

31. Leading article in the "Daily Chronicle" — 29th May, 1921
32. *Ibid.*
33. "Daily Chronicle" — 22nd May, 1921
34. *Ibid.*
35. See, for example, Lutchman, *op. cit.* pp. 246 et seq.
36. *Ibid.*
37. The issue of the 7th October, 1923
38. The "Daily Argosy" — 31st December, 1926
39. The "Daily Argosy" — 5th December, 1925
40. *Ibid.*
41. The "Daily Argosy" — 28th November, 1925
42. The "Daily Argosy" — 13th December, 1925
43. See, for example, *Ibid.*
44. Clinton Rossiter, *The American Presidency* (Rupert Hart-Davis, London, 1960) pp. 22 et seq.
45. Despatch dated 11th January, 1917 from the O.A.G., Cecil Clementi to the Secretary of State for the Colonies.
46. Confidential Despatch dated 19th March, 1925 from the Governor Graeme Thomson to the Secretary of State for the Colonies.
47. See, for example, Secret Despatch dated 23rd December, 1919 from L. S. Amery to Sir Wilfred Collet.
48. Clementi's Despatch dated 26th March, 1917, *op. cit.*
49. Confidential Despatch dated 21st December, 1923 from Sir Graeme Thomson to the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

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Concern For Criticism

Several years ago, Mr. Gerald Moore produced a little book of essays dealing with writers from Africa. *Seven African Writers* (1962) was intended neither as literary criticism in the strictest sense nor as original scholarship. Mr. Moore's purpose was to alert us to the new literatures that were emerging from Africa; and such background information as he provided was subservient to the smooth and enthusiastic content analyses of the work of the writers being introduced. *Seven African Writers* was an admirable, if modest, piece of journalistic criticism for which Mr. Moore has come to be highly regarded.

His most recent offering, however, *(The Chosen Tongue: English Writing in the Tropical World*, Longmans, 1969, 45s) intends to impress us as a sustained act of literary criticism, and as an analysis of a socio-cultural situation. The challenge begins with the title itself: *The Chosen Tongue*. The reader coming innocently to the work of Mr. Moore might be forgiven for expecting a profound and aware discussion of the outer linguistic situation and its implications, in addition to a rigorous concern for style; for one is made to think that the author will show how these Black writers, whether using English as a first or second language, have seized it and made it their own not only in the general, almost incidental, sense of using it to reflect their culture and society, but in the more intimate and exploratory manner of artists possessing and being possessed by the word.

But a superficial introduction moves us comfortably past or through larger linguistic issues to a rather more popular thesis, one that depends less upon close critical analysis of particular texts than upon a broad discussion of themes: "By confining this study to the English writing of tropical Africa and the Caribbean, as I propose to do, a much greater degree of coherence can be attained. Quite apart from their common use of English, these areas have

direct historical, cultural and ethnic links with one another too obvious to need labouing here . . . The density and antiquity of these connections across the Atlantic basin would itself justify an attempt to study the area as a whole" (pp. xxi and xxii). It is this thesis and not any concern for language that lies behind the organisation of *The Chosen Tongue*. It is divided into four parts: 'The Islands'; 'The Continent' (Guyana); 'The City' (London) and 'Guinea'. In 'The City', Mr. Moore deals with the exile theme in works by West Indians and Africans; the section called 'Guinea' opens with Chapter 8 'The Revenants', covering L. Edward Brathwaite's *Masks* and Denis Williams's *Other Leopards*, but goes on to concentrate on African writers. And the epigraph to Chapter 8 "We goin' home, we goin' homel Israel is redeem' I King Rasta a come fo' 'im pickney them!" confirms what is implicit in the ordering of the work. — Mr. Moore is encouraging us to see 'Guinea' the section in which the book comes to its end, as symbolising some kind of return to the spiritual home.

The attempt to see West Indian literature and West Indian culture as part of African literature and African culture is most clearly discernible in the work of a German theorist Jahnheinz Jahn. In the introduction to his massive and invaluable catalogue, *A Bibliography of Neo-African Literature* (1965), Jahn writes:

In contrast to Western literature . . . Neo-African literature has certain stylistic elements which stem from Negro-African oral tradition. It is this style which characterises Neo-African literature and not the author's language (for the most part European) birthplace or colour of skin . . . Works written by Africans which lack these specific stylistic elements do not belong to neo-African but to traditional African literature . . . The main centres of Neo-African literature are Africa, South of the Sahara and the Caribbean, but we find it also in other areas of the world where African and Western traditions have mixed: Latin America, North America and even Europe.

In the same introduction, however, Jahn confesses that the criteria for recognising neo-African literature are "still under discussion" and that "all the material which could be contained by such criteria has not yet been competently analysed". But there is much less reticence in Muntu: *An Outline of Neo-African Culture* (1958), an earlier publication by the same author where, as it happens, the uniqueness and objectivity of these stylistic criteria, and their value as part of a critical method are put in serious doubt

Discussing poetry written by Negroes in America, Jahn takes up James Melton Johnson's 'Negro National Anthem' whose Neo-African qualities are

discovered in "the imperative style": "the intensification through repetition", the "Nommo which transmutes the old Biblical images into new living actual images", and the "responsibility of the word". It might be objected that there is nothing specifically African about the stylistic features and the imaginative processes here enumerated. More damaging reflections arise when we look at the lines being "analysed":

Lift every voice and sing
Till earth and heaven ring
Ring with the harmonies of Liberty;
Let our rejoicing rise
High as the listening skies,
Let it resound low as the rolling sea.

The terms in which Jahn describes the stanza, and his enthusiastic tone do not seem justifiable from the words on the page. What the example helps to indicate is that "stylistic criteria" are being advanced to give an impression of objectivity while the author pursues a more subjective hypothesis, and one that has little to do with literary criticism.

This neo-African theory is neither sleeping nor dead. It appears in a more subtle and authoritative guise in L. Edward Brathwaite's 'Jazz and the West Indian Novel' (*Bim*, 44, 45 and 46) where the same stylistic elements are celebrated as in Jahn's discussion, and where one must also doubt the validity of the critical performance. For Brathwaite climaxes his attempt to find in the West Indies "some mode of New World Negro cultural expression based on an African inheritance, no matter how unconsciously" with a discussion of *Brother Man*, "the most successful, though far from perfect" example of "the jazz novel". Since Brathwaite himself tell us that there have been few such "jazz novels" so far in the West Indies, and concedes that *Brother Man* is a badly flawed novel, how useful is this aesthetic as a critical tool for describing or evaluating what we have? In fairness, it must be noted, Brathwaite warns us that his stressing of the African aspects of West Indian literature in this essay is only a corrective stress; his larger intention is "to see West Indian literature in its (it seems to me) proper context of an expression both African and European at the same time". Nevertheless, one must be reluctant to welcome an aesthetic which is so useless critically, and which for all its ceremonial respect, courtesy and appreciation so firmly refuses admittance to Naipaul, and then, surprisingly, to Lamming and Harris. After a brilliant verbal analysis of an "extraordinary act of improvisation" in the opening movement of Harris's *The Waiting Room*, Brathwaite continues: "Harris's book, taken as a whole is not a jazz novel. As with Lamming his concern re-

mains individual rather than social. Lamming is concerned with individual consciousness; Harris with individual vision". Is the historian of creolisation in the West Indies here driving unwittingly towards a theory of aesthetic pluralism?

Mr. Moore prudently avoids these deep waters. He permits himself to advance archetypal correspondences between Wilson Harris and Tchicaya U Tam'si as evidence of "the African parallels to much of Harris' thought and imagery", but ignores Lindsay Barrett's *Song for Mumu* (1967). He fails to see that the story of *Other Leopards* (1963), is not just "the record of a personal failure" to "flow naturally back into the stream of African existence", that the terrifying madness of the hero at the end is not a "plunge into fantasy" from which the book suffers, but is the point of the book: Lionel Froad goes mad because the world in which he lives presses him too hard with ready-made answers and allegiances. Williams depicts him as having just enough integrity to reject these identities as illusory but not enough vision to create the private space, the centre of being, from which he might be able to take from each group what it has that speaks to his inner longings. His difficulties with *Other Leopards* notwithstanding, Mr. Moore arrives at this common sense judgement of L. Edward Brathwaite's *Masks* (1968): "Masks stands as the most impressive and complete work yet produced in this literature of the black re-entrant who finds in Africa something less than a real homecoming, but something infinitely more than failure or disappointment. Here Brathwaite finds something which he can connect, something from which both his life and his art can feed and grow. But ultimately he must abandon it and return to the islands which are his own real and now sufficient world." (p. 131). What this tells us of the organisation of Mr. Moore's book, rather, its apparently ruling thesis, is that he does not really believe in it, but finds it convenient as a formal and fashionable shelter for two different sets of essays.

Of the African sections in *The Chosen Tongue* there is no need to say much here. In general, Mr. Moore's ideas do not seem to have grown much since *Seven African Writers*. There is an interesting introduction to Okigbo's poetry; Tutuola is celebrated in the same terms as in 1962 but one looks in vain for discussion of Gabriel Okara's *The Voice* (1964), surely one of the outstanding novels from Africa, and one which anybody interested in Harris, Tutuola and Soyinka ought not to ignore; it is surprising that in a work about African and West Indian writing, commentary on Achebe's *A Man of the People* (1966) can proceed without any reference to Naipaul's *The Mimic Man* (1967); and one wonders whether in digesting Tutuola, Soyinka and Okara for instance, it has ever struck Mr. Moore how different these sensibilities are from that of any Negro West Indian writer, how inimitable even by a West

Indian, whether consciously or unconsciously, are the imaginative worlds these writers create? An African critic will find Mr. Moore's comments on African writings as critically limited as a West Indian finds him on West Indian writing. For *The Chosen Tongue* belongs to a tradition of enthusiastic content-summary and naive/preentious socio-political and racial-cultural generalisation that passes for literary criticism in the West Indies. In such criticism writers who do not fit generalisations are either dismissed or excluded.

Mr. Moore tries to do both to V. S. Naipaul. How can a critic with pretensions to sensitivity or social awareness afford to ignore the challenge of our most technically assured (although most conventional) artist, and one of the most disturbing observers of West Indian social realities? Mr. Moore crassly advances that the author of *A House for Mr. Biswas* "admits" that the "dense pattern of associations with India is rapidly disappearing." It is obvious to any attentive reader that the nightmare world Naipaul creates for Mr. Biswas to toll in is generated out of Naipaul's fully felt awareness of the decay and menace of Hindu cultural forms in Trinidad. Mr. Moore rightly reports that creolisation is one of the principal themes of Naipaul's novels but alleges that Naipaul laments the process as one of loss. No, it is lamented as a growth into mimicry: Negro creolisation is seen by Naipaul as a treading of the weary road to whiteness; Indian creolisation is an imitation of this imitation. It is dis-appointing to find Mr. Moore repeating the common prejudice of West Indian intellectual gatherings without having taken up the critical challenge presented by the author's novels.

Metropolitan critics have so far failed to serve West Indian literature because they have been unable to resist offering second-hand and superficial analyses of the society, and unwilling or unable either to pay close attention to particular texts or to relate their interests in other literatures to their interest in West Indian literature. Louis James's space in the Introduction to *The Islands in Between* (1968) would have been better used in reflections on the gap that seems to exist between the largely illiterate West Indian reader and those highly developed West Indian writings. Dr. James's thoughts on the absence of a sub-literature in the West Indies and on the not-unrelated absence of a habit of reading might have been useful, for this is the kind of situation with which he dealt, in part, in his *Fiction for the Working Man*.

But who cares about literary criticism in or for the West Indies? In her 'Reflections on West Indian Writing and Criticism' (*Jamaica Journal* Vol. 2 No. 4 and Vol. 3 No. 1), Sylvia Wynter makes a forceful assault upon the cultural myth of Europe — its consequences upon criticism in the West Indies and its contribution to "the air of inauthenticity" at the University. It is impossible to

disagree with the main lines of Miss Wynter's attack. One movement in her argument, however, calls for analysis, for in it she seriously underestimates the gravity of the situation and the responsibility it imposes upon literary criticism in these islands. "Whilst the critics are safely 'home and dry' at the university", Miss Wynter complains, "the writers are scattered, in exile." A little later we read that "the Interpreter replaces the writer; the critics displace the creator. Yet in displacing the creator, he diminishes his own validity." Miss Wynter obviously does not need reminding that literary criticism is in a bad state. How else could she write of it with such contempt and unawareness of its potential? But there are other emphases than her own:

To those who take a serious interest in literature it must often seem as if their interest were curiously irrelevant to the modern world; curiously, because a serious interest in literature starts from the present and assumes that literature matters. In the first place at any rate, as the consciousness of the age. If a literary tradition does not keep itself alive here, in the present, not merely in new creation, but as a pervasive influence upon feeling, thought and standards of living . . . then it must be pronounced to be dying or dead. Indeed, it seems hardly likely that, when this kind of influence becomes negligible, creation will long persist in any case, a consciousness maintained by an insulated minority and without effect upon the powers that rule the world has lost its function. And this describes well enough the existing state of affairs.

The greatest English critic and teacher of the century found the atmosphere in England in 1932 as discouraging for literature and literary criticism as we find the atmosphere in the West Indies in 1970. The year 1932 saw the founding of the magazine Scrutiny. From 1932-1953, in the lecture room and in the pages of Scrutiny, Dr. F. R. Leavis, his colleagues and his graduated students laboured successfully to create a consciousness throughout their society that literature matters as literature, not as a substitute for something else; and that literary criticism is a craft calling for maturity, intelligence and sensitivity to the organisation of words on the page.

The seriousness with which Dr. Leavis practised the craft of literary criticism was a direct function of his belief that literature matters, potentially, as the deepest and most subtle influence upon feeling, thoughts and standards of living. His dismissals of writers who do not, in his view, enhance life have sometimes seemed hasty ("That Dickens was a great genius and is pre-eminently among the classics is certain. But the genius was that of a great entertainer, and he had for the most part no profounder responsibility as a creative artist than this description suggests"). On the other hand, who else

could have given such respectability to the great boredom we feel in reading Trollope and Thackeray and our growing conviction that life is too short for either: "Thackeray is a greater Trollope. His attitudes, and the essential substance of his interest, are so limited that . . . for the reader it is merely a matter of going on and on: nothing has been done by the close to justify the space taken, except of course that time has been killed (which seems to be all that even some academic critics demand of a novel)".

The strictness with which Dr. Leavis has applied standards in his critical practice have led to accusations of narrowness, even bigotry, and the asperity with which he has attacked bad critics has at times been attributed to arrogance and waspish malice.

It is worth pointing out that most of his judgments of significance have passed into critical orthodoxy, influencing syllabuses at schools and universities. Yet his value resides not so much in the "rightness" of his particular conclusions but in the atmosphere he helped to create; and in procedure — the method of analysis he so scrupulously and sensitively applied to literary works. The frequent attacks on other critics, the forceful dismissal of writers and books, do not have to be defended or apologised for simply as concomitants of his belief that if literature is a power for good, bad literature and the criticism that elevates it are powers for harm. There is that; but the creation of controversy was the prelude to and part of that genuine dialogue on which literature thrives. So many discussions of critical theory or about particular works took place because someone was reacting to a Leavis aside or a Leavis broadside (everybody read him), that we have to see the asperity as part of a deliberate attempt to provoke discussion. As he wrote in the Preface to The Common Pursuit: "Collaboration may take the form of disagreeing, and one is grateful to the critic whom one has found worth disagreeing with. Most of the matter in this volume originated in a consciously collaborative enterprise — a sustained effort to promote the 'co-operative labour' of criticism."

It is a sad reflection on the quality of our intellectual life in the West Indies or on the state of our psyche that we do not argue with one another about what matters to us — neither in literature nor in any other fields. Are we too busy to read what our colleagues are writing? Is it that they haven't written enough? Is it that what is written by someone we know is somehow already known and judged by us? Or are we afraid, in the atmosphere of insecurity, jealousy and distrust that is so thick in our half-baked society that an intellectual disagreement will always be construed as a personal assault?

Without discussion and disagreement literature will not yield up its powers to transform and release us. But it is true that without a method to guide us, discussions can easily lose purpose and meaning. Dr. Leavis's essay on *The Irony of Swift* is a classic illustration of method and belief operating to each other's advantage. Dr. Leavis's belief is implicit in the seriousness with which he approaches Swift and in the scrupulousity with which he applies his method of analysis to the text: if you do not believe literature matters you will not take the craft of criticism seriously. At the end of the essay, belief becomes explicit and interferes with the final judgment, but because of the soundness of the analytic method and the over-all procedure, it is possible to see the interference for what it is and adjust our own attitudes accordingly.

The essay begins with the iron determination "to discuss Swift's writings — to examine what they are", and it begins with this kind of insistence because as students of Swift know, it is peculiarly difficult to discuss the works "without shifting the focus of discussion to the kind of man that Swift was." (Another advantage of looking at this essay of Dr. Leavis is that it provides one model for writing about V. S. Naipaul). By beginning with the writings, Dr. Leavis hopes that reference to the man will be reduced only to what is essential for purposes of literary criticism. He concentrates upon Swift's irony because it gives "the best chance of dealing adequately without deviation or confusion, with what is essential in his work." What follows is perhaps the most controlled example of close reading and verbal analysis in English literary criticism. Dr. Leavis not only communicates what it feels like to read and respond to Swift; he selects passages for discussion which would justly represent the writer's cast of thought and stylistic qualities in the most fastidious of anthologies. By the end of the analysis we know exactly what Dr. Leavis means by irony, and how Swift's irony works: "The dispassionate, matter-of-fact tone induces a feeling and a motion of assent, while the burden, at the same time compels the feelings appropriate to rejection, and in the contrast — the tension — a remarkably disturbing energy is generated. A sense of an extraordinary energy is the general effect of Swift's irony."

These elements of scrupulous shaping-up, particular reference and analysis, and a progressive defining of critical terminology are missing in Gordon Rohlehr's ambitious essay on Naipaul, 'The Ironic Approach', in *The Islands in Between*. Rohlehr precludes any real discovery of his author through the critical performance itself by beginning with a conviction: "Naipaul is a Trinidad East Indian who has not come to terms with the Negro-Creole world in Trinidad or with the East Indian world in Trinidad or with the greyness of English life, or with life in India itself where he went in search of his

roots." Because Rohlehr does not work towards this sweeping pronouncement, and does not seek to convince us by the methods of literary criticism, the reader who does not already agree with the judgment of Naipaul the man finds the essay as a whole difficult to accept. Something different happens when Dr. Leavis passes judgment on Swift. The essay is moving towards a climax and the reader agrees with the bridging resumé: "We have, then, in his writing probably the most remarkable expression of negative feelings and attitudes that literature can offer — the spectacle of creative powers . . . exhibited consistently in negation and rejection." (This might have been a judgment on Naipaul's work). So far pure literary criticism takes Dr. Leavis.

But because he believes that literature is life-enhancing and that the great creative writer not only has feelings but has insights into them, it becomes necessary to limit Swift's achievement: "A great writer — yes; that account still imposes itself as fitting, though — his greatness is no matter of moral grandeur or human centrality, our sense of it is merely a sense of great force . . . He is distinguished by the intensity of his feelings, not by insight into them, and he certainly does not impress us as a mind in possession of its experience." It is obvious that Leavis as close-reading critic is moving in one direction through his analysis of the writing, while the Leavis who believes that literature matters (is life-enhancing) has the desire to suppress the negating author. The crucial point here, however, is that the reader who disagrees with the final judgment is free to reject or modify it without necessarily denying the truth of the actual criticism. For, as it develops, the critical analysis is not an illustration of a thesis declared before hand or imposed from the outside. We can accept the analysis and make such reservations about the judgment as we find necessary. This possibility is always present when we read Dr. Leavis, and arises from another article in his critical faith:

The analysis and judgment of literary art belong to the literary critic, who is one in so far as he observes a disciplined relevance in response, comment and determination of significance. He is concerned with the work in front of him as something that should contain within itself the reason why it is so and not otherwise.

To return to Miss Wynter's fears. The critics, such as they are, are not displacing the creators. For they are employed, increasingly, to function not as critics but as pedagogues. I doubt very much whether our creative writers could survive long in the conditions that the critics has to put up with in our society. By his teachings and by the fanatical practice of his craft, however, the critic at the University can help to spread the belief that literature matters: primarily, in the sense described by Dr. Leavis in 'What is Wrong With Criticism,' and only secondarily in the senses to which the socio-political com-

mentators like Mr. Moore and sometimes Miss Wyrnter herself have too often reduced it. It is from their position as pedagogues, if they choose to work in the West Indies, that the critics can begin the long task of creating in the society an atmosphere in which both literature and literary criticism might flourish.

KENNETH RAMCHAND.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Collection One: New Beacon Reviews 1968 ed. John La Rose.

The stated aim of *Collection One* is to open "new windows" on West Indian thought and art. The four articles which make up the pamphlet offer a nice balance of varied topics. The literary analyses of Jean Rhys and Willson Harris take on a wider perspective from juxtaposition with Eisa Govella's acid remarks on West Indian historiography, and with the teasing biographical study of McKay by Cooper and Reinders.

An attractive feature shared by all four articles is the absence of socio-political jargon. Stereotyped attitudes are also largely avoided in favour of a frank appraisal of the matter under discussion. I found, too, a curious thematic unity in *Collection One*, which I will try to demonstrate in the following paragraphs.

I was intrigued with "Claude McKay in England, 1920". The glimpses given of the man, the place, and the time are fascinating, and surely call for a full-length study. A footnote informs us that Wayne Cooper, one of the co-authors of the article, is working on a critical study of McKay. What I should like to see emerge (from this or from some other work), is a study of the interaction of cultures and ideologies as revealed through the lens of such a history as McKay's. The article does not claim to spend any time on actual criticism of McKay's writing, though some comments on his political writing unavoidably appear. The achievement of the article lies in its portrayal of McKay — both through his own eyes, and through other contemporary evidence. As this period of the history of West Indian culture is now known almost exclusively to those who lived through it, an expose such as this is of considerable current interest.