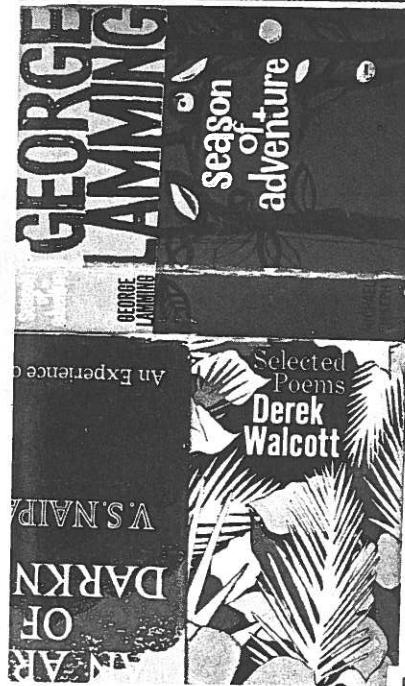


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1. John Hearne
2. Sylvia Wynter
3. Roger Mais
4. Fitzroy Frazer
5. George Lamming
6. V.S. Naipaul
7. Neville Dawes

# We must Learn to sit down together and talk about a Little Culture\*

*Jamaica Journal 2.4 (1968) +  
3.1 (1969)*

## REFLECTIONS ON WEST INDIAN WRITING & CRITICISM

by Sylvia Wynter

### PART ONE *CRITICISM CONSULTED*

**IMPACT - A Publication of the Guild of Undergraduates,  
U.W.I.**

**Wayne Browne, The Novelist in an unsettled Culture.  
CARIBBEAN QUARTERLY, Vol. 13, No. 1. March 1967.  
W.I. Carr, Roger Mais - Design from a Legend.**

**The Islands in Between - Essays on West Indian Literature,  
Edited with an introduction by Louis James.  
Oxford University Press, 1968.**

**T.W. ADORNO      PRISMS 1967      (Trans Weber)  
George Lamming,      THE PLEASURES OF EXILE 1960**

\*Title from Fitzroy Frazer: *Wounds in the Flesh.*

**"For colonization is a reciprocal process; to be a colonial is to be a man in a certain relation; and this relation is an example of exile"**

(George Lamming, *The Pleasures of Exile*)

The article, *The Novelist in an unsettled Culture*, is written by Wayne Browne, a Final year student of English at the University of the West Indies. That on Roger Mais, published in the Caribbean Quarterly, was written by W.I. Carr, a former lecturer in English on the Mona Campus. The collection of essays — *The Islands in Between* — is edited by Louis James, also a former lecturer in English there. The essayists are for the most part West Indian. Both Louis James and Carr are Englishmen. All, West Indian or Englishmen, are connected, in one way or the other, with the University of the West Indies. John Hearne, a writer who functions in this context as critic, runs the University's recently built Creative Arts Centre. But my concern is not with labels — English or West Indian, writer or critic. My concern is with connections. The first connection to be made is that the critical writing of the English-speaking Caribbean, as a body, is centred at and diffused from the university.

The second connection to be made is that this critical exploration is conducted, for the most part, under the guidance and within the perspectives of English criticism. This itself reflects the fact, that the University, like the society, is a 'branch plant industry of a metropolitan system'.\* In all such systems, the creators of original models, i.e. the writers, must cluster at the centre if they are to have the freedom and the opportunity to create. The third connection follows from this last — that whilst the critics are safely 'home and dry' at the university, the writers are scattered, in exile. Already, in 1960, George Lamming foresaw the inevitability of his own exile. He wrote then,

*"I am still young by ordinary standards (thirty-two to be exact) but already I feel that I have had it (as a writer) as far as the British Caribbean is concerned. I have lost my place or my place has deserted me."*

Even more recently, C.L.R. James said in an interview, in Paris, with the French newspaper *Le Monde*:

*"The majority of us (writers in exile) keep on talking about the only subject which really explodes in our hearts — our native land. But as it becomes more and more of a dream its contours fade, and when our people at home read what we have written about them, they cannot recognize themselves any more. They (the writers) will cut my throat for having said this, but it is the truth, as much for me as it is for them. I, who am old, have lived through this calvary, but they who are young, are only now undergoing theirs. Until my last breath, I shall refuse to accept that this exile will not have an end."*

These are naked statements. They are statements to which attention must be paid. To attend them, I must reveal my own connection, declare my interest.

Jamaican, a West Indian, an American. I write not to fulfil a category, fill an order, supply a consumer, but to attempt to define what is this thing to be — a Jamaican, a West Indian, an American. I believe that this definition is the beginning of awareness; the 'taking of consciousness' of being, as modern Latin American writers express it. Lamming, in the *'Pleasure of Exile'* worked towards this kind of awareness. He wrote,

*"..unawareness is the basic characteristic of a slave. Awareness is the minimum condition for attaining freedom."*

The Mexican writer Leopold Zea sees the importance of this type of awareness at the national level. Up till now, he writes, Mexico was involved in action. But in action that was not aware of its origin or intention. Now Mexico had to enter into an awareness of its reality. To be aware of reality means that,

*"we shall have to make ourselves aware of the springs which have moved hitherto irrational forces in order to direct them better. In this way we shall not fall for yet another Utopia".*

I share in this intention. I therefore cannot regard what I write as a fetish object called literature — a being in itself — to be deified under the static concept of Art for Art's sake. I cannot accept that culture is, to borrow the phrase of Roland Barthes, "*a piece of inexplicable magic*", to be created by the artist, unconsciously, as medium, with the critic as High Priest and conscious interpreter. I accept Brecht's thesis that in settled periods of history, culture — and literature which is its part, with criticism as its partner — can reflect reality. But that in traumatic times like ours, when reality itself is so distorted as to have become impossible and abnormal, it is the function of all culture, partaking of this abnormality, to be aware of its own sickness. To be aware of the unreality of the unauthenticity of the so called real, is to *reinterpret* this reality. To *reinterpret* this reality is to commit oneself to a constant revolutionary assault against it.

For me then, the play, the novel, the poem, the critical essay, are means to this end — not ends in themselves. Yet they are means which are at one and the same time, self-contained cells, and part of a dynamic living process. This process marks the path for the West Indian from acquiescent bondage to the painful beginning of freedom. Freedom means the rejection of 'white lies' and the acceptance of the 'black truth' of his condition. Our condition is one of uprootedness. Our uprootedness is the original model of the total twentieth century disruption of man. It is not often appreciated that West Indian man, qua African slave, and to a lesser extent, white indentured labourer, was the first labour force that emergent capitalism had totally at its disposal. We anticipated by a century the dispossession that would begin in Europe with the Industrial Revolution. We anticipated, by centuries, that exile, which in our century is now common to all.

The exile of the writer, then, not only from the Caribbean, but from Latin America and from many other neo-colonial territories, is part of a general negation. It is part of a process of negation in which culture itself has been dispossessed. The Brazilian critic, Clarival do Pardo Valladares, writing on the concept of Negritude, recently, commented:

*"Whilst Western civilization considers art as a distinct activity which tries to reflect in the object, the interiority of the individual artist. . tribal art, according to William Farnsworth, is completely integrated in the life of the people."*

He went on to consider the present state of tribal art in Africa. Now that the artist of Africa was drawn into 'the culture industry' of the West, he had begun to lose the 'virility of his motivation'. This motivation had been to create art which expressed the collective thought and feeling of the tribe. Now instead the artist turned out traditional models of fecundity as 'bibelots' for Europeans; and for the new European oriented elite-bourgeoisie of Africa. Even when a group of traditional craftsmen use old tools, and traditional musical instruments to create traditional arts, its excellence was negated, because,

*.. all this was being done through the motivation not of tribal but of tourist art. The product, rightly called folkloric art was authentic up to a certain point. Beyond that point it lost its motivation, its aesthetic reason, and became marked with the travesty of the touristic object, which recalls an exotic origin, but which at the same time, serves the requirements of, and responds to the imposition of the taste of the buyer."*

Tribal art in Africa and elsewhere is merely undergoing the dispossession of art and culture everywhere today. In the West, and the 'free world' over which the West exercises dominance, culture has become a mere appendage to the market mechanism; another industry among others. In the Soviet Union, and the 'fraternal' countries over which the Soviet Union exercises dominance, culture is a mere appendage to the mechanism of the established order. The Communist world makes this emphatically clear. Hence the 'trial' of writers. The 'free world' resorts to more subtle methods. It accepts its writers, encourages their heresies, acclaims them; pays them. It understands that the logic of the market mechanism tends to make the writer, as it makes what he writes, irrelevant.

Like the tribal artist today, the writer writes not for the tribe, but for the market. He produces not for man but for the consumer. By accepting the part of the man as the whole, the writer, and the artist, deny the humanity of man. In denying the humanity of man, he denies his possible brotherhood; his possible coming together as one. A multitude of consumers, constitute not a group, to borrow Sartre's distinction, but a series of consumers, each waiting in line at the supermarket for their packaged cultural product. A multitude of consumers are the negation of a multitude of men. Art which accepts man as a consumer, belongs to what Malraux calls, 'the appeasing arts'. These arts, as Malraux points out, are not inferior arts. They are anti-art. Art is a vital and functional element of the dynamics of a society, that which unites men; the more than bread by which they live. Anti-art, whether expressed in the James Bond novels, or the French anti-novel, the very latest avant of the avant garde, helps men to escape from the reality of a society which they have fashioned; which now fashions them; and which they can no longer endure. "Good art", said Tolstoy with prophetic insight, "is that which serves the religious perception of our times — that of the unity of mankind." 'Bad art' is that which disserves it. The appeasing arts, says Malraux — the cinema, the soap opera, the television serial, invite men to an escape to an illusion.

The appeasing arts are not confined to the lowest possible denominator. Just as there are consumers of all grades, — Top people take the Times and a bold new breed wears buffalo jeans — so there are 'appeasing arts' of different brands and different quality. In art, as in other goods produced for the market, the connoisseurs are those who recognise 'fine' art by its delicate bouquet, its esoteric genealogy, its abstruse rationale. The topgrade consumer-connoisseur is deadly

was in his way a connoisseur, too. A lowbrow in ideas but with highbrow consumer tastes in food, women and cars. To accept James Bond was the most complex and U form of inverted snobbery. The highbrow who slummed for a while with Bond in high-class beds, could return to highbrow ideas in volumes tooled for the anti-philistine. And of course, the middlebrow consumer has his middlebrow brand and line, all nicely catered for. The essential factor was that both high and middlebrow could be made to feel that they belonged to an elite. Nothing tops silvertop gin and only the elect of the intellect could savour it without sin. The writer who consciously sets out to write for an elite is as much involved in the appeasing arts as the writer, who, wanting to write 'for the people' falls into the trap of writing for the consumer.

The concept of 'people', better expressed by the Spanish 'pueblo' is fast vanishing. The writer who returns from exile at the metropolitan centre to 'write for his people'; to seek with them to 'break out of identity imposed by alien circumstances', and to find a new one, must come face to face with the fact that his 'people' has become the 'public'. And the public in the Caribbean, equally like the public in the great metropolitan centres, are being conditioned through television, radio, and advertising, to want what the great corporations of production in the culture industry, as in all others, have conditioned them to want. Returning from exile at the metropolitan centre, the writer all too often finds that he returns only to another example, another facet of exile. Yet by not returning, the writer continues to accept his irrelevance.

I returned. I returned because I had no choice. I could not write, my talent did not suffice, except I could return to the lived experience of my own corner of reality. I accepted that writing would have to be done in the interstices of my time. For my writing was not a marketable product in the 'branch plant society' to which I returned. My interpretation of one aspect of European literature could be sold; I had the Good Housekeeping label of a metropolitan university. If the label had been marked English literature rather than Spanish, I would be able to function in my own society as an interpreter of West Indian literature rather than of Spanish literature. But within the 'branch plant' arrangement of my society and its university, I (and others infinitely more gifted than I am) would have no possibility to function as the *creator* of any such writing.

Given my particular position, I cannot pretend to objectivity nor impartiality in my approach to these critical essays. Nor can I pretend to function purely as a critic in relation to them. I prefer to bear witness to my own reaction on reading what is after all a feed back report on the body of writing now labelled West Indian. And my first reaction on reading these essays was that this critical body of work confronted us with a paradox at once so simple and so complex, that it staggers the imagination; until one remembers that in the upside down reality in which we have our being, paradoxes are 'normal'. For what they show us, these essays, is that the books, as the products of the writers, have a function, at least in academic circles. There they are transformed into texts. West Indian books have a function in West Indian society. West Indian writers have none.

Since the texts are there, to be explained, interpreted, accepted, dismissed, the interpreter replaces the writer; the critic displaces the creator. Yet in displacing the creator, he diminishes his own validity. Criticism is a part of culture and

not its instant powder substitute. When the creative instinct is stifled or driven into exile, the critical faculty can survive only as maggots do — feeding on the decaying corpse of that which gives it a brief predatory life. The exclusion of the West Indian writer from West Indian life, has even more far-reaching implications than the agony of exile undergone by the writer himself. It implies the acceptance by us of all of a 'bewitched reality'. It implies our acceptance of an arrangement of society in which the writer in order to find a way of functioning, must go to the metropolitan centre. It implies our complicity with the commissioners of the market system. The Communist commissioners send their dissident writers to prison. The market commissioners by inducing writers to find outlet and function only at the metropolitan centre, sends them into exile. We come to terms with our 'branch plant' existence, our suburban *raison d'être*.

To be a colonial, says Lamming, is to be a man in a certain relation. A suburban is a man without a being of his own; a man in a dependent economic and cultural relation with the metropolis. To be in that relation is an example of exile. The air of inauthenticity which pervades the West Indian University, springs from the fact that the university, like its society, only much more so, is in exile from itself. Like Caliban, as Lamming sees him in the 'Pleasures of Exile', the university has no self which is not imposed on it by circumstances. Many of these critical essays, which embody the University's criticism of West Indian writing reflect, and parallel this inauthenticity. Some do not.

## II

**"We have met before. Four centuries separate our first meeting when Prospero was graced with the role of thief, merchant and man of God."**

(*Lamming, 'The Pleasures of Exile'*)

In his long and detailed introduction to *The Islands In Between*, Louis James, as editor has only this to say about the exile of the West Indian writer:

*"Seen against the various tensions of the area, it is not surprising that many creative Caribbean writers moved away from the West Indies to see their predicament in perspective... V.S. Naipaul — who entitled an account of his visit to his ancestral homeland 'An Area of Darkness (1964)' — and Samuel Selvon, left permanently for England. Into exile in London too, went many other creative West Indian writers, including George Lamming, Wilson Harris, Andrew Salkey and Edgar Mittelholzer."*

Why does Louis James, accept and pass over, as a given fact, a connection without which West Indian writing cannot be properly explained? For James cannot be accused, as W.I. Carr can be, of refusing to see literature in the context of a given time and place. Indeed much of his introduction is given over to a historical sketch of the area which produced West Indian writing; and of the circumstances which helped to define it. Yet this historical sketch is distorted by James' essentially 'branch plant' perspective — a perspective that views the part for the whole; that adjusts new experience to fit an imported model, with a shift here and a shift there; that blinds its horizons in order not to perceive the logical and ultimate connections that would invalidate the original model

'appeasing arts'; and of their corollary, 'acquiescent criticism.'

What do we mean by this? James does not hesitate to point out the colonial background to West Indian writing. No West Indian, however passionate and anti-colonial could fault him on this. He says all the right things, makes all the right genuflections. If he praises the British presence in the Caribbean,

*"Only an extremist would deny the positive contribution to West Indian social and political life made by England. They are ubiquitous, and deeply ingrained, far more so than in India or Africa. English education opened up a cultural heritage which reached beyond England to Europe, and Asia and Africa. It provided a highly developed tool of language with which a writer like Walcott could explore his own unique predicament, just as the British liberal traditions formed the basis for the struggle for independence from England."*

Louis James is quick to adjust the balance with this:

*"At the same time the English traditions could be destructive. Petrified within the social structure as the standards of respectability they could also, as we have noticed, divide class from class, and constrict the evolution of national ways of life."*

If we examine both the praise and the dispraise, we shall find that James has really evaded the issue. He has, to use just phrase of T.W. Adorno 'parried by not parrying.' No one in reading both accounts could fail to see on which side the balance tilts-in favour of England and her 'positive contributions'. Yet an English education provided Walcott with a highly developed tool of language to explore a 'unique predicament' which England's economic interest had created; a predicament which had profited her. If British liberal traditions formed the basis of the West Indian's struggle for independence, it was the British anti-liberal tradition which by making him colonial, caused him to have to struggle in the first place. From this long and anti-liberal tradition England also profited. Her 'destructive English traditions' which divided class from class, were there to serve a purpose. To continue an economic and political arrangement which profited her. The more they profitted her, the less they profited the West Indian. The end result is an arrangement by which, with independence attained, the majority of the West Indians were illiterate. The writer wanting market and audience had to go to England; the West Indian emigrant wanting a living wage had to go to England. As the West Indian University, wanting skilled personnel, had to turn to England. The presence of Louis James in the Caribbean and the absence of the writer in London are part of the same historical process.

The distortion of Louis James' perspective comes from his avoidance of this connection. He sketches the history of the Caribbean from an Archimedean point outside the historical process. Yet it is a process in which he is as involved as is the West Indian. This pretended objectivity and detachment is the common stance of what I call, for convenience, the 'acquiescent critic.' In attempting to write from outside the process in pretending detachment, the 'acquiescent critic', accepts the status quo, by accepting his own fixed point outside it. He falls into the trap of which Adorno spoke:

*"He, the cultural critic speaks as if he represented either unadulterated nature or a higher historical stage. Yet he is necessarily of the same essence as that to which he fancies himself superior. The insufficiency of the subject... which*

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*notion to which it opposes itself as independent and sovereign."*

James, as an English teacher teaching in a West Indian university, passing judgement on West Indian writing, is mediated to his bones by the colonial experience, by the colonial myth in which he is as involved, though in a different role, as is the West Indian.

It is Lamming the writer and the West Indian, and not James the critic and the Englishman, who sees this vital connection. James' criticism, in the final analysis, is there to reinforce the status quo; Lamming's is there to question it. Lamming, the questioning critic cannot take fixity as his stance; he knows himself and his perspective moulded by a historical process imposed on his being. He writes from a point of view inside the process. He knows that he does. Awareness is all. In the '*Pleasures of Exile*' he begins his historical sketch of the Caribbean quite differently from James. He speaks to James, not at him. "*We have met before*". Lamming tells him. "*Four centuries separate our meeting . . .*"

### III

**"Behind everything is imperialism," Edgar said. "Forget imperialism," Capleton snapped. "We don't have any guns or planes."**

**"Why forget imperialism, Ramsay thought."**

(Neville Dawes, *The Last Enchantment*.)

**"History was built around achievement and creation and nothing was created in the West Indies."**

(V.S. Naipaul, *The Middle Passage*.)

**"Mouche affirmed that there was nothing here worth looking at or studying; that this country had neither history nor character."**

(Alejo Carpentier: *The Lost Steps*.)

In '*The Pleasures of Exile*', Lamming performs the highest function of criticism. He opens for us Shakespeare's play, THE TEMPEST. He reveals extensions of meaning that have hitherto avoided us. He does this by involving himself, a twentieth century Barbadian Negro, within the context of the play. He brings 'immanent criticism' to a new height, that is he reveals the qualities that the play has as 'an end in itself' by paradoxically placing it firmly within the context of the adventure of its time. He says:

*"I see 'The Tempest' against the background of England's experiment in colonization.... and it is Shakespeare's capacity for experience which lead me to feel that 'The Tempest' was also prophetic of a political future which is our present."*

Lamming places 'The Tempest' within the process of England's creation of Empire. 'The Tempest', he shows us, was as much the cultural expression of England's adventure; as were the voyages of Drake and Hawkins, its economic expression. It is the measure of Shakespeare's genius that at the height of England — Prospero's intoxication, he should have been aware of the dimension of Caliban's tragedy — "*That when I waked, I cried to dream once more*".

It is the measure of Lamming's critical insight that he sees this as the beginning of a *Cultural* connection that was not separate from the economic, but lay at its very heart. To elucidate this connection Lamming begins to chart for us "*the triangular course of that tremendous Voyage which swept Caliban from his soil and introduced him to Heaven through the long wet hell of the Middle Passage.*" This is the beginning of an African's history as Caliban; and of Hawkin's as Prospero. Both after that voyage had suffered a sea-change and had been transmuted into something terrible and strange. The history of neither Caliban nor Prospero can be understood from now on, outside of that relationship.

Lamming points out that from the start it was a relationship based on violence in the name of commerce. He does this merely by quoting Hakluyt:

*"... and got into his possession, partly by the sword, and partly by other means, to the number of 300 Negroes at the least, besides other merchandizes which that country yield-eth. With this prey he sailed over the Ocean Sea and unto the Island of Hispaniola and arrived first at the port of Isabella."*

Thus we had 'the Middle Passage'. A triangular trade all spelling profit for those of Prospero's race who survived the crossing. And spelling loss for all of Caliban's — for those who died, in their millions, for those who survived to inhabit a brave New World, for those who remained behind, to wage internecine war, to trade their kith and kin in exchange for Prospero's symbol of power, his magic wand — the gun.

I have quoted Naipaul's statement about history in the West Indies. It is an often quoted statement. Louis James begins his historical introduction with this statement. W.I. Carr, in his long and illuminating article on Roger Mais, also quotes the statement, and comments:

*"I used to feel that this summed it all up, and I partially reject it now, because it seems to me too much of a comment upon the present, or upon the effort possible in the present. Naipaul seems to be inviting one just to get up and go away."*

The quotation by both these critics of a judgement made by Naipaul in his travel book the '*Middle Passage*' is a comment as much on the critics as it is on Naipaul. But a distinction must be made. Although James begins with this comment which, when examined really implies a division pointed out by Sartre:

*"Not so very long ago, the earth numbered two thousand million inhabitants; five hundred million men, and one thousand five hundred million natives. The former had the Word; the others had the use of it."*

Louis James contradicts this division later in the section headed 'Unconquerable Spirit', and in the quotation from C.L.R. James which he uses:

*"One has to hear with what warmth and with what volubility and at the same time with what precision and accuracy of judgement this creature, heavy and taciturn all day, now squatting before the fire, tells stories, talks, gesticulates, argues, passes opinions, approves and condemns both his masters and everyone who surrounds him."*

That is Louis James opposes to the dangerous division of Naipaul — Men make history; Natives don't — a section in which he sketches the development and the creation from

African beliefs and fragments of the 'coherent' culture which at first he denies. What gave coherence to this culture was its revolutionary intention. If in the day, Caliban laboured and worked in order to create the economic base for the dazzling progression of 'achievements' of Prospero at night he became a man once more. His folk songs, his folk dances, his calypso with its satiric intention, his dances, imitating the white dances, transforming them with the heavy rhythm whose survival assured the existence of his being, constituted a nightly revolution against the reality to which he was condemned. One sees the acuteness of Adorno's comment that because "*culture arises in men's struggle to reproduce themselves.* . ." it "contains an element of resistance to blind necessity." This Caliban, transformed at night before the fire, talking, singing, involved in ritual and religion which was still arranged around a spiritual altar of African gods, created the culture out of which the Haitian revolution, fused into an equally revolutionary European cultural tradition, sprang. The night gathering about the fire had tremendous relevance. Around the fire the Native took hold of the Word. And it was His Word in his own mouth, fired by his own dream. By making use of the Word, as Lamming shows, Caliban had initiated his first act of revolution against Prospero. He had appropriated Prospero's language, as Prospero had appropriated his labour, thinking to appropriate his being. But his being survived and returned Prospero's language, changing forever its meaning. The cultural tradition out of which the West Indian, who is fed by the Caliban culture of the West Indies writes, is an inherently revolutionary one. That was always its intention.

Louis James, has glimpses of this. But by his arrangement of his material, he sees as subsidiary that which is really central. Because of this he misses certain implications. He quotes Braithwaite at the head of his introduction:

"For we  
who have cre-  
ated nothing,  
must exist  
on nothing . . .

He uses this to reinforce Naipaul's statement rather than seeing it as an ironic comment on such a statement. For Naipaul's statement, his concept of history, is nothing more than a reflection of Naipaul's terrible enchantment by what Louis James himself calls 'the brilliant myth of Europe'. Gordon Rohlehr in his excellent essay on Naipaul, uses the critical approach of a Lamming. He explains Naipaul in the context of Trinidad. But he points out that this retrogression in sensibility and interprets the connection between the man and his world. He sees the '*Middle Passage*' compared to '*Biswas*', as "a sensibility is itself a part of the colonial experience in which Naipaul had been, and is still, involved."

*"Naipaul is a Trinidad East Indian who has not come to terms with the Negro-creole world in Trinidad, or with the East Indian world in Trinidad, or with the greyness of English life, or with life in India itself where he went in search of his roots."*

The validity of Naipaul, even in a maimed book like the '*Middle Passage*', comes from his own personal involvement in the 'horrors' which he describes. His sense of unreality, his revulsion in India as in Trinidad, is his intuitive and terrible response to the colonial experience. The fact that India and Trinidad and the rest of the Caribbean are now 'free'; that they have a flag and an anthem, are not any proof to Naipaul that things have changed. Indeed, in a sense, they have got worse. Naipaul's value is his true and certain geiger response to

a situation. His danger lies in another facet of the colonial experience - his constant misinterpretation of this unrealism and its source. On his return to Trinidad, Naipaul was caught up in an increasing 'poverty of culture' which Oscar Lewis has recently shown is endemic to the early states of industrial capitalism. In this sense, although Trinidad had made more economic progress since independence than in all her British years, she too, like the rest of the Caribbean, like India, like England herself, has entered a vast dispossession.

Naipaul's insights into this dispossession, whether in travel book or in his novels are acute. His honesty impels him to experience this dispossession through his own being; and no one can describe it in others. Yet his animus against the Negro sharpens his eye for the Negro's dispossession. In spite of himself, this revelation has a revolutionary intention. His portrait of Eden in '*The Mimic Men*', takes us back to the implications of Lamming's analysis of the relation between Prospero and Caliban. In the '*Mimic Men*', Ralph Singh, Trinidadian Indian and failed politician, takes refuge in London. His escape is merely the conclusion of a flight that had begun, long ago in *Trinidad* when by changing his name - Ranjit Kripalsingh to Ralph Singh - he had denied his being and accepted a basement bargain status in the 'white-Christian Anglo-Saxon-educated, rich' continuum of Prospero; his flight conditioned by the cultural myth through which Prospero exercises his domination. The cultural myth which had taught Singh (and Naipaul) nothing but reverence for Western power; and the psychological basis of Western power, referred to by Sartre as "*that other witchery of which I have already spoken, Western culture*". Now, refuged in his London hotel Singh recalls the past with a dry telling of the beads. The most successful part of the book is this evocation of the past - the days at school when four boys, one of whom was Singh, had tried to escape from the stereotypes which the cultural myth Prospero had used to keep them in happy subjugation. One of the four boys was Eden.

*"Eden was something of a buffoon. He was the blackest boy in the school and for some time was known as Spite... His reputation as a buffoon and his special relationship with Deschampsneuf had been established early... Eden had fixed on Asia as the continent he wished to travel in; he had been stirred by Lord Jim. His deepest wish was for the Negro race to be abolished; his intermediate dream was of a remote land where he, the solitary Negro among an alien pretty people, ruled as sort of a sexual king".*

The myth, devised by Prospero, as the magic to prop up his power, had sold to Eden the emasculation of his spirit. The myth, by emasculating his spirit, conditions his compensatory dreams and fantasies. Once his dreams have been conditioned Prospero grants him freedom of speech; Prospero grants him the vote, a national flag, an anthem. He is sure now that Caliban will speak only to deny himself; vote only to abolish himself. Yet, the system breeds its contradictions. For Eden leaving school, becomes envious when Deschampsneuf gets job in a bank; and he can't. The rage at not being able to handle money, the new magic wand, the new gun, festers. It is forgotten in the daily round. Until Ariel, in the person of Naipaul, in the '*Mimic Men*' returns Eden-Caliban to himself. Eden, once made aware of his emasculation, will grope back to his pristine dream of freedom. When he gives tongue to his dream it will be the more terrible for having been denied so long. Eden will speak then with the voice of the young black American, Eldridge Cleaver,

*"We shall have our manhood. We shall have it, or the earth will be levelled by our attempts to gain it."*

The Calibans, their past appropriated, their present distorted are determined to have the future. They have a right to it. The Cuban poet Retamar writes:

"You were right Tallet. We are men of transition.  
Between the whites...  
And the nocturnal blacks, blue at times, chosen through  
Terrible proofs; only the best survived  
The only superior race on the planet."

The history of the Caribbean is a history of survival.

It is only the 'racist humanism' of Europe as Sartre calls it, that sees history in European terms only – history as achievement and creation. Yet as Alejo Carpentier shows in his novel, the 'Lost Steps', the creation of the Eroica Symphony is an essential corollary of the negation of Auschwitz. Naipaul accepts the racist definition of history with the part of his intellect that is crippled by it. As Rohlehr says:

*"It (Naipaul's Englishness) manifests itself, rather, in his unconscious acceptance of a typical European view of Third World inferiority. . . it shows itself in his contemptuous rejection of all things West Indian. "*

Naipaul's self-hatred, foisted by the cultural myth which he has accepted, ugly in some of its manifestations, is yet an essential part of his talent. His own torment provides him with a scalpel with which he dissects, with the precision of a Fanon, if without his understanding and clear intention, the state of Caliban's and Ariel's descendants. Biswas is essentially a tragedy of dispossession. The disintegration of Hanuman House is the disintegration of the last decaying remnants of Hindu culture. Distorted as Tulisdom is, struggling to survive in a new world where the sole economic motive has made irrelevant all the customs and traditions by which the Indian had affirmed his being in his exile, it yet provided a shelter for many of the others, who, unlike Biswas could not make the adjustment to 'creole' culture and the competitive ethic. Hanuman House, stagnant and evil, is swept away, as Biswas enters his house. It is not accidental that Naipaul kills him off. Like Don Quixote, with his madness gone, Biswas might have woken up to find his house a cage. With the house and the Perfect car, Biswas has entered suburbia. The Tulsis, the human enemy, have been replaced with the remote gnomes of Zurich; and the vast and all embracing Hanuman Headquarters in which all the Biswases are now imprisoned.

In this new Hanuman House, it is Caliban who is still subversive. For Biswas has learnt to write. He is now a journalist, and has the Word, even if that Word is conditioned by the consumer, Biswas has taken his place as the Ariel of the system. Caliban cannot. Even in this new house, he is still on its lowest floor. He is the base on which the superstructure is erected. His is the negation that makes possible the dazzle of the culture industry. Lamming shows the beginning of the myth and its reality in Shakespeare's 'Tempest'. At the heart of the myth is what Adorno calls 'The original sin' of all culture: *the separation of mental from physical work*. It is the original sin at the heart of the relationship between Prospero and Caliban. Caliban is not himself without guilt. Caliban, a version of cannibal, was for Shakespeare, the original Carib in the New World. Ariel was perhaps, the Arawak, the innocence of the younger stages of a culture when progress and advance is not bought at the expense of the negation of others. The Caribs, on the other hand were predators. They kept young boys whom they captured from other tribes, castrated them, and brought them up as slaves until they were fat enough to be eaten. It is interesting to note that some observers on Columbus's first voyage found the

Caribs, i.e. the cannibals, the predatory, warlike, warmongering tribe to be

*"in some ways more civilized than the inhabitants of other islands even though they did not appear to possess any gold. Their houses were better built, their weapons very well made, and their cotton was just as skilfully woven as the best Spanish cloth."*

Caliban's mother had enslaved Ariel. The advanced culture of Caliban, like the advanced culture of Greece and that of Western civilization has been created at the expense of slaves and helots of all times and all races. The more 'advanced' the culture, the more its original sin. Prospero enslaves Caliban; as the representative of a more powerful and advanced culture, his enslavement of Caliban is more total. His culture depends on Caliban's labour. To get Caliban to accept this conversion of himself into brawn, muscle, body; to get him to consent to this division of labour which gave brainwork and the fabrication of cultural myths to Prospero and manual work to Caliban; even more, in order to rationalise to himself this inherent injustice, Prospero creates a stereotype and sells this stereotype to himself, Miranda and Caliban. Lamming notes the constant sadism with which Prospero brain-washes Caliban. He quotes: Prospero's speech:

*"But as 'tis  
We cannot miss him; he does make our fire  
Fetch in our wood and serves in offices  
That profit us. What ho! slave! Caliban  
Thou earth, thou! Speak!"*

Prospero wants only answers to his summons, respectful obedience to his orders.

By calling Caliban "earth", as Adorno shows in his analysis of culture's guilt, Prospero, the anti-Philistine throws on Caliban, the guilt of his own oppression. He distorts Caliban into pure body. As pure body Caliban performs his first revolutionary act. He attempts to rape Miranda. Mervyn Morris, a West Indian and a writer, in one of the most 'acquiescent' and depressing essays in the collection 'The Islands in Between' – dismisses the 'Pleasures of Exile', in almost the same tone and language with which the English critics destroyed Lamming once he broke out of the pattern, analysed the West Indian scene through its relationship with England; and the English scene through its relationship with the West Indies. It is the connection that is at the heart of the imperial myth. Once the connection is clear, the myth is in danger.

Morris, mediated to his bones by the limiting pragmatism of modern English criticism; by the pragmatism of 'decent' modern English prose which accepts 'reality' and makes no attempt to explore its contradictions, dismisses 'Pleasures of Exile' as "a rag-bag collection of essays", and has this to say:

*" . . . the discussion of the Tempest scarcely illuminates the assuming without evidence that Caliban is black, eagerly play discussing whether he did try to lay Miranda, and inquiring into the absence of Prospero's wife."*

The discussion of Caliban's attempt to rape Miranda, is at the heart of the racial myth which is shattering the world today. Lamming discussed it in 1960 and was a precursor of what is now a common place. But what particularly condemns Morris and his easy dismissal, is the terms in which Lamming discusses this rape. He points out that Caliban, still involved in his dream of freedom, wants to rape Miranda with a positive intention. His motive is not revenge.

"I had peopled else", and Lamming quotes, "this isle with Calibans".

His issue would have been the reunion of body and brain — the reunion of two stereotypes, the white man with his burden and the black man with his minstrel song. The reunion would have shattered the stereotypes, the division between mental and physical work, the original sin at the heart of all society, all culture. Caliban's dream impelled him towards wholeness. '*And when I waked, I cried to dream once more*'. It is this dream that Morris, locked in his too English, neat, not garish, language and Weltanschauung, forgets. It is this forgetting that inhibits Morris' exploration of his own talent.

Morris, like Naipaul comes to too quick terms with the 'brilliant myth of Europe'; with its concept of what is culture and what is history. W.I. Carr, is perhaps the most subtle and consistent propagator of the concept of culture through which the cultural myth of Europe exercises its dominance. As we shall see, Carr belongs to the kind of cultural critic, whom Adorno identifies:

*"But the greatest fetish of cultural criticism is the notion of culture as such. For no authentic work of art and no true philosophy, according to their very meaning, has ever exhausted itself in itself alone, in its being — in itself. They have always stood in relation to the actual life process of society from which they distinguish themselves."*

In his essay on Mais, Carr sets out to disassociate Mais 'from the material processes of life'. By accepting culture as a deified object, enthroned in ritual, whose communal sustaining belief has long since vanished, except for a handful of the elite who believe with their intellects, this kind of critic, like Spengler,

*"... severs culture from man's drive to survive. For him it becomes a game in which the soul is its own playmate."*

Morris, although to a lesser extent than Carr, accepts this concept of culture. So does Louis James, although with some reservations; and so does Cameron King who is co-author with James of the essay on Derek Walcott. Hearne, in his essay on Wilson Harris, is a clear exponent of this concept, almost in spite of himself. Wayne Browne in the Article in 'Impact' shows himself a disciple of Carr, with the imagined consequences; although here and there an original and thinking mind tries to break through the 'witchery' called Western culture, sold him by Carr. These are for me essentially 'acquiescent' critics — critics who reflect and parallel the inauthenticity of the university and its society. Against these, Lammings '*Pleasures of Exile*', Rohlehr on Naipaul, Creary on Mais, move towards genuine criticism — and therefore towards illumination rather than that mystification which is at the heart of the "brilliant myth of Europe."

The poem of Cesaire which is the manifesto of Negritude, which Lamming quotes, and which Braithwaite echoes; and James quotes without perceiving its implications, is an attack on the concept of man as a producer-consumer. The Negro with his stubborn holding on to a tribal integrated philosophy and culture, through its fragments, rhythm, dance, song, would fit in like the Catholic with his medieval memory, uneasily. We who have created nothing is *not* a negative statement, as is Naipaul's. It is the very negation of what Naipaul has said. History is not a building, fixed in place and time, its bricks the dates of each achievement, the records of things created, its cement the blood of victims and victimizes; history is the history of man's attempt to fulfil his being, his resistance to being reduced to producer, consumer; producing finally the atomic bomb which waits to consume him. *"Eia for we who*

*have created nothing"*, like Caliban's attempted rape of Miranda, is an assault against all culture which accepts as the price of its existence the negation of any part of man's being. It is like Caliban's attempted rape, a move towards wholeness. Negritude, unlike its current yet necessary distortion, *Black Power*, is essentially syncretic and inclusive and whole.

"White Power" is the trap that Prospero fell into, when, in order to free Ariel, he enslaved Caliban; then found that freeing Ariel and enslaving Caliban paid off. Prospero's magic, his culture, his poetry, soured into white power and imperialism. Black Power is its negation. Negritude, in the sense in which Caliban understood it, and the Brazilian Clarival do Prado Valladares defines it contains their solution and resolution. Commenting on the sculpture of the "Brazilian Agnaldo Manoel dos Santos, which won first prize at Dakar, he points out in the work, "*the links of the ancient African art and medieval Catholic art... the syncretism of two cultures, African and Iberian*", and concludes:

*"This ought to be the true path of negritude.... I think that the character of a culture is more important than its racial contingency. The universal presence and dimension recognizable in Negritude is the result of the first of these attributes."*

Even more than the fusion of races or the fusion of cultures is the task that faces Caliban, if he is to put an end to exile, i.e. the fusion once more of the body and the brain — the refusal to accept the separation between physical and mental work which is culture's sin; the refusal to be an elite, the brain, to a mass, the brawn. In accepting the consumer role for the mass, we accept their separation in the same way as we accepted and continue to accept that some men must be hewers of wood and drawers of water. There is need for a cultural revolution of this kind of magnitude. For its only with an end to the division between body-brain; consumer mass — technocrat elite that the world will have a chance to break out of the Spenglerian rise and fall of civilizations. Adorno tells us that the concept of Fate has always been the reflection of the domination of one group of men over another. The end of such domination is the end of the concept of Fate; and of its more refined extensions in the cultural myths by which men of all races, of all brilliant civilizations, have used to dominate other men, whose negation underpinned their brilliance. Adorno quotes James Shotwell:

*"The civilizations that have come and gone have been inherently lacking in equilibrium because they have been built upon the injustice of exploitation. There is no reason to suppose that modern civilizations must repeat this cataclysmic theory."*

There is no reason to believe this. Although there are many indications that we will. The concept of culture as a fetish object, justifying the negation of others; the concept of history as something which excludes the 'natives'; the contempt implicit in Naipaul's, his quoter's, and Mouche, the Western culture addict, whom Alejo Carpentier\* shows in her sterility passing judgement on a culture more valid and more whole than her tourist object d' art, are psychological barriers that must be battered down if we are to survive. The 'appeasement arts' come to terms with these concepts. 'Acquiescent criticism' bolsters them. The imperial way of seeing has not disappeared with the imperial flag. Its manifestations are more subtle; because more subtle, they are more dangerous. It was easier to fight 'manifest unfreedom' in 1938, as Mai fought; than to grapple with 'seeming freedom' as we must do now.

\*In his novel — *The Lost Step*

**BEATIE:**... "It does work, it's happening to me, I can feel it's happened, I'm beginning on my own two feet - I'm beginning..."  
 .... Beatie stands alone, articulate at last.)

**ARNOLD WESKER, Roots.**

"It is remarkable that the Negro ever writes at all. In order to endure he must be cunning and silent. Jazz is a form of silence."

**NEVILLE DAWES, The Last Enchantment.**

"In Mexico, the word is used not to reveal but to conceal.... the true use of language would commit us to a daily and permanent revolution...."

**CARLOS FUENTES.**

To write at all was and is for the West Indian a revolutionary act. Any criticism that does not start from this very real recognition is invalid. The hostility that Carr speaks of, in his essay on Salkey in the 'Islands In Between', the hostility that the writer meets with at the hands of the educated sections of the West Indian public, springs from this fact. The hostility that the West Indian writer meets with from University students, for example, comes directly from the concept of literature sold them by educators like Carr. These educators, the moulders of generations of West Indians, are, in the large majority, as English as they are West Indian. They are a cultural, not a racial product. They worship at the shrine of a graven idol called culture. They come out of the same all embracing mould, the same formation. As Baldwin MacDonald\*\*, the rebel turned headmaster, discovered when he read up on the etiquette of proper English and headmasterly behaviour, there's no escaping the mould.

"It was indeed difficult to argue against six standard textbooks. But, obviously, all of them belonged to the same school of thought, to the same stable of knowledge, and fed on the same belief."

Lamming points out that the higher up the West Indian moves in the social scale, the more educated he is, the more the cultural myth indoctrinates him through these standard text books.

Naipaul's concept of history is the result of this indoctrination. Yet Naipaul's novels, as Rohlehr points out, are an assault on this concept. In 'Biswas', Rohlehr tells us, Naipaul who says that the West Indies has no history, himself writes, 'in the history of West Indian underprivilege'. Biswas, safe from too much education, like Lamming's Papa in the 'Castle of my Skin', does not, as Carr would like him to do ('In his essay on Mais Carr accuses the Jamaican of being unable "to ponder his own limitations") ponder his limitations. These limitations are imposed on him by colonial circumstances. He might not know this; and certainly does not care. Both, Biswas and Papa, assault these limitations. The assault on these limitations is what gives meaning to their lives. They come within the category of men who live their lives and fulfil their being. They are men, to borrow Alejo Carpentier's terms, who "work out a destiny for themselves" against all possible odds. In a world where Carpenter sees" many faces and few destinies", they are men, through their struggle against circumstances. Both, in a profound sense, fail. Their failure is important. The failure of the men and women in West Indian novels is a witness to the impossible odds against which they are pitted.

\*\* In Fitzroy Frazer's novel 'Wounds in the Flesh'

To see Roger Mais's 'Hills' and 'Brother Man', Carew's 'Black Midas', Lamming's 'Castle', the way many reviewers do as 'the triumph of the human spirit' is to deliberately and wilfully misread the message. For what these books and others — Ramsay's failure in the 'Last Enchantment', Baldwin MacDonald's failure in 'Wounds of the Flesh', and so many more, all failures, attest to, is the total deprivation of all the Caliban's by Prospero's machinery of power. The heroic survival of the few, their heroic failures are only matched by the squalid and innumerable failures of the many. Patterson's 'Children of Sisyphus' showed honestly and remorselessly the failure of all. The West Indian writer, shows clearly a society in which,

"What keeps the mechanism creaking along is human deprivation under conditions of insane sacrifice and the continual threat of catastrophe." \*

In showing this society, however, ineptly; the struggle of Caliban to realize himself against the brutality of Prospero's arrangement of society, the West Indian writer attacks that concept of culture by which

"The precarious and irrational self-preservation of society is falsified and turned into an achievement of its immanent justice and rationality." \*

The West Indian writer is therefore involved in what Fuentes calls "a daily revolution." This is the reason for his exile, from Latin American and from here. Prospero's arrangement sees to this. This is too, in many cases the reasons for his failure as novelist, as poet, or what have you. In initiating his revolution, Caliban takes language and tools and concepts from the Prospero whom he must fight. All to often, his writing is accorded, or not accorded, recognition by this very Prospero. All to often in having to write for Prospero's approval, he negates his own intention. The writer needs to write, as Lamming does in 'The Pleasures of Exile', addressing himself to his own audience. That at the same time he addressed himself to Prospero too, is not irrelevant. The relationship with Prospero has not come to end with the physical departure of Prospero. As Lamming acutely realizes, since colonization had been a reciprocal process, decolonization must be equally so. Since it is Prospero who created the myth and assigned the respective roles, the process of demythologization must take place between himself and Caliban. Caliban, must in a dialogue, re-invent, re-define the relation. If Caliban is to become a man, Prospero must cease being a myth of super-man. Once this dialogue has really begun, the historical process which placed Louis James in the Caribbean and Lamming in London can be meaningful.

Lamming, seeing the connection between colonizer and colonized, examined the 'Tempest' against the experience of England's early adventure in Empire. Louis James, in spite of the many subsidiary excellencies of his comments, does not see West Indian literature against its necessary background — England's late adventure in the dissolution of Empire. What do we mean by this? For James, unlike Carr, reveals the connection between West Indian writing, the use of dialect etc., and the upsurge, beginning in the thirties, against colonial rule. But he keeps his analysis, with no more than a brief reference, firmly in a West Indian compartment. He does not see West Indian literature as the expression of the breaking out of all the Calibans, not only all over the British Empire, but at the heart of Empire itself.

That was what the English angry generation was about. E.R. Braithwaite's *To Sir with Love*, was significant in that it showed that Prospero had enslaved Caliban of his own race as he had enslaved others. Since the enslavement rested on a system which divided mental and physical work, body and brain, Braithwaite's hero, black but educated, was a Prospero

\* Adorno — Prisms.

representative to the Caliban East End children. His refusal to accept that these children should be excluded from all the props of Prospero's humanity; his struggle against the colonial circumstances imposed on these East Enders, comes from his own memory and still present experience (through his black skin) of the Caliban torment. The book is valid because of this connection.

Arnold Wesker's 'Roots' is even more illuminating. What Wesker shows us in *Roots* is a Beatie, a twentieth century Caliban's mate, condemned to waitressing, bludgeoned, bruised dehumanized like the rest of her family by the Telly, the radio, the advertisements, slick and sick; by the shoddy programmes, the shoddy clothes, the shoddy amusements, shoddy personal relationships, the shoddy ideas and evasions, the shoddy view of the rest of the world — what Wesker shows us in 'Roots', is a Beatie, breaking out through pain and hurt, to grasp the Word, the Word as liberator, and not as a prison cell. Jimmy Porter in 'Look Back in Anger' breaks out from the place of silence in which the imperial system, in which he was at once colonizer and colonized, had imprisoned him. In which he had acquiesced. His railing in 'Look back in Anger' was the beginning of his revolt. What has happened to this anger now? How was it stifled, channelled safely into avenues of conformity?

In the 'Pleasures of Exile', Lamming, used 'The Tempest' to show us the origin of Caliban's imprisonment by the word. Miranda, reflecting her father's teaching, addresses Caliban indignantly:

... when thou didst not, savage  
know thine own meaning, but wouldest gabble like  
a thing most brutish, I endowed thy purposes  
With words that made them known...

Each time Caliban writes, he reveals his purpose. His purpose, by the nature of his enslavement, cannot be a purpose acceptable to Miranda and Prospero by the very nature of their domination and exercise of power. Caliban, by writing at all, is groping towards his own choice of words. This is to gropetowards his own purpose. To speak for himself is to make Miranda's interpreter role irrelevant. Since this role is a key guardian role in Prospero's system, then Miranda as interpreter, must defend it. To defend this role, she welcomes Caliban's speech, encourages his purpose; and straining his purpose through the spectrum of her own, ends up by confusing his intention. In England, the angry generation having rebelled, like Baldwin MacDonald in 'Wounds in the Flesh', against the system, have been made headmasters, been caressed by power and given upholstered places on a modern chromium fence. They have come to acquiesce; their works have begun to take their place within the appeasing arts. Their anger provides a new thrill, a new frisson, a sort of superior James Bond.

In his latest novel, 'Season of Adventure', Lamming creates, in the character of Charcot, an angry young Englishman, who after anger experiences only a sense of futility. Lamming analyses why:

The second achievement of England's corpse was the effect of the pantomime on his generation. They were angry, But it was not the potent anger of a man unfairly dispossessed, (even when dispossessed in England, Charcot felt himself the dispossessor in relation to the West Indian, the African, and profited to however small a degree in his role as dispossessor) a man whose silence might contain a dangerous future. The anger of Charcot's generation had no precise details. It was not about poverty or hunger or

waste. Hunger and poverty and waste had equal urgency with the activity they called the Arts. Literature among the more attentive was an organism with all its parts complete. They could dissect it like a knee, and put it up again. They checked its pulse, charted the course of its veins, and listened for the mortal pause of its heart like a patient found gone in cancer. Their anger was an atmosphere in which they moved; a burning faith which showed their future raped. In anger everyone, because they had been deceived not simply by parents and teachers. They had been deceived by the very assumptions that had once made their country great."

When their anger "had started to pay off, when all their intentions had assumed a different role", in spite of themselves when "without any change of heart without betrayal of the heart, they had suddenly won the approval of their enemies" Charcot packs his bag, and leaves for San Cristobal to teach history. In doing this,

He had wanted to undermine the monotonous strength of his own inheritance. Europe had become the name of some erratic growth of moss or weed which totally imprisoned all his hopes."

But San Cristobal puts an end "to all his notions of adventure". In his pupil Fola he sees "a perfect example of his own displacement". In seeing Fola's displacement, a displacement even more total than his; — he is aware of his; she can scarcely afford to be aware, lest her precarious being, fragilely clutching be swept away; in accepting the blunting of his anger by the power of England's myth, still potent in her corpse, Charco has only one reaction left:

"Guilt was their last privilege. Their sole atonement became a daily exercise in the rebellious posture."

This penetrating analysis of Charcot, gives us an insight into the critical attitudes of a W.I. Carr. These attitudes are important and are worthy of attention. To discuss these attitudes is to initiate the dialogue between Caliban and Prospero — West Indian and Englishman — that we consistently avoid. Fearing confrontations, we take refuge in claptrap phrases like 'racial harmony'. Racial, and, even more important cultural harmony, cultural fusion can only come out of a high degree of awareness. Awareness calls for honesty of intention and expression. To be aware of Prospero's attitude and of our own is to set in motion that demythologization which for both is extremely difficult; and as Lamming insists painful. For both West Indian and Englishman, their critical attitudes whether conforming to or reacting against, spring from the seeds of their colonization,

"which has been richly infused with myth. We can change laws overnight; we may reshape images of our feeling. But this myth is most difficult to dislodge.. it is there as part of the actual texture of behaviour itself." \*

Where, as in the faculty of Arts and particularly in the Department of English, West Indian and English lecturers are busily engaged in interpreting the literature of Prospero, the cultural myth which at once enchains and at once holds out the possibility of liberation: as well as the emerging literature of Calibans which at once rebels against — as Hector Murena puts it "America is the child of Europe and we must assassinate her in order to live" — and at once fulfills the potential of freedom that is implicit in Prospero's charms, then this degree of awareness must be of a very high order indeed. The dangers of acquiescent criticism spring not only from a lack of awareness but from a deliberate rejection of such awareness.

\* George Lamming 'The Pleasures of Exile'

# We must Learn to sit down together and talk about a little Culture

REFLECTIONS ON WEST INDIAN  
WRITING AND CRITICISM by Sylvia Wynter

## Part 2

### CRITICISM CONSULTED

**IMPACT** - A publication of the Guild of Undergraduates,  
*U.W.I.* Wayne Browne, *The Novelist in an Unsettled Culture*.

**CARIBBEAN QUARTERLY**, Vol. 13, No 1. March, 1967.  
*W.I. Carr, Roger Mais-Design from a Legend.*

**THE ISLANDS IN BETWEEN** - Essays on West Indian Literature, Edited with an Introduction by Louis James. Oxford University Press, 1968.

**T. W. ADORNO:** *PRISMS*, Trans. Weber, 1967.

**GEORGE LAMMING:** *THE PLEASURES OF EXILE*, 1960.

### V.

"But that which makes cultural criticism inappropriate is not so much lack of respect for that which is criticized as the dazzled and arrogant recognition which criticism surreptitiously confers on culture. The cultural critic can hardly avoid the imputation that he has the culture which culture lacks.. When the critics permit themselves to be degraded to propagandists or censors, it is the old dishonesty of trade fulfilling itself in their fate. The prerogatives of information and position permit them to express their opinion as if it were objectivity. But it is solely the objectivity of the ruling mind. They help to weave the veil."

(ADORNO PRISMS. Trans. S. Weber.)

At the beginning of his article - *The Novelist is an Unsettled Culture* - Wayne Browne quotes a statement about

England made by W.I. Carr. Browne uses this statement as a measuring rod with which to assess the West Indian cultural experience. Carr wrote and Browne quotes:

"The novelist in England inhabits a dense world of critical discussion, of weekly reviews, of shared exchanges. He has the great advantage of relative anonymity in a culture, or rather in a social context, which is not forced to engage in a prolonged and painful dialogue with itself.. He is not obliged, by the conditions of his living to explore the nature of his Englishness. It is present for him in the achievement of his predecessors. And at the same time the English novel is so evidently a product of a high degree of social awareness."

It is plain from this that Carr sees England through different spectacles to those with which Lamming's young Englishman, Charcot (in the novel, *Season of Adventure*) sees it. Carr shares Charcot's feeling of guilt, is trapped in the same rebellious posture, but lacks the latter's disillusioned awareness that his posture is a posture.

Instead, Carr weaves a myth about present day England in much the same manner, as the narrator's father in Alejo Carpentier's novel *The Lost Steps*, weaves a myth about a Europe he too, had long since left. Carr sells his illusion of present day England to Browne as the narrator's father sells his dream of a distant and magnificent Europe to his son. The father instils in his son a view of the world, a Manichean view, in which, as Professor Coulthard\* expresses it, the world is "a battle field between the light of recorded (European) culture and the darkness of original animality, (America)"

In Europe, the narrator's father tells him, working men partake

EDITOR'S NOTE: In Part One of 'Reflections on West Indian Writing and Criticism' (Jamaica Journal, Vol. 2 No.4., December 1968) Sylvia Wynter made a distinction between what she termed 'acquiescent criticism' on the one hand, and 'challenging criticism' on the other. According to this distinction the 'acquiescent critic' pretends to take an 'objective' stance, outside the historical process which has moulded his point of view; the 'challenging critic' accepts and is aware that his point of view is moulded by this process. His awareness can lead therefore to creative insights which, by transforming the nature of consciousness, can transform the historical process. The challenging critic can help to initiate conscious change; the acquiescent critic, by pretending to be objective, bolsters the status quo, even when he most seems to protest against it. Sylvia Wynter sees W.I. Carr - a former lecturer in English at the Mona Campus of the U.W.I. - as a typical exponent of 'acquiescent criticism'. In Part Two of the essay she explains why, continuing and developing this thesis.

\*In *The Spanish American Novel, 1940 - 1965. Extra Mural Studies, U.W.I.*

of German Kultur ; enter libraries and read devoutly, attend concerts and listen with raptness to the music of Beethoven. In America, however, there was only the barbarous killings of Pancho Villa and his men; America was the continent of 'little history' in which darkness had its being.

For the son, drunk on his father's myth, the Eroica Symphony of Beethoven comes to symbolize all the light of a great and unparalleled civilization. When his father dies, he goes to Europe, and still seeing it through his father's eyes, he is "dazzled and enthralled by the music and architecture and painting of the Old World," During the war, he hears the German concentration camp guards singing the chorus from Beethoven's Eroica:

*"Freunde, schoner, Gotterfunken  
Tochter aus Elysium"*

He begins to question his father's myth of a 'kultur' in which million of men are burnt to a scientific ash in ovens, while their burners sing the chorus from the Eroica. Along with the myth, he questions the entire gamut of what Sartre calls "*our precious set of values*"; and on closer scrutiny, he too sees that there isn't one "*that isn't stained with blood*". He sees through "*the striptease of humanism*", comes face to face with the underlying reality, sees it "*naked, and its not a pretty sight*". He is haunted now by the sickness of his father's dream which is his heritage; by that 'fine sensibility' of Europe, part and parcel of that supermanhood, which to realize itself as Prospero's dominance, had created Caliban — slaves in America; and in Europe had created of its own kith and kin, Caliban-monsters, transforming the 'cultured' workers of his father's dream, into the alienated Nazi mass, alienated — like today's London dockers marching for Enoch Powell, North America's blue-collar workers clamouring for George Wallace — from that very humanist being that the Eroica Symphony sets out to celebrate.

He returns to America where the cities are a tired reflection of the European sickness, other victims of the super— culture myth. He gets the chance to travel into the interior of Peru to search for some primitive musical instruments. In a settlement, hacked out of the jungle, he falls in love with a girl Rosario, a girl *mixed of all the great races of the world, the most differentiated, the most separated who for milleniums had remained ignorant of their common existence on the planet.* There he begins to make a discovery of a culture, which, unlike the Western one, had not yet separated magic from reality by the use of reason; a culture in which Nature was not there to be exploited, but to be co-habited with. A culture in which, for Rosario who inhabited it, herbs were living beings in a mysterious world which existed alongside the apparently 'real one'; where the woods had its one-legged genie, and nothing that grew under the shadow of a tree could be plucked except one left a coin in payment; a coin paid with a ritual gesture, a ritual asking of permission. Carpenter knows that he cannot return to inhabit this culture. One cannot appropriate a way of life; one must live it from one's first breath. He knows that he and Rosario are separated, and that that which separated them,

*"were the thousand books read by me, and that she knew nothing of; her beliefs, customs, superstitions, notions that I was ignorant of, notions which supported a reason for living as valid as mine."*

His illumination comes from his break-out from a Euro-centred world — his realization of the possibility of "other" states of being; of an endless variety of potentiality and possibility. In the end he leaves. The artist cannot stay in the past nor even entirely inhabit the present; his concern is to go

towards and to help create the impossible, which is tomorrow.

In the Caribbean, as in the backwoods of America, the potentiality of another 'culture' has always existed; and still exists, although now going down before the assault of a worldwide negation of culture brought by modern industrial "civilization". It was this culture, fragile, makeshift, temporary, but *valid* out of which Lamming wrote 'In The Castle of my Skin'. It had been a culture created by the village. Once the village breaks up at the end of the novel, Lamming says goodbye not only to the village, but to this other culture that had given him heroes like Papa. And a set of values that were humane, because they never thought of humanity; but of the mutual survival of one another. The destruction of the village, erases the culture, but not its memory. And not its echoes. It is this which gives such meaning to the last sentence of Lamming's 'Castle':

*"I had said farewell; farewell to the land."*

Carr is ignorant of this culture; or rather he does not recognize it as one. In his analysis of Mais' — '*The Hills Were Joyful Together*' — he does not see the singing of the folksong at the fish-fry, for what it is — a carry-over from the village-culture of the land, when food, like the fish had come as manna from the hand of a fixed and certain God. Carr is far more concerned with the fact that,

*"Mais' explicitness at the end of the episode nearly over-points it: 'And they all laughed, and bright tears stood in the eyes of some, to witness that they still understood the meaning of miracles?'*

He is far more concerned with the fact that Mais almost departs from an artistic norm; than that Mais, by echoing the past, reveals that a people have been expelled from a way of life, in which however poor, they had shared a communal being. Out of that being they had created a folk song. Now they no longer create. They only remember.

Jean Creary knows of this culture. Her comment on the fish-fry, points to the dispossession of the people, rather than to Mais's departure from a norm:

*"These rhythms both communal, and within Mais's artistic eye, culminate in the choreographed meeting point of the fish fry, where the imprisoned, the spirits of the slum-dwellers erupt into a rhythmic celebration of life and fellowship ..... But the pattern is asserted so that it may be denied. There is no ultimate escape from the disintegrating forces of poverty."*

The poverty of slum culture has replaced the culture of the village. Even the echoes have almost entirely disappeared by the time Patterson meets the '*Children of Sisyphus*'. This is the real 'unsettlement of culture' in the Caribbean context, yet it plays no part on Wayne Browne's horizon. The 'unsettled culture' of his title is obviously supposed to compare and contrast with the 'settled culture' of an England which Carr had portrayed.

Yet, the problems of the new novelist of England parallel, to some extent, the problems of the West Indian. For the new English novelist must, like the West Indian, come to terms with his own kind of dispossession. England is still a metropolitan centre, and the English novelist is assured of a market; and a market function. It is true that as Carr says, the young English novelists still have "*a dense world of critical discussion, of weekly review, of shared exchange.*" But this exchange is the narcissistic one of a closed world from which the reality of the transformation which England is now undergoing in her changeover from colonial power to colony, is deliberately excluded. The writers for the most part, even when they

chronicle portions of the new reality, of the change, refuse for the most part to see and accept the implications. The few who do, like Lamming's character Charcot, and feel their inadequacy to cope with problems of such magnitude, get the hell out. What in fact a W.I. Carr sells to a Wayne Browne as a 'shared exchange' is in fact, a masturbatory exercise. Charcot realizes this, when from the distance of a West Indian island he recalls his London friends,

"... charting through dead lakes of coffee the origin and end of every well-known failure."

As for the 'nature of his Englishness' which according to Carr, the English writer can take for granted, because 'it is present for him in the achievement of his predecessors', it is precisely here that the English writer finds himself in a dilemma as paradoxical, in its way, if not more so, than the dilemma of the West Indian writer. The new English writer, a Sillitoe, an Osborne, a Braine, a Kingsley Amis, descendants of classes dispossessed from 'Englishness' — in the Shakespearian context — by the Industrial Revolution, must now come to terms with a Caliban history of deprivation, an Oliver Twist past that the memory of a Dickens can only partially redeem. Far more terribly, any exploration of 'Englishness' would lead him to an admission of involvement in another type of exploitation where he was no longer the exploited, but the exploiter; where to anchor himself in the achievement of his predecessors he would have to accept the guilt, not only of the past, but of the continuing present. He would have to admit with Sartre:

"You know well enough that we are exploiters. You know too that we have laid hands on first the gold and metals, then the petroleum of the 'new continents' and that we have brought them back to the old countries. This was not without excellent results, as witness our palaces our cathedrals and our great industrial cities; and then when there was the threat of a slump, the colonial markets were there to soften the blow or divert it. Crammed with riches, Europe accorded the human status de jure to its inhabitants. With us, to be a man is to be an accomplice in colonialism, since all of us without exception have profited by colonial exploitation."

To explore the nature of Englishness with the perspective with which Sartre explores the nature of Frenchness would commit the English novelist to changing its name and nature.\* It is not, as Carr puts it, that the English novelist, is not 'forced to engage in a prolonged and painful dialogue'; it is simply that until now, he has not had the necessary courage to begin to do so. Here too, he parallels the West Indian. For the culture which Englishman and West Indian share, is a culture permeated by what Wilde calls, "the carelessness of facts", a culture which uses pragmatism as its shield against the 'black truth'; a culture which survives through its power of evasion. English 'culture' is settled; but as Lamming points out, with the stillness of a corpse. If and when the 'painful dialogue' with itself begins it will be a long delayed sign of new life.

This dialogue must, by its very nature threaten the present social context which Carr sees as a standard of excellence; and the 'structure' which supports this social context; a structure in the final analysis controlled 'by the gnomes of Zurich'; and which, at second hand remove, controls us. Lamming the West Indian has begun the dialogue that the English, given their ambivalent role — exploiter and exploited, puppet and part-puppet-master — must avoid. This is the main difference between the West Indian writer and the English. The West Indian has little to lose by questioning — and thereby

\*In *Encounter*, December 1968, John Wain points out that George Orwell did just this. Orwell argued that the English "... do not wish to recognize ... that their own fine feelings and noble attitudes are all the fruit of injustice backed up by force. They do not want to learn where their income comes from."

threatening Prospero's cloud-capped towers. By the mere fact of being a West Indian, Browne breaks out of Carr's distorted perspective when he argues:

"But one looks for the object of satire in the West Indies and finds that he must look to history and a mother country 4000 miles away in the throes of its own death or to the economics of modern capitalism and Big Brother U.S.A. if he is to apportion blame."

Looking even further one would end up with the super-culture myth which underpins this economic octopus. Browne, impelled by his own circumstance here contradicts the myth purveyed by a Carr. He does not as yet pursue this contradiction to its logical conclusion. When he does so, it will become clear that Carr's role as critic in the system of Prospero is that of an *agent provocateur*; the louder he shouts against it, the more he fulfils his function as guardian of the system.

## VI.

"His vanity aids that of culture: even in the accusing gesture, the critic clings to the notion of culture, isolated, unquestioned, dogmatic. He shifts the attack. Where there is despair and measureless misery, he sees only spiritual phenomena, the state of man's consciousness, the decline of norms. By insisting on this, criticism is tempted to forget the unutterable, instead of striving, however impotently so that man may be spared."

(ADORNO. *Prisms*)

"You see Miss Mullings, what we've got here is a staff that can uplift -- you know, people... who conform to standards... We've got to have standards, Miss Mullings, we've just got to..."

(Fitzroy Fraser, *'Wounds in the Flesh.'*)

Lamming's Charcot, coming to terms with his own displacement, shares displacement with his West Indian pupil, Fola. Their relation is one of equality. Carr, by refusing to accept his own, sees himself still in the interpreter role of Miranda. What Carr cannot forgive the West Indian is that he should become his own interpreter; his own saviour. For this threatens Carr's role and sense of purpose, a sense that is being increasingly challenged as sterling totters, and recovers, pulled by strings from Zurich. Because he refuses to see the apparatus which controls his and the West Indian's common condition, he must hold on for relevance to a well known and recognized role. In his long and illuminating essay on Roger Mais he sets out to destroy any West Indian writer who too clearly, by making certain connections that Carr must avoid, diminishes this role. The essay on Mais is as much in dispraise of these West Indian writers as it is in praise of Mais; who safely dead can be erected into a fetish object; and whose anger can be disguised under the name, and throne of Art.

The list of writers dispraised therefore has its significance. I am included, although the connections I made were so confused and ill-made, as hardly to have seemed worth while meriting Carr's guns. Certainly not when compared to his dismissal of Eric Williams' *'Capitalism and Slavery'*. It is interesting to note that Williams' book — prepared as a doctoral thesis for Oxford University — could not, for quite a few years, find a publisher in England. It was first published in the United States of America and has since become a classic. *'Capitalism and Slavery'* exposes the close connection between the growth and expansion of capitalist enterprises in England, and the U.S.A. and the profits made from the slave-trade on what has come to be known as *'The Middle Passage'*.

Orwell was even none explicit, arguing according to Wain "that, since the British Empire was a system for exploiting cheap coloured labour, the true 'proletariat' of England had dark skins and lived thousands of miles away."

It is logical that a Naipaul, although using the title '*The Middle Passage*' for his travel book about the Caribbean, should avoid making mention of the economic connection and implications. Nor in fact does he seem ever to have bothered to read Williams' book. Steeped in the English interpretation of their own history, he is able to criticize the 'lack of culture' in Trinidad, measuring it against an English 'norm'; and without ever understanding that the lack of the one and the norm of the other are equally the results of a single and common historical process. He averts his gaze from the guilt of the strong; and concentrates his contempt on the degradation imposed on the victim by the aggressor.

It is also logical that Carr should quote Naipaul with approval. If he finally rejects Naipaul's view of history — *History was built around achievement and creation and nothing was created in the West Indies* — he does so not on rational grounds, nor from an intellectual rejection of an inherently Fascist statement; but because the acceptance of this statement would invalidate his own emotional attachment to a Messianic role and function, that of redeeming the Caribbean's lack. He criticizes Naipaul for his statement, only because such a statement, '*simply invites one to get up and go*'. Which, of course, is scarcely the point. Especially as, in his Mais article he supports Naipaul's thesis when he maintains that the history of the West Indies is not a history but merely an '*agglomeration of wicked incidents*'. He refuses to see any *human purpose* behind the incidents; any logic however haphazard. We are to place the blame for what happened on some vast impersonal force called History. History belonged to England and History is the arch-knave. Here Carr quotes one of the High priests of Western culture, T.S. Eliot, with approval:

*"History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors  
And issues, deceives with whispering ambitions,  
Guides us by vanities... "*

Carr then uses Eliot's mystic utterance to demolish the connection made by Williams that Carr refuses to admit:

*"The politician and the propagandist will hardly recognize themselves here, neither perhaps will the historian. One remembers for example, the frigid determination with which Eric Williams gives us the facts of West Indian history in his Capitalism and Slavery, but denies us any experience of its texture."*

In the name of an artistic norm and imperative called 'texture', the revolutionary insight of Williams' books, the connection and interdependence of English and West Indian history is avoided. We note that Carr sees '*Capitalism and Slavery*' as being only about 'West Indian history'; the far reaching insights into England's economic history made by Williams are irrelevant. He goes further. As the 'cultural critic', having 'the culture which culture lacks' he points out, with forbearance, Williams' basic shortcoming:

*"What the reader will question will not be Dr. Williams' knowledge nor his professional competence. It will be his relationship to the past and the present."*

The shortcoming of course, is Carr's. It is his relationship to the present, which makes it imperative to dismiss Williams' connection. Such a connection reveals the present relationship between a Carr and a Williams through the past connection between them— "We have met before", Lamming wrote, "*four centuries separate our first meeting when Prospero was graced with the role of thief, merchant and man of God.*"

These are the kind of insights a Carr must evade, if he is to maintain an illusion, rather than acquire a true knowledge of his own past — and ours. With Hawkins' first raid on Africa,

his first Middle passage to the West Indies with Africans as human merchandise on board, the nature of being an African the nature of Englishness had changed. In the place of African and Englishman there was now only a relation— slave dealer and slave. Our common history is the history of that relation; our common destiny is its negation.

In '*The Pleasures of Exile*' Lamming explores some of the cultural aspects of the economic relation revealed by Williams. Lamming also must be dismissed and demolished. Dealing with writers rather than with a historian Carr justifies his dismissal not on lack of 'texture', but on clumsiness of technique vulgarity, imprecision, vindictive cliché. He uses the notion of culture '*isolated, unquestioned, dogmatic*' to disqualify those writers whose insights are unpalatable; and of course he bases his disqualification on the basis of the '*decline of norms*'. He is the typical 'kulturkritik' assessed by Adorno; in order to censor those writers whose views he rejects, he will serve as a propagandist for Roger Mais; now dead, and helpless to reject his sponsorship. Unlike Mervyn Morris, Carr is too acutely aware of the danger which Lamming's analysis constitutes, to casually dismiss it. Rather he whittles away in a crablike approach, whittling Lamming down to size through concession: He will accord to the '*Pleasures of Exile*',

*"...if not always the strictest relevance, at least the advantage of convenience. The blurred inconsistencies, if only by the density of their accumulation, manage to draw attention to contours of feeling with which people are familiar. And so we concede an order of attention."*

The point having been made, the attention is reserved for another significant attack on Lamming.

Several West Indian novelists, those who attended elementary schools, rather than secondary schools, experienced with a kind of edged clarity, the Empire Day ritual. Several have felt impelled to exorcise the shame; once, looking back, and seeing the incongruity of the situation, they realize how happily they had assented to their own degradation. Austin Clarke deals with it, and so does Neville Dawes, in the '*Last Enchantment*'. Dawes, also one of Carr's pet hates — he deals among other things with the connection between West Indian and English man, the West Indies and England — is dismissed with the characteristic aside which Carr prefers to use; the sly knife rather than the blunt hatchet.

*"They (Mais' characters) are not the cardboard product of predictable views of race or social and cultural background and not puppets controlled at the behest of vindictive cliché as they are in, say, Neville Dawes' '*The Last Enchantment*'."*

The mention of race, thrown in casually, is important. For it is the prevalent myth of 'racial harmony', which until the timid appearance of Black Power this year, ruled as a graven idiom even more on the Mona campus than in the rest of Jamaica black writers who discuss race are to be shunted aside. Naipaul's racism vis-a-vis the black man can be discussed no as a neurosis, as Gordon Rohlehr firmly terms it, but as Art Neville Dawes' exploration of his own feelings of blackness in a white world must be dismissed as 'vindictive cliché'.

This determined avoidance and distaste for 'race' is not confined to Carr. Louis James in an otherwise excellent and sensitive interpretation of Vic Reid's '*The Leopard*', makes the, to me, astounding statement,

*"It still remains true, however, that on the level that dominates the book, the emotional, the story is one-sided and INTENSELY ANTI-WHITE"*

The statement seemed astounding until, reading the essay by

James and Cameron King – In Solitude for Company – I came upon this other statement. It is intended as an answer to what the authors say is a common accusation made against the poet Derek Walcott – that he turns “to European culture and experience” in preference to West Indian culture and experience. The reply from James and King, does Walcott even more of a disservice than the original accusation; and reveals an attitude of the critics that is part and parcel of the apparently objective approach. James and King argue with some heat:

“...the concept that ‘European’ culture has a nationalist identity in opposition to that of the Caribbean has the dangerous elements of racial mythology. The ‘literature of England’ reaches backwards and outwards to the cultures of Greece, Rome and medieval France. It touches the thought and civilizations of Europe, the new world, even Asia and Africa. Its pre-occupation is with man as a human being, and for this reason a culture that becomes isolationist and inward looking can paradoxically cut itself off from the means of knowing itself.”

Granted that the original ‘accusation’ against Walcott is confused and imprecise, the reply to the accusation is itself a clear example of that ‘racist humanism’ of which Sartre speaks. It is clear that James and King see European culture as being the super-culture which embraces all other cultures, and obliterates as it absorbs. To deny any part of ‘European culture’ is to deny ‘humanity’; is to be involved in ‘racial mythology’. What James and Cameron peddle and what, Walcott is at times trapped by, is the ‘cultural myth’ rather than the cultural reality of Europe. The cultural myth underprops the economic and political power of Europe based on its exploitation of non-Europeans; the cultural reality of Europe consistently attacked and opposed this dominance, this concept of Europe as a super-culture, as the end product of Man’s glorious march towards ‘humanity’. The cultural reality of Europe sees the ambivalence of its own power and glory; and embodies its real creativity best when it is most self-critical. It is this reality that speaks with Sartre to answer the dangerous myth-making of mediocre minds:

“Leave this Europe where they are never done talking of Man, yet murder men everywhere they find them, at the corner of everyone of their own streets, in all the corners of everyone of their own streets, in all the corners of the globe. For centuries they have stifled almost the whole of humanity in the name of the so-called spiritual experience.”

If Walcott has not yet realized the full range of his talent, it has nothing to do with his either accepting Europe or turning his back on Europe. He has no choice. The West Indian experience was ‘created’ by Europe; and the West Indian experience helped to create Europe as it is today. Besides to be West Indian is to be syncretic by nature and circumstance, by choice. It is the *myth* of Europe which rejects; which rejects all other experience, African, Indian, Chinese which contribute to the being of the West Indian. What is important is whether Walcott accepts the myth of Europe for its creative reality. The myth of Europe will alienate him from himself in much the same way as it has alienated European man. The creative reality will give him a complex, if painful, mirror in which to reassemble all the divided fragments of his still indeterminate identity. The dilemma of being either West Indian or European is a false one. To be a West Indian is to accept all the facets of one’s being. The over-emphasis on the European facet is a hangover of the myth; and implies a rejection of the others. The swing of the pendulum, now in vogue, will redress the balance towards the myth of Africa. One then hopes that the West Indian and Walcott will work through to the reality of both.

Louis James and Cameron, reject anything in the West Indian experience which seems to exclude, or criticize too acutely, the West Indian’s ‘cultural debt’ to Europe. Pretending to objectivity, they are critics whose ‘objectivity is the *objectivity of the ruling mind*.’ In his article on Mais, Carr sets out to reject anything in West Indian writing which brings the West Indian into a too sharp confrontation with the European, and here specifically, the English colonial power. Any such confrontation brings too sharply into question his own position and involvement. Since the importance of Mais both as Man and writer is part and parcel of the Caribbean anti-colonial, and anti-British movement of the ‘thirties, Carr goes to great lengths to prove his thesis that to see Mais against the background of political turmoil, and to interpret his work in the light of this turmoil, is to diminish Mais’ validity qua writer. It is in the context of this thesis that he drags in Lamming’s evocation of the Empire day scene in his first novel, ‘In the Castle of my Skin.’ Not only does he damn the writer for writing about this scene, he damns the West Indian reader for reacting with emotional acuteness to Lamming’s passage. He puts his condemnation in brackets, to show it as a pretended careless aside, the last academic refuge of the destructive:

(...I am thinking for example of the kind of automatic and literal-minded acceptance of the Empire Day scene in George Lamming’s ‘In the Castle of my Skin’. We have there all the dreadful décor of the West Indian setting not so very long ago – the meaningless blare of the British national anthem, the suits, the sycophantic bullying teachers etc. No West Indian could read the episode without responding to the deadening pressures of the occasion. But in fact he is importing his own experience into the book. As a piece of writing it is strained, factitious, derivative.)

Lamming was the first ‘British-colonial’ to chronicle that experience. He did it well enough for a Carr to get the point of how many psychological crimes had been committed in the name of British ‘democracy’. As a passage it is derivative, derived from Lamming’s life. Lamming has imported a terrifying experience into his book. For all West Indians of his generation the passage of writing is not only ‘telling’ about an occasion; it creates a mnemonic pattern which dredges up association at an unconscious level. It is powerful enough to make a Carr feel uncomfortable. It is a passage of writing by a West Indian writer who had lately come out of the culture of a village which was largely oral; like the African tribal culture, like the medieval European’s. It is written for ear and eye, and that is its achievement. It is not Carr’s concept of what writing should be. It must therefore be dismissed.

Coming to Mais himself, Carr’s thesis that “*to assign to art a predominantly political and social context is to misunderstand the nature of art*,” is best answered by Jean Creary’s review of Mais’ works – in the essay, ‘A Prophet Armed’ in the collection, ‘The Islands In Between’. She shows that to interpret the social and political background through art and art through the social and political background, is to give truer insights into the nature of each; when the interpretation is based on the desire to illuminate rather than to obscure. Yet it would be naive not to see that Carr’s posing of a false dilemma, his attempts to ‘rescue’ Mais from the kind of political tribute paid him by Norman Manley, for example,

“Roger was a product of that moment of history and drew from it the direction and power and purpose which his writings reveal . . .”

has its purpose. To accept that Mais’ work owed something to the mass movement of the Jamaican people to break out from colonial non-being, is to accept that confrontation that we have mentioned before; and that Carr is at such pains to avoid.

To admit the validity of the anti-colonial experience would be to admit that the West Indian Caliban first found his being when he broke into his own speech to assault the structure of values of which Carr is the purveyor. Because of this evasion, he chooses to see Mais' work as some sort of 'inexplicable magic,' understandable only in terms of Mais' peculiar genius.\*

He therefore begins by isolating Mais. Mais could not have come out of Barbados (can anything good come out of Nazareth?) because,

*“.. its flat overbred topography is alien to the bracing symbolic framework of Mais’ imagination.”*

Having got in a side swipe at Lamming, Carr then goes on to dismiss Trinidad and its 'nervously inspired anarchy'. Finally, giving the Jamaican hills the credit of producing Mais, Carr then gets in his blow at the Jamaican people, whom, apart from a rather selectly dropped list of names, Carr doesn't care for. Mais, Carr argues is too good to be a 'Jamaican possession'. Since the West Indian is a mythical rather than an actual entity, Carr allows Mais to be "*a deeply significant West Indian possession.*"

To rub in his point, Carr selects as a 'Jamaican possession', the poet, J. E. Clare MacFarlane. MacFarlane, Carr suggests, is good enough for Jamaica and Jamaicans; Mais is too good for them. The malice is almost neurotic. Louis James, in his introduction to '*The Islands in Between*' made a distinction between the different generations. Men like MacFarlane were pioneers in West Indian writing. They wrote at a time when for a black man to write at all was itself a miracle. They borrowed from English models, sensibility, metre, attitude. Their faults were the faults of their circumstance. But, as Fanon has pointed out, we must learn not to underestimate the efforts of our forefathers. They fought with the weapons that they had. Carr sees and wishes to see only that these men seem ridiculous. And he passes on to his West Indian pupil Wayne Browne, the destructive quality of his contempt. Carr laughed at the spectacle of a Clare MacFarlane being crowned Poet Laureate at the Ward Theatre in Kingston; Browne selects as his object of ridicule A.J. Seymour of Guyana. Seymour, a later and better poet than MacFarlane, is quoted by Browne as saying:

*“I would say that the time has come for a novel to be published which placed emphasis upon the qualities of dignity, discretion, superiority and timelessness in the West Indian scene.”*

Browne mocks Seymour's concept of dignity, contrasting it with the 'dignity' of Naipaul's Biswas:

*“It is a story, (a fable as Mr. Carr calls it) that has something, everything to do with ‘dignity’, though not we are afraid, ‘dignity’ as Mr. Seymour pronounces it; an unconscious pathetic, heroic assertion of identity in a situation where history has contrived to make it impossible for identity to matter.”*

Yet, it is clear, that dignity for Biswas had come to mean – not as in the mystification of Carr's interpretation, the struggle to be what he is, for his personal identity, like some little private property of the soul – but a house and a Prefect car. Dignity, equally for a MacFarlane and a Seymour had come to mean a literature which could portray the black man, not only as minstrel clown, but as man. The concepts of 'dignity' of a Biswas, a MacFarlane, a Seymour were all 'reactions imposed on them by colonial circumstances'. All three, in different ways, attempt to break out of a degrading stereotype imposed on them by the British cultural and colonial myth. We can dismiss their concepts of dignity, only if we accept that by

\*Like Louis James, Carr makes his 'anti-colonial genuflections' Colonialism was for Mais as all other writers, he admits, a 'primary nullification'. But his 'colonialism' is again seen as a vast impersonal force, without

their struggle, all three can make this claim upon our imagination – that we acknowledge their "*unconscious pathetic, heroic assertion of identity in a situation where history has contrived to make it impossible for identity to matter.*"

Fitzroy Fraser, in his novel, '*Wounds in the Flesh*' also dismissed by Carr – tells of the conversion of the rebel Baldwin MacDonald into the headmaster, striving to conform to the English norms of being a headmaster, trapped like his former English friend, Jonesy, in the English traditions of Headmastership; both wanting to be different, but both influenced and controlled by the mould and manners of the Headmaster of the top school where they had both taught. Baldwin wants to bring to his little country school all the missionary light of Europe that the 'top school for top people' enjoys. In his efforts to do this he clashed with an English couple, both teachers, both hustlers, indifferent and on the make. They blackmail Baldwin into granting their request, by confronting him and throwing in his face, the passes that Baldwin had made at the wife. Baldwin, confronting them, pretends that he gives in of his accord. He wouldn't use force he said, to hold them to their contract. These were not colonial times, he says, looking at the "ex-coloniser, the "ex-user of force". But the ex-colonizers couldn't care less; all they want is out. Baldwin, the black Baldwin, must now take upon himself the white man's burden. He begins his missionary mission. He appoints a regular afternoon where the staff should meet for tea. He is determined that the staff shall hold on to the standards of the ex-colonizer. He earnestly implores them:

*“We must learn to sit down together and talk about a little culture.”*

It is not the intention, but the crassness of it, the reductio ad absurdum of his own, that offends Mr. Carr.

It is, in a more sophisticated dress, Baldwin's concept of culture that Carr peddles in his article on Mais. In attempting to detach Mais from the whole 'material process' of his country's life, Carr gives us a portrait of Mais which is anti-Mais, and anti-the whole meaning of his struggle against circumstance. Carr contradicts Manley's statement that Mais and his art were a product of a moment of history:

*“But although Mr. Manley’s pages are a generous tribute to the memory of a dead friend, it seems to me his emphasis is a misleading one. It doesn’t help us to come at a sense of Mais’ quality as a writer, and although it points to the content of the fiction, it can’t help us in trying to define its underlying tragic metaphysic. Anyone who has read *Black Lightning* with attention is surely entitled to feel that Henry James might be more usefully invoked than George Lamming, or even Vic Reid. But Henry James, alas! is not likely to be a welcome guest.”*

Miss Creary's title "A Prophet Armed" is the best reply to Carr's assessment of Mais. For no one could call Henry James a prophet. If Mais, in '*Black Lightning*', which for all its occasional excellences is a flawed and incomplete book, echoes James, then it is a mere moment in a vast gamut of feeling. Henry James is all that Mais is not – the 'culture symbol' that proves that America, "that super-Euroean monstrosity", had achieved her European potential. She had got herself "a great writer". But Mais is far more than a writer. This is what Miss Creary brings out – Mais was gardener, journalist, painter, politician, poet, dramatist, novelist, talker, lover, bon vivant, good companion. All the facets of his being re-inforced the "wholeness of the man". His life, in spite of Carr, was not reduced to writing books. He was a prophet, descending from England's William Blake, like him concerned with '*building Jerusalem*'. That what he was talking about, that what he was connection or relatedness with England. And he rejects any notion of the creative quality of the awakened anti-colonialism of the West Indian people.

making the bricks for — in life, love, politics, writing painting, facing death. His only West Indian parallel is Jose Martí.\* Mais writings like Martí's were essentially confrontations with power. They were not protest 'writing', nor 'protest painting'. Protest accepts the inevitability of that which it protests against; and asks for adjustments to suit the protester and those on whose behalf the protester pleads.

Mais like Martí realized that political liberty was nothing if the liberty of the spirit was unattained. This was the revolutionary intention behind Brother Man — a rare character in all literature, except perhaps in the Russian. Mais like Martí accepted that the poet and the writer should be 'the footstool of the *pueblo*'. That the artist's mission was to write for the people and to paint for the people, even if in doing that, one loses those felicities of style that adorn the art of those who create for an incestuous elite. Mais' books were in no sense of the word belonging to 'the appeasing arts' — elite or mass. In the 'Hills' and 'Brother Man', he took the 'native' out of the darkness behind the Word, and drew him into the light world of print — the light that had been confined only to *men*. In both these first two books — 'Hills' and 'Brother Man' — and in his third book, in another manner, Mais was talking about *Jerusalem*, to a people in exile in another *Egypt*.

'Black Lightning' is not, as Carr asserts, a better book than the other two. The question of being better or worse is, in a final analysis, irrelevant. Carr's choice of 'Black Lightning' corresponds to his own concerns. 'Black Lightning' seems to him a more "private" book; and this is why he prefers it. Miss Creary points to its achievements, and suggests the reason for its failure:

"Moving and impressive as 'Black Lightning' for the most part is, the sense of an incompletely formulated statement persistently haunts one."

Even more acutely, she goes to the heart of the matter when discussing 'Brother Man'. Mais was a prophet. And a prophet deals in visions. The areas of failure in all Mais' books, in his paintings, in his life itself, occur in those areas where there was, to borrow Miss Creary's term, 'a limitation of his vision'.

The limitation of his vision in 'Black Lightning' cannot be removed from the limiting conditions of the colonial experience of the late 'forties and 'fifties. The exhilaration and release which had come from facing the 'enemy' in a direct confrontation were replaced by the tortuous and dangerous subtleties of a 'limited experience' in self-government. West Indians were being taught by their former master who had governed them arbitrarily, how to govern themselves with a democratic procedure; they were being taught how to reconcile political independence with economic and cultural dependence on the 'master', now transmuted into a peaceful and lovable Big Brother; they were being initiated into the world of Pilate's diplomacy, where the two party system, by making each party identify the other as the enemy, caused them to avert their eyes from the powerful neo-colonial apparatus. It was a sad and miserable time. Worse than now. The confidence trick was not even suspected then. The failure of the artist in 'Black Lightning' was the failure of the bright promise of a New Day which Mais had prophesied and helped bring about — a day whose high noon faded in the semi-darkness.

But Mais 'failure' is creative; it is a triumph of failure, as Edwards Mallea, the Argentinian writer puts it. In the unreality of our times, success would have meant the negation of that reality for which one fought. And prophets always come before their time; they are warners of the future; or of the end. 'Black Lightning' is important for quite other reasons

\*Note on Martí.

than Carr gives to it. In 'Black Lightning' Mais is saying that even the personal illumination of a Brother Man and a Minette, their love, is not enough. The vision must be made into a song. The song must be communicated through areas of feeling that have scarcely been tapped; that the colonial experience, except in the candour of a Brother Man, buries and distorts. Mais in 'Black Lightning' came to understand that the artist was locked and lost with his 'personal vision', which could become the egotism of pride in his power of knowledge, in his creative hands, making like God. His vision had to be transmuted into the substance of the lives around him; if he is not to perish in blindness. Mais was a Samson who dreamt that the enemy was not the poor maligned Philistines, but the myths which divided Jews and Philistines.

As Jake, the sculptor carved, Samson became Christ, the eternally crucified, holding potential seeds of violence within himself; and potential seeds of liberation. Blinded by his vision, afraid of the conclusions, Jake withdraws into himself and learns about friendship, and love that is humble, through Amos, the hunchback, who plays sweet music on his accordion; as David played to Saul. In the end, in the time of the long rains, when Jake gives his carving to be burnt for firewood, he has pulled down the whole temple, the whole super-structure which has enthroned a graven idol called culture. The statue is used to warm the bones of men and women since it could not, through the incompleteness of the artist's vision, warm their spirits. Where the Nazi concentration camp guards incinerated men and women and children in gas ovens to the strains of the Eroica Symphony, thinking to 'purify' the culture which had produced such a fetish masterpiece, Jake-Mais gives his masterpiece to be incinerated so that men may live. Mais' whole life was a life dedicated not to preserving artistic norms a la Carr, but a life dedicated, "*to striving, however, impotently so that men may be spared.*" Mais differs from all other West Indian writers in the way that Jose Martí differed from all other Cuban writers. Both had fulfilled their being as, in the phrase of Martí "a man among men and not a wolf among wolves"; both had lived a life directed at the impossible. Both have entered the element of myth.

## VII.

*"In the union on the bluff over the river, the student's steel band was practising and the plangent drone butted steadily into the yielding texture of the night. It was monotonously arresting as a pulse beat: the un-worked rhythms of a people who have only realized music as a social adjunct and not yet as an art..... All the way down the long shallow hill into Queens-haven, bursts of remembered music, seemed to gather themselves like small waves inside me and break out uncontainably: Freude, I sang,  
Freude, schöner Gotterfunken  
Tochter aus Elysium."*

(John Hearne - 'Land of the Living')

*"The West Indian who comes near to being an exception to the peasant feel is John Hearne."*

(Lamming - 'The Pleasures of Exile').

Barrie Davies— The Seekers—, a critical essay on John Hearne, falls midway between acquiescent criticism, exemplified in Carr, and challenging criticism exemplified in Lamming, Rohlehr, Creary. They are not hard and fast categories, and the categories are my own, and arbitrary rather than impartial. Challenging criticism seems to me to relate the books discussed to the greatest possible 'whole' to which

\*Born in 1853, Martí was a journalist and a lawyer, apostle of, and fighter for Cuba's independence from Spain. He died in 1895 but live

they belong. Aquiescent criticism either refuses to do this altogether as in Carr, or does it imperfectly, as in James and Cameron King; or relates to a background which is mythical rather than real, as in Hearne on Harris. The aspects of Hearne's criticism which we shall look at in a while, parallel aspects of Hearne as novelist.

Lamming has accused Hearne of lacking the 'peasant feel' which is basic to many other West Indian writers. He has also attacked him for idealizing a kind of colonial squirearchy in his novels. And, by implication he removes Hearne from the revolutionary intention of other West Indian writers. The West Indies, Lamming says, "*belong to that massive majority whose leap in the twentieth century has shattered all the traditional calculations of the West, of European civilization.* . ." He excepts Hearne from this peasant feel. Yet, this is, I think, a simplified view.

In his article on Harris, John Hearne, begins, "It is from Yeat's great phrase about the 'unity from a mythology that marries us to rock and hill' that we may justifiably begin an examination of Wilson Harris' singular exploration of his corner of the West Indian experience. To Harris, this sacramental union of man and landscape remains the lost, or never established, factor in our lives. We enjoy, we exploit, we are coarsely nourished by our respective Caribbean territories – but illegitimately. We have yet to put our signatures to that great contract of the imagination by which a people and a place enter into a domestic relationship rather than drift into the uncertainties of a liaison." This is a significant statement about Hearne's own work, and attitudes. On the one hand, he justifies Lamming's stricture about not having the peasant feel, by his total blindness to that ambivalent 'we'. Who is we? For the West Indian peasant, by the mere fact that he is a peasant, has already entered into that 'sacramental union of man and landscape'. His folk song, his folk culture, fabric or beliefs about herbs superstitions, relationships to trees – no Jamaican peasant can quite come to terms with cutting down a tree, except out of dire necessity – are the signatures that he has put to that 'great contract of the imagination with which a people and a place enter into a relationship'. The relationship began illegitimately – the African slave who in the middle of the seventeenth century was given a plot of ground to cultivate on Saturdays and Sundays, to help feed himself and so keep the labour power for the canefields and the mills in good condition, did not choose his plot of ground nor choose to labour on it. But soon he saw it as a source of memory- the continuance of a relationship that he had known in Africa; and soon he saw it as a source of freedom.

For soon he came to see his relationship to this plot as that which preserved his being. In the instertices of the slave system, he entered into a union; it was sacramental in its profoundest sense. On this plot he buried his dead, so that the souls of his ancestors as they had done in Africa remained in close union with the living. The clump of breadfruit trees today mark his plot of ground and his union with it, as the ruined Great House marked the European's domination of the land. Hearne's failure to grasp this, justifies Lamming's criticism. Yet such a failure is understandable. The colonial divisions in our society were marked and deep. Lamming, growing up in a village, had this instinctive knowledge. But for Hearne, urban and with several generations of a middle-class background, there is no intuitive grasp of this fact. It is a necessary but difficult act of apprehension.

What Hearne intuitively grasps is that the people who lived in the Great Houses had also entered into a contract with the land. It was a proper marriage rather than an illegitimate one.

And like all marriages, the land, the woman was subjugated and dominated by the male. The subjugation, and the exploitation of the union, was carried on through the labour of slaves; but the relationship between the master and the land was still there. With the end of slavery, those few planters who remained, settled down to a less violent domestic relationship. Hearne's instinct to create Brandt's Pen, and Carl Brandt, was the same as Lamming's to recreate Papa, and his house "*the house by the corner where Papa does keep goats.*" That Hearne gives us an idealized version of Carl Brandt and of the Pen is true enough. But Carl Brandt and his like, needed an idealized version of themselves to evade the reality of injustice that would otherwise, press in too closely on them. And as Hearne shows, Brandt lives up to this ideal. His relationship with his workers is feudal; but it is charitable and protective and still human. Brandt is a Prospero in his paternal authoritarianism; but his lack of Prospero's intelligence and ambition makes him kindlier, more generous in spirit. Brandt's Pen and Carl Brandt are Hearne's ideal, even though the Pen does not provide the setting for the majority of the novels. But the ideal is always there, imagined, serene and gracious in the distance. Except in "*Land of the Living*" where, as Davis points out, no reference is made to the Brandts at all. Davis is good on the significance of Brandt's Pen.

*"The one area of safety appears to be the spacious upper middle class life of Brandt's Pen which, significantly, embodies values and beauties from a life that has really past, that of the old plantocracy. . . Even Roy MacKenzie, feels its attraction:*

*'And this is the thing that could really corrupt me. Not the wealth of it but the closeness of it that could change me. This incestuous, happy, kindly closeness where every personal contact is never let go, and where every one fits into his place like a cork into a bottle.'*

*Brandt's Pen is a 'womb with a view' One cannot but feel that the tension between Hearne's own emotional attraction to it and his intellectual rejection unbalances these novels."*

Yet the area of the 'heart's country' to which Hearne has dedicated himself, is not Brandt's Pen, but the Suburbaville of Queenshaven in Cayuna. Brandt's Pen is the fleeting vision of the Eden from which Suburbaville residents have been displaced. Andrew Fabricus, a former Brandt type, cast out of planter life through his father's inadequacy, spends his life working until he has saved enough to buy a property and reinvent the past in a modern setting. Rachel Anscomb and Jojo Rygin, measure their own climb to the top through the possessions and the money with which they can match the careless luxury of a Brandt's Pen. Which of course, they can never do; Brandt's Pen is the culmination of two centuries of practise in gracious living: Davis quotes Hearne,

*"In the big, high dining room, where the long, deep-gleaming mahogany sideboard was bright with silver and crystal, Elvira had laid two places on large squares of coarse, starched white linen. Two centuries of polish had brought the table to a texture where the cloths looked as if they were floating on black water. There was grapefruit, cut and cored, with clear amber crystals of brown sugar soaking into the pale green flesh. While they were eating these, she brought in a heavy tray of ham and eggs on a thick, bone white, blue-flowered dish. . ."*

Davis criticises Hearne here, for not 'knowing when to limit, to select, to stop.' But he misses the point of the accumulation of adjectives and objects. The ritual of food in the Caribbean, in the country planter's house, or among the peasants in the village, is part of the contract they have entered into with the land. Freyre shows this brilliantly in his '*Masters*

*and Slaves*' where he examines the food patterns of Brazil, and the fusion of dishes, and ceremony. Just as Lamming describes in detail the making of 'cuckoo', cornmeal turned with okras, as the special feast the boy gets when going away,\* so Hearne describes the meal, not only as a fact but as a ritual pattern of behaviour, of being.

The ritual, transferred from eating, from taste, from pleasure in order and in the security of traditions, extends to all the areas of the senses. This is Hearne's original contribution and that which includes him in those writers with a revolutionary intention. For his caption of "*the quality of life in the Caribbean, qualities of experience recorded through heightened senses*", provides for the middle-class West Indian readers an assault on the vision of snow and spring and flowering cherry trees which, like the Empire Day ritual, had filled their consciousness, through books, alienating them from that 'contract with the land' from which the peasant had never wandered. Davis pinpoints Hearne's very real achievements:

*"Eye, ear and nose are indefatigably awake. An orange peel is a ring of blazing yellow; beer bottles sweat icily; beer slides glacial down throats gummed with heat. In bathing in the sea each variation of sensation is observed."*

*"The water was pale blue and it felt smooth and clinging, like warm milk. But when they swam out and dived to the white sea-bed, it was cool and there was a dim glassy blue light around them, and coming to the surface again they could feel the salt stinging their eye rims, as they blinked the water out of them."*

*"Hearne is portraying a state of feeling, a heightened awareness he sees answering and penetrating the intense light and colour of the West Indian environment. In the process, he has provided masses of data about the quality and density of the Caribbean experience. He has been going what James Fenimore Cooper, faced with similar imaginative problems in America called illustrating 'the land and water which is their birthright.'*

This is Hearne's significant contribution. It is a quality most marked in his first three novels; it continues in the others but not with the same force. As Hearne gets further away from the 'established order', the feudal ideal of Brandts Pen, that he hankers after, he enters the more shifting reality, the spiritual placelessness of Cayuna's Suburbaville, on the fringes of Brandts Pen. Outside Suburbia, outside the neat fences and the clambering bougainvillea, change waves threatening fists on what Davis calls, 'the background of meaningless blue'. For Suburbaville separates the terror of Tiger Johnson's hell, of Henneky's inferno from the serene order of Brandt's Pen; Suburbaville is caught in between, a buffer between the base and the superstructure. Outside Suburbaville, the slums begin. And in the slums live the strangers.

In his second novel, with I am sure unconscious irony, and without meaning to, Hearne portrays as the real 'stranger at the gate', not the cultured (presumably Haitian) communist, Etienne, a black man castled in the very Western values whose political and economic bases he has set out to overthrow, but the Cayunian slum-king, Tiger Johnson. Johnson, like the nameless murderer of Mark Latimer in Voices, like Sonny in Autumn Equinox, like Henneky in Land of the Living, are the real strangers in Hearne's novels. The gates of Brandt's Pen, and the gates of Suburbaville are shut fast against these strangers; and to a great extent — and it is here that Lamming's criticism has point — so too are the gates of Hearne's imagination. Latimer's murderer is seen through the eyes of a Latimer, a Tiger Johnson through the eyes of a Mackenzie, Henneky through the eyes of a displaced Jew, Stefan Mahler. To reverse this angle of seeing will be very much Hearne's Rubicon.

\*In the novel *'In the Castle of My Skin'*

Davis is good on the political aspects of Hearne's novels. He points out that,

*"The communist activities exist at the level of those in a James Bond novel. We suspect that they mean little as politics, to Roy McKenzie or to Jim Diver. For them to be a Communist is to be alien and romantic; they have no rational programme."*

To illustrate this, Davis shows how Mackenzie, the Communist, "finds fulfillment by hurling himself to death against the front of a police car to enable Etienne to escape"; and how, in 'Autumn Equinox', Jim Diver sacrifices himself, although with no assurance that his sacrifice will have any effect, only perhaps, "to prove something to himself." From this Davis concludes that "it would be hard to see a consistent political philosophy in these novels."

Having come to this conclusion, Davis goes on to argue that,

*"Human commitment in unselfish love is of more importance to Hearne than political commitment. Rachel throws herself in the way of the bullet Jojo intended for Michael*

*"It is a heroic gesture which in its very completeness destroys all possibility of realizing the values that it asserts. Mark Latimer's love for Brysie is cut short by a casual machete stroke; and Jim Diver's for Eleanour by the anti-Castro thugs. The fatalistic tragedy cuts short human and political aspirations alike."*

And here we begin to wonder. Has Davis here, without quite realizing it, not put his finger on what he says the novels lack — a consistent political philosophy? Can it not be argued that Hearne's political philosophy is one founded on a world view which accepts the dominance of Fate in order *not to* change circumstances? The most curious observation to be made about Hearne's Cayuna, is its essentially static nature. The more things change, the more they remain the same. Not that Hearne's politics are the politics of *reaction*, the politics of a Brandt, say, who by striving to retain the old way of life, by opposing a total concept of the past to the present, in reacting from change, can in fact help to precipitate change. Hearne's political philosophy, and this is what I find disturbing in a man of his generation, seems to me to be the far more dangerous '*liberal*' politics of the present status quo. By at all times asserting the primacy of individual choice over the needs of the whole, by in fact, assuming a dichotomy between the two, Hearne seems to me to share and to accept that world view, which Adorno analyses in an essay on Spengler:

*"The return of what is always the same, in which such a doctrine of Fate terminates, is however, nothing but the perpetual reproduction of man's guilt towards man. The concept of Fate which subjects man to blind domination, reflects the domination exercised by men. Whenever Spengler speaks of Fate he means the subjugation of one group of men by another. In reality the inexorability of Fate is defined through domination and injustice."*

Are Hearne's characters really interested in changing society? Or only in acting out roles, in making gestures about changing it, changes which are doomed from the start? In 'Voices Under the Window', the changer of the system, Mark Latimer, is doomed; and the author dooms him, by an accident of Fate, a 'casual machete stroke' rather than by the logic of his circumstance. For Latimer's socialism is, from the start, like its author's, of the head rather than the heart. Although his political commitment begins with his punching a sailor who uses the term 'nigger', one suspects that after this brief emotional flurry, (he himself is part, a small part, black) Latimer begins to act through an intellectual imperative,

committing himself as his Czech communist friend had advised him, to the 'destiny of the poor'. But he commits himself without every having really felt what José Martí termed the 'slap on his own face' that the poor feel every day, the total sense of outsidership.

And it is here perhaps that Hearne confuses the issue. For, if he had shown us that the political commitment of his hero was as much an upper-middle class privilege, as much a product of the social and political arrangement of his society as was his colour of skin, quality of hair, of education, of feeling, of conscience; if he had shown us that in taking over the running of the system Latimer was merely coming into an inheritance, and that in chanting the slogans and seeking the destiny of the poor he was in fact fulfilling nothing but his own private destiny, easing nothing but the private property of his conscience, then his death, at the hand of an unknown murderer, would not have been by accident; but the result of a terrible logic. For then the unknown murderer would have been seen also as a logical product of the same system; a man who kills aimlessly in an aimless existence which is his lot of inheritance. But Hearne draws back from such a conclusion. It would have made Latimer's murderer as important as Latimer himself. It would have shown both as the result of the same historical process, a process in which Latimer had an ineluctable appointment with his murderer; an appointment decreed not by Fate, not even by History, but by Man's unjust arrangement of his society.

The pattern of *Voices* is repeated as novel follows novel and all the potential threats to the basic arrangement of Cayuna society are eliminated — white Roy McKenzie with his romantic and upper middle-class Communism; black Jojo Rygin, threatening the system with his grasping after black economic power; Rachel Anscomb, rocking it with her brown body power, her outsider's sharp aggressive brain; Henneky, finally assaulting the implicitly accepted values of 'white power, white religion and white culture' on which the system is based. All these seekers after change Hearne condemns to death or frustration.

Yet the Brandts do not fail. They live on, serenely. The inhabitants of Suburbaville do not fail — the Olivers and the Sybils; Andrew Fabricus, buying his estate, taking his modernized place in the system, effortlessly defeating in Parliament the corrupt black politician Littleford, does not fail; nor does his wife Margaret, painting Leda raping the swan, creating a classical oasis of Art in a society whose suburbs, by their acceptance of privilege, do violence to the slums of a Tiger Johnson, day after sour day. The Brandts and the unhabitants of Suburbaville embody for Hearne, those 'human values' which 'politics' can only destroy; and come hell or high water these human values must be preserved by the few who can afford them. So these few do not fail; nor does the Jew Stefan Mahler, wounded with the memory of Nazi holocaust and therefore supposed to 'understand' the wounds of the black outsider, Henneky, fail. At the end of the *'Land of the Living'*, Henneky dies, but boy gets girl — Stefan gets Joan.

Here Davies makes his most acute observation:

"*And yet in the present social situation of Cayuna, Henneky's death remains a dramatic aberration. There is little hope of a moral resurrection. There cannot even be real contact between the white Mahler and the Negro Henneky, no mutual recognition that they have been wounded by the same accident.*"

There can be no real contact because Mahler, the Jew, even after the Nazi experience, fails to see the connection that Alejo Carpentier's narrator saw; instead, Mahler happily sings

the chorus from the Eroica Symphony, opposing it to the music of the steel band which he, and his author, mentally dismiss as being 'a social adjunct to people's lives' which had not yet become 'ART'. One sees that Mahler, like Hearne, is still imprisoned in a European scale of reference, a very arrogant Euro-centred view which had justified the massacre of all the Untermenschen, who had not as yet become Aryans, did not as yet participate in European 'kultur'; who in fact, were perhaps forever shut out by race and blood and breeding from any real progression to an imagined cultural Valhalla.

Mahler, coming to Cayuna, takes his top place in the system, a place accorded to him by his whiteness of skin; he is now the Aryan and the black Henneky, the exiled Jew. If he is to live as a man, Henneky must destroy the system. Mahler, like Hearne, wants to keep the system, making a change here and a change there; but making sure that the 'human values' which are important to them are not thrown overboard. Yet because these values are reserved only for the few, the more than equal, they partake of the sickness of all privilege, of all injustice; and they constitute a daily slap in the face to the poor who have no share in them.

In order to avoid this connection, Hearne with the eye of the evader — Davis points out that Hearne's eye cannot "adjust to the more shadowy aspects of his panorama. We never really see the seething poverty in the slums of the Queens-Jungle—" takes refuge in the concept of Fate. In a world supposedly dominated by Fate, the individual can only 'accept' his destiny; he cannot create it; can only make 'gestures' of change, he can never really change it. In such a world, the poor are only props to be used by the few who can afford the luxury of private lives and a liberal conscience. The world of Hearne's novels, resemble the world of Graham Greene's *'The Burnt-out Case'*, set in the Congo, and that of *'The Comedians'*, set in Haiti. In Greene's novels, Africans and Haitians are there only as background crowds, to provide the setting for the spiritual wrestling of the burnt-out liberal European intellectual, or for the sexual wrestlings of the played-out European comedians. In Hearne's Cayuna, the poor serve as the background crowd. The body of a Bernice in *'The Land of the Living'* is there to recharge Mahler with feeling, so that he can fulfil this feeling in his relationship with Joan: as Africa is there to recharge Green's intellectual, and Haiti to rekindle both the conscience and the sexual capacity of his comedians — the black horror in the background provide the stimulus for both.

Whilst Henneky and Bernice died hunted tragic deaths, Mahler remains once more at ease. A little anguish to be carried over into his relationship with Joan, whose drunken and unhappy soul he has redeemed, can hardly atone for the death of a Henneky and a Bernice; for the acceptance of their continued exclusion from the possibility of happiness. Davis glimpses this and asks:

"*Is the cosy adjustment into middle-class domestic life any answer to the challenge posed by the life and death of a Henneky?"*

Yet Davis fails to see that in choosing this 'cosy adjustment into middleclass domestic life', in choosing 'human commitment to unselfish love' as being of more importance than 'Political commitment', Hearne has himself made a political commitment. For in asserting that politics destroy 'human values', Hearne accepts that these values are a fetish object, like culture; that like culture, or Brandt's Pen, they are timeless and static. He disassociates the creation of values from particular societies at particular stages of existence, as he disassociates 'culture' from the 'material processes of existence'. 'Human values' are not there to serve Man; but to be served by

him. Under Greek values, Greek culture, Hearne avoids seeing Greek slavery as their base; he evades also the logical connection between the 'timeless world' of Brandt's Pen and the terror of the Queenshaven slums. And he evades these connections by concentrating on sex as 'a serious human issue.'

In concentrating on the private life of individuals at a time when private life has become '*a mere appendage to the social process*' Hearne distorts his perspective. Even the most all-embracing bed can scarcely today contain the powerful forces that determine the private life down to its very marrow. It is no longer sex that impels society, but society that impels and distorts and confuses, sex. The trivial tragedy of a drunken Joan Culpeper and the deeper tragedy of a Henneky are dictated by the same forces. By exalting private personal gestures, as an end in themselves, rather than as symptoms of the same sickness, Hearne defends the '*immanent rationality and justice of the system*'. Ritual replaces belief; and prevents any genuine action springing from such belief.

It is this basic distortion which lies at the failure of the later novels of John Hearne. In his first novel, '*Voice Under the Window*' Hearne is still aware of his own temptation: he makes Lattimer's politically conscious friend tell him:

*"Love for, your generation, is only interesting and important if it takes place inside a much wider frame than two people together can make. The same with everything else; every private thing has a responsibility to something bigger than seems to enter into every corner of your lives. Even when you aren't aware of it as you aren't Mark, it lies on your conscience."*

In *Voices* some sort of a balance was kept between the private love and 'the much wider frame'; this was also to some extent true in '*Stranger at the Gate*'. But in Hearne's third novel, '*The Faces of Love*', 'love' made of the island and people of Cayuna, a convenient frame in which to work out its private destiny; the 'something bigger' became only a stage setting in which the lovers could do their own thing. Because of this imbalance, Hearne's characters have become trapped in trivia.

'*Land of the Living*', which Davis sees as Hearne's best book, seems to me to be his most alienated; an intellectual exercise in which Hearne sings the blues for Auschwitz and Henneky's crucifixion, only to solve it in the success story of Joan Culpeper's bed. There is a certain barbarity in such a resolution. '*Land of the Living*', like '*Autumn Equinox*' belong essentially to what Malraux calls 'the appeasing arts'; they provide an escape to an illusion, which alone keeps the unjust reality creaking along; they provide the pleasures of romance, which as Malraux shows, does not unite men but separate them by the very human values that Suburbaville can afford; and Queenshaven can't.

Both Hearne's return to his island, and his long silence since '*Land of the Living*' are hopeful signs. But the danger of returning home is not, for Hearne, as Davis suggests, the danger of 'intellectual isolation'. The world of the Mona campus — at the University — where Hearne co-administers the Creative Arts Centre — can keep one well in the vanguard of 'intellectual thought', especially that of England. Yet it is, paradoxically, this 'intellectual thought' that can be the danger. The Argentinian, Eduardo Mallea, has described two Argentinas "*an invisible Argentina, and a superficial Argentina of men who had substituted appearances for reality.*"

Here too there are two Jamaicas; and the Mona campus for the most part belongs to the 'superficial' Jamaica which has substituted appearances for reality. What Hearne as a writer

may well be in need of, is not only a return from exile in the metropolitan centre; but a new kind of exile, one which Mallea describes:

*"Without exiling oneself, one cannot get anywhere. The path of creation is the path of exile; and there is a time for rejecting this and a time for accepting; there is a time for choosing to remain tied to surrounding fiction and a time for exiling oneself. And such an exile in our country, means going and living in the invisible nation with its invisible sensitivity, living in the heart of the nation."*

This is an exile whose actual distance can perhaps be measured as the distance from the Mona Campus to August Town; yet whose spiritual distance is incalculable. It is an exile into a new way of seeing, of feeling. And the exile cannot be fitful, a mere slumming, like Mahler's; nor a slogan-like commitment to the 'destiny of the poor'. It is instead a commitment to one's survival, as a human being and a writer. One can only hope that Hearne's next novel — continuing his evocation of landscape, his 'martyring of our emotions to rock and hill', to smell, and taste and sound, his genuine gift as a story teller, that ancient gift, common to all cultures, will break new ground, out of creative exile in the invisible heart of nation'. For it is only there — not a place, but a new gamut and range of feeling — that Hearne will cross his Rubicon; will learn, through a new emotional identification, how to see the white Mahler through the black Henneky's eyes; how to define the 'insider' Lattimer through the outsider's eye of a Tiger Johnson. This new kind of eye, the outsider's eye, will mean that Hearne, having paid his dues, will have learnt how to really sing the blues for a Henneky; he would then have no need of a borrowed suffering. To sing the blues the writer must be haunted by the same sickness; and the same wound. Our wounds must haunt us, in our exile in the invisible nation, every minute of our waking day. If we don't sing the blues for our own pain, who will sing the blues for them? It is in this sense, that Hearne needs a new type of exile, into outsider territory; that he needs a blacker Weltschmerz.

### VIII.

***"I am not much concerned in what the West Indian writer has brought to the English language.. A more important consideration is what the West Indian writer has brought to the West Indies..."***

(**Lamming, 'The Pleasures of Exile.'**)

***"Once the mind is no longer directed at reality, its meaning is changed despite the strictest preservation of meaning..."***

(**ADORNO, 'Prisms'.**)

***"They wished to renew Western music imitating rhythms which had never had a musical function for its primitive creators..."***

(**Alejo Carpentier, 'The Lost Steps'.**)

If John Hearne, in his latest novels, enters the middlebrow world of the 'appeasing arts', Wilson Harris, of whom Hearne writes with approval and ritual mystification in the essay — "The Fugitive in the Forest"; takes his place, with his novels, and in spite of the sincerity of his stated intentions, in the highbrow context of the appeasing arts. To see the validity of this, one has only to read a short story — Kanaima, written by Harris and published by Kenneth Ramchand in his collection

\*The Islands in Between

of West Indian narrative. Ramchand, addressing this narrative to West Indian readers and to West Indian school children, edits and simplifies Harris' story, with the motive of communication. The result is a powerful story, in which Harris recreates a myth believed in by Negro and Indian, by the folk over whom Kanaima exercise dominance; and provides that element of the unattainable that man, capitalist or communist or Third World ignores at his peril. In this story Harris shows us a fusion between the belief and the believer; and the believer through belief becomes consciously aware, in the light of Harris' interpretation and re-invention, of his own tenuous and fragile journey up the rockface supported by the moulding of the face of Kanaima; his own projected dream creating the reality of Kanaima. In this story, Ramchand as editor pares away the narcissistic accretions of Harris, the writer qua writer, and reveals the validity of Harris as creator, as the re-interpreter of collective fear and hope. There is then, in this short story, 'the virility of motivation' with which the artist communicates, by establishing that reciprocal relation with his audience which is the basis of all art that sets out to give meaning, however impossible and difficult, to existence; rather than providing an escape from an existence accepted to be meaningless. This 'virility of motivation' is lacking in the novels of Harris.

It is this lack which betrays the revolutionary intention of Harris; without this primary and compelling motive of communication — even of the incommmunicable — the writer floats in a free fall of obfuscation. This is not to deny Harris's insights — his opposition to the concept of the 'individual character', as portrayed in Hearne, for example; his shattering of the established images of feeling, in order to shatter the distorted reality which these images project and support. What one objects to is that he replaces existent reality with another *arbitrarily* created out of his own imagination; not in opposition to, nor as a contrasting illumination of reality as it exists, but one so totally unrelated, that it ends up by being escapist. Whilst, denying the fixity of the 'individual character' — Hearne points out that Harris argues that the problem of character in the West Indian novel, is one of *fulfilment* rather than *consolidation* — Harris in fact establishes in his novels the primacy of the unrelated individual imagination.

It is this paradox that explains the fascination that a Harris has for a Hearne, in spite of the very profound differences between them. But it is this paradox too that makes it impossible for Hearne to grasp the very real insights of Harris; and therefore to understand where the insights, put into practice, have failed to come across. Yet Hearne's essay, here and there, gives us clues to Harris failure. In discussing Oudin one of Harris' 'characters', Hearne points out that at the end of the novel, the reader can see Oudin, stripped of his magic realism, see him,

"As just another old Guyanese peasant dead on the floor of a hut on the coastal savannah."

By the very careless and casual contempt implicit in this statement, — a contempt totally absent from the intention of a Harris — one sees that the 'reality' of the peasant has been 'exploited' as a symbol for a literature, which, in ostensibly reinventing him, totally excludes him; since its meaning is foreign to him. He has been used to create a myth in which he neither partakes nor believes — it is Harris' rather than Guyana's myth.

In his first novel, Lamming tells how he first came upon its title:

"I first came across the phrase 'castle of my skin' in a poem by the West Indian poet, Derek Walcott. In a great torrent of rage, inseparable from hate, the poet is addressing some white presence. . 'You in the castle of your skin, I among

*the swineherd'. This phrase had coincided with my search for a title, and I remembered that night and knew that Papa . could never see himself among the swine. Nor could the village. So I thought that it was correct and even necessary to appropriate that image in order to restore the castle where it belonged."*

In Harris's novels, and in areas of the later ones of Lamming, the 'castles' of the West Indian people are being continually appropriated, either to build the peacock palace of Harris' private vision, or to strengthen the walls of Lamming's now distant village, continually rebuilt, exquisite and nostalgic, fading from reality, out of lingering echoes. Lamming's awareness of his dilemma, his linking of the reality of Papa's hut and village to the present reality of his London centre, enables him to provide moments of illumination about a new relation.

Harris on the other hand, inhabits a closed palace, whose jewelled walls reflect only themselves. There Harris achieves what he sets out to achieve — the attainment '*of an inward dialogue and space*' in a world where language and being has been emptied of meaning. But his dialogue is a monologue which begins and ends in a cul de sac. In one of his essays, Adorno explains the dilemma of a Harris:

*"For it is only in the process of withdrawing into itself, only indirectly that is, that bourgeois culture conceives of a purity from the corrupting traces of the proletarian disorder which embraces all areas of existence. . Only in so far as it withdraws from Man can culture be faithful to man. But such concentration on substance which is absolutely one's own, contributes at the same time to the impoverishment of that substance. Once the mind is no longer directed at reality, its meaning is changed despite the strictest preservation of meaning. Through its resignation before the facts of life, and even more, through its isolation as one 'field among others', the mind aids the existing order and takes it place within it."*

Despite his conscious intention, the novels of Harris end up a a highbrow consumer product, accessible only to the initiated and alien to its own audience. In striving to perfect a *theory* Harris strives to achieve *artistic norms*; and turns his back on the other striving — that striving which his own short story Kanaima, so well illustrates — the striving, '*however impotently that man may be spared.*' Because of this, the artistic norms of Harris' novels are achieved in a vacuum; excellent, like Narcissus, in love with, and reflecting only itself.

But the core of Harris' confusion can perhaps be found in an essay — *The Writer and Society*\* — in which he makes a 'far-reaching' distinction between 'social character — that is social species or species of convention' — and 'primordial character'. To make his point he uses illustrations from Greek myths and from the Haitian vodun, or voodoo. Speaking of the experience of the 'possessed' dancer in voodoo, he says

*"Remember at the outset the dancer regards himself or herself as one in full command of two legs, a pair of arms etc., until, possessed by the muse of contraction, he or she dances into a posture wherein one leg is drawn up into the womb of space. He stands like a rising pole upheld by earth and sky or like a tree which walks in its own shadow or like a one-legged bird which joins itself to its sleeping reflection in a pool. All conventional memory is erased and yet in this trance of overlapping spheres of reflection a primordial or deeper function of memory begins to exercise itself within the bloodstream of space. ."*

One cannot help but feel here that Harris has never attended and knows very little of the Haitian voodoo ceremony. Apar

\*In a collection of essays by Harris — *Tradition and the West Indian Nov*

from the almost ludicrous disparity of the description, the fundamental point that the '*primordial consciousness*' of the individual possessed dancer is achieved by means of a complex ritual and technique, a ritual and technique created, and participated in by the social group, is missed; and therefore that primordial and social character are complementary, rather than distinct entities.

The individual possession of the dancer is attained, not only through individual effort alone, the individual dance; but by the 'work' (to use the Jamaican Pentecostal term) 'the labouring in the spirit' on a collective journey travelled by the group; and on this journey every landmark is a communal possession. The journey to possession by the Unconscious is a *conscious* one. The primordial revelation is attained through an elaborate, extremely logical and *social* ritual. It is paradoxical that Harris, who in general seems to be well aware of the *logic* that underlies all so-called primitive art, should miss such a basic corollary. His mistake seems to be one shared by many European artists, whose predicament, the Cuban novelist Carpentier describes, when he says that they took fetish objects like African masks and attempted to use the *objects* in their assault on Cartesian reason. They failed because they were unaware that these objects had their own rationale; that they were in fact not only manifestations of a reasoned and logical belief; but of a belief, and of a reason which had not separated itself from the way of life which created it and which it created. As Carpentier writes;

*"They looked for 'barbary' in objects which had never been barbarous when they fulfilled their ritual functions in primitive rhythms. . They wished to renew Western music imitating rhythms which had never had a musical function for its primitive creators . ."*

In his novels Harris attempts to evoke a primordial consciousness, without providing the social keys, the communally recognized landmarks which would invite the reader's participation in the 'work of the spirit' on the journey; without this the journey does not take place, there are gestures of movement rather than movement itself; without a common belief, ritual degenerates into a solitary exercise in a cell. Perhaps Harris' comment on modern American poets, best describes his own novels, novels in which,

*"...one may only point to the symbol of an overwhelming ordeal without release."*

## IX

*"He went and sat down beside the wall he was building, high enough now to give a little shade from the sun. The building was still in its earliest stage. He knew it was to be part of the new University College but he couldn't imagine the ultimate shape and he felt excluded from its social meaning.."*

(Neville Dawes. '*The Last Enchantment*'.)

*"How often is Art in all its forms and fancies going to make friends with the multitude? National galleries sheltering the best, or municipal ones sheltering the worst, aren't much good to the common man, passing through the common hours..."*

*It is useless to say that the artist can sit safely in his ivory tower, looking scornfully down from a lancet window at the people below. He can't, for sooner or later sturdy shoulders pressing against it will send the ivory tower toppling. The artist may live on for a while, hearsed in honour from a few; but when the few go,*

*the end of the artist comes."*

(Sean O'Casey, '*The Arts Among the Multitude*')

In the first part of this essay we pointed out that the body of critical writing which we are discussing, has come out of the University of the West Indies. As the only institution of comparable size that the Caribbean territories will be able to afford, it is clear that the University must commit itself to the cultural destiny of our territories. If we borrow Eduardo Mallea's distinction once more, we may well ask — to which Jamaica, which Caribbean, is the University of the West Indies to belong? To the inauthentic, making gestures, and in particular the gesture of 'silence', which is, according to Mallea, the most typical gesture of those who refuse to explore their reality? Or to that other, 'that invisible heart' which compels exploration and awareness. The critical essays show that the University is still poised between the choice ; and leaning more towards the older, the easier, the gesture of silence. Silence, and in silence we include slogans and formulas borrowed from the metropolitan centre and applied without relevance, is more 'academic', conforms to 'established standards'. Silence is more liveable with. With silence, the descendants of Prospero and Caliban, ex-colonial master, and ex-colonized, can pretend that the multiple flags waving in place of the Union Jack have bewitched away the past. Yet we can realize our common present only by the exploration of our common past. To replace this exploration by silence as we have mainly done so far, is to give to silence the sound of the school yell that Dawes describes in the *Last Enchantment*:

*"The unity, the oneness of the same school yell, was superficial, and the much vaunted great harmony among the different races was an inaccurate interpretation of a very precarious compromise."*

Above all, this kind of silence, of the unsaid, has deprived the University, as it does some of these essays, of a genuine sense of purpose. To avoid the past connection between Prospero and Caliban, is to ignore what *unites* them in the present; the unity of a *common purpose*. Without the realization of this purpose, with our continued pragmatic acceptance of 'just getting on with the job', we shall continue to turn out an elite technocrat class (some with liberal slogans, some with Black Power slogans) all seeking to take an 'élite place in any order (liberal, Communist, Black Power) which is based on an elite. We shall continue to turn out the 'brains' prepared to direct the 'brawn'; and thereby prepared to continue the sickness and injustice of an ancient separation. What then is this common purpose?

Our purpose begins to formulate itself with our awareness of the University, as the logical result of a common history stretching over some four centuries; as a place where the descendants of Prospero-slave owner, and Caliban—slave, can, by using the technological knowledge acquired by Prospero from an unjust relation, mount an assault against that historical necessity, that scarcity of food and shelter, which had, in the dark and terrible ages, impelled exploitation of some by others; and still impels it. Our purpose is stated by Adorno in an essay:

*"The only adequate response to the present technical situation which holds out the promise of wealth and abundance, is to organize it according to the needs of a humanity which no longer needs violence, because it is its own master . ."*

And what, one may well ask, has all this got to do with 'talking

about a little culture?' Injustice, based in all its forms, on a concept of elitism, continues, not because the technological means are not available, to provide food, shelter, and freedom from material want for *all*, but because minds, which have for centuries been moulded and preformed to come to terms with the *actuality* of scarcity and therefore of injustice and elitism, and division, find it difficult to come to an awareness of the distortion of their own barbaric formation. This formation had been imposed on us through long centuries by the blind necessity of material existence; and this formation continues to dominate us through the power of the very cultural myths which we had devised as our avenue of escape, our illusionary flight from this necessity. And that is why the twentieth century revolution must essentially be a cultural revolution; a transformation in the way men see and feel. To paraphrase Brecht: '*The Barbarians had their cultures; it is time now that we had ours.*'

It is not, of course, going to be as easy as all that. The Argentinian writer, Ezequiel Estrada, discussing among other things, the cultural failure of the Russian Revolution, also pinpoints the reasons for the failure of the nineteenth century independence movements of Latin America:

*"Neither here nor elsewhere is there any public awareness of the fact that cultural emancipation is not any easier, although it may be less bloody, than political liberty; and a great part of the failure of our independence movements was due to the fact that our liberators were not liberated from themselves. . Mentally freed, they were subconsciously in chains, because they continued to accept the structure of European cultures, changing only their forms and a small part of their content, in the same way as they had done with their political institutions. ."*

This is an exact analysis of our situation, both as society and University today. This situation is reflected in the imitative solutions which we devise to all our problems. This is not to deny that our cultural distortion is a reflection of a power situation in which we are still economically dominated, as was nineteenth-century Latin America, by metropolitan centres. As a University we have attacked the distortion of this *economic* dominance; yet we continue to reflect in our goals, curriculum, 'standards' the cultural corollary of this economic arrangement. The refusal of our society to take us seriously may well spring from the fact that 'culturally' we reflect the very untruths that we denounce. We need a new awareness of our own paradox; and this awareness should be diffused through our praxis, however inadequate, rather than through our sermons.

The cultural 'image of the University, can be said to be embodied, in its critical writing, and in its Creative Arts Centre, not in its writers nor in its creative artists. It may be argued that it is the policy of the Centre to invite down writers to become West Indian versions of the English Universities 'writers in residence'; for the period of exactly one year. Yet it is clear that the writer-in-residence, brought-down-for-a-year, can be there for no other purpose than for that of being a piece of cultural display; there for his advertising value rather than for the reality of his function. The writer-in-residence-for-a-year is the appeasing gesture used to disguise the fact that as a University, and a society, we *acquiesce* in the arrangement by which West Indian writers must continue to live in metropolitan centres and thereby be rendered impotent to take part not 'in the talking about culture', but in its creation. And for that, the University, and its society need the writers as much as the writers need them.

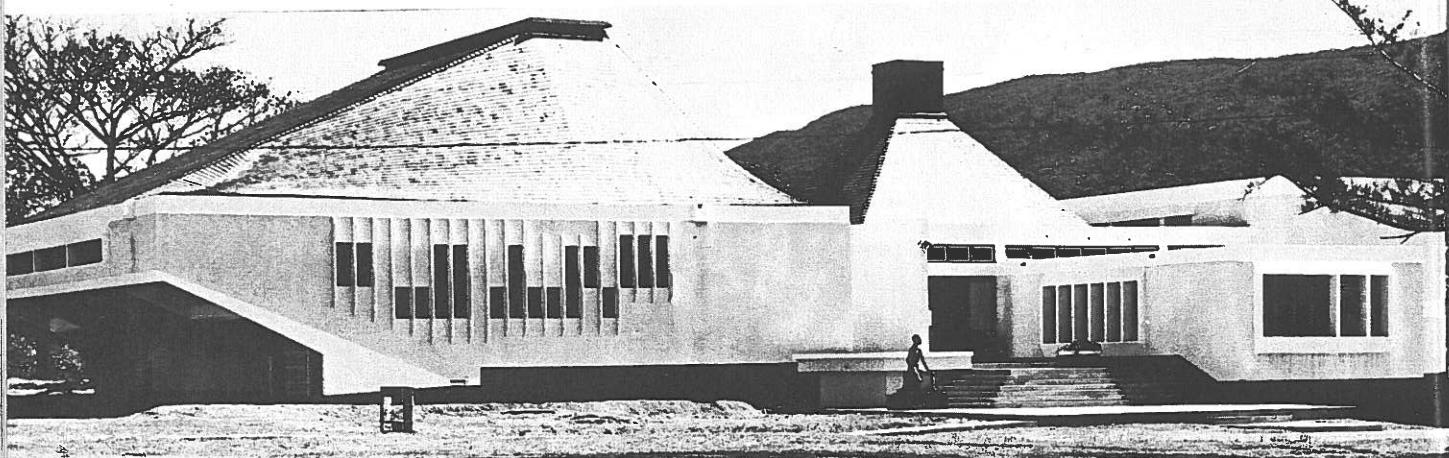
If it is argued that there is no place in the present arrangement and curriculum of the University to provide the writer with a function, it can be answered, that this may very well be where the change in the arrangement and curriculum ought to begin. It is not by accident that the uprising of the 'thirties threw up writers and artists at the same time as it threw up politicians; both are at one and the same time, prophets and technicians of change. The failure of a society can depend on the limitations of the vision and the skill of both. The exile of the one or the other creates an imbalance for the society as a whole. The exile of the writer from the University, which as an institution, is itself the result of the upheaval of the 'thirties, is a serious lack; it is the writer, and not the academic who is best able to link the University to that 'invisible heart of the nation'. The link is of the imagination rather than of the intellect; and it is this link which can include Dawes' worker-politician Edgar within 'the social meaning from which he is so far a stranger. Without writers to give flesh to its intention, without functioning artists, the Creative Arts Centre remains but another appeasing gesture; another Ark for the faithful, in which the elite and the highbrow can contemplate their intellectual navel, whilst the floods of proletarian disorder sweep over the multitudes outside.

A new 'culture' for us is not a luxury, not and no longer the playmate of an elite soul; it must be instead the agent of man's drive to survive in the twentieth century.

Adorno is right when he says:

*"Today, adjustment to what is possible no longer means adjustment; it means making the possible real."*

*\*In the novel – The Last Enchantment'*



Creative Arts Centre, popularly known as 'The Crematorium' University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica.

Photo Derek Jones