of expertise and are, moreover, frequently assigned introductory courses where the more experienced teacher might be a greater asset to the novice student. The focus on research also applies to the recruitment of senior faculty because, more often than not, their research record is the critical ingredient in the hiring decision. In reading the advertisements it becomes clear to the prospective candidate that in order to be considered for a position, they should focus on developing a strong research program. Teaching, therefore, becomes of limited concern.

Elrick (1990) argues that OUPID failed because universities did not extend academic and university values in a manner that fostered real improvements in university teaching. Smith (1991) was concerned that the infrastructure in universities did not promote teaching. We believe that available evidence indicates that little or nothing has changed, and that we have not learned from past experience. The only way to ensure that real and significant improvement in teaching takes place at the university level is if teaching takes precedence in department meetings, in course assignments, in the offices of administrators, in collective agreements, in standards for promotion and

tenure, in hiring practices; and, most importantly, in university budgets. This is the real bottom line.

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AN IMAGINATIVE RECREATION OF THE HISTORY OF THE WEST INDIES

(with Ashwannie Harripersaud)

Abstract

This piece is not meant to solve the puzzle that is the West Indies and the West Indian consciousness. Rather, it attempts to identify the pieces of the complex cultural jigsaw of the place and its people, those that were forcibly brought and who came often under false promises. This paper reaches back imaginatively to those who were our ancestors; it imagines what they thought and think, long gone as they are, remaining as they do. Taken as a whole, this piece attempts to show to us who we were and who we are, what we were and what we are. It demonstrates that our outer initial separate plurality has become our heterogeneous inner singularity.

Introduction

It is our intention in this chapter to move behind the façade of history towards a body of consciousness that is authentically West Indian in nature. This is a difficult journey to make for several reasons. First, it is not easy to avoid succumbing to the temptation of being conscripted into the ranks of this or that race, this or that homogeneous entity, and therefore stress the suffering of one or another group as being more or less than that of any other. Second, it is no easy thing to recall

ancestral linkages, a miracle of roots, without both hurt at great and tragic loss and without trembling in awe at the fact of survival even in the face of monolithic systems of terror and chaos. Finally, it is difficult in the extreme to look at the footnotes of history, to which the story of the West Indian has been relegated by European historians, and claim history; to look at a discontinuous story line and tell a story. How do we find the voice to tell the story of those who have been silenced with such desperate finality? Therefore, let the voice be muted, the tone hushed. Let the story be told in the dark, in a fractured narrative, from a distance as in an echo, faint as memory. The ancestor of which we write is many-faced, many-coloured, a composite. When we speak of this or that ancestor, see that ancestor as one of many spectres inhabiting the land and the consciousness of the West Indian. This essay, therefore, is not history; nor is it a historical document in the conventional sense; rather, it is but a riddle of psyche, a mystery of muddled consciousness, heterogeneous character. Most of us are acquainted with the journeys of Christopher Columbus and about the state of Spain, specifically, and Europe, generally, in the latter half of the fifteenth century. We know also that early in the morning of October 12, 1492, some Arawakan Indians from the Lucayos people awoke to the astonishment that they had been discovered. On the question of "discovery", there is indisputable evidence today of the immigration of the Vikings to America via Greenland, long before Columbus sailed. It is also indisputable thanks to Ivan

Van Sertima's *They Came Before Columbus* (2003)- that Africans had had direct contact with South and Central America, long before Columbus landed.

At any rate, Columbus set eyes on an island that the people called Guanahani Island. There are many accounts of the Lucayos, and we may imagine without too much difficulty what it was like for them to have awakened to the *Santa Maria*, the *Pinta*, and the *Nina*. From all accounts, including Columbus's, this was another Eden. There are many accounts of the peaceful, giving and friendly nature of these Arawaks. What *they* did not know was that the planting of the Spanish flag symbolized a stake driven to the very heart of the culture, their existence. Yet, the first meeting between the invaders and their future victims, between the "savage" and the "civilized", was conducted with amity and inquisitiveness on both sides. They grinned at each other, struggled hopelessly with strange tongues, and fell back on gestures. The newcomers produced red caps and glass beads, with which the Lucayos were delighted and eagerly decked their persons. Running back to their village to fetch gifts in return, the "savages" brought cotton thread in balls, parrots, even household utensils and spare weapons, which were pressed upon the Spaniards. Finding that some boats had already left shore, the Lucayos plunged into the ocean and swam after them, to make sure that no visitor failed to receive a present. The first prophetic note was struck on this day when the Arawaks tried to examine

the Spanish swords--they took them by the blades and, through ignorance, cut themselves. Mournfully, they pointed to old wounds made by arrows, and indicated that they had been received in battle with enemies from other islands who had sought to capture them. The existence of the war-like and marauding Caribs (or, correctly, Cariban peoples) thus impinged vaguely on history. The first prophetic note was, as it were, written in blood. The second note was struck early the next day, October 13, 1492. Thirteen canoes, each carrying forty-five natives, came out to the ships. They brought their products for barter. Columbus had never had experience with such unmercenary traders. He noted: "All that they do possess they give for anything which is given to them, so that they exchange things for broken pieces of pitchers and bits of broken glass". A few wore small pendants of gold as ornaments for their nostrils--and they gave these away with the readiness of the truly innocent at heart. The trinkets held a deadly fascination for the Europeans, who solicited by signs the hint that there was more of the yellow metal to the southwest. The second prophetic note was struck when Columbus noted in his journal on the 13th: "I was attentive, and took the trouble to ascertain if there was gold". The second note of impending doom was struck in letters of gold outlined in the vermillion of blood. With this began the treachery and rapacity that were to mark the course of European civilizers for centuries. Other ominous notes were struck when, later the same day, Columbus seized seven of the friendly Lucayos to

educate them as interpreters, and to deliver them to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella as specimen. The seized youngsters, though frightened, did not seem to have been too resentful; they may have thought it a privilege to depart with demi-gods. They were to be the first slaves, first specimen, first educated. About Hispaniola, Columbus later wrote: "In the interior are mines of metal and the population is without number. Espanola is a marvel". This, then, was the origin--these were our first ancestors: the Arawakan Amerindians. This may be said of them: They were soft and kind, and all they wanted was peace in their islands where there were no beasts of prey, no poisonous snakes. They were eaters of corn-meal and cassava; this grain and that root were grown in abundance. Fruit were a passion to them; and fruit were wonderfully plentiful. They played games with a light ball. Tournaments between villages were staged; the losers had to pay a price--happily, they had to entertain the winners at a feast. We know that they loved to dance, an art at which their sensuous grace was remarkable. Peter Martyr, who heard the language spoken, wrote that the Arawak language was "soft and not less liquid than the Latin...rich in vowels and pleasant to the ear." We too have heard the language and can attest to the truth of Martyr's remarks. When an Arawak tells you, in soft syllables, "Danshikabu", she or he means "I love you". We can, like Columbus, say that they were many-- millions. Now, there is no single record of an Arawak (or Carib, for that matter) alive in any of the islands in the archipelago. There are few

alive in Guyana, but they are but few. They were the subject of indiscriminate slaughter. The Spanish priest, Bartholomew de Las Casas, records with the kind of stark clarity that only a first-hand witness can, the utter devastation of thousands of Arawak at a time. The Spanish raided villages and as the savages ran to them in greeting, were butchered. Las Casas records the cutting open of children; pregnant women were gutted and fetuses ripped out and bloodily held aloft.

*Without ceremony They take the axe to
the Tree of Life:*

Blade whistles, Bark weeps.

Fruit caves in on

*Its decayed seed and Ants, red like
flames, Celebrate the murdered Root.*

*The flight of white metal Tears the
moon's side;*

*The wound streams loss and Moonbeam
bends like*

*An exposed rib unused. Pierced sky and
chopped tree: Nightmare's origin.*

Hope collapses

*Like the deflated moon. This is the dark
time,*

But further darkness Stalks the land,

And the sky is emptied of stars.

In remembrance more than in protest, this is what we may say of our first and tragically ignored ancestors: They lived in peace abundant; and they were murdered for little cause.

THE CARIBAN PEOPLES

The Caribans, war-like cousins of the Arawaks, succumbed less willingly to the tyranny of the Europeans. They fought fiercely but were no match for the civilizers and Christianizers. Taken to work on labour-intensive tobacco plantations, they died from want of freedom as they would from want of air. Thousands preferred to leap off cliffs to their death. Even to this day, one precipice in Grenada from which they launched themselves to death is called Le Mourne des Sauteurs, Leapers' Hill. The Caribans were literally exterminated by the French and the English.

To justify this for centuries to come, the white people will call us cannibals. We raided and made war, for that is the nature of the beast, wheresoever the beast may be. We take women, for they are of great beauty and grace. They will provide us children so that we may not be lost in the dark time. But before we are worthy, we must refashion ourselves into their image. We must eat their spirit of peace, play the music of their valour

in defeat. Thus, we cut a morsel of the defeated and eat in ceremony and become as one with those which our nature led us to kill. And now we extract a bone with which we will make a flute and play a tune of mournful celebration. Their flesh will become our flesh, their bones our flutes. The victor and victim are enjoined in ceremony, and life continues. Life, in the supple sinew of our children. Whatever you may hear or read in books is not the story; the story is written in the sand. Their stories are as they who tell them. Remember, as you drink piwari and eat cassava bread. Remember.

What is tragic about all of this, apart from the practical annihilation of an entire people (as if anything can be *apart* from that) is that there is little or no sense of our ancestral aboriginal pain or malaise. Even now, the legacy--the nebulous, subterranean legacy of these people, their link to us-- has been ignored endlessly, remorselessly unaddressed by historians. In school, we are not given a *sense* of them as living spirits within the castles of our skins. Even something as fundamental as the origins of the word "Caribbean" has failed to permeate our taught and sometimes willingly learned callousness. It is entirely understandable that European historians have ignored or white-washed this aspect of

Caribbean history. It is unforgivable that local historians, with precious few exceptions, have followed the pattern. Our artists, on the other hand, attempt to call their spirits into characteristic being. Wilson Harris, the brilliant novelist, has been most notable in this regard. Martin Carter, Derek Walcott, John Hearne and V.S. Naipaul have given them some attention.

AFRICANS

When sugar replaced tobacco as the main crop (*King Sugar* as Eric Williams calls it in *From Columbus to Castro*) in the West Indies, there was a desperate need to import vast quantities of cheap labour. At first, the slave trade fell almost exclusively into the hands of the Portuguese--at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Then, in 1572, King and Emperor of Spain, granted a patent to a group of favourites to fetch four thousand slaves to the Antilles. After the smuggling activities of John Hawkins in the 1560's the hunt for "black ivory" became booming business. The English, French and Dutch joined the Spanish and Portuguese in this horrific race to dehumanize human beings. True to monarchical morality, Charles V of Spain gave his permission and royal blessings; James I of England and Scotland issued the first exclusive slaving charter to Englishmen in 1618; Charles I issued new blessings to slaving enterprises in 1618. Under Charles II, there was a Royal African Company headed by the Duke of York with the King as his partner. Louis XIV of France, not to be outdone, joined with his royal blessings in 1673.

As we know or should know, soul-shuddering descriptions exist of the journeys of slaves across the Atlantic from Africa to the Caribbean. Charles William Taussig in *Rum, Romance and Rebellion* (1928) describes the journey in these terms:

On the larger ships, there was no more humanity than on the smaller ones, for the black men were packed in rows between decks with the roof only three feet, ten inches above the floor on which they lay. With from ten to sixteen inches surface room for each, they often had to lie spoon fashion. It must not be forgotten that the voyages frequently took several months. At times they were packed so that the head of one slave would rest between the thighs of another, and thus they would remain for weeks during the voyage across the ocean.

In this manner was another group of ancestors introduced onto the emptied but bloodied stage of the West Indies. These ancestors were trapped, chained, beaten, and placed in the bellies of slave ships which were spiritual, psychological, emotional tombs. They were packed there in less space than Europeans afforded their dead in coffins. The space, the horror of enclosure and hopelessness, is too narrow for us to contemplate. In the dark they lay with their private, ubiquitous fears echoing in their heads, their lives a nightmare. There they lay for weeks on end in the cramp dark of their own silence and their own screams. They lay there awash in their own sweat and blood and urine and faeces. Then they were landed, auctioned, and

herded onto plantations. They were nameless, abandoned by the gods. Slowly, they lost their languages from lack of use, for such use was punishable by severe whippings and mutilations. They were subject to the endless grind of fruitless labour, the long days in the sun which lashed them like the master's whip. Their nights were spent in dread of the coming day when the process would begin all over again. It was upon this foundation that the pyramid of neo- classical England was erected. But there was struggle against the odds, survival in the furnace of exploitation. *Obeah* and *Vodun* remain, potent fragments of language are used, rituals and habits of the old world are enacted, foods of that old world eaten. They come from Africa, but are now West Indian. Irreversibly. They made songs in Creole, the precursors of Reggae and Calypso, which mocked "massa" and "missie" even as the colonizers watched in admiration the shining bodies of their happy slaves, "assistant planters" as they were called by a youthful Romantic poet. To be sure, there are forgiving and more glamorous pictures painted of the slaves and slavery. Historians like L.J. Ragatz wrote, "If the African suffered hardships and the mortality among them was high, it must be acknowledged that the same was true with respect to the white seamen removing them to their new homes" (138). This sentiment persists with astonishing frequency, even in the face of hard evidence. While this attempt to self-forgive and self-justify by false equivalency and twisted logic this is unconscionable, it is understandable. The Pontius Pilate

syndrome, save Pilate was more honest and possessed more integrity. What is equally astounding but not so forgivable is that non-European, non-white people who hold themselves up as "experts" of what is called Post-Colonial Literature, who teach to students the works of West Indian writers like Walcott, Naipaul and Jean Rhys, conspire with their former masters, still admired and held in awe in spite of the rhetoric made in safe terms and in safe places and under safe circumstances. What is unforgiveable is the homogenization of colonial circumstances: "We all went through the same thing!!!" is a refrain heard often in literary conferences on what is called Post-Colonial Literature. This is not a singular view; it is a view which prevails at academic conferences which have become forums for the shameful display of war wounds that have not been suffered. When examined, these wounds reveal themselves to be so much make-up. One of the most insidious results of the many literary theories that prevail today, and that are held up as all-embracing and perennially applicable is that it negates the history of people, especially those of Africa and the West Indies. This disqualifies them to teach or to speak of ANY Post-Colonial literature because it demonstrates a profound ignorance of what happened in history. And this is a charitable view. The other explanation is simpler and more damning: racism. This is much more reprehensible than white men and women forgiving themselves with the ease of justification.

Our ancestor is African, but we West Indians are not. Our ancestor is Arawakan, but we West Indians cannot claim this vanished solidity. Our ancestor is Cariban, but we cannot make that claim. We are all of these. We are none of these. We are a composite, a hybrid. Listen well with eyes half shut. Hear our ancestors:

Hell is dark and close; it smells of all the foul discharge of people. Hell is without ceremony, without grace. Hell is where I lie with hundreds of others, in the belly of a wooden whale, swallowed up, lost. How I ache to stand up against this indignity, but I cannot raise my head three inches. I gulp for air, but my open mouth receives the urine and sweat from the others that are packed above me. How I miss the grass, trees, light, breeze. My father and mother, brothers and sisters. How I miss friends. Games, talks, stories. It is dark in hell. How can they mistake me for a slave? And even slaves are not to be treated such. There are strict rules. Guidelines. Slaves may win their freedom after a time. They may buy their freedom and may marry into the people. How now this slavery? How am I become a slave? By what logic, by what decree? Have our gods been beheaded by the white man that they

*hear not my prayers, that they see not
my suffering? Have they fled in fear of
the white man's god?*

*I lie beside a stranger who is a brother,
who is myself, so closely is he fitted into
the curves of my body, his head betwixt
my heels, mine between his. I hated his
weakness for whimpering, but I realize
that the sound is mine. And I hated what
I had become, hated the creature into
which I was being refashioned. To roam
free upon the solid land of my home. Air.
Space. Blue skies and white clouds
adorning. Where is home? To die here
would be to lose my soul; not to die
would be to stay in hell. I wish for death,
but only parts of me die, and by degrees.*

THE WHITES

The whites are our ancestors also. We carry that ancestry in the clothes we wear, in the language we speak, in the structures of our government, and in our education and justice systems. We also carry that legacy in the games we play, in our everyday habits, and in many strands of worship. That ancestry stubbornly remains in our values; we cherish the “fair-skinned” and almost loath the “dark-skinned”, for instance. Richard Ligon's *History of Barbados* was written in 1653, six years after he left the West Indies; he offers important

clues of the role of whites in Barbados. The island was populated by Englishmen in the 1620's, and Ligon estimates that, soon after, there were eleven thousand white peasant farmers on that island. It is significant that Barbados became known as "little England". Indeed, they were on their way to becoming what New England became later in the USA. This European heritage, not acknowledged often, is undeniable. But these peasant farmers were not slaves: they became the ones in control, the ones with the whips and guns. They became gentlemen and gentlewomen who returned home to England in triumph, in wealth. It is only those without knowledge or integrity or honesty or conscience who would insist on equating the lot of the whites, however mean, with that of the slave. We may recall a statement which is still used to justify the treatment of slaves, even after 400 years; it was used by the white regime in South Africa not too long ago. The language might have evolved somewhat, but the sentiment is identical. This statement comes from a document called the Moyne Report. It was written in 1838 and published in 1945.

A number of excellent English gentlemen and ladies, of broad views, sympathetic to the West Indies, were sent to the islands by King George V in 1938 on a Royal Commission. They wrote the Moyne report which is the foremost ever written about the West Indies. It is important to stress that they were not hostile to the West Indies, that they were liberal of view. They were merely

profoundly ignorant of that which they were dealing. Here is the statement: "negroes were taken from lands where they lived no doubt in a primitive state."

This is the kind of blindness, the kind of cultural arrogance which prevails today, and not only in the white world. The report goes on to say that "Their transfer to the West Indies unlike most other large-scale movements of population did not involve the transfer of any important traces of their traditions and customs, but rather their complete destruction." It is almost impossible to produce a sentence that contains more mistakes and more gross misunderstandings and misrepresentations. Yet, our own writers, notable, celebrated writers have echoed this: Orlando Patterson, for instance, writes about the "historylessness" of the slave. V.S. Naipaul writes, equally erroneously, of the "storylessness" of the West Indies. Under such enormous pressure, there was great erosion, great fragmentation. But there was always transformation, always metamorphosis, always survival. And that survival, as we have said before is manifest in the sound of words and the strains of music, the rhythm of dance, and the drama of habit. It is embodied in Queh-Queh, Carnival, Kukumina, and Rastafarianism. The African spirit was tested severely but was undefeated. The Arawakan and Cariban ancestors remain behind every blade of grass, mapped in the form of every flower, in each teardrop that drips like dew from the tip of a leaf. And then the Chinese were brought in, but were found

to be unsuitable for the kind of labour demanded by King Cane; so they became, of their own initiative and genius, part of the "merchantry" by opening small businesses and cake shops. The English encouraged Portuguese to come as labourers, for they provided a useful racial and classist buffer zone between themselves and the darkest members of society. West Indian society was a series of solitudes, divided along spectra of colour which became synonymous with class, wealth, and privilege.

THE EAST INDIANS

One final group was introduced: East Indians (so named to differentiate them from North American Indians and Amerindians). They were brought from India as indentured labourers after the emancipation of slaves in the British colonies in 1833, the British being scrupulous to have a dependable source of cheap labour to generate wealth from sugar plantations. In 1814, one of the most prominent planters in Trinidad, William Burnely, proposed the importation of indentured workers from India on a large scale. He was joined in this regard by Governor Woodford of Trinidad and by the combined Court of British Guiana in 1850. Between 1838 and 1914, no fewer than 238,000 East Indians were introduced into British Guiana, 145,000 into Trinidad, 21,500 into Jamaica, and 39,000 into Guadeloupe. They were introduced also into Surinam, St. Lucia, St Vincent and Grenada. The significant West Indian poet, Martin Carter, has pointed out that they

were introduced onto the stage of the West Indies as lesser players, into a system which was already established as exploitative and brutal. In 1889, Lechmere Guppy, mayor of San Fernando, Trinidad's second town, was harshly critical of the degradation imposed upon the "new slaves" as he called them. They lived in squalor, and for their labour received nothing but broken promises and scorn. But, apart from providing cheap labour, they served the vital function of drawing the resentment of slaves away from the British. The slaves, freed into economic slavery, saw the Indians as usurpers, interlopers. The British encouraged this view. Today, we the decedents of our African ancestors and those of our Indian forefathers continue stupidly to play the deadly game created by their former masters. In doing so, we enslave ourselves in perpetuity. In many ways, we are less free than our ancestors, for our imprisonment is self-imposed. After independence in the sixties, West Indian politicians in Guyana and Trinidad especially attempted to ride to power on the backs of either Indo-West Indians or Afro-West Indians. The most notorious of these was Forbes Burnham whose inflammatory rhetoric fed the flames of resentment between the two races. In 1963-64, these two peoples, blinded to what they shared, killed each other for what set them apart: the colour of their skin. Through the fog of the past, our ancestors wail:

*So we children gnaw upon the bone of
contention Like dogs of war.*

We look down pondem

*And shake we head in shame. On earth,
we shed tears and Blood for we children
to go*

*School, learn, and become lawyer and
doctor and teacher. We hope then dat we
children learn to live*

In peace wid all neighbours,

To pass fruits and eggs over fences

*To shout “maanin’ neighbour maanin’”
To cry at their neighbours’ loss*

*And celebrate at their gain, To share in
joy and pain. To learn that loving others
Is the best part of living.*

*We hope that we children live Lives
better than we did.*

But we children still hate what we

*Were made to hate, who we were made
to hate. Through generations this hate
remains.*

*We children learn only to count money
Weigh gold and measure property.*

In heaven we shed tears. Tears seed rain.

*Rain fuh wash dem of foolishness and
meanness.*

*When you meet dem, tell dem that They
job is to learn from we pain, Not fight
over it?*

*Ask dem how we can shower demwid
blessing When all dey deserve is a good
cussing?*

Add to this list of Amerindians, Africans, Chinese, Indians, and Europeans, immigrants from various North African Islamic states, Madierans and Japanese, and we obtain an idea of the bewildering complexity of the region. These, then, are the ancestors of all West Indians, if they want them. These are our ancestors, all of them. In these many and diverse roots roots of people, roots *in* people; roots of pain and roots of love and endurance reside the origins of the West Indies.

The West Indies contain the only man-made culture on this scale in the history of the human race. There has never been anything like it, nor will there be anything like it again. In *Caribbean Voices* (1971) John Figueroa, a West Indian critic writes:

*This mixture of people making up the
West Indies is remarkable and, as the
history of the world goes, new. Where
else ahve Africans, Asians,
Amerindians, Europeans, and every
possible mixture of these, come together
to form a new people? Our ragout
makes the "melting pot" [of the United*

*States of America] look like an innocent
cup of tea!*

This, importantly, is not only an issue of *society*; it is an issue of *consciousness* which looks beyond what we may appear to be. West Indians do not have the luxury of superficial analysis, shallow differentiation as we look at our black, brown, white, yellow brothers and sisters in the streets. The way we appear is irrelevant, for no matter what we look like, we are all mixed. This is an issue of psyche, not an issue of the accident of skin colour.

We in the West Indies cannot afford to and cannot with any correctness claim that home is Africa, China, India or Europe. We can and should feel an affinity to each, but to think that we belong in the cultural skin of Africa is sheer folly and self-delusion; it is sheer arrogance as well, for that skin is too taut with the sinew of history, too firm with the muscles of tradition. Africa is a part of us, but no longer are we part of Africa. We could feel *for* Indians, and we may feel as Indians do; but we cannot be Indians. We do not have their history, their traditions which stretch over centuries. Time, distance and circumstances have made us unique. The same holds for China and Europe. None of them, noble as they may be, has our unique though artificial heterogeneity. This is what torments us and makes us unique. We can claim all of them, but not any one of them. And we can claim our Arawakan and Cariban

ancestors; and we must, for they cry out for the claiming.

Where, then, is home? Home is not Africa, Asia or Europe...these places are not inhabited by our original Amerindian Muse. Home is the West Indies, and the Muse of the Caribbean which addresses our artists and writers like a paradoxical *stab* of blessing, has a face that is fissured and fragmented...like our islands.

When we look at our red, black, brown, white, yellow, and our visibly mixed brothers and sisters in cities and countrysides, we should not see an image of ONE of them, but ALL of them. In EACH of them, in ALL of them reside aspects of our psyche, our fragmented, wonderful, wondrous rainbow carnival of consciousness.

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THE CLASSROOM RE-IMAGINED AND RE-DESIGNED: THE PANDEMIC-READY TEACHING AND LEARNING STATION

(with Ashwannie Harripersaud)

Abstract

Save for the most callous among us, all of humanity knows the chaos wreaked upon the world by the Covid 19 Virus. The losses are of unspeakable proportions. Those losses continue. Among those losses is lost educational opportunity for our children and young adults. The debate among world experts continues unabated: when should we re-open schools? At what levels? Under what conditions? What are the potential perils? How do we assess the effects of viral mutations and variants? There is so much that we have yet to learn that, at best, we are making educated guesses; at worst, we yield to denial and despair.

This paper charts the efforts made by various countries to deal with the impact of education on schools, colleges and universities. Given the vast differences in resources; the availability of medical and other expertise; innovativeness; and political will and the humility of political leadership to follow the advice of scientists, the responses have been markedly different. Not unusually, the poorer the country, the greater is the suffering. In this paper, we use Guyana as

representative of nations bereft of those things we have just mentioned.

However, even in nations that are blessed with the wherewithal for managing and minimizing the impact of this deadly pandemic, education has suffered. In poor countries, this damage may be almost irreparable for decades to come. The overall international quest has been to find a way to re-open educational institutions safely. Outside schooling, social distancing, hand-washing, and the wearing of masks have been vital ameliorating tools. Some places have used plexiglass to separate students and prevent the exhalation and inhalation of droplets. Other countries have simply followed uncritically what richer and more resourceful countries have done. Many countries have simply denied the fact of the pandemic or have simply guessed their way along. Denial and guess-work have led to catastrophic results.

In this paper, we have attempted a solution that involves the re-imagining and re-designing of the traditional classroom space into being a **Teaching and Learning Station**. This innovation, in our opinion, almost guarantees the safe re-opening of schools. It ensures the safe return to in-person teaching and learning, and it prepares us for inevitable future pandemics. We have offered up the design with the hope that it may be taken up and acted upon.

Keywords: Covid, pandemic, teaching, learning, classroom

1. Introduction

The entire planet has been stricken by a new virus which continues to cause millions of illnesses and deaths in the earth's human population. As we write this, there have been almost 30 million cases and almost 1 million deaths. The COVID-19 virus continues to wreak destruction hitherto unseen since the 1918 Spanish flu, and the best global medical experts continue to work themselves literally to exhaustion, illness and death in order to understand the genetic make-up of this virus, to see how this virus is spread; to ascertain the demographics regarding susceptibility; to assess where and why they are the most susceptible; to study the forms symptoms take; to assess the health damage to those who have recovered from the disease; to see what remedial steps can be taken to avoid people contracting the disease, and to find an anti-viral to attack the virus. Preventative measures have been established world-wide, but these are tragically inadequate to curb the spread of COVID-19. This is true not because prevention is unnecessary, but because there is much more to be done after preventative measures have been taken.

The COVID-19 Pandemic has had and is still having a devastating impact on every area of life globally. The impact is being felt keenly in all sectors of education

everywhere, and even the greatest experts are at a loss regarding how to react to ensure the health and well-being of students, teachers, and staff. The conventional or traditional classroom does not and cannot ensure that all the necessary safety measures are implemented. The classroom space must be re-imagined and re-designed; yet, no country in the world has thus far arrived at a creative alternative to the traditional classroom. This Project seeks to make an initial step, albeit a tentative one; it establishes and offers up a change from the traditional classroom set-up and replaces it with the **Teaching and Learning Station (T&L Station) that would allow for the safe return to in-person teaching and learning for COVID-19 and all future pandemics.**

This highly contagious air-borne and air-transmittable COVID-19 Virus has already killed more than one million people worldwide; it has already infected 30 million more. The few countries like the Scandinavian countries (Switzerland, Denmark, Norway, and Finland, excepting Sweden), South Korea, New Zealand, Taiwan, and Canada acted swiftly and efficaciously to contain and mitigate the Virus since it became known in 2019. Most other countries ignored the facts and warnings, took no action, and are paying a heavy price in lives lost, life in abeyance, and in crushed economies. No sector in any society anywhere is exempt: health systems (where they exist) are over-run; educational systems at all levels

have ground to a halt, on-line classes notwithstanding; unemployment is rife since businesses are adversely affected; borders have closed; transportation is practically non-existent.

Schools, colleges and universities have suspended face-to-face instruction in the vast majority of countries, excepting those few countries that have acted expeditiously and effectively. The situation has become tragically extreme in those countries that have foolishly politicized the Corona Virus: the once-mighty USA and Brazil, for this reason, are the worst affected, with the highest positive cases in the world. Ironically, America is the richest country in the world; Brazil is the richest country in South America. Leadership in these cases has been replaced by callousness, brutish ignorance, and stupidity. This deadly Virus has changed our world forever; yet, in these two countries there is still no coherent National Plan.

The dreadful impact of this Pandemic on the global economy is yet to be estimated fully, but global economists are agreed on one fact: that it will take national economies decades to recover, if ever they do. There are already signs of a global recession according to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Economically, even rich countries are contracting at alarming rates, and one is left to wonder about the fate of desperately poor countries such as the one in which we live. How then are we to survive with our habitual dependence on aid, our complete lack of

innovation and creativity, our consumer-oriented thinking, our lack of expertise in any field, and our ridiculous complacency? We hardly have a health care system; we have an ancient education system; we have a dilapidated infrastructure; the highest suicide rate on the planet; stunning rates of unemployment; a stunning illiteracy rate; we have endemic power outages for no reason whatsoever; and there is no evidence of meaningful research being undertaken.

Elsewhere, the quests for an anti-virus and for therapeutic medicines have accelerated medical research to incredible speeds. Worldwide, thousands of medical doctors and medical researchers of every conceivable field— psychologists and psychiatrists, sociologists and linguists, writers and technologists— all are working day and night to save our lives. The most worthy universities and colleges on the planet have mobilized their expertise in all ways to bring relief and to end this horror. In countries like Guyana, we do not have the simple decency to acknowledge or even fleetingly mention any name of those who are doing the work of saving lives including ours; the difficult work that we cannot do and will not do here. We simply wait to reap the benefits. Thankfully, with new political leadership in Guyana, there are signs that we are awakening. We already hear of Task Forces, but we must keep in mind that task forces are only as good as the people who comprise them. We do not have the luxury of endless circuitous and protracted

consultations that lead only to bulky reports and little meaningful action.

Of immediate relevance to this original research initiative is the fact that education has suffered and continues to suffer in extreme ways. Professors, teachers, administrators, staff, businesses, school boards, governments, and Foundations are engaged strenuously and almost single-mindedly in trying to find ways to re-imagine education and the classroom, in particular. For those who bother to be aware and those who actually care about anything outside of themselves, there can be no more worthy preoccupation. We know that the great majority of schools globally are physically closed for fear of spreading the virus thereby preventing further debilitation, illness and death. Students are at great risk, as are teachers, parents, grand-parents, and all concerned in schooling at all levels globally. Here in Guyana, the same worry prevails, but there are but few visible remedial initiatives. We simply follow: we close schools because elsewhere and everywhere, schools and universities are closed. We simply follow, without any kind of critical look at ourselves. We will inevitably re-open our educational institutions when others re-open theirs. We are yet to learn to compare and contextualize according to our circumstances, and the consequences are dire should we fail to create and implement policy-driven mitigating ideas.

In Asia (strangely, excluding China, where the Covid 19 started), Africa, South and Latin America (Brazil,

especially), and the United States of America (of all places!), hospitals are so overwhelmed that medical doctors are forced to do the unthinkable: they have been made to send critical Covid 19-stricken patients home to die. In the USA, bodies are so many that they have to be ignobly dumped into freezer-equipped trucks. In Brazil, mass graves are the order of the day, with no end in sight. The sheer ignominy and shame of it; the sheer scale of it; the sheer tragedy of it all.

Those of us, who lay claim to teaching--even by interactive technological platforms through our computers or cell phones, if we can afford these--are morally obliged to be sharply aware of the unprecedented circumstances under which we teach and under which we expect others to learn. It is indictable if we just —dole courses on-line without recognizing where we are. Why are we teaching and learning on-line, what physical, mental, and pedagogical adjustments need to be made, what considerations need be taken into account? How does remote teaching and learning affect students and teachers? How have familial and social conditions been impacted? In Guyana, teachers from kindergarten to the university level must be aware of very basic things: do all students have cell phones or computers? Do they all have connectivity? Can they afford it? Do they have electricity? If, as a teacher, one establishes deadlines, can one be assured that the Network is consistently reliable? We have experienced first-hand that university

teachers use technological platforms -- all of it simply taken or bought, of course—without a single mention of this deadly pandemic, without any ostensible recognition of the scope of this horror. And they certainly do not adjust the material to fit the circumstances. They teach and assign grades in the same way as they always have or would have in normal circumstances. This lack of awareness and subsequent adjustment is all okay, one supposes. But while millions are dying and millions more are being stricken down, the habitual becomes unconscionable. The lack of awareness is callous and unforgiveable. For their part, students seldom have questions about anything meaningful; questions are restricted to how many words, what grades, when are deadlines. The blindness appeared ubiquitous. Here, we all have a burden to bear: shallowness and pettiness. Meanwhile, the world writhes from the devastation wrought by this Corona 19 virus.

Teaching and learning are now almost exclusively on-line, and the world's quantum leap in technological advancement is not only advantageous but absolutely necessary. At this point, globally, there are intense debates and discussions about how and when and under what conditions the re-opening of educational institutions can occur. There is, of course, no impactful evidence of such debates or discussions here in Guyana. World-wide, ideas are being advanced as to whether to remain with on-line teaching and learning. There are a

series of hybrid options, thanks to the great people who have invented Zoom, Moodle, Canvas, Edmodo, Schoology, Sakai, Showbie, iTunesU, Google Classroom, WhatsApp, etc. The world may stay with on-line teaching and learning exclusively until some inventive country finds a vaccine. Or, we may do some form of hybrid instruction mixing on-line with limited face-to-face instruction. Or we may implement some form of flexi-time, broken into mornings and afternoons, varying between grades, staggered classes or programs or courses. Or an on-off for classes, splitting classes into parts to accommodate physical/social distancing.

In the United States of America, the Covid 19 Virus has laid bare and exacerbated the divide between those who have and those who do not. Hollywood actors and the wealthy are administered the best and quickest Covid 19 tests as frequently as they desire. The turn-around time is almost instantaneous. Owners, coaches, and athletes in the National Basketball Association (NBA); the National Football League (NFL); Major League Baseball (MLB); National Baseball League (NBL); and National Hockey League (NHL) are constantly being tested, again with immediate turn-around results, and isolated and quarantined if found positive. Nothing at all is wrong with this. However, those without fame and fortune (and even those of modest means) line up for as long as 12 hours to get tested. That is if those tests are available at all. If they are fortunate, they get results in

seven to ten days. Thanks to scientists and researchers like Dr. Anthony Fauci, we know that the gestation period for this virus to become full-blown in symptomatic patients is 10-14 days. The delayed turn-around time makes the test almost useless, since the spread has already occurred, and more people have gotten the virus in the interim. The spread progression, of course, is neither arithmetic nor even geometric. The progression is exponential. It is no wonder, then, that Black and Brown members of the population—the most economically disadvantaged in what we still regard as the most powerful and richest nation in the world—are the hardest hit. These facts are well known to all global citizens. One needs only turn on the television or go on-line and listen and watch and read. There is REAL analysis and information from scholars and practitioners from every possible academic discipline. All of this is readily available and permeates to all corners of the globe through every reliable news outlet in the world.

The one implication that is seldom or never broadcast or heard is that the Covid 19 Virus has laid bare and widened the already enormous chasm that exists between nations that have and who are wallowing in poverty and debt. The gaps between developed nations, developing nations, and under-developed nations are quickly becoming unbridgeable. The global economy has already shrunk an alarming 20%. Countries in the latter two categories depend largely on lending

agencies like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Charitable handouts from places like China, the EU, Canada, and the USA are finite and shrinking. Under the Trump administration, the USA has already cut aid to the —darkerl countries dramatically.

Against the odds, some populous developing nations have had stunningly low death rates. They include Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, and Taiwan. Apart from the fact that these countries acted immediately and efficiently with regards to the containment and mitigation of Covid 19, they also have sturdy public health infrastructures, including medical research university hospitals. Those countries which were and still are in denial (including America and Brazil), played politics and the futile blame game are now reaping the bitter fruit of illness and death. Even the Center for Disease Control (CDC)—the most highly regarded and expertly staffed agency in the world—had to bend to political pressure. The CDC is beginning to resist those political pressures and have released a comprehensive set of guidelines, although none of this has been made mandatory in the USA.

2. The Major Foundations

While the Federal Government of America has led the charge in denying the reality of Covid 19, *The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation* has led the fight globally against the virus. The Foundation has identified some

of the cascading effects that will afflict the developing world, including shrinking economies; joblessness; exacerbated poverty; malnutrition leading to weakened immune systems in whole populations; and the further weakening of health systems (where they exist at all), etc.

The Foundation is working assiduously on the following, simultaneously:

1. Immunomodulators: Drugs to regulate the immune system to counteract C-19.
2. Therapeutics that will cut the death rate due to C-19
3. Anti-Viral Drugs that will attack the Virus
4. Monoclonal Antibodies: proteins engineered to interfere with the Virus.

These desperately needed and back-breaking research activities--sponsored by one among many Foundations, we must remember—are in addition to billions of dollars of grants to countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and other places. While Foundations and Nations and experts attached to universities are working assiduously day and night to find ways to save lives, there are also those front-line workers who are working to do the same: the doctors, nurses, first-responders, cleaners, postal workers, grocery clerks, and many others. They are putting themselves at grave risk to save us, and they are getting sick. They are dying.

Medical researchers, doing REAL research are now finding that even after those who have been infected and have recovered are far from being in the clear in terms of health and well-being. Even those who have recovered from Covid 19 are faced with long term and even life-long ailments, including the following:

- Depression and anxiety
- Psychosis—a condition that affects the way the brain processes information.
- Delusions
- Deleterious cognitive effects
- Chronic fatigue
- Heart and other organ problems

The American Heart Association has warned that 23% of recovered Covid 19 patients suffer cardio complications while 8% to 12% have devastating heart problems. Scientists have expressed fear that these patients will face life-long health struggles.

3. Education/Re-Opening of Schools and Other Educational Institutions

While there are continuing debates and discussions on what modes of learning and teaching ought to be used in order that education move ahead, there is no doubt that schools and universities must re-open eventually, since face-to-face teaching cannot be fully replaced by on-line instruction. Education is not homogeneous.

Children at the kindergarten level, for instance, learn differently from those in secondary schools, and the former are much less acquainted with the use of technology. Partial on-line instruction may apply to senior secondary school children and college and university students, if they have the equipment and broad-band connectivity. Educators and demographics specialists have suggested that as many as 50% of children in the developed USA have no or limited access to 4G and broadband! And what of delayed learners (or “slow learners”, as we tend to label them). What of differently-abled children?

The issue of re-opening schools cannot be looked at and solved as if it were one issue that is separate from a complex of other issues. Nations can re-open schools in willy-nilly ways for the sake of their economies at their own peril. And yet, economies versus schooling is a false equivalency. We need not choose; we need to be prepared.

As the On-Line Education Berlin (OEB) organization has insisted: we need to re-imagine education. We can begin by re-imagining the pandemic-ready classroom. If our single contribution in the fight against the Covid 19 Virus is a prototype of the re-imagined classroom, then we would have made an invaluable contribution to the global education enterprise.

Dr. Becky Pringle, President of the National Education Association of America, has recently warned: —There

are still no means to ensure social distancing in the classroom...and [there is] no funding to find ways to re-open schools safely. Dr. Tom Frieden, Former Director of the Center for Disease Control insists that the US—must adapt schools to the new Covid 19 reality. He also warns that there should be reduced crowding in schools in order that we minimize the spread of the virus. He further stipulates that there is still no overall access to distance learning in black and brown populations in the USA.

4. Covid 19: Guyana

There is much from Dr. Pringle and Dr. Frieden that applies to Guyana and to countries like Guyana. Here, we are yet to advance any original initiative to reduce class numbers that would assure social/physical distancing. And while we ought to have learned that schools can re-open only if and when we have established conditions that are verifiably safe, we have demonstrated no ability to do so. Two hand-washing sinks per school building simply does not do it, especially if they are side by side. This would ensure a cluster, the exact thing we ought to be avoiding. We have no idea of who, where and how many have access to the essentials necessary for distance learning. While the government of America has refused to provide funding to schools, we here in Guyana have little or no funding at all—even though our new government seems willing to do all it can. The pattern of being dependent

still holds. In the end, WE have to think ourselves out of this disaster.

Here in Guyana, we do not need to re-invent the wheel; a great deal of work has been done by others, elsewhere. But we do need to learn about that work and make use of it by taking off from it. We can learn a great deal from Denmark, for instance. Think big and act fast was the secret to the Danish success against this Virus, says the Danish Finance Minister. And this was since April 2020. Globally, the best scientists are finding out new facts about this Virus, and we need to be sure to keep ourselves constantly informed and up-dated about these developments and build them into our own National Anti-Pandemic Plan. We have provided the CDC Guidelines link from which we can select applicable mitigating strategies. But our Government must mandate these, although there will inevitably be the usual naysayers who did not and do not even try to have a National Plan. Doubtless, there will be empty charges of “tyranny” and “dictatorship”, but our citizens will be safe and healthy.

As our situation worsens, one sure thing is this: Guyana MUST devise a Coherent, Uniform, Integrated National Plan. The United States for all its economic and expertise wealth is in desperate straits (almost 7 million infected and more than 200,000 dead!). Inarguably, this is because the Trump administration has failed to arrive at a National Plan. Poorer countries cannot follow this woeful example.

Assuredly, we need to begin by articulating that which we have learned from others elsewhere. Here, then, is what we know:

1. We know that we need wide-spread testing. Currently, our testing rate is .8% of our population. With our tiny population of 779 thousand people, wide-spread testing could be done with some ease, despite the fact that a small percentage of us are far-flung. Overall testing (rather than cluster testing) will identify infected and symptomatic and asymptomatic citizens. We also know that some 40% of asymptomatic patients spread the virus.
2. We know that we must track and trace.
3. Having found who and where citizens are infected, we can implement structured isolation/self-isolation/quarantining measures **WITHOUT STIGMATIZATION.**
4. Mandatory mask-wearing at all times when in public or in schools.
5. Physical/social distancing at all times when in public or in schools.
6. No social gatherings of more than ten, still ensuring physical/social distancing.

7. No crowds/bars/social events unless social distancing is in force.
8. Spend as much time outdoors as possible, including during school activities.
9. Hand-washing every two hours and sanitizing all surfaces.
10. Taxis and buses should have their windows down with reduced passenger loads.

These measures have been shown to be effective in stopping the spread of the virus. It is obvious that they work very effectively in societies that are disciplined: South Korea, Japan, China, Taiwan, Denmark, Finland, Norway, etc. Because we Guyanese are certainly not known for our discipline, these measures will need to be mandated: one warning for contravention, followed by significant fines, followed by loss of licenses, for instance. All of this, of course, must be communicated clearly and constantly to citizens. They must be made aware that these measures are part of our collaborative fight against a deadly enemy. They need to know that no one is to blame for having contracted the virus, but that we must each do our part to stop the spread.

We also know (or ought to have recognized) that the Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines “recommend” that no community nor County nor State (or Nation) should re-open schools if the Covid Positive Rate is above 5%.

Some States in the USA with Positivity Rates above 5% have, for political expediency, re-opened schools, universities, and colleges at their peril. Cases have spiked, many people have died, and schools, universities and colleges have had to shut down again after just 2-5 days after re-opening. Guyana cannot pay that price; but we will if we do not learn and act upon that learning.

The statistics in Guyana, broken down, paint a gloomy picture, and we must remember that we are yet in the midst of this disaster and that it is yet evolving:

Month	Number of cases per month	Cumulative number of positive cases	Number of deaths per month	Total number of deaths
March	12	12	1	1
April	70	82	8	9
May	71	153	3	12
June	92	245	-	12
July	168	413	8	20
August	893	1306	19	39
September	1588	2894	41	80

Table 1. Total number of COVID-19 cases and deaths recorded in Guyana (March 11, 2020 – September 30, 2020)

Table 1 above shows that the cases in September far surpass the accumulated totals for March, April, May, June, July, and August. This establishes the dramatic

acceleration in cases and in deaths. Since we are yet to have wide-spread testing, we also have no way thus far of knowing just how greatly we have been hit by this Virus. Of course, the numbers above seem small, especially when we read or see the numbers of cases in the USA, the hardest hit developed country in the world, with more than 7 million cases and more than 200,000 deaths...and counting. Super-spreader events (political rallies, the foolish politicization of masks and social distancing, college and university partying, large gatherings, etc) are making the numbers worse. The USA has tested only hundreds of thousands thus far; **the number of positive cases is just shy of 6.65 % of the numbers tested.**

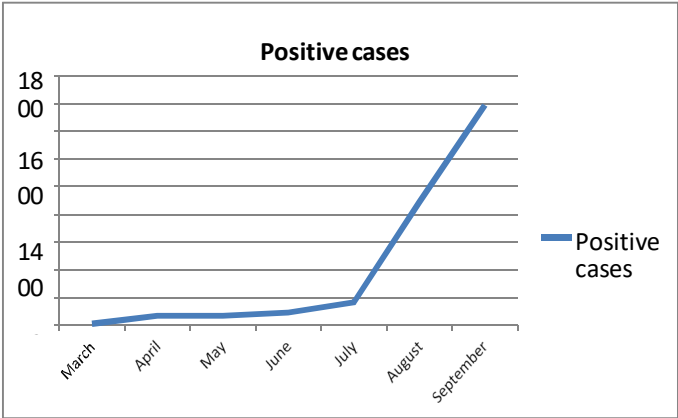


Figure 1. Number of positive COVID-19 cases represented by months in Guyana

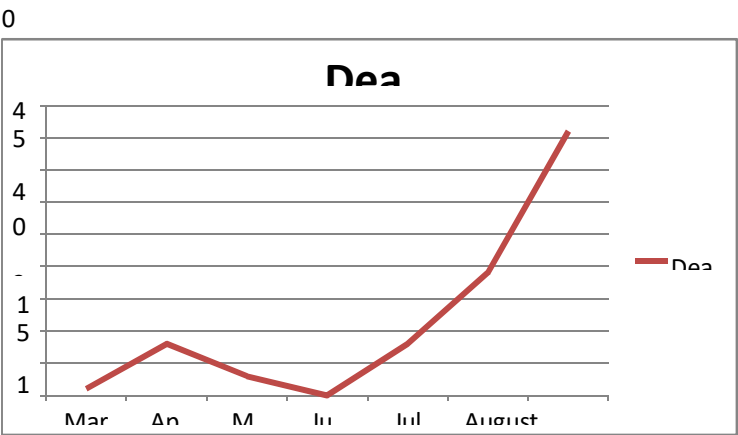


Figure 2. Number of COVID-19 deaths recorded by months in Guyana

	United States of America	Guyana
No. of tests done	107,536,225	No. of tests done 14,082
No. of positive cases	7,150,165	No. of positive cases 2,894
% of positive cases	6.65%	% of positive cases 20.55%

Table 2. A percentage comparison between USA and Guyana

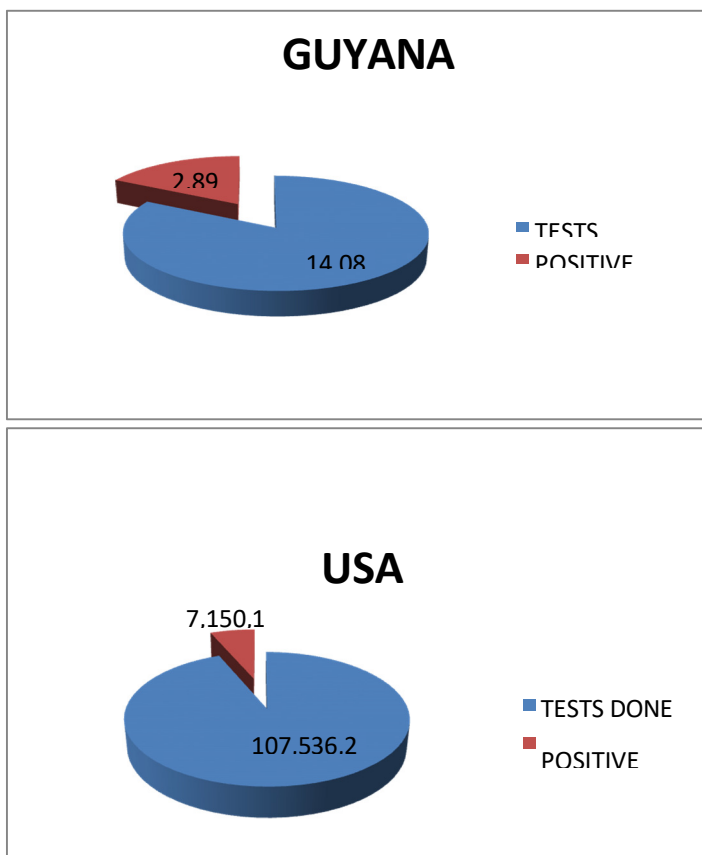


Figure 3. Pie chart comparing the numbers of tests done to the number of positive cases recorded in USA

Figure 4. Pie chart comparing the numbers of tests done to the number of positive cases recorded in Guyana

In spite of the great difference in actual population numbers, Guyana's chunk of the national pie is much larger in terms of positivity rate per tested population.

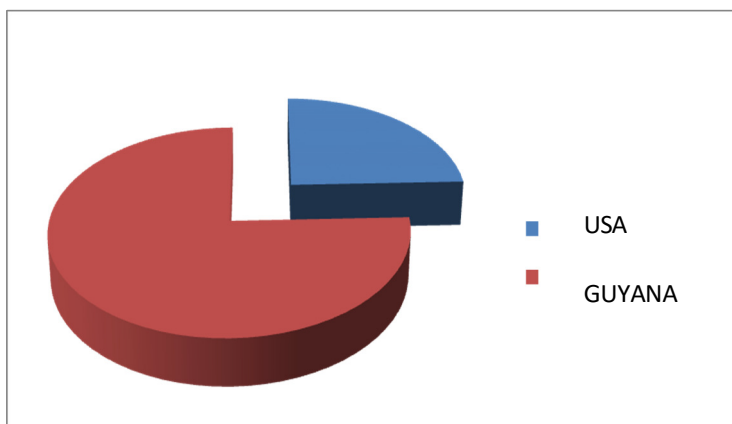


Figure 5. Comparison of the positivity rate in relation to number of tests done between USA and Guyana

In Guyana, the number of tests done is 14,082 and the number of positive cases is 2,894. The percentage of positive cases, in relation to tests done is 20.55%, triple that of the US. This is not to make an empty comparison between the richest country in the world and Guyana, a very poor country. We cannot compare numbers, but we can compare percentages. And we are in more dire straits than America. In the USA, the politically-driven re-opening of schools and colleges and universities has been disastrous. We can and must learn.

The following charts lay out the case more clearly than do mere figures:

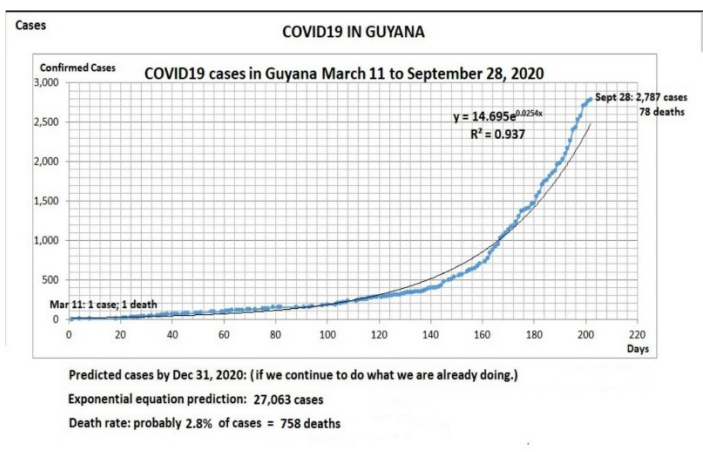


Figure 6. Number of confirmed COVID -19 cases in Guyana (March 11 – September 28)

This chart lays bare the steepness of the infection rate as of now. An analysis by Kemol King in Kaieteur News of August 26, 2020 reports that of the people tested in Guyana in August, 1 in 4 people tested positive. The cases are increasing; the situation in Guyana is worsening.

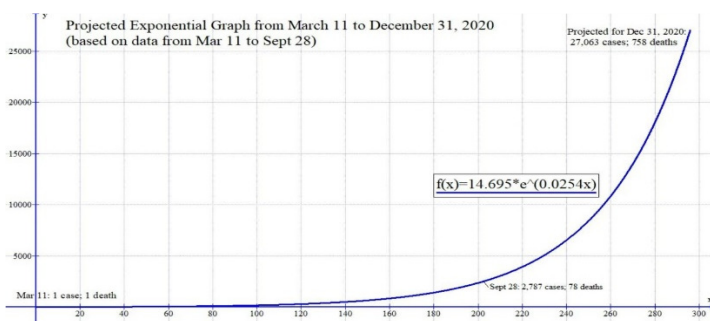


Figure 7. Projected Exponential Graph from March 11, 2020 to December 31, 2020

Even without the 1 in 4 acceleration in August, this graph demonstrates the steepness of the rise in cases by December 2020. The fundamentals outlined above (masks, social distancing, hand washing, etc.) must now be enforced without delay. We must learn from places like Denmark, South Korea, New Zealand, etc. Upon the first known cases in Denmark, there was immediate action. The country was notified about a total lockdown, and stay-at-home orders were scheduled to begin on March 16, 2020. Famous for their civic-mindedness, the citizens voluntarily stayed at home four days before the schedule. The Danes came together, and just over 50 days after the lockdown, Denmark returned to a new normal: there was no clamour, no acrimony, no wilfulness, and no denial, not at any level. Together, they stopped the virus from spreading; educational institutions were adjusted to establish and maintain social distancing; education methods were slightly adjusted to place greater emphasis on fun and less on curriculum; testing and tracing continued; businesses were re-opened; public services returned to normal; and there remains much greater vigilance and awareness.

Different though the two may be, this could hardly be said of places like the USA and Guyana. The pertinent thing here is that schools were re-opened with only slight adjustments. Classrooms remained fundamentally the same, save for socially distanced desks, and there were more outdoor classes.

World-wide, in terms of the classroom structure, there is only minimal change. The traditional desks and chairs remain, even though there are reduced student numbers by half on a rotational basis. In Scandinavian Countries three-sided Plexiglas was used for social distancing in the classroom and to prevent droplets from being transferred from one child to another. Civil servants and parents voluntarily supplemented the number of teachers. In Thailand, old ballot boxes were used to provide separation. We are suggesting more dramatic changes to the classroom structure to prepare for the safe re-opening of schools and other educational institutions during Covid 19 and **all other forthcoming pandemics**. This is the classroom truly re-imagined and re-invented to be **The Teaching and Learning Station (T&LS)**.

5. The Teaching and Learning Station (T&Ls)

We have re-imagined and re-designed the traditional classroom into being a **Teaching and Learning Station**. In the process, we have harkened to every epidemiological/medical data and opinion available. Our design follows all applicable guidelines from the *Center for Disease Control* and from the *National Health Institute*. We have also harkened to the guidance offered by the *Ministry of Health* here in Guyana. Although our design does not show the obvious (mask wearing at all times when in schools; hand sanitizing every two hours; and no crowds, for instance), we have supposed that there is sufficient

awareness that these must become part of our regular national habits.

We will show our concept by sectional stills and by tri-dimensional representation in order that you have a more vivid idea of the T&LS.

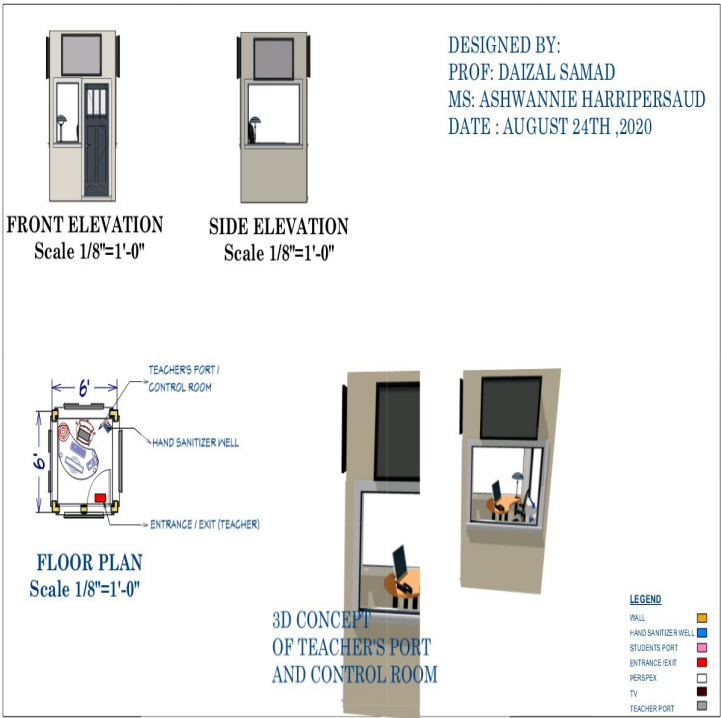


Figure 8



Figure 9

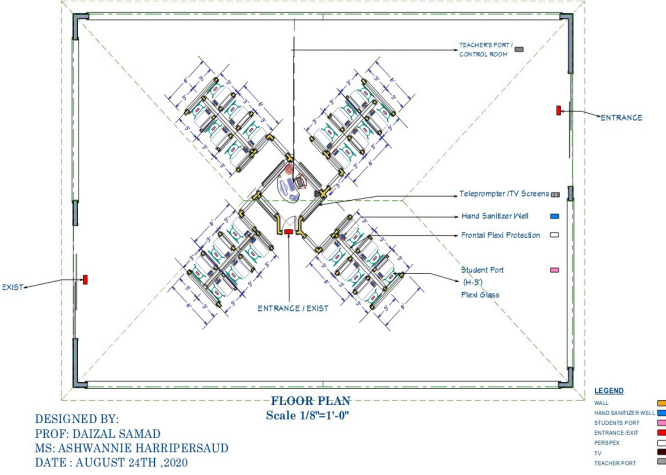


Figure 10.



Figure 11.

The representations of the **Teaching and Learning Station** demonstrate the following vital physical and safety features:

1. The T&LS has 4 wings, each wing being 15 feet in length and 6 feet in width.
2. The length and width of the wings ensure social distancing between students and between students and teachers.
3. All surfaces are made of $\frac{3}{4}$ inch plywood, strong enough to withstand bracing, leaning, books and other material(s).
4. Each wing accommodates individual ports for 5 students, two on each side and one at the head of each wing. This would give us a total of 20 students per one-hour of face-to-face instruction.
5. The student port replaces the traditional desk/bench/chair.

6. The teacher port is centrally located and is 6 feet by 6 feet.
7. Student ports are enclosed by nickel-lined acrylic or Plexiglas, with heights that block aerosol and droplets transfer. It also mitigates any potential ricochet factor. The nickel-lined Plexiglas makes for greater stability and permanence.
8. The teacher port, also enclosed with Plexiglas on all sides, is central. This centrality assures that the teacher is in the direct and comfortable line of vision of students on all sides. The height of the Plexiglas inhibits aerosol transference, and the elevation of the teacher port assures that the height of the Plexiglas does not hinder the sound of the teacher's voice.
9. Four-sided monitors are placed around the teacher port at a height above that of the average teacher for unhindered viewing by students from all directions. This also ensures that the teacher is in clear view of the students and vice versa.
10. The monitors are controlled by a central desk-top computer bolted onto the teacher's desk situated in the teacher port. The teacher is equipped with at least 2 high capacity flash drives for pre-prepared content. These may

also be submitted electronically in place of the old “lesson plan”.

11. The dimensions of the re-imagined T&LS can be fit-for-purpose, and can be built within the traditional classroom space.
12. Student ports are equipped with numbered buzzers should students need to get the attention of the teacher.
13. Each student port and the teacher port are equipped with built-in hand sanitizing wells.
14. There are discrete entry and exit points for students.
15. Teachers also have a separate entry/exit route since the teacher port is enclosed and secured and may need to be unlocked. Once again, it also assures social distancing between the teacher and the students.
16. One T&LS can serve up to 20 students at any one time. With staggered classes, **Teaching and Learning Stations** can be used safely and effectively for the entire school day. However, we need to ensure that there is the sanitized wiping of all surfaces after each class.
17. The teacher port is equipped with a desk, computer and keyboard, and a comfortable swivel chair.

18. The teacher port may be equipped with an application alerting the teacher as to which student needs his/her attention for questions/comments.
19. It must be remembered that this re-imagined and re-designed T&LS is a permanent feature not only against COVID-19 but against future pandemics.

This re-imagined and re-designed **Teaching and Learning Station**, when (if?) implemented can go a far way to ensuring the **SAFE** re-opening of schools. It should be noted that our T&LS does not replace in totality on-line teaching and learning; however, it does facilitate face-to-face contact between teachers and learners in ways that are safe for students, teachers and staff, parents, and the community as a whole.

It would also be useful to note that this re-imagined and re-designed T&LS can be adapted for board rooms, conference rooms, staff rooms, university and college rooms, meeting rooms, etc.

6. Ancillary Considerations

In spite of the apparent virtues of our novel **Teaching and Learning Station**, there are ancillary areas about which thought must be given. They are as follows:

- (a) We must communicate to the community (especially teachers and students) the importance of social distancing and mask-

wearing when in public or on their way to and from schools, as well as while in schools. The messaging must be clear and effective, and the penalties for not following mandatory guidelines established. Of course, where there are penalties systems, there ought to be contiguous reward systems.

- (b) Temperature-testing stations must be set up at the entry of all school compounds, ensuring that students are at least six feet apart as they line up for temperature checks.

There must be clear markings to establish distance.

- (c) We will need to increase the number of workers (cleaners, temperature takers, teacher assistants, etc.) and volunteers (parents are invaluable here).
- (d) We may need to create more entry and exit points if schools are inadequately prepared in this regard. These (including stairwells) must be marked to establish distance. Where possible, windows should be kept open to ensure air flow.
- (e) Each school must dedicate space for an adequately equipped “Covid- Ready Control Room”. This will serve as a secure area for those suspected of having the infection and for emergencies. There should be an

equipped nurse or nursing assistant to staff the Covid Ready Control Room.

(f) Appropriate arrangements ought to be made for the conveyance of children in ways that assure distancing. Taxi and bus windows should be open for air passage.

(g) Each and every current classroom does not need to be re-designed, but the number of T&LS must adequately reflect the school population.

(h) The innovative nature of the T&LS will inevitably attract students, teachers, parents, and the community as a whole. This makes for excitement and better educational receptivity on the part of students, teachers, etc.

(i) It should be borne in mind that the one-day-on, one-day-off (or in-person class/on-line class) does not mean “days off” for teachers and students (M/W/FRI and TUES/THURS/SAT). Teachers will be required to mark and return assignments submitted on-line.

7. Building the Prototype (The Poorer Nations Context)

With material help, we propose to build a prototype of the re-imagined and re-designed Teaching and Learning Station. For instance, the University of Guyana Berbice Campus may be the most convenient location for the

prototype in Berbice. Initial locations in other countries will be determined by their local authorities.

The T&LS Prototype can be ready for show-case viewing in Guyana about one month after we get the nod from governmental authorities. We would be happy to present the prototype to decision makers and other interested parties in person.

8. Limitations

1. Given the projected upward trend, we are keenly aware that time is not on our side. With each passing day, there are more victims of COVID 19. Urgent decision making and action is necessary. Once again, we should see this as preparation for inevitable future pandemics.
2. COST- (a) The cost of each T&LS is about 1 million Guyana Dollars or 5,000 USD, including workmanship. In Region 6, we have arranged for one prototype to be built free of cost for workmanship, but we will need donations for materials.

(b) The cost of each T&LS is not prohibitive given the benefits, but the accumulated cost can be quite intimidating for poorer nations.

9. Conclusion

We have no doubt that effective vaccines will be developed by the great minds with which we have been blessed, and that the world will recover from this current COVID-19 pandemic. Of course, poorer and less attentive countries will recover at a much slower rate, especially when we realize that there will be more potent mutations/variants of COVID-19. We also have no doubts that there will be future pandemics. To be prepared is the only option to avoid even greater catastrophe. One way to be prepared would be to implement this **Teaching and Learning Station** worldwide. Our original design is versatile and may be adjusted to different sizes of classroom spaces, boardrooms, conference room, and other situational circumstances. In the final analysis, at the very least, this T&LS has the potential of minimizing the impact of the current and future pandemics on educational enterprises.

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SECTION 2: ARTS & HUMANITIES

WHOLENESS AND HOME IN EDWARD KAMAU BRATHWAITE'S RIGHTS OF PASSAGE

Edward Kamau Brathwaite's **The Arrivants** is a trilogy which explores the diaspora and fragmentation of a people. It reminds us that the displacement of large numbers of Black people from environments and social structures within which they found a sense of identity and home was an act of great cruelty. Yet, in spite of its specific references to Africa and West Indians of African descent, **The Arrivants** is a poem which articulates historical and contemporaneous, inner and outer dilemmas that afflict all West Indians. The poem reaches beyond the conscious philosophical predilections of the poet. West Indian poet Martin Carter has pointed out that all others who were brought to the region were locked in the same iron economic structures that imprisoned African slaves and their West Indian descendants (8). In spite of the politics of racial division which continue to plague places like Guyana and Trinidad, the issue is not so much an equipotentiality of pain, a measuring of horrors, as it is a sharing of triumph at the fact of survival despite the odds. For how can we equate or measure the unspeakable practical devastation of the entire Arawakan and Cariban peoples with or against the unutterable horror of slavery, with or against the grinding deprivation suffered by the indentured? To continue to appraise the boundaries of pain suffered by

different ancestors is to consolidate the aridity created by those who visited myriad injustices, bloody murder, upon all West Indian peoples. The spirit of the indigene and the spirits of Africa, Asia and Europe inhabit all West Indians; they are subtle living presences beneath the skin, for being West Indian is not an issue of colour; it is a complex of sensibility.

Rights of Passage, the first part of Brathwaite's trilogy, dramatizes the evolution of Black consciousness as it searches for its spiritual and psychological substance. The quest and longing for home and psychical wholeness is voiced explicitly in "Postlude/Home":

*Where then is the nigger's
home?
In Paris Brixton Kingston
Rome?
Here?
Or in Heaven?
What crime
His dark
dividing
skin is hiding?
("Postlude/Home" 77)*

The word "dividing" implies the perpetuation of the pattern that Rights of Passage asserts, a pattern which charts the process of fragmentation, exile, endless movement and rootlessness experienced across the actual and metaphorical Sahara. Brathwaite refers to

African history before slavery, and juxtaposes this with the process of slavery which began in Africa and continues in the West Indies. That this process continues is implied by the present continuous of "dividing." The search for home and wholeness persists through the shadowy premises of time and space.

"The Journeys" refers to the initial movement of African peoples southward across the Sahara which presages other journeys to other lands. It captures also the evolving postures and psychological metamorphoses of the disinherited Black psyche. The poem, like the archetypal journey, begins with

E-
gypt
in Af-
rica
mesopo-
tamia
mero-
e

("The Journeys" 35)

The peculiar form Brathwaite employs - the splitting of words - is very important. The technique reminds us that the groping, imaginative, retrospective glance along corridors of space and time springs out of and into a peculiar schizoid being; consequently, the subjective perception itself becomes split. The West Indian's vision of himself is divided between what he is on one

hand, and how he is perceived on the other; when he acts out his prescribed role, he fractures self, consciousness. Also, the form is reflective of the discontinuous heritage, of "gapage" in the retina of the imaginative vision. Moreover, the employment of split words allows Brathwaite to emphasize the Latin prefix e-("from," "out of"), suggesting a cyclical, archetypal process which is manifest in the Biblical exodus from Egypt, the extraction from Africa, the shifting presence of the Black man in the New World, and the further journey to England and North America. Brathwaite postulates in *Rights of Passage* that the Egyptian and Roman species of imperialism foreshadow the imprisoning architecture of European colonization in the New World. Slavery is invested by Brathwaite with a spiritual significance, with cosmic futility and perishability; yet, even in the very face of this experience, the slave retains, within the core of his consciousness, an undying hope of liberation. The search for home involves the attempt at reconciling the continuity of a brutal history with the discontinuous, staccato rhythms of hope entertained by and contained in the evolved, evolving consciousness of Black people. As Rohlehr puts it, Brathwaite's strenuous attempt at reconciliation resides in the poet's notion of historical process as a dialectic, not simply of socio-economic forces, but of contrary current tendencies and potentials, deeply embedded within the psyche of the Caribbean peoples. ("Bridges of Sound" 14).

Brathwaite's Rights of Passage provides an alternative to the conventional dichotomy of history and art, society and individual, physical and psychical. The poet speaks of this dichotomy which "expresses itself in the West Indian through a certain psychic tension, an excitability, a definite feeling past, of not really belonging..." ("Roots" 10).

In this poem, the consolidation of individual fragments of self and culture is replaced by a fulfilling historical archetype that embraces the many contradictions and differences within and without the West Indian. Such an inclusion of ills and creative capacities serves to reinforce this "poetic statement of rootlessness, dispossession and the search for reassuring values and a secure habitat" (Asein 100).

Rights of Passage begins with an incantatory, heartbeat, drum-like rhythm that invokes, simultaneously, a trance-like immobility and a powerful and painful spiritual push backward, downward through the contiguous densities of consciousness and history. The statement of theme in "Prelude," as Rohlehr stipulates, "is bare, taut and skeletal, as if the bones of African experience were being uncovered" (175). But there is more, because the poetic memory reassembles all the bones found within the contaminated soil of history: bones are attached to bones, event to event, epoch to epoch. The quest for home within Africa is juxtaposed structurally with the Middle Passage which was a journey into homelessness. One direction goes counter

to the other, but Brathwaite's determined imaginative shamanistic effort embraces the counter- journeys or the usually dichotomized cornerstones of historical artifact.²

The drum of Africa in "Prelude" is associated with the "skin whip/lash, master's sun" and thus establishes a parallel between the pre-slavery experience and the New World plantation experience which may be symbolically represented by images of scorching sun and lashing whip. As the persona sinks into realms of memory, the initial elements of creation become granular and essential in "Dust glass grit/ pebbles of the desert." By seeking out and stressing the hidden, fragile and sometimes forgotten elements of being (and art) latent in West Indian individuals and society, Rights of Passage restates history in a wholly imaginative and potentially fulfilling manner. Even though the steady, trance-inducing, throbbing rhythm of "Prelude" remains affirmative, however, this is undermined consistently by images of decadence which Brathwaite invokes: there is persistent building and destruction, hope/ hopelessness, butterflies/filth, and heat/cold as the necessary spiritual journey is made through the relic past. In "Prelude", there is a coalescence of conflicting experiences and images: the paradoxical symbol of the flame is employed appropriately; it protects and destroys, gives warmth and razes. The desert, like the flame, has a dual significance: it is both the actual Sahara and the Sahara of self, what Gordon Rohlehr

calls a "spiritual wilderness" (175). The narrating consciousness employed by Brathwaite in "Prelude" is the overseeing persona which provides an ancestral, almost supernatural perspective of the evolution of Black consciousness in Rights of Passage. With this almost spectral voice and ancestral vision, we move through Brathwaite's imaginative recreation of historical occurrence. No longer is the slave historyless or storyless, no more an expendable commodity or economic entity. Of this, Lloyd Brown writes:

Brathwaite's "I" is the communal voice speaking out of and demonstrating the cycles of black New World culture in time and space - in the West Africa past and present, and in the New World past and present. (141)

Each time we turn in Rights, we see West Indian people presenting a new dimension; each time we stand still they metamorphose into a different posture. But the important thing is that they remain Black people, their societies and psyches are fragmented into pieces, which individually masquerade as the "genuine article", that have even now become patented and consolidated; but West Indians remain uniquely West Indians. The individual Black consciousness is no single homogeneous entity: he is the patiently suffering, hopeful Tom, disinherited and shunned by his descendants who become in the New World self-assertive activists, petty bourgeois aspirants, avengers,

empty exhibitionists, religious philosophers, "gigolos or gentlemen or both," Rastafarians, and so on.

The most strenuous attempt at establishing a sense of self and a home for that self is made by Tom. Brathwaite writes:

The persona, Tom, also undergoes a series of transformations - from ancestor to slave to prophet to Uncle Tom, and is finally translated into an image of the past out of which the future springs.³

Tom is as much wounded by the folly of his children as he is by colonial forces. The persona is introduced in "Tom" with a distinct change from the rhythm of the African drum to the rhythm of the Blues; he is nostalgic as he turns back briefly to the dignified and continuous African past:

*Atumpan talking and the harvest
Branches, all the tribes of Ashanti
dreaming the dream of Tutu, Anokye and
the Golden Stool; built of lightning and
the brilliant adze.*

("Tom" 12)

But when he confronts the present, Tom becomes utterly despondent:

and now nothing

nothing

nothing
so let me sing
nothing
now
let me remember
nothing
now.
let me suffer
nothing
to remind me now
of my lost children.
("Tom" 13)

Despair leads him to take a stand contrary to Christ's "suffer the children to come unto me." Yet, as the poem unfolds, there is a certain power, an incorrigible innocence and faith in the goodness of things to come as he envisions the future. But for the present hopelessness and homelessness predominate:

So I who have created
nothing but these worthless
weeds, these needless seeds, work;
who have built
but on silt, but on sand

but on luckless salt,

dream

("Tom" 15)

Tom's shifts in historical and imaginative perspectives are manifest in tones of melancholy, nostalgia, despondence and hope - signifying a consciousness in upheaval, an intense emotional trauma. Brathwaite describes The Arrivants as a "tale of deprivation, paradoxically balanced upon a sense of hope, of continuity and of unity ("Notes on Rights of Passage"). And this is precisely why the figure of Tom is central to the poem - because he represents that stage of the metamorphosis which, more than any other, achieves a delicate balance between despair and hope, disintegration and regeneration. It is through Tom's hurt/hope that we witness his descendants' response to the dilemma of fragmentation and homelessness; at no other stage in Rights is the Black person so acutely perceptive. Tom becomes the central objective consciousness that reacts in its own peculiar way to the dilemma; his

*reaction, in turn, has its further,
multiplied subjective implications
dramatized by his posturing urbanized
children. In "All God's Children," they
mock him, his futility, and the things he
seems to stand for:*

They call me Uncle

Tom and mock me

These my children

mock me.

Winds raise

the flat-

roofed house

each harvest

time.

("All God's Children" 17)

The ironic voice of the children is juxtaposed with the painful melancholy of the "father, founder, flounderer." They mock what seems to be his acquiescence and passivity and fail to see that the fragile "flat-roofed house" represents the beginnings of home. They never come to grips with his immense introspective strength, wrought from a tradition of coherence and an accumulation of transposed, discontinuous motifs, from retrospection. They fail to acknowledge his Muse and

complexity. Tom sees the vital necessity of arresting the process of disunity and hurt, of stopping each generation from scorning and abandoning its predecessor. Tom's attitude is far from one of acquiescence:

Boss man rates gain

I am his living vein

of sustenance:

his corn, his meal, his grain.

Boss man lacks pride:

so hides his

fear of fear and darkness

in the whip.

("All God's Children" 19)

Gordon Rohlehr assesses Tom's relationship with his children:

Uncle Tom may be an inhibiting influence on his children's psychic growth, but it is he who observed the histrionic quality of their rebellion: their uncertainty of self masked by overloud speech, exhibitionist sexuality; their play-acting in front of the white man which can scarcely conceal the frenzy

*and confusion inside them. ("Review
Article" 177)*

Moreover, Tom has also reconciled himself to his own consciously assumed posture against the system which ensnares him. Simultaneously, he recognizes the tyranny and ineffectuality of the White "Boss Man." However, his insights are ignored by and unbeknown to his children, and Tom anticipates that their self-loathing, self-annihilation, and homelessness will continue.

The next generation shifts again, rootless, to New York and London in "Didn't He Ramble." In this poem, the uniquely evolving persona has its own historical and psychological validity, but its youthful sense of psychical wholeness is self-delusion because it excludes Tom and the knowledge and spiritual strength immanent in him. Significantly, the narrator abandons his "big city" speech and the voice becomes Tom's. This reinforces the idea that the aspect of Blackness embodied in Tom is central to the psyche of West Indians and cannot be abandoned or disregarded if and when they attempt spiritual reintegration: he is the core of self around which wholeness is to be fashioned. The poem concludes with Tom's hopes for and queries about the fate of his grandchildren:

*I should like to see
my children's children:
slender shoots: the grow*

*-ing green reminders
of the seed I gave,
will their blooms find my grave?*

....

*Or do I hear them mock
my sons: my own sons mock-
ing me?*

("Didn't He Ramble" 25)

The grammatical choice of "mocking," like that of "dividing" in "Postlude/ Home," indicates the persistence of the hurt; it indicates a progression and recycling of pain.

Tom's questions are answered partially in "Folkways." The Black man here assumes yet other postures that have to do with inflated sexuality, squandermania, and the threats that quickly descend into self-pity and disenchantment with the music of railroad Blues. This Hollywood-generated posture of the "bad-ass nigger" that begins "Folkways," while prescribed by the Whites, is clearly subscribed to by the Black man: the irony is that he reveals a naked futility even as he dons this mask. As Rohlehr points out in *Pathfinder*, the irony may be more the poet's than the narrator's (84). And it is this prescriptive/subscriptive aspect of the lines - indeed, of all the postures - that is important to understanding *Rights of Passage*. Brathwaite exposes

the reactionary as well as the utter hopelessness of posturing. The journey for a sense quality of self and home continues; the quest for coherence goes on, as Brathwaite, in a brilliant display of his knowledge of rhythms, amalgamates the scores of jazz and journey in the train image and rhythm. (Rohlehr, "Bridges of Sound" 13- 18)

"The Journeys" reiterates the persistent, inevitable theme of the Black man's relentless movement through time, space, and historical processes, through Africa to the Caribbean, thence to Europe and North America, to San Salvador,

*Christopher, Christ, and no Noah
or dove to promise us, grim
though it was, the simple
salvation of love.*

("The Journeys" 36)

Indeed, West Indian history involves the life-denying journey by Christopher Columbus as well as the tyranny and insecurity of the fortress-building consciousness of Henri Christophe. The Old Testament Ark of Noah carrying life mutates into the slave ship carrying death. Home, then, is a fortress protecting and consolidating a long-implanted sense of illegitimacy. Also, because St. Christopher is actually an island in the West Indies, the lines carry literal and "contemporary" implications. The

West Indies have evolved, but little has changed within the West Indian psyche and society.

Most of the rest of *Rights of Passage* is concerned with the attempt "to illustrate what home - or the lack of home - means to these West Indians who up to now have not been able to afford the luxury of a mythology" ("*Notes on Rights of Passage*"). But because of the superficiality of the posturing attitude, because of the refusal to recognize the centrality of Tom and to unearth the elements and structures of culture that remain buried beneath the rubble of history, the West Indian remains homeless and fragmented. There is the Black man as "gentleman or gigolo or both"; as the propagator of negritude, Rasta in "*Wings of a Dove*," as arriviste or rebel.

Having failed to achieve a sense of self or home, the West Indian returns to the Caribbean in "*O Dreams O Destinations*," in Part IV of *Rights*. Things and contained (Ramchand 136). Contemporary West Indian social and are not the same: he does not leave behind, totally, what his journeys implied political upheavals are linked inextricably to historical and psychological processes by interlocking images and rhythms.' And the twin dilemmas of psychic fragmentation and socio-political division have grown to monstrous proportions. Black despots have replaced White tyrants, and the people remain buried beneath the same weight of poverty, disenfranchisement and futility.

Out of the disillusionment of having returned to a West Indies that is even more chaotic, Brathwaite's narrator employs an ironic tone and delivers a justifiably caustic attack on West Indian politicians. As Chaos reigns within the political milieu of the West Indies, we return to "The Dust," - the recreative potential of the folk, the people. This poem represents the most significant turning point in *Rights of Passage*; Brathwaite allows the folk, the residue of human and linguistic creolization of "acculturation" and "interculturalization" (*Contradictory Omens* 11) - to articulate their feelings about West Indian existence. In this poem, almost every facet of life is confronted in human and linguistic rhythms - the products of historical and etymological processes - which remain firmly rooted in the "folk". There is, for instance, the allusion to medicinal herbs or "bush medicine":

How

You Evie, chile?

You tek dat Miraculous Bush

fuh de trouble you tell me about?

("The Dust" 62)

*And then there is the familiar ironic awe of the
commercial class:*

Hush

Doan keep so much noise

in de white people shop!

("The Dust" 62)

Brathwaite refers to the diseases and the endurance, the "tekini' trus' at de shop," the stoic faith in the face of disaster and natural catastrophes in this poem "in which Bajan dialect at last finds its Muse (Baugh 68)." "The Dust," quite significantly, follows "O Dreams O Destinations," in which we witness the ineffectuality of the aspiring bourgeois elements, the exploitative classes that are taken up with their deadly games.

The establishment and articulation of the rhythms of "The Dust" signify irrepressible hope, so reminiscent of Tom's. However, the claim cannot be made yet that "the uneducated villagers come almost unconsciously to terms with existence itself (Rohlehr, "Review Article" 19)." They dramatize the daily harshness of their lives, but they have not come to terms with it. The folk here represent a state of perplexity and hope, the latter hitherto unrealized; they embody cadences and states of being that point them, unconsciously, towards an inner direction to which Tom has been pointing (Tom has, of course, become the dust), towards an incorrigible innocence and a profound obedience to their self-created, self-creative rhythms. "Why is that? What it mean?" at the end of the poem signifies the people's ancient bewilderment and pain even as they endure. As if to answer the question of the women in "The Dust," "Postlude/Home," replays the entire process through

which Rights of Passage has come. The final poem, "Epilogue", begins in similar fashion to the first, "Prologue". The West Indian consciousness has evolved to its original point, the original shudder of memory. The circle is complete; the questions remain; the empty postures persist; the despots rule; and homelessness continues to bedevil the spiritually and psychically wounded West Indian. But one may return only if one has survived, and even in the furnace of history West Indians will re-fashion themselves. Already the Creole rhythms of the folk have taken shape and have been voiced; in "Epilogue" the landscape becomes animated and quick with re-acknowledged life. In these things there is hope:

*Dust glass grit
desert
sands still shift
in the water-
less towns; scorched
hurt continue
to glow
but my people
know
that the hot
day will be over
soon
("Epilogue" 81)*

The narrating West Indian consciousness has returned to his initial point; but and he has acquired penetrative insight. His position is one of both hopeless- in his shamanistic exploration he has gathered knowledge and self-knowledge, ness and faith, impotence and strength. Standing on the threshold of newness and self-renewal, the West Indian confronts himself with a final, probing question and a resolute, reverberating answer:

*Should you
shatter the door
and walk
in the morning
fully aware
of the future
to come?
There is no
turning back.
("Epilogue" 85)*

NOTES

1. Rights of Passage was first published by Oxford University Press in 1962.
2. For an in-depth analysis of this duo-directional aspect of The Arrivants see Lloyd Brown.
3. Edward Brathwaite, "Notes on Rights of Passage." Argo Record Company with the British Council and the Lamond Library of Harvard University. The notes are found on the record sleeve.

4. Velma Pollard provides a detailed discussion of this in "Language in the Poetry of Edward Brathwaite." 5. See Gordon Rohlehr, "Background Music to Rights of Passage," for further details.

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IN SEARCH OF THE CHRYSALIS OF THE VOICE: THE LANGUAGE OF THE SLAVES IN JOHN HEARNE'S THE SURE SALVATION

John Hearne's novel, The Sure Salvation (1981), focuses upon the traumatic historical events which have given birth to what is now the West Indies. The action occurs on a barque ironically named the "Sure Salvation" which is being used to take an illegal shipment of slaves from Africa to Brazil in 1860. Hearne's depiction of the bewildered sensibility and horrific condition of the slaves is remarkably unsentimental; he captures both their plight and their peculiar dignity in a fashion so objective as to render their abominable physical condition and spiritual malaise as distanced. A peculiar mist or opaque glass seems to stand between them and our perceiving eye. Hearne realizes that the cruel fact of slavery is a grotesquery that the human consciousness can only approach or conceive in vague shadows or tearful glimpses if we are not to despair of humanity's future by succumbing to the cruel legacies of the past. This rendition, strangely enough, simultaneously heightens and diminishes the suffocation and immobilization which the slaves are made to suffer.

In The Sure Salvation, we become aware of the awesome secret of the ship by a kind of fragmented Morse code to the senses. It is not until the end of

chapter two that the presence of the slaves is hinted at by the "chorus of moans that rose and burst wetly on the deck like the fat and sticky bubbles on the skin of a sulphur pit," and in the "facrid, heavy smell" that briefly escapes from the hatch. The ship is marooned upon a windless ocean, but the moans of suffering humanity rise and fall like the swell; the moans rise out of the grating, then they "sank again ... as if some great, docile animal lay dying of its wounds in the hold, bubbling its last breaths through torn lungs' 24). William Hogarth, captain of the slave ship, records the "'undulating and animal groans of bewildered protest" which are emitted from the hold wherein, "stacked and stowed with the greatest care, lay four hundred and seventy- five bodies" (25). As Edward Baugh observes, it is not until chapter four that the slaves are actually seen as they are brought up to the deck to be hosed down, exercised and fed (Baugh 61).

In his presentation of the slaves, John Hearne might have taken a cue offered by Joseph Conrad in *Heart of Darkness* (1902), caveats which concern individuality and language. There is no African face in Conrad's superb novel upon which are painted the marks of individuality; at no time do we enter into the consciousness of the African. (It is interesting to witness Gabriel Okara's *The Voice* [1964] approach the issue from the other direction). The other tormenting variable which arose to haunt Conrad is language; the novelist's genius allowed an implicit confession that he

was groping forward into a new experience in a half-light/half-shadow which his linguistic faculty could not contain because his language was geared to envelope the homogeneous contents of European culture. Conrad's profound confession of the inadequacy of form (to carve the African feature) and of language (to contain and convey cross-cultural experiences) is taken up in Hearne's *The Sure Salvation*.

Wilson Harris, in *Tradition, the Writer and Society*, points out the grave necessity for language to envelope the experience of eclipsed identity or humanity with which John Hearne deals. Harris writes:

This vision of consciousness is the peculiar reality of language because the concept of language is one which continually transforms inner and outer formal categories of experience ... Such a capacity for language is a real and necessary one in a world where the inarticulate person is continually frozen or legislated for in mass and a genuine experience of his distress, the instinct of distress, sinks into a void. (32)

Harris goes on to address the issues of individuality in the corium of slavery:

To assume that the slave was an individual is historically absurd since the individual possesses certain

distinguishing marks, while a slave was like an animal put up for sale... When therefore one speaks of an inarticulate body of men, one is creatively rejecting, as if it were an illusion, every given, total and self-sufficient situation and dwelling within a capacity for liberation, a capacity for mental and unpredictable pain which the human person endured. (33-34)

In **The Sure Salvation**, John Hearne shows that the erosion of self-the reality of individuality in the process of becoming the void of self-is itself an illusion if it is seen in terms of immediate and total loss. Rather, there is a metamorphosis of self, an evolution of consciousness which is necessitated and compelled by human endurance even in the furnace of apocalyptic occurrence. John Hearne allows three of the slaves to stand out in the shadow of the situation in which they are caught. These three are the Baluba boy who serves as interpreter for Alex Delfosse, the black cook who has dreams of establishing a kingdom with the slaves as his subjects; Tadene, the oldish woman in whom Alex sees a potent weapon and instrument of control; and Mtishta, the African virgin whom Reynolds, the second officer of the "Sure Salvation," uses for his sexual pleasure.

The Baluba boy is surreptitiously released and taken by Alex to where Tadene is shackled. He speaks to her in the language of her people and when she asks about this,

he answers with pride: "I speak many languages... the two languages of the white men and the language of the Bakongo and the Luanda and many others and all the slaves' "(141). He also tells Tadene that he has always been a slave. What John Hearne has done here provides an unpredictable, very fragile thread of communication between all the peoples and languages in the ship; a thread of relief, potential unity and dialogue in a place where there appears to be total absence of communication. The Baluba boy, therefore, creates a crack or hopeful fissure within the monolithic inarticulate body of the slaves. So that, while the "historical plane" remains largely smooth and implacable, there is a new but hidden divide which may paradoxically unite into singular purpose. The unfortunate thing, of course, is that it is Alex's purpose, one which precludes true freedom. Moreover, Hearne renders slavery as something old and new: the Baluba boy is the "old" slave, Tadene and Mtishta among the "new." Hearne's reminder is that Europeans neither invented nor possessed a monopoly on enslavement of people, even though they took it to an extreme that was, and still is, unprecedented. Alex points this out when he tells Captain Hogarth: "It's black men sells black men to Standish" (164). Mtishta adds her testimony:

Tadene had told her that they were both slaves. But that was impossible. Even Tadene was mistaken here... she and Tadene could not be slaves. She had

*seen the slaves in her father's houses.
Slaves were strangers who you
sometimes bought to help if there was
too much land for the people to till. She
and Tadene were not strangers. They
were the people. (164)*

There is, of course, a marked difference between the kinds of slavery which Mtishta is thinking about and the slavery which now holds her in bondage. Slavery, therefore, as a phenomenon upon a "historical plane" is, for Hearne, riddled with variety. There is, implicitly, a kind of evolution into what the Africans aboard the "Sure Salvation" have become. Yet, the world of self is by no means immediately accomplished upon being placed into the bowels of the ship.

Each character in the novel speaks in a manner distinct from any other: Hogarth's language is consistently formal, acrolectal, and weighed with marine imagery; Alex's is racy and he utilizes land imagery drawn from southern American life and dialect; and the language of Ned Dunn, one of the crewmen, is distinctly proletarian, leaning toward the basilectal end of the linguistic dialectal continuum. Different and distinct though their speech patterns are, all of these characters speak the same language. The opposite occurs below the deck where there is a certain "languagelessness" because there are too many languages, although there is the "thread" of communication offered by the Baluba boy as well as the "instinct of distress" which they share like

a language. The inner language of the young girl, Mtishta, serves as a caveat toward her paradoxical communal individuality. In a short article on The Sure Salvation, Edward Baugh writes:

Through the brief entry which Hearne allows us into the minds of the African women Tadene and Mtishta, what strikes us most is that they are minds, intelligences, not just self-pitying, self-dramatizing wails of suffering. They see their white gaolers and tormenters not as monsters but as strange men whose customs and minds they are trying to understand. (62)

The African women, indeed, are possessed of "minds, intelligences"- unmistakable aspects of individuality- and that is nowhere more evident than in Hearne's representation of Mtishta's thoughts. Reynolds, according to the African girl, is "Elegwa:" evil without purpose... a spirit without a role in the complex exchanges of good and bad; a thing outside the decent order of worship and propitiation" (83). When Mtishta was being brutally deflowered by Reynolds:

She had had to respond with all her pieties if she was not to become a ghost forever without home or purpose, she had withdrawn herself. She was safe now ... although it had been a near

thing... she had felt herself close to being consumed... the unhallowed experience could have overwhelmed her; devout and proper observances could have been forgotten. (84)

The girl's thoughts are consistently focused on order and ceremony and the absence of ritual observances: her village was raided and people had been killed and "left on the ground, impiously, without ceremony." On the long trek to the coast people were beaten to death and left on the track "without the decent ceremony of burial." The food she is forced to eat is "strange and unblessed." John Hearne's brief entry into Mtishta's linguistic consciousness reveals her adherence to a world of order and ceremony; there are scores of references to order, ritual, ceremony, and the absence of these necessary facets of life and death. Because she is inextricably bound to the life of her community, she reaches within and beyond the boundaries of singular personality. In Mtishta, one obtains a phenomenally eclipsed yet vital life of the society-in- individual and the individual-in-society. This is precisely what keeps her from being "consumed" by "Elegwa," from becoming "a ghost forever without home or purpose" (83). It is important to see that there is no instantaneous loss of self that follows upon the cruel circumstances of the Middle Passage. John Hearne, in *The Sure Salvation*, is dramatizing the strength of the African

sensibility even under the duress of slavery; while there is a constant erosion of self, there is no total loss of self.

Addressing Hearne's entry into Mtishta's linguistic consciousness, and after quoting some of her thoughts, Neville Dawes writes:

This while being correct English manages to remember that the girl is thinking in a language that is very differently constructed from English and this is suggested by the twists of formality in expression. (9)

Dawes is, of course, correct in his observation. However, the "twists of formality" spring from much more than variations in linguistic syntactical bases; the language is reflective of the life of ceremony, of ritual sensibility rooted in a communal order which achieves expression in a particular and sublime species of language and uniqueness of voice.

Hearne's remarkable achievement lies in the fact that Mtishta's language is an inner language which suggests a profound dialogue with the inner/other- worldly spiritual territory. It is because she is rooted in a culture which draws no definite distinctions between the spiritual and the physical that Mtishta is able to remove herself from the violation which Reynolds performs on her body. Ironically, then, cruelly imprisoned, ravaged and abused as she is, Mtishta is among the most free of those who live above the deck of the "Sure Salvation"

since her "rooted" language and her spirituality "continuously transforms inner and outer formal categories of experience" (Harris 32).

All of this is by no means meant to diminish the horror of slavery. On the contrary, because Mtishta's response is so painfully isolated, the glimmering light of her heroism serves to emphasize the dark horror in which all the slaves are caught. Her evolution, nevertheless, points towards a flicker of hope in the very room of despair. John Hearne qualifies both hope and despair as partial elements of human existence.

Each time we are privy to the thoughts of Mtishta and Tadene we are reminded of the bewildering complexity and heterogeneity of African culture. As well, these thoughts are largely unvoiced, so that language itself is imprisoned within the boundaries of the single albeit communal consciousness. The issue of communication—of language—becomes one of grave necessity after the slaves are released by Alex. Since the multiplicity of languages renders communication impossible and since the need to communicate is vital, the Africans utilize the sophisticated and universal medium of music. Captain Hogarth notices:

*There is noise in the main and foredecks
and below him: song; voices trying to
establish the most elementary exchange
in two dozen tongues; drums. How, in
God's name, did drums come aboard,*

and why do they seem to speak to each other as diplomats might speak French to each other across a conference table.
(198)

The dignity of the peoples establishes itself on the mind of Hogarth-dignity and sophistication regardless of physical nakedness-as they embark on the arduous journey in search of the chrysalis of the voice. Half of an hour after they are clothed and allowed to disembark from the "Sure Salvation" onto the "stelling" at Abari (Guyana), the Africans begin to dance:

They did not caper nor fling themselves about. Nor were their dances the same since they had been culled from such a variety of tribes, nations and peoples. But what they did... was dance. And the sound of their feet stamping onto the planks of the landing... made a curious harmony, as of different tongues trying to discover the few important words by which they might discover essential exchange. (222)

As the freed slaves begin the search for the inchoate language of dance, they might have established the beginnings of the Queh-Queh dance which is still performed at prenuptial ceremonies in Guyana. The dance, incidentally, is accompanied by the voice and the only music is the rhythmic and harmonious stamp of

feet on boards. As the freed slaves execute the dance, the fifteen thousand blacks of Abari look on "with incomprehension, resentment, and visibly mounting interest" at the harmony-within-diversity that is being displayed by people who "looked like them but with whom they could not exchange one meaningful word" (222). John Hearne appears to have created another kind of divide within the very fabric of what is to become West Indian society. On one hand, the "new" blacks of the Old World are creatively embarked on continuous therapy, on an unceasing artistic quest for the element of oneness or reconciliation between their diverse origins. On the other hand, the "old" blacks of the New World are frozen upon their own spectatorial ground of adopted conventions. And yet, in Hearne's tone it appears as if there is a pull like a strong current beneath a placid river which could bring them all together into one old and new, vital human community, evolved from the diversity and hurt of things.

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COMEDY AND THE COMIC IN TRAGEDY: AS YOU LIKE IT, KING LEAR, AND HAMLET

"Comedy", Aristotle tells us, "aims at representing men as worse, tragedy as better than in actual life" (Aristotle 1958: 347). Accepting this as a directive, many critics have fallen prey to a kind of formalistic fallacy and have differentiated sharply between the dramatic genres of comedy on one hand, and tragedy on the other. Christopher Fry, for instance, writes:

The difference between tragedy and comedy is the difference between experience and intuition. In the experience we strive against every condition of our animal life: against death, against the frustration of ambition, against the instability of human love. In the intuition we trust the arduous eccentricities we're born to, and see the oddness of a creature who has never got acclimatized to being created. (Fry 1965: 68)

Fry has established or perceives a divorce between experience and intuition-the respective realms of tragedy and comedy-as belonging to implacable scales of human existence. Similarly, in Feeling and Form, Susan Langar postulates much the same differentiation: "Tragedy is the image of Fate, as comedy is of Fortune."

She goes on to speak of structural differences and "effectual" differences: "Tragedy is a fulfilment", while comedy expresses the "continuous balance of sheer vitality" (Langar 1953: 330).

Another school of critics has been somewhat less simplistic by pointing towards the troubled notes in Shakespeare's comedies. Indeed, Love's Labour's Lost ends on a note of wintry closure as well as on one of spring's awakening; Merchant of Venice totters precariously on the precipice of tragedy. In A Midsummer Night's Dream, the sadness of Pyramus's and Thisbe's fate remains a thing nebulous rather than cancelled, always awaiting to arise and haunt us in unguarded moments. Also, in Much Ado About Nothing, Don John's punishment, postponed, remains inevitable; and Jaques, in the final analysis, is alone and excluded from the ritual dance of renewal in As You Like It. In refusing to participate, and before he turns away, Jaques

says:

*"To see no pastime, I: what you would
have I'll stay to know at your abandoned
cave."*

The very seed of trouble and tragedy, then, inhabits potently the womb of Shakespeare's comedies. Nonetheless, at the risk of stating the obvious, this troubled note is inevitable since life itself must be to some degree threatened in order that its transience and

value be celebrated. The role of the serious in the comic is appreciated easily. What remains elusive is an understanding of the role of the comic within the density of tragedy. The issue is not addressed nor is it resolved by notions of differentiating the realm of tragedy from that of comedy, experience from intuition. Comedy may include a fertile motif of tragedy without the former relinquishing its sovereignty. In much the same way, intuition is a phenomenon of psyche which does not, cannot, move singularly without the sphere of human experience. Indeed, one recognizes that the borderline between sanity and insanity, tragedy and comedy, experience and intuition, is so subtle that it becomes a significant caveat one may ignore and make into a cliché. An exploration of this confusing area is necessary if we are to move beyond an economy of facts involving division and differentiation which result in embattled polarizations. The question arises as to whether the comic substance may autonomously yet integrally inhabit the womb of tragedy; or, to put it in an interrogative way, can the comic exist on the soil of tragedy without surrendering sovereignty and yet refrain from offering itself as a phenomenon, wholly apart from the dramatically enlarged landscape of tragedy?

Sigmund Freud, in Wit and Its Relation to the Unconscious, suggests that the joke represents an eruption from the unconscious and establishes, consequently, a kinship with the life of dream and the

life of art (Freud 1960: 118). If this is true, then the clown has his finger on an enormity of triggers which could serve to cloud or clarify (by blinding smoke of words or flash of wit, respectively) the apparently chaotic. Intuitively and phenomenally, the clown sees/sheds light in/on bleakness, structure in/on chaos. All of this illuminates the role of the clown in Shakespeare's Hamlet and King Lear in which his presence may appear incongruous, perplexing, or as an aspect of caricature.

The need to look at the clown in a syncretistic or dedifferentiated way corresponds to Shakespeare's own vision. In fact, the "objective" or spectatorial audience of drama is made to participate subjectively, actively, in the life of the stage. Eric Bentley makes the point that, in some respects, there is no difference between the theatre spectator and the audience of other parts of the imagination:

It might be imagined that his position is identical with that of the observer of painting, sculpture and architecture: all are onlookers. (Bentley 1972: 255)

The complex dialogue between drama and audience goes even further: like painting, the theatre possesses a visual density, but it is also a temporal art like music. Here, we begin to achieve a kind of sensual syncretism: participation of senses, implication of emotions. In this sense, Hamlet's words are of special significance:

*I have heard
That guilty creatures, sitting at a play,
Have by the very cunning of the scene
Been so struck to the soul, that presently
They have proclaimed their
malefactions.
(Act III Sc 1, 593-597)*

Hamlet is working from the premise that drama may trigger an eruption of conscience because there is a territory where emotions, feelings, actions, conscience and contexts overlap. Hamlet, in attempting to "catch the conscience of the King", plots to syncretize conventions which would keep asunder dramatic reality and human reality. If, like Claudius, we have committed an atrocity, then we are affected in the "spectatorial" reality while watching Hamlet. Even if we have not, there is still an eruption of conscience, signifying that there is a miracle of roots existing between art and life. Simultaneously, we are safe and disturbed, distant yet involved inexplicably. That Claudius is affected by the "mouse-trap" is evidence enough that Hamlet has succeeded in shattering the perceived differentiation extant between the life of art and the life of society.

The syncretistic view of life and art, comedy and tragedy, the comic and the sombre is suggested by Lily B. Campbell when she writes of the love-hate, joy-grief themes in Hamlet and Romeo and Juliet:

It was inevitable that Shakespeare begin the study [of grief in Hamlet] with the emphasis on the pain of passions traditionally yoked as opposites, joy and grief. (Campbell 1930: 115)

She goes on to demonstrate that Shakespeare has succeeded in creating areas of overlap where opposing principles begin to crack and melt, as in the unconscious components of art or in dreams.

Nathan A. Scott also offers a reading which refutes Aristotle's differentiating approach. However, the refutation is vague and generalized, until Scott begins to deal with the legendary comic, Charlie Chaplin. It is Willie Sypher who offers the most useful analysis of the comic and comedy within a syncretistic context:

If we now have trouble isolating comedy from tragedy, that is not because comedy and tragedy are identical, but because comedy often intersects the orbit of tragic action without losing its autonomy. (Sypher 1965: 32)

This, of course, comes very close to the central issue of the sovereignty of the comic within the arena of tragedy, autonomy without endeavour for ascendancy or tyranny. Again, it is Hamlet who provides a cautionary note when he tells the players: "Let those that play your clowns speak no more than is set down for them" (Act III Sc ii, 45-47). Two distinct caveats

present themselves immediately: first, we should not accept uncritically Aristotle's differentiating stand that comedy and tragedy belong to distinct species of drama; second, in examining the complexity of a creative search which explores the corridors of light and dark, comic and tragic, life and death, we need to advance on a broader front which keeps contradicting options open but which disallows the ascendancy of one element over its opposite number. What Hamlet warns against is the clown's potential to confound the "mouse-trap's" tragic intention and confessional effect.

Curiously enough, Shakespeare's use of the clown to effect a warning against investing in an idolatry of absolutes occurs in the Jaques/Touchstone relationship in As You Like It. We meet Jaques in Act II Sc v, questing for melancholy, demanding more song from Amiens. He can, he says, "Suck melancholy out of a song, as a weasel sucks eggs...." begins by associating himself with a somewhat unsavoury carnivore and its life-denying act of sucking eggs. Of course, this is by no means unambiguous: to "suck melancholy out of a song", self-indulgent as it might appear, would leave a song purely with its potential for evoking joy. Yet, his differentiation between melancholy and joy, and his longing for an "unadulterated" form of the latter seems to go counter to the paradoxical, strange anguish we feel in experiencing a thing which is apparently "purely" happy or joyful.

Jaques sees himself as the unpopular but necessary scavenger. Sombre, unattractive in his seamless black coat, he seeks to

*Cleanse the foul body of th' infected
world,*

*If they will patiently receive my
medicine.*

(Act II Sc vii, 60-61)

Jaques recognizes the philosophical import of his role, but it is only after he meets Touchstone that he begins to realize his ineffectuality, born of arrogance and nurtured by self-indulgence. He then asks the Duke for a clown's dress: "O, that I were a fool! I am ambitious for a motley coat." He sees this as a guise from under which he may speak and comment fully, freely. He would exchange his role of sombre philosopher for that of the philosophizing fool:

I must have liberty

withal, as large a charter as the wind,

*To blow on whom I please, for so fools
have.*

(Act II Sc vii, 47-49)

Jaques sees the need to reject his absolute, unidimensional perspective of utter gloom, utter despondency and static differentiation. He feels the need to apprehend both spaces of gloom and chinks of

light, to know happiness as well as despair. He has realized partially how deeply hypnotized he was by static polarizations built into his role and fate. Finally, he has begun to perceive an accumulating counterpoint of values within diversified experiences and perspectives.

Consequently, Jaques enters the scene with "a smile upon his face" and "breaks into laughter" (stage directions). His unaccustomed mood punctuates his demeanour, and represents an hiatus, relief from a narcissistic core written into his own predilections. He has stirred the magical waters that reflected his image, and his visage begins to rearrange itself. Yet, he remains curiously unfulfilled, "unfinished"; a gulf remains between his new-found ambitions and his visualization of their fulfilment. These predilections have to do with liberty, with the ability to comment upon humanity's torment without mirroring that misery-to comment, and in the confessional course of speaking, to achieve a certain freedom, an unpredictable ascent over the situation that is being commented upon. For instance, Jaques dwells upon the evolution of men and women in his often quoted.

All the world's a stage

*And all the men and women merely
players;*

They have their exits and their entrances

*And one man in his time plays many
parts.*

(Act II Sc vii, 139-142)

But Jaques returns to his initial stand. The speech revolves around the endless circuit of hopelessness and futility which marks this evolution in the lives of people -- from childishness and toothlessness back to childishness and toothlessness, from nothingness to nothingness. His preclusion of the possibility of rebirth, of another life, testifies to the fact that he has not discarded his homogeneous, dark coat for its more complex motley cousin. This is precisely why he continues to tempt Orlando: "Will you sit with me? And we two will rail against our mistress the world, and all our misery" (Act III Sc ii, 275-277).

In spite of the fact that his meeting with Touchstone beckons him toward a third and perhaps nameless revolutionary order of sensibility other than "given" sombre material or "given" comic material, Jaques remains a consistent and consolidated figure with a "melancholy of his own". Until he learns that a song cannot be divorced from the voice that sounds it, that it does matter "how it be tun'd", that it cannot be "purely" joyful, and that we may ask that it "make noise enough", then he must embark again-as Shakespeare makes him-in search of the merging, blending, syncretistic components of the glorious, beautiful, joyful, painful symphony of life.

There is a significant gesture toward the fulfilment of the Jaques/Touchstone complex in the Fool in King Lear. As in As You Like It, the egg image occurs; but this time it is put into the mouth of the wise Fool who embodies over-lapping wisdom and laughter which Jaques longs for but never achieves. The latter's need for a song of sheer joy becomes transmuted in King Lear into an actual song, symbolic of a de-differentiation of joy and tears, sadness and laughter. The Fool in King Lear, having upbraided the King for "making thy daughters thy mothers", sings:

*Then they for sudden joy did weep
And I for sorrow sang,
That such a king should play bo-peep,
And go the fools among.*
(Act I Sc iv, 174-177)

In much the same way, Jaques' sealed envelope of time—that implacable body of time in which humanity is doomed to an endless, pitiless, remorseless cycle, in which he begins and ends in nothingness—is opened by his kin and evolved counter-part in King Lear. In answer to the Fool's "Can you make no use of nothing, uncle?", Lear responds, "Why no, boy, nothing can be made of nothing." The Fool check-mates him by saying to Kent: "Prithee tell him, so much the rent of his land comes to. He will not believe a fool" (Act I Sc ii, 131-136). "Nothing" comes into meaningful dialogue

with "something"; joy, tears, laughter, and sadness are syncretized into a song, and the philosopher fuses into the fool. Yet, remarkably, no single element threatens to over-throw the other: Jaques and Touchstone remain sovereign; yet they assume, humbly, an aspect of the other within the unfathomable wholeness of the Fool in King Lear. As if to emphasize this, Shakespeare offers an exteriorized but reflected version of the philosophical aspect of the Fool's personality in the character of Poor Tom (actually Edgar disguised).

In Liberty, Laughter, and Tears, Horace M. Kallen offers an accurate estimation of the relationship between the Fool and Lear: "Upon the Leary course of events, the old King got a certain release from his developing tensions" (Kallen 1968: 88). However, Kallen does not explain what might have triggered this "certain release" which Lear experiences. It is in Act III, Sc vi, that the king encounters the apparently demented Poor Tom and interprets his condition to be symbolic of humanity's, "The thing itself...poor bare forked animal." But Tom has a personal as well as a generic relevance to Lear: the latter sees his own dementia reflected in that of the former. The king proceeds, then, to mimic this mask of madness (for Edgar is playing a role) by stripping himself to a likeness of Tom's nudity. Consequently, Lear becomes more vulnerable: stripped to the skeletal architecture of self, he may enact the ritual trial of his traitor-daughters. On one hand, he seats beside him Edgar/Poor Tom (the sane/insane,

real/unreal, who is the man as well as the mask); on the other, there is the philosopher/ Fool. Lear has chiselled self to a papery frailty and receptiveness and transparency. Bare, self may now be adorned by those garments possessed by Edgar/Tom and the Fool. Finally, King Lear begins to re-sense buried/renascent elements within and without given appearances and enclosed fields of experience.

King Lear's re-creation of self-using a multiplicity of dedifferentiated factors enriches rather than confuses the range and content of his experiences. They occasion a ceaseless quest for motifs of release from embattled polarizations within the drama. This scene, in a curious way, presages Lear's cradling in his arms his dead daughter, Cordelia. Anton Ehrenzweig identifies brilliantly the motifs of release and relief in the pieta scene:

Lear's casting out is undone and atoned for in the reversal of the image of the "Piet..." [Michelangelo's Rondanini Piet...]. Lear, cast out into the wilderness, castrated of his manhood (so that in the end he appears garlanded and sweet like the mad Ophelia), is redeemed by the burying, containing mother. (Enrenzweig 1967: 251)

If Christopher Fry's definition of comedy as being "an escape, not from truth but from despair, a narrow escape

into faith is true", then the entire "trial" scene is comic (Frye 16). Obviously, this is not so at all. The scene represents a pregnant body of tragedy, bearing the curling foetus of comedy lying unseen but present in, sovereign to but dependent on its relationship and oneness with tragedy. Indeed, if the human face could be fashioned into responding to this Shakespearean scene the way the mind does, then the face would be drawn into a kind of grotesquery of merging contraries: Anguished face of humour, smiling face of anguish.

Shakespeare's use of the clown to force or fashion a syncretistic reality occurs also in *Hamlet*. In Act V Sc i, the Prince of Denmark comes upon two clowns who, unbeknownst to him, are preparing Ophelia's grave. Above the earth, in the realm of the living, Shakespeare allows the comic and the serious to meet. Yet, the clowns are the ones who begin the scene with the serious and highly controversial question as to whether a suicide deserves a Christian burial. However, the second grave-digger/clown is so terribly logical in his arguments that the dialogue evokes laughter. At this point, the syncretistic vision is threatened because laughter is "fore-grounded" or achieves ascendancy over its "other". Yet, the conversation does not end with the conclusion of the debate. As if to rescue the serious from the tyranny of laughter and the physical reality from metaphysical speculation, the dramatist allows the Second Clown to conclude the debate with a serious social comment: "If this had not been a gentlewoman,

she should have been buried out of Christian burial"". Not only is bathos averted and equilibrium regained in the body of dialogue and debate, but also the metaphysical is seen as having an unalterable context in and connection to the physical and social life of humanity.

This dedifferentiation becomes even more explicit when we learn that Ophelia, the sad and tragic, is to meet Yorick, the merry and comic, in the very womb and grave of the earth. There is the strong suggestion of a crumbling of bodies and barriers: a crumbling of classes, genres, and people into a syncretistic sameness and independence.

In his characterization of the Clown/Fool, Shakespeare repudiates any investment in an idolatry of absolutes masquerading under any guise whatsoever: tragedy or comedy, laughter or tears, pleasure or pain, physical or spiritual, death or life. The Clown/Fool in King Lear, the Clowns in Hamlet, and Hamlet himself reject the posture of such as Jaques who would make such an investment. Rather, Shakespeare offers us a syncretistic vision pointing to a liberation from obsessive monolithic ideologies. It is in this way that the Clown/Fool in his motley coat serves as a living and symbolic arching and connecting rainbow between principles and postures.

In conclusion, it must be admitted that the significance of such a fantastic hybrid constellation and connection

of syncretistic elements and visions may remain elusive for a long time because a body of predilections exists still to frustrate enquiry. The significance of Shakespeare's Fool/ Clown's presence in the tragedies may elude us. Nonetheless, there is a possibility that the dramatist's own (and his characters') complex syncretistic apperception may serve to equip us with an effective, revolutionary tool which may help us to understand and cope with the diverse, antagonistic elements which plague this tormented age of ours.

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REBIRTH AND EVOLUTION IN THEODORE ROETHKE'S "THE SHAPE OF FIRE"

In the beginning was the Word, and

the Word was with God, and the

Word was God (St. John 1:1)

One of the issues which has preoccupied artists from the sixteenth century onwards is that of the inadequacy of language and form to envelope and convey new experiences. The unconfessed alteration of sensibility which must have occurred in the minds of the most attuned in Europe at that continent's meeting or mismeeting with other peoples could not have been captured by journalistic entries and by anthropological notations. Both involved the apparently objective recording of the action and activities of the specimen under scrutiny; both read of one-sidedness. This alteration of psyche has become ever more noticeable since World War II: the eclipse of the Word allowed for little illumination or poetic examination of an ultimately more complex human civilization. Not only is the individual poetic consciousness asked to make sense of a world which subsists on multi-cultural, multi-racial, multi-religious constraints; but that consciousness itself has been fractured by the pressures which it has undergone.

The fragmentation of the individual psyche is a microcosmic manifestation of a wider explosion from

homogeneous to heterogeneous global constraints. Humanity, therefore, begins to question its ability to apprehend complexities contained in the collective and individual consciousness-an agonizing and perilous undertaking which involves a grope backward into the origins and nature of psyche as well as into the nature and origins of the Word. When the tool of the Word becomes ineffectual at carving and recording individual and societal experiences, then the poet is confronted with the need for the reconstruction of self as well as a rebirth of the Word.

Theodore Roethke is one of America's major post-WW II poets, and his long poem "The Shape of Fire" thrusts in this necessary reintegrative direction. The poem is an attempt at providing and dramatizing an artistic reincarnation of the eclipsed Word and tormented self out of a deep intimacy with, and unwavering examination of, the Muse. "The Shape of Fire" begins with the question-and-answer dialectic, pointing immediately to the tension within language and the need for a newness of form. This does not necessarily contradict Rosemary Sullivan's interpretation of the poem as "an attempt to convey the crisis of mental breakdown" (Sullivan, 52), or with Joy Parini's stipulation that the poem "enacts a kind of birth" (Parini, 105). A fragmented psyche often fractures language itself: one is symptomatic of the other. However, what does occur is that a hitherto unexamined dimension of the poem begins to uncloak itself.

The persona of Roethke's poem becomes a kind of New World Moses on an artistic Sinai, a questing consciousness aware of the presence and potency of the fire, but not of its shape. "The Shape of Fire", then, represents a shamanistic encounter with the Muse, an entity which the poet may not wholly comprehend but which may reveal to him its partial nature, and which may point in the direction of salvation through artistic rebirth. The questions in the first stanza, consequently, are rendered with clarity; the response retains elements of ambiguity and doubt. Again, the index toward language appears in the very first stanza in which the question-and-answer dialectic asserts itself:

What's this? A dish for fat lips.

Who says? A nameless stranger.

*Is he a bird or a tree? Not everyone can
tell.*

The nature of the origin of the response remains hidden and so remains true to its subconscious or divine persona. And this honest portrayal of the experience is testimony to Roethke as an artist: his recognition that what is subconscious must remain so to achieve its full impact. The questing, questioning consciousness has no clearly defined vision or mission: the direction-giving persona remains nameless and shapeless, retaining a certain mystery of identity. The first stanza of Roethke's "The Shape of Fire", then, initiates the shamanistic quest; it dramatizes a confrontation with the Muse by a

fragmented poetic self, in order that the rebirth of the Word, with its divine implications of life and light, be effected.

The concept of ritualistic song and dance expressive of the form and nature of a quest is, of course, nothing new. Through the centuries it has appeared over and over again: in Ulysses or Odysseus of Greek mythology; in the mythology of the Cuna Indians (of the Republic of Panama) in which a mother-to-be, gripped in the trauma of a difficult child-birth, peals out a song of prayer to Muu (the power responsible for the formation of the foetus) who has over-reached her function by capturing the "purba" or "soul" of the woman. In the latter case, the song represents a quest for the lost purba (Levi- Strauss, 187). This motif appears also in the West Indian "Limbo", a ritual performed by African slaves at the command of slavers during the Middle Passage. Limbo takes the form of music, chanting and dance which, together, are caveats of dismemberment, death, and rebirth. The movement of the limbo dancer as he lowers himself, spider-like, beneath a horizontal pole set ablaze, is a dramatization of the reintegration of the fragmented psyche, a metamorphosis of self from the density of the African through the coffin of the slave ship and into the complexity of the West Indian. Finally, the-media of song and dance as symbolic of the quest is found in Navajo mythology wherein, significantly, there appears a benignant spider-woman who is given a Tiresias-like,

directive role supportive of the questing consciousness (Campbell, 69- 70).

While one is not postulating that Theodore Roethke was conscious of these curious connections, one is saying that he was obeying out of his individual psychological torment the very impulse to structure life through this concept of rebirth. That such "perilous" connections have not been made by critics could explain, perhaps, why several parts of "The Shape of Fire" remain "puzzling" or are simply ignored.

Almost invariably, literary critics have either skirted the second stanza or have taken refuge behind Bill Brown's speculation which was extended by Kenneth Burke in the latter's "The Vegetal Radicalism of Theodore Roethke" (1950). The former course has been taken by Rosemary Sullivan (1975), Jenijoy La Belle (1976), and by Arnold Stein (1965). The latter course, to his credit, has been taken by Jay Parini in Theodore Roethke: An American Romantic (1979). In his oft cited article, written in Roethke's life-time and praised by the poet himself, Kenneth Burke accepts Bill Brown's interpretation of the line, "An old scow bumps over black rocks":

[The line is] about as regressive as human memory can be. It suggests to Brown "the heartbeat of the mother" as the foetus might hear it dully while asleep in the amniotic fluid, the

*ultimately regressive baptismal
water...." In any case, at the very least,
the line suggests the state of near
stagnation, a stream so low that a boat
of even the shallowest draught scrapes
bottom. (Burke, 95)*

The tendency towards regression is quite unmistakable, and the rhythm of the line certainly bears out Burke's point.

The second stanza represents a further regression towards a dialectal archetypal wholeness through the coalescence of images of the self-creating and self-scattering womb. The fallen divine child (in the persona of the poet and in the body of the Word), identifies the womb from which he delivers himself in psychological health and poetic wholeness of structure in a threefold heave of birth, love, and death.

The spider and wasp images in the poem carry a significant cargo of intuitive meaning, one which goes counter to or undermines the conscious intent of the poet. This is one of the instances in Roethke's poetry when the intuitive substance in the lines arises to enact a surprising overthrow of thought. In so doing, the poetry comes into fecund coincidence with other themes, occurrences and images—even with other words of different artists living in places and times apparently far removed from Roethke's. Already, for instance, the curious spider figure in the Navajo myth has been

pointed to. The recession of water is an interesting image of departure and exposure. The "old scow" balances precariously on the dual implications of water and earth, as well as of a peculiar settling and destruction, simultaneously, inherent in Romeo's

*Come bitter conduct, come unsavoury
guide*

*Thou desperate Pilot, now at once run
on*

*The dashing Rocks, thy Sea-sick wearie
Barke*

(Romeo and Juliet Act V Sc II, 116-118)

The largely ignored final line, "A cracked pod calls", carries the same implication of death and rebirth. The pod contains the seeds of life, but it is "cracked", the cycle of life endangered. Even more importantly, the line is subtle reference to language: the "cracked pod" represents the lips through which language invokes ("calls") its own spectral and mystical beginnings. Obviously, the image is somewhat fanciful and is not wholly appropriate to the function it is meant to serve.

The rest of the first section continues the process of, on one hand, the objectification and exteriorization of images of birth; on the other hand, there is the largely subjective, pleading voice of the child (in the first, third and fifth stanzas) to be "mothered out of here", to be awakened and comforted. As Parini suggests, the final

stanza of section one contains explicit images of birth: "The arbour is cooler", and "Weeds, weeds, how I love you" indeed carry vaginal and pubic implications. Yet, as Desmond Morris has pointed out in *The Naked Ape* (1967), there is a remarkable biological mutuality between facial and genital features. Therefore, as much as this might be an attempt by the poet to dramatize the re-birth of self as an integrated rather than fragmented entity, it is a contiguous attempt to portray the renewal of the word from its condition of eclipse through the poet's profound intimacy with the Muse. In fact, the two interpretations may not be wrenched I apart without violence done to the poem. "The worm comes without sound", for instance, indicates the rejuvenation of the Word through the reincarnation of the poetic consciousness. Though re-born, however, the Word-Child has not articulated itself, has not given shape to its own existence.

This is precisely why the second stanza obeys the linguistic as well as humanistic evolution of the Word-Child by using the rhyme and rhythm of the nursery to suggest a particular stage of development: it represents a movement from the environ of the womb into that of the nursery. The origin of language only suggests itself, while the sensual perceptions are more acute.

Section three of "The Shape of Fire" is a particularly complex-one; and, once again, it has been ignored by many critics. Sullivan, one exception, explains the stanza in this way:

The course of mental breakdown is outlined in an address to "the flat-headed man", the warder of death and madness "come to unhinge my shadow". The poet insists that, once articulate, he had "slept in the pits of a tongue", in a state of fruitful inspiration: "the silver fish ran in and out of my special bindings". But he had grown tired of the greenhouse ritual, and of his subordinate role as "assistant keeper of the mollusks." "A two-legged dog hunting a new horizon of howls", he looked for new teams.

(Sullivan, 51)

Although Sullivan's interpretation is accurate generally, she does not consider the complexity wrought by the ambiguity of the lines. The first three lines may indeed be an adoring Otto Roethke, bending over the child, veins bulging, "a varicose horror". It is he who greets the child, "hello, hello", and who claims relationship immediately. But the simplicity ends there: whose consciousness, for instance, does the line, "Have you come to unhinge my shadow?" inhabit? This could originate from the persona of the retrospective, tormented poet addressing his renewed, self-created image; it could also be the voice of the rejuvenated poetic consciousness addressing Otto, the father; or, very importantly, it could be the persona of the Word

addressing the medium through which it will effect its "second coming".

If we are to be true to the experience of the poem, none of these possibilities may be ignored: surely it is the voice of the self-creating child addressing the principals of his conception. In the end, it is the child himself, possessor of the Word, who usurps the power of the parents: on one hand Otto; on the other, the Mother Muse, contained in the ageing, once-inspired, now crumbled, retrospective Roethke. But the latter also embodies the eclipsed Word, while the self-creating child is synonymous with the reincarnation and evolution of the Word in a refashioned robe.

It is because of Roethke's need to be true to this experience that he retains the ambiguity by embracing simultaneously life and death in the line "...unhinge my shadow". There is here an optimistic note of release, undermined by the negative implication of spiritual malaise which inhabits the room of hope. The indices toward the origins of language are quite explicit: before its reincarnation, it "slept in the pits of a tongue", which recalls also the "greenhouse" or germinal stage. But by far the clearest indication is the image of demented self and Word as "A two-legged dog hunting a new horizon of howls". The image does not represent, as Sullivan suggests, a quest for "new themes"; rather, it gestures toward something much more fundamental: a quest for the origins of authentic expression in which those

themes may be couched. "The Shape of Fire" is the expression and fulfilment of this quest.

In attempting to dramatize the reincarnation of the Word, the poem has regressed into its own conception. Then it evolves into its soundless, unarticulated birth; then to the rude beginnings of language in prehistoric howls and rasps; and now, it evolves into song. Yet, even in this last musical stage, an unexpected and spontaneous twist occurs which questions the authenticity of the song. There is, for instance, the deliberate objectification of "A voice sang". The self-creating Word-Child appears temporarily recaptured or restrained by the parental forces (in all the senses and nuances which were discussed earlier) who have reasserted their dominance over the act of creation and the being created. The song itself reminds and warns about infantile dependency and unpreparedness while at the same time dramatizing the Word-Child's own illusion of power and its self-tyranny. The song, as much as it represents a road wrongly taken, serves also as a caveat which points in the direction which ought to be taken, a path away from self-enchancement.

The Word-Child, therefore, evolves into a new state of awareness, abandoning the tendency to believe too absolutely in its own powers and potential. Its new-found humility is more akin to its original plea in the first part of the poem. At the end of section two, the tone of prayer in "Renew the light, lewd whisper" appeases the "battling" parental powers, and the reincarnation

and evolution of language continues in section three. There is no arrogant or self-delusive leap into a territory of recreative density along the evolutionary continuum as occurs in the "song" section; rather, there is a slowing down, necessitated by the juxtaposition of the tense vowel in "renew" and the lateral consonant in "light" as well as the tense vowel and plosive in "lewd" alongside the bilabial of "whisper". This is a moment of reappraisal which yields the realization that the re-birth and evolution of the Word-Child has not assumed the sublime strains of a song; it is as yet a fondling, a "lewd whisper".

The third segment progresses from a "lewd whisper" into a section that is implanted firmly in the evolutionary density of proverbial language. It is Parini, once again, who addresses this issue. Of the third section, he writes:

*Here we see the influence of Burke
again, who thought of proverbs and
aphorisms as the core of all poetry.
There are no lateral connectives
between the proverbs...so we are left to
our own resources.*

(Parini, 106)

Left to his "own resources", Parini goes on to interpret each of the lines as an entity in itself. The fact is that the stanza is baffling only if the re-birth of the child is divorced from the -reincarnation of the Word. As stated

before, Roethke is using the renewal of the poetic self to grope into the chrysalis of the Word, thus effecting a mutual reincarnation. Therefore, the maturation of one coincides with that of the other. In this section, therefore, we have arrived at a stage in the evolution of self and language within complex proverbial constraints. As Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe has demonstrated in his remarkable *Things Fall Apart* (1971), a society of people depends, partially, on language for its cultural continuity. A significant segment of oral tradition subsists on proverbs which serve as the essence of the collective wisdom of the people. The Ibo proverbs which Achebe employs are concentrated, significantly, in the first part of the novel. With colonialism comes the fragmentation of the society, and a consequent breakage of the tool of the Word. That fracture is marked by the conspicuous absence of proverbs in the second part of the novel.

Having said all of that by way of illumination, we now begin to sense the importance of this section as a vital stage in the progression of the poem and why Roethke has chosen this particular form. Since Jay Parini has interpreted the individual proverbs, the only unanswered question is why did Roethke employ these particular proverb-like expressions. It may be suggested that the answer lies in the dialectal implications of the proverbial expressions: stasis and movement, centrality and marginality, light and darkness, and so on. Interestingly enough, Martin Buber, in speaking of the

mystery that exists within the dialectal relationship between word and response, declares:

Essential to it [the meaning of dialectical relationships] is the fact of the tension between word and answer; the fact, namely, that two men never mean the same things by the words they use; that there is, therefore, no pure reply; that at each point of the conversation, therefore, understanding and misunderstanding are interwoven; from which comes then the interplay of openness and closedness, expression and reserve.

(Martin Buber, 63)

It is, therefore, the tension that is inherent in language which pushes the Word to its maturation and which allows the poetic consciousness to evolve from an oral environ into an attempt at apprehending a more complex exteriorized as well as interiorized reality. It is in the final section of Roethke's "The Shape of Fire" that the Word and the child, both made anew, are able to encompass, grasp and record the most minute detail and occurrence and invest them with a cargo of beauty, profundity and wholeness.

The rejuvenated poetic self, no longer demented and fragmented, embodies its twin, the Word, itself no longer eclipsed. The self conveys to us in its new voice

the beauty of this world in which "the herons floated high over the white houses/And the little crabs slipped into silvery craters". In this world,

Death was not. I lived in a simple drowse:

Hands and hair moved through a dream of wakening

blossoms.

Rain sweetened the cave and the dove still called;

The flowers leaned on themselves, the flowers in

hollows;

And love, love sang toward.

The apprehension and conveyance of the idyllic image in section five is an appropriate conclusion to the arduous artistic pilgrimage. There is a progression from the penultimate to the final section, but it is a vertical upliftment rather than a horizontal advancement. The images seem to unfold into shimmering petals of light and tremulous, glittering life. And yet, it remains more a vision prayed for than a vision achieved—a prayer that has as its foundation a profound optimism in the triumph of light and life and an exquisite though strangely anxious love for things of beauty:

*To follow the drops sliding from a lifted
oar,*

*Held up, while the rower breathes, and
the small*

boat drifts quietly shoreward;

*To know that light falls and fills, often
without our*

knowing,

*As an opaque vase fills to the brim from
a quick*

pouring,

*Fills and trembles at the edge yet does
not flow over,*

*Still holding and feeding the stem of the
contained*

flower.

What makes this odyssey through the netherworld of faithlessness and despair to the strand of belief and hope a worthwhile journey, is the possibility of its fulfilment. And so, Theodore Roethke's "The Shape of Fire", in the final analysis, gives shape to the shattered human image; it lends an authentic voice to his anguish as well as to his appreciation, compassion and love. And if this apprehension of beauty is to be caught only in a flashing pregnant moment in space and time, only to fade again

amidst the rubble of life, then it is well. The poet may, himself, say to us:

A lively understandable spirit

Once entertained you.

It will come again.

Be still.

Wait.

("The Lost Son")

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DAVID DABYDEEN (1955-

Biography

David Dabydeen was born on a sugar plantation in Berbice, Guyana, in December 1955. He emigrated to England when he was twelve, and "grew up in the care of local authorities because his parents were divorced" (Interview with Wolfgang Binder 70); he read English at Cambridge and London universities, obtaining his doctorate in 1982. Dabydeen's experience as a West Indian immigrant in England informs both his scholarship and his poetry. Dabydeen is of South Asian extraction, a fact of which he was ashamed-foreign dress, food, and language were seen as the signals of inferiority. The replacement of that sense of humiliation with one of pride was a painstaking process of intellectual and artistic maturation.

Dabydeen's sense of cultural/racial isolation and inferiority served to compound and was a consequence of his being a product of historical and contemporaneous violence. He has been sensitized and marked by the racial violence of the early 1960s in Guyana that resulted in "massacres between the Indians and the Blacks" (Interview 67). Dabydeen is deeply aware of the heterogeneous nature of his culture and psyche; but there remains a fracture between his sense of being "black" and the meaning of blackness in the context of his "Asian-Caribbean" heritage and the

violence which ruptured Guyana. (Black is used in this essay as an inclusive signifier for all people of colour.)

Thus far, Dabydeen has dedicated his scholarly life to working with other black scholars (and scholars of black studies) to bring black peoples into focus, to give them voice. He insists that "any scholarship relating to black people should not be divorced from consideration of contemporary racist realities and should not be separated from the struggles to combat such racism" (Preface to *The Black Presence in English Literature*, viii). To this end, a conference was held in Wolverhampton, England, in December 1982. The choice of setting represented a deliberate attempt at yoking scholarship with traumatic social occurrence. As Dabydeen points out, it was in Wal Ver Hampton that Enoch Powell made impassioned xenophobic speeches that triggered a rash of racist sentiment in the 1960s and after.

The papers that are compiled in *The Black Presence in English Literature* (1985), edited by David Dabydeen, are "concerned with locating literary texts within social and historical contexts, and within popular and scientific ideas" (Preface ix). Black peoples' literary and scholarly activity must be integrated into every level of educational curricula if they are to be treated as less than invisible. Black presence and voice are not only manifest in writers like Chinua Achebe, George Lamming, V. S. Naipaul, and Wole Soyinka; Dabydeen insists that the theme of blackness is prevalent in

traditional works since the literature is "rooted in a culture characterised by a history of conquest, colonisation and imperialism" (Preface ix).

Dabydeen, by work and example, indicts those educational institutions that refuse or neglect to include black studies in their curricula. This ethnocentricity and the inability or refusal of teachers to acknowledge black or multicultural presences are signals of a potent residue of racism in education. The consequence is exclusion and bitterness, and violence is the inevitable reward.

Major Works and Themes

In his first scholarly book, *Hogarth's Blacks: Images of Blacks in Eighteenth Century English Art* (1987), Dabydeen demonstrates that black people, rendered politically impotent and socially invisible, were in fact brought into visual scope on the canvas of William Hogarth. Dabydeen's point is that Hogarth, although remaining true to the sociohistorical truth that prevailed in the eighteenth century (blacks remain marginalized, diminished, and backgrounded), attempted to move black subjects from invisibility to visibility, from muteness to the realization of an inner voice. There is a recognition that they too have a perspective.

Despite being relegated to the role of the subhuman and submissive, despite being juxtaposed with animals, Hogarth's blacks maintain an inner dignity that impugns the moral decay of the whites. According to Dabydeen,

Hogarth's intention was to use blacks to satirize the English upper classes, especially. Also, Dabydeen suggests that Hogarth aligns blacks with other victims of commercialism and colonialism; the former were sometimes participants in the rituals of the English peasantry. Dabydeen holds that if Hogarth's satirical intentions are missed, then the painter "can be deemed to have reflected or reinforced racism among his white contemporaries" (Hogarth's Blacks 113). In this book, Dabydeen has reread creatively Hogarth's dramatic narrative: the eighteenth-century painter brings black people into the picture; the twentieth-century scholar brings them into focus.

David Dabydeen's *Hogarth, Walpole and Commercial Britain* (1985) is noticeably an extension of *Hogarth's Blacks*. He examines much of the same material only with an inverted focus; he posits that Hogarth's moralistic message covers a deeper political intention: exposing the nobility and reprimanding the government. The painter's portrayal of the aristocrat as upright citizen and the commoner as the collapsed and crime-ridden is profoundly satirical. The criminal activity of the latter is a consequence of and a response to the commercial avarice, political corruption, and moral decay of the former. *Hogarth, Walpole, and Commercial Britain* is another important work; however, it is weakened considerably because Dabydeen repeats almost verbatim some of the themes examined in *Hogarth's Blacks*.

David Dabydeen's various roles as agitator, poet, and scholar appear to converge in his first collection of poems, *Slave Song* (1984), winner of the 1984 Commonwealth Poetry Prize and the Quiller-Couch Prize at Cambridge. *Slave Song* is "largely concerned with an exploration of the erotic energies of the colonial experience, ranging from a corrosive to a lyrical sexuality" ("Introduction to *Slave Song*" 34).

The collection is important and fascinating for several reasons. Dabydeen assumes simultaneously various masks: he is poet, critic, translator, and social commentator. The poet captures the abrupt rhythms and raw substance of peasant life in Guyana (and in the West Indies generally). By writing in Guyana Creole, Dabydeen allows the language to be authentically part and product of historical and contemporaneous experience. Like Derek Walcott's "What the Twilight Says," the "Introduction to *Slave Song*" is important in itself; Dabydeen writes:

*The language is angry, crude, energetic.
The canecutter chopping away at the
crops bursts out in a spate of obscene
words, a natural gush from the gut, like
fresh faeces. It's hard to put two words
together in Creole without swearing.
Words are spat out from the mouth like
live squibs, not pronounced with
elocution....(36)*

The poet uses the "brokenness" of the language to envelop and convey the "broken and suffering" Guyanese peasantry and their antecedents from Africa and India. However, *Slave Song* does not emit self-pitying wails of pain. The employment of Creole is a caveat of the poet's celebration and defiance:

To write in creole was to validate the experience of black people against the contempt and dehumanizing dismissal of white people. Celebration of blackness necessitated celebration of black language, for how could a black writer be true to his blackness using the language of his/her colonial master? ("On Not Being Milton" 189)

In anticipation of the "summary dismissal or parody" by white critics, Dabydeen "clothed the creole poems in an elaborate set of 'notes' and translations' as an act of counter-parody" ("*On Not Being Milton*" 182). The formality of these notes and "translations"-their anthropological/literary nature originates in Dabydeen's role as scholar. Mark McWatt has pointed to the "ironic tensions created by the purity of the native voice and the 'purity' of the scholarly mask that presented it...; the whole apparatus of notes and translations seemed to contain the great energy of the voices and that great surge of animosity... directed primarily at their English audience" (86).

Dabydeen assumes the posture of the critic and so becomes the audience of his own poetry. The poet supports and subverts the scholar; and because of this creative/critical self-sufficiency, he renders irrelevant the white audience even as he targets them.

The experiences that Dabydeen seeks to capture and articulate are no longer subject to the astringencies of formal English or rules of literary propriety; the images and rhythms (fractured and lyrical) in "Song of the Creole Gang Women" function outside of conventional English language and experience. The voices of the women recount the omnipresence of the white colonizer-specifically the British Company, Bookers. Even the things most cherished and private are subject to ownership and abuse: children and sexual organs. Life is a grinding ritual of work, pain, and longing.

In "The Canecutters' Song" and "Slave Song" Dabydeen dramatizes the historical/cultural longing of the canecutter for that which he perceives to be pure, spiritual, adorned, adorable, unachievable qualities embodied in the white woman. This longing becomes fleshly lust for white skin and blondness; both desires are equally futile, and this futility generates a dream-desire to subjugate, despoil, and rape. The victim of humiliation and degradation dreams his revenge against the white master by possessing the pampered and protected white mistress. One aspect of the dream is that she wants to be possessed: in "Nightmare" she dreams

of being raped and is aroused sexually by it. All are consumed by perverse colonialism.

The bitter fruits of British colonialism were reaped in the 1963-64 racial conflicts in Guyana: rape and murder. "For Mala" depicts the grotesque drama of the oppressed turning upon themselves in cannibal conspiracy with the oppressor. The land itself is contaminated and its yield is no longer a source of nourishment; fruits like five-fingers, star apples, and pumpkins are used to record mutilation and murder.

There are times in *Slave Song* when Dabydeen relies too heavily on the commentary and "translation." In the ironically named "Guyana Pastoral," his note that "the rape and murder of a young girl, told in hard, brutal rhythms, signify the violent aspect of Guyanese existence" (49) is not borne out by the poem itself. The commentary is more vivid than the poem. Moreover, the "translation" carries better than the lines of the burdens implied in rape.

Slave Song exposes in stark fashion the tragic realities of Guyanese history and the monstrous circumstances that result. At points in the collection, Dabydeen's regret at wasted lives, beaten and broken bodies, enfeebled minds is so touching that the reader aches for a people's distress. At times in *Slave Song*, there is hope and laughter even in the teeth of racial strife and economic despair: hope in spite of suffocating futility.

David Dabydeen's second book of poems, *Coolie Odyssey* (1988), retraces the movement of indentured laborers from India to Guyana and the further, related diaspora of Guyanese to England. Like all West Indians, the Indo- Guyanese is afflicted by fragmentation and homelessness. Life in Guyana is existence in the mud, between the ideal territory of memory (India) and those sublime worlds where dreams come true-England and North America. But these cultural and economic "havens" are found to offer nothing but further alienation and disillusionment.

The underlying quest in *Coolie Odyssey* is for a myth to encompass the journeys, for a humility and honesty of perception to capture it, and for a language that reverberates with loss but that echoes hope. The rendering is complicated in this poem because the poetic consciousness and expression are aspects of the evolutionary processes that produce them; the poet's genesis is the people's history, and the language must offer a coincidental application. However, while the poet seeks to validate the experiences of his antecedents, they do not see their stories as worthy. As Ma tells the poet, the words that we would use are too insubstantial to bear the cargo of their history. Ma and others of her generation in *Coolie Odyssey* are aware that the children who leave and return for vacation or for weddings or funerals with mere academic knowledge are most susceptible to romanticizing the hardships endured by their forebears.

In *Coolie Odyssey*, David Dabydeen returns to the devastating results of racial violence in Guyana. The desperate longing for whiteness (especially the white woman) rages on; and the white woman, especially, tries to plunder "native" sexuality, stories, and craft. Dabydeen also refers to recent political despotism suffered by Guyanese and to two of the heroes that bring relief to the people-Rohan Kanhai, one of the world's great batsmen; and the murdered Dr. Walter Rodney, one of Guyana's great political leaders and scholars.

The language in *Coolie Odyssey* does not approximate the basilectal Creole used in *Slave Song*; nonetheless, the rhythms are West Indian, and the images are as stark and as memorable as those of the first collection.

David Dabydeen's *The Intended* (1991) is an autobiographical novel in which the narrator recalls his boyhood in a Guyanese village. It traces the flight from Guyana to England. Once there, old longings are compounded by new desires, old homelessness by new rootlessness and alienation. The West Indian remains the eternal immigrant. Dabydeen displays the permanence of the biases that have been bequeathed to rather than experienced by people of the narrator's generation. There is, consequently, a greater blindness to and deeper stupidity about racial/religious prejudice. In England, the narrator is still afflicted by Hindu/Muslim suspicions that prevail in Guyana but have their roots in the violence leading up to the India-

Pakistan split. Once again, as in *Slave Song* and *Coolie Odyssey*, Dabydeen life of the Guyanese peasantry is painted with cruel precision: it is raw, recalls the cultivated racial division between Indo- and Afro-Guyanese. The crude, violent, demanding, and futile.

In England, the narrator is plagued by a deep sense of shame: language, dress, food, and clothing are all reasons for humiliation and self-loathing. This is painfully dramatized when Nasim, one of the narrator's friends, is chased by a gang of whites into the path of a car and is hurt seriously. In the hospital, he "looked small and lost, like pictures of hungry Third World children we saw on television" (14). The narrator's response is shame and anger at the victim: "I hated him. A strange desire to hurt him, to kick him, overcame me" (14). This abhorrence of vulnerable, wounded self and others finds expression in his deep desire for acceptance through conformity or for invisibility and dumbness.

This novel is not structurally sophisticated; at times it is almost clumsy. However, Dabydeen's *The Intended* is urgent, intense, and honest. These are qualities that inform both Dabydeen's scholarship and his art. To read his work is to read our own discomfort and anguish. David Dabydeen startles us out of our self-composure.

Critical Reception

Hogarth's *Blacks* has generated considerable interest in the scholarly world. Michael Cooke stipulates that Dabydeen "incontrovertibly established that the black

was a habitual, not an accidental figure for Hogarth, and a continual attraction for the eighteenth-century artist"; he writes also of the "intensity of Dabydeen's focus and conviction" (226). Roy Porter testifies that Dabydeen's research is "invigorating, his interpenetration powerful and his judgement secure" (998). However, although mostly positive in their comments, many reviewers of Dabydeen's two scholarly books accuse him of "over-reading," of flying too conspicuous a political flag.

Dabydeen's *Slave Song* and *Coolie Odyssey* are deserving of the praise they have been given. Mark McWatt concludes his review: "David Dabydeen has made an important contribution to the knowledge and self-knowledge not only to the descendants of indentured Indians but to all West Indians struggling to make themselves new" (90). Benita Parry, who has written the only full-length article on David Dabydeen's poetry, is impressed by his "radical political poetry" and by his "rewriting of the west's master narrative that addresses the post-colonial condition" (13). Nonetheless, she has reservations about Dabydeen's canecutters' "fantasies of abusing and mutilating the white woman" (6). She suggests also that the "difficulty" of the Creole "makes the reception of *Slave Song* self-limiting amongst a diversified poetry readership" (13). Wrought from the hurt of things, the language is difficult; it is also defiant, disconcerting and, at times, tender.

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FROM SLAVE TO SOVEREIGN: ALEX DELFOSSE'S DREAM/NIGHTMARE THE SURE SALVATION

The traumatic beginnings of the West Indies are dramatized in John Hearne's most recent novel, *The Sure Salvation*. The action occurs on a barque ironically named the "Sure Salvation," which is being used to take an illegal shipment of slaves from Africa to Brazil in 1860. For three weeks the ship is marooned upon a windless ocean, surrounded by festering faeces, evidence of human corruption. In *The Sure Salvation*, present and past, outer stillness and inner activity, Africa and Europe, actual and mental imprisonment and crises, and involuntary community and voluntary isolation collide with devastating effect on the characters. Each of the crew is caught and consumed by his own inner torment or ambition or guilt, as well as by a natural stillness and broiling heat—a situation reminiscent of Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"—as the slaver lies stranded in the Atlantic. The ship's captain, William Hogarth, is an English aristocrat who has fallen from social and moral grace; his partner in this heinous crime is a black man, Alex Delfosse, who serves as the ship's cook. The latter is the most fascinating character in *The Sure Salvation*.

Alex Delfosse is a free black from Louisiana who "chooses" Captain Hogarth as the instrument with which he will fulfil his ambitions of being monarch in a kingdom of his own creation.

The slaves, in Alex's scheme of things, are to be his subjects. He is "the free born Negro child of [Jean-Paul Delfosse's] freed and manumitted Negro, Polydore Delfosse, and his duly married wife Eulalia" (159). Alex shared his mother's breast with Jean- Paul's son, Louis, and they grow up to be as brothers in crime and wanton violence in the American "wild west." Louise, whom Alex remembers with nostalgia and fondness (or sentiments akin to these) was well educated but, according to Alex. "The books and the words were the only things in him that hadn't spoiled rotten by the time he come to his manhood. He was a bad, mean boy, too. The worst I ever saw ... except me" (53). It is from Louis that Alex obtains the idea of monarchical splendour: "We're Kings without a crown because of your black skin," he tells Alex.

Louis dies in a manner that looks forward to the slaughter that is to occur on the "Sure Salvation." He died in an adobe hut, killed by an old man (who is himself killed by Louis) while trying to violate the man's daughter. Alex muses: "Well, he didn't know enough not to try after that girl-child... Not even wanting her, really, but wanting to hurt an old man who would have taken any hurt but that" (53). When Louis is killed, his blood "had covered everything-as if all the badness and evil he had inside had come bursting out at last" (54). By Alex's own assessment, Louis Delfosse, for all his evil, was the less sinister part of the twinship. The cook makes an important distinction between

"kinds of hurt" and, implicitly between himself and Louis:

It was only the sort of hurt a man couldn't take, even if he had to die trying not to take it, that Louis Delfosse could get any pleasure from. The other kind of hurting you have to give out, so's to get where you're going... (54)

Alex Delfosse knew from the beginning, with almost mechanical precision, where he wanted to go and who would have to be chosen, used and discarded along the journey. With incredible judgement and insight, he chooses Hogarth as his primary tool. On their first meeting, Alex strolls onto the deck of the "Sure Salvation" to apply for the job of cook but with almost imperial arrogance and self-confidence, a "shadow of disdain" upon his face which "filled Hogarth with shame." The Captain, as Alex knew he would be, is immediately resentful. Even before any words are exchanged, Alex reveals to Hogarth the latter's racial and class bias:

One did not take kindly to a black so unaffectedly at ease in a suit any Jermyn Street tailor would have been proud to see leave his shop on a gentleman's back. Nor did he bear himself with that deference and anxious hope of finding me in even temper which is habitual to

any black, however dignified, when he approaches a white man ... I should have felt anger at his unspoken impertinence, his damned nigger presumption, but instead I wished only to justify to him in what condition I had found the "Sure Salvation"... (148)

In the manner, language and carriage of a gentleman, and with practised ease, Alex establishes their equality. Hogarth also recognizes Alex's dangerous nature from his face which "belonged in company I would not care to cross or have look at me with less than regard." After several verbal thrusts and parries, from all of which Alex emerges the courteous winner, Hogarth confesses that Alex "rebuked me for daring to treat him less than one of my rank" (154).

It is Alex Delfosse who, five years after their meeting, plants the seed of their current venture in Hogarth's mind. Hearne's choice of the name Delfosse ("fosse" is "cesspool" or "grave" in French, Spanish and Portuguese) is quite apt because he seems to embody a "cesspool" amorality and succeeds in making Hogarth the captain of the "grave" which is the "Sure Salvation."

For much the same purpose, Alex "befriends" the evil second officer George Reynolds while, again, establishing social equality. Alex knows that Reynolds is the most menacing man on board, and it is because of this that he has to keep him preoccupied. The would-be

monarch intends to use this embodiment of evil to his own advantage and then kill him. With truly frightening objectivity, Alex thinks of Reynolds: "When I'm obliged to kill him I'll be real regretful it's got to be that way. But a man like him you don't leave to your good luck to take care of for you" (56). Alex's identification of the slave woman, Tadene, "that dried up old bitch [who] is the luck I was waiting for," is equally precise. It is she whom Alex would use to "ride herd on the niggers when I let 'em loose."

In spite of the acknowledged equality between the cook, the captain and the second officer, Alex remains curiously defensive about his colour. Alex, for instance, is never to be caught without the papers which legitimize his status (much like the passport carrying modern person or the pass-carrying South African people). The papers are carried in a "long wallet of pale, grainless leather fine and supple as silk" which was taken from the belly skin of a young Apache whom Alex had killed (159). The legal symbols of his birth, baptism, being and freedom are carried within an envelope of death. Of course, his inseparability from the papers is easily justified and explained by the dangers at the time which any black man would have faced he needed to have carried upon his skin or person a mark or paper which gave credence to his condition, ownership or freedom. However, given Alex's proven ability and adeptness at handling almost any situation, one suspects that there is a deeper fear, a more profound

insecurity which is, again, akin to the malaise of identity at the heart of modern man's need to prove that his face and name are his. All of this becomes a little clearer when Alex, having set the slaves loose and taken over the ship, explains his plans to Hogarth about setting up a kingdom in South America. Hogarth, whose face is "now full and animated with concern," tells Alex; "You are mad, Alex ... you are quite mad...you will be hanged before you clear the Amazon estuary How could you imagine? You- you" (198). Alex, in turn, responds with questions of his own: "You mean because I'm black, Cap'n Hogarth? You think I shouldn't be considerin' such a venture?" Hogarth dismisses Alex's significantly defensive questions: "You know I do not mean that. But this venture you propose is madness. For any man.. white or black." Also, after speaking to the captain for the first (and last) time about Louis Delfosse, Hogarth offers that he "can nearly find it in my heart to forgive you" but "I do not think I could have forgiven your brother ... No, I could not have forgiven him had he shared in the betrayal you have faced me with" (201). Once again, Alex's response is defensive: "Cause I'se black, Cap'n ? An' you expected nothing else, but you couldn't have taken it from a white man so much like me you couldn't have told us different save from his face against mine ?" (201).

Delfosse's insecurity and shame at his blackness are also beneath his desperate need to leap from being "slave" in feature and colour to being sovereign in name

and function; from menial to monarch. His legal status as "free Negro" is haunted (as in a significant parenthesis) by a nemesis of illegitimacy which addresses and is addressed by the death-in-life institution which is the "Sure Salvation" as well as by the sculpture of "free" society over which Alex wants to rule. Both the current world of the ship and the futuristic dream kingdom which Alex wants to create and rule in the Amazon are the "living" and "dream" consequences of his void of conscience. He seeks to create of humanity a mechanistic collective being constituted of outer shell and inner void, subjects having a technical life but who are psychically butchered. Alex's dream becomes the living nightmare of others who are caught up in its narcissistic core; yet, the core is fissured by deep fears of his own illegitimacy, and a profound sense of shame at his blackness. Alex Delfosse is himself imprisoned by the death-dealing dictates of his dream/nightmare in spite of his apparent freedom of movement between the socio-hierarchical poles of Hogarth on one hand and the slaves on the other.

John Hearne invests in an enormity of triggers and ironic implications by giving Alex black skin and a stereotypical function in his role as black cook. He is the same colour as the slaves but shares the sensibility and void of conscience of the slavers; his "herd" image demonstrates and betrays the way Alex sees the Africans-as cattle. His deep-seated shame at being black causes him to consistently and insistently deny

any kinship-racial or human-to Africa and Africans. Very early in their relationship, as Hogarth and Alex look at a slaver, the former speaks of "this foul trade" which Standish, the captain of the slaver, "pursues among our people" (164). Alex Delfosse quickly and effectively dismisses the captain's embrace of all mankind. As Alex explains, "Standish don't ply no foul trade cap'n...and whatever he plies, it sure as hell ain't among my people"" (164). Any gesture or suggestion of shared skin or spirit with the slaves perturbs Alex. At the same time, he establishes social equality with the aristocratic English Hogarth and Reynolds with such hysteria that he unconsciously beckons at his sense of the illegitimacy of his freedom. Moreover, Alex's "nobility" is as easily donned as his wonderfully tailored suit; and it is equally superficial. He lacks that nobility of spirit which flickers and goes out in Hogarth and which shines so brightly in Mtishta, the African girl whose body Reynolds defiles but whose spirit he cannot soil.

Alex's betrayal of humanity is as sweeping as Hogarth's, and perhaps even more so. The greater depth of his betrayal does not reside in the coloration of skin which he shares with the slaves but in his role as catalyst to Hogarth's fall towards corruption. He tells Hogarth, unapologetically: "It's me persuaded you gradual into slavin' from that day in Havana to now when I'm takin' from you what you never dare claim back." But Alex's

betrayal resides in another very important area of human relationship. William Hogarth voices this:

"I was coming to an understanding of...of brotherhood with all men, despite this trade, because of you. I was beginning to realize that men like you and I, despite our difference in appearance, truly belonged to a greater purpose than we could prove in an argument... And now you have betrayed me... In your betrayal, Alex, I discern an inevitability.. against which I had begun to hope, foolishly. for equality and fraternity...I trust and hope that your race will serve mine to the end of time...you could no more help your betrayal than an ape can help stealing fruit from the house in which it has been taken as a privileged pet..." (201-202)

Alex's betrayal of Hogarth represents the tragic abortion of the hope for brotherhood-even if this brotherhood is limited to a singular black/white relationship-which lodges itself in the consciousness of the captain in spite of the infertile, death dealing earth into which it is planted. And since Hogarth's hope would have been as grand and sweeping as his corruption, then the consequences of his brotherhood would have been as widely felt as is his exploitation of humanity. His steadfast wish to keep the human race divided along the lines of the conqueror and the conquered, the master and the slave, seems to look chronologically forward to and find fulfilment in the Fabricuses and Hydes in John Hearne's Cayuna novels, in elements of neo-colonialism so familiar to the contemporary "Third

World;" and it finds its living reality in the deadly divisions in South Africa.

Moreover, Hogarth's choice of the "ape" imagery is significant in light of the fact that Charles Darwin's *Origins of Species* had recently shaken the foundations of Christian belief in Europe. The black "race," for Hogarth, remains frozen upon a primary scale of human evolution. Again, out of his personal disillusionment, Hogarth has confounded all of mankind in that he wishes for a negation of human kinship on both the synchronic and diachronic levels. This time, however, the captain is much more obviously the victim of Alex's actions.

Although Hogarth seems (and most likely is) unaware of the racist interpretation which may be attached to his "ape" analogy, Alex Delfosse almost certainly is. Without knowing it, Hogarth has hit upon his most vulnerable spot-his colour. The captain's charge of betrayal also disturbs Alex's characteristic equanimity and conscious deliberation of events: he responds with "furious inarticulacy," with an almost hysterical anger:

*"Goddam your talk of betrayal,
Hogath...I never betrayed you...
Betrayal was waitin' for us both out
here, an' it was just who took hold of it
first was all ..I never betrayed you.
Betrayal was there to be taken...An' you
know that's how it's always been an' how*

*it always will be until God decides
different. ' (202)*

For the first time since their initial meeting, however, the captain is not overwhelmed by Alex's exposition or explanation of events. In fact, Alex succeeds in committing the worst kind of self-contradiction while attempting to use arguments of predestination to extricate himself from the web of deceit which he has spun and in which he is trapped. Indeed, betrayal was not "waitin' for us out here"" at all, since it stepped aboard the "Sure Salvation" five years before in the form of Alex Delfosse, since it was lodged in Hogarth's heart ten years before this journey, and since the illegal "cargo" of souls represents the most heinous betrayal of man by man in the entire history of the human race.

The slave ship is eventually captured by the "H. M. S. Beaver" which is captained by Lieutenant Honeyball. latter's interrogation of Alex recalls the Hogarth/Delfosse interview five years before in Havana. Initially, however, there is a marked difference in Alex's attitude: he appears now to abandon his lofty arrogance and uncompromising dignity. When Honeyball asks, "What were you doing on this wicked venture, eh? Taking your own people into slavery?" Alex is much less forthcoming in his response than he was with Hogarth. His reply is, "I'se a cook, cap'n." He holds his hat with "becoming deference" across his stomach and speaks in a language that is farther from the acrolectal proximity to which he is accustomed.

Clearly, Alex's apparent acquiescence springs out of his instinct for survival which is outwardly realized in his conscious calculation of his circumstance and his interrogator; in spite of the danger, however, Alex still refuses to acknowledge his blackness. He pleads ignorance of the purpose of the journey in the language and posture of the Uncle Tom/unintentional wrong-doer and, although Honeyball is aware that all of this is a charade, Alex achieves the desired effect:

"So it was like that, eh ?' said Honeyball, but his voice was gentle and almost supportive. 'Yet you are more than you suggest my, friend... you speak a great deal higher up the scale of education than you're trying on me now... What brought you to this, man? Why do I find a free Negro of your calibre in such company?'" (208)

Having, lulled Lieutenant Honeyball into being "gentle and supportive", Alex Delfosse goes on the offensive using impeccable logic, conveniently selected aspects of the truth, and a misrepresentation of events to bring the young lieutenant to a sudden realization that "it was he-in the chair on the other side of the table from the tall, coldly calculating black man in the elegant white suit-who must justify himself" (209).

The questions which the young officer asks are quite important since they recall Reynolds' question to Alex

concerning Hogarth "Why do we find his like sharing a berth with the likes of us on such a venture?" (120). Honeyball's questions implicitly reinstate Alex to the level of Captain Hogarth. Delfosse is victorious in the exchange when he leads Honeyball to a point of boiling rage. The Lieutenant loses control:

"Get out!" Lieutenant Honeyball's red face was an alarming shade of burgundy as he jumped to his feet. 'Get out, you damned insolent- and stopped, as he realized how near he had come to uttering the word which the faintly smiling black man had been waiting for him to say. (211)

The word, of course, is "nigger" and its utterance would have diminished Honeyball himself and would have rendered his whole capture/rescue invalid. In the end, the roles are completely reversed and it is the captor who thanks the captive.

When the slaves and the crew are all landed by Honeyball at Abari (Hearne's fictional name for Guyana),⁹ they find the town empty of all figures of authority (there is a picnic and they have all gone to the Abari Falls) except for an insecure mulatto Barbadian Clerk of Courts called Weddington who protests bitterly at being left alone with this mass of humanity. Honeyball points toward the role which Alex could play in keeping "order:"

"You'll need that chap," Honeyball had advised... "You'll need him, by God until your Governor and all the other 'sahibs' return ... Yes, Mr. Washington. If I were you, I would use this man as your 'aide' until your... your... your real people come back from their holiday, what ! He'll be invaluable.'" (222-223)

It is easy to see that it is Weddington who will be Alex's "aide," that the latter will soon be wielding the whip of power so subtly that few-if any-would be aware of his design. It is as if the capture of the "Sure Salvation," Honeyball's landing at Abari, and the reins of control being placed-however temporarily in the hands of the weak Weddington, have all provided the circumstantial force to push Alex's almost aborted plan into being. It is fitting, therefore, that the final words in John Hearne's *The Sure Salvation* be uttered by Alex Delfosse : "Don't fret yourself, Mr. Weddington Its's only five hundred niggers you got to worry 'bout...I'll help you settle them in... An' they sure as hell don't have no place to go"" (224). Wrenched from the world of Africa and thrust into the belly of the world of the "Sure Salvation," the slaves have now been born into the New World in which they are homeless strangers who future. face an uncertain future.

It is also obvious that Honeyball sees Weddington's brief period of supervision as being an aberration. The latter is mulatto, part black and part white; therefore, for

the latter, he is "people" but not ""real people," This lack of regard is why Honeyball cannot be bothered to get his name right. More importantly, Weddington's insecurity and his sense of the invalidity of his "power" (however brief, involuntary, and illusory this power is) find their ultimately sinister reflection in Alex. Haunted by fears of the illegitimacy of his freedom, Delfosse dreams up a compensatory social architecture in which he alone may establish the rules of freedom and imprisonment, the boundaries of life and death.

In the final analysis, the freedom which Alex wants to impose upon the slaves is as illusory as his own, and a new monster/master slouches towards fictional Abari (factual Guyana) to be born.

Note

¹ In a personal interview in June 1984, John Hearne confirmed that Abari is the fictional name for Guyana. Interestingly enough, Abari is a river and a village on the Atlantic coast, in the country of Berbice, Guyana. Abari (Guyana) is also the setting for *Counterfeit Passports*, Hearne's novel-in-progress.

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DE-DIFFERENTIATION IN THE SELECTED WORKS OF PATER, RUSKIN, TENNYSON, AND ROSSETTI

During the latter half of the nineteenth century, a whole system of psychology called Atomism had reinforced a trend to divorce dialectical principles. Atomistic thinking goes back to the materialism of the Greeks, whose world consisted of discrete elementary particles, each endowed with specific energies. Each organ in the human body, each celestial body in the universe, each principle in the metaphysical arena was ascribed its function and position in the hierarchical scheme of things. David Katz writes of this atomistic world-view:

The organism was represented as combination of the smallest elements, namely cells; if one could achieve an insight into the function of a single cell, comprehension of the work of the whole organism would come about automatically... by summation. (Katz, 4)

The term "organism" could easily be extended into having a relevance to society, nature, metaphysics and art. When the specific functions and natures of individual elements or "cells" begin to overlap or merge with others and when the barriers between opposing principles begin to crack or melt (as in the unconscious components of art or in dreams), there is portrayed a deceptive image and impression of chaos. Therefore,

principles of beauty and ugliness, physical and psychical (outer and inner) states, consciousness and subconsciousness, life and death, are kept apart in the name of order and art. In this way, many architects of art and society justify rigorous organization and differentiation.

However, apparently polar elements in every field of life may be less differentiated without resulting chaos. If the depth of unvoiced feeling, unrealized wells of emotion and intuitive feelings within and without humanity are to be plumbed, we cannot afford to distinguish (differentiate) between opposites in ways that are final. The works examined in this paper demonstrate that the creative quest--which invariably explores corridors of dark and light, life and death--necessitates another evolution which admits to contradictions, but which never allows them to ossify. Critical examination of Walter Pater's essay on "Style," John Ruskin's essay "Of the Real Nature of the Greatness of Style," Alfred Lord Tennyson's poem "Lady of Shallot, and some of the paintings and engravings of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, reveals the profound need for a new syncretistic vision within the works themselves as well as in the progression of the apperception of art and (aspects of) society which these works represent.

Both John Ruskin and Walter Pater begin their essays by insisting on the correctness of keeping principles and disciplines wrenched apart. Ruskin writes:

Happily for mankind, beauty and ugliness are positive in their nature as physical pain and pleasure, as light and darkness, life and death. (Ruskin, 40)

Pater also insists on a certain differentiation: "It is surely the stupidest of losses to confuse things which right reason has put asunder" (Pater, 1)

In spite of their categorical tones, neither writer remains rigid in his dichotomy of aspects of art and socio-academic life. Both warn of the futility of divorcing the function of the imagination from that of the intellect in the capturing or recapturing of historical events; this tendency is especially apparent in the realm of strict historical scholarship and in the jealously guarded boundaries of departments of literature on one hand and history on the other in universities. Pater warns against this tendency to view the imagination as an intruder in the documentation of historical fact; he argues that the recording of history implies an imaginative recreation of past events. This recreation reveals itself clearly in the choice or selectivity of details which is governed by "a vision within" rather than a preconceived format governed by an "outer" reality. In this way, claims Pater, the historian becomes an artist--providing that his portrayal of a sense of fact is governed by a truthful presentation of such a sense. Pater stipulates: "Truth! There can be no merit, no craft at all, without that." The recording of a sense of historical fact becomes indistinguishable from literary art because both are

connected to "soul," with its "specific personality, its preferences, volition and power" (Pater, 22). Already, therefore, conscious (intellectual activity) and intuitive (imaginative activity) elements have begun to crack barriers previously identified and explicitly endorsed by both writers.

John Ruskin also speaks of the "imaginative power" which is exercised in the portrayal of historical occurrences. He draws a distinction between higher and lower art: the latter resides in the faithful representation of art; the former "either imagines its subject, or arranges the materials presented to it."⁵ Like Pater, Ruskin constantly refers to the human tendency to structure that is so prevalent in the consciousness of the poet/historian/painter. He makes this even more explicit when he writes:

Certain operations of the imagination come into play, here and there, so as to touch the history with some light of poetry. That is, with some light shot forth of the narrator's mind, or brought out by the way he puts incidents together. (Ruskin, 55)

In spite of their initial position of keeping apart "what right reason has put asunder," both writers agree on the influence of one discipline upon another. More importantly, this serves as a caveat to another thing: that the traditionally viewed conscious, intellectual activity

of documenting historical fact suffers an inevitable coloration by imaginative activity through selectivity, structure and through truth and beauty in the expression of the sense of fact.

Nevertheless, Ruskin cautions that even though such a coloration may exist, there is no need to equate or "confuse" the historical character with its poetic or imaginative equivalent. In other words, if an overthrow of fact is achieved and the recreation of reality becomes purely imaginative, then the inner or psychic reality gains an almost tyrannical ascendancy over the outer or physical reality. Again, this may serve as an indication of the need for a syncretistic or de-differentiated vision of art and society in which we begin to refute the traditional modes of perception whereby attention is paid wholly or primarily to conspicuous features, the consequence of which is that other features of existence or art begin to fade into insignificance.

Despite Ruskin's initial insistence on the divorce of principles, he stipulates later in his essay that the imagination must deal with the knowledge which has been merely compiled; the imagination never produces but by "combination and contemplation." Ruskin is examining implicitly the relationship of the past to the present in imaginative, creative ventures. "Creation," he concludes, "in the full sense, is impossible to the imagination" (Ruskin 57). Again, the view is tending toward a de-differentiated one in which neither past nor present, inner nor outer reality achieves a non-creative

ascendancy over the other. The analytical mode of perception runs the risk of stressing the ills or joys of the present over and above that of the past or vice versa. If we differentiate and stress the tragedies of the past, then there is the frightening conviction that we live within a changeless routine of exploitation and self-exploitation.

If the ills of the past or present are emphasized at the expense of the heroism and nobility of those before or with us, then we also begin to involve ourselves in a rigid symmetry of pain and horror: a mere list of catastrophes in our generation alone is overwhelming. One way or another we begin to court elements of disaster and stasis which wear the mask of dynamism, but which are nothing more than a replay of fact. What becomes necessary, therefore, is a new architecture of perception in which aspects of past and present begin to achieve equality on the canvas of human existence, in which there is a breakthrough or release from abnormal and implicitly embattled polarizations.

Both Ruskin and Pater recognize in some degree, that art, the individual and society are bombarded by a welter of disparate principles. Both, however, wittingly or unwittingly, point toward a new de-differentiating or syncretistic vision; and both are optimistic. Ruskin's optimism resides in principles that push backward along scales of morality and order while Pater's is grounded in a specific literary form or style (prose) of communication which achieves an apprehension of the

complex and widening variables of reality and community of principles.

For Pater, this new architecture lies in the literary artist/scholar's ability to remain grounded in his/her contemporaneous reality and yet draw from the fertile knowledge of the past. From such a de-differentiated association, arises a creative rather than an abortive tension out of which the literary artist/scholar "begets a vocabulary faithful to the colouring of his own spirit, and in the strictest sense original." Pater goes on:

That living authority which language needs lies, in truth, in its scholars, who recognizing always that every language possesses a genius, a very fastidious genius of its own, expand at once and purify its very elements, which must need change along with the changing thoughts of living people. (Pater, 12)

Pater has arrived at the conclusion that language needs to be a vehicle for a syncretistic perception of existence, especially one increasingly tested by a ceaselessly growing number of heterogeneous constraints.

This also becomes an issue of significance to us when we realize that any attempt at voicing the presence and pressure of past perspectives as well as present complexities, may lead to a ravaged contemporary consciousness. We run the risk of reiterating that which we seek to repudiate or--perhaps more dangerously--of

overstressing the primacy of one thing or people over another.

In a sense, language is as much the adversary as the vehicle of creativity because it tends to over-simplify complex physical and psychical states and the areas of overlap in these states. Not only that, but this very language plays a role in conventionalizing human beings, leading us to external definitions of ourselves, ignoring transmissions from non-verbal portions of the self.

Pater, then, asks language--prose as new architecture--to bear a tremendous but honest burden. Today, we make the same plea: that language allow for the articulation of the syncretistic apperception of the tensions of past and present--the pain, hypocrisy, and exploitation as well as the joy, beauty, truth, and heroism contained in the complex organism of community, in the body of the self, and the beings contained in that self. All that John Ruskin and Walter Pater speak of or point toward--sincerity, truth, selectivity, beauty, and a terrible need to resolve these with their opposites--Pater asks prose to carry. In this way everything is made to ritually and syncretistically partake in the rhythm and dance of language, art and life.

This very hope for syncretistic resolution and consequent release comes across in Tennyson's "Lady of Shalot." The poet's intention is quite obvious as he

sets Camelot--the world of action, deed, and superfluity--alongside the isolated, magical, artistic and death-like existence of the Lady of Shallot. Lancelot, meant to be the essence of the heroism and life of Camelot, appears heraldic but metallic and shallow:

*The bridle bells rang merrily
As he rode down to Camelot
And from his blazon'd baldric slung
A mighty silver bugle hung,
And as he rode his armour rung
Beside remote Shallot. (Tennyson, 354)*

The beauty and power are undeniable, but they remain the properties of metal. On seeing the vision of beauty and death, the Lady dead in her boat, he says:

*She has a lovely face;
God in his mercy lend her grace,
The Lady of Shallot.*

The world of Camelot is portrayed as beautiful, yet strangely cold, almost aloof.

There is also an element of beauty in the creativity and cloistered existence of the Lady. But she invests in art as an absolute and implacable model of fulfilment. Consequently, her actual and metaphysical window upon the world becomes simply a mirror which offers but a reflection of life:

*And moving thro' a mirror clear
That hangs before her all the year
Shadows of the world appear.*

Finally overwhelmed by the barrenness of her existence, the Lady confesses to herself: "I am half sick of shadows." The fact is that both worlds are shadows once they remain differentiated as absolute or separate entities. Eventually, she moves out into the physical state of Camelot, surrendering the death-in-life, wholly spiritual aspect. In doing so, she dies. The question arises as to whether Tennyson is suggesting that while there is a need for a meeting of the two worlds of Camelot and Shallot, such a meeting will inevitably end in death. An affirmative answer would yield rather a superficial interpretation of "The Lady of Shallot." It is necessary to recognize that when the Lady goes out into Camelot, she is enacting a drama of authentic sacrifice by abandoning her safe but static, barren, non-sensual existence. Moreover, because of Tennyson's fair-mindedness and objectivity of presentation, there is no relinquishing of sovereignty by either Shallot or Camelot. When she enters Camelot, the Lady becomes what she was all along: a spiritual being; but now she abandons her differentiated status and truly enters the material world. Lancelot's reference to grace and God occurring significantly at the end of the poem is an unmistakable caveat to the fulfilment which results from the merging life-in-death/death-in-life complexes.

Tennyson is ultimately more unambiguous than either Pater or Ruskin in pointing up the danger of investing in an idolatry of absolutes through a differentiated perception of the world--a view which gives premium to the "backgrounding" or "foregrounding" of one or another aspect of humanity's existence. Tennyson is insisting on a syncretistic view whereby a curious density of sources of energy from both the reality of Camelot and the "architectonic" world of Shallot merge into each other, signalling us toward a revolutionary order of art and society.

In spite of his fair-mindedness and clarity of vision, however, Tennyson does not present that badly needed new architecture for scrutiny. He offers the complex premise of sacrifice and syncretistic associations which may provide an enormity of possibilities through which worlds come into meaningful rapport with each other and with elements of release, relief and fulfilment. But he does not, as Ruskin, offer abstract moral frames of reference; nor does he, like Pater, offer a definite artistic model out of which we may undertake creative expeditions into reintegration and resolution. For Tennyson in "Lady of Shallot," wholeness seems to be, in the final analysis, an unfathomable thing, achievable in a moment in time and space. The achievement of wholeness indicates the end of a journey and, simultaneously, the beginning of yet another.

The Pre-Raphaelites, with their profound respect for Tennyson, moved within the area of the visual arts

toward this same syncretistic or de-differentiated vision of art and society. Timothy Hilton comments on Rossetti's wood engraving of Tennyson's "The Palace of Art":

The spectator must thread his way through its maze-like space, from the broken-nosed, apple-munching guard, past and round the strange bridge or platform whose structure merges with an organ played by an ecstatic beauty. The space then plunges into a middle ground and background in which men, ships and castles seem both near and immeasurably distant. (Hilton, 176-77)

This seems quite an accurate description of the carving (as far as one can judge from the reproduction in Hilton's book) but this critic explains away much too easily the ambiguity of the bridge/platform by speaking of its "strangeness". Indeed, the device is a bridge, conventional symbol of defence/offence and bears its own cargo of experience; but it is also a platform of music which serves, at once, to undermine and support the bridge, thereby effecting an incredible undifferentiated association. Neither conventional device gains sovereignty or ascendancy and this indivisible constellation of images and associations serve as a trigger for other motifs of relief from implacable polarizations. In this sense, Hilton is accurate when he speaks of the nearness and

"immeasurable distance" between the "grounds" of the carving.

There is one other feature of Rossetti's engraving that is of interest and relevance: the figure of the woman. Hilton stipulates that the "soul" in the poem is externalized and dramatized as a woman (Hilton, 177). This might be true, but it is only a part of a complex series of syncretistic associations. The man hovers above and behind the figure of the woman as she arcs backward into him, hands on the organ. She becomes a living arching rainbow between the psychical or spiritual scale of art and the sexual scale of humanity (society of love and passion, as it were). Not only is there this physical/psychical, spiritual/sexual linkage, but there is also one existing in the merging of male and female principles. The figures are not differentiated: beneath the soldier/lover's shoulders the clothes merge, melt, fuse into each other: cape of soldier/lover and soft folds of woman/lover. Moreover, both figures seem to tremble on the threshold between life, death and possible "newness" or rebirth. The beauty is cradled as both dead and born being (as child and corpse) in the womb and arms of the soldier/lover. There is a sort of manic bliss carved into the face of the woman which repudiates death as a total phenomenon and yet there is a deep element of mourning. The syncretistic power of the work, certainly, is bound up with its capacity for releasing all these levels of experience.

Many of Rossetti's paintings also dramatize this climax of associations, pushing us toward a necessary exploration into neglected relationships beyond a tautology of identity and differentiated perspectives. Two of the Rossetti's paintings which are relevant to this discussion are *The Annunciation* or *Ecce Ancilla Domini* and *Beata Beatrix*. With regards the former, both John Ruskin and Frederic George Stephens stipulate that Rossetti breaks from the traditional figures of the Virgin and Gabriel at the moment of the annunciation. Stephens writes:

Unlike the Gabriels of Angelico, Memmi, Durer, Del Sarto, Raphael, Giovanni Santi, Tintoretto, and Rembrandt-- [Rossetti] makes no obeisance to Mary, not yet crowned Queen of Heaven. (Stephens, 116)

This break from tradition is important because it may serve as an index towards Rossetti's own need for an apprehension of a syncretistic vision of a Biblical phenomenon. In the painting itself, the Virgin, clad in white, is sitting on a pallet bed as if just awakened, and sees with some puzzlement and awe the full length of an angel before her holding a white lily in his hand. In the foreground to the right, at the foot of the bed, there is a frame over which is draped a red embroidery on which is designed a limp imitation of the lily of the angel. The use of "foreground" to describe the embroidery does not contradict what was suggested

before with regard to the syncretistic view to emphasize or de-emphasize experience in art or life. The issues here are slightly more complex than the mere isolation of a single element in the painting. In fact, the embroidery with its withered lily comes into the same field of vision with the erect lily stem in the hand of the angel. Interestingly enough, this very embroidery appears in Rossetti's *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin* (1849), painted one year before *Ecce Ancilla Domini*. The curious fact is that there is a visual manifestation of an intuitive, artistic vision which appears to have sensed the "present" annunciation. The art foreshadows the event, but surrenders (much like Tennyson's *Lady*) its role (but not its presence) in the blinding face of heavenly organicism. The artistic work of the Virgin, though powerful and sovereign, is not allowed to usurp or overshadow; rather, it presents itself in humility and dignity, having been allowed to stand in the presence of human and divine reality (or humanized divinity in the form of Gabriel).

Another series of associations is suggested by the posture of the Virgin: first, she has just arisen from a prone position (position of sleep and death); secondly, rather than adorned in blue robes with gold borders as in traditional paintings, she is shrouded in a white garment, and thirdly, she assumes the position of blossoming foetus (the heel is pulled inward and backward, the knees moving up to the breast, the shoulder slightly rounded as if to meet the knees. The

Virgin is physically awakened to her own sublime spirituality; the human creature is possessed of divinity whilst the divine spirit is made flesh. Moreover, the girl becomes the mother even as her posture presages the Christ-child within and without the womb. Rossetti has captured a tense harmony of relationships within the complex curve of time and between several traditionally opposed principles: he weaves a thread of mortality through and into the fabric of immortality, past, present, and future; wholesome relief is found in the community of birth, life, death, and resurrection.

This harmonious co-existence of principles traditionally viewed as antagonistic is also found in Dante Rossetti's Beata Beatrix. One could hardly find a more appropriate endorsement of this discussion than the words of Rossetti himself. Of Beata Beatrix the poet/painter writes:

The picture illustrates the Vita Nuova, embodying symbolically the death of Beatrice as treated in that work. The picture is not intended at all to represent death, but to render it under the semblance of a trance in which Beatrice, seated at a balcony overlooking the city, is suddenly rapt from Earth to Heaven.
(Rossetti, 39)

Once again, there is no ascendancy of heaven over earth or life over death. There is no frightening necessity for

choice, differentiation and discrimination. It is here that Pater's essay on "Style," Ruskin's "Of the Real Nature of Greatness of Style," Tennyson's "Lady of Shallot," and the works of D. G. Rossetti meet. They all, to a greater on lesser extent, serve as pointers and examples of a new and sublime architecture of human relationships and art built on the dialogue of dialectical principles, on compassion, truth, beauty, sacrifice and love.

All these artists seem to move in one philosophical direction and to one artistic conclusion: that the rigid differentiation of elements of society, nature, and art denies the deep-seated harmony that lies at the heart of all creation. This nineteenth century, hopeful architecture of unity so relevant to and so needed by our heterogeneous world involves a profound understanding and revelation of all factors that divide humanity. In this process, we engage ourselves in the search for an identity that is ritual, inclusive, and manifestly human.

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THE WEST INDIAN EMERGES: GEORGE LAMMING'S IN THE CASTLE OF MY SKIN

(with Ashwannie Harripersaud)

Abstract

George Lamming's **In the Castle of My Skin**, first published in 1953, is a seminal work in West Indian and Post-Colonial literature. It precedes and establishes the foundational themes that are central to the works of V.S. Naipaul, Wilson Harris, Derek Walcott, and a host of the most incisive West Indian writers. This article explores the West Indian's muscular heave to emerge from the horror that is West Indian history. The West Indian, embodied in the protagonist named G, must overcome a sense of loss, a sense of fragmentation and rootlessness in order that he approach the world with wholeness and hope. This struggle continues in this new age of ours, and remains as relevant to us as West Indians as it was during and immediately after Colonialism. A critical exploration of this novel may be more urgent now than it was when it was first published.

Keywords: Post-colonial literature, rootlessness, themes, analysis, colonialism.

Introduction

George Lamming's *In the Castle of my Skin* explores the development of the consciousness of the narrator, G, within the milieu of a Barbadian village in the 1930's.¹

He seeks, within the microcosm of his individual consciousness, for the identical societal, actual, and psychological permanence and continuity that is exemplified by the White landlord Creighton and the old Black couple, Ma and Pa. G quests for continuity, for a sense of self and a physical and psychological affiliation with a land that he may term home; that kind of permanence which the pebble (a symbol that has come to assume great significance in West Indian literature) has come to represent. The very form of *In the Castle of my Skin* obeys a deep-seated need to re-state history by investing it with a profundity brought about by demonstrating the relationship between historical fact and personal anecdote. The novel, by its very autobiographical nature, represents an adult's backward grope into realms of memory, tracing its evolution by placing it against a dynamic backdrop of historical and social circumstances. The individual carries within himself the implications of the generic as well as the specific. *In the Castle of my Skin* takes up the evolving consciousness of the narrator as he sits and looks at his ninth birthday being rained away. From the very beginning of the novel, G's participation is more internal than not, and his impact on the outer world is only minimal. The first paragraph of the book is laden with images of inevitability: rain, the passage of time, poverty, the mother figure, and religion. And in the face of these ubiquitous aspects of West Indian life, we are told, "I wept for the watery waste of my ninth important day." The futility of striving in the face of abject

poverty and decay is beautifully demonstrated by the almost deliberate destructiveness of traditional sources of life the rain and the river by what appears to be an almost cosmic conflict with another ordinarily life-giving source, the earth itself. It becomes a cosmic conspiracy of conflict:

The white stalks of the lily lay flat under the hammering rain, then coaxed their roots from the earth and drifted across the upturned clay, into the canals and on to the deep black river where by agreement the floods converged. The water rose higher and higher until the fern and flowers on our veranda were flooded. It came through the creases of the door and expanded across the uncarpeted borders of the floor. (9)

The flood at the beginning of *Castle* has been looked at by various critics for its social and symbolic implications. Charles Larson concludes after brief analysis: "Thus, at the outset water imagery becomes a leitmotif to symbolize a time of change in the village."² Similarly, Gerald Moore stipulates:

The book begins with a great flood, announcing the ninth birthday of the fatherless only child who looks out upon the waste of waters carrying everything away. So that flood becomes the first great climacteric announcing change.³

But it is Ngugi Wa Thiong'o who has perceived the commencement of organic decay that coincides with the beginning of the novel: "The restless note is struck at the very beginning: looking at the rain, the hero can see the raindrops in terms of his interior life..." And at the end of the novel, "not only the boy's childhood, but an organic way of life has ended."⁴ Ngugi asks two questions that are of importance for an understanding of the novel: "What is this organic life, and what are the forces disturbing it?"⁵ But even this is rather easily perceived and Ngugi stops at rational criticism, refusing to commit a leap into somewhat more disturbing but ultimately more fulfilling criticism. Moreover, in an article that is otherwise plagued with inaccuracies and contradictions, Ambrose Kom shows perceptiveness and objectivity in writing:

The torrential rain which falls at the beginning of the novel is undoubtedly the harbinger of an incipient malaise. The flood which follows is a natural disorder that probably announces the end of an era or the imminent disintegration of the little community's traditional structures.⁶

The article goes on to point out briefly some Shakespearean echoes. But the fact is that the flood carries, in addition, Biblical associations implying a dramatization of the dialectical relationships between beginning and end, and life and death. The Biblical character that comes to mind is, of course, Noah. Like Noah's world, G's is thrown into upheaval: "The floods

could level the stature and even conceal the identity of the village.” This point is briefly looked at by Dubem Okafor in an incisive article. This critic agrees, “The novel...begins with a diminutive deluge, reminiscent of the waters of Genesis in the time of Noah.”⁷ Noah's beginning contains the end of another life, his new lease on life encircles and involves the death of the other: his world is a liquid womb that merges these principles that were allowed to become absolute and authoritarian. In the light of these paradoxes, it is significant that the flood occurs at the beginning of the text on G's birthday in the sense that, while the flood points toward a social upheaval, it also indicates an impending one in the consciousness of the boy: the dialogue of dialectics addresses both the specific and the generic. The very important concepts of time and re-creativity etch themselves into his mind as the village is inundated: “The clock shelved in one corner kept up its ticking. My mother retreated to another part of the house where the silk and taffeta designs of her needling were being revised and reversed. I soon followed like a trail of smoke tracing a radius round its red origin.” (12)

In this atmosphere, recorded in symbolic terms, G attempts to establish his sense of self out of an affiliation with immediate ancestral relationships. He begins by groping in the darkness of memory, but this is, ironically, hindered by his mother who initiates a song (almost certainly a hymn) which the village takes up. Having had his intuitive backward glance

obstructed, G substitutes a more conscious type of inquiry, only to discover family ties that are unknown and dissipated. It is in this way that G is a silhouette of the homeless, dispossessed Black man who has been wrenched from his home in Africa. This shadowy affiliation creates of him the incoherent exile that he is and so inevitably colours his future. This theme of homelessness and the futile attempts at creating a home in social and psychological terms on the highly dubious foundations of acquiescence and complacency are structurally juxtaposed alongside the tragedy of Mr. Foster who externally dramatizes the wrench. G's mother is told about Foster's house being swept away in the floods, but "Foster swears he won't leave the old house, and went sailing down the river on the roof. They had to fish him from the Deanery wall with a rope." Foster tenaciously holds onto the only object that gives him a sense of rootedness, of being, but the object itself, like the very structure of the village, totters precariously on the precipice of annihilation. There is, therefore, an internal as well as external attempt at the creation of a sense of self and home, at arresting the sense of impermanence that plagues the West Indian. Each aspect mirrors the other, placing each in context while retaining an unshakeable but tremendously distant and vague sense of self. Both are living fossils that have remained out of the evolution of an exploitative, self-shattering process. Finally, the important figures of Ma and Pa are introduced: "They were the oldest couple in the village, so old no one could tell their age, and few

knew what names they had besides those we had given them, Ma and Pa” (14). They are portrayed as spiritually powerful and speak with the diminished strength of ancestral voices: strong because they are closest to Africa (and therefore to a sense of home) both in terms of sensibility and age; and diminished because they are closest to the demeaning fact of slavery. These are the characters that dramatize the social, historical, political, and anecdotal milieu in which the evolving consciousnesses of G, Boy Blue, Bob, and Trumper develop and with which they interweave themselves.

They all represent attempts at reconciling their state of fragmentation and homelessness. At times these attempts are admirable heroic even at others perverted; but always there seems to be some malevolent spectre that haunts them and renders their attempts futile. Part of the significance of *Castle*, therefore, is Lamming's attempt at a restatement of West Indian history through a complex interweaving of two aspects of the birth of the people. Lamming points to the fact that, when history is taken in isolation, when the documentation of historical fact becomes an obsession that denies the imaginative, personal evolution of a people, then it becomes a strangling fictive archetype. Lamming juxtaposes historical fact alongside anecdotal, undocumented events that affect the society and the individual. One obtains, therefore, two evolving recollections within one embracing, more realistic archetype. It is in Chapter Two that this design is made clear. The narrator tells the

amusing story of being bathed by his mother in full view of the neighbours, an occurrence typical of West Indian communal village life. But to say that, because of such scenes in the village, "...life is characterized primarily by daily routine and the deep harmony of social relationships which, it seems, is the modest heritage of the African civilization from which the villager's happy descendants descend," is to be both Romantic and naive.⁸ Lamming himself undermines the humour as well as the "happiness" by introducing the image of the pebble: "The pebbles loosened by moisture from the earth slipped beneath my feet...The pebbles shifted under my heels...the pebbles reassorted" (16). G, like the village itself, literally and figuratively, stands on shaky ground. The fact that he is being "drowned" in water is not insignificant, in view of the flood and its symbolic overtones that have been examined earlier. Moreover, the death of the pumpkin-vine undermines the general "happy" mood with the uneasiness and sense of futility that the death of organic life can evoke:

*'Look what they do,' she said, letting the
snapped vine slip between her fingers.
'They kill it, and it was just going to
bear.'*

*Suddenly the whole morning had
changed.*

*'What they do?' the neighbour asked
keeping her balance above the fence.*

*'Kill the pumpkin vine,' my mother said,
turning away from the fence with
hardened indifference. 'Why the hell
anybody worry to plant anything round
here only God knows.'*

*Now the voice spoke as if from an inner
void beyond which deeper and deeper
within herself were incalculable layers
of feeling. (17)*

So that later, when the fence separating G's yard from the neighbour's crashes and "the two yards merged," it does imply a greater closeness of existence, but this is also symbolic of a communal, widening futility. Here, the breaking of a barrier implies a shared and magnified imprisonment. This event is of importance because it is the single episode in which any of the villagers (with the exception of Ma and Pa) attempt a fruitful consummation out of their forced attachment to the land. The attempt at establishing a fulfilling symbolic relationship with the land ends with a withering vine. Significantly, it is only Pa who is shown to be rooted enough in the land to be able to rear goats, pigeons and cultivate a vegetable patch.⁹ This pattern, which implies the paradox of the illusion of wholeness and at the same time a real imprisonment, is dramatized by G's mother, Miss Foster, and Bob's mother:

*They sat in a circle composed and
relaxed...It seemed they were three*

pieces in a pattern which remained constant. The flow of its history was undisturbed by any difference in the pieces, nor was its evenness affected by any likeness. There was a difference and there was not difference. (24)

This, again, has been looked at by critics in a rather superficial manner: Kenneth Ramchand¹⁰ sees the pattern as symbolic of the unity of the villagers, while Kom recognizes an implied unity, interdependence and rootedness in the soil.¹¹ But the unity is a superficial one. Later, under the pressure of change, the fabric of the society, like G's mother's needling, becomes "revised and reversed," while Pa is indeed rooted in the soil, possessing that kind of spiritual strength, a relative psychical intactness which the villagers have lost. To say that the villagers are "solidly rooted in the soil which their slave ancestors formerly created"¹² is to be blind to the fact that the villagers are tied to the land in much the same way that the slaves were because of the perpetuation of the tyrannical social and psychological architecture that was created by colonial exploitation. The feudal relationship between Creighton and the villagers carry many of the characteristics which existed in pre-Emancipation West Indies. The geometric pattern that the three women form is the superstructural, stated pattern of a circle; but the circle, paradoxical symbol that it is, withholds its liberating facet. Even more important is the fact that they recreate

at the sub-structural level the pattern of a triangle. And this is of absolute importance because it is a re-dramatization of the figure formed by the horrifying slave trade the triangular journey made by European ships coming out of that continent, travelling on their sinister path to the West Coast of Africa, then undertaking the infamous Middle Passage to the so-called New World, having gorged their holds with human cargo, and then finally back to Europe. So that while the recreated sub-structural triangular form implies the perpetuation of the exploitative model initiated by the slave trade, the recreated super-structural form of the circle, with its liberating qualities precluded, ensures the imprisonment rather than “symbolize(s) the women's own deep-rootedness and...interdependence.”¹³ The figure they form, therefore, is the symbolic correlative of a historical process. This is precisely why the "three" repeats itself and is a mathematical magnification of its horrifying implications. The three is constant but evolves into figures that are of greater value:

There was no change in the increase...the meaning was not clear to them. It was not their concern, and it would never be. Their consciousness had never been quickened by the fact of life to which these confidences might have been a sure testimony...Three. Thirteen. Thirty. Three hundred. (24- 25)

This, surely, is indicative of the perpetuation, the constant recycling of imprisoning and exploitative archetypes, each consolidating and extending its previous manifest image. And so this symbolic human, “present” formation, clearly historical in its echo, may be described in these terms by George Lamming: “The flow of its history was undisturbed by any difference in the pieces...There was a difference and there was no difference” (24).

The “peace” and “unity” which seem to pervade the village is a stifling oppression, and the tragedy is that the villagers themselves are unaware of this alienation. They are blind to themselves, blind to the myth that relegates them to being “low- down nigger people” and “my people, the enemy.” Indeed, this myth “had eaten through their consciousness like moths through the pages of ageing documents” (27). The education system, the public bath, the religion, the role of the overseer thrust upon him and embraced by him, the accepted superiority of the White man, the title of Little England taken on by Barbados, and the pride of being a faithful child to Big England are all symptoms of the cancerous pattern which had absorbed them and blinded them to themselves.

One typical incident is told about the boys at school who cannot conceptualise the very idea of slavery:

He [the pupil] told the teacher what the old woman had said. She was a slave.

And the teacher had said she was getting dotish. It was a long, long, long time ago. People talked of slaves a long time ago. It had nothing to do with the old lady. She wouldn't be old enough. And moreover it had nothing to do with the people in Barbados. No one there was ever a slave, the teacher said...Not in Little England...Thank God nobody in Barbados was ever a slave. (57)

What has been implanted in the teacher and handed down to the pupils is the illusion of a sense of self and cultural continuity by being an offspring of England. And this is the kind of strangling delusion that impedes any sort of insight into one's dilemma and of a true sense of history out of which the self may have evolved and in which context it must place itself. The power of the delusion undermines the West Indian and throws him into an abysmal area of loss. It is only out of a profound awareness of the nature of the Void—an intimate knowledge of the creation of this area of nothingness—that may allow the West Indian to recall not the illusion of wholeness, but a recreated density of self and a home for that self, however elusive, however vague this may be.

Lamming allows the students to stumble onto an awareness of the exploitative nature of Christianity in the West Indies. The religion is itself inextricably bound to colonialism:

They have put the two of them together now. The empire and the garden. We are to speak of both of them in the same way. They belong to the same person. They belong to God. The garden is God's own garden and the empire is God's only empire. They work together for us. God save the king who will help us to see the garden again. But the old woman wasn't wrong. We are slaves. We are still slaves to these two. And we are happy to be slaves. (71)

The seemingly endless cycle of exploitation, however, does evolve into a new phase, even as the villagers begin awakening to a sense of their own dispossession, their own homelessness. The prophetic note is struck, ironically, by Miss Foster because of the attention paid her by the landlord. Mr. Foster's house has been swept away by the flood and, as assistance, Creighton offers Miss Foster the comfort of prayer, a cup of tea, and "half a crown sixty cents, believe it or not: 'You never know what coming to you in the world' she said, '...you down today, you up tomorrow'" (34). And the introspective consciousness of the narrator records:

The landlord. The overseer. The flood. Miss Foster. Bob's mother, my mother. Not thirteen but three. They were silent now. You down today, you up tomorrow. And in that brief silence they seemed to

wonder what would happen tomorrow.
(34)

Tomorrow and political change arrive with the emergence of Mr. Slime. This character represents the kind of aspiring bourgeois opportunist which the West Indies experienced with the first tremors of self-awareness. But the very premise that springboards Slime into the political arena is a highly dubious one. Slime is forced to quit teaching because of a possible adulterous relationship with the head teacher's wife. He initiates the Friendly Society and Penny Bank and then goes further by saying "how he goin' to make us owners o' this land" (79). This idea of ownership of land by the masses would, of course, involve the implementation of an entirely new and radical social and political structure. Moreover, the symbols of land and house are devices pointing towards a reintegrated self and therefore the redemption of self. Slime's power increases as he calls a strike against Creighton's shipping company; and out of his organization, the masses become vaguely conscious of their own potential. The shoemaker tells his striking friends:

*'If you ain't there to unload these boats,
Christ, they can't unload themself. And
the Great can't do it. They can give
orders and all that, but they can't do one
honest day's work.'* (96)

But the strikers' potential is at once vaguely envisioned and hopelessly harnessed. The potential for independence becomes treacherous because of the disillusionment brought about by Slime's mutilation of the trust they have placed in him. The replacement of a Creighton with Slime bodes ill for the villagers:

'Seems to me there is only two great men round here,' said Boy Blue, 'Mr. Slime an' the landlord. An' if you don't watch out there goin' soon be one, Mr. Slime only. The landlord will sort o' stay where he is in the big house, but Mr. Slime will be sort o' captain o' this ship.'
(167)

Slime maintains bargaining links with the colonial class. At the height of the strike, "a small delegation among whom were Mr. Slime and another politician, had gone to the Governor's House to get the Governor's advice on the calling of the strike" (199). This occurs because the type of transitional figure that Slime represents seeks change but not meaningful changes.¹⁴ The homelessness and alienation of the masses is a condition which may be exploited. He is not possessed of the powerful intensity of the workers whom he leads. When the riots begin, "The politicians disappeared appalled and terrified" (200). The superficial commitment of the politicians precludes them from responding as the workers do or, for that matter, from understanding such a response. They cannot begin to contain such intensity.

It is therefore surprising that Ambriose Kom can write: “As a skilful politician Slime does contain the local workers' uprising.”¹⁵ The scene that indicates the different directions in which the participants will move occurs as the landlord walks through the village into an ambush set up by the urban workers, while the villagers remain locked in their houses. The landlord makes his appearance:

The terror on his face was indescribable. His clothes were soiled, and he stepped with the uncertainty of a drunken person. The men waited...His face was as white as a pebble. He approached the corner where the roads made four and the men turned round to aim...He had reached the corner where the roads made four...Mr. Slime turned the corner. He waited at the corner where the roads made four and then walked towards the men...the Landlord didn't look back...Then all eyes were fastened on Mr. Slime. His head spun with the terror and confusion of the scene. He didn't know what he should do...They watched his face for a signal as the landlord walked exhausted and stupid through the wood...entered the track and was almost out of sight. No stone had been “fired”...He had

escaped. Mr. Slime sighed as he reached the men who looked disappointed, angry and above all obedient. 'Thank you,' he said, 'I'm glad you didn't do it.' (206-207)

It is quite obvious that they are all caught at a historical and symbolic cross-road. The workers reveal their indecisiveness and their dependence on Slime. The villagers re-dramatize their role as shut-in victims of circumstances, doomed to ineffectuality. Slime shows his own ambivalence and insecurity. And the landlord, now himself diminished and human, walks back to his house on the hill. Quite significantly, the next chapter emphasizes the changelessness of the situation: "The years had changed nothing. The riots were not repeated. The landlord remained. Pa was asleep and his snore was the same". (209)

Nevertheless, one is aware of another paradox here, which is the logical follow-up to the shifting of focus in the ambush incident. The omniscient vision of the narrator shifts almost unperceptive from the landlord to Slime, thereby indicating a certain sameness, and yet a definite difference between the two. The historical, traditional architecture is essentially the same, but the primary oppressor has changed. The point here is that the narrator is correct and inaccurate at the same time. For the masses, "the years had changed nothing"; their role as victim is restated and reinforced. Contiguously, things have changed: one oppressor has been replaced

by another, and the new order is committed to the perpetuation of the old homelessness of the masses. The Shoemaker is the first casualty. Told by his “black landlord” that he must remove his house from the land in three weeks; the second casualty, Foster, sums up the people's attachment to land and house:

If there's one golden rule we all on this land got, tis this: if the good God give you health and strength, work till you can get yuhself a shelter over yuh head by day, and a corner to rest yuh bones at night. And when once you get it, give the good God thanks and never get rid of it.
(240)

Mr. Foster recalls to the new owner of the land the incident at the beginning of the novel when his house was swept away by the flood. He concludes by telling the man: ““You can do what you please, but I tell you that to let you know what a house means to some people in this corner of God's earth””. (240). The two incidents involving the Shoemaker and Mr. Foster are symbolic of a greater, more fundamental homelessness that resides in the constantly assaulted being of the villagers. They emphasize the kind of attachment that the new land-owning class cannot comprehend. For the villagers, “Dirt was cheap . . . and sand was free; but the land was the land, priceless, perennial and the symbol of some inexplicable power”. (241) The final shocking irony comes home to the villagers as they read the

handbill telling them that the land was bought with money from “the poor man's Penny Bank” and the “help Your Brother Friendly Society,” organizations which they felt would help them to own the land. The last tragic casualty that Lamming tells of is Pa, who is to be sent to the Alms House. The news is broken by the head teacher who has apparently bought the land. In the conversation, Pa touches upon the treacherous relationship between Creighton and Slime, but he cannot really articulate the complexity and the painful consequences of the dispossession he is made to experience. In fact, Pa is voicing in his silence the tragic homelessness of a people that had manifested itself long before they could have articulated it. Both the head teacher and Pa are the victims, even though they are prescribed different roles in this tragedy. The pebble, the permanence that is the “real you,” is unreachable because the sense of self has been submerged to an unfathomable depth. In the end, “The words are spoken, and the gestures made, but they give no clue, and each knows that that other person is hidden somewhere”. The story of Creighton contains an incalculable paradox: the exploiter is himself a victim of the very architecture his forefathers created and which he has helped to perpetuate. The symbolic position of Creighton's brick building on the hill, the high fence of barbed wire and broken bottle that shields and imprisons him, that “castles” him, is indicative of an unbridgeable divide wrought from fear and prejudices that have been consolidated through the history of the West Indies. But there is a mysterious relationship

which breaks through and repudiates these biases, allowing the White Creole to share in the burdens which he has helped to place on the backs of the villagers. Of course, one is all too aware of the difference between the landlord and the villagers, the exploiter and the exploited; but the participation in this exploitative archetype leads to an unpredictable sharing:

Whatever they endured the Creightons remained. It were as though the village were a disease which couldn't be rid of. They couldn't leave it any more than the Shoemaker or Mr. Foster or Pa himself. It held them as it held the villagers. Everyone said it had got into the blood. It was the soil of their roots. (230)

The dilemma of incoherence, fragmentation and homelessness are embodied in the consciousness of G. He is evidence of the maimed human image. In a sense, he is the image that witnesses its own destruction because what occurs in terms of his interiority is externalized in the homelessness of the villagers. Early in the novel, as the boys set out for the sea, G senses that “something was wrong”. He, like Pathe old and the young—cannot articulate the problem that resides within him but which also lies outside the scope of his logical comprehension:

Above us was the morning star hard and distant like a diamond. It had a quality of

light like the dew, but did not shine. It seemed a solid, four-pointed flame that would crack under the hammer and scatter from the blow in a million splinters, each remaining solid and steady like the star itself. (109).

It is as if he is looking into the morning sky of the West Indies and the West Indian and seeing the initial shattering blow the initial explosion, the resulting fragmentation, and the consolidation of the myriad of fragments. G has established an intuitive dialogue with other selves across the barriers of time; he has committed an intuitive leap backward in a subconscious effort to regain a pre-West Indian intactness of psyche. His vague but certain knowledge that “something was wrong” is born out of an authentic response to his individual image, the image of the West Indian. This is a direction-giving image, and the directions—the liquid leaps—fountain into the present ground upon which G stands and into the image that he is. The first direction springs from his present and states itself in terms of an unshakable potential for life; the second is rooted in and grows out of the deep and hazy past and flows forward into his present unfulfilled image: that of the fragmented and homeless but hopeful West Indian. This image is juxtaposed alongside the contrasting image of the doves which seem so absolutely at home:

*Only the doves seemed to have found
some peace in these surroundings . . .*

The brown bodies seemed to slope up all together to meet the blue-ringed necks and the heads that were neither round nor flat. The line was broken but the movement was regular, as they crossed the green turf from one end to the other, keeping time with their coos and carrying in their eyes all the colours of the rainbow.

This, certainly, is the kind of relationship with his surroundings that dramatizes the aspiration of the disintegrated, dispossessed West Indian. It is not a statement of stasis of what he may become; rather, it is what he must push towards and then move forward again in an endeavour to obey the human need for a condition of constant becoming, a constant reassessment of self and the surroundings in which it finds itself. The doves do not surrender individual sovereignty, but it is the smooth wholeness of each that subscribes to the rhythm, the dynamism of the “all”. The geographic nature of this symbolic human hope for a sense of home should also be carefully considered: the disjointed archipelago that is the West Indies indeed contains “all colours of the rainbow,” a reference to the racial heterogeneity of the region. Ultimately, then, this vision of hope in *In the Castle of my Skin* reaches out of its specific circumstances to encompass the reintegration of all aspects of the West Indies. But it is a vague, implicit embrace. Very importantly, as G looks

at the doves, it occurs to him that in the village the sparrows and black birds “which were the commonest victims of our snares had seldom been joined by the doves”. (111) There is a sense here, therefore, of home, security, and a commitment to the life of the “individual,” a powerful assertion that derives its strength from the collective rhythm. G, on the other hand, remains the isolated and vulnerable hopeful West Indian who is closer to the symbol/image of the crab. Michael Gilkes puts this well:

The frequently-used image of the sea-crab, with its awkward, halting progress, its sensitive, stalk-like eyes acting as perceptors for the vulnerable creature its protective shell, is closely linked with the personality of the novel's young hero, G.

Having looked at the morning star and intuited its fragmentation and having perceived the image of hope inherent in the animal inhabitants of the West Indies, G looks again into the sky (the “day” of the West Indies having progressed) and receives a vision that is of tremendous value in the context of Lamming's attempt at a restatement of history within a liberating, fulfilling historical archetype in which the dialectics of life interact with each other. G looks into the sky and sees a thick, white cloud in one part of the sky:

It seemed to be driven by some force outside it, but soon the wave burst from inside...it became thinner and whiter breaking up into shapes of islands and men and beasts, and the shapes disintegrated into specks that flew like spray in the face of the laughing sky. The sky was like a great big bully choosing the life and death of these tottering shapes. (111)

Then G looks at another part of the sky, where everything was more peaceful and the clouds were enacting a legend. On that side were the men and beasts. Under a lion's neck where the mane fell in a thick fluff two lambs lay sleeping. The lion's skin pointed down to the basement of sky so that a space was formed that covered over and about the sleeping lambs. Some yards away two men were exchanging words in an altercation that involved life and death. It was on close examination that they were men, but the shapes were not satisfactory. The animals were more accurately constructed. The men looked disfigured. The light was unsteady, and the figures seemed to take on different colours. One grew whiter and whiter...while the other became thicker and cloudier as if it were ready to rain...The rain cloud had turned black with a full face and heavy like many a villager's. The figures were still, and they looked across at each other hard and steady as if they were involved in a common chaos which neither could understand but

both greatly desired to redeem. They looked and their eyes were no longer there but they seemed to see in some other way, each the other! And as they looked the clouds curving over and about their heads made an arc of words that read: ARE YOU NOT A BROTHER? The shapes sharpened in outline, the white one getting heavier and darker; and finally, they burst into broad trickles of rain that ran down the precipice of the sky...It was not clear who had spoken, and the clouds had written no answer. (111-112)

What Lamming is doing here is indeed a remarkable, daring thing. This is a vision of a manifest image which is pointing towards the unmanifest, hidden, imageless yet wholly authentic sub-structural truth. In the first part of the sky at which G looks, he sees an intense re-dramatization of images in space; but it is an archetype that reflects and succumbs to the horrifying legacies of the past. In that sense it is life-denying, for it has not progressed into any kind of wholeness: the archetype of exploitation is all too evident here as the dialectics of life and death come into conflict under the awesome dictatorial power of the sky. This drama of images simply subscribes succumbs to the kind of exploitation that initiated the society that is the West Indies: there is the initial fragmentation, significantly into islands, beasts and men, and a restatement of the horrifying archetype of slavery. Then G turns and looks at the other part and there is a progression here: a welter of principles involves themselves in a drama that resolves the conflict

contained in the first image. The first is the resolution of the dialectics of hunter and hunted—the lion and the lamb springing out of a sacrifice of their prescribed roles. The “sacrificial lamb” now involves itself with the thing that kills: the trusting being of the former gives itself up—self-sacrificing itself, as it were to the traditionally tyrannical lion. The latter, in turn, sacrifices its traditional role as hunter. And, from the resolution of paradox, this enacted image of sacrifice by a sacrifice of image, is created a womb of peace, a realm of relationship that suspends conflict and, in so doing, underlines a profound commitment to life itself.

Yards away, however, there are two men, “exchanging words in an altercation that involved life and death.” It is precisely this discord that renders them less than entirely human. The principles of Black and White wrench themselves apart and consolidate their polarized states as they stand on the ground of conflict. Then, it is as though they suspend their prescribed roles in a moment of truth or recognition of a thing shared, a “common chaos” which neither could understand but both greatly desired to redeem. They lose their eyes—another sacrifice—and in so doing experience insight. The bolstering of ego ceases, the consolidation of polarized states is suspended, and they seem to enact a confirmation of each other's unique personal existence out of a compassionate human response in a shattering moment that was unforeseen, and which may not be repeated or imitated. They suspend traditional, biased

concepts of humanity, thereby reasserting a profoundly realistic image of man: "Are you not a brother?" And so, out of their recognition comes a sharpening in outline and tear-like trickles of rain. Fundamental principles, rendered hierarchical and static because of ruthlessly entrenched dehumanising biases, become resolved: land/sea/sky (the "basement" and "precipice" of the sky), hunter/hunted, death/life, Black/White, animal/human, wholeness/disintegration, victim/victor, all participate in a drama that subscribes to life rather than succumbs to stasis and so death. The relevance of all of this resides in the fact that the images in the sky represent the objectification of a subjective perception. The very tone of the recording, retrospective "I now" of Lamming lends a dialectical balance to the perception of the evolving "I then" which is, in fact, the dramatic agent of a subconscious fictionalised reality. The images represent the exteriorisation of G's oceanic density, dramatizing at once images of despair and hope, the strangling obedience to an exploitative archetype and at the same time an unpredictable, fulfilling historical archetype. The novel ends with Pa about to leave for the Alms House, with the Shoemaker's house being reduced to "a bundle of wood heaped on stones" as he tries to remove it, and with G's journey to Trinidad. All have been rendered homeless, in many senses. Even so, however, there remains a stubborn, persistent core of being, diminished but potent, which is symbolized by the pebble. At the end of the novel, on the edge of his journey to Trinidad, G recollects the words of Pa and a

constellation of people and thoughts which reflect his own state:

*'Twas a night like this nine years ago
when those waters roll.' The village, my
mother, a boy among boys, a man who
his people won't feel alone, to be a
different kind of creature. Words and
voices falling like a shower and the old
man returning with the pebble under the
grape leaves on the sand. (303)*

To miss the fact that events and people are structurally sandwiched by a reference (made, significantly, by Pa) to the flood, on one hand, and by the permanence symbolized by the pebble on the other, is to be blind to the kind of paradox which surrounds G and which he embodies in the room of his consciousness; the paradox of destruction and homelessness and, at the same time, an incorrigible hope for a fulfilling recreation of reality is one that underlines a very fundamental aspect of West Indian literature. In this passage, the language itself, "words and voices falling like a shower," is reminiscent of G's bath on the shifting pebbles and the drama of the vision in the sky. The ending of *In the Castle of my Skin*, therefore, represents the contraction of paradoxical symbolic images which interpenetrate each other and become re-interjected into the consciousness of the narrator as he is about to move to Trinidad a place which incidentally, close as it is to Barbados in cultural, geographic and historical terms remains, by and large,

outside of any conscious shared experience of the Barbadians in the novel. Implicit in the ending is the fact that G is himself uneasy about finding a sense of self and a home in Trinidad. Even though he is afforded the brief apprehension in the “clouds” scene, G is not yet ready to undertake a sustained imaginative grope backward into the beginnings of the West Indian's unique dilemma, by restating history in order that he may release himself from an imprisoning archetype. As we move away from Castle, we realize that G is not yet ready to undertake this rather more perilous grope towards an apprehension of the pebble, of that oceanic hidden image within him. And so, he enacts the desired response to the warning made by an African ancestor in Pa's dream:

*So if you hear some young fool fretting
about back to Africa, keep far from the
invalid and don't force a passage to
where you won't yet belong. (211)*

The impact of *In the Castle of my Skin* has been a tremendous one on West Indian literature. As Charles Larson writes:

In a way, it is proper to think of Lamming's work as foreshadowing the later inward turning of the Third World novel—personal history depicted through introspection, stream of consciousness, the interior monologue.¹⁷ Indeed, in *Castle* George Lamming made the first muscular artistic leap in West Indian literature

towards an authentic response to this West Indian dilemma of psychic fragmentation and homelessness. *In the Castle of my Skin* points toward the questions but, like the clouds in G's vision in the sky, provides no definite answers.

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SECTION 3: MALAYSIAN LITERATURE

LETTER FROM MALAYSIA

Fall 1994

February 1, 1994 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Dear Friends,

When I arrived in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on December 17, my first impression was that Malaysians are a warm, kind, generous, hospitable people. Even before I landed, this was the impression that I received from Malaysian Airline, by far the best airline that I've encountered. After one month and ten days, my initial feeling has been strengthened. I have been welcomed with great cordiality and regard within and without the university community. The manners here are refreshingly archaic.

Obviously, the contrast between hot and hazy Malaysia and cold and clear Canada (and I do not mean to sound like a beer commercial) is acute. After Canada, the yellow, red, blue, green, orange, pink and purple of the outfits of women and men hurt the eye pleasantly. This is a conservative, ritualistic society where, for the great part, people are retiring but not without a sense of humour. Those whom I've met have ameliorated a little my crunching homesickness for New Brunswick. My thoughts and feelings are rooted in my sense of being abscised twice over-first from the Caribbean, now from Canada. Home, indeed, is an unfathomable place.

Malaysia is a land marked by contrasts and contradictions. Everywhere there is evidence of things being built-construction sites, lorries, bulldozers, cranes, the incessant sound of metal on metal, the hard sound of a nation preparing itself for a new century. But there is equal and parallel evidence that economic deprivation is a reality and a threat-heaps of rubbish, dilapidated houses, a sense of general abandonment on the faces of people and on the facades of buildings; an unhygienic road-side food stand erected feebly, bravely, next to a posh restaurant.

My rickety (but air-conditioned) taxi runs parallel to a very expensive Mercedes. In between, there is a 50 cc moped upon which sit a husband and wife team. I know them to be a team because a look of quiet desperation is imprinted equally upon both faces. Perched precariously, they zing along, hopefully for better, expectedly for worse. The woman wore a drab green dress, drawn up by her posture to reveal six inches above the ankle. I had forgotten that feet could look like this: they were cracked and splayed. The toes were crooked inward as if to keep grip on her tenuous existence upon the earth. There were sores above her ankles, some quite raw. The husband wore a helmet incongruously too big for his head; and, as he rode along on the broken lines separating the lanes-six inches on either side from certain death-his head would fall upon chest as if from a great weariness. Then he'd jerk it up again, more from habit than from will.

There is the shack in the shadow of the skyscraper; the manicured garden adjoining a yard littered with the rusty, abandoned carcasses of vehicles; expensive cars bedecked tastelessly alongside cars so old that they run on a hope; and national confidence (even nationalistic chauvinism) and a pinching insularity which manifests itself in pragmatic regard for and fear of the English Language, simultaneously. The air is never neutral: there is always a stench or a fragrance. Outside of Kuala Lumpur, we get the latter mostly.

On a clear night, the stars seem so close that they appear to neighbour the leaves of trees thick with their rich greenness. On a moonlit night children play games on the streets and in yards. Friends visit easily, and all is noisy and musical with community. This is a young country, and there are babies and toddlers everywhere, always the sound of appeasement or scolding. The sound of street vendors selling ice-cream, bread and cakes, sweets, a rice-cooked-in-coconut-milk-with-a-hot-sauce dish, vegetables, meat, or even mattresses, is heard frequently. They toot, hoot, call, yell, whistle, ring bells, and play music.

If I were to identify a national pastime, it would be eating. Each meeting or conference that I've attended so far has been punctuated by the arrival of polite men and women bringing pots of tea and coffee and a variety of tasty finger foods. Faculty members are served individually whilst the meeting continues apace. This holds true for meetings at all levels and does not depend

on the presence of senior university officials. Breakfast is not breakfast as we know it-it's an event, a meal as heavy as supper in most New Brunswick homes. There are innumerable open-air restaurants that pay little attention to form or style but place the accent on convenience, speed and taste. Five Canadian dollars would buy much more than two people can eat. If this is a bit too formal, there is always the roadside stand, never far off, where you can get a considerable and tasty meal. One of the favourites is "roti channai" consisting of a much softer and more delicious version of pita bread. This is eaten with a broth made from yellow split peas; in the middle of the broth is placed a spicy chili sauce. This would cost just over a quarter. The less adventurous would head for any of numerous and varied conventional restaurants; and there are many McDonald's and KFC outlets.

It is true that the sounds of children, vendors and construction are ubiquitous; yet, the most prevalent sound is the blast or beep of the horns of vehicles. The drivers of trucks, buses, cars and motor- bikes in Malaysia seem to be positive that pressing the horn incessantly would make other vehicles evaporate or take wing. Motorists are offensive in the extreme: pedestrians, including pregnant women and children, are fair game. I have seen many school children stranded in the middle of the road; they stand in a row, shoulder to shoulder in their uniforms, looking like swallows that line electric wires. Except that the

swallows are safer; and they are noticed because they poop copiously on these pampered cars. But the children stand stranded for many minutes as vehicles zoom in front of and behind them. And they are standing on a cross-walk, marked clearly in yellow!!! For their part, pedestrians, when they are given the chance to cross, saunter and swagger in arrogant challenge to crazed motorists and their horned metal weapons. There is little or no regard for the sirens of ambulances or fire engines; lanes are ignored; overtaking on the inside shoulder of the road is a normal and seemingly natural occurrence. The worst culprits are these little mopeds-thousands upon thousands of them-which dart in and out of traffic like so many mosquitoes driven mad by the scent of fresh, warm blood. For the most part, Malaysians are an attractive, graceful people; however, they are at their least attractive when they perch or crouch on these motor- bikes. They seem unbalanced and contorted, always out of proportion, always graceless. Yet, this is when there is greatest self-admiration.

The second most prevalent sound in Malaysia is the azaan or Muslim call to prayer. It is to be heard five times per day-one is awakened by it and put to bed by it. It is a plaintive, tremulous cry exhorting people to prayer; and it may be quite beautiful if the voice is not too nasal or shrill. Mosques are as numerous as Christian churches in Fredericton, and each mosque seems equipped with a public address system.

Consequently, the air rings with the Arabic call. There is a sense, even among Muslims, that Islam is the same all over the world. It is not. In the Caribbean, the very rhythms are different, the attitudes quite dissimilar. The religion reigns supreme here, and seems to dictate the very rhythm of every-day life. Even on academic campuses, everything grinds to a halt for about two hours during communal Friday prayers. It is significant that the most dominant building on the huge campus of the University Kebangsaan Malaysia is the mosque. The people are devout. The ignorance of our Canadian students regarding the Islamic Bible (The Koran) is matched by the ignorance of Muslim students regarding the Christian Bible. Two massive, massive solitudes. But I shall keep my thoughts on the university for another time.

If I am to identify a refrain that runs through my head, it would be this: I had forgotten. Much of what I see and hear comes to me as a kind of half-buried, half-excavated memory. I had forgotten that cats in heat could sound like children in pain, that they could roam the streets in large numbers with their far-away eyes, tufts torn from their bodies leaving raw pink patches. Most are scarred and lame from a life of perpetual combat and violent sex. In them there is a curious aggression, that which we find in the abandoned and despairing. I had forgotten that dogs could be hairless from age and dumb hardship, their skin wrinkled in big grey-black folds. I had forgotten that they could have

udders hanging, blackened and dry from too much use and too little food. Defeated, they scavenge for food in the rubbish which accumulates like days at the backs of shops.

I had forgotten that roosters heralded the dawn, their red and blue and black and gold feathers ruffled by the effort, then return to their accustomed glossy smoothness. They pick their feet up as if disdaining the earth; like sprinters they raise their knees, thighs parallel to the ground. These roosters crow, their chests puffed and necks curved in an unabashed display of male potency. I had forgotten that the wind may seem a thing alive: once, as I was walking through a rubber plantation, it came through the trees like a visible and predatorial thing. Three monkeys were running high above on the tops of trees, the wind on their tails. I remember now the majesty of the coconut tree and the seductive sway of the banana plant.

Women can walk the streets at night without too much apprehension. They are graceful, modest, and confident without being strident. Unselfconsciously, men walk hand in hand in friendship and brotherhood, without fear of being condemned or lauded. Like most Canadians, most Malaysians are ready to smile. Most seem able to rise above everyday worry to be neighbourly or welcoming.

My evening walk leads me through a rubber plantation via a dusty road which leads to a quarry and to a large

pond out of which pink fish leap and splash. One day, I was approached by a boy of 10 or 11. He was extremely dark, his face glistening with sweat from exhaustion or agitation; yet, he smiled pleasantly. "Uncle! Uncle!" he called (all elders are either "uncle" or "auntie"). "Melayu? Melayu?" He was asking whether I spoke Hahasa Melayu, the national language of Malaysia. I replied: "No. English. Do you speak English?" "Little bit, lah!" he stammered. From his painfully fragmented English (individual words, really) which punctuated his frantic gesticulation and mime, I made out that his father was in an accident. Apparently, the man was riding home from work on his moped when a truck came up behind him, hit a speed bump, went up into the air, and touched the back of the bike on its way down. Bike and father went flying. The truck drove off. That his father was hurt was proved by the bloody clothes which the boy produced, and by the blood which I now noticed had soaked into the dust. His father had made it home and had fallen asleep. The boy wanted me to help him get the bike and bring it home safely. However, I could not decipher where the accident occurred or where the bike had been deposited.

This child, made eloquent by panic and fear for his father, could not make me understand. His eyes were beautifully black and shone with intensity and effort. His lovely face was alive with feeling, this child that could not get my help though I was willing to give it. The concentration on my face must have seemed like

pain or worry, for the boy stopped and said in a voice thick with new worry: "Don' worry, Uncle! Don' worry." "So sorry, Uncle. So sorry." He walked off through the trees clutching his bloody bundle, turning back and waving all the while, the shadow of leaves upon his face. It struck me that he had comforted me; this needy child with the intense eyes had extended his compassion beyond his circumstance, his fear, his language and his age. If this is the Malaysian of the future, then Malaysia's future is assured. I hope I see him again.

As I continued along my way, I wondered: how can I hope to contribute to many in complex ways when I could not have contributed to the relief of one child in an urgent but simple matter? And supposing it were a greater emergency, what then...?

With your permission, I shall use this medium to say hello to all my students, friends and colleagues at St. Thomas University and the University of New Brunswick. I remember you all fondly and wish you all the very best.

Daizal R. Samad

University Kebangsaan Malaysia

TOWARD NATIONAL IDENTITY AS BY PHENOMENAL ALCHEMY: A READING OF K.S. MANIAM'S IN A FAR COUNTRY

The self, migrant, half-formed, unformed, dismembered, must be remade from a series of metamorphoses; it takes as parts of itself all influences and personages which have affected it, afflicted it, lived with it and died with it. In the making and re-making of the individual, these elements and influences are reborn into things unlike themselves. But the issues in K.S. Maniam's *In A Far Country* are not only as complex as the formation and reformation of self, about reintegration from dismemberment; they are about the simultaneous and allegorical relationship of that self with a national entity, a country; they are about antecedental and pregenital influences, those who have influenced and those who are influenced, the subject and the object, the signifier and the signified; they are about self and country, and about nation and family. In *A Far Country* faces us with a series of half-formed and constantly reformed concentricity: self, family, nation, world, universe. In this novel, we are confronted by the half-remembered world of dreams and nightmares, about the constantly evolving world of substantial reality which informs the dream world and which is reformed by that dream world, as the metaphor is indistinguishable from the meaning it implies.

At one level, *In A Far Country* charts the reintegration of the narrator's self through retrospection and introspection; it explores the ways in which that self may exist in a nation in which it finds itself but from which it is alienated. But at a deeper level, the novel explores the country that is a construct existing and evolving within metamorphosing self. The characters with whom Rajan, the narrator, has been and is in contact his father, Andy, Lee Shin, Shivasurian, Zulkifli, Mani, Matt, Vasanthi are as much characters in their own right as they are metaphoric aspects of himself and Malaysia, the nation in which they all live. For there are two nations, like the reality of dream and the dream of reality, one within Rajan and one without, each addressing the other, each a part of the other. But the self is not an island; it is a hybrid complex of other selves that have touched it. Maniam's premise is that the self-reservoir of other interconnected selves of the past and present and future - which exists in a country goes towards its making, as the country goes towards the making of that self; the landscape/manscape relationship is symbiotic. In *A Far Country*, more than any fictional work ever produced in Malaysia (or in Singapore, for that matter), explores the contentious issue of what constitutes a multi-racial psyche, and a multi-racial nation existing in a largely multi-racial world. As in many of K. S. Maniam's works, the quest for the realisation of self-reintegrated and for a simultaneous sense of nationhood takes the form of the search for the tiger.

Rajan's habitual posture is that of the individualistic objective observer, the rationalist. He is always on the inside looking out or on the outside looking in. The narrator's very first statement in the novel is only half right: "There has hardly been a time in my life when I've stayed in a room, looking outside, doing nothing" (1). Yet, Rajan recalls that, as a boy, he saw his father ease into a slow death from despair and drink: "I watched my father" (4); "I sat on watching, waiting" (7). There is a significant absence of dialogue between him and his father, even as the boy observes and absorbs the tragedy of a futile life drawing to a close. Also as a boy, he recalls observing from a safe distance the spectacle of the slaughter of Mani, the goat. Slightly older, he uses the same objectification to record the movements of Muniandy, a labourer: "He became a most absorbing subject. So I became a follower of his movements, a sort of secret or private eye to work out what he was doing at all hours of the day" (19).

Later, as a young man posted to the North of the island, he observes his colleague, Lee Shin. Rajan actually keeps a notebook, in the manner, tone and language of the amateur anthropologist, on Lee Shin's activities. He refers to himself as "the observer" and takes comfort in walls that "kept out unwanted night intrusions and kept in a familiar cosiness" (37). Without knowing that his statements imply unconscious confession, he writes, again referring to himself in the third person, again in "The Lee Shin Study": "He had always kept away from

such exposures by simply jamming his window to and throwing himself into the timeless world of books" (38). In the study, more revealing of Rajan than of Lee Shin, he writes about "studying myself as somebody else. Not to lose myself within myself but to stand outside and examine all the thoughts and feelings that cause attachment and misery" (36). Rajan, the recollecting adult, uses the same tone and posture in describing his feelings about his wife's room:

*My view was that she wanted some kind
of comparison to all the luxury she found
in the rest of the house. Perhaps she
wanted to use it as a reminder of the
poverty from which she had come. (91)*

In talking about his newly regained pastime of reading, Rajan says: "This pastime of mine was completely alien to my nature. Perhaps all that reading provided a contrasting view or views of life to the one I led" (102). Yet, this habit of reading is one that he has had from since a young man; so that it is less "alien" to his nature than he says. Rajan, therefore, is unaware of what he contains, is blind to the true nature of his identity - as Malaysia is largely unaware of the promise it contains beneath superficial caveats of "development" and popular notions of "nationhood".

Remarkably, it is in the process of writing creatively, without the limitations of conscious ideology and attitude, that he stumbles on the truth: "Life is not all

analysis. Just when I thought I had reached some sense of peace and clarity, I find odd things happening" (145). It is in art that self may be apprehended, that the nation may be reconceived and re-apprehended as a vision of complex harmony beyond racial divisions, political sloganeering, silly national songs and shallow sound bites.

The strong implication, therefore, is that Rajan until now has been lost. And being found lies in the written retrospection embedded in *In A Far Country*. His life has been but a series of observations, and one has been spared this pseudo-scientific analysis. What he discovers partially in the process of writing is that writing itself is a source of analysis, but much more complex since it calls upon an unconscious confessional equipment. Maniam's wonderful achievement here is that he allows the reader to see what the narrator only glimpses. In a way, then, the reader participates in the evolution of the character. We may envision what Rajan contains and the being to which he has evolved even as the evolution continues. Much like the Malaysian may envision what Malaysia contains, how it has evolved and to what, while the nation as a whole remains blind or half-blind to what is truly valuable: what it contains, the many and diverse, the interconnectedness that creates the fragile whole.

When we first meet Rajan, he is depleted, having "lost the drive that brought me to my present status of house and property owner, with a solid bank account" (3). He

describes himself as a "zero" (30); but, since he goes on about his bank account, he is a cipher full of numbers. He claims: "Most of the time, my mind is a blank and to get rid of the blankness, I've been reading" (3). In spite of having achieved what is regarded as success, he is "now filled with a terrifying emptiness" (25). Later in the novel, the refrain occurs again: "There is a blank now in my mind where once there used to be a wide, scenic canvas of the country" (78). Though he uses words like blank and blankness, empty and emptiness, to describe his mind, Rajan is really a blank with a lifetime of experiences. Many people have walked into and out of his consciousness, leaving indelible footprints. It is not so much that he is a blank as he cannot read what is written into his mind. He describes his house as

A big house, it is too quiet and too cramped with the trophies of my achievements. I am hemmed in by all kinds of external laws; rules and regulations that govern success but not the well being of a person. Why do I feel so left out of everything, and bereft? (65)

Rajan's refusal and inability to acknowledge the spectral presences that he constitutes is one of the reasons why he hears but cannot understand, sees but does not apprehend. About Lee Shin, he writes: "Now and then he whistles a tune which has no resemblance to any the observer has heard" (31); "He does not make

sense; nor does the Mandarin inscription along the length of the flute" (39); "As Lee Shin launches into a full melody, the observer becomes more and more disoriented. He has never heard a harmonica produce such strange sounds" (33). Almost in a daze while hearing the sound of the sea and what may have been crabs, he says: "I was struck by a sudden wave of protest in a language I didn't even know existed" (26). When he withdraws to a life of contemplation, his wife Vasanthi takes over the running of the business. He says: "I can't help but think that this entirely new Vasanthi must have grown all the time without my noticing the signs" (90).

For one who fancies himself as an observer, the narrator is curiously blind to the sounds and sights and people around him. Rajan's psychic disability is rooted deeply in his personal past and in the connected and allegorical colonial past of the country.

Rajan is a real estate developer who, on the surface, is successful in every regard. He is a self-made man, an economic success story of his own creation. His recipe for material success includes a conscious plan to acquire wealth, a consciously chosen direction, industry and dedication, a demanding work ethic: "I came to be associated with reliability, perseverance, and determination" (68). The recipe includes, as well, the conscious abandonment of elements of the past and a conscious ignoring of the influences that go towards making him what he is and what he may become.

One of the great catalysts to Rajan's material success, his "drive", is his humble beginnings in the rubber plantation, the grinding poverty of his parents, their sense of being strangers in a strange land. The road away from such homelessness and poverty is a red laterite road on which he has his first psychical rebirth; it is a critical step towards halting remembrance and Osiris-like reintegration. Rajan, the boy, is sent by his mother on an errand for grocery on credit. He is both half-filled and half-hungry, half-awake and half-asleep, as he sets off on the road, "a bit of winding red-graveled stretch" (24). Rajan feels "an otherness accompanying me" (23). As "the otherness gains dominance" (24), he is forced to forget his mundane mission. The landscape assumes new life and proportions, "The space between [the trees] reflected a light that only the first morning on earth could have radiated...there was no time; there was no space" (24). This is the first morning of the first day of his psychical rebirth and the birth of the landscape upon which he is to tread the days of his life. This first push is the birth towards material ambition, as a newly independent nation sets out on its own rocky road, yearning for proof of its worth and independence by material prosperity. Rajan reaches the shop, but "I wasn't the meek estate boy but an aggressive individual out to make a mark in the world" (25).

He embarks on a journey that leads him, physically and psychically, away from estate life, the life of the rubber tapper, imprisoned by thick walls of poverty and

disease, futility and suicide, hopelessness and cynicism, decay and death. He is reborn on a road that takes him away from his father's despair and death, from the alienation and hopelessness which have already laid waste his siblings:

What did my father see during his last days? And the children, my brothers and sisters, they had that glaze in their eyes that shone like the marble surface of exclusion. There was no light or colour or reflection. Nothing moved or formed itself behind those unseeing eyes. (43)

His rebirth represents the apparent exit of the colonised from the coloniser's dream of paradise by material wealth, a hell in which few gain and many lose, where there are the owners and the owned, where "people don't explore; they supported and obeyed" (43).

Ironically, Rajan's direction, while it leads away from deprivation to material success, leads to another kind of futility. He exchanges his father's prison for another that is different only in the animal comfort it provides. Instead of obeying the commands of the coloniser, he reacts in contrary fashion, equally predictable, easily manipulated. Rajan's fear of being owned and controlled is connected to his estate past and to his father, and it underlines his every action and relationship. He goes against his two business acquaintances, Jimmy Kok and Ramasammy, and joins

forces with the more "progressive" citizens of the town who would have two colonial buildings destroyed. Rajan's mind is made up when he visits one of the buildings:

I realized how much the District Office, together with its adjunct, the Court House, had ruled my life. There it had been that my birth certificate was issued, my father's citizenship papers obtained, copies of my own school certificate verified and stamped for application to university; there three couples had committed themselves, one to the other, in marriage and there it was too it was that death certificates were received for the final exit. (75)

Rajan's reaction, typical of many leaders of newly independent nations, is all too familiar. Destroy that which reminds us of our subservience, and erect new structures in our own glory. The rationale varies, though not much, from place to place; but the reason behind the action is always the same - a deep-seated insecurity and fear. The fear of being owned assumes a very personal dimension for Rajan. He justifies his philosophical position on the issue in personal terms: "They gave me no choice but to do what I did. Ramasamy and Jimmy Kok.... assumed an air of proprietorship over me that was irritating, if not humiliating... They believed they owned me" (73).

Rajan's reaction is consistent, right up until he locks himself up in his wife's sanctuary-like room and begins the narrative process that is the novel and the recreation of himself through the re-assembly of disparate, forgotten or interred aspects of himself. He reacts against Wali Farouk, the guide at the camp at which, as a young man, Rajan is posted:

So when Wali Farouk set himself up in imperious leadership, I kept my distance from him. I wasn't going to be led by the nose into seeing what he saw of the land.... The little of the land that I had seen until then bore the imprints of transferred history and culture. I wanted to see the land for what it was, unadulterated by any man's visions or fantasies. (44)

He reacts in similar ways to Lee Shin and to Zulkifli, both of whom he feels "assumed an air of proprietorship" over him (73). The ethno- colonial implications are clear: Rajan will resist any imposition on or circumscription of his individual freedom, whether it comes from the English, Malay, Chinese or Indian. Central to this fear of being owned is the narrator's reaction to his father. Rajan sees that it is colonialism that is responsible for his father's despair and death. However, he also yields to the temptation of blaming and despising the victim for being victimised. Initially, he remembers his father as a broken man,

tugged this way and that, puppet-like, by the tyranny of plantation life and the white man's dream, seeing his children and wife become infected by the diseases of bitterness and despair, and yielding finally to drunkenness. Rajan's description of his father is yet another means of distancing himself from the weak, as if the weak carried a potent seed of evil. In almost the same terms as Marlow uses to describe Kurtz, Rajan says: "All I can recall is that he would lie like a covered corpse... the corpse sat up and blinked at the bright day...then the corpse straightened itself out some more and put on a shirt and shorts" (3).

The amount of material property he acquires -- house, money, bank account, business, car, etc. -- is directly proportional to the distance he wants to establish between his "successful" life and his father's futility. All of Rajan's business dealings have, in some way or other, to do with land. As Zulkifli tells him, "You divide and sell the lots like pieces of cloth" (92). This "attachment" to the land is a reaction against the seafaring tradition from which his father is descended. Rajan wants to stop the wandering; the immigrant must now find a harbour and establish home:

Why did I like being nearer the land than the sea? The sea, on recollection, seems to have been there in my blood, a phase of forgotten evolution: that part of a process when the human spirit was lost in all the seas and oceans and only

*yearned for land, for a home. Was that
the shiftlessness I had seen in my father's
eyes before he died?*

But Rajan is too unrelievedly focused on his father's last days; in the process of recollection, and in the act of writing, he recalls more than the corpse he describes. He at first bemoans the fact that there were no stories, "no torrents of words or sounds of surprise, only barren sighs and a turning away of heads" (44). But later, when he matures in the process of recollection and writing, Rajan remembers more of his father, a man moved by dreams of escape from India, removed by the dreams of the English who would uproot and transplant and imprison. His father was a man who recounted and interpreted, even if in reprimand of his wife, stories from The Ramayana. Here was a man who was in Malaysia but who stranger still to its varied landscape and its peoples. Rajan's father is caught between being the Indian immigrant in psyche and being the Malayan citizen on paper. But it is he who offers to Rajan the direction he must take to establish a home in Malaysia: "We must leave the estate. We must go to the real land." That was what he said the many times we stood at the estate border and looked at the sprawling land beyond. "We must get to the centre," he said, "all by ourselves" (44).

The final sentence by Rajan's father is deliberately, painfully vague. The "we" may be generic, familial, personal; the "centre" may be universal, national,

individual; and "ourselves" may be all of the peoples of Malaysia, none of the people other than Indians, none apart from family, or none apart from the lonely, questing self. It is fair to conclude, then, that Rajan's journey must include others characteristic signposts, as they were - that gesture towards this centre, country, home; as it must involve original, imaginative means of getting there.

Rajan's father is an important aspect of his psyche: "Though I scoffed at him, how strange it is now to almost look and be like him" (3). He carries with him the significance of ancient myths and beliefs, customs and cultures. He brings India -- and the inestimable cultural wealth that this implies -- to Malaysia. Yet, transplantation means transmutation; Malaysia is not India; and Rajan is not his father. In this new place, multiracial and multicultural, new and greater demands are placed upon the consciousness to create or recreate self and a home for that self. As much as each new wave of migrants brings new cultural wealth, they bring too a new complex element to the national entity.

The Chinese-Malaysian, Lee Shin, is knotted to Rajan, the Indo- Malaysian, as is the latter's father, the migrant from India. Lee Shin is related to Rajan's father within the complex of Rajan's psyche:

*I stayed mostly at home as did Lee
Shin.... The more I observed Lee Shin,
the more I felt I was part of a left-over*

dream. The memories of my father must have shaped, unconsciously, my relationship with Lee Shin...even though we lived separate lives, we seemed to be joined together by some deep-seated desire for home.

Rajan father's relationship with his son mirrors Lee Shin's with his. "There had been too big a difference between his father's and his own attitudes to living in this country" (161). Thus, the fathers are as related to each other as are the sons, and as the sons are to the fathers. The issue is much more complex than the tempting simplicities of racial or familial heritage, for post-modern nations and national identities cannot be built on such flimsy foundations.

The knotted relationship has gone unacknowledged by Rajan, until now that he has come to rest in his wife's room: "What astonishes me is that I didn't notice the similarities between Lee Shin and myself" (40). He recognises in Lee Shin as well his identical habit: "a frenzy for playing roles" (60). "The Lee Shin Study", a pretentious, superficial piece of writing (but one which may be seen as a kind of stumble towards the kind of honest examination in which he is now involved) regards the human being, the brother who is self, as a creature who is to be studied, evaluated, classified. Once this proves inadequate, Rajan does with Lee Shin as he does with his father: he attaches terms with the ease of those who would dismiss by stereotype or label.

At one point, unable to come to grips with the complexity that Lee Shin represents, he says: "Lee Shin has taken another step into self-delusion" (46). At another point, he says,

I wasn't going to be trapped by nostalgia or sentimentality. He could call it whatever he wanted, even purity, but I wouldn't let him bask in all that sweet swathes of decay around the mind. The more I listened to him, the more I felt compelled to give up the observer's position and detachment. (48)

But Maniam's Lee Shin dismantles any stereotype of the Chinese, while retaining the caveats of the person of Chinese ancestry questing desperately for self-reintegrated and home in Malaysia. Lee Shin represents another step in the evolution towards contemporaneous Malaysian identity of which Rajan's father is the one of the initial steps. Lee Shin retains some of the "typical" Chinese habits: he wants his fiancée to be a traditional Chinese woman; he decorates his house with Chinese ornaments from China or Taiwan; he romanticises the shoes which bound the feet of Chinese women to paralysis; he is frugal. However, as much as he surrounds himself with the physical and emotional trappings of what he thinks would keep him Chinese, he turns away from that which is expected as well. He does not return home for Chinese New Year celebrations; he refuses to acquiesce to the wishes of his father; he turns

away from business and towards art. Rajan, now mature, realises that Lee Shin's "frugality had nothing to do with miserliness. It had to do with independence. Independence from the materialistic" (161). This is exactly the process that Rajan unconsciously undertakes, as if Lee Shin, existing within him, would witness his own truncated dream come to reawakened fruition in Rajan.

The narrator attempts to answer questions put to him in a letter from Mei, Lee Shin's fiancée. Rajan had kept the letter, "like a talisman, unopened, for a long time now. The envelope had yellowed over the years and the paper is brittle" (159). In his final letters to Mei, Lee Shin had "talked about 'pollution.' That's his word. He talked about 'how a person can't be himself.' He said something about the "privilege of individuality is the greatest possession in the world"" (160). Lee Shin's words, it must be remembered, are more than two decades old, uncovered now by Rajan who himself has evolved through reintegration. The words - and words are the medium by which Rajan carry the same portent as if seeks self-expression and self-realisation he had opened Lee Shin's tomb and found the body miraculously intact. Words are subject similarly to interpretation, and these words are especially potent in the context of a multi-cultural country in a multi-cultural world.

When Lee Shin refers to "pollution", he does not refer to the same type of pollution referred to by Shafi in V.S.

Naipaul's *Among the Believers* (1979), although the reference may be an ironic counterpoint to that interviewed character who says: "In the [Malay] village there were no pollutions of yellow cultures, yellow literatures (Naipaul 239). Lee Shin uses the word in the sense of "moral corruption" and "hypocrisy", the kind his own father exhibits and to which Mei has just referred to in her letter: "He said his father was thinking about business all the time. Money all the time" (160). And this is the same pollution by which Rajan almost poisoned himself. Thus, the caveat contained in the letter is less about racial "purity" than it is about morality and materialism, and it is directed as much to Rajan as to anyone else.

Rajan, in interpreting the words, mistakes the reference to me "impurity" (as in the mixture of blood in the veins of the individual, the mixture of influences in the psyche of the single self, or the mixture of cultures in the arterial streets of a nation). His uncertainty reveals itself in the language, but he is honest now about that uncertainty:

Was he trying to be a Chinese in a foreign land? You can only be a Chinese in China. So I thought at the time. Now his attitude becomes a little clearer. There was no China, as of old, for the culture to grow. So he took it into his head to transplant that culture here.

Even this isn't quite the correct view of Lee Shin's aspirations. His thoughts towards the end, as you say, were strange. This was, as I see it now, because he was a purist. (161)

In these few lines Rajan has had to correct himself twice, and then he touches on the truth:

Though his room was crowded with things, it wasn't cluttered up with just anything. His furniture, crockery, flute, banners, calligraphy and decorated dragons all marked out this sense of space for him...he was trying to convert a country foreign by creating cultural landscapes and landmarks in which he could be at home.... What he hadn't bargained for was interference. (162)

And the truth is one that Rajan himself sees later, with the help of his wife, Vasanthi, and Zulkifli. Lee Shin, like Rajan and Rajan's father before him, cannot abandon what they contain culturally and linguistically, and make of themselves blank parchments upon which any other culture would write their language and draw their visions. For each people the Malay, the Indian, the Chinese would have brought precious cultural cargo. But each type of cargo, that came sets down from tired migrant shoulders upon the sturdy land, goes towards the making of that landscape. Lee Shin's "clutter", then,

is Rajan's as it is Zulkifli's. When Rajan says, "The strange thing is that he seemed to need me. I was like his alter ego without whom he couldn't develop self-assurance" (162), he is once again involved in a drama of unconscious irony. First, it is much more than self-assurance for which Lee Shin needs Rajan: he needs him to complete the many-coloured, cultural fabric of consciousness and society, the Malaysian person and Malaysia the nation. Second, Rajan needs Lee Shin just as much as Lee Shin needs Rajan, and for the identical reason. They are part and parcel of each other, cultural baggage included, as they are all part and parcel of the nation. The relationship is much more complex than characteristic or neighbourly closeness; it is a case of shared psyche, hybrid psyche. And with each additional cultural element or creative individual element, the contour of the nation itself changes. Each new landing changes the nation, each new birth moves the Muse of the land to a new rearrangement. Rajan sees this only after he has apprehended the tiger, the spirit of the land:

*Though Lee Shin is dead, he has lived
within me for a long time. I don't think I
can completely exorcise him from my
thoughts. Nor do I want to. At one time,
I thought of the past as dead history. I
don't think so now. The past is needed to
make the present alive. But there must be
no slavish or desperate clinging to the
past. (166-67)*

Lee Shin is a moral purist, an artist, a transmuting, transmuted individual who has not been given the chance to be the fully mature, heterogeneous, Malaysian individual. Lee Shin is embattled on every front: by the expectations placed on him as a modern Chinese man; by the expectations placed on him by Chinese tradition; by the general materialistic values of the society. Rajan, playing his role as the sensual guru, places tremendous pressure on Lee Shin as well. He takes him upon a sensual, sexual journey to the Spotted Lady. The journey leads to yet another world in which Lee Shin is a stranger, and the further alienation eventually pushes him towards the brink of insanity. But it he who has pretensions as to special is the malice of Wali Farouk - relationship with the land, but who is but a petty fraud floating upon the flimsy reputation given him by a political label. The relationship between Wali pushes Lee Shin towards suicide. Farouk and Lee Shin is demonstrative of the habitual (though seldom publicly acknowledged) hostility in Malaysia of the Malay for the Chinese and vice versa. But the destructiveness of the relationship is greater because of the symbolic roles these characters play in the novel.

On a broad scale, Wali Farouk contains a certain type of malevolence they wear or where they find themselves. Within the particularities of Malaysia, the crime they all must face is that they have aborted the very foetus of the Malaysian citizen that is inherent in

Lee Shin, as Ramasammy and Jimmy Kok threaten to halt Rajan's identical evolution.

Lee Shin's experiments with the flute and the harmonica represent I for a creative means through which to express self and the evolution of that self. Rajan's medium is writing, and the text is the exercise come to mature realisation: we witness the recreation and evolution of Rajan to reintegrated self and complex, on-going heterogeneous identity, on-going national identity. Lee Shin's music is his medium towards the same end; art is the road that leads to the Muse of the land, to the realisation and apprehension of self as inclusive hybrid entity. However, Lee Shin never gives himself nor is he given the chance to finish the song of himself. He is too frenetic in his search for the Muse, too ready to abandon one search for another, too much still the migrant. This is why he abandons the flute for the harmonica, why he begins one melody and changes so quickly to another. Unlike Rajan, he gets no help; for in his life there is no Sivasurian, no Zulkiffli, no Lee Shin, no wife in whose room he may take refuge and sanctuary. Rajan does not yet understand the quest and is too caught up in one or another posture, so he hears but does not understand; while Wali Farouk exercises his cruelty. The pressures are so great that Lee Shin commits suicide. Rajan discovers the body, "His legs were drawn up to his stomach; one hand clutched a wad of notes and the other seemed to have pawed at the floor" (62):

He was an aborted foetus, man-like in completeness but everything else not formed at all.... Why did he have to lie down there on the floor like an unfinished task he had set for himself? Could man be more distorted? The hand that held the money seemed to clutch at desperation. The other hand, having pawed at the floor, lay like a sculptured piece of action that had reached its conclusion. His face was dark-as dark as mine- and the rest of his body blue-black. I couldn't accept this sudden change in colour.... (63-64)

Lee Shin is an "aborted foetus" for he is as yet incomplete. The realisation of a Malaysian identity, the Malaysian person, lies unfulfilled. This is the task he "had set for himself": reintegration, completion, community. He is caught between the need for individual independence (the money clutched in one hand) and the need for national-cultural attachment (the other hand pawing at the ground). He is caught between material ambition and the symbolic realisation of being the tiger. In the end, Lee Shin achieves neither; but neither has he "reached a conclusion" since his conclusion is Rajan, reborn time and again, to become finally and symbolically the inclusive citizen, the rainbow identity of the nation. Lee Shin, in death, becomes the colour of Rajan; and this gives additional

truth to Rajan's words to Mei: "Lee Shin lived within me for a long time" (166).

Lee Shin's incompleteness is similar to Rajan's father's reduction at death: "The slackened skin cried out against the emptiness within. My father had dreamed too much and had achieved too little... There was little of him, when he died, to be buried or cremated" (46). With minor modifications, Rajan could have been describing Lee Shin. Indeed, the implications of aborted citizenship, aborted identity, are the same.

Lee Shin is therefore related to Rajan's father as well as to his own generation of Rajan and Zulkiffli. The cross-generation relationship occurs most strongly with Lee Shin and Mat, Zulkiffli's son. Thus, Lee Shin, who would have been of Zul's age had he lived, now lives in the desperation of Zul's son, Mat, of the following generation. This finally ready to leave his wife's becomes clear when Rajan room/womb visits Zul who has now aged to venerable Pak Zul. Rajan's attempt is to try again to perceive the tiger, his first attempt with Zul having been aborted, as his father's dream of home is aborted and as Lee Shin lies like an aborted fetus.

During the visit, Rajan hears from an embittered Zul about the latter's son who had journeyed into the city, Kuala Lumpur. What Ma saw and experienced there, was so corrupting that it overwhelms the aboriginal strength of the lad. Though he has seen the tiger, the aboriginal Muse of the land, Mat goes mad.

countryside, to family, the land, and community, to his "moorings" (126 But the damage is done. Mat eventually kills some people and is placed in an asylum. Wali Farouk's malice and Rajan's interference have assumed urban proportions in the gloss and neon, the new and phosphorescent grime of Kuala Lumpur. The victim, previously Lee Shin, is now Mat, each related to the other as would father be to child, The victim, though from different generations and caste in different skins (Chinese, Indian, Malay...), is always the same: the national self. Just as Lee Shin "lived within" (166) Rajan, so too does Mat: "Though I haven't seen Mat, he comes to me clearly in that semi-conscious state in the afternoons" (134). Rajan actually places them together: "Mat's preoccupations take up, as do Lee Shin's, a lot of my attention" (134). Lee Shin is reincarnated in Mat: both choose music as their artistic medium, both play the harmonica, both are driven to madness, both are aborted. Zul tells Rajan:

"Even before he went to the city, he was fond of playing the harmonica. He had brought one back from the city. From it floated strange tunes in the evenings. When the nights were still we could hear them even from our house. Sometimes there was a strange fury in the music. On such nights I couldn't sleep until morning." (124)

These are the exact terms which Rajan uses to describe Lee Shin's harmonica. To both Rajan and Zul, the music is strange or unearthly, disorienting, both listen from within walls of their own, both understand partially, both only after the fact of death and madness. Thus, the Mat-Lee Shin psychical merging reveals the overlap between Rajan and Zul. But since Zul is Mat's father, and Mat is Lee Shin reincarnate, then Lee Shin is Zul's offspring. And since they are both born from the retrospection of Rajan, from his consciousness, and since Zul is reflected in Rajan, then they are both the issue of Rajan.

But the knotted relationship between the Chinese-Malaysian Lee Shin, the Indian-Malaysian Rajan and the Malay-Malaysian Mat cannot fathomed by those with thinking that only skirts the narrow borders their own race, whose eyes are blinded by blood. Blood clots to crust forms scales that blind; materialism too is the cold coin over the to blacken the day; and arrogance is the poke, red hot, that is into the third eye. But here, in this complex vision of relationship that K.S. Maniam has painted, is what holds: race, culture, religion and language are as pertinent as ever; but there is absolutely no place for racial narcissism and its ancillary sense of superiority. Second, the past is as important as the present and future; but there should be no hysterical clinging to this past, no matter how romantic it is made to seem. Third, the individual is as vital as the societal; but the relationship between the two is osmotic, the

membrane separating them microscopically perforated, like a blessing. In this vision, everyone and everything is seen in the other, is part of the other, complexly so, nationally so. The meaning of national and individual identity is that it includes all, without exception, without prejudice, without hierarchy.

One of the most potent obstructions to this vision is arrogance. It is a kind of intellectual, posturing arrogance, for instance, which prevents Rajan from seeing the significance of Lee Shin's struggle and the danger that struggle presented. The arrogance takes a posturing, classist turn with Jimmy Kok and Ramasammy, and it renders them ineffectual and superficial. It is arrogance of a racial nature that blinds Zul and his wife Jamilah from seeing the vulnerability of their son Mat. The result, as in the Lee Shin case, is madness and death. There is much that is significant in the manner in which Zul tells Rajan that Mat has seen the tiger: "He saw the tiger," Zul said. "I made him see the tiger. Yet, when he went to the city, everything was destroyed"" (129). For Zul, it is important for Rajan (and everyone else) to know that Mat has seen the tiger; but it is just as important for all to know that it is Zul who made him see it. This is arrogance that comes from racial pride as from individual egocentrism. It is racial pride and social shame that prevent Zul and his wife from taking steps that may have saved live and Mat's sanity. They discuss "sending him away":

"He's of our blood," she said.

*'In our culture no man loses his mind.
Something may trouble him but he would
soon return to his senses' (124)*

Mat, however, does "lose his mind"; and others lose their lives it. Zul needs to learn through his son's tragedy that, having apprehended the Aboriginal Muse or having been made to see the tiger is no guarantee against corruption or decay of any kind. To have apprehended the tiger is to have achieved a sense of home in Malaysia; but such an achievement is not a birth right nor does it yield itself from racial heritage nor is it to be invoked by political privilege based on race. The achievement of a sense of home is a moment of stillness in a lifetime of strenuous movement. Then it is a constant struggle to find another moment, further along the continuum of national for the nation like the individual evolves; to stand still is to stagnate, to die. Home is an unfathomable and transient place.

There may be an ironic truth to Zul's stipulation that "In our culture no man loses his mind"; for, since Mat does "lose his mind", he may not be of the same culture as his father Zul. Mat, indeed, is of a much more complex and evolved hybrid culture that encompasses Lee Shin, Rajan and Zul. Mat, like Lee Shin, represents a leap from the homogeneous entity of separate cultures and races in Malaysia into the density of heterogeneous Malaysian culture and identity, which has to do with all cultures or else none. K.S. Maniam makes the disturbing point that if the Malaysian of Malay or Indian

or Chinese heritage continues to be Malay or Indian or Chinese and continues to cherish a past that is idyllic since it is in the past, then the true Malaysian will stay curled up, dead, like an aborted foetus. Or else, Malaysian identity, embodied, will remain locked away in the thick walls of insane asylums. Zul is as guilty of ethnic narcissism as are Rajan's and Lee Shin's fathers.

Ironically, Rajan would be lost without either his father or Zul. It is, after all, his father who gives him the initial push towards recreation; and it is Zul that takes him to a place where he may sense the tiger. It is Zul who points out to him that his relationship with the land needs go deeper than cutting up and buying and selling as if land were cloth or meat. And it is Zul to whom he must return to find the direction, again, to the centre to which his father referred, to the place where the tiger is to be found. In words that presage what would be said of Mat, Rajan says:

History, as I now realize, is an accumulation of the individuality of man's and people's actions...I've lost that anchorage in my life and only vaguely sense where I've to turn to for a more meaningful centre. Perhaps this zigzagged trekking back to Zulkifli might help me find that centre. (121)

Ironically, it is Zul who, echoing Rajan, says of his son: "Mat left his moorings behind: friends, neighbours,

relatives and family" (126). But as much as Rajan needs direction, Zul needs to learn how to give them. The relationship between the two cannot be that of master and servant, teacher and pupil. For each comes with his strength, cultural wealth and knowledge. When first Zul takes Rajan to tiger land, it is his overbearing didacticism which compounds Rajan's lack of understanding and sense of alienation. Rajan turns and runs as if he would have been devoured whole. Zul, indeed, would re-make Rajan in his own image. He tells the narrator:

"He [Mat] was made to behave in that way. As at one time you almost changed me. Tried to turn me away from my own nature. Why am I speaking to you like this? Because the others of your kind have no faces. You can change and so change them also. Remember, you must moult completely. Not just have your skin made artificially into something else. Like my son's." (133)

There is fear and defensiveness and bitterness here. But Zul also has a firm idea of what it will take for Rajan to expiate the guilt that has been attached to him: he must give up all of self. Now, however, rather than run away, Rajan may take the direction which Zul offers without assuming the role that Zul would have him play. Now, his mature, calm, philosophical: "Now I know certainty has a way of throwing limitations around life" (133).

Rajan contains Zul as he does Lee Shin, but he is not either. Once again, also, the last two sentences uttered here may have an unconscious ironic barb for Zul. The implication, quite contrary to the one intended by the speaker, could very well be that Zul gave to Mat an artificial skin. And that "artificial skin" is Zulkifli's.

The other conspicuous and consistent element in Zul's speech to Rajan is the accusatory tone. He still sees Rajan (and correctly so since Rajan withholds from Zul the rubber plantation history out of a sense of shame) as part and parcel of the city. He holds Rajan responsible, since it would be ultimately more difficult for him to look at his own role in the destruction of his son:

*"When I look back I see you and others like you as the cause. We lived well, maybe too peacefully, before you all came with your ideas and energies. Ideas that can even destroy the tiger, the oldest symbol of our civilization. You gave up everything to come to this land. We offered you what we had. But you all became greedy and wouldn't share. Saw no other world but the world of progress and money. And we had to make the sacrifices. This time I want you to experience what my son went through."
(129)*

Just as Rajan had turned too firmly away from his past in shame, so has Zulkifli turned too much towards his past in idealism. Just as Rajan had dismissed, forgotten or interred every influence and every person in his past, so does Zulkifli seek to alienate by blame every person in his present and future. The most disturbing thing about this and the previous speech is that it reveals the racism that is latent in much of what Zul says. This talk about "others of your kind" (133), "you and others like you" (129) may have been interpreted as "those from the city" that would have set up a relatively innocent hostile stereotypically, the juxtaposition between the urban and the rural - Rajans of the city and the Zulkiflis of the country areas. However, when Zul speaks of those who "gave up everything to come to this land", he could only be referring to the "immigrants". And by making such divisions, he aborts the whole impulse to nationhood, one community from many people, one identity from many cultures. He is blind to the hope that Lee Shin and Mat held and that Rajan holds. Rajan, of course, is still blind to what he contains and speaks likewise in racial ways. He asks Zulkifli: "Why do your people give me their land to sell"" (92). When Zulkifli speaks of "our civilization" and attaches to that homogeneity the Aboriginal Muse of the land, he excludes growth and people. In his fear and greed, he takes away power and confidence and strength from the very thing that he would protect: the tiger. He therefore would bring Rajan into the lair of the tiger, but not in the hope that Rajan may apprehend the tiger and come

into its ken; he would bring Rajan as sacrificial meat into the tiger's presence. In his arrogance and bitterness, he would shed blood for blood shed.

Rajan, of course, is guilty of arrogance as well. One does not dismiss people and their lives without being arrogant. But Rajan's arrogance is individualistic rather than racial, and the scope for damage is rather limited. When first they go in search of the tiger, Rajan stupidly takes a gun. The gun gives false confidence, and arrogance comes with that. Zul gives him instructions: "We've got to take on the character of the tiger first. We must see through its eyes. Feel through its body. We must become the tiger" (100).

Rajan responds somewhat petulantly, "You seem to know everything about it" (100), and this is the exchange:

*"Through the instinct that has travelled
to me through the*

blood of my ancestors," he says.

*Are you saying that I can't have such an
instinct?"*

*"You don't have ancestors here," he
says.*

*"I can go directly to the tiger," I say.
(100-101)*

Racial arrogance encounters individual arrogance, and no one gains anything. Zul loses the chance to witness

the birth of the new Malaysian identity of which he is one of the midwives; Rajan's rebirth must wait, always in danger of going the way of Lee Shin. He must, before coming into the presence of the tiger, exorcise this arrogance.

It is from Sivasurian that Rajan learns the lessons of humility. The former is a drifter who finds himself sitting around Rajan's business premises. Unlike the other visitors to Rajan's place of business, Sivasurian wants nothing. Unlike his easy racial categorisation of the Zulkifli, Jimmy Kok and Ramasammy, obviously other visitors Rajan finds it "difficult to Malay, Chinese and Indian, respectively- place him culturally. Outwardly he looked Indian, the blue, tattooed pottu on his forehead testifying to that, but in everything else he was an enigma" (78). Like that other enigma, the harlequin in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Sivasurian is at home. He is given much since he asks so little. And he is the only one, significantly enough, who is not given a definitive attachment to any racial or cultural group.

Sivasurian has reached a level of confidence and sublime humility that takes him above the ordinary: "Almost everything I have has come to me by accident, not through design. I haven't chased after shelter, food, name, wealth or happiness" (82). This, of course, is a criticism of Rajan's attitude towards the material. But he goes further and almost preempts Rajan's subsequent stages of evolution. Sivasurian tells him:

"From the beginning my feelings were opened outwards, other than kin and kith. Thoughts centred around the self-arrest you in time" (82-83). In several ways, what he teaches echoes what Zulkifli wants Rajan to learn, though the strategies are quite different.

It is Sivasurian who is given the task and privilege of enlightening Rajan about the social and political evolution of the country, from World War II to the Japanese Occupation to post-war divisions and the hunger for power among the locals, each hunger having a different colour. He has written all of this in a "hard cover exercise book" (91), and thus provides Rajan with yet another creative signpost for his journey, which ends with his encounter with the Muse of the land.

Like Rajan's father and Zulkifli, Sivasurian points him to the "centre" where resides the Aboriginal Muse and to which Rajan must evolve: "The centre is all,' someone I knew years later, used to say. He even wrote a book on the subject and presented it to me. 'You'll read it one day,' he told me mysteriously and as mysteriously (2) vanished from my life" (27). But Sivasurian does not vanish from his life. Later, Rajan realises: "He appeared and disappeared mysteriously. Looking back, I realise he was around during those times when I was on the edge of some crisis or upheaval" (79). Also, as he moves towards his own encounter with the tiger, Sivasurian's voice "has become a second voice inside me... the voice becomes even stronger" (72).

Clearly, like the many other characters, Sivasurian resides within Rajan; but he is the only one to whom words like "mysterious" and "enigma" are consistently attached. And yet, the words in which Sivasurian speaks and in which he writes are remarkably simple. He is a mystery to Rajan because he operates outside scope, outside any racial and cultural any familial and professional ken. And to Rajan, these are essential caveats to identity. A man is measured by what he does, how he provides for his family, what he contributes to his society (whatever he conceives that society to be). A man is his race, as he is his origin; he is to be measured by the distance from which he has arisen or by how far fallen, by how far he has gone. But Sivasurian lives outside of these measurements, beyond these values, thus is he an enigma, a mystery.

The second reason why Rajan attaches these words to him is that Rajan is looking at a version of what he himself is to become but knows it not. Once again, Rajan is blind to his own promise, to what he contains. Sivasurian is the humble son of the soil to whom the land and its varied people give succour. He identifies with no single race or culture or creed, with no profession, with no area, with no ancestor. And since these are some of the measurements we use, Sivasurian is difficult to identify culturally and racially; he asks nothing but gives much and is humble in the giving.

Zul, then, may point in the direction of the Muse of the land, but may not take Rajan into its presence. Rajan

may follow his father's gesture towards the centre but may not be his father. He may inhabit the space that was Mat's but he cannot succumb as does Mat, as he cannot yield to suicide as Lee Shin does. He may learn from Sivasurian the lessons of humility, but his fate is not similar wandering but a journey back to family with renewed vision of self and society. Rajan contains them all, but he cannot choose any one. To choose any one would be to betray all the rest, the country itself, and it would be to lie curled up, again, the aborted foetus of what is, even now, Malaysian identity.

In many ways, the direction towards rebirth and reinvention of self and the national identity is a movement away from intellectual groping. Rajan's initial intellectual posturing, partially, results in the abortion of Lee Shin, Zulkifli is prevented from apprehending the tiger because his "mind is working too much" (95). On the other hand, Sivasurian is reborn into no recognisable ethnicity, into the true Malaysian. Rajan, having gathered around the self-creating hearth all the characters within his consciousness, having allowed them their place within the circle of his heart, and having allowed them to have their tales sung, may now move once more in quest of the tiger.

Rajan has just returned from his visit with Zulkifli, and he drifts into a state of what he interprets to be lethargy and blankness:

Again my mind doesn't give me the ground I need to tread on. It has become, curiously, a dead field. First my memory and then my mind seem to have become useless. What remains for me with which to view myself, life and the world? This feeling of inadequacy accompanies me in everything I do...I'm neither dead nor alive but floating in an in-between state... The border between real and unreal becomes fuzzy (137)

Rajan mistakenly associates this state of creative preparation with his initial emptiness that he sought to fill with material goods. Indeed, the "in-between" state recalls that of the young Rajan whose initial rebirth occurs on a laterite road. Yet, this emptiness cannot be appeased by material gain since it is too advanced for such base concerns. But neither is this the state of tabula rasa upon which Zul would mark his own ideas of identity. The state in which Rajan now finds himself is unprecedented, for he has never been so prepared to undertake his quest for the tiger.

This state of creative destabilisation prepares Rajan for eventual imaginative fulfilment, the realisation of identity at the apprehension of the tiger. He has shed material greed, rid himself of the fear of being owned, acknowledged those that have contributed to his formation as individual and national self, has abandoned his pseudo-objective, intellectual posture,

repudiated any racial idea of identity, and is much less egotistical. However, Rajan is different in several significant ways from that which he was during the first search for the tiger. This second search is done at his own pace rather than at the insistence of someone else. The journey is more deep-seated and challenging, as it necessitates a profound imaginative journey into the heart of what the nation may be rather than a literal journey into a forest. He is accompanied by a whole community of people of all races rather than led by any one person of any one race. Because of the nature of this journey, Rajan is vulnerable rather than arrogantly self-assured. Also, he does not have to be prodded into this; rather, the evolutionary formation of his (and so the nation's) true identity comes as logical and organic fulfilment. It is not insisted upon as by some political decree, nor is it squeezed out of him by some chokehold of jurisprudence, nor is it manufactured in some cultural factory.

The imaginative journey begins, and Rajan moves rapidly: "Without anyone to guide and impose on me, I am travelling with an agility of my own" (138). He becomes the eye looking at itself, released from the stranglehold of the tiger's eyes and those of Zulkiffli. He moves towards the centre to which his father pointed, but with the insight that it is a "never formed centre" (138); and the landscape itself participates in this formlessness, this on-going evolution. His body, "exhilarated", is released from its shackles, "humming

with motion" (139). His mind, "so long merely recording, now becomes active" (139). There is flight, fearlessness, timelessness, "effervescence", whole release, whole liberation. But this euphoria is like a kind of drunkenness, and just as quickly as he reaches this state, he descends from it. For people may not build an identity on euphoria; a nation may not know nationhood from the headiness of the air at new independence. And so Rajan's speedy journey to the centre of tigerland is slowed by doubt, fear, time, hopelessness, "labour and turmoil" (140), and despair. Once again, he is armed though with a parang rather than with a gun (the gun was a loan from Jimmy Kok and the parang a gift from Zulkiffli). But Rajan is resilient and the quest is not aborted. He draws upon his inner individual strength to pull him away from the brink of despair:

*I can't let that happen for hope is the
lighted clearing I've put at the end of my
labours, both physical and mental.*

*I sit against a tree as against a bulwark.
The tree, I recognize, props me up. I feel
safe. That gives me an idea, a kind of
spiritual discovery. Why can't I let
whatever I can't understand be
contained in an object? But objects, like
the tree trunk, are fixed and immobile
whereas my mind is all motion.... There
has to be something, perhaps a living
creature, that can match my mind and*

even outdo it in agility and versatility.
"The tiger!" I cry out, to myself. (140 -
141)

And so, by transferring what he thinks himself to be into the appropriate creature, Rajan appropriates the tiger. But the tiger that he chooses has all the qualities of an actual tiger since Rajan creates an imaginative world but retains residues of the same material values. Significantly, Rajan sees it necessary to justify his choice, reverting in the process of rationalisation to the Rajan of old. And the old habits return with tiger-like ferocity. Indeed, it is more the tiger that appropriates Rajan than the other way round, though Rajan is unaware of this irony and reversal. The qualities of the tiger that he emulates, assumes and respects are its death-dealing aspects:

*I become ruthless for I don't honour any
other life as much as I do the tiger. I
slash more furiously at whatever lies in
my way.... I take delight in going after
small animals and plunging my parang
into their defenceless bodies.... I want to
see blood spilled and must go after
bigger animals. I want to offer a
sacrifice to the tiger. All those that are
small must pay homage to the big and
powerful one. (141)*

Imaginatively, he kills a boar and offers it up as sacrifice to the tiger: "I know the tiger won't harm me for I've left the boar's carcass in the centre of that holy circle" (142). But since Rajan sees himself as the tiger and has assumed the deadly qualities of that animal, he is offering a sacrifice to himself. Thus, Rajan comes full circle to what he was, employing again the jungle law which he applied before in business and in his relationships with others. Worse, Rajan has taken within the density of his imagination narcissism to new heights. He is a kind of demi-god to whom sacrifices must be made and to whom allegiance must be pledged. He has become the sadly typical post-modern businessman, the alarmingly typical post-colonial politician.

The first irony, then, is that Rajan, in seeking to evolve, takes a turn that leads him to where he was in the first place: ruthless, self-involved, self-indulged, greedy, egotistical and arrogant. But since he has new power within the territory of his imagination and since this power has implications for the nation, then he is all the more dangerous. The second irony is that Rajan runs away from Zulkifli's vision of the tiger only to find himself standing in exactly the same spot from which he ran. In the first place, he is told by Zulkifli: "You must surrender your self to be the other self" (101). As he says, this was an "ageless invitation to disown whatever I was and to merge with the tiger" (101). He

runs away from this, only to return to it of his own accord:

So obsessed am I with its [the tiger's] nature that I forget my own personality. This, I realize, is the ultimate sacrifice needed to gain access to the tiger's presence: giving up of the self.

How is this to be done? ... the answer does not come until I see the colourless, transparent skin left behind by a snake. By moulting! By leaving everything behind that I am.... I'll be freed from the burden of being responsible for myself.
(142)

The images are identical to those used when Zul first takes him to see the tiger. Just before he flees, Rajan felt his skin "peeling and leaving me in a vulnerable nakedness" (101). Zul uses this image of the snake shedding its skin when Rajan returns years later to see him: "'Remember, you must moult completely. Not just have your skin made artificially into something else. Like my son's" (133).

The vision that Zulkifli imposes and which is recognised by Rajan to be an imposition, now takes on a more ominous dimension; it seems no longer a threat since it is now generated by Rajan himself, the "other" in a post-colonial multi-racial setting. It is therefore much more imperative, much more seductive. An order

of political convenience has become a natural order; concessions become rights; the new coloniser has replaced the old coloniser, and the old colonised weary and jaded, submits himself voluntarily up to be ruled; the victim conspires towards his own victimisation. This is the seduction that would have the individual relinquish "the burden of being responsible for myself" (142) to the state. Rajan arrives at this half-truth:

*There is only the need to be subservient
and to accept. In this way, I discover that
the qualities are not out there but lie
dormant within me. No wonder it has
taken me so long to discover its
presence! (143)*

The tiger is indeed within Rajan and because he has always looked outward for its presence, he is unaware of its presence. But the way to this realisation is not relinquishing responsibility, to be blindly subservient and accepting. Neither is it to yield to the pressure of a racial preconception of a manifest Aboriginal Muse. On one hand he seeks to yield up himself: "I find myself burning to be set free.....it is as if the skin is peeling and my flesh merging with the flesh of another, the other" (143). On the other hand,

*Something within me is beginning to
protest. It pipes up like the voice of my
childhood when innocent and therefore
made bold, I accepted nothing,*

*submitted to nothing. There is now a
tussle between wanting to be merged
with the tiger and the need to be really
free. (143)*

Maniam is drawing the fine but vital distinction between two categories of freedom. The first is the freedom of one who gives up his right to think and speak and be individual; thus is such a one free of responsibility. The second category is to be "really free", which implies at this point in the novel creative recollection and reassessment as well as the strenuous resistance of easy categories of instinctive affiliation c instinctive rejection. Caught between rushing "towards the tiger and the familiar authority I've created" (143) and the "appalling" "idea that nothing of me will ever remain" (143), Rajan awakens from the vision. He recognises a certain evolution of this vision from the literal search in the actual forest for the Aboriginal Muse manifested in the tiger. Now the landscape is his consciousness; he is led there by no one, but there is still no fulfilment. Once again, he turns away. Yet, the journeys he has made, both literal and imaginative, though both were aborted, have taken him to a point of "purgation" (143), necessary for revelation. This cross-fertilisation of literal search and imaginative quest yields to Rajan, "the true ramifications of that search for the tiger" (144):

*I see now how I found a tiger in myself:
in my attitude to my profession, the*

country and life. Unable to handle the abstract complexity of my existence in this country, I designed...an imaginary country.... I forgot the subtle territory I must constantly cover, attentive and sensitive, in order to gain some insight into that vast country called life...

From where I stand, as one who has survived the chaos of the mind, I feel doubt is necessary before clarity can be grasped. Too much clarity is what leads to authoritarian behaviour and when matters become too complex, the personality breaks down. (144)

The summary is revelation, for it provides deep insight into the nature of individual and national identity. The apprehension of the tiger and its very nature is wrought from a search that is rooted in the actual landscape of Malaysia and that is yoked to its peoples; but it is wrought equally from the soil of the imagination and from the people that inhabit that imagination. Neither is the imagination meant to be a place to which one escapes when conditions are difficult in "substantive" political reality/national reality. Rather, in times of crisis, a journey into the territory of the imagination is a shamanistic quest for solutions. Political decisions without imaginative, artistic, moral vision is but so much leaden dogma. Conversely, the imaginative quest for its own sake is but the journey of the voyeur.

Apprehension of the Aboriginal Muse -- a Muse that is perpetually being formed and reformed, and therefore always beginning -- depends on individual struggle but bearing in mind a communal struggle as well. But there is a larger implication as well, for there needs be equilibrium between the concerns of a small country such as Malaysia and those of the large world spinning outside. Nothing must be allowed to overshadow the other -- the literal over the imaginative, the individual over the communal, the national over the global -- or else we yield to fatal pride, "authoritarian behaviour" (144) and political despotism. Indeed, doubt in all things -- even in those we hold dear, such as religion, culture, language, race, national pride, individual freedom, social equality, etc. -- must precede clarity in some things. But Maniam's point takes us further, for even after doubt and after consequent clarity, there are dangers: "Too much clarity leads to authoritarian behaviour" (144). Thus, too great a certainty over racial superiority or religious superiority or right to rule or right to privileges lead, step by step, to murder, to genocide. The need for equilibrium translates logically into equality, a national and global equality in which no person is above his or her community, no community above another community, no people above another people. In this way, K.S. Maniam's *In A Far Country* offers an architectural blue print for those of us who seek to be at home in multiracial nations, who seek a harbour in a multiracial world.

Dedication

This article is in honour of Associate Professor Dr. Fadillah Merican, whom I knew as a colleague, dean, and friend. This was during my tenure at the National University of Malaysia (UKM) from 1993 to 1998. There were many people who triggered and encouraged my interest in Malaysian Literature written in English, among them Mr. Wong Phui Nam, Mr. K.S. Maniam, Professor Lloyd Fernando, Professor Mohamed Haji Salleh, Dr. Ganakumaran Subramaniam, Mr. Kee Thuan Chye, Professor Zawiah Yahya, and others who are too many to list here. Dr. Fadillah's encouragement was pivotal to what contributions I made to the creation and implementation of Masters and Bachelors programmes at UKM. Many of these programmes placed Malaysian Literature in English in focus. Dr. Fadillah's personal contribution to the literature of the nation is not insignificant, but her greatest contribution to scholarship in Malaysia may have been her encouragement of others to contribute. This article is a tribute to the lasting nature of her encouragement.

INTENTION AND EXECUTION: A CRITICAL LOOK AT A. SAMAD SAID'S SALINA

Introduction

A. Samad Said's Salina¹ in the contexts of Malaysia and Singapore, is an important work. It is vitally important for people to see themselves in literature, to hear their language and nod with recognition at that which is familiar. It is important for colonized people, especially, to realize that the pages of literature-that sacrosanct world of black and white print- is not a territory inhabited exclusively by white people speaking the dialects of their respective tribes, acting out their habits, dramatizing their customs. Samad Said's novel situates Malays and Indians of a certain class in pre-independence Malaya. This, singularly, justifies its publication and its presence in secondary and post-secondary curricula in Malaysia and Singapore.

Having said that, it must be said also that *Salina* is far from being a great novel, far from being a "classic", meaningless term as this has become. It is arguably a work of some anthropological merit, and the warmth of its reception may depend on the moral and political outlook of the reader. However, when placed under the scrutiny of literary criticism, this novel falls apart.

CHARACTERIZATION and STRUCTURE

Salina is a work of little literary merit. Said's characterization leaves much to be desired, and it is guilty of stereotyping and cliché. The main character, Siti Salina, is the stereotypical prostitute with the clichéd heart of gold who is caught, we are told repeatedly, in the tyrannical grip of relentless Fate. She is victimized further by Abdul Fakar, her indolent, reprehensible live-in lover whom she feeds, clothes and harbours. In return, Fakar rewards her with what seems to be sexual fulfilment, and with terrible and humiliating beatings. He abuses her in every way, exploits her in all ways; but she keeps him for years, nonetheless. While sexual gratification or fear might have offered plausible explanations for her forbearance, it is not for these reasons that she continues to cater to his various appetites. Rather, we are given the unlikely reason that she thinks him to be her childhood lover reborn; Fakar "bore a striking resemblance" (494) to him. The manner in which this is revealed is disappointing equally: it is done as denouement, climax. But the reader's pulse does not quicken at this revelation in the final pages of the novel.

Equally clichéd is Salina's desire to live the righteous Islamic life (in another tradition it would have been the righteous Christian life). However, there is never any action to match or realize this desire. Towards the end of the novel, after yet another beating from Fakar, she accepts the advice of Katijah and others, leaves Fakar and Singapore and moves to Kelantan and Kuala

Lumpur. She writes to Hilmy, her former neighbour whom she regards as a brother, about the evils of society and the heartlessness of people: "Hilmy, you know what people think of me. Not only here, when I was in Singapore it was the same. What can I do. I'm helpless. (511)

What he did hear from Siti Salina made him feel uneasy because he knew no matter where she went, people would still look suspiciously at a woman like Siti Salina, and wherever she went no one would open their hearts and minds to help "lift" Siti Salina from the depths of humiliation which in the first place she had become entangled in through no wish of her own.

However, we are never given a clue as to why she is alienated in Kelantan and Kuala Lumpur, places new to her and in which she is a complete stranger. We are meant to believe that people there know instinctively that she is a prostitute and shun her as a result. Consequently, she is prevented from earning a "decent" living, from leading the good Islamic life, and is caught again in whoredom. Moreover, the idea of the rebirth of Mohamed Yusof, her late childhood sweetheart, borders perilously on a belief in reincarnation, flying in the face of the Islamic morality which the book advocates.

Through most of the novel, Hilmy is Salina's neighbour. He is the stereotypical schoolboy who, for the first two hundred pages of the novel, possesses the intelligence

and naavet of a thirteen year old, although he is, in fact, "a young man of about eighteen. This impression is solidified each time we hear him think or speak. He cares for his mother, Katijah, "an old woman of forty nine or so" who is to be found in numerous gushingly sentimental Indian movies of the fifties, sixties and seventies. When we are introduced to her, "The old woman was coughing..."(1). The novel progresses, the cough worsens, and she dies. Caste in the cliched mould of the long-suffering but wise, sick old woman, Katijah dispenses advice to Salina as Hilmy dispenses medicine to her. In turn, Salina gives money to Katijah and Hilmy; to the school boy, Salina also administers copious doses of advice about education and life, generally.

During one of their early lengthy conversations, Salina informs Hilmy of the exploitative landlord-yet another cliché-Kurupaya, who has converted goat-pens into hovels for people. The roofs leak, the walls are full of holes, there is no sanitation, no privacy. Having been told that everyone in Kampung Kambing is being exploited,

Hilmy was silent. But from the information given by Siti Salina, he learnt another new thing about Kampung Kambing, something which he thought he would never know before this. (39)

It is a mystery why he could not, at eighteen have known that people exploit people. However, his navet extends well beyond rudimentary knowledge of social injustice and inequality. Early in the novel, he is told by Nahidah (the village virgin with whom he inevitably falls in love) that "Fakar isn't Inah's husband, you know" (33). He is incredulous, and for the next chapter, focuses obsessively on this: "[Salina's] sentence immediately reminded him of Nahidah's words the day before in the bathroom. He remembered Nahidah's words clearly 'Fakar isn't Salina's husband, you know'" (40).

Later, "As he ate his mind was working; he thought about Fakar and he recalled Nahidah's words. 'Fakar isn't Ina's husband.' It was rather disturbing" (48). Clearly, the boy is more than "rather disturbed". Said has given him the moral sensitivity of the eighteen-year-old, but the thoughts, knowledge and behaviour of a thirteen year old. Even if that is to be forgiven, though, Said's lapse of memory cannot. Just over one hundred pages after Hilmy's obsession with Fakar and Salina's unmarried state, the matter again bubbles to the conversational surface after Salina is given another thorough beating by Fakar. Katijah explains to Hilmy:

*"He does not like Ina, so he beat her up,"
Katijah said looking at her son.*

*"He does not like his wife?" Hilmy
asked.... (137)*

After Katijah's brief consideration of the possible psychological damage that may be inflicted upon Hilmy if he is told the truth, Said gives us this:

"Siti Salina is not his wife," said Katijah, feeling regret and disturbed [sic] having uttered the sentence.

"Not his wife?" asked Hilmy, truly startled as the fact had never occurred to him before (138).

An incredibly short time after (one day and four pages have elapsed), Samad Said would have us believe that this boy who knows so little about anything would think and speak thus:

"In school I learn history... We trace how someone in poor circumstances become successful in founding a world for his race. And we learn about people's difficulties, about their ignorance, about their struggles. All this is not just for us to read or to learn but it is also for us to learn from these examples as boundaries or limits to which we can go." (187)

This is from a boy who has just discovered that people are unfair to people. The relatively sophisticated language, insight and intellect at work here does not belong to the consciousness of Hilmy, even though he is newly, miraculously, suddenly made mature. Clearly,

he is an inappropriate vehicle for the conveyance of the writer's thoughts. Said is guilty of this on several occasions in *Salina*.

Nahidah is a cross between Juliet and Cinderella. Like Juliet, her love is surreptitious and does not come to fruition. Like Cinderella, she is forced by Zarina, her wicked step mother, to do the cooking, cleaning, scrubbing. This star-crossed Cinderella and Hilmy discover that they love each other. She is coerced by Zarina to become a "waitress", a euphemism for prostitution. Nahidah hangs on to her virtue and virginity (here, they are synonymous), but is lusted after by the lascivious Encik Salim at work, and by Abdul Fakar at home. It is the latter who deflowers her brutally, providing one of the few poignant moments in the book. Said's description of the event is economical, and he seems to pull tastefully a curtain over the event. Little is said, and the impact is considerable. Nahidah's reaction to the rape is to go to work where she is persuaded by the other waitresses whom she has never trusted previously that "only this [alcohol] could relieve her confused state of mind" (422). She believes, yields, becomes drunken and is taken advantage of sexually by Encik Salim and his friends. Incredibly, in a society where privacy is non-existent, no-one suspects what has happened to this girl at home or at work. Sunarto, Nahidah's foster-brother, confidant and "protector" (we are told this repeatedly by Sunarto and Said), does not know, although he is aware that something is amiss.

Hilmy is unaware and the usually perceptive Salina perceives nothing.

Like Nahidah, Sunarto is victimized by Zarina, the wicked foster/stepmother. His ineffectuality is altogether fantastic. He is the only breadwinner in the household since Nahidah's father was killed; but, we are told, since he owes his life to his foster father, he accepts with god-like stoicism and patience the public humiliation that Zarina heaps upon him daily. Then, as if there is a suspicion that the first reason is not convincing enough, we are given another reason for his forbearance: "He himself had become the target of Zarina's anger even though he still handed her money, not because he was forced to but because he took pity on her" (448). However, he has been a "target of Zarina's anger" for more than four hundred pages and not once are we told of this pity. Moreover, we are never told why he should pity her. Once again, much is told but little is substantiated by the action, and Said persistently inserts information for immediate convenience and effect without much thought to the whole.

There is yet another explanation for Sunarto's fortitude: he wants to marry Nahidah. The moment and manner that he chooses to reveal this cause us to lose much sympathy for him, even though it is obvious that such a loss is contrary to the intention of the novelist. Clearly, Sunarto is held up as some sort of moral paragon, long-suffering and loyal. But the writer works against his

own purpose. After Nahidah is raped, Said writes of Sunarto:

He protected Nahidah and imparted to her that life would not always continue to be difficult and that it did not necessarily mean a person should believe it is already fated that he or she is useless to society at large-a prostitute, a waitress, thief, robber and so forth because if it were so, God is not at all just whereas the truth is God wants man to make an effort...although it was vague to Nahidah, he said to her several times that she would not be a waitress forever, and that she would definitely become a good member of society if she made an effort to better herself and if she were to strive to correct her faults and mistakes in the past. (414-415)

These are the author's convictions, not the character's; and the story does not endorse them at all. Quite to the contrary, the characters in *Salina* are all caught in the grip of crushing, relentless fate. These thoughts, implanted into the consciousness of Sunarto, are absurd in the face of events. They come across as empty moralizing on the part of the writer who has used once again a character as his mouthpiece. The result, ironically, is a loss of sympathy for the very character with whom Said would have us sympathize. When, at

the end of the moralizing, he vows to himself, "I will tell Nahidah frankly so that she will marry me if something bad happened to her"" (415), Said answered him to seem noble, altruistic. Yet, it seems that he is more ready to redeem than to love her; to marry her is to save her, to prove his goodness and generosity. This impression is strengthened when he does propose:

"Idah! There's something else that's [sic] has prevented me from leaving the place. Perhaps you will be surprised but never mind, now since I have the chance, I will tell you. I would look after you as best I can...I would like to be the one to help and guide you Idah in return for your father's kindness to me. And if before this, I was reluctant to say anything, now I don't feel apprehensive any longer because I feel in times of suffering Idah, this is how I should help and guide you." (426-427)

This is utter condescension; he wants to return her father's kindness with a favour of equal magnitude-marriage. He wants to "help" and "guide" and "look after", but not love or regard or cherish. He proposes at this point because he feels superior to the "fallen" Nahidah.

Our dislike for Sunarto runs counter to what Samad Said means us to feel for him. Nonetheless, he deserves

our pity because he too falls prey to the novelist's confusion. At one point, he is ordered by Zarina to take her to the shop where Nahidah works: "Sunarto took her to the shop and when he saw from outside that nothing untoward had happened, he left them [Zarina and Nahidah] both together" (346-347). However, one paragraph after we are told that all is well and that he has left, we are then told that Zarina enters the shop, asks where she can find her step-daughter, and is told that she is "at the back". That he saw them together is peculiar because they had not yet met! And when they do meet, they are out of sight. Said's sequence is confused. Also, when Zarina "went to the back...she found Nahidah sitting on a stool. Her dress was torn, her hair was untidy, and she looked very sad" (347-348). But we are never told what happened to this girl whose virtue (or virginity) we are meant to care so much about. This is mentioned and forgotten; once again, bewilderment and frustration result. She has not been raped; this occurs later.

During the same conversation during which we are meant to forget that Nahidah has been subjected mysteriously to violence by some unknown person or persons, and during which Zarina and Nahidah themselves succeed in forgetting, the wicked step-mother reveals that she knows and is displeased that her virginal step-daughter has not been accommodating the lustful Encik Salim. What follows is remarkable: "On hearing this, Nahidah looked up at Zarina because it

never occurred to her that everything that happened at her place of work would get to her mother's ears" (352). This is remarkable because Nahidah knows (and we are told) that Zarina belonged to the sisterhood of "waitresses", that she still has contacts in the profession, and that she had got Nahidah the job. Either the girl is stupid, in which case she loses some sympathy, or else the novelist is careless.

After she has been violated and abused, Samad Said dispenses with Nahidah conveniently. The issue of rape and its awful consequences are difficult to wrestle with and to write on. Therefore, she is never allowed to tell of the rape and to explain her plight-not to Sunarto, her ineffectual protector; not to Hilmy, with whom we are assured she is in love reciprocally; not to Salina, who would have had to have reacted. She is banished to a life of silence. Samad Said goes to the edge of this murky pool but withdraws onto the safe, solid ground that surrounds it. The excuse cannot be made that a modest sense of inadequacy disallows Said from entering into the tormented female consciousness that results from the violated female body. Throughout the novel, there is no such hesitation. Moreover, in not having Nahidah reveal her rape by Fakar and then by Cik Salim and friends, Said does not have to record Hilmy's, Sunarto's and Salina's responses to the rape. Therefore, we continue to wade ankle-deep in the emotional shallows of this book.

The characterization of Haji Karman provides yet another example where Said's intention is laudable but his execution is lacking. Karman is meant to be the voice of Islam, the moral voice that resonates like the Muslim call to prayer. We are told that he has many students and that he is respected by them. However, he is introduced to as an unbearable busy-body, ill-tempered and unstable. The wise, cough-racked Katijah speculates that he might be senile. The Haji's views on Salina are interesting if idiotic. Towards the middle of the novel, he voices his belief, "emphatically" (301), that Salina leads the life she does "Because she is not strong in her Islamic religious faith"" (302). Hilmy responds:

"You know teacher, its [sic]] like this: even if her faith is strong the fact remains she was forced by the [Japanese] soldiers during war-time, what could she do? In such a situation, she had to surrender...." (302)

Not to be outdone, Karman re-joins:

"Oh no, no! She ought to have controlled herself and not given in: that's what religion is all about; religion is not only a guide to a correct way of life but also a wall to keep out all sorts of temptations of the flesh."(302)

Such a dangerously limited view of rape and religion should disqualify Karman from being any kind of advocate, especially a religious one. He lacks understanding and is lacking in compassion. Also, we are asked to believe that this old man, set in his ways and limited in his views, can be transformed miraculously into a more understanding man, newly knowledgeable about the ways of individuals and society. This, after one short conversation with the recaste, miraculously matured Hilmy.

Just as Haji Karman is intended to be the voice of Islam, Razman is meant to represent the muted voice of Abdul Fakar's conscience. The execution is equally unsuccessful. We are told by Said that Razman is that Razman had "probed and studied human feelings with all its secrets well read, intellectually adroit and morally upstanding. Samad Said insists of life" (463). Once again, however, the action and dialogue does not support the claim. During one of their several debates, Razman tells Fakar "There'll come a time when Siti Salina will know how worthless you are to care for and feed like a child; then you'll know"" (435). This is hardly an example of penetrative intellect at work. At every turn, he is defeated by Fakar at intellectual debate.

Worse than that, Razman is ineffectual and cowardly. Razman tells Fakar: "You know ... I will never trust you, no matter what. Not only I do not trust people who are irresponsible"" (433). This shift from particular criticism of Fakar in a particular circumstance to

general criticism of people generally betrays his cowardice. Again, Fakar wins the debate, and Razman retreats into petulant silence.

Ironically enough, the only time we see Razman in motion, this intended embodiment of Fakar's conscience is questing for sexual gratification from prostitutes. He is pushed in this contrary direction on the spur of the moment because Said needs another catalyst (in addition to Katijah's advice and severe beatings from Fakar) to precipitate Salina's departure from Fakar. Therefore, while searching for a whore, he encounters Salina. His intended role as foil or conscience to Fakar forgotten or abandoned, Razman proves himself a liar, a hypocrite and a coward in his conversation with Salina.

In the Foreword to the novel, A. Teeuw makes several fantastic claims on behalf of Salina. One of the more glaring concerns Bulat, a pot-bellied child who is threatened frequently with castration by several characters. Throughout the novel, the child torments two goats, mimics politicians, hits banana trees with his fists, and falls. At the end of the novel, he is taken for several rides in cars sent to take people to vote. From this Teeuw concludes that Bulat, "too becomes a symbol of humanity and hope under the most depressing circumstances" (vii). However, a child in a literary text is not automatically a symbol. This must be worked at, deserved; and Bulat's character is not worthy of such a claim.

Dialogue:

Obviously, inconsistencies in characterization affect negatively the dialogue in a novel. For the first half of the novel, Hilmy's dialogue is too juvenile for an eighteen year old; then it becomes, suddenly and inexplicably, too sophisticated for the character. Fakar's dialogue with Razman is disjointed and pointless because the relationship is not explored fully. In conversations between Fakar and Zarina, the wicked wolf and the wicked step-mother, Said forgets whose opinions and words are whose. Consequently, Zarina would use exact words and opinions voiced previously by Fakar-words and opinions with which she had disagreed.

One of the most objectionable pieces of conversation in Salina occurs between Nahidah and Hilmy. They are in the public bathroom, alone, and they have just discovered their passionate love for each other. The almost painful, halting exchange of wonderful, intense first love is captured beautifully by Samad Said. Shyness and awkwardness dictate that nothing be said outright; yet, much is said in spaces, silences, gestures, expressions. Here is Said's finest accomplishment. However, inexplicably and abruptly, the writer veers the conversation in a most bizarre direction: Nahidah, who should be tremulous with excitement at her discovery of first love, gives Hilmy a passionate lecture on the urgency and necessity of reading works by Malay writers. She says,

"Surely English books aren't the only books of a high standard. Even so, surely you as a Malay, would want to read Malay books. If it's true Malay books don't come up to standard, just read them for their contents [sic], examine what is in the heart and mind of Malay writers, examine what is written by Malay writers about their own race. People say now's the period when our people are beginning to learn to discover themselves the period when we become aware of ourselves, open our eyes so to speak. If we've come to that, when are we going to be conscious of ourselves if we do not read the books written by our own race? Are we going to wait till the Malay race sinks completely before we care to read about the history of its fall?" (363)

This somewhat eloquent, tightly rhetorical, passionate lecture is worthy of any university lecturer holding forth to a class of undergraduates. But Nahidah is a girl of seventeen who has not finished school, who is in a public bathroom washing clothes, who has just discovered for the first time that she is in love with a boy who loves her with equal passion. They have forgotten their youthful hunger, their newness. The result of placing a lecture like this in the mouth of this

character at this time amounts to absurdity. Nahidah goes on to mention several writers by name although she has just told us and Hilmy that she can only remember titles. The list, like the lecture, is gratuitous. After a few moments of this prodigious literary barrage, Hilmy succumbs: Nahidah has converted him as he has converted Haji Karman.

Lists, Repetition, Refrain:

The list of Malay writers is gratuitous, but perhaps the most gratuitous overture in the book comes on page 520, when we are treated unnecessarily to a string of political players from Malaysia and Singapore. Salina is weakened considerably by this inability to omit or this tendency to include the impertinent. Too many times are we told about Bulat beating the banana trees and falling; too many people go to the toilet singing the same song as if it were a laxative; the question of why Salina tolerates Fakar is asked too many times for the answer given; Sunarto's thoughts are repetitive and monotonous. Too many characters laugh "long and loud": Fakar, Nahidah, Kurupaya, Encik Salim, Zarina, the waitresses; even the goats "bleated loudly and long" (36). On too many occasions Said records the "puffing steam from the ice factory and the sound of the log-sawing machine from the sawmill" (26; 79; 184; 214; 366; 406; 471). This is meant to be a significant refrain of some sort; but, because the significance is unknown, it becomes pointless, tedious repetition.

Conclusion:

A. Samad Said's *Salina* is structurally unsound, repetitious, and replete with gratuitous detail. The characterization is inconsistent and unrealistic; many of the characters are clichéd and stereotypical, especially the females. Said's ideas and themes are provocative but are seldom worked through to their respective difficult conclusions.

Salina contains some good dialogue and Said manages to convey the claustrophobic nature of Kampung life, the abject poverty of the people. The ending is good because the writer does not yield to the temptation of imposing on the novel an unrealistic happy ending.

Salina is a germinal work, a good beginning. It is not a good novel. To praise it too much is to encourage emulation at the expense of evolution, improvement. Malaysians and Singaporeans, especially, will gain from having read it, for they will recognize familiar rhythms; but the reading of *Salina*, if at all critical, is unfulfilling.

¹ A. Samad Said 1961. Hawa Abdullah (trans) *Salina* Kuala Lumpur Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka

² These critical impressions of Samad Said's *Salina* are circumscribed by the fact that they are based on a translation of the work. There is no analysis of the use of language, for instance. The task has been made arduous because the translation by Hawa Abdullah is replete with mistakes of every kind.

CONCLUSION

Across the Oceans: Multi-Disciplinary, Multi-Continental Essays by Daizal R. Samad and

Ashwannie Harripersaud is more than a collection of scholarly reflections—it is a testament to the unrelenting pursuit of truth in a world shaped by fragmentation, displacement, and reinvention. Through their incisive analyses, Samad and Harripersaud traverse literary, historical, and pedagogical landscapes, revealing the interconnected struggles of postcolonial societies, the failures of institutional systems, and the resilience of the human spirit. Their work does not offer easy resolutions; instead, it compels readers to sit with the discomfort of unresolved questions, to interrogate inherited narratives, and to imagine new possibilities for belonging and justice.

At the heart of these essays is a recurring reflection on identity—how individuals and communities navigate the ruptures of history, whether through literature, education, or cultural memory. Samad's voice, shaped by his experiences in Malaysia, the Caribbean, Canada, and beyond, emerges as both critical observer and participant in the narratives he examines. His scholarship refuses simplistic categorizations, blending rigorous analysis with lyrical introspection, personal reflection with universal resonance. Whether dissecting

the psychological scars of colonialism in Kamau Brathwaite's poetry, exposing the systemic failures of Caribbean bullying policies, or reimagining classrooms for a pandemic era, Samad's work remains anchored in a profound humanism—one that acknowledges both the brutality and beauty of the world.

Harripersaud's contributions further enrich this dialogue, particularly in their collaborative explorations of education, history, and social justice. Together, they challenge static conceptions of identity, urging a re-examination of the past not as a fixed narrative but as a living, contested terrain. Their essay on the imaginative reconstruction of West Indian history, for instance, does not merely recount events but resurrects the voices of the erased—Arawaks, Caribs, enslaved Africans, and indentured laborers—revealing how their struggles and survivals continue to shape the present. Similarly, their visionary proposal for pandemic-ready classrooms highlights the necessity of adaptive, inclusive thinking in times of crisis.

What unites these diverse essays is a commitment to truth—not as an absolute, but as an ongoing excavation. Samad and Harripersaud expose the contradictions of postcolonial societies, the hypocrisies of institutional power, and the limitations of borrowed frameworks, yet they also locate spaces of resistance and renewal. In Brathwaite's poetry, they find the fractured yet enduring African diasporic consciousness; in John Hearne's **The Sure Salvation**, they uncover the

grotesque replication of colonial violence in figures like Alex Delfosse; in George Lamming's **In the Castle of My Skin**, they trace the West Indian's fraught journey toward selfhood. Each analysis is an act of reclamation, insisting that history, literature, and education are not passive records but active sites of struggle and transformation.

Across the Oceans leaves readers with a challenge: to engage critically with the world, to resist complacency, and to recognize that the work of justice and belonging is never complete. Samad and Harripersaud's essays do not merely diagnose fractures—they illuminate pathways toward wholeness, however tentative. Their scholarship is a reminder that truth is not a destination but a journey, one that demands courage, empathy, and an unflinching willingness to confront the shadows of the past and present.

In the end, this collection stands as a beacon for scholars, educators, and seekers of meaning—a call to manoeuvre the oceans of history, memory, and identity with both rigor and compassion. For Daizal R. Samad and Ashwannie Harripersaud, truth is not merely an intellectual pursuit; it is a moral imperative, a lifeline in the storm of human experience. Their work, like the tides, pulls us toward deeper currents, urging us to listen, to question, and, above all, to endure.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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Professor Daizal R. Samad is a world-renown scholar who has lived, taught, researched, published and written for extended periods on five continents—Continental North America, Asia/Southeast Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and now back home in Guyana in South America. Professor Samad has been awarded Best Professorships on the first three continents for his work. He returned home in 2008 and was invited to be Director of The University of Guyana Berbice Campus. He resigned from that position in 2013 and now teaches undergraduates at that Campus.

Professor Samad has written and edited ten books internationally. Samad is now working on another novel entitled *Behind the Seawall* and a collection of short stories. In addition to these, Professor Samad has published hundreds of scholarly articles on a wide range of topics. He remains one of the most productive scholars and writers in Guyana and the West Indies.

Along with his teaching duties at UGBC, Professor Samad now concentrates on mentoring the new generation of teachers by encouraging them to embark and publish on various aspects of education. His efforts have yielded great rewards since—within the last two years—some twelve of his students are now published writers.

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Dr. Ashwannie Harripersaud is a trained teacher and gained her Doctorate in Education from Selinus University, Italy. Dr. Harripersaud has her Master of Arts in English at JAIN University in India and her Bachelor of Education from The University of Guyana.

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