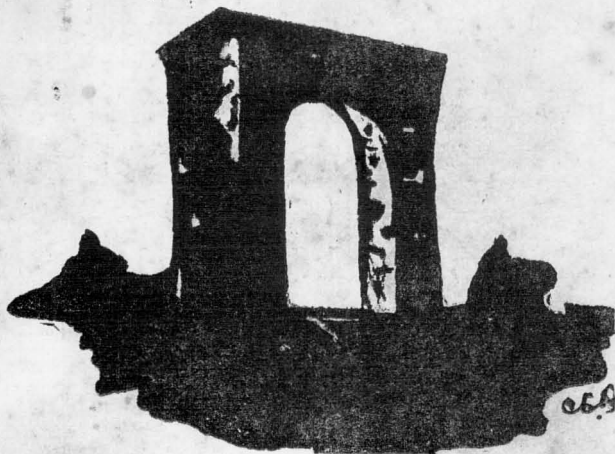


KYK- OVER- AL

No 26



DECEMBER, 1959

Reading a poem — a mosaic of comment.

Lulu & the Camoodi — folktale in creolese.

The Lost & the Lonely — Ivan Van Sertima.

(from an unpublished novel)

"Amalivaca" (Work in Progress)—"Leafing through
Schomburgk"

"Of Age & Innocence" — "Dr. Zhivago" — "To Sir With Love"
and other reviews.

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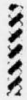
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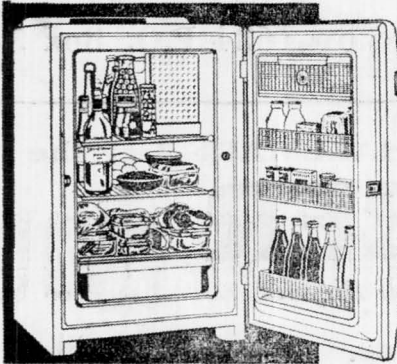
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Comment

Good wine needs no bush, but as host I should say Florence Caviglioli won the third prize in the recent History & Culture Week Literary Competition with a Guianese folk tale which was popular up the Berbice River when she was a child. This story of Lulu and the Camoodi is reproduced in creolese in this issue of *Kyk*, and I would encourage readers to persevere through any difficulty they may find for the surprising sophistication of feeling and thought so subtly shaded in the story.

For the rest, the mosaic of anonymous comment on "Funeral Rites" by Wordsworth McAndrew continues in print the discussion of issues to which this magazine is dedicated, an intellectual habit greatly needed in British Guiana today. The Madrigal is a conscious return to the manner of the Gothic fairy tale, and *Leafing through Schomburgk* presents us with facets of our history that we can easily assimilate.

A.J.S.

KYK-OVER-AL

Edited by

A. J. SEYMOUR

Vol. 9 No. 26

December, 1959

Fifty Cents

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Contributions and all letters should be sent to the Editor "Kyk-Over-AL", 23, North Road, Bourda, Georgetown, British Guiana.

Work in Progress on "Amalivaca"

by A. J. Seymour

Conceived as a long epic, "Amalivaca" has been in the back of my mind for many years now. In another place. I have written at length on what it proposes to say, as the poem already has a life and existence of its own, but many things have been acting against its rapid progress. Like Wordsworth. I can say that getting and spending we lay waste our powers, and always there is that visit by the gentleman from Porlock.

However, in the past few months, a little progress has been made by the poem, in spite of myself, and it occurs to me that I should publish that progress, partly for the sake of the poem itself, and partly to share with readers the new sections now drafted. This is not to say that there will be no textual emendation, but it is the function of a little magazine to act as experimental literature.



AMALIVACA BROODS UPON KAIETEUR

Seven days now this womb of sacred waters
 Has made its marriage with oblivion
 Over the sounding cliff of rock, and I,
 Amalivaca, in this tiny wedge
 Driven between the witness centuries,
 Have drowned my mind within the moving flood,
 Married my human to watery particles
 Searching the smoothness secret of its power,

But when I disengaged myself again
 Resuming my old flesh and thoughts once more,
 A truth wrung from the rock and waters rose
 And made a shrine within the risen me,
 The truth of how our people lived and worked
 And the vast doom hooded above our heads.
 These waters write that for a distant sin
 Our spirits shall loosen in their scabbards and
 Rust into nothingness, our hearts shall fail
 In their cohesive substance, and a death
 Consume the marrow of our minds until
 We forget everything except the lore
 How to win food from soil—but all these thoughts
 That wing us now above the animal,
 This yearning for the Almighty and His signs,
 Shall come as the vague fingers that a child
 Remembers once had held a glittering treasure
 And only twitch now, empty, lost, distressed,

THE MUSIC THAT AMALIVA MADE

There is a drum upon the plains of Maita
Outside the cavern where he lived—a stone
Hollowed to beat the mutter of the thunder
Moving within the deep Brazilian sky.

There is a season when the wind will blow
Until the branches sway like grass-skirt dancers
And the trunks tremble to a low ground music
The rush of waters swollen by the rains,

Often at evening when the winds had gone
And sky was once again a baby blue,
They heard Amalivaca beating rhythms
First haltingly, and then with surer power,
To capture sound the forest had made before,
Moving its way up thro' the hollow stone.
This was the orchestration of the storm
When all the forest world is weeping tears
On earth from leaves, from branches and from sky,
And to the families in the neighbouring tents,
Caught by the echoing, crisp and darkening air,
It seemed the tears flowed down the forest face
Again, etching the streams to random rivers,
Giant for the sea.

Who knows the forest knows its violins,
The soaring singing of the water birds,
The plaintive call of bird seeking a mate,
The throbbing accents speaking his desire.
And, melancholy, when a tribe had failed
To catch his meaning, and recalcitrant
Like a strong rebel calf braced from the pull,
Then from a bamboo cut mature with care,
And cunningly contrived with whistle stops,
He pulled the soul of all these forest calls
Until it seemed that he had beckoned forth
All drowsed benignant spirits to consort
And heal his heart again with music.

HOW AMALIVACA LEFT THE TRIBES

A flick of wrist upon the heavy oar,
 And the canoe moved easily from the bank
 To leave the weeping tribes behind. For now
 They knew that they would see no more
 Amalivaca who had been their guide
 And counsellor these many happy moons
 And showed them how to win a better life
 From their beloved forest. They would not hear
 His voice speak with the little stranger ways
 They've grown to listen for and love so well
 Nor see his eyes so suddenly retreat
 Back to his spirit, as he brooded on
 The questions they had brought to him,
 And blaze again to life. No more those hands
 Would rest upon the children's heads in blessing
 Nor, easy with their power, crush unguent balm
 Cut a tree trunk to grace upon the stream,
 Nor lift the inturned palms to Makonaima,
 These things they knew would be no more, no more



Aime Cesaire

FIVE POEMS

(from *Soleil Cou Coupe*)

I have embalmed my cut-off head in a very fine skin
 its absorbed strength ought to be calculated
 worms! thread! cocoons!—on the other end packice or angels

Look I am so smooth you could believe nobody ever has seen me
 Of course I got away from the dogs
 is it in vain
 that sirens scream the roll call of the cities
 that men never expect the pioneers of nothingness
 and that bewildered priests silently laugh

Astrologers
 all your measures are in my dismeasure
 in the pyramidal orbits
 the ability to cry and to breathe
 and the dungeon which my heavy steps design
 is always mirrored in each polar star

No good-bys (my tongue is boorish)
 a huge bird sits on my bedside he deigned to reverse for me
 the phrases of the priests and the dreadful feast far from here
 my gesture well hidden
 designs a lapse of the parallaxe
 the earth dissolves like an icecube in urine
 and the innocent sound of its echo feeds a beryl

Some Miles Nearer The Sun

The tip of the shadow cone on our Brazilian like cheeks
 when the sun is eclipsed
 laughing with happiness like the long coitus
 between a tree and a sailboat
 in the hall of a cyclone, one of the greatest

Woman

give me your eagle eyes your glorious eyes of a bird
 your firebird eyes soulsearching eyes
 and how I love the bloodcirculation of the disaster
 in the veins of a house ten floors high at the glorious moment
 which precedes its collapse exactly at three in the afternoon.

*Since Akkad Since Elam Since Sumer*

Master of the three roads a man stands before you who walked much.
 Master of the three roads a man stands before you who walked
 on hands who walked on feet, who walked on the belly who
 walked on the behind.

Since Elam. Since Akkad. Since Sumer.

Master of the three roads a man stands before you who has carried
 much.

And truly friends I carried since Elam, since Akkad, since Sumer.

I carried the body of the commander. I carried the railway of the
 commander. I carried the locomotive of the commander, the
 cotton of the commander. I carried on my wooly head which
 is such a suitable pillow God, the machines, the road,—the
 commander's God.

Master of the three roads I have carried under the sun, I have
 carried in the fog wild ants over burning embers, I carried
 the umbrella I carried explosives I carried the ironcollar.
 And as one sees in the soft mud on the Nile's border the spur
 of the ibis, I have left on the banks, on the mountains, on
 the shores the grigri of my squeaking feet.

Since Akkad. Since Elam. Since Sumer.

Master of the three roads, Master of the three trenches, may it
 please you just once—for the first time since Akkad since Elam
 since Sumer—apparently the snout is more sunburnt than
 the callus of my feet, but really gentler than the beak of the
 crow and as supernaturally draped with biting folds which
 my greyloaned skin gives me (the color which men impose on
 me each winter)—that I may walk just once through dead leaves
 with small sorcerer-steps

there, where the inexhaustible order of men triumphantly menaces
 which one hurled at the knotted sneering of the hurricane.
 Since Elam since Akkad since Sumer.

(grigri—Westafrican amulet.)

Perdition

We shall beat the air with our armoured heads
 we shall beat the sun with our wide open hands
 we shall beat earth with the naked foot of our voices
 male blossoms will fall asleep in the creeks of the mirrors
 even the shells of the trilobites
 will open themselves in the twilight of eternity
 over the tender breasts swollen sources of milk
 and we should not cross the threshold
 the threshold of perditions?

A vigorous road crisscrossed with yellowish cracks
 holds back where the buffalos leap in untamed anger
 running on and devour the reins of mature tornadoes
 into the sounding reeds of flaming dusk

*The Wheel*

The wheel is the most beautiful invention of men and his only one
 there is the sun which turns
 there is the earth which turns
 there is your face which turns on the axle of your neck when you cry
 but your minutes will not coil the licked up blood around the spool
 of life
 the art to suffer is as sensitive as the stump of a tree under the knife
 of the winter
 the hind weary from not drinking
 puts for me unexpectedly upon the well's edge
 your face of a dismastered schooner
 your face
 like a village asleep at the bottom of a lake
 to be reborn on the day of grass and the year
 of fruit.

Jacqueline de Weever

FOUR POEMS

Foreign Morning

The morning comes:
but here no coral blushes creep
along the calm and placid cheek
of the expectant sky.

The morning comes:
but here no art of kiskadee
no thread of winging melody
draws veil from sleeping eye.

The morning comes:
but no bewitched perfumery
wooded from the night's distillery
enchants the passer-by.

The morning comes:
and here the grass knows poverty
no crystallised dew-drop jewellery
her hair to beautify.

The morning comes:
no lovely trembling with delight
in expectation for the sight
of lover, gentle one:
He waits besides the amber sea,
wrapped in the golden sun.



Riches

As I watch the day awaken
The morning glories shine
With pearls of magic dew-drops
Delicate and fine.

I, too, am rich in jewels—
Pearls, rubies, amethysts,
Upon my hands and on my breasts
Where his mouth has kissed.

Richer than a sage in learning
Richer in wealth than a queen
His love has taught me and crowned me
And my heart is at peace and serene.

Sun-Song

In the land of eternal summer,
 The kingdom of the golden sun,
 The brazen wonder becomes the lover
 For earth his precious one.

Her garment is woven of sunlight
 Lavishly splashed with colour—
 Brilliantly weaved embroideries
 Of tree and bush and flower.

When she closes with humble blushing
 To hide from his garish might
 Her petal'd eyes, in moon-and-star guise
 He comes to woo with delight.

But first from the day he departs,
 To the golden fanfare of sunset
 In a crimson splendour, blue and lavender
 And the muted song of the cricket.

And the heart knows a fearful longing,
 To be marked with his brazen brand,
 Enchantedly singing, eternally burning,
 In the grip of his powerful hand.

*Poem*

Your sweet brown fingers weave for me
 Garments of gold and filigree;
 Robes of buttercup brocade,
 And girdles of roses that shall not fade;
 A veil the silver of moonbeams new
 Before the crescent comes into view.
 And who shall touch these garments rare
 Frail as columel, light as air?
 Naught but your lips, and then, not much,
 They are invisible to your touch.
 But at your touch the nectar flows,
 Swells to my heart and overflows.
 And that is why my limbs are fleet,
 My eyes lanterns, my laughter sweet.

My heart was like a Kiskadee,
 Perched upon a cassia bough;
 Possessed of yellow melody,
 Rich with glorious sun-gold flower.
 Because my love had come to me
 And blessed me with his gentle touch
 My heart was singing joyfully,
 Intoxicated quite too much.

But now my heart no longer sings
 The Kiskadee's abandoned air;
 Nor shall the sun-gold petals cling
 Around the black thorns of despair.
 Because my love has gone from me
 A crepe of burial shrouds my heart
 And death instead rings mournfully
 A farewell, since my joys depart.



Milton Williams

TRISTRAM

(Son of Sorrow)

Like the dead you are gone.
 Unlike some living I do not mourn
 but I am left to bear
 your patented burden.

When I saw you straightway
 I marked you down.
 Like the sun and rain
 the earth on which to shine and fall.
 As the moon and stars
 to lovers
 their resplendence bequeath,
 I gave to you my heart's sun
 and my eyes' rain
 and the beautiful star of myself.

By the sea on a cliff
 it stood, washed by fresh winds
 more vital air
 and waves' ever-recurring lap.

In the blood-red pulse of your days
 stained here there everywhere is me.
 Then you left and went away
 became untouchable.
 I remained an helpless tenant
 landlord by nailed days.

(ii)

You were my moon.
 Before you my tides
 ebbed and flowed.
 Oh I will wrap you
 in a mould of forever
 then stamp you
 with my living sky.
 I will spend the rest
 of my needle-lengthened-days
 scraping away your fungus'd—residue.
 For when you came
 between this droughted-coast
 and the majestic mountains
 my heart ruminated.

(iii)

In bloomtime I gave you my heart
 to pluck and to keep for our ripening.
 Instead you ground and crushed it dry.
 Oh you are cold and cruel
 like a jagged block of stone.

I sowed you with my seed.
 You killed it before
 the season of its sprouting
 now we have no harvesttime.
 You are cold and cruel
 like a jagged block of stone.

You are an army marching
 against me in sleeptime.

I will put heels to sleep
 and let her run away.
 For when you came
 warm all the way
 was every corner of my home
 then you left the fires raging.

I'm on fire. Oh
 all consuming, I burn.
 I am of the sun's element
 I am like the sun
 I am the only sun
 in this ice-box of a world.
 Before me all
 to water and to nothing turn.
 Behind me all
 is razed and black.

II

The time has come for me to speak
 words granite-hard and cold and sharp
 like knives of steel.
 For me to fertilise the desert
 and clear the land of carrions.
 No man of wealth or country backs me.
 Only thunder-voiced Walt and proud
 obdurate Pound fathers me.
 Like them I speak through the explosion
 of a spirit too long flaggelated.
 I burst upon the scene like "Ulysses"
 come home: quickwitted tigereyed
 pantherfooted. Ready to do battle
 with the lechers of time.

Not Death I fear
 Only you native leeching
 on the wall of time's decay
 slouched in the slush of your importance
 broken like a slave on the wheel.

Upon your back I slash
 water for blood run at our feet
 and you collapse to live.

Not Death I fear
 Only you woman, flower
 of the nails of the world.
 Like a child in a crab's tentacles
 You sleek in your own slime of abstinence.

At nights in your sleep I seek you
 and like a hawk I shred
 leaving only bones to walk away.

Not Death I fear
 but castaway from the North is you.
 Most imperious of all maggots
 scuffling in my stool
 You are lord of the cesspool
 I disdain.

Out of my sight you are flushed
 flung riverwards
 to drown to life.

III

The sky of their day is no more.
 Broken and shattered
 the lamps of their homes
 still,
 they come for changes.
 Out of the fields of dross and shambles
 loom
 despaired-cries...
 Bright blossom of their night
 holy mother of their flowered strife
 rose, at the dawn of their dying,
 wither not!

(ii)

Day's shroud of sundown
 is night's herald.

The lax will and cased desires.
 Canals of longing sealed and stamped
 feet of hope broken at the thighs
 is man's night his living death

a broken limb hanging in the wind
 the lone stump drifting in a void.

O on the promontories of consciousness
 surface the unsought for...

Black and chained and naked ones
 scorned and kicked and whipped and seared ones
 broken on wheels.

(iii)

To find is to lose
 and loss is discovery.

This recognition of extremes
 is rasped-grounds and walls
 towards and on which
 man soot-eyed journeys.

Predestined for peril.

Ah, the imperilled self:

blackstallion thoroughbredmad
pitting mane and breath and limb:

windrecklesswash of washing tides.

Glory of the eternal bonedeepest
he dances
dances down his stonetime.

This time has never been time at all
Shuteyed
is disintegration and death.

For the unliving there can be no time
only graves tombs walls horizons.

(iv)

From the timeless to time

generations
centuries.

Feathertopped and spikebottomed—
the road.

Realisation:

herald of the indomitable Will
of man's vision father Herculean.

Forcing the timeless horizons
to their verge
and unhorizon'd time.

Vistas
tremendous and annihilating

parallel
the soul's hallowed acres.



The Thursday Poetry Club - *A Mosaic.*

INVITATION

For several years now, a small group has been meeting on Thursday evenings at 7.30 to talk poetry. We have met in a variety of places, and the character of the group and the attitude to talk have changed over the years, but the group keeps meeting and talking about poetry.

There are two great shadows thrown by the centuries over the group as we talk, one from the Mermaid Tavern where Walter Raleigh, Shakespeare, Beaumont, Jonson and Donne had met and talked in the Friday Street Club, and from the Literary Club of Samuel Johnson where Reynolds, Goldsmith, Burke were members. But it doesn't really matter to us that we challenge comparison with the great dead for we enjoy ourselves talking of Pasternak and Housman and the Rubaiyat and that is what matters.

It's difficult to say now just when the group began. Let us say from a desire to discuss poetry and the things of the spirit at our own place and in our own way. In the old days we talked more philosophy, reviewing the position and work of the artist against the world situation, deploring the changes of the world spirit, emphasising the opportunistic American tradition we wanted to create over against the death wish of Europe. Now that the average age of the group is much younger, we are more like a creative workshop in an American University. We talk about principles of criticism and creation, we read and talk about the old masters or the contemporary Atlantic writers, we face the problems of the young enthusiast who brings his own work and wants to have comments upon it.

I can recall we have had visitors—an Irish Trade Adviser who was Secretary to a Yeats Memorial Fund Committee; a Governor of Sadler Wells and the Old Vic and a member of the L.C.C.; a successful novelist; the editor of a vigorous American quarterly magazine—and they have entered in their varying degrees into the intense discussions we conduct of Life and Art and Philosophy and the place of the Artist in Contemporary Civilisation, because they and we believe that discussion is necessary to build a deeper and richer spiritual life in our country if we are to pin foundations in the marvellous resources of the spirit, and they participated in the light and sometimes the heat we engendered in the analysis of the B.G. creative effort. I can't help thinking that the creative writer is at a relative disadvantage here, compared with the creative musician and the playwright and the artist. They can compose their work and it seems that an audience is readymade almost, to appreciate and discuss what they have produced. But it is only now that the young writer can produce his work and hope to have a comment upon it, and we certainly need more of the intelligent discussions of a poem, if the country is to build up a discriminating and critical audience.

In other issues of *Kykoveral*, we have published mosaics of comment and reaction to a piece of verse, and one is always seeking, perhaps, to enlarge, even if temporarily, the group of critical people who will read poems and be unself-conscious about saying what and why they like or dislike. It may be in a radio discussion to start you talking on the ideas behind books, or a series in the press setting out ideas for discussion in that public forum; or it may be the request like this to read a poem and send your reaction or criticism of what it purports to say.

Here is a poem I'd like you to read and drop me a line about it. That line can take several forms, ranging between approbation through distrust into violent disapproval. But what your reaction may be, I hope you will consider yourself free to put it down so that we can record the mosaic of comment and put it (anonymously as usual) in the forthcoming issue of *Kykoveral*. —A. J. S.

Poem

LAST RITES

The cloaked figures crowded around the corpse
Seem hardly aware of the tiny drops of rain
That nip noiselessly at the impervious black fabric
On their backs

And run reverent rivers
Down the grey, jumbie-bead pallor
Of their vulturine features,
Poising, poisoning for an instant
On the high cheekbones
In silent simulation of tears.

Their bare heads are bowed in beatitude,
But behind the busy eyebrows
Bloodshot eyeballs beam baleful thoughtwaves
On the centre
Where Cathartes Ruficollis,
Vitiating funereal blackness
Of sacerdotal garments,
Stands sibilating
As he consecrates the pentecostal.

In sweetest sacrosanctity
He leads the Benediction
And these preprandial prolegomena
Mirror the Christ of the Last Supper
Who, in the same night that He was betrayed,
Took bread

And when He had given thanks,
He brake it and gave it to them, saying:
'Take, Eat. This is my body, which is given for thee.
Do this in remembrance of me...'

W. A. McAndrew

COMMENT

I

The first two verses of this poem, in their humorously macabre vein, create a mood of enjoyment for the reader. There is an air of mystery, a suggestion of the occult, and the reader pauses in suspense as he wonders whether the figures mentioned therein are human, subhuman, or supernatural. With the aid of a dictionary, the reader identifies Cathartes Ruficollis and continues his reading only to come to a jolting on the third verse where the carrion feast is compared to the Last Supper of Christ. His first impression is "Sacrilege!" It sends him back to the first verse for a second reading with the feeling that perhaps he had misunderstood or misinterpreted. But the simile in the third verse rears up again, if not sacrilegiously, then irreverently and irrelevently. The comparison is neither logically nor emotionally apt; it destroys the mood of enjoyment created in the first verse.

The poet's use of words is sometimes original and provokingly descriptive, other times strained. The phrases "silent simulation of tears" and "bloodshot eyeballs beam baleful thoughtwaves" deserve honourable mention, but "preprandial prolegomena" suggests too much lexicon labour.

Had the poem ended with the second verse, or with the first two lines of the third, its effectiveness would have been strengthened. Let Cathartes Ruficollis lead his dinner guests in sacrosanctity—a well-chosen word befitting the mood in the first two verses—but let not the irony go further into sacrilege.

2

My reaction to "Last Rites"? First—what, generally speaking, does the reader have the right to expect from a poet? What, in other words, do we accept as the fundamental role of the poet as artist?

If we regard the poet as being still primarily the troubadour, the teller of tales, the graphic artist, then the writer of "Last Rites" has done a fine piece of word-painting. Irrespective of the particular school of painting for which we might have a personal preference, the fact is that he presents us with a picture in bold outline with just the detail needed for a vivid reproduction of the scene. The choice of language is slightly marred perhaps by the use of the word "jumbie—bead", which seems to me rather too deliberately and self-consciously Guianese. Incidentally, there are bits and pieces in the poem that remind me strongly of *Urn Burial*.

But where the painter must perforce leave his picture to speak for itself and its inner message is thus susceptible to a subjective interpretation, from the poet we have come to demand something more. What is this something? It is this. The poet can and must convey in words, and therefore more unmistakably, the nature and extent of the emotion that his subject is intended to awaken,

for we must remember that emotional response is the ultimate yard-stick for all forms of high art. The poet as artist must therefore exploit this advantage he possesses over every artist whose medium of expression is less unmistakable than words, and therefore susceptible to the subjective interpretation. As I see it, then, your question in this case is what is the nature and what the extent of my emotional response to "Last Rites"?

"Last Rites" portrays a scene from one of those major experiences that are common to humanity. Who is there among us that has not witnessed the last rites over some relative or friend? The subject is one therefore that is pregnant with emotional possibilities. But it is not so much our own memories that we wish to refresh. We do not read a poem primarily to revive an old experience. We do so to learn from the poet his own personal emotions when faced with a memorable situation. We expect him to communicate to us his own emotional response. His greatness as an artist therefore hinges upon two things. First, the quality of his own emotion, then his ability to communicate this emotion compellingly.

One captures readily the emotional atmosphere of the scene in this poem, heightened as it is by the use of metaphor in which common-place detail is transformed and blended to form part of the occasion. Drops of rain, in silent simulation of tears, become reverent rivers. The features of the cloaked figures crowded around the corpse are seen as vulturine and assume a grey, jumbie-bead pallor.....

What of the poet's own emotional reaction to the scene? The last rites remind him of one of the earliest, and even today, one of the most important of the rituals of the Christian religion, the original last supper. But then for the majority of mankind the last rites are always religious, be they Christian or pagan. For me, however, the emotional climax of the poem was already past. As far as I am concerned the entire poem lies wrapped up in the two words "preprandial prolegomena" which at once bring back the image of Francis Thompson's carrion-worm. The communion prolegomenon that follows merely rounds off the poet's emotional climax.

And what of my own emotional response to the poet's emotional reaction? Deep down in us all lies a streak of the macabre that makes the shock not altogether unpleasant when we come face to face unexpectedly with an experience such as the word preprandial in a context such as this. The old citizenesses of the French Revolution did their knitting in the shadow of the guillotine not because of hatred for the aristos but because of the macabre pleasure it gave them to see the falling heads, and it must be difficult for the mind of the poet to resist the lure of the macabre when face with a scene such as that described in "Last Rites". This is a far cry from Wordsworth's emotion remembered in tranquillity, but Baudelaire had his moments of greatness.

I wonder whether his obvious fascination with the sounds of words has not swept Mr. McAndrew off his feet and made him overdo the alliteration. Is it not too much that there should be examples of this playing with words in more than one third of the twenty-nine lines of this short poem? Surely the effect is diminished and the meaning obscured.

That was my first impression. Then I read the poem, again, and was conscious of a feeling of bathos. Why, I asked myself. Because the mourners are not human as I first thought? Because of the shock of realising the link made between the meal of carrion and the familiar words of the Communion Service? Both, probably.

I read the poem again and began to feel a sneaking admiration. Even if there's too much alliteration, some of it is very good, particularly in the first verse. A group of crows in a drizzle of rain, crowded around some carrion—that's all the poem is about. But now this common enough sight has become in my mind 'bare heads bowed in beatitude' with the rain 'in silent simulation of tears'. At least it is some triumph to be able to translate a moment's experience into words so that the reader cannot help but share it.

Is it not true though, that in some of the best-loved poetry in the English language, wonderful effects are obtained by the use of the familiar word in an unusual way, rather than unusual words to express something quite ordinary? I think at once of Ruth amid the 'alien' corn. For instance, take 'preprandial prolegomena'. Preprandial is allowable perhaps, but would 'preparations' instead of 'prolegomena' have altered the meaning, or the alliteration? Of course, it is always a presumption to try to alter a work of art. When it's finished we must take it or leave it.

I think of all my favourite poems, and there's something common to them all. I didn't have to look up the meaning of any of the words used. They were basic enough English so that the average reader could grasp their meaning at first reading. Surely this is important unless one is writing for a select audience. Yet perhaps it is one of the functions of poetry to shock, to stimulate thought, and if so, this poem is a success. But I don't like it. I won't put it in my personal anthology.

Thank you for your invitation to comment on 'Last Rites! It has been remarked that 'If you don't understand a poem that doesn't mean it's bad, but if you don't want to understand it, it means that it probably is bad'.

Frankly, on first reading I didn't understand 'Last Rites' and I am not really sure that I wanted to. This placed me in a dilemma.

However, I thought my dictionary might help. It did. It confirmed my worst fears.

POEM	—	A metrical composition especially of elevated tone.
PROSE POEM	—	Description etc., resembling poem in tone.
PROSE	—	Unversified language, especially as a form of literature, plain speech, humdrum experiences.
POETASTER	—	A potty poet, a writer of inferior or contemptible verse.

My first impression, you see had been twofold. Firstly, that *Last Rites* was in fact Prose cunningly laid out to give the appearance of a metrical form but omitting a few essential verbs, commas and full stops, and giving the first word of each line a capital letter. Secondly, that the author had successfully attempted to crowd the largest number of long words into the smallest possible space.

Having consulted the dictionary, I tried again more objectively. Is it a Poem? (your description). I think we should try to establish this. I don't really think it is either a 'metrical composition' or 'of elevated tone', unless perhaps elevated can be taken in its colloquial meaning—slightly drunk. We could I think give it the benefit of the doubt and classify it as a Prose Poem, i.e. a humdrum description.

On further thought too, I realised that I didn't understand it because I didn't understand some of the words, and that I didn't want to understand it because I didn't want to admit, even to myself, that I didn't understand some of the words.

What he has done, I think, is to throw an incisive search light on our hypocrisy at the time of the death of friends and loved ones. In that respect *Last Rites* succeeds. I feel unable to suggest any valuation of the work since I cannot rid myself entirely of those first impressions.

I shall have to leave it to your other more knowledgeable contributors. I do feel however, that he leans too heavily on alliterations, almost as though it is important for him to get an arty alliteration rather than anything else. I don't really think poetic licence should allow the misuse of words in order to get this effect. In this connection I would question the use of beatitude and sacrosanctity. I don't really object to prolegomena but I wonder if it might have better as 'this' p.p. rather than 'these'. I am more worried about Pentecostal which is an adjective placed here as a noun and in any event would not seem appropriate to this particular ceremony.

On balance I don't think I would suffer unduly if you asked me to attend the last rites of Last Rites.

5

. . . so sorry I did not send comments on the poem, but I felt I was not able to make any judgment. Quite honestly I did not like it. This is probably entirely due to prejudice and ignorance. Even in T.S. Eliot I do not like quotations from the scriptures. With him the . . . sentence can often carry it off but there is always the danger that the rest of the poem will look cheap beside the quotation. Then I was in some confusion about whether crows were being likened to a funeral party or a funeral party to crows. The former seemed the more likely but do your crows have eyebrows and cheekbones, and the crows here are incapable of sibilating. And why pentecostal in line 19. Surely the last supper was just before passover, pentecost is whitsum. But this is really quibbling and it may well be that if I had seen such an event the poem would have been vivid enough to carry me with it instead of leaving me plodding behind with Philistian mutters of 'What's it all about'.

6

This poem mystifies me somewhat. The writer obviously is trying to be clever with his material—a cleverness which, I must say at the outset seems to get in the way of what he is trying to convey. It exemplifies so clearly the tendency of some young poets of the modern school to force their material into patterns which will not respond to such treatment.

It is not easy to discover the intention of the writer. But one must presume in order to discuss the poem at all. In the first place there is an unmistakable attempt to create the sombre, funereal atmosphere that surrounds the last rites of burial. But this is subordinated to what seems to the author a greater purpose. He strives to link these last rites of a modern sect with the Last Supper of Jesus and to give a universal significance to the particular funeral rites he is describing. This significance stems presumably, from the twin association of life and death, sad remembrance and deep joy, disruption and continuity which were present at the last supper and which are supposed to be present at the sombre burial scene. There is something in this poetic concept which, if carefully worked out, could express a deep and commonly shared human experience. But this is precisely what is wrong with the poem. The reader has to force his way into meaning. There is none of the intensity which we expect of poetry dealing with these themes. But I must not be entirely critical. There are parts of the first stanza which show some promise of a possible future development. Here the author is trying to conjure up the atmosphere of the burial scene. The figures are cloaked and suitably anonymous. Nature in the form of rain is used to symbolise the mood of the mourners, the rain-drops themselves making "silent simulation of tears". The death-like

pallor" of the mourners' faces is described as "jumbie-bead pallor" with the sharp and eerie connotation of death which the word "jumbie" conveys in this country. In the drops of rain "that nip noiselessly at the impervious black fabric" the sense and the sound are cleverly knit together; but he spoils the imagery by the use of the words "vulturine features" which give an all too sinister suggestion of crows gathered round a decaying corpse. In general, however, the first stanza can stand scrutiny—it just achieves its effects and there is little that is meaningless or pretentious.

The same cannot be said for the other two stanzas. It is obvious that in the second stanza the sound is more important than the sense. In fact the words now dominate the writer to a baleful extent. Alliteration now disguises cliché and lines like

"Bloodshot eyeballs beam baleful thoughtwaves"

are almost without meaning in their context. The name of the priest is equally preposterous but worse yet is to come. The lines

"Vitiating funereal blackness of sacerdotal garments"

is a clear indication that rhetoric has been called in to function where poetic intensity has failed.

The last stanza has the most tenuous links with anything that has gone before; The words of Christ at the last supper seem forced on to the poem to give it a greater significance by the use of Christian symbolism. But they do not belong there. There is no logic in the imagery of the first two stanzas which would lead us to these words. They are prefaced by pompous cliché and pretentious phrase. Preprandial prolegomena is priceless!

No, this is not poetry. There is no development of imagery, no intensity, and little control. The delicate fusion of thought and feeling which make poetic experience is not to be found here. There is plenty of "clever" alliteration and echoing sound which go to make the rhetorical.

7

Death as a theme in the work of a creative piece can be compelling. I find this quality in Mac Andrew's "Last Rites", which he wraps in his heavily-garbed cynicism. Tolerant of his style, I would have read the whole poem without any reservations, but I find too strong an irreverence in Cathartes Ruficollis and Christ being placed in such intimate company—even if death is a stark fact in the rites of the Last Supper and in those of this preprandial flock—and in the sibilance of the poised scavenger bearing association with Christ's words as He broke bread on the eve of his betrayal.

A Tale

The Madrigal

by Jacqueline de Weever

On a clean crisp morning, the young musician Auberi was walking on the seashore enjoying the sea air as his habit was whenever he was holidaying in the country. Today the sea was calm and of a deep, rich amber colour, the waves, as they lashed against the shore, topped with their salty, crusty foam. He always yearned after the sea, and loved to sit alone on the stone jetty, watching the waves lash against it, drawing back, gathering force, and lashing again, always in perfect timing to the rhythm of the sea, until he felt himself become a part of the rhythm of the waves and the sea. This morning the tide was going out, and he walked down to the very edge of the water, listening to the sea, with the taste of the fresh morning in his mouth, the sky fused into an intense blue by the sun whose fires were beginning to gather strength, flecked with little white clouds like handfuls of sheep's wool, flung out over the blue by a careless hand. The wind, too, was crisp and very clean, as if in its travels over the sea it had met with nothing unpleasant, so pure it was. Auberi stretched his arms out to the sea, filled his lungs with the wonderful air, and if he only knew how, he would have willed himself to dance on the white foam of the amber waves. It was on such clear mornings as this that the strange mood took hold of him, and as he stood there with his bare feet on the warm sand, it came over him. It was a mood in which the sand on the sea-shore became the sand of the desert, the distant capstan on the jetty loomed into Cheops' pyramid, the wind as it blew against his face full of the whisperings, the singing, of Arab voices, the whole atmosphere charged with the breath of Egypt. In the grip of these powerful sensations he found himself trying to fit together the pieces of a very ancient existence, but each time the mood slipped away like the sand slipping through his toes, and he was left with the feeling that he had not resolved the melody of this existence into its final cadence. He now sighed heavily as the mood slipped away once again, and looked up the beach to continue his walk. He could not move however, for his feet refused to carry him; what his eyes saw commanded his feet to stand still. For not many yards away lay the shape of a human being.

After the initial shock had worn away a little, he forced his benumbed legs to take him to the body, and as he bent over it, he saw that it was a young woman. Her wet clothes clung to her body, her hair coiled around her throat like a black snake; yet as he bent over her, Auberi saw her lips move, her eyelids flutter and close again, and a moan oozed from her throat. Quickly he picked her up in his arms, and as fast as he could he returned to his little house which was not far from the beach.

He carried her into his study and put her on his couch, but her clothes were so cold that he decided to dry her. He peeled off her dress, made of such coarse brown cloth that he thought perhaps she

was a fisherman's daughter, and when she lay before him, clothed only in her hair, his heart trembled at her loveliness. She was small, but withal, finely built. As he remained lost in contemplation of the wonder, she turned her head a little and moaned again, a moan which cut through his contemplation as a sharp rapier cuts through a piece of silk. Realising again that she was cold, he poured a little brandy down her throat, wrapped her up in blankets, and removed her from his study, preferring to give her his bed where she would be more comfortable. Although she did not awaken, her state gradually changed from unconsciousness to sleep, and as he watched her sleep, she seemed to grow more beautiful; her hair, which was now dry, was like strands of black silk, her ever breath was like the clean crisp air at the seashore. He felt his heart quicken with desire, so he left the room, closing the door behind him.

Whenever he needed help or advice, he had always gone to his friend, Richard, the writer who lived next door. Now he felt he needed advice, for he was bewildered by the finding of the girl, her beauty, and his own desire. Perhaps he ought to fetch a doctor, for he could not understand why she should continue to sleep. She was all so still; and as he stood hesitating in front of the door, Richard himself came from the front porch.

"Oh, how glad am I to see you!" exclaimed Auberi. "I've found a precious jewel." At this Richard raised his left eyebrow, a habit he had when he was sceptically amused. Auberi told him how he had found a girl on the beach, about an hour and a half ago, and how he had tried to resuscitate her; and although he believed that she was past all danger, yet he was disturbed that she should sleep so long. Richard looked at her, and while he conceded that she was alive, and breathing regularly, he urged Auberi to call a doctor. But this idea no longer appealed to Auberi. He felt that the doctor might take her away, and although he had had the girl with him only such a short time, his heart pricked him at the thought of a separation from her. Instead of sending for a doctor, he asked Richard to remain with him, to wait with him while she slept, until she should wake up, and this Richard agreed to do. The whole day passed while they waited; evening came, deepened into night, and at last Richard went home.

"If you need me during the night, I'll be working, you'll see my light from my study. This is a very curious thing, and I think you should call a doctor. You won't? Well, good luck." With that he was gone.

Auberi was distressed. He gave her a last look, before he curled up on the couch in the study, hesitating between calling the doctor and leaving her alone. The excitement of the day had tired him, and since he was sure she was alive, he decided to wait until the morning. If she still slept, then he would call the doctor. He put out the lamps and went to sleep.

About midnight he thought he heard music, but he was always hearing music in his dreams, for was he not a musician? It sounded as if someone was quietly humming a quaint melody to the accompaniment of a lute. He decided that he was dreaming, turned over, and tried to sleep, but the song continued. He could hear the fingers plucking the strings of the instrument, and the voice had the deep rich notes of a violoncello. He opened his eyes. The silver bow of a crescent moon was sending fine streaks of golden light through the window; and now the music was very near, so he turned slowly in its direction, enchanted by the sound and a little afraid by its beauty. Now he was stupified, for he was face to face with the girl he had rescued, but how marvellous she now was! She was sitting in the moonlight, wearing a gown of gentian and gold silk, a gown moulded to her bosom, billowing out in deep folds of blue and gold, and long sleeves of blue slashed to show the gold lining underneath. She seemed poised for flight out of her gown as a butterfly is poised on the brink of the cocoon before flying off into the world. Her throat was a finely wrought pillar set between a handsome pair of shoulders, her face was soft and smooth, and when she smiled, the smile reached from her full ripe lips to the depths of her magnificent black eyes, eyes full of mystery and a vague longing, into which Auberi found himself longing to gaze. She was lovely, exquisitely and wonderfully made. As Auberi gazed at her, giving his eyes time to drink in her beauty, she continued to hum softly, her fingers plucking the lute, now and then lifting those eyes to Auberi's face. His heart and his eyes were enchanted, and when she came nearer to his couch, put her head against his knees and continued her song, the enchantment grew stronger, and again he felt the desire he had experienced earlier in the day. Gently he took the lute from her, and tilted her face up to his.

"You are lovely," he said, "Where do you come from? What is your name? You know I found you on the beach this morning, and I have been waiting all day for you to wake up."

"My name is Arianne," she answered softly, "and I belong to you. But, my Auberi, why not take the beautiful things in your life gratefully, without asking questions?" He was surprised that she knew his name, and before he could ask her any more quest she put her arms around him, kissed him on the lips, and as his own arms tightened about her, all his senses rushed out to discover her. His vision, touch, taste, smell, even his hearing, embarked on a voyage of discovery of this unknown mysterious gift.

The next morning when Auberi opened his eyes, he found himself alone, and his heart stood still in fear lest it had been deceived by a dream or hallucination. He got up slowly, pricking up his ears, and crossed the room to the window on the other side, almost expecting to find his house in a strange setting; but when he looked out the window he saw Richard bending over his rose bush. He smiled at his own fear, turned from the window, making up his mind that the events of the night before could very well have been a dream, when he saw the lute on a table nearby. The sight of the lute evoked all the delight, and his heart trembled with the remem-

bering, of the night before. As his thoughts formed the name "Arianne" she came into the room, in a frock the pale yellow of buttercups, which lighted up every contour of her face and body.

"There is one question I must ask you," Auberi said as casually as he could. "Last night you were dressed in a marvellous blue and gold gown, today you are wearing a yellow dress. When I brought you here, I brought only you. Am I dreaming, or are you real?"

"Touch me," she said in her deep rich voice. "What does your hand tell you? This is real, is it not?" she asked, drawing his head to her full bosom.

A few days later Auberi and Richard were sitting in the shade of the lime trees, drinking lemonade from tall glasses frosty with ice, for it was midday, the sun was at its zenith; they were a little tired with digging vegetables in Richard's vegetable garden. "Your Arianne is truly beautiful, Auberi. But it is strange to me that she has no home to go to, but is content to stay with you." Richard was doubtful, and full of misgiving. "Her loveliness makes me think of the sea, the sea creatures. Has she told you how she happened to get herself half-drowned? Perhaps a jealous lover tried to kill her."

Auberi was silent a few moments before answering; he swung himself in the hammock for a moment or two, running his hand over the place where he had stitched a piece of the coarse brown cloth of Arianne's old dress to the inside of his shirt, and when he spoke he gazed into the blue and green distance before him. "I love her, Richie, and I am afraid of my love for her. When she speaks, I feel that she has spoken to me before, somewhere, long ago. I feel transported to another place, another age, and I feel that all the music I have written have been puny attempts to recapture the music of that time, the music of that voice. I feel as if I have been carrying within me the desire for that sound for a very long time."

Sometimes, at night, while he was working on his novel, Richard would hear Arianne singing to her lute, and many times he felt a strong desire to sing with her. Her songs were quaint and delicate pieces, and as he listened to them, Richard thought of blue waters lashing against marble steps, gardens filled with heavily scented flowers, ladies in rich gowns of silk and brocade, gentlemen in tights and cloaks with silver daggers hanging from belts of beaten gold. He would shake his head and blink his eyes to shut out the visions, but as long as she sang they persisted. One day he mentioned it to Auberi. "Auberi," he said, "what do you think of when Arianne sings?"

"What do you mean?"

"Sometimes at night I hear her singing, and I find myself thinking of brocades and silks, silver daggers."

Auberi smiled indulgently. "You think that strange? She loves sixteenth century music, and I have been thinking of asking you to learn a part so that you can join in a madrigal with us. Of

course we need at least four voices, but since it is just to enjoy ourselves, three will have to do. I'll teach you what you have to sing."

When Richard knew his part, they decided to sing the madrigal together one evening after supper, but Arianne stopped them after the first stanza. "We don't do justice to the master's music like this, Auberi," she said softly. "I think I'll sing two parts, and you and Richard sing your own parts as before." The men exchanged glances, and their heart beats quickened as if in anticipation of the beauty that was to follow. She sang the upper and middle voices, the soprano and the alto, while Auberi sang the tenor and Richard the bass, her voice weaving itself into the men's like the gold and silver threads in a wine-red brocade. Her voice was indeed marvellous. Auberi got the impression that it had been carved, moulded, and shaped by the music of the madrigal for centuries, so that the melting flowing lines, the pathos as well as the perfection, had been left clinging to the voice as gold dust clings to the cloth over which it had been spilt. As they sang together, the harmonies gradually went to their heads like wine, intoxicating them delicately and delightfully, and when the song was finished, there was silence for a full minute, their minds held by the music as with strong but fine threads of silk, held as much prisoner as the silk worm is held by its silken bonds. But as Arianne played a little coda on her lute, they felt the bonds loosen, the silence fade, and the music take possession of the room.

Soon they were singing together every evening. Arianne made the most delicious honey and rice cakes, and provided *sapodillas* with wine added to delight the taste. Auberi fell more and more in love with her, his whole being stirring and growing with one glance from her black eyes. She filled his days with tender care and his nights with delight, while he drank in her loveliness at every turn. The very air he breathed seemed to be a part of her, because she moved in it, Especially did her grace in playing the lute move him, so filled with music were her fingers. One day he examined the lute, and found that it was made of finely polished wood, inlaid with ivory and mother-of-pearl. Like everything about her it was exquisite, but in spite of its beauty, it showed signs of great age.

"Arianne, I like your lute, but I don't remember finding it with you."

She took his face between her palms and a shiver of sweetness ran through him. "It was given to me a very, very, very long time ago, and he who gave it to me promised me that whenever I sang with it, I would be able to sing in as many voices as I chose. Touch me, Auberi, I feel I am living only when you touch me. You are going to ask me who gave me the lute, and I will tell you. An old man, whose name I do not know, gave it to me when I was quite a small child, and he is long since dead. Perhaps my lute is a magic one," and she ran her fingers lovingly over it. "Is it not enough for you that I am here, my Auberi? When your hands caress me, I care

only to be clothed with the garments your fingers can weave for me. Kiss me," and when he kissed her, it was as if he was in a wine press and the sweetest grapes were being pressed into his mouth so that the juice ran down his chin.

There now occurred a change in Auberi. He had been on holiday six weeks already, weeks which had been spent in reading, roaming the countryside with Richard, lying in his hammock under the lime trees, with not even a desire to write a single note. Now he found himself working, creating such wonderful sounds that his music took on a glowing richness, and he composed more easily than before. He worked ceaselessly while Arianne watched him anxiously. Many times in a night she would get up and make him hot chocolate which he loved to drink when he was working, or she would sit under his desk and hug his knees until he stopped working from sheer exhaustion. Once in bed, he would cradle his head in her bosom and fall asleep immediately, while her desire was left to tread the darkness alone. She poured her tenderness for him over his curly head, kissing his hair and running her fingers through it, longing for him in the very tips of her fingers, the palms of her hands, in the edges of her lips.

The last week of his holiday arrived and Auberi allowed himself time to relax. He closed the piano, put up his manuscripts, held out his arms to her. "Come, my Arianne, come down with me to the sea before we go. Oh, it's been such a long time since I really held you in my arms; come with me to the sea." As they walked along the shore, he told her how he had been enjoying the fine morning when he found her nearly dead. "How did that happen? Did a jealous lover try to drown you?" he asked, remembering Richard's explanation. For answer, she leaned her head against his shoulder and whispered:

"Auberi, I love you. It seems to me that I have loved you before, once upon a time, and that I lost you. Now that I have found you again I won't lose you, although you ask me questions the answers to which I do not know. Look how calm the sea is, and how beautiful!"

After that, Auberi forced himself to swallow any questions which begged for utterance. Instead he revealed in her beauty and took his fill of her love.

The next week they returned to the city with Richard, and Auberi began rehearsing the new compositions with the orchestra. Arianne continued her tender care of him, and also undertook to care for his garden, for the only things which grew well in Auberi's garden were his roses. He neglected everything else. She cut away the vines which were killing the jasmine and mimosa, removed the anthuriums and put them in the damp cool and shade under the front stairway, pruned the frangipani, and soon the garden was filled with the fragrant perfumes of the flowers, the night air filled with their scents. On such nights, love was a lovelier thing because of the flowers.

One evening there was a ball given to honour the composer whose music everyone was enjoying, as the concerts had begun and people were flocking from far and near to hear the music which Auberi had written. For it turned out that his music was so well received that everybody was talking about it. He took Arianne to the ball, and she wore a dress that took his breath away every time he looked at her. It was made of white gossamer silk, moulding the contours of her exquisite shoulders and bosom, and billowing out from under the bosom in deep, rich folds of white and gold; it was the same style of dress as the one she had been wearing after she had waked out of her long sleep, but a more magnificent one. Over her hair she wore a little cap embroidered with seed pearls and diamonds, and her elegance created quite a stir among the ladies present. As they went up the broad staircase, a tall ascetic man passed them. His face showed that he was almost middle-aged, yet he had a head of unusually black and bushy hair; on the little finger of his left hand he wore a ring with a gigantic stone of black jade. On his way down the stairs, he paused for a moment to gaze after Arianne. She shivered.

“Do you know him?” asked Auberi, when the gentleman had passed.

“No,” she replied, in a too-frightened whisper.

“Then why do you shiver? Tell me, my love, are you afraid?”

“No, Auberi, it is nothing. Let’s not talk about it.”

About half way through the ball, the stranger appeared and asked for a dance with Arianne. Auberi looked straight into his eyes. Those eyes held just a hint of mockery of him and all the world. Arianne gave Auberi’s hand a frightened squeeze, and for a long as he was able, Auberi kept an eye on them while they danced. When they were swallowed up in the crowd, and when the music for three sets of dances had been played and they had not returned, he went to look for them. In the course of his search he met Richard, who was, in his turn, looking for Auberi, for he had seen Arianne leave with the gentleman, but he had no idea where they had gone, and this piece of news upset Auberi very much. Could it be that his Arianne was being unfaithful?

The two friends left the ballroom, hurried into the street where Auberi took the direction to the left. He thought he heard singing in four parts calling his name, but in his deranged state of mind he could not believe his ears. Nevertheless the singing continued, and he followed it. It took him out of the city, down to the sea shore, with Richard following him. Where the sea lapped against the shore there were two figures wrestling with each other, and from the belt of one of them a silver dagger gleamed in the moonlight. As they hurried toward the figures, Arianne’s voice called out: “Take his

dagger away from him, slay him, and then plunge the dagger into my breast." Auberi froze in horror on the spot, and as Richard rushed forward to get the dagger, the voice called out again. "No, Auberi must do it."

The thought of killing his Arianne chilled Auberi's blood, but the voice cried again. "Do it, or you will never see me again."

In despair and rage, Auberi attacked the man, who was a skilful and strong wrestler, and only after a dreadful struggle did the musician, half-crazed with his love, succeed in driving the dagger into the breast of the man. As the body sank into the sea, the waves bore it away swiftly, taking Arianne with them. At this, Auberi tried to pull her out, but the sea had a strange force and continued to bear her away. "Do it now, Auberi, or you will drown, and I shall never be free. Someone else will find me on the beach, thousands of miles from here, someone else will love me in the night, and I shall be forced to love him. Do it now, Auberi, for the sake of the jasmine-scented night of our love."

Auberi raised his arm and plunged the silver dagger into the bosom which had cradled his head a joyful night. As Arianne sank into the waves, a change came over her. In the light of the full moon, the beautiful girl shrivelled and shrank, her skin became as wrinkled as a crocodile's skin, the eyes beady like those of an old bird, the nose like an eagle's; beneath the skin on the brow could be clearly seen the shape and bones of the skull. This was age such as no man had ever seen, for even the limbs, which a while ago were young and strong and perfect, were now crooked and bent like the limbs of an old tree. And the waves did not carry it away any further; they had lost their power. And while the two men watched like men bewitched, the old skin continued to shrink and to curl up, and at the last to peel away, and like a snake shedding its old skin, a fresh new Arianne emerged while the sea suddenly gathered force and a gigantic wave heaved her and threw her heavily onto the shore. Here Auberi's strength failed him and he fell down in a faint.

He woke in his own bed, in his own house, to find a woman leaning over him. It was Arianne, as lovely as ever, but now dressed in his old blue bathrobe. He grew limp with joy when she took him in her arms, and as he pressed his lips to her breast, he felt the mark he had made with the dagger. He opened his eyes, bewildered, and saw Richard leaning against the door.

"Richie, tell me that it has been a dream. But it could not have been a dream, for there is the mark." He closed his eyes for the memory gave him pain.

"Touch me, Auberi, my dear love," said Arianne. Her voice now had a new quality in it, it was a little husky, but still rich and sweet. Auberi looked at her again. She was still lovely, but in a

different way. She no longer shone brilliantly like a diamond, the light seemed to have been softened, there was a new vulnerability about her, she was now like a rich ruby which asks not only to be enjoyed but also to be cherished.

"Auberi," she said in her soft husky voice, "now I shall grow old along with you; now you will have to clothe me," and here she smiled a little implishly, for now there will be no more lavish and magnificent gowns to set questions in your mind. I shall no longer remain young and beautiful, as I have for centuries; for four centuries have I been the lovely Arianne, because I once thought that to be young and beautiful forever to be the thing I wanted most.

"My father was an Egyptian merchant who had a shop in Florence, where we lived quite comfortable. He had a friend, a Netherlandish composer of madrigals, who dined often at our house, and who taught me to sing. It was all such a *ling time ago* that I have forgotten his name, but he gave me a lute one day as a gift, and promised me that as long as I was young and lovely, I would be able to sing his madrigals in all their parts, the three-part ones as well as the six-part songs. I loved music very much, especially his madrigals; I was also very much in love with a young composer, a pupil of the Netherlander, who was admired me because of my sweet voice. I wanted to win his love completely, to bind him to me, but he eluded me at every turn. Now if I could contrive to remain young forever and to sing in as many voices as I choose, one day he might fall in love with me. But how to do this, I could not tell. My father was a scholar as well as a merchant, and I set myself to studying all his books to find out if they could tell me how to achieve my desire. After months of studying I came across an old papyrus, which had written on it an ancient Egyptian ritual for remaining young and beautiful. It said that if a young girl were prodigal enough to unveil her beauty to the new moon, when it was just a thin silver bow in the sky, and walk backwards three steps, repeating at each step. "I want to be young forever, and I now renounce forever those things that are most precious to me," If a young girl did these things, she would have the secret of remaining beautiful forever. I thought of all the things which were most precious to me, my father, my home with the fountains in the marble hall, my books, my horse, but never once did I think that the love of my young composer was to be added to these things. So one morning, in the very early dawn, I carried out the instructions. I stood naked facing the very new moon, took the three steps backwards repeating the words, and then walked back to my room. The years passed, I still sang beautiful with my lute, my father grew old and died, the young man I loved turned his heart away from me, my friends remarked that I kept the secret of youth to myself and would not share it with them. A time came when everyone I had known grew old and died, and my youth began to cause me embarrassing moments. Everybody remarked about it, some jealously, some suspiciously, until it began to be rumoured that I was a witch. So I left Florence and went to France, where no one knew me. I

stayed there for some years, when the same whispers began to reach my ears. My friends would grow old and die, while I remained young, and people rumoured that I was a witch. When I had had this experience three more times, in Spain, in Morocco, in Egypt, I tried to committ suicide by pumping off a cliff into the sea, but the sea washed me up on the shores of West Africa, someone found me, grew to love me, and I was somehow forced to love him. Then one day a tall ascetic gentleman began following me around, and again I jumped into the sea. Again I was washed up on the beach of an island, a man found me, and the same thing happened all over again. I longed for the power to love, which I had thrown away, and I began to long for death, but through the centuries I have been denied both. All this time I had not sang with my wonderful voice, I had forgotten about my gift, I was in such despair. It was only when I saw Auberi, sleeping so peacefully like a child that I suddenly remembered the words of the old Netherlander, and I longed to hear the old melodies and harmonies. Whenever I sang for you I found peace. Now one day I shall grow old, and I won't be able to sing anymore, but while I have this last chance of youth, I can still sing in many voices. And what is any gift, however wonderful, compared to the gift of being able to love?"



Leafing Through Schomburgk

by Joy Allsopp

At a time of political confusion when the colonies of Demerary, Berbice and Essequibo were being occupied in turn by English and Dutch troops, a single, very ordinary event took place in Freiburg. Saxony, which was to mean a great deal to British Guiana. This glad event was the birth on June 5th, 1804, of Robert Herman Schomburgk. We know little of his early life, but I like to think that he was an inquisitive boy, always asking 'why?' and that at an early age he must have shown signs of the boundless energy and determination which were his characteristics in later life.

When Robert Schomburgk came to B.G. thirty years later, that great traveller Baron von Humboldt was writing—'...the whole interior of Dutch, French and Portuguese Guiana is a **terra incognita**.' Most maps of South America at this time—the early 1830's—still retained the mythical lake called Parima, said to occupy most of the interior of B.G. This lake is believed to be the source of the famous legend of El Dorado.

The Royal Geographical Society of London, adventurous then as now, commissioned Robert Schomburgk to do some exploration in B.G. His terms of reference were explicit. He was to investigate the physical astronomical geography of B.G., and connect the positions thus ascertained with those of Humboldt on the Upper Orinoco. To the achievement of these endeavours the Society contributed the considerable sum of £900. It was expected that the Government would bear part of the expenses of the expedition.

Robert Schomburgk arrived in B.G. on 5th August, 1835. After twenty years of steady British rule the planters—and the Court Policy—were able to turn their attention from European wars and threats of wars. They could now think of internal affairs. The old unsatisfactory lighthouse was replaced in 1830 by the present imposing structure. On the amusement side was the opening of D'Urban Race Course in 1829. And now, money was forthcoming to help finance the Schomburgk expedition.

Robert Schomburgk spent four years carrying out his task, and to say that he fulfilled his terms of reference would be an understatement. Quite literally, he put B.G. on the map. For where there had been vague lines and great blanks, he drew in authentic rivers and winding tributaries. To give vital statistics, he is reported to have determined the latitudes of 174 points by 4,824 altitudes of heavenly bodies. In one of his books, which he calls, and it's a mouthful—'A description of British Guiana, Geographical and statistical exhibiting its Resources and Capabilities, together with the Present and Future Condition and Prospects of the

Colony'—he says this—'The purity of the air is so great, in the interior, that the planets Venus and Jupiter may be seen in the daytime.'

Who knows but that our tourist brochures will one day tell of 'new-found' wonders in B.G. as they describe some of the natural phenomena discovered by Robert Schomburgk over one hundred years ago. In the same book mentioned above, he describes Ataraipu as the greatest geological wonder of this country. This is what he says—

'The greatest geological wonder of Guiana is no doubt Ataraipu, which, with full right, may be called a natural pyramid, far surpassing in height and grandeur the Egyptian piles constructed by the labour of man. The Ataraipu is on the Western bank of the river Guidaru in 2°55' N. latitude. Its base is wooded for about 350 feet, from thence rises the mass of granite, devoid of all vegetation, in a pyramidal form for about 550 feet more, making its whole height about 900 feet above the river.'

Another possible tourist attraction of the future is what the Amerindians call Taquiare or Comuti, which means water-jug in the Arawak language. This 140' high pile of granite is described as a huge boulder of stone on which rests an oval piece of granite. A third stone resting on this is in the shape of a jar, and on the top is a fourth piece shaped like a cover.

Although not a botanist like his brother Richard, Robert could not travel through the new unexplored country of Guiana without taking note of the strange trees, birds and flowers. He did more than take idle notice, he brought to the attention of the Admiralty in London the valuable timber in the forests. He actually suggested that the Demerara River from its mouth to Hababu Creek should be made a vast harbour, a naval arsenal, where mora and greenheart could come into their own as shipbuilding materials.

On 1st January 1837, Robert discovered the water lily which he named *Victoria Regia Schomb.* This plant he describes as 'the most beautiful specimen of the flora of the western hemisphere.'

With tremendous enthusiasm and imagination, he made many other suggestions for the advancement of B.G. Why not grow grapes on the slopes of the mountains? What about producing cocoa, vanilla, cinnamon, nutmegs and other spices?

After his return to England late in 1839, Robert organised an exhibition in London which he called The Guiana Exhibition. It was held at 209 Regent Street, and perhaps has not been surpassed since. To make an authentic forest scene, the walls of the room were decorated with scenic foliage. There was a model of an Amerindian benab, and last but not least, three Amerindians to demonstrate the use of the bow and arrow and the blowpipe. These

envoys from the forest came from three different tribes. They were Corrienow, a Warrau, Samarang, a Macusi, and Sororeng, from the Parawano tribe. Unfortunately for them, the exhibition room was not very well heated, and they complained bitterly of the cold during those winter months.

In the same book, the 'Description of British Guiana etc.' which was published in 1840, Robert/Schomburgk drew attention to the fact that the boundaries of the colony, especially on the west and south, were not at all clearly defined. As a result of this much valuable territory was in danger of being lost. Accordingly, a Boundary Expedition was arranged and Robert S. was asked to lead the party. On this second occasion he was accompanied to B.G. by his brother Richard, who had been commissioned by the National Scientific Institute to make collections for the Royal Museum and Botanical Gardens in Berlin.

It is to Richard than his brother that we can look for a full account of the adventures of this second expedition. He published his record in three volumes which were translated into English by Walter E. Roth. Volumes I and II of his 'Travels in British Guiana' contain a straightforward account, complete with maps, of this expedition into the interior. Volume III contains a list of flora and fauna.

Richard is, of course, mostly concerned with trees, flowers and birds, and his descriptions of these sometimes border on poetry. Here is his description of the voice of the bell-bird.

' . . . there fell upon my ear from out of the near forest some wondrous note such as I had never before heard. It was as if someone were striking several harmonically tuned glass bells. I now heard again, and after a minute's pause, once more and yet again: there was then a longer interval of from six to eight minutes, when the clear full harmonic notes rang out afresh. I stood a long while spell-bound in the hope of hearing the fairy-like cling-clang sound just once more—silence alone followed, and I anxiously turned to my brother from whom I now learnt that it was the voice of the *Chasmarnynchos carunculatus* or Bell-bird as the coloured people call it. It took me but a minute to get my gun out of the boat and ask Sororeng to accompany me, because his sharp eyes would certainly discover the bird amidst the green foliage more easily than mine: the latter, however, smilingly intimated that I might just as well remain quiet where I was because all attempts to kill the lovely songster would be fruitless, owing to its perching only upon the extreme tree tops, where it was well out of range. My attempt even to find it was in vain, for the limbs of the trees were so interlaced with one another that my view was already blocked by the first branches. No song, no note of any one of the feathered residents of the Guiana forests, not even the goat-sucker's voice, so distinctly articulate, had set me in such astonishment as the tintinnabulary peal of the bell-bird. I had already learnt when first stepping

upon this remarkable portion of the globe that the birds of Guiana possessed the gift of speech, but a voice such as this had hitherto remained absolutely unknown to me. My attention was now wholly and solely directed upon this marvellous songster: it could not be withdrawn from it by anything else,...When the magic song was heard anew my eye rambled around into the thickly-leaved tree from which it appeared to come, but in vain. I heard the lovely song, yet never saw the singer."

It remains for one of our poets to produce something worthy of this beautiful bird-sound, a poem that will become as familiar to us as the well-loved 'Hail to thee, blithe spirit'.

He writes however about everything of interest, whether it be the thrill of his first night in the forest, or an Amerindian divorce case. On this occasion the husband, on being fined two dollars for beating his wife, this being the punishment, he was told, that the Great Queen had ordered to be inflicted on such offenders, exclaimed—'Had the Great Queen known of the existence of such lazy women as my wife (he had earlier compared her with a sloth), she would certainly never have such a law, but would allowed the men to beat at least the lazy ones'.

And here is what Richard Schomburgk has to tell us about the marriage customs of the Warrau tribe.

'Polygamy is commonly indigenous among the Warraus. Every Warrau takes as many wives as he can support, or rather believes to be necessary for looking after and attending to him. The chiefs mostly possess a regular harem. Wedlock takes place at a very early age, and I have often seen mothers who could hardly be eleven or twelve years of age and yet possessed children of from one to two years old. Marriage is not consecrated by any religious ceremony. The girl's parents make a choice of bridegroom already of tenderest age and later on hand her over to him without further formality. From the day that the daughter is destined for him, he has to work for her parents until his entrance into manhood. In this interval he showers every attention on his youthful bride, decorates her with beads, and brings her the best of what is procurable in the chase. As he becomes a man, he takes her to where he thinks of building his house. When such a mutual arrangement on the part of the parents has not taken place, the young people follow their own inclinations. A visit to the house of the girl of his choice and a few presents are the first distinctive signs of awakened or already long-cherished love. If the plans of the parents are in full agreement with the wishes of the wooers, the daughter will either become his for a fixed present or be handed over to him by the parents upon the fulfilment of services to be performed for them. In the latter case, according to the value set upon the bride, he has to work for a year or still longer for her parents.

On completion of this term the young husband clears from bush and trees a sufficient piece of land, and hands it over to the young woman as her provision field which she now further cultivates and tills. The man acquires his second, third, and fourth wife by means of gifts. When the wife gets old, and this usually

takes place already by the twentieth year, the husband looks for another among the little girls of seven to eight years of age: he hands this child to his eldest wife to bring up, and the latter teaches her everything in the way of domestic duties until she arrives at maturity, when she enters upon all the rights and duties of the marriage state. But whatever number of wives a Warrau may possess, yet the one first taken unmistakeably sways the sceptre before which all her successors have to bow in matters of domestic concern. The house-master usually has one or two favourite wives whom he never lets away from his side but who accompany him on all his excursions.'

The two brothers left B.G. for the last time in May, 1844. Robert spent some time in Barbados, and wrote a history of the island. He later was appointed British Consul at St. Domingo, and after that, in Siam. He died in 1865. The same year his brother died, Richard accepted the post of Director of the Botanical Gardens in Adelaide, Australia, where he had emigrated many years before. In that city he founded a Museum of Economic Botany, and his friends subscribed and commissioned a portrait of him which probably still hangs there.

Although there is no record of a portrait of either of the Schomburgk brothers being hung in B.G, there appears to have been no lack of appreciation of their services, particularly those of Robert, later Sir Robert Schomburgk. The following is an extract from the Guiana Herald of January 24, 1843.

' however general the opinion may be of the utter uselessness, if not inexpediency of mooting the question respecting the Boundary line between ours and the Brazilian territories, and however justifiable economists may deem the legislature of this Colony in refusing to contribute any pecuniary aid to forward the settlement of this matter, still we think there are few who will not readily admit that Mr. Schomburgk has rendered the most essential services to this colony....'

Mention must be made of the fact that Richard S. wrote his 'Travels' in German, and were it not for the able translating done by Mr. Walter E. Roth, the majority of us in B.G. would not be able to read these two volumes. Mr. Roth has succeeded in producing a translation which reads, as Pasternak has said a translation should,—'in a natural and lively way.'

Both Robert and Richard Schomburgk believed firmly in a bright future for British Guiana. But I wonder whether Sir Robert might not have been surprised to find that this paragraph, written by him more than one hundred years ago, has still for us in B.G. the same wishful tone?

'Guiana bids fair ere long to become a focus of colonization, and with her fertility, her facilities of water communication, she may yet vie with the favoured provinces of the eastern empire, and become, as Sir Walter Raleigh predicted, the El Dorado of Great Britain's possessions in the West.'

Extract from

The Lost and the Lonely

by Ivan Van Sertima

In which Da-Da after tragic failure and frustration in both private and public life withdraws himself completely from the world and seems resigned to a long slow agony of dying. Stefan tries to draw him out of his shell but to no avail. A profound and curious intimacy develops between father and son Stephan's life for a long time to come is twisted and darkened by the shape and shadow of his father's spirit.

During those last days he began to walk away from his shell, walk slowly away out into an untouchable farness and silence. It pained me to look him fully in the eyes. I could see the flight and exile there, that dry dark fathomless stare that spoke of utter disinterest, withdrawal and abandonment. His were the eyes of the blind, of the new dead: a dull blunt blaze of glass that held and mirrored nothing. The shell continued to eat, to speak, to push its arms and legs about, driven through all the idiotic repetitions of living by the momentum of habit. But I could feel the flatness, the falseness, the hollowness of the thing he had left behind. Only a phantom reality of flesh that had to be jilted and jettisoned because it was still too young, too instinct and pulsant with power to die with him. How it had stood up to the nervous assault and burden of the years I could not tell. Instead of growing feeble it had toughened to a gnarled hardness, a raw bronze-brittle strength. It would take another fifty years of brutal motion on the earth, perhaps, before life wore it down, made it grow old and sick and rot to a leprous foulness like his essence.

He kept to the house all the time, pacing up and down, up and down, but never adventuring out into the yard or street for a single moment. And he kept entombed in his night-clothes too, a thick white dirty pyjama-gown that looked like the sheet they pulled over bodies when they gave no pulse. All other clothing was boxed away, discarded, and to see him stride across the floor in this death-cloth made one think of a man buried alive in a casket on the top of the earth in some fantastic ritual of slow torture and execution. The house had become that kind of a tomb for him, and the sentence of doom was written heavily on his face. He paced behind panes of glass, looking out on the yard and street, seeing the living close and near, knowing he could live no more, and knowing too with the same terrifying certainty, that until the shell was smashed he could not die.

Some nights I would turn over and fall out of my sleep at the sound of his voice and I would hear him cry a thousand times, Oh, what to do, what to do? What to do, what to do, what to do?

"O Good Lord!" I would scream beneath my breath, feeling every jagged shock of sound in the silence "O God, God, if you have anything to do with this man's pain, or any man's pain, stop torturing him, stop torturing him. Kill him outright and be done, O God, but don't drag it out like this. Kill him tonight in his sleep and never let him wake up to this horror anymore. O God, kill Da-da, kill Da-da. Kill him tonight in his sleep, I beg you, please."

And when a long pause came and that hysterical anthem seemed lost in a deep stillness I would weep my heart out for relief and mutter gratefully to the night: "Thank you, God. Thank you for killing him."

One evening as I came up the pathway to the house I saw his head upon the window-sill, mounted on a crooked platter of arms, staring at the street. I had never seen him look so crushed and broken before, so wretched and lonely, so old and lost and sad. No more the glazed withdrawal in the eyes. They had suddenly become the most expressive eyes I knew. All the anguish in his life, all his horror and hopelessness seemed to stir to instant and to total life inside of them. Somehow in one terrible flash he had come back, out of the farness and silence. All of a sudden the death-mask had been lifted and shattered and the spirit had come bounding back, bursting the shell with its fist, and startling the cold dry eyes with the essence and memory of all his hideous hours.

A heaviness fell upon me as I entered. It seemed as if the whole place was stuffed and overflowing with this man's feeling and no one could move in his presence for long without falling victim to the curse of darkness on his soul.

"Da-da," I said in an urgent voice, throwing an arm on his sunken shoulders, "you must get out of this house, man. Go for a walk, look up your old friends, meet people again, try and do something. You've got to get out of this house, Da-da. It's come like a tomb, it's come like a tomb. You must get out. You must get out of this house."

He turned on me as I spoke, breaking into a wild hysterical shout.

"Get out and go where? See who? Go where? See who? Nobody wants to see me. All these months I stay home. Ten months I stay home. Away from the city, away from friends, away from everybody, everything. Nobody even sends to ask for me. Whether I'm sick, whether I'm dying, whether I'm dead. Nobody notices. No one, O Christ, no one, no one at all. Nobody cares. Not a soul in the world cares what happens to me. Better I stay here and die, man. Better I stay here and die."

"But you can't sit around like this," I cried, on the verge of tears, "you can't just sit around like this waiting to die, Da-da. You can't just sit around like this, waiting to die."

"Ten months," he raved again, ignoring me. "Ten months now and nobody visited me once. Not once, O Christ, not once. What kind of friends I had, what kind of friends I had, O God, O God. I want to know. I want to know. Why, why has everyone deserted me? What have I done, O God, what have I done? What have I done to deserve all this, O God, what have I done? Not a friend in the world, not a friend, not a friend. Not a friend in the whole wide world, not a friend, not a friend. A man has to bear his pain all alone in his hell of a world, O God! O what a hell of a world, hell of a world, hell of a world, O God, O God! What to do! What to do!"

On and on, and on and on he raved like this, repeating himself again and again, raving louder and louder, hoarser and hoarser, charged to fury and madness by his pain. For what seemed like an hour he raved, shouting at the top of his voice until the sound came like sand in his choking throat and all his nervous energy was exhausted. Then he broke down, cried as if he would never stop and threw himself like wood across the bed.

He was up earlier than usual the following morning. He had a long bath too, which was so strange for him on Wednesday morning. He had only bathed at the beginning and close of the week for the past ten months. A greying growth of beard, which had been dark only a year ago, paled off his hollow cheeks and ended in a thready stubble at the chin. This he began to weed out at the hall-mirror that morning, bleeding his wrinkled skin every now and then with his awkward reversion to a long-forgotten habit.

I watched intently from the breakfast table. Karl and Dianne never noticed the change at all. Ot at least they showed blank faces as though they didn't. They never seemed to notice whatever their father said or did, avoided his eyes at table, and avoided speaking to him whenever they could. I watched and waited and wondered, for it was nearly a full year now since he had shaved like this on a mid-week morning.

The shaving done, he disappeared in his bedroom for about half an hour and when he came out again the dirty white pyjama-gown was gone. He emerged in a white sharkskin suit, something he had worn in the brief heyday of his glory the year before. Somehow the months had not moth-marked and yellowed it. It came out of a thick celluloid shelter as glossily white and fresh as the first day he wore it. But it was a most unfortunate choice. To both of us as we looked at it came back the image of the man he was, the image of the day he first wore that suit, the image of the cheering crowds, the city's booming guns, all the pageantry and colour, the glory of that first day he stood to take his oath in the parliament and assembly.

He was so full of life and hope then, so vigorous and eager, jubilant and proud. Now he looked a built-up scarecrow of a man, a crucifix of bones with a mockery of clothes flung on. Grief had

sucked him dry, down to the ossal fabric, the rude skeletal necessity, leaving only a bloodless skin drawn with a rubber-band tightness to the core and frame. I had never seen anything so ghastly and incongruous, so startlingly illustrative of death-in-life as that dried up and wasted shell-thing wrapped up in a smart and stunning suit of clothes. It was like the blaze of hard white light clothing a lone backstreet, promising a gay city life that was not there.

He looked at the mirror for a long time and I shuddered under the violence of his thought and feeling as he stood there. I had become open and vulnerable to all of him, it seemed, and in moments of such tortured twisting I felt it like it came from inside of me, felt it like one feels the tug, the spasm, and the burning of one's own smarting guts and heart. A big ball of air came up in my throat and I ached to vomit the tea and the butterless loaf of weak white bread.

Suddenly I sprang up, almost knocking the wares over in my haste. Da-da ran his fist straight into the full-length mirror and it came splintering down in a cascade of fragments all over the floor. I threw my arms around him and tried to hold him down but he pulled away from me like a lunatic, stamping on the glass and kicking it about with his boots and screaming the place down.

"Karl, Dianne, come quick," I shouted, "Da-da's going mad. Come quick, I say. Da-da's going mad."

They both rushed out to work as though nothing had happened, as though the mirror had been broken and lay shattered in another house, and the raging sobbing man was a total stranger. I threw my arms again around him and I began to cry and scream myself as though infected and caught up in his delirium. I cried as if a long-growing geyser had burst inside of me. Cried like a child dragged from the milk and warmth and motherhood of the earth, cried for the whole loss and tragedy in both our lives, for all the waste, the endless, brutal, meaningless drama of pain. Eventually we both grew quiet and my father returned to his room. When he came out of it he was back in his bedroom slippers and the dirty white pyjama-gown again.

The next few weeks he walked right back into himself. A shell-man paced the house once more, deadened and distant, lost to the world in a farness and silence I could not hope to bridge or breach or door. Only at night a fever of life returned, returned as always in a grotesque and frightening shape of nervous horror.

"Come sit and read for me, Stefan," he would say some nights and I would ask: "What would you like me to read, Da-da, what would you like me to read?"

"Anything," he would cry impatiently, "anything, anything at all. Just read, read. I want to hear somebody talking to me.

Somebody must talk to me. Nobody wants to talk me anymore. Everybody's shutting me out. This silence O God, this silence is killing me."

I would sit by his bed for hours on end, reading. Far into the night I would sit and read, sometimes reciting long narrative poems or sections of some favourite novel, and he would just lie there staring blankly at the ceiling while the voice ran on and on. Suddenly, somewhere along the way he would shake all over with a great convulsion of sobbing, clutching at the pillow and pounding his face in it. He would cry in a strange dry way then as if there were no more rivers to bleed out his heart. His eyes remained dry, and hard as glass. And the sounds were dry too like a man being strangled, gasping sandily for the breath of life.

"What is wrong, Da-da," I would stop and ask, "What is wrong?"

"Read boy, read, you go on reading."

I would go on but my heart no more in it I too would become like a shell, voice-distant, eye-distant. I would withdraw my spirit from the book, keep spinning the sounds out like magnetic tape, and rise a voiceless phantom from the chair. In that moment of mutual distance and withdrawal I would know a mutual intimacy and nearness. I would go out and meet my father in a miraculous mingling of mind and essence, I would go out and entangle myself into the webwork of this man. A heaviness, as of all his years, would fall upon me and I would take on his nervous load and shape, remembering as I had lived it, the vital moments of those fifty years. I would become my father, my lost mother my young mistress, my time not only during but before my life, losing my familiar and single identity into a strange and dual world and self.

THE LOST AND THE LONELY

Is the title of the 80,000 word novel upon which Ivan van Sertima is at present working. The scene is laid in Guiana's capital city in a contemporary setting and the novel depicts the tragic crisis of a young man who finds himself an exile in his own country.

The chapter portrays the closing stages of the life of Stefan's father.



Lulu an the Camoodi

by Florence Cavigholi

Dis was a gurl, she live far in de faress wid she muddah, she faada an a parrat dat deh use to call Lora.

Now dis gurl did name Lulu, an she faada did love she so much, dat he use to treat ee wife baad fu Lulu. If Lulu head hut she, e seh Lulu muddah en tekkin good care a she, an wah evva Lulu tell e against she muddah e use to believe she, an so sometime e would beat up de wife baad baad, so Lulu poar muddah live in dread all de time.

Lora now, was a talkin parrat an very sensible, she did like Lulu muddah, an use to sarry fuh she wen she gettin baad treatment, an Lulu muddah use to treat Lora good, causen som times she use to warn Lulu muddah bout any a Lulu tricks dat she would play fuh get she in trouble. But Lulu din like Lora atall an of course Lora return de compliment.

By dis you know of course dat Lulu was a very wicked gurl, an she eye did pass she muddah so much, she nat only use to tell lie pan she, but she woan hear wen she muddah talk to she. She use to do all de tings she muddah tell she she mussin do, an cause de poar ooman to get beat up. Dis was fun fuh Lulu.

Wan dey now, de faadah go to work as usual cuttin wood in de faress, an lef Lulu an she muddah at home. So de muddah do she house work, tidy up she bed an ting an set about fuh cook she husban food fuh wen e come home in de nite, causen de faadah use to carry e brekfus fuh eat durin de day; but wen she open she safe she see nutten en deh fuh cook. She seh to she self, "Lawd is wah dis pan poar me now, you mean me gah fuh guh til a village now fuh buy provision? An is so far to de village?" An she suck she teet, vex wid sheself fuh lettin dis happen to she. Dis time she trying fuh figure out how de provision done suh soon, causen all a dem does go pan a Satiday to de village, an like so she does feel at ease, causen she husban wid she fuh protec she, but she doan like to travel wid Lulu in de faress widout she husban causaen you nevah can tell wha Lulu will do nex. She had dat experience wance an she pay de cansequence, dear enough. Dis time she en know dat Lulu tek she provision an play dally house and feed up de burds an pigs wid it, an causin she muddah a big set a trouble.

Anyway de position still de same anyhow she put it to sheself, so she decide she an Lulu will guh to de village, "at lease" she tink to sheself "wah evah happen, me husban will get e food tinite."

So she turn to Lulu an seh, "Lulu gal awee, na gat nutten fuh cook fuh you faadah dinna tinite. Come leh awee guh ah village fuh buy provision". Lulu seh "Moomah, nutten na deh a house fuh eat?" Moomah seh "No gal, put an you hat and you shoes an leh awee go ah village."

Lulu glad fuh de chance fuh gie she muddah worries now, right away she gwine lie. She staat fuh groan an mek up she face an hole ann to she foot. Hear she now, "O, Moomah, me foot a hut me, me caan walk suh far". Lulu moomah see right away dat is mo worries dis gurl gwine give she suh she seh to sheself, "If me wan guh a village me guh come back mo quick dan if awee two guh. If me carry she, she guh gie me worries all de way an me nah guh reach back in time fuh cook me husban food. An if me lef she home lack up in de house she gwine too friken fuh come out side by is she alone, an no tighah or camoodi can trouble she if she lack up in de house, so me betta try quick if me wan fuh reach back in time fuh cook me husban food."

So she turn to Lulu an seh "Awright chile, you staan me guh run guh quick an come back, but you do jus wah me tell you, or else you might fine yourself in trouble, mo dan yuh, able wid, you might get kill"? an she add dis piece, "an you know how you faadah love you." Causen she know how Lulu wun want to grieve she faadah, an den she tink again, "is no use tellin she me love she to, causen she doan kay. Ah only pray to Gaad dat every ting guh right till a come back."

Dis time Lulu siddown in de chair swinging she fat lil legs, an she lil mine wukkin how much mischief she can do by de time she muddah come back.

"Lulu, you gwine do wah a tell you?"

"Yes Moomah, me gwine do every ting wah you tell me."

"Do Lulu, doan get in no mischief."

"No Moomah, ow! you self to."

"Awrite gal." Lulu moomah seh. She turn an tek up she basket, an she money an she lack up all dem windah an doh an bolt dem good den she come back to weh Lulu did sitten. Dis time Lulu watchin she, an she seh, "Now Lulu, wen me guh tru de doh, you mus bolt it good an turn de key in side. An you mussin open none a dem windah nor de door, causen anyting or anybody can come inside an harm yuh, doan open de doh to nobody but me."

"Awrite Moomah guh quick an come back."

Lulu moomah seh "Hm, it look like she gwine behave she self, causen de danjah is mo dan she."

Den Lulu tun an seh, "But Moomah how me gwine know is you rappin at de doh, me caan see tru de wood?"

De muddah seh, "Gal you na known you own muddah vice?"

Lulu seh, "Moomah anybody can imitate you vice."

"Awrite den Lulu, wen me come to de doh me gwine sing a song dat nobody gwine taink bout singin to a doh."

"Da is a good ideah" Lulu seh.

"Well awrite now lissen to de saang" de muddah seh, an she sing dis saang:—

Is me Lulu gal,

You muddah come home,

Looloo open de doh,

Yuh muddah come home.

She sing it ova and ova suh Lulu can know it good.

Dis time dey en know dat a Camoodi deh undah de house hearin everyting wah goin on upstairs, an dat e tekkin in dis saang good, good, causen dis Camoodi is a smaat Camoodi, an e know fuh imitate anyting or anybody, an is suh e does get e food. Wen e imitate de animals dey does come to e an e does jus gobble dem up.

Anyway Lulu muddah gie she a las warnin, den she step outside on de varandah an she hear Lulu bolt an lack de doh. She give it a good shakin an pushin fuh see if it can budge, but de doh was fas.

So she turn to Lora an seh, "Lora gal, you is me only frien, watch ovah Lulu wen a gaan an tell she if you see anyting wrang; do fuh me sake. Remembah a love you an does treat yuh good. Doan mine Lulu baad, do it fuh me sake." Lora watch she good but she en ansah Lulu muddah, causen she did glad if anyting happen to Lulu, dat will put she out a de misery she does suffer at Lulu han. So she en mek no pramis, but she jus cack she head wan side an lissen good.

Lulu muddah turn an guh down de steps an start pon she laang journey to de village praying to Gaad in she hart dat everyting be arwrite. She en tink bout peepin undah de battam house fuh see if anyting undah neet deh, an of course Lora din see de camoodi causen e come fram de back a de house an crawl undahneet it.

Eh! Eh! Lulu Maddah gaan now, she hustlin down de road, dis time de camoodi watchin she, e wait till she reach a good distance, den e crawl out an mek e way to de bush behine de house; e guh a good distance weh Lulu caan hear e. Now Buddy is wah you tink e gwine an do? E gwine an practice fuh sing dis saang, causen e did larn de wods good wen e been lissenin undah de battam house.

Wen e reach de spat now, e staat fuh practice fuh sing, man, fus time e try e vice too coase, suh e seh "mmm dis won do, Lulu mus know is nat she muddah vice". E try again, dis time e vice too hoase. E seh "Gawd! is wah dis. A know is wah wrang wid me! de las time a swalla a cow, it lef me troat too slack, is dat's wy ah caan sing like

Lulu muddah. But a must get dis gurl causen she fat an nice, ah ent want she muddah an she faadah yet causen deh ent fat an jicy like Lulu. As fuh Lora, she can even full me teet-hole”.

De very taught a Lulu an how she fat an nice mek de Camoodi decide e cyan wate. So e put aan a frak just like Lulu muddah own an a hat like she own to, fo comafage de situation, den e staat prancing down to de house.

Wen e meet now, e see Lora pan de verandah weh she cage hanging, right in front de doh an e seh to eself, she mus'n see me face, she will tek me fuh Lulu muddah, causen a dress up jus like she.

But is betta de Camoodi did come widout a frak, causen e lang lang tail did still lef outside e close. Lora done know is nat e mistress, but e glad fuh anyting happen to Lulu causen e en like de gurl attal. So e staan quiet. Dis time Camoodi suh hungry e impatient; e fuget to sing, e put out e han an wrap at de doh.

Dis time Lulu inside, up to all saat a mischief, she hear de wrap, she seh to sheself. “Eh. Eh. is who wrapping at dis time a de day, Poopah doan come home suh soon an moomah kyan reach de village suh suh quick an come back, eh. eh. ah wandah is who?”

Camoodi wrap mo haad now. Lulu get up from weh she been, curious fuh know is who. “Is who wrapping deh?” De camoodi ansawah, “Is me Lulu darlin open de doh, yuh muddah come home? Dis time e vice hoase hoase you know.

Lulu seh, “Eh, eh, Moomah, wah happen, who mek you vice suh hoase.” De Camoodi mek ansa, “Ah ketch coal Lulu.”

Lulu tinkin all de time, she seh to sheself, “Da en me muddah vice” suh she seh, “sing de saang moomah.”

De camoodi ketch eself den, an e rememba de saang an e tretch out e neck an staat to sing:—

Is me Lulu gal,

You muddah come home

LooLoo open de doh,

You muddah come home.

Dis time e vice still coase but e hopin Lulu en gwine resist de inclinashun fuh open de doh an peep. Lora watchin all dis time. An e was right.

Lulu cyan bear it no, mo. She loose de bolt, tun de key an befo she can peep tru de doh crease, Camoodi hurl eself pan de doh an knack Lulu flat pan de floor. Den e punce pan she, an e wrap eself rung she, Lulu hallah an fightin all de time but she en

able wid de Camoodi. Then she rememba wah she muddah did tell she. De wods come back to she, "You might fine yourself in mo trouble dan you able wid." An all de wrang tings wat she does do, she muddah words come back to she, an she did sarry, she seh, "Ow, me muddah, if only a did hear you." But was too late den. De Camoodi bite off she head, and trow it undah de bed, and wen it did rollin to de bed de hair come off an leff undah de chair, den e bite aff she navel ann spit it out undah de table. Den e swalla de ressa a she baddy, whole, whole.

Well, Lulu laan she lessen, but hear wah gwine happen to de Camoodi now.

Lulu did suh fat, dat wen de Camoodi swalla she, e could'n budge fram weh e bin, e leff right deh wid e belly swell out big, big.

Eh. Eh. de muddah comin home now, she run all de way tru de faress till she meet de village, buy she goods an comin home now. She run she walk, she run, she walk, till de sun did high in de sky an de journey mo haad now, causen de midday sun mo hat an she weary aready.

Wen she reach a good distance fram de house, she see de doh open, she haat leap to she troat, an she staat run mo quick. Dis time she foot cyan, carry she fas enough. Wen she reach de doh, wah she gwine see but de big fat ugly Camoodi wid e belly swell up big, lying down in de middle ah she floor. De house in confusion, every ting upside down, an Lulu nowhere aroun. "O Lawd!" Den she staat fuh bawl, WWaai! O me lawd is weh me Lulu deh? Wah me gwine tell me husban wen e come home? O Gawd me, waan gall pickny gaan inside de Camoodi bely, An so she go an for a laang time.

Dis time Lora hearin she mistress how she hallerin and greivin ova Lulu. Lora din bargain fuh dis paat atall; she glad fuh leh Lulu dead, but she en glad fuh see she mistress greive. She lissenin to all wah Lulu muddah hallerin an sehin.

"Aw! me pickny!" an she trow sheself in a chair holin she head an rackin sheself backward an farward all de time de tears runnin down she face like rain pourin fram de sky.

Lora feel sarry fuh de poar woman now, an decide fuh help she. Suh e staat fuh sing fuh she, an dis is de saang wah Lora sing:—

Lulu, poar Lulu dead,

Undah de bed,

You see Lulu head;

Undah de chair,

You see Lulu hair,

Undah de table,

You see Lulu navel.

Lulu, poar Lulu dead.

Lulu muddah hear de singin an she stap cryin fuh lissen. She guh to de doh an stan up. Dis time Lora sing it again.

Lulu, poar Lulu dead, etc.

De muddah lissen good an wen de saang done sing, she guh inside de bedroom an look. Lulu head been undah de bed in trute, she surch undah de chair an she fine Lulu hair, an wen she hice up de table claat, Lulu navel been deh to. So she coleck sheself an she tek all tree a dese tings an she put dem in a caana, den she guh in de kitchen an bring out ah axe, an she lif it high up in de air an bash in de Camoodi head. All de Camoodi coulda do was groan suh, m m mmm den de dead. An Lulu muddah tek a shap nife an cut open the Camoodi belly and tek out Lulu baddy, an she siddown wid she needle an tread an stitch aan Lulu head back pan she baddy, den she tek lil pase an pase aan Lulu hair pan she head, den she tek Lulu navel an stick it back in place wid lil glue, an wah you tink happen? Lulu come alive again.

Den deh hole aan pan mattee an dem cry an dem laff wid joy. An Lulu tell she muddah she sarry fuh all de baad tings she use to do anall de trouble she cause de muddah an pramisse nevah to be wicked again an tell no lies, an be dissobedient. An wen she hear how Lora save she life, she hug up Lora an kiss she too, and Lora an Lulu was de bes o' friens afterwards an de live happy everafter.



Poet in a Slave Arena

by Milton Williams

To be truly a Poet is to be driven beyond the frontiers of what is and is possible into the alarmingly impossible and give expression to the inexpressable. For the True Poet such is to be desired with all his strength of mind and being. This confrontation in itself constitutes a rape. It is in itself too, a face to face encounter with the eternal. This is what the struggle—the deep anguish of spirit, a consequence of the bi-section of being, the lot of all men, moreso mutual to the mortal creator—to give expression means: a coming to grips: a prostration at the feet of that which is the key to man's existence. The valid road therefore is quest, struggle with life and limb and brain, the removing of layer upon layer of barriers.

Poetry is not only words (some of which are apparently meaningless) not only means, not only be. A True Poem is substanceless substance. Contained in it are flickers of imaginary light. A True Poem is a curious and flexible transmuted intermingling of all elements contained in the human environment. To use the term environment I am aware, for certain people, is to juxtapose a valid delimiting bond. On the contrary, by the term Human environment, I in no way confine myself to any social class, religious and political movement. I in no way confine myself to any race, ethics or geographical surroundings. Rather my concern is with the whole theatre of the human throughout all time and space.* The social and political, the racial, ethical, religious and geographical are all barriers to the essential and perpetual problem of man.

The question arises of itself. What is the essential and perpetual problem of man? I answer this: loneliness, mystery. These are not final answers but frontiers insinuating themselves for plumbing.

Man in his naked essence is a creature of loneliness eternally besieged by the shadows of mystery. So soon as he became aware, so soon was he confronted with the mystery of his origins and of the origin of all around him: birds, trees, rocks, rivers, mountains and the far off distant sun and moon and stars and planets. The True Poet then is the one most deeply aware of the loneliness and mystery that is a perpetuation from the beginning. It is that which beleaguers, hounds, stamps him like a red hot iron through all the streets and structures and monuments: sanctuaries from the ravages of the cruel fascists—nature space and time.

With the exception of one or two (one by commitment more deeply and tragically aware than the other) no poet of Stature has ever emerged from this Feudal slave arena. To have asked for one was to demand the impossible. Precisely what is required of the True Poet.

The West Indies and British Guiana today is one blown up plantation. At all levels the pattern of the slave plantation is reduplicated. On the one hand there is the homage paid to the big house, the big car, the big job. At another, to the skin, to colour. Coupled to these are the multiplicity of the weak-minded, the weak-willed, the spineless and the water-blooded. The True Poet looking out on all this is petrified with horror; is stuffed up all the way to his gullet with the filth. For these are the great distractions with which he must engage. Looking out on all this the True Poet can feel nothing but sorrow. He is the Tristram of the Feudal slave arena.

What is projected? What asserts itself as on some lofty screen, as if daylight's accentuation for the first time thereon is reposed? Not this: The arena's a pool—a cesspool populated by maggots, whirling around in endless idiotic ejaculations, without centre, without core, just a bottomless cavity. Is insensitivity and senselessness. Impotence and abstinence! A chaotic and gutless quagmire. It is colossal vice wherein no light is permitted only everlasting night.

Wrapped in cesspool's garments, a maggot's glory, our victim of time circumstances and history in one Amazonic uprootment creates a severance and sustained impregnability. Grows enormous and tangible wings while he perseveres the path sketched by his deep sense of inner certainty and vision which is as old as time and man.

This then is our True Poet. To the mere apprehender of appearances his actions are designated as a consequence of not-knowledge-of, at most as blind arrogance. Hearing this he laughs and his laugh is a vomit that says: "I alone am and will always be right. The world was and will always be wrong. I was present in the beginning. I lived with man in his caves, tents, villages, towns and cities. I delved into the ocean, earth, came through the tops of mountains, walked on air, walked through the sun, moon, stars, and planets. And I know that this search of man for love, shelter, comfort and security, for a richness of life both material and spiritual is a quest that soars over all his agglomerated fabrications and is to be found in sequestered vaults not of his making.

The True Poet is he who sees through all the facades, and from that perimeter of consciousness throws down his gauntlet in one daring and brazen act.

No sooner done than a vision comes: sunhair'd and blueeyed and fairlimbed; fullbreasted, depthighed and halo-bedecked the unknown comes, touches our hero and says, "I come I come. I am the unknown'thy God. I give thee but a momentary glimpse and I depart. Will see thee again only when thou dost summon me as thou did'st today. O son. O lover. O darling and brazen, brave and dogged one. O strongwilled. O visionary, thee only thee I love. kisses lightly his lips. In a little while I leave thee and thou would'st look for me again in every mortal woman but

they will prove empty and insufficient. Worry not. Take only this charge. Over all men and over all time I thee set. Do my work and I am thine."

Is the state of our hero to be imagined, nay, much more, conveyed? Hardly, too much for inadequate language. Let it suffice if we say that the apex of this experience was akin to drunkenness; not stupor'd, but glorious drunkenness, where one rides as upon the crest of some surging and golden river. Or, to the O holy sexual moment. Of senses inflamed, most complete: deposition, union, tranquillity. These, so finite, so fragmentary, are its mortal approximations. For that other, so lovingly, so richly signed and sealed is an eternal revolving on the plane of everlasting purity and bliss.

To what ground, what new garden have we come in full amplitude of soul? Is not the metamorphosis complete? In one instant the aggregation of years is dissipated, falls down a congealed ghost. For now what previously appeared as fluctuating insinuations is given obliquity, angularity, becomes the norm. No more can there be bisections. For actions done no more can there be bad consciences. For our hero functions now as man in the beginning and with more: the possibility of the possession of knowledge of the congregated experiences of all men in every civilization throughout all time. From this unique promontory a significant realization is projected: he and all men are brothers. All that has passed under the heavens and on this earth was a fallacy and an irreligious lie. An irreligious yet a profound and agonising truth that scarred and emaciated their existences. From henceforward he is given the right to understand and the framework or the form for his content.



N. E. Cameron

(A Profile)

This is the 30th year of Norman Cameron's authorship and I wonder whether he himself could have visualised the varied literary styles that lay before him when he published his first book "Evolution of the Negro" in 1929. In the Postscript to "Thoughts on Life and Literature," he had indicated the urge to write which began to gather force when he found himself in Cambridge at the age of 19 as a Guiana Scholar, and gradually the realisation grew that although Christian and Guianese, the fact of his being of African stock was of great importance. As he points out, it was to dominate the other elements in his personality and to affect the course of his thinking over the 30 years between then and now. To pursue what that meant in Guiana, he found it necessary to become editor of an important volume "Guianese Poetry—1831-1931" in which he collected the best, to his mind, of the poetry written and printed in British Guiana culling assiduously from newspaper files, now unfortunately destroyed, poring over little known and often decaying booklets of verse which must have gone from the heart of the author as lightly as the song of a bird.

This urge led him to scorn delights and live laborious days of research, and of founding and helping to found groups to fill needs in the infra structure of the community as he saw it—e.g. the British Guiana Literary Society (1930-1934), the British Guiana Union of Cultural Clubs (1943-1950) and the Association of Masters and Mistresses (founded in 1952). It led him to prepare addresses of outstanding thought on the future of the people of Guiana—the farmers and the young people needing education in rural areas (in 1931 there was printed in the New Daily Chronicle a thoughtful and striking address on Village Continuation Schools which Unions of Local Authorities may well study now with profit).

It seems to this writer at least that first and foremost Norman Cameron has fundamentally been a teacher. Having learnt certain truths about himself and his country, he has always endeavoured to pass them on to others. There are his History of Queen's College (1951) and his forthcoming History of Education in British Guiana to testify to the lore of institutional education, but in his drama he also made use of the dramatic form to put over home truths he has learnt, without political fervour, but as an educationist will.

Apart from the sheer dramatic values there are in Balthasar, Adonya, Sabaco and Ebedmelech, the continuous message that there are valuable contributions to be made to the community of nations, by the people of every stock.

Quite properly, in order to drive this message home, Norman Cameron has written much explanatory prose, in his historical articles on drama in British Guiana, in the essays and addresses,

some of which have been given more permanent form in *Thoughts on Life and Literature*, and also in the original poems, *Interlude* (1944). The theme always has been on the didactic but it would be untrue to say that the intensity of the message has not stimulated the creative artist in him. Critics have claimed that the creative fire does not burn as brightly as it does in other writers, but to say that ignores the strong message which shines sincerely and even passionately through every page. Here is a searcher after Truth, this is Diogenes bearing the lamp for all to see and was it not Keats who postulated the twin aspect of Truth and Beauty a century or more ago?

Norman Cameron might have remained a writer and thinker and educator in the forefront of Afro-American endeavour, had it not been for the events of 1943, centred around the person of the *British Council Advisor* in the West Indies Harold Stannard, which crystallised in the launching of the *British Guiana Union of Cultural Clubs*. Norman Cameron became the first President of the Union and the aims of this body dedicated to the development of Guianese culture and the things which unite our people and not divide them forced him to take the large view of cultural endeavour and even more important, to plan and carry out programmes which would develop our intellectual interests as a whole. He took a keen interest in the establishment of the *Patrick Dargan Memorial Shield Debating Competition*, and it was he who embarked upon the collection of the valuable library of B.G. books which the Union succeeded in acquiring. So the man of thought was given a chance to work out his ideas in convention activities and a Pan-Guianese attitude was the result.

Of late years, with the arrival of new strong writers, the work of Norman Cameron has been rather neglected, but to those older ones among us, the memories are bright of what the man has done for our nascent culture. Here is a man of intellectual force and great energy, with the ability to carry out arduous research, undaunted by praise or blame, using many literary forms to pour out during these 30 years his message to the young and to those who want to learn, drumming in lessons of character and method and thought for the future, applying intelligence to the problems around us and using his basic, logical approach in everything.

This is not to write *finis* to the man's work—the activities he has planned to celebrate his 30th anniversary will at once belie that—but to take a quick look back over the 30 years and to point out the evident pattern of his life's work.

—A. J. Seymour.

REVIEWS

Of Age and Innocence

by George Lamming

In his third book "Of Age and Innocence," George Lamming plays the virtuoso, displays an advance in technique and lays a greater emphasis upon manner than upon matter. This is a distinguished book which is hard to read as a novel.

It's easy enough to describe the bare bones of the story. There is an island in the Caribbean which is awakening from its long sleep of colonial status into nationalism. Five people arrive in an aeroplane and become involved in the political changes. A group of boys do what boys will do, all over the world, make a club or scout troop and give it a dash of mystery by calling it a secret society. They too become involved in the story. On the brink of his triumph the local leader is murdered, and there is a great trial which stirs the community.

But the author makes the incidents happen off stage as in a tragedy by Seneca and because the movement of the book is shrouded in a deliberate mist of emotion, we are never quite sure what has really taken place. Perhaps we can say that there is a great deal of resemblance between the tragedies of Seneca and this book by Lamming and I'd like to pause for a bit and underline the similarities. There are fine passages of description scattered over the book, and all composed in the author's best style. He talks of nationalism, and of the effect of politics upon a community, commonplaces are raised from a mundane level like night, or the carnival of San Cristobal or the accidental effect of the writing upon a piece of paper upon the thought processes of a character is pursued with a curious and nice pen. There is much high morality and philosophical reflection, as on the relationship between accuracy or error to be discerned in the nature of figures, or on the urge and reflection to be found in the travelling of ants; and there are always effective epigrams. But the tragedies of Seneca were meant to be recited to a literary audience who would know the value to be placed upon the references, and similarly this book suffers from an excess of style and moral disquisition and it is unlikely to appeal to the general readers who want a story in the first place and an interesting portrayal of character in the second.

This is not a novel in the normal sense. The book is difficult and, even in a certain sense, unpleasant to read. There is introduced very early the literary device of the diary, that treasure house of the abstruse and the esoteric, and even in the first section of the book the part which traditionally is devoted by an author to catching the interest and holding the attention of the reader, we are conscious that there is a deliberate blurring of the issues. Let us look at it together for a bit. The scene is in an aeroplane and the pathological tone is set in the first sentence—"the airliner had lifted itself

like a cripple grown used to its crutches." The atmosphere is one of ill-health and the neurotic personality; we look up and the two small bulbs which give direction to the passengers are recorded as "stammering a language of red and green flickers." Again the note of physical disability. This process of slow, complicated analysis which will pervade the book continues in the mind of Marcia, and as she thinks about her relationship with Mark she begins to read the pages of Mark's diary. As we look over her shoulder at the diary, we are immediately engaged upon a shuttlecock of temporal events which are entangled in the minds of the characters. This device makes a nonsense of temporal location and statistics so that we swing between the time of the mental process and the time embedded in the process, without our being aware of the shift until the change has taken place. Then fairly early comes a remarkable evocation of the intimation of disaster which the author will realise.

In this airy region of the clouds, we see the figure of Shepherd, the mad poet, stand up in its place in the plane. He embarrasses the hostess in the way he asks to be shown to the smallest room and when he emerges he fills the silence with a thunderous recitation of the poem "The Hound of Heaven." Sexual overtones appear in his talk to one of the woman passengers and we are conscious that this is the language of indecent assault, all the more menacing for being softly spoken. Remember there are two pistols cocked in his hands as he keeps the crew and passengers in a state of terror. "You are beautiful," he says, "and that is why I should like to see you in another form. . . . cactus flowering from your hair and clinging only to your nipples." He doesn't spare her and the girl shrieks with tears as he wishes her snails in her womb.

It is not polite, it is most unpleasant but I must make this attempt to indicate the violence in this scene, to show the reader the degree of premeditated assault upon the imagination with which the author begins the book. Mind you, later in the book, Shepherd seeks to explain to Penelope that it was really himself he had been attacking because of another woman whom she resembled in every detail. But it is too much.

The pall of mental illness and malaise hangs over the book, and the liana of neuroticism trails its tendrils in and around the characters and the events. Ma Shepherd and Rockey are most sympathetically drawn, Ma Shepherd perhaps because she establishes a relationship with the boys—shall we suggest that she is Age and they are Innocence? Rockey is the curious phenomenon of a creature of the sea as a farmer is a crop and a child of the soil; and the evidence he leads before the Court is a noble expression of the unconcern of certain types, shaped by natural process, for the relatively artificial qualities of legal procedure.

The author is happiest with the boys. He describes their hopes and plans with a lucid pen. For instance he says "they had come together as a little society which worked in secret, and the unity

which the speakers were urging San Cristobal to achieve was for them a fact. They had transformed the myth of the political meetings into some reality which no one could question. . . . And here one boy was thinking "Age is nothing if there ain't no doing. Age is the Society start young and behaving old without any show of numbers. . . . The Society is at work again, doing what the big ones talk." In the episode with the ants, and the description the boys gave Marcia and Penelope of the island's mythology, there is a happy temper which shows that the author can write with an optimistic outlook when he so desires.

But for the general rule, the grownups are poor specimens troubled or obsessed with one matter or the other, insecure in company and uncomfortable when alone with themselves. Perhaps this is a projection of the author, harking back to the hopeful days of childhood with its intense loyalties and its desire for adult triumphs, and at the same time disgusted by his perception of the sham and tawdriness of the grownup world, and the inability of the human being to shape events the way he would have them go. The island, therefore, does not come to life for this reader. There are clear vistas of sea life and activity on its shores, the easy garrulous camaraderie of the people buying and selling on the waterfront; we see the machinery of administration; through the eyes of the boys we catch a glimpse of the natural vegetation and of institutional life and, more important, we learn the deeper layer of myth in the island's story. But we do not see the island in the round; we are not meant to.

And the book is not a study in emergent nationalism. That quality is finely described in the words used by Mark at the public meeting. "Nationalism", he said, "is not only frenzy and struggle with all its necessary demand for the destruction of those forces which condemn you to the status we call colonial. The national feeling is deeper and more enduring than that. It is the private feeling you experience of possessing and being possessed by the whole landscape of the place where you were born, the freedom which helps you to recognize the rhythm, of the winds, the silence and aroma of the night, rocks, water, pebble and branch, animal and bird noise, the temper of the sea and the mornings arousing nature everywhere to the silent and sacred communion between you and the roots you have made on this island. It is the bond between every man and that corner of the earth, which his birth and his work have baptised with the name, home". This is not the mystical entity for which men vote; this is a philosophical and poetical explanation of the force behind the politicians urgings. One will not in this book find, even if one had hoped to look for it here, a sympathetic portrayal and justification of the struggles of a people for their own doorway. As one man said to Penelope "The vote is a key, madam, use it and authority can take any turning. . . . I may sell mine madam".

After all this you may well ask why then do we say that the book is distinguished if we we dislike the

neurotic flavour and it is not a sympathetic study of the national colonial struggle. The answer is in the quality of the writing itself. Particularly is he felicitous in the descriptions of natural states and seasons outside the troubled processes of his characters. To the boys standing by Rowley's grave, "the air was like acid, cleansing their eyes and all their years congregated and fled down a long legendary tunnel that swung a refuge through the dark volcanic heart of San Cristobal".

Or there is Mark confiding to his diary, "I like it here in the evening; for the evening in San Cristobal is a final rebuke to all decision. It does not change places with the day, obediently at the customary coercion of the season....The evening arrives, It arrives with a show of militant displeasure and it declares its wish for solitude and the absence of light. It is arbitrary and firm. It knows its own mind and its action is prompt. The day hesitates for a while, tries to put up an argument and slips away meditatively in an attitude of mild outrage. And the evening quickly surveys its territory, relaxes its black frown and stretches lightly, lazily over the land. It is amiable and harmless".

What conclusion then should we draw? That the author is shadowed with an obsession which makes every prospect pleasant and only man is vile? That his metier is not the novel, but he is developing on the side of the philosophical essay and the penetration of poetry? That he has little personal enthusiasm for the national struggle of the militant colonial? That his vision is one he shares with Schopenhauer and Housman, those colonels of the pessimistic corps? That his imagination is stimulated best by the thought of men in the mass and the evolution of the social forces which shape them?

The conclusion is all of these things. I have no wish here to link this third book with the other Lamming productions or to trace a growth in his interests. There isn't time. And we should add this last point only George Lamming has written his third book, but he has not yet given us, his readers, the fulfilment of the considerable literary powers he possesses. He is not an entertainer in the sense of Mittelholzer, or a satirist like Naipaul; he is not classicist like Hearne; or a poet of the myth like Vic Reid. It is his job to tame the spiritual turbulence he depicts and to realise the philosophical urge in him into a message for the region, which by his own definition, distils for him the magic of nationalism in the name of home, "possessing and possessed by the whole landscape of the place where one is born".

Let us hope that will be soon.

—A. J. S.

To Sir with Love

by E. R. Braithwaite

The Bodley Head 13s'6d.

Francis Thompson in his 'Hound of Heaven' said,
 'I sought no more that after which I strayed
 In face of man or maid:
 But still within the little children's eyes
 Seems something, something that replies
They at least are for me, surely for me!
 I turned me to them very wistfully:

In his search not only for employment, but also for understanding, this is what Mr. Braithwaite did. After demobilisation from the R.A.F. and equipped with 'a science degree and varied experience in engineering technology', he applied with a certain amount of confidence for suitable jobs. But at his very first interview, after encountering the scarcely veiled disapproval of the receptionist he was told that in spite of fulfilling all the requirements of the job, his appointment 'would adversely affect the balance of good relationship which has always obtained in this firm'. This theme was repeated with only slight variations as he applied to fill other vacancies. Eventually, after eighteen months, he is advised to apply for a job as a teacher. Here he is at last accepted, and is sent to a school in the East End of London.

A feeling of desperation was quite possibly coupled with wistfulness as he faced his class for the first time. For this was a class of teenagers, boys and girls, children who were underprivileged, underfed, suspicious. He, like these children, had faced many deprivations and frustrations though for different reasons. Would children judge him just as another teacher, or would they too, debit his colour first? Perhaps one could even say there might have been some sort of kinship between these children from London slums and a negro from a little known colony. Both have feelings of bitterness to be overcome and an eagerness to wrest something better from life. It is interesting to surmise the possible differences in attitudes which might have resulted if the school to which this teacher were appointed had been in a more select area of London.

At this time in the history of human relationships, when Little Rock and Notting Hill are fresh in the memories of all those interested in the colour problem, this account of a negro school teacher successfully winning the confidence and even affection of a class of English children is like the proverbial spot of blue in a very cloudy sky. Mr. Braithwaite's fundamental belief in the essential goodness of people irrespective of colour or creed shines through the story. He writes with integrity not only concerning his relationship with his pupils, but also with other people. Through the unexpected kindness of a Jewish tobacconist, he is helped in his search for lodgings near the school. He goes to the suggested home

at once, but is told, 'Sorry, I'm not letting'. A voice from inside calls out, 'Who's it Mum?' and the woman replies scornfully, 'Some darky here asking about the room'. As he turns away the young voice cries out 'Oh Gawd Mum' it's Sir, it's me teacher'. That the mother later visited the school specially to ask 'Sir' to take the vacant room speaks volumes.

Even as he begins to realise and take pleasure in the hero-worship the children exhibit, he realises that there can be pitfalls. The mother of the most attractive girl in his class asks him to have a word with her daughter who's been staying out late at night. 'She'll take notice of what you say, Sir, she always does'. Although flattered, the teacher realises the danger of becoming involved in the family affairs of this good looking widow and her auburn haired daughter. Someone else is equally conscious of the unfavourable gossip that could arise from this situation. Gillian, his best friend on the staff, warns him to be careful.

A different problem arises when he visits Gillian's parents. On a completely different social plane from the school children, Gillian's father is connected with international finance, and often travels abroad. Her mother is a fashion designer and the family home is at Richmond. While, with the ease of good breeding, the parents accept Ricky as a well educated and interesting person, they are aware that this friendship with their daughter is more than a passing fancy. They make no secret of their anxiety that she should be contemplating the difficulties of a mixed marriage. Besides, they're worried about their grandchildren, 'they'll belong nowhere and nobody will want them'. But Ricky answers proudly 'I hope we will have children and those children will belong to us and we will want them'. He might have added that the children could happily belong in his own country too.

One wonders what difference it might have made to the story if Mr. Braithwaite had not been lucky enough to have the constant friendship and encouragement of his landlord and landlady, affectionately referred to as Mom and Dad. In the evening he could freely discuss the day's difficulties with them, and enjoy the benefit of their advice. It must have made a considerable difference to the bouyancy of his spirit to return each evening to a home, a place of unclouded relationships, a haven from the cold and unsympathetic vibrations of a large city.

The children as well as the rest of the staff are sketched in with bold strokes. The cool viciousness with which these 'force-ripe' boys and girls set out to 'break' their new teacher is told with candour. His was no sudden or miraculous victory, a weaker character would have given in early in the game. Facing the same class all day of every school day, trying every method of reaching them, of claiming their interest and attention in spite of themselves, this must have been a severe physical as well as mental strain. Only sustained and imaginative effort could have achieved the dramatic success which led up to the climax indicated by the title of the book.

—J. A.

Weather Family

by Edgar Mittelholzer

THE WEATHER FAMILY by Edgar Mittelholzer (Secker and Warbug—18/—) is one of the liveliest of the Mittelholzer books. There is gaiety and freshness, like that of a girl preparing for her first ball, which recaptures on a larger scale the sheer gamin quality of Olivia, that little Puck he created in **Shadows! Move Among Them**. In this recipe for a Book Society choice, he has compounded the normal ingredients of middle-aged bachelor teacher, a West Indian family with its teenagers and its tensions and thrown in for good measure a West Indian hurricane which tosses housetops curlicue against trees, pours the rain in a liquid eiderdown upon the cane-fields, unearths a fan mill like a toy machine. The link between the family and the hurricane is a rain gauge, because the family is crazy on changes in the weather and has perfected a technique of plotting these variations. So to them, Janet the hurricane is an occasion for exhilaration than for fear. To this reader, there is something Rabelian about the vast screen of sea and sky and the antic play of the hurricane, like a kitten with houses and trees. The intrigue of the love story, or rather stories, and the adolescent approach of the young heroine are reduced to minor key by the larger character known to be lurking out in the ocean off Barbados and suddenly appearing on the stage to bring characters together and resolve all tensions in a great wave of contiguity. All the poet in Mittelholzer rises to the surface as he describes the panther wind smashing the Gospel Hall into splinters ("God's match box" he calls it). The last few pages of the novel seem the fierce ending of a tremendous passage of music where no member of the orchestra draws breath but plays plungingly on like an ordered chaos to the end.



Tinkling in the Twilight

by Edgar Mittelholzer

A TINKLING IN THE TWILIGHT—by Edgar Mittelholzer (Secker & Warbug—18/—) The vein of humor which used to be sardonic in his previous books—I remember the sardonic overtones and echoes in **Morning at the Office** and **Shadows! Move Among Them**—seems to be changing from the intellectual to the earthy in the Mittelholzer canon. Perhaps success is mellowing the author. However, in this new novel, the author makes his hero, the retiring bookseller who lives in Paddington, alone with his Yogi routine, undergo a quietly humorous transformation in personality which gives release to his suppressed sex life and changes him from a figure of fun to a figure of sympathy. The change, is, in a sense, accidental, but it suddenly forces Brian Liddard to look outwards from his tightly controlled absorption with himself and

his own states of mind. If we know our Mittelholzer, we know that he believes sex of some sort is a key to open the cupboards of humbug and let the roaches and cobweb out and very soon, this is an element mixed into the unravelling of the plot which then moves with his usual mastery of suspense to the end.

What is the story? The tale of a man who by brooding upon changes of time in the past unwittingly stumbles upon a door which leads him into the future, and to his horror finds that he is powerless to control the opening and the closing of the door. Edgar has often described the state of mind of a man going mad, or believing that he is going mad, but on this occasion we all feel the sense of fun as Brian describes in his notebook the strange feelings he has, and the frustrations which come upon him are comic in situation. Is it not comic for this austere bachelor to be suddenly faced with the charms of a professional "pedestrian" and to have to wriggle out to the accompaniment of her mocking laughter?

Even more entertaining to the reader with any interest in the future are the glimpses of the world of 2064 into which Brian breaks through! (I wonder—does Edgar see himself as a reincarnation of George Orwell or the younger, more platinum Aldous Huxley? Can he resist the temptation to become prophet as well as professional entertainer?) First of all, music and we hear the opening chord of Pembroke's Murder Symphony. After the blood-curdling scream of the music, the audience in its rapt darkness, with the orchestra in its pit under the floor, responded to the significant silences, the lovely Howling Hiatuses, the scream and thunder and the sob and wail.

Then Art. In 2039, it will take the *Times* critic nearly 2½ hours to find the Yellow Dot in a painting by Charles Partridge. You see, the painting was in the Dot Obscuro School of Art tradition. "Whoever paints human figures and landscapes and still life as they did in the old days"? The Mittelholzer projection about the novel of 2064 is of course an interesting one. In that time ahead of us readers go to creative literature for their sound, not sense. "The critics praise impact and contact, not content". Of course, as the historian told him, it was sentimentality which eventually slew the society of the 1950's. Democracy is a music hall word and the country is run on the coterie system which evolved in Germany. But I must stop here.

The Imperial Idea

by A. P. Thornton

Macmillan—30/—

Had he the audacity, Professor Thornton would have named his closely written and fully documented study of British Power over the period 1850—1956, "The Decline and Fall of the British Empire". But the ghost of Gibbon must have been looking over his shoulder.

To us in emergent territories, this is a fascinating book. Here is the rich palimpsest with the imperial slogans and guide rules of generations of British statesman, engraved upon the minds of Parliament after Parliament only to be rubbed out and re-stated to suit the temper of succeeding times.

And now that power is passing via "Suez 1956" and Acts of Colonial Development and Welfare into the hands of indigenous people, Thornton pays greater attention to the growth of nationalism in the Dominions than to its growth in the Colonies, but he has traced the pattern by which the Dominions evolved from colonial status and treatment. This nationalist argument he says was a new moral issue, "whether it came from a subject-race impatient of political restraint, or from dissident and self-interested opinion within the white self-governing Dominion, (which)..... could not be written off even by the most convinced imperialist as so much bubble agitation of a merely traitorous kind".

For Curzon, "Empire was the key to glory and wealth, the call to duty and means of service to mankind"; Joseph Chamberlain saw colonial policy as "we are to keep what belongs to us; we are to peg claims for posterity; if any one tries to rush these claims, we are to stop them". But there are other views also. Nehru was struck by the British "calm assurance of always being in the right" in their approach to Indian problems, while Beatrice Webb could write bitterly that imperialism is "an impossible combination in British policy of Gladstonian sentimental Christianity with the blackguardism of Rhodes and Jameson".

The book begins with the Don Pacifico inquest of 1850 when Palmerston stated the principle "A British subject must be able to say that he was a citizen of a Power whose fame and influence spanned the world". There is in the pages of this book an account of the long debate on the power of England overseas, her constant quarrel with France, her desire for trade to be extended, the complex seesaw of interests in Victorian England, the gradual development of Empire as a faith in a civilising mission (Disraeli with his sense of finesse is the high priest of the religion) to keep law and order in unruly places. Thornton analyses the way in which this dynamic

for Victorian politicians was translated into action and perpetuated by the upper class traditions of the public schools and the British Army.

Then he traces the reason for the decline. Despite the fact that the world would take England's position as largely what she thought it to be, there were certain forces which developed in opposition. The Boer War proved expensive; the 1914 War left Britain heavily in debt; the United States of America and Japan grew up rapidly into Great Powers and became policemen for some of the great seas where English ships had sailed supreme; the Dominions became increasingly uneasy over the prospect of Imperial commitment without full and equal consultation; the doctrine of democracy gathered force in England itself and gradually changed the image of the country from one shaped by the upperclasses, to one on which the working class had begun to stamp their characteristics including those against privilege. Thornton pays attention to the part played by Shaw and Wells as entertainers in the attacks on the structure of English society. There was the League of Nations where El Salvador and Great Britain could be reckoned as equals in political wisdom.

No wonder poor Imperialism crumpled before the combined assault of these many powerful forces.

What is Thornton's vision for the future? He suggests that Great Britain should assume the role of moral leadership and quotes Gilbert Murray's proposition that always "the privileged should give up their privileges on grounds of conscience or humane principle". He sees the liberal tradition (with a small l) as having involved all parties in England with this moral suasion and he ends his book with the sentences "In every generation there is such an initiative to be taken. To discover what kind of imperial idea should inform that initiative, and how it should be applied, is the cruel test that lies in wait for all British statesmanship in the second half of the twentieth century".

Well written closely argued, to be read by all policy-makers in a colonial territory.



Dr. Zhivago

(By Boris Pasternak)

If the novel "Doctor Zhivago" had been written by a poet living in Denmark or Japan, about the revolution in his country, there would have been a different reaction to the work by critics writing in England or America. So at the outset a distinction must be made between the novel and its political implications.

Anyone reading in the *Times* of November 7 the texts of the letter written by Boris Pasternak to *Pravda* on November 5, 1958, and of the letter sent in September, 1956 to the author by the editorial board of the magazine *Novy Mir* will be impressed by the way these political implications have covered the novel itself like a funeral shroud. Pasternak in his letter expressed himself in a rather surprised way as realising the "monstrous consequences of the political campaign" which arose around the novel after the award of the Nobel Prize. He refers to the warning given him by the editorial office of the *Novy Mir* "that the work might be understood by readers as a work directed against the October revolution and the foundations of the Soviet System". Pasternak himself added "I did not realize this and I now regret it".

Pasternak has defined for us what he understood to be the evils of his novel. He writes "I am supposed to have alleged that any revolution is a historically illegal phenomenon, that the October revolution was such, and that it brought unhappiness to Russia and the downfall of the Russian intelligentsia. It is clear that I cannot endorse such clumsy allegations. At the same time, my work which was awarded the Nobel Prize, gave rise to this regrettable interpretation and that is the reason why I finally gave up the prize". He had earlier in that letter stated "I have never had the intention of causing harm to my state and to my people".

The second text to notice is that of the letter sent in 1956 by the editorial board of *Novy Mir* to Pasternak at the time of the Soviet "thaw". The board was "alarmed and distressed at the spirit of the novel. The letter charges Pasternak as regarding "the story of Zhivago's life and death as a story of the life and death of the Russian intelligentsia, a story of its road to the revolution and through the revolution, and of its death as a result of the revolution". The board describes Zhivago as "a man bloated with a sense of his own self-importance.....ready to betray (the people) in time of difficulty.....a type of highly intellectual philistine", and deals at length with the desire of the "heroes... to preserve their own lives".

This is not really literary criticism—it is sociological comment; and perhaps some of the acclaim given by the critics has been based on similar premises. The board did however, touch on the "artistic

aspects" of the novel. They asserted that there was "general incoherence of subject and composition" and that the novel had a "splintered character". The editorial staff of *Novy Mir* summed it up—"You have written a political novel-sermon par excellence".

The editorial board of *Novy Mir* is right in many of its claims to Pasternak. Certainly on every page there cries out the assertion of the individual to be of value and his unwillingness to be reduced to the vegetative processes of eating and sleeping. Certainly the poet in Zhivago instinctively desired to get away from the levelling to the herd which moved in the wake of the revolution. Certainly, like every one else, Zhivago stole wood from the Moscow street to warm his family in winter. Certainly, too, he could do little or nothing to cure the sufferings of the people around him, except to apply his doctor's art when captured by the partisan army.

But to say that these things is to say that the title hero was recognisably a person and not an improbable-ideologically-motivated being.

If the shroud is removed from Dr. Zhivago what is disclosed? A novel written under the shadow of Tolstoy with Russia as the hero—the Russian of the revolution. There are incredible hardships stoically undergone as Russians only can endure them. There is the vast confusion (which Tolstoy found in War), extending over large areas of the country at this time of civil warfare, and the break-up of family life. This is biography rather than fiction, seen with the quick of the poet's eye and it is a picture likely to have more meaning outside the borders of Russia rather than for Russian readers. Because Pasternak has dared to see his period of living from above and with the heightened and quickened eye of universal poetry, instead of the particular values of history.

There are times when I wonder whether the main value of the work is not to drive home the lesson that no matter where a man lives, he cannot write a novel which does not criticize, implicitly or explicitly, the Soviet system. The title character is a man driven by his nature to preserve his life because it is individually his, and to seek happiness because he is essentially a human being. Zhivago wants to understand life, and the events going on around him. He seeks love as an end of living in a society where things fall apart the centre cannot hold and anarchy is loosed upon the world. And he will do that whether or not the country has Russia for name, or America. He will seek to record his impressions whether or not he holds views different from the voiceless, nameless "herd" of people about him. He will be true to his gift of quick illumination and metaphor whether or not his scribblings will be preserved for anyone else to see.

There is much to find fault with in the novel although this article is not intended as a review of the novel—rather is it a comment on its implications. Coincidence plays too improbably fortunate a part. Other and greater writers have shown greater skill in the

organisation of more diverse material than Pasternak had to treat here. **The Magic Mountain** has an artistic entity which one finds lacking in this work; the great German novelists are supreme craftsmen by contrast. The end of the novel falls away and there is little to account for the disintegration of the title character after the war, when he had kept his integrity in such bitter circumstances and crises. The figure of Lara is mythical than realized. Some of the characters speak in faint echoes of Dostoevsky without rising to their intensity. There is a long-distance focus of the scenes which prevent the reader from being fully involved in the action and which remind, him unfavourably, of the incomparable focus and shading of Tolstoy in **War and Peace**. Some of the best and most poetical effects in the work, e.g. the snowflakes "like blanks between the small black letters, white and endless" of Strelnikor dead near to the drops of blood in the snow like "iced rowanberries"—they have no dramatic significance in the later narrative.

But the work is instinct with the vigorous poetry of a major poet. Who can afford to throw his effects away prodigally because the life of the next moment is a challenge met as supremely well, Metaphor is woven illuminatingly into the dense texture of the book and we are moved to pause on each as if it is the last insight we will know. The love of Russia shines through the text, the love of Russia's classics sustain Zhivago in his winter retreat and his attempt to build a new life away from his Moscow past. The sights and sounds of Russia live on in the mind after the book is closed, and the people of Russia emerges as the single hero of which all persons are but types. The cities and the towns are etched in tones which convince the readers that they are almost indestructible and the vitality of Russian life remains as the fact that turned back and blunted the armies of Napoleon. In this perhaps may be discerned, despite the editors of **Novy Mir**, the spiritual outline of the present Russian system, that this poet in the end, leaves an impression of the permanence of the people and the brilliant transience of the individual. The characters are broken and the people is the great pool where in wornout breeds and clans drop for restorative silence.

This article must be read in conjunction with the recent correspondence in your columns concerning the freedom of the creative artist. The case of Pasterak is a specific example of the general thesis advanced by one correspondent after another, and it shows that today's world will allow not even the pure artist to remain "uncommitted" and "uninvolved". All his life Pasternak has been acting as an uncommitted writer pursuing this contradiction of his art in the most committed country in the world. And it is ironic that at the very end, with his novel climaxing his life of poetry, the crown of success involved him in a collision with his country's mores.

Autobiography

by **Boris Pasternak**

(Collins Harvil Press)—15/-.

One of the main points coming out of this small but wise and important book is the fact that Pasternak is 69 and therefore is contemporary with Tolstoy and Scriabin, those half-legendary figures in Russia's cultural history. From his experience, that of a dedicated creative artist, Pasternak is able to tell his reader "One must live tirelessly looking to the future, and drawing upon these reserves of life which are created not only by remembrance but also by forgetting"; or to say "my concern has always been for meaning and my dream that every poem should have content in itself a new thought or a new image. And that the whole of it should be engraved so deeply into the book that it should speak from it with all the silence and with all the colours of its colourless black print".

Pasternak was preparing to be a musician but when he realised that he had little or no technical skill as a performer and that he read music like a child learning to spell, he gave up music and turned to literature.

This book gives readers a peep into Pasternak's and into Russia's history. His father a painter, his mother a musician, Boris grew up in an atmosphere where the outstanding figures in his country's art and literature come and go in his family's house. Scriabin the composer lived next door at one period and the boy of twelve then spent days enthralled by the fragments of music from Scriabin's "Divine Poem" being composed next door and resounding through the neighbouring forest trees. Some of the most moving pages in this study are devoted to a memory of Tolstoy's death and funeral and a comment on his poetic vision—"Throughout his life (Tolstoy) could always look at an event and see the whole of it, in the isolated self-contained finality of its moment, as a vivid and exhaustive sketch—see it as the rest of us can only see on rare occasions in childhood, or at a crest of happiness which renews the world, or in the joy of some great spiritual victory".

I would have liked to learn more of the translations of Shakespeare, and the problems that arose from turning those plays into Russian, and the comments are understandably guarded where he speaks of his relationships with Mayakovsky and Yesenin, his

poetic contemporaries, but the book was written after the novel "Dr. Zhivago" (which incidentally he describes as his "chief and most important work, the only one of which I am not ashamed and for which I take full responsibility"). This is a lively picture of intellectual life in Moscow which it would be impossible to have from any other hand in Russia today.

The purpose of the book was to act as a preface to a collection of Pasternak's poems (which have not so far been published) "To give some idea of how in his individual case, life became converted into art and art was born of life and of experience".

Those of us who have read "Dr. Zhivago" experienced the curious focussing of a double vision between the spiritual life of the poet and of the character in the novel.



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The illustration depicts two men in suits. The man on the left is smiling and holding a glass of whisky. The man on the right is holding a card up to his face, possibly a playing card, and is also holding a lit cigarette. Below the illustration, there is a bottle of Haig's Scotch Whisky and a glass of whisky.

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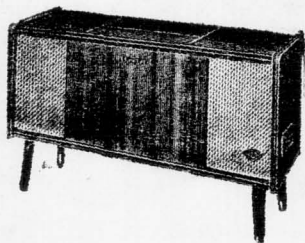
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